

Early

Learning & Education
PROGRAMSWhat's
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Rainy Day Math

As it starts to rain outside, the teacher invites the preschool class to gather plastic containers from the sensory tubs and cooking area to place outside where they can catch the rain. Children run around the yard placing containers in the sandbox, under trees, on the sidewalk, the grass, and next to the building. They then come back inside to watch the rain through the windows. As they watch the rain, they begin to notice the drops sliding down the window panes.

Greg points to one large raindrop and says, "Look! This one is moving really slowly." Sophie says, "This one is faster." Children continue to point out different raindrops and make predictions about which ones will move faster or slower. As the children discuss the raindrops, the teacher asks, "Why do you think that one will fall faster?"



Greg says, "Because it is big, it falls faster." Monique begins to point at each raindrop as she counts, "One, two, three, four." After a while, the rain slows down and eventually stops. The teacher asks the children to collect their containers from outside so they can see how much rain fell.

Some of the containers already have measurements on them, and the children add plastic rulers to the ones that do not. They walk around the tables, writing down measurements and discussing how much rain they caught. "Mine is taller, so it has the most rain," says Sophie.

Greg says, "I think I have more because my bowl is bigger." The teacher asks the children if there were spots on the playground that got more rain than others. "Mine was on the sidewalk, and it got a lot,"

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BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

Children learn about the world through relationships. Use the following books to start conversations about friendship with children. The book *Friends Forever: How Parents Can Help Their Kids Make and Keep Good Friends* by Dr. Fred Frankel can be a helpful resource.

- *A Friend for Henry* by Jenn Bailey
- *A Friend is Someone Who...* by Marilee Joy Mayfield
- *A Rainbow of Friends* by P.K. Hallinan
- *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* by Eric Carle
- *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig



Nature Explorations

Children can learn about science, math, and language from nature activities that can be explored on a daily basis. These can include a mix of adult-directed activities and independent exploration through play. For example, take nature walks and collect fallen nature items. Children can then add those materials to the science area for further study or use them to create works of art. On a cloudy day, invite children to look at clouds and find pictures in them. They can draw and talk about the cloud pictures they see. On a sunny day, children can take chalk and a measuring tape outside. They can trace the outline of each other's bodies or other objects on the ground with chalk, and then measure the difference in size between the chalk outlines and their shadows.

Experiment with gardening by placing popcorn kernels, dry beans, or grass seeds in a sealable bag. Place two or three damp cotton balls inside the bag and seal it. Use painter's tape to hang the bag in a sunny window and watch it grow. Use nature to transition from one activity to another. For example, children can bend and wave like trees while walking to the door or cleaning up. They can also imitate animal movements and natural events like thunderstorms or wind while telling stories or singing songs. Help children learn about stewardship by forming a green team that takes cloth bags outside to search for trash and recyclable items.

There are many ways to inspire children's natural curiosity every day. Look at the learning environment inside and outside, and think of the exploration opportunities those environments provide. Observe children to discover their interests and plan activities based upon those interests. Maintain a balance between planned activities and undirected play time in natural landscapes where children can create their own games, pursue their own interests, and learn at their own pace.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 3* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2013).



The Importance of Healthy Friendships

From the moment they are born, children begin to form relationships. Research has proven that infants require bonding with an adult in order to thrive. Eventually, their social circle will expand to include caregivers, educators, and friends. Children between the ages of three and five begin learning how to play cooperatively and compassionately with others. It's during this time that parents and educators begin to notice children forming friendships. Friendships are important to the social and emotional development of children because they teach them how to work through disagreements using cooperation, negotiation, and problem-solving skills.

Through friendships, children learn how to treat others with compassion and consideration. Throughout their lives, children will encounter diverse people from different backgrounds and cultures who can enrich their lives. Forming friendships gives children the ability to appreciate the uniqueness and value of others. Friendships also provide

children with the emotional support they need to gain confidence, learn from mistakes, and feel accepted. Children who form strong friendships learn how to share both laughter and tears. When they encounter challenges in life, those friendships also provide a support group that can help children feel more resilient.

Establishing and maintaining friendships also builds healthy communication skills. Children learn about how to talk and have conversations from adults, but they practice those skills with their friends. Use the books from the *Building Friendships* article to discuss healthy relationships and the qualities of a friend. Children use language with their friends to share ideas and opinions, communicate plans, and learn from each other all day long. The skills children learn from friendships helps them navigate social situations, share knowledge, feel supported, and experience more success in their lives.



Rainy Day Math

says Sophie. "Mine was under the tree, and it did not get full," says Monique.

The teacher draws a graph to record the children's observations about how much rain they captured in each type of container. On another paper, the teacher draws a map of the playground, and the children place an "X" in the spots where they placed containers, and they circle the "X" in the spots that got the most rain. When they are done, the teacher places the two graphs on the wall where children can reflect on their work.

In this activity, children experiment with how to measure rain, and discuss the different factors that can impact the measurement of rain, such as the type of containers being used and where they are positioned. Children are making predictions, measuring, comparing quantities, writing down numbers, counting, and recording their observations. They are learning that even though two containers can look different, they can hold the same amount of water. They are learning how to use a ruler, recognize numbers, compare quantities, and count. Children are also learning how to predict, observe, share their thoughts, record data, and reflect on their work.

