



Early

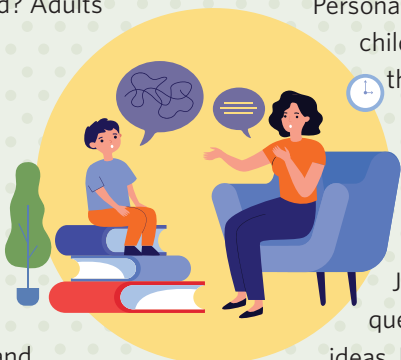
Learning & Education PROGRAMS

Talking and Learning

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How do children learn that language is creative, enduring, and beautiful? Or that language can inspire new ideas, preserve history, document research, and teach us about other people? How do children learn that language can be found in a story, a song, or a bird? Adults teach them by modeling a love of language and literacy; by experimenting with language in silly stories, songs, rhymes, or poems; by sharing a wide range of print-rich materials with them; and by interacting with them daily.



Children learn to speak, listen, and understand the meaning of language by listening to adults talk, read, and sing. They also learn from observing gestures and facial expressions. Observe children for signs that

they understand what is being said. Depending on where they are in their development, children might demonstrate understanding by using gestures to respond, imitating sounds, repeating what is said, or asking questions.

Personalize conversations by using children's names and speaking in their primary language whenever possible. Match the complexity of your own language to the child's ability, and use books or pictures to introduce new words.

Join children as they play and ask questions that expand on their ideas. For example, if a child has built a wall of blocks surrounding plastic animals, the educator might say, "What are the animals doing?" Asking questions about their work, interests, objects, actions, or

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PLAYING WITH WORDS

The following books encourage children to practice the sounds of language through the use of rhymes and chants. Invite them to create their own rhymes, chants, or songs.

- *Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger
- *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina
- *Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom* by Bill Martin and John Archambault
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd
- *Jump, Frog, Jump* by Robert Kalan
- *Llama, Llama, Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney
- *Mortimer* by Robert Munsch
- *Over in the Jungle: A Rainforest Rhyme* by Marianne Berkes
- *Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy E. Shaw
- *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood





Family Engagement

Families and educators working together for the benefit of children promotes everyone's success. There are a variety of ways to include families and encourage them to contribute to their child's education.

- Invite parents to record themselves telling a story, reading a book, or singing a song to share. Children will feel more connected to home and learn about each other's families.
- Create a Parent Library with child development or parenting books, journal articles, workshop handouts, or community resources for parents to reference. Parents of older children are often willing to donate books they no longer need.
- Celebrate families' academic and personal achievements by inviting children to make them a card or draw a picture.
- Invite parents and other family members to come or record themselves sharing a special talent, skill, or cultural tradition for children.
- Schedule an appreciation dinner for parents that is prepared by the children. Encourage children to decorate, make place settings, and prepare the food. An easy menu could include soup and sandwiches, and a fruit salad with yogurt for dessert.

- Help parents form a committee and host bi-monthly in-person or virtual meetings where they can come to socialize, learn about child development, or plan volunteer activities.
- Gather various samples of the children's art (paintings, three-dimensional structures, collages, murals, etc.) and display them as if they were in an art studio. Children can decorate, create invitations, and serve a snack. Schedule the event for an evening or a Saturday; in-person or via video conference.

Child care programs provide families with opportunities to build social connections. These friendships can help strengthen family resilience, and inspire them to engage more in their child's learning and development. Providing small luxuries such as coffee to go, a place for parents to put their belongings while they help, or a couple of adult-sized chairs where they can sit and read with their child, can help parents feel welcome.

Source: *The Many Forms of Parent Involvement: Ideas from the Exchange Panel of 300* by Roger Neugebauer (Exchange Magazine, November/December 2004).



Tummy Time for Infants

Placing infants on their backs to sleep continues to be the recommended practice for parents and caregivers. Cribs should only contain a fitted bed sheet. It is also safer to dress infants in sleep clothing rather than use a blanket when the weather is cold. These precautions have been proven to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID). To learn more about the safe sleep requirements for infants in a child care program, visit the Community Care Licensing website noted below.

