

# Early Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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## Exploring Diversity

Learning to accept and appreciate the similarities and differences in each other is an important part of child development. It shapes their perceptions of the world around them, teaches empathy, encourages friendships, and builds cooperation. While children may come from different types of homes and backgrounds, they can discover the things that bind them together (their similarities), and learn to appreciate each other's differences. Educators can develop an inclusive environment where children feel welcomed and accepted.

Children begin noticing similarities and differences at a young age. Research shows that infants as young as six months old begin to notice what is familiar and different.



For example, they may show a preference for a caregiver whose physical appearance is similar to a familiar family member. Older children may begin asking questions about people who look or sound different. These are wonderful

learning opportunities! Even though there may be times when children's questions feel awkward, they should be answered honestly and without judgement. Guide children in seeing how those differences make each of us unique and valuable. Encourage them to develop peaceful conflict resolution skills by helping them learn

how to actively listen to each other, take turns in conversations, practice seeing things from different perspectives, and make compromises. continued on page 4



## HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE BOOKS



The following books explore concepts such as stewardship, cooperation, and community.

- *A Cool Drink of Water* by Barbara Kerley
- *Beautiful Blackbird* by Ashley Bryan
- *Building a House* by Byron Barton
- *Castles, Caves, and Honeycombs* by Linda Ashman
- *Everybody Bakes Bread* by Norah Dooley
- *Everybody Works* by Shelley Rotner and Ken Kreisler
- *It's Back to School We Go! First Day Stories from Around the World* by Ellen Jackson
- *Lots of Grandparents* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila Kelly
- *Matthew and Tilly* by Rebecca C. Jones
- *Roxaboxen* by Alice McLerran





## What Makes Us Alike and Different?

Each day is an opportunity for children to celebrate who they are. Art activities are a wonderful way for children to develop their self-concept and learn about others. Children can make representations of themselves and their families with a variety of art materials that can then be shared with others. Select crayons, paper, and paint that represent different skin tones; and yarn or collage materials that can portray different types of clothing, hair, and eye color.

Math activities also offer an opportunity for exploring diversity. Children can sort self-portraits or photos into groups by hair, eye, or skin color and then create a chart to count and compare how many people have physical characteristics that are alike and different. Children can also sort and classify materials in the room such as photos, books, plastic food, blocks, and other toys.

Challenge children to a book study. Start by discussing the elements of diversity, and what it means to include everyone. Then create a chart that lists books in the first column, and use the next columns to represent elements of diversity such as language, gender, ages, family structure, abilities, etc. Children can then look through books and use tally marks to indicate which elements of diversity the books include. Encourage children to reflect on their own ideas about culture, diversity, and tolerance.

Music is an enjoyable vehicle for studying other cultures and languages. Incorporate music and musical instruments into your daily curriculum. Allow children to explore them freely, compare the different sounds, or invent a new instrument or song. Other ideas include celebrating holidays that the families in your program recognize, preparing daily snacks or meals that represent the cultures of families in your program, playing games children share from home, and inviting families to share their family's traditions with the children. Children learn to appreciate the diverse people in their community when they are encouraged to notice and appreciate the characteristics and traditions that bind us together and also make us unique.



# Bullying Basics

Many children experience some form of bullying during their childhood or adolescence. Research shows that bullying behaviors can negatively impact a child's self-esteem, relationships, and academic success. Bullying occurs when a person takes advantage of a power imbalance, such as knowledge of embarrassing information, physical strength, or being popular, to intentionally and repeatedly cause harm to another person or group of people.

Children may encounter four types of bullying. Verbal bullying involves name-calling or teasing focused on physical appearance or ability. Social bullying includes spreading rumors, purposefully leaving people out of activities, publicly embarrassing someone, damaging a reputation, or breaking up friendships. Physical bullying involves hitting, shoving, or kicking others to impose their will on them. Cyber bullying occurs when a child uses digital devices to intentionally humiliate or cause harm to others, and usually involves posting false rumors or embarrassing photos.

