



Early Learning & Education PROGRAMS

Learning and Growing Together

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Ms. Anna is outside with a group of four-year-old children. Three children stop playing to crouch down and look at something in the grass. Ms. Anna walks toward the group and hears Sam say, "I think it's a cricket." Then Lily says, "No, it's a baby grasshopper." Ms. Anna joins them and says enthusiastically, "Wow, what an interesting creature. I wonder what it can be?" Sam says, "I think it's a cricket." Ms. Anna asks, "What makes it a cricket?" Sam turns toward Ms. Anna to say, "It's small and I saw it jump." Then Lily says, "Baby grasshoppers jump too." Then Julian says, "Wait," and runs to the investigation station to retrieve a bug box and carefully catch the insect. "Now we can see it better."



Julian remarks, "It's brown. I think grasshoppers

are green." Sam agrees that grasshoppers are green. Lily crosses her arms and insists that it is a baby grasshopper. Sam looks thoughtfully at the insect and then turns to say, "Ms. Anna? Maybe we should see if it is in our nature book." Ms. Anna agrees, and Sam runs over to the book box for the nature field guide. Sam finds the section about crickets and grasshoppers. After further discussion, they decide it is a cricket because it is smaller, brown, and has longer antennae. The children continue observing the cricket for a few minutes before setting it free. When they go inside, they ask Ms. Anna to read *The Very Quiet Cricket*, by Eric Carle.

This scenario illustrates how important social and emotional skills are to a continued on page 4

RESPECTING CONFIDENTIALITY

Licensed child care providers are required to keep information about families and children confidential. This includes information about the health, development, and behavior of children. Keep family files in a secure location and hold personal conversations where they cannot be overheard. In cases of contagious illness, families must be notified of the incident without sharing the names or other identifying information of infected children. The same applies to incidents of injury, such as one child biting another. It can be challenging to keep information confidential, but doing so builds trust with families.





The Power of Conversations

Pausing to have deep conversations with children is beneficial for both the child and the caregiver. During conversations, children practice important social skills such as listening to others, waiting for a turn to speak, and using respectful language. They also develop their understanding of language, expand their vocabulary, engage in critical thinking, and build relationships.

Through these meaningful conversations, the caregiver has an opportunity to model social skills and language, and they also have an opportunity to listen and observe. These observations provide caregivers with necessary knowledge about the child's development, personality, and interests. This information can then help the caregiver develop activities and environments that support the child.

Many preschool-age children are able to create stories and have lengthy conversations about their ideas, observations, and experiences. Use open-ended questions that encourage children to answer in detail or start a conversation. For example, "That looks interesting. Can you describe what you are working on?" This question encourages children to provide more than a "yes" or "no" answer, and is more likely to inspire a conversation.

The question also invites the child to reflect on their work, and opens up opportunities for collaboration. A child who is asked this question while working in the sand box might say, "I'm making a birthday cake." If a child nearby hears the

conversation they might turn and say, "I can get plates." Within a few minutes, the children could be working together serving pieces of their cake to the caregiver and other children.

Conversations also help children cope with emotions and solve problems. For example, a caregiver who notices that a child is struggling with a task could say, "I see you are working on a problem, can you tell me about it?" This now gives the child the opportunity to identify and express their emotions, reflect on the problem, and work out a solution. When caregivers coach children through solving their own problems, it builds the child's critical thinking skills and boosts their confidence.



Daily Playground Safety

Establishing daily playground procedures can help prevent injuries and keep children safe. Whether your playground is part of a center or the backyard of a family child care home, there are three basic safety issues that need to be considered. The first is general safety. Even if it is an enclosed play space, it is still necessary to do a safety walk each morning before children arrive. Look for potential hazards such as standing water, injured or sick animals, animal droppings, trash or debris, and broken equipment. Also test metal play surfaces to make sure they are not too hot for children to use.

The second thing to consider is supervision. If there is one adult supervising, they should be constantly moving and following the flow of children as they play. When there are two or more adults, each can be assigned a particular area to supervise, but they should also keep an eye on the whole yard. If a water activity is being offered, then it should be directly supervised as there is a danger of drowning.

The third item to consider is preparing for emergencies. Keep a phone outside, and store a first aid kit with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer in a locked container. Develop a signal, such as blowing a whistle, to use when there is an emergency and you need children to come to you immediately. This will allow you to quickly move children if there is an unforeseen danger nearby.

