

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Learning with the Arts

Children learn naturally through play. As they make marks on paper with crayons, move to music, pretend to cook, and sing they are using “the arts” to learn. “The arts,” or dramatic play, art, music, and movement are valuable tools for supporting the healthy development of children. The arts provide opportunities for children to practice math, science, language, literacy, and motor skills through play. Most of all, the arts are crucial in the development of social and emotional skills such as self-identity, creativity, friendship, empathy, communication, and self-control.

Adults often sing lullabies to help infants relax without realizing that most lullabies around the world are sung to a tempo (timing in music) of sixty beats per minute. This is the same tempo of an adult heartbeat at rest,

which is why it helps infants feel calm and safe. Babies will turn their heads, move their arms and legs, or vocalize in response to music or sounds. Toddlers will sway, bounce, dance, hum, or sing to familiar music. Singing and playing music for infants and toddlers is comforting and builds their ability to distinguish similarities and differences in sounds and language.

Moving to music develops muscles, balance, and coordination.

Between three and five years old, children’s movements become more fluid, controlled, and confident. Children may create their own dances or mimic dancing they have seen. This exercise releases hormones that

can help children release stress and experience a more positive outlook. Children also enjoy exploring different instruments,

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RESOURCES

Children’s Home Society of California has free resources available at www.chs-ca.org. Click on “News and Events” to select one of these resources:

- **COVID-19: Resources**
- **Activity Sheets:** Distance learning activities for children
- **Know and Grow Tutorials:** Recorded informational presentations
- **News:** Links to current news on parenting and education
- **Workshops and Events:** Find free workshops and events
- **Blog:** Information on parenting, health, and child development
- **Podcasts:** Listen and learn about child development and parenting guidance
- **Parent Newsletters:** Articles, tips, recipes, and activities
- **Online Presentations:** Interactive presentations about child development
- **Free Educational Resources:** Family Education Program brochures, a developmental stages wheel, activity book, character growth chart, and school readiness kit

Family Conversations

Children need opportunities to build a strong self-identity and positive attitude within our diverse community. Understanding who they are and how they are connected to others helps children develop a sense of belonging and purpose. Adults can support children in developing their self-identity, empathy for others, understanding of social roles, and communication skills through meaningful conversations.

Quality conversations allow adults and children to build relationships based on respect. When adults listen to children and answer their questions openly and honestly, children learn that their thoughts, feelings, and ideas are important, and that the adults in their lives are trusted sources of information. This is also an opportunity for children to practice the social rules for conversations such as turn-taking, listening, respectfully disagreeing, and using polite phrases (excuse me, nice to meet you, please, thank you, etc.).



The following ideas can be used to start family conversations that support the development of a healthy self-identity and appreciation for others.

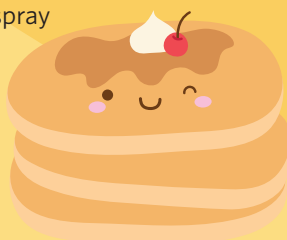
- Sit together in front of a mirror, or look at photographs and ask, "How are we alike? How are we different?"
- Once a week have a family share night. Everyone takes a turn sharing a story about their week. After telling a story, ask "What would you have done?" Asking children to put themselves in the position of someone else helps them develop empathy.
- Create a "Talk Box." Each week family members can write discussion topics or questions on slips of paper and put them into the box. Each evening during dinner, family members can take turns choosing a conversation topic from the box. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to talk about the topic or question. Some sample questions or topics could include, "What does it mean to trust someone?" "When you feel sad, what helps you feel better?" "Describe a time you helped someone." "Explain what it means for something to be fair."
- Read a short book out loud together before bedtime and talk about the characters and story. Ask, "How do you think they felt?" or "Why do you think they did that?"