Children who experience bullying may be embarrassed or afraid to ask for help. Be vigilant for signs that a child is in distress such as: damage to clothing, withdrawal from others, changes in eating habits, loss of personal items, unexplained injuries or illness, a decline in academic

performance, or depression. Children who bully others may exhibit: increased physical or verbal fighting, possession of extra money or belongings, assigning blame to others, and refusal to take responsibility for their own actions.

Educators can help prevent bullying by learning to recognize the signs, intervening with appropriate guidance and support, setting clear behavior guidelines, and promoting acceptance of diversity. Providing children with opportunities to learn empathy, build positive relationships, practice cooperation, and develop self-esteem can also help prevent bullying. For more information visit our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org) to view or download our free brochure *Bullying: Identifying and Preventing Bullying Behavior*.



## Exploring Diversity

When families enter a child care program, they should be able to see themselves reflected in that space. Create a welcoming environment by being mindful when selecting materials. These materials can include photos of the families, books in the children's home languages, and signs in languages that families use.

Additionally, educators may choose to incorporate items found in the children's home such as woven blankets, musical instruments, games, dramatic play fabrics, and eating utensils. The use of art and play materials can also promote an inclusive environment by offering crayons, paper, and baby dolls in different skin tones. Miscellaneous materials can include building blocks with mirrors, empty boxes of familiar household items, and books representative of different abilities and household dynamics (number and gender of parents, grandparents as caregivers, types of homes, varied careers, etc.).

Develop a method to regularly communicate with parents so they have the opportunity to ask questions about program goals, learning standards, and their child's developmental progress. Keep in mind that people of different backgrounds may have different ideas about what to expect from educators. Listen to their concerns and expectations without judgement and consider their point of view before responding. When families see themselves represented in the learning environment, they will feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and traditions. Encourage them to participate by contributing photos, fabrics, books, music, or other artifacts that are typical to their home. Parents can visit or create a video to share a story, craft, song or game that has meaning for their family.

Children who develop a strong sense of who they are, and have learned to accept others will be more likely to form positive relationships throughout their lives and possess the tools to confront bias in constructive ways. Educators can teach children that every human being is worthy of respect, acceptance, love, and understanding. Every day is a new opportunity to embrace diversity and celebrate what makes each of us unique and valuable!

Source: "Anti-Bias Work: Taking Up the Challenge" by Margie Carter (Exchange Magazine, March 2000).

## SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Supportive environments help children feel welcome and accepted. Take a moment to reflect on your environment and interactions with children. Is there an area that allows children privacy and comfort? Children thrive when there is a soft, quiet spot where they can rest, reflect, or play quietly. Consider setting up a cozy corner that includes a rug, pillows, stuffed animals, hand puppets, and diverse books.

Do your interactions with children build relationships? Show children you are happy to see them and interested in what they have to say. Demonstrating interest in the things that are important to children shows them they are valuable and supports positive relationships. Enjoy your time with children, and they will enjoy their time with you!

Source: *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition* by Thelma Harms, Richard Clifford and Debby Cryer (Teacher's College Press, 2005) and *The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition* by Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer and Richard Clifford (Teachers College Press, 2007).



## RECIPES

### Spiced Oatmeal Muffins

Children can practice language, math, and science skills by making these muffins with you. Ask them to gather the materials you will need, and invite them to pour and mix ingredients. Talk with children about the changes they notice to the color, texture, and consistency of the batter.

#### Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup quick-cooking oats



Preheat the oven to 400°. Crack the eggs into a bowl and then add the white sugar, brown sugar, canola oil, and milk. Mix the ingredients together using a whisk or fork until they are combined and smooth. Then add the all-purpose flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and quick-cooking oats. Mix all the ingredients together. Fill the muffin tin with paper baking cups. Then use a small measuring cup or spoon to fill the prepared muffin cups about 2/3 full with the batter. Put the muffin pan in the oven and bake for fifteen to seventeen minutes until the muffins are fluffy and golden brown. This recipe makes twelve spiced oatmeal muffins.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.pbs.org/parents/recipes/spiced-oatmeal-muffins> in October 2021.