Tummy time play helps prevent flat spots on the back of an infant's head, supports overall motor development, and helps strengthen the neck and shoulder muscles infants will need as they learn to roll, sit, crawl, and walk. Babies can begin spending time on their tummies the day they come home from the hospital. Start by engaging babies in tummy play for three to five minutes a couple of times a day. As the

infant's interest in play grows, the amount of time can be increased. To reduce risk of injury, tummy time should always be closely supervised by an adult.

Spread a blanket on the floor and place toys just out of reach in a circle around the baby. This will encourage them to turn and reach in different directions. Adults can provide physical support by placing infants on a nursing pillow or by laying the infant's chest on top of the adult's lower leg as they sit on the floor and move toys within the baby's reach. Engage the infant in play by smiling, talking, and drawing their attention to different toys.

Sources:

The websites

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing/public-information-and-resources/safe-sleep> and

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Back-to-Sleep-Tummy-to-Play.asp> were accessed in July 2022.



Talking and Learning

feelings gives children the opportunity to reflect and share their ideas. Use descriptive words during conversations so children can hear a wider variety of words. Consider the differences between saying, “The duck is next to the tractor,” and “the small yellow duck is standing next to the big green tractor.” The second sentence provides children with a richer vocabulary.

Place books in learning areas and read to children often. Use a variety of print-rich materials such as labels for toy bins, posters, photo albums, story books, song books, maps, the newspaper’s sports section, and children’s magazines. Adding print materials to dramatic play can inspire spontaneous conversations between children. The dramatic play area might include cookbooks, magazines, a phone book, empty food containers with labels, paper for taking orders, menus, coupons, calculators, envelopes, and cards.

Show children that their stories are valuable enough to be written down and shared. Staple pages together to make booklets, bind paper with yarn, or buy inexpensive blank journals. Children can draw, use photos, or cut out pictures from magazines to create pages for their books. Children can dictate stories that they have drawn. Add these books to the reading area for children to enjoy.

Encourage children to listen to each other as they talk through problems. Label emotions and model respectful language they can use with each other such as, “I feel sad because I want to use that toy” or “I will pass it to you when I’m done.” Teaching children to talk about emotions and solve problems together will help them develop the language skills they need to build strong relationships with others.

Sources:

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, and Debby Cryer (Teacher’s College Press, 2005).

The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition by Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, and Richard M. Clifford (Teachers College Press, 2007).

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Children learn about language as they talk, play, and explore print-rich materials in their environment. Consider the different areas where children play. How are opportunities for practicing language and literacy skills presented to them? Are there informational books and posters in the science area? Are there books or pictures of different structures in the block area to inspire building? How is literacy visible in dramatic play or the art area? What writing materials and tools are available? Do children have time to interact and talk with both adults and each other?

Providing children with a wide range of print materials and engaging them in thoughtful conversations gives them an opportunity to hear and practice language. Rotate books, posters, and pictures at least once a month to provide children with new materials. Consult with families about children’s interests and invite them to share their child’s favorite books.

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



RECIPES

Pumpkin Apple Muffins

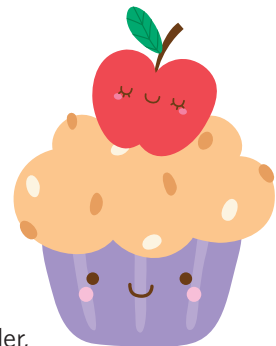
Celebrate fall by making these muffins with children. Buying food in season is less expensive, and it provides the opportunity to have a conversation about the fruits and vegetables that are harvested in fall. An adult will need to use the can opener and chop the apples into large slices, but children can use plastic knives to cut the apples into smaller chunks and help mix ingredients.

Ingredients

- 2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 can pumpkin puree (15 oz.)
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 cup chopped apples (Honeycrisp)

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350°. Chop the apples. Mix the flour, sugar, pumpkin spice, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Beat the eggs in a separate bowl. Mix in the pumpkin puree and oil. Fold the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until they combine, but do not overmix. Fold in the chopped apples. Line a muffin pan with baking cups, or spray each tin with cooking spray. Fill each muffin cup 3/4 full and bake them for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in a muffin comes out clean.



Exploring the Fall Season

The following activities will support children's learning as they explore the fall season. Visit the public library to choose books about fall. The librarian can help select books that complement learning activities and are appropriate for each age.