RECIPES Orange Pancakes

Ingredients

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup quick oats
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup nonfat milk
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- Non-stick cooking spray

Serving Size:
12 four-inch pancakes



Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, oats, baking powder, and salt. Mix well.
2. In another large bowl, crack the egg and beat it lightly with a fork.
3. Add orange juice, milk, and canola oil to the egg. Mix well.
4. Coat a skillet with non-stick cooking spray, and heat over medium-high heat.
5. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients. Stir until the dry ingredients are moistened. Do not overmix.
6. Pour 1/4 cup batter into the skillet for each pancake.
7. Flip pancakes when bubbles appear on top and the edges are slightly browned; about 3-4 minutes. Cook until second side is slightly browned; about 2-3 minutes more.
8. Serve warm with fruit, syrup, cinnamon, or jam.





The Importance of Friendships

From the moment they are born, children begin building relationships. In fact, research has proven that infants require bonding with a loving adult in order to thrive. Eventually, infants expand their social circle to include siblings, family members, caregivers, educators, and friends. Between the ages of three and five, children begin learning how to play cooperatively and compassionately with others. It is during this time that parents and educators begin to notice children forming friendships and may demonstrate a preference for one friend in particular. Through friendships, children learn how to interact, communicate, collaborate, and negotiate with others.

Throughout their lives, children will encounter diverse people from various backgrounds and cultures who can enrich their lives. Playing with a diverse group of friends, hearing other languages, and learning about how other families live can help build children's appreciation for the uniqueness and value of others. Public librarians can help select books about diverse families to read with children. Reading books such as *Milo Imagines the World* by Matt de la Peña or *Kindness is My Superpower* by Alicia Ortego offers children an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences of others with the guidance of a caring adult who can model respect and tolerance. Children learn the social rules for conversations by watching and listening to adults, and they practice those skills with their friends.

Friendships benefit children by providing them with the emotional support they need to gain confidence, learn from mistakes, work through challenges, and feel secure. Children who form successful friendships are often more resilient during

times of stress because they have a support group they can turn to for help. During the pandemic, many children were not able to see their friends in person, and toddlers and preschool-aged children may not have had the opportunity to build these friendships that are so vital to their social emotional-development and wellbeing.

As children enter or return to school and child care, they may need support from their families and caregivers as they build or renew friendships. Encourage children to befriend others, and ask educators and child care providers what they do to support children building friendships. Children engaged in distance learning can still connect with friends virtually to read books to each other, talk, or play games. They can also write each other cards to send by mail, or talk on the phone. Giving children opportunities to make connections and build friendships benefits all areas of their development and wellbeing.



or clapping to the rhythm of a song. Make shaker instruments by filling an empty plastic bottle half-full with plastic beads, or a wooden spoon with a metal pot can become a drum. These musical experiences are opportunities for children to express themselves both verbally and non-verbally while socializing with others.

Infants and toddlers enjoy sensory art activities such as making marks on paper with large crayons, finger painting, blowing bubbles, drawing with sidewalk chalk on cement, pasting leaves or flower petals on paper, or using blocks to create patterns. Spending time outdoors where infants and toddlers can gaze at the beauty of nature or touch and explore flowers is another sensory art experience. Adults can encourage creativity by providing children with opportunities to explore beautiful things such as nature, picture books, or rooms with crafts and art displayed. Keep children safe by making sure that art materials are non-toxic.

Offer art experiences for preschoolers by placing supplies like paper, crayons, pencils, erasers, tape, child-safe scissors, watercolor paints, glue, and playdough in a box. Add old newspapers and magazines, recycled items (boxes, plastic lids, and cardboard tubes),

and items from nature (twigs, stones, and seashells). Invite children to freely explore these materials and develop their own plan for what they would like to make and how it should look. Artistic activities provide children with an outlet for processing emotions, experiences, thoughts, and ideas. As they work with shapes, colors, lines, and textures, they also build their knowledge of math and science.

Dramatic (pretend) play encourages children to share their personal stories, mentally process information or experiences, and practice using new skills or knowledge. Infants and toddlers might babble or “talk” to someone on a toy phone. Preschool-aged children may enjoy dressing up, acting out stories from books, or creating new stories. When engaged in imaginative play with others, children invent stories, assign each other roles, negotiate, problem-solve, and interact with each other. When children have opportunities to explore the arts during play, they develop the strong social and emotional skills they need to understand themselves and each other.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework Volume 3, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).*

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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