Refer to the *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs* for specific information about playground supervision, equipment, safe surfaces, enclosures, and more. This free publication is available online at <https://nrckids.org/>.



Learning and Growing Together

child's learning. The children in this story are demonstrating a variety of skills, including: the curiosity to learn, confidence to share their opinions, awareness that others may have different ideas, the ability to negotiate and collaborate, the skills to manage their emotions, and knowledge about resources for researching answers.

Consider the educator's role in this story. Ms. Anna designed an environment that promotes exploration and discovery by creating an investigation station and providing non-fiction reference books for things children might observe outdoors. When the children discovered the cricket, Ms. Anna moved near them and asked a question that started a deeper conversation, and then remained present as a facilitator. The children were given the time and space to discover the answer on their own.

When children are given opportunities to interact through play, they naturally develop the social and emotional skills they need to learn and grow. Educators can provide environments that promote collaboration and the exploration of social roles by making dramatic play available daily, serving family style meals, dancing, singing, and encouraging group art activities. Nature play also encourages working together as children create, investigate, and make discoveries.

As children play together, they assign each other tasks; rely on each other for information, ideas, or advice; take initiative; negotiate; practice managing their emotions; and learn perspective-taking, which builds empathy. Using a balance of both structured and unstructured play allows children to interact with each other and adults naturally. These meaningful interactions build the development of children's social and emotional skills.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

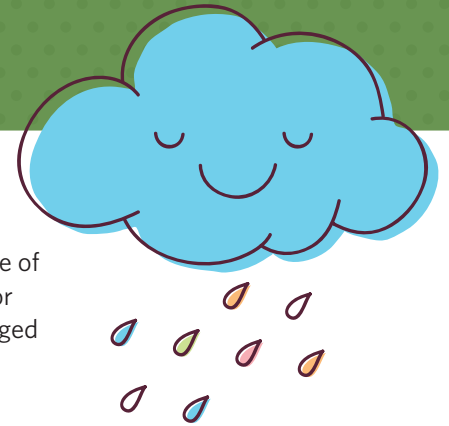
REFLECTING ON FRIENDSHIPS

Children learn about tolerance, empathy, negotiation, compromise, and management of strong emotions by forming and maintaining friendships. Caregivers can help promote friendships by teaching children how to recognize and manage their emotions, and by planning activities children can work on in pairs or small groups.

A thoughtfully designed environment also supports friendships. Choose posters, books, and play materials that reflect different cultures, lifestyles, and abilities. Give children the opportunity to experiment with social roles through dramatic play, and invite families to share about their traditions. Use the following questions to reflect on ways to support friendships and social development.

- What things do you do to help preschool children manage the strong emotions that are often part of their friendships?
- What kind of information do you share with families about their children's preschool friendships? How do families help inform you about their child's relationships with friends?

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).



Recipe for a Rainy Day

Fill a box or tub with items and activities that have not been used in the last couple of months. This will make the items feel new and exciting to children. Use this box for days when the weather keeps everyone indoors. The idea is to keep children engaged and get them moving. Some things you could include are:

- Kid-friendly exercise DVDs
- Scarves or long ribbons for dancing
- Board games
- Scented markers
- Soft indoor balls, large sponges, or rolled up socks to toss
- Favorite books
- A large flat sheet to make a fort, or be used like a parachute to toss sponges
- Colored masking tape to make a balance beam or hopscotch on the carpet

Red Light, Green Light

This game is usually played outdoors, but this version can be played inside. An adult stands opposite a group of children who are in a line, shoulder to shoulder. The adult holds their hands up and says, "Green light," and the children move forward. When the adult drops their hands and says, "Red light," the children stop. This continues until one of the children reaches the adult. That child then becomes the light. To play the game inside, ask children to tip-toe, crawl, walk backwards, or hop on one foot.

Supporting Transitions



Transitions occur throughout the day. Make transitions easier by constructing a few props and activities to occupy children when they are waiting for a new activity to begin.

Activity: Five Little Peas



Age group: Infants

What you need: Materials are not required.