Activity: Pretty Leaves are Falling Down

Age group: Infants

What you need: No materials required

What you do: Sing "Pretty Leaves are Falling Down" to the tune of "London Bridge" while using your body to act it out. Wiggle your fingers as you sing: *Pretty leaves are falling down, falling down, falling down. Pretty leaves are falling down all day long.* Make raking motions and sing: *Let's rake them all up in a pile, in a pile, in a pile. Let's rake them all up in a pile, all day long.* Jump as you sing: *Let's all jump in and have some fun, have some fun, have some fun. Let's all jump in and have some fun all day long.*

What they learn: Infants listen to new vocabulary and connect words with movements. They may practice imitating sounds and gestures.

Source: *Creative Resources for the Early Childhood Classroom, 5th Edition* by Judy Herr and Yvonne Libby Larson (Thomson-Delmar Learning, 2009).

Activity: Pumpkin Bowling

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: Small to medium-sized pumpkins, ten empty water bottles, sand or gravel to fill the water bottles, and open outdoor space.

What you do: Invite children to help fill the empty water bottles with sand or gravel so they are weighted and will not fall over easily. Place the bottles in a group like bowling pins at one end of the grassy area. Place the pumpkins a few feet away, opposite the bottles. Invite children to take turns rolling the pumpkins to try to knock the bottles down.

What they learn: Children strengthen muscles and coordination as they fill the empty bottles and roll pumpkins. They are also developing science skills as they explore the physical properties of pumpkins.

Activity: Changing Seasons Scrapbook

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Blank paper, glue sticks, tape, hole-punch, yarn or metal rings, child safe scissors, markers, crayons, old postcards or photos of nature scenes, and nature collage materials.

What you do: Take a walk with children and point out various nature items such as clouds, trees, plants, and insects. Children can collect small items to add to their book. Once you are back inside, invite children to make a changing seasons scrapbook. Encourage them to draw pictures of what they saw, or glue/tape items onto the pages of their book. Once children have completed their pages, punch holes on one side and use yarn or metal rings to bind pages into a book. You can combine the work into one classroom book for each season or make individual scrapbooks. Place scrapbook(s) in the reading area.

What they learn: Children create representations of nature that will help them understand the concept of changing seasons. It also introduces new vocabulary. Children can dictate stories about their artwork which can then be read over and over again.



Exploring the Fall Season

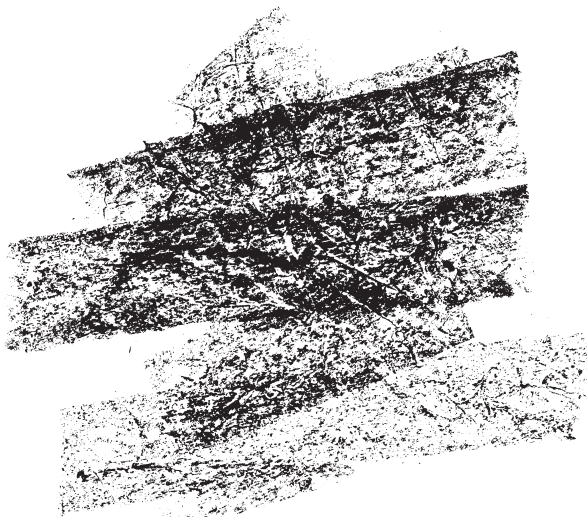
Activity: Fall Nature Etchings

Age group: School Age

What you need: Crayons, thick white paper, scrap piece of cloth, and an opened paper clip (supervise paper clip use if younger children are present).

What you do: Set aside the black crayons for later. Invite children to color the entire sheet of paper. They will need to apply some pressure as they color to fill the space completely. Next, show children how to gently rub the excess wax off the paper with the cloth. Now give each child a black crayon. They can use the black crayon to completely cover the first layer of colors, and then use the cloth to remove the extra wax gently. Children can use the end of the paper clip to scratch, or etch, a nature scene on top of the black crayon. The first layer of colors will show through to reveal their etching.

What they learn: Children learn how to use a familiar art medium in a new way. They also have the opportunity to learn the word “etch” and discuss the scientific properties of wax and color. Try using a light color for the second layer instead of black, and discuss the similarities and differences between the first and second etchings.



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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