# Families and Friends

Children can use the following experiences to build friendships, develop language, and strengthen resiliency.

**Activity:** Where Should I live?

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** No materials are needed.

**What you do:** Chant this fingerplay with infants:  
*Where should I live? In a castle with towers and a moat?*  
 (Bring your hands together over your head) *Or on a river in a houseboat?* (make wave motions) *A winter Igloo made of ice may be just the thing* (pretend to make blocks of ice with snow), *but what would happen when it turns to spring?* (Tap your chin and pretend to think) *I like tall apartments and houses made of stone* (stretch up with your arms over your head), *but I'd also like to live in a little mobile home* (scrunch down and pretend to drive). *A cave or cabin in the woods would give me lots of space* (stretch arms out wide), *but I guess my home is really the best place!* (Hug yourself and smile).

**What they learn:** Children are introduced to rhyming words and vocabulary that describes different types of homes. Interacting with a caregiver also builds trust and strengthens the relationship they share.

**Source:** Rhyme adapted from <https://www.kid-sparkz.com/preschool-sings-family.html> in October 2021.

**Activity:** Find a Friend

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** A cereal box, scissors, hole-punch, brad fasteners, small photos of each child, and a marker.

**What you do:** Draw a large heart in the center on the blank side of the cereal box. Divide the heart into sections based on the number of children. Place a photo of each child in a section and write their first name below the photo. Make a spinner by cutting a piece of the poster board or box into an arrow shape, and punch a hole in

the center of the arrow. Use a brad fastener to fix the arrow to the center of the heart. It should be tight enough to stay together, but loose enough for the arrow to spin. Hang the spinner on the wall. As children arrive in the morning, they can spin the arrow and say the name of the person it lands on. Then they can find that child and offer a hug, high five, or wave as a greeting.

**What they learn:** Children build language and develop friendships by associating photos and names to each other. This is also a useful tool to ease the transition from home to child care or school.

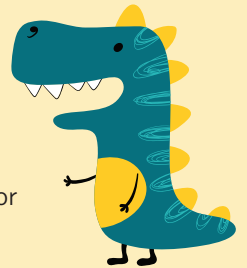
**Activity:** Dinosaurs Go Out to Play

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** Large bed sheet or parachute to be the cave.

**What you do:** Invite children to join you in an open space outside and grab an edge of the sheet or parachute. Choose a child to be the first "dinosaur" under the sheet. Sing this chant as everyone moves the sheet up and down: *One dinosaur went out to play, into his cave so far away, he had such enormous fun, that he called for another dinosaur to come.* The child under the sheet chooses a second child, and so on until all children are under the sheet. Invite children to play it again. The child who went last can now go first.

**What they learn:** Children have the opportunity to practice waiting and taking turns as they engage in physical activity.



# Families and Friends

**Activity:** Family and Friends Memory Book

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** Photos of friends and family from each child, scissors, construction paper, double-sided adhesive tape or acid free glue sticks, stickers, hole punch, yarn, fine tip markers, and colored pencils.

**What you do:** Invite each child to put their photos in order from oldest to most recent. Children may wish to trim photos. Children can arrange their photos on pieces of construction paper and use tape or glue to affix them. Markers can be used to draw borders around the photos, write captions, dates, or names. Once photo pages are done, children can design a cover and give their book a title. The final step is to bind the pages together by punching holes down one side of each page and using yarn to tie them together.

**What they learn:** Children recall happy memories as they identify the family members and friends who are part of their social support system. This helps strengthen the resilience of children.



## 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](http://www.chs-ca.org).

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