What you do: Sing the following lyrics while acting out the words. *Five little peas in a pea pod pressed* (cup two hands and pretend there are peas hidden inside them), *one grew, two grew* (slowly lift one finger and then another), *and so did the rest* (begin to separate your hands from each other, but not completely). *They grew and grew and did not stop* (inflate your hands until they look like a ball), *until one day they all went pop!* (clap hands together on the word “pop”).

What they learn: This finger-play can capture the infant’s attention or call mobile infants to you. Wondering what might be inside your hands will inspire their natural curiosity, and children will be introduced to math skills such as counting, sequencing, and patterning.

Source: *Easy Songs for Smooth Transitions in the Classroom* by Nina Araújo and Carol Aghayan (2006, Redleaf Press).

Activity: Name that Singer

Age group: Toddlers

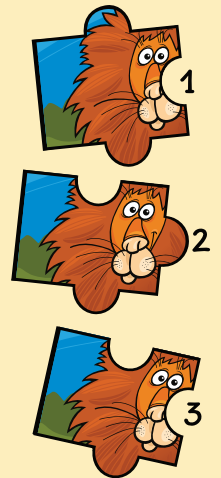
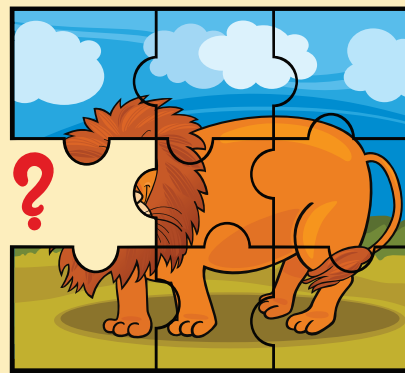
What you need: Tape recorder or digital recorder on a phone or tablet.

What you do: Once children have learned one or two songs, record their individual voices singing. Once children’s songs have been recorded, play the recordings and ask children to identify each singer. Once the children have named the singer, they can join in and finish the song. If children cannot guess the singer by the end of the song, give them hints about the singer such as eye color, what they are wearing that day, or where they are sitting. If you record the song as a video, you can also show the children who is singing.



What they learn: This activity encourages children to practice listening and language skills, identify people by their voice, and express themselves creatively.

Source: *Transition Magician: Strategies for Guiding Young Children in Early Childhood Programs* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum (1994, Red Leaf Press).



Activity: Puzzles to Go

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Poster board, glue sticks, pictures from magazines, postcards or greeting cards, clear contact paper, sealable plastic sandwich bags, box or tote, and sharp scissors (adult-use only).

What you do: Glue pictures to a piece of poster board, and when they are dry cover them with clear contact paper. Use scissors to cut the pictures into puzzle pieces. Store each puzzle in a plastic bag, and place the bags in a box. During transitions, children who are waiting can choose a puzzle to do. Once everyone is done, the puzzles can be put away.

What they learn: Children learn how to entertain themselves while they are waiting, and they practice spatial awareness, eye-hand coordination, patterning, and problem-solving skills.

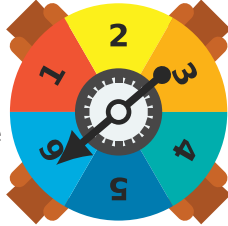
Supporting Transitions

Source: *Transition Magician: Strategies for Guiding Young Children in Early Childhood Programs* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum (1994, Red Leaf Press).

Activity: Spinner Story Boards

Age group: School Age

What you need: An eighteen-inch diameter circle from a piece of poster board, scrap pieces of poster board to make arrows, permanent markers, brad fasteners, pictures from die cuts or magazines, glue sticks, and a ruler.



What you do: Make the story board by dividing the circle into six equal wedges. Use the ruler and a permanent marker to draw the lines. Poke a hole in the center of the circle and attach an arrow shaped pointer made from poster board scraps with a brad fastener. Glue one picture in each section for a total of six

pictures. When children are waiting during transitions, they can sit in a group with the story boards. One child spins the arrow and starts a story using the picture as inspiration. Each child takes a turn adding to the story, until the group is satisfied that their story is complete. Make several different spinner story boards and store them in a box.

What they learn: Children learn to express themselves creatively, take turns, work cooperatively to complete a goal, improve vocabulary, and practice communication skills.

Source: *Transition Magician: Strategies for Guiding Young Children in Early Childhood Programs* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum (1994, Red Leaf Press).

ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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