Encouraging children to use math tools and math vocabulary in their experiments and play increases their understanding of math concepts and strengthens their ability to express their thoughts and share observations. Using everyday experiences as opportunities to practice math skills makes learning more meaningful for children.

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



REFLECTING ON PATTERNS



Patterning skills are essential for understanding algebra. Reflect on the opportunities you offer children to explore patterns. Consider the following example and questions for reflection:

While playing with blocks, Joseph was sorting out the long and short rectangles: "I am making a fence." The teacher noticed and said, "Long rectangle, short rectangle, long rectangle, short rectangle," touching the blocks while talking. "Joseph, look at your fence. You have a pattern. What is happening over and over again?" After Joseph completed the fence, the teacher suggested, "Do you want me to get your paper and a pencil so you can draw your pattern to save in the pattern book?"

What materials were available to encourage the exploration of patterns? What did the teacher do and say to support and extend Joseph's understanding of patterns? What is the value of keeping a pattern book?

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

Biscuit Shapes

Identifying and manipulating shapes are important math skills. This cooking activity explores shapes, builds language development, and strengthens muscles. After children have washed their hands, they can help prepare the biscuit shapes. There are usually about eight biscuits in a tube, so adjust the amount based on the number of children.

Ingredients

- 1 tube of refrigerated biscuits
- 1/2 cup of flour
- Optional toppings: butter, jam, or honey

Directions

Open the tube of refrigerated biscuits and invite the children to help separate them and lay them out on a clean work surface. Discuss the circle shape of the biscuits and ask children to try and make other shapes by pushing and pulling (kneading) their biscuit dough. Children can also use a plastic knife to cut shapes from their dough. If their hands get too sticky, they can dust a little flour on them.

Place the biscuit shapes on a baking tray and bake according to the package directions. Check on the biscuits as they cook as the different sizes may affect the cook time. Children can spread butter, jam, or honey on their biscuits. Serve them warm as a snack, or as a side dish for breakfast or lunch.



I Am Unique and Wonderful!

Children use their senses to learn and understand that they are unique and valuable. Providing children with art and sensory activities allows them to express themselves creatively while they explore different textures and materials.

Activity: Pounding Fun

Age group: Infants

What you need:

Plastic hammers, short wooden spoons, empty and clean plastic food containers (butter tubs, large yogurt tubs, etc.), pots, and pans (you can cover them with a cloth to dull the sound).



What you do: Offer this activity as a way for young children to express and release feelings, sing, create a beat, and feel strong. Set up pounding materials in different areas. Make sure that children have enough room to swing their hammer or spoon without accidentally hitting each other. Invite them to pound the different materials and narrate what is happening to encourage language skills.

What they learn: Children learn that they are powerful and can make things happen. They also learn about the various sounds they can make by hitting different-sized objects or exerting different amounts of force. They practice eye-hand coordination, build muscle strength, learn new vocabulary, and release emotions in a positive way.

Activity: Learning with Sock Puppets

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: Different colored socks, yarn, felt or foam pieces, nontoxic markers, scraps of cloth, and fabric glue.

What you do: Use the materials to construct three different puppets. Place the remaining materials in your art area. During circle time, introduce children to your puppets. Describe their personalities. The puppets can represent different emotions, such as happy, sad, and angry. Use the puppets while telling stories to demonstrate how different people respond to situations, and thereby



help children understand themselves better. Invite children to make a puppet that represents how they feel or who they are.

What they learn: Children learn that everybody has emotions and might express those emotions differently. They have the opportunity to label, explore, and express emotions. They can use their puppets to create stories, work through conflicts, or express how they feel.

Activity: Dough People

Age group: Preschool

What you need:

Multicultural or skin tone doughs, rolling pins, wiggly eyes, different colored yarn (for hair), fabric scraps to make clothing, cutting tools (plastic knives or wooden craft sticks), and books that represent diverse people, such as *All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Got Our Skin Color* by Katie Kissinger and Wernher Krutein.

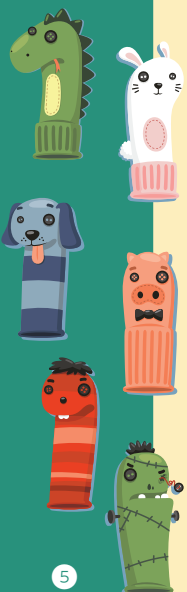
What you do: Read the book and talk to children about how we all have characteristics in common (two eyes, one mouth, two ears, etc.), but we also have differences in how we look that make us unique and special (hair type, skin tone, clothing preference, etc.). Place all the art materials on a table and invite children to make a representation of themselves. Once they have made their person, talk about what makes them unique.

What they learn: Children learn to appreciate each other's similarities and differences. Children also have the chance to make three-dimensional representations of themselves, and express themselves creatively.

Activity: Family Stories Cookbook

Age group: School Age

What you need: Construction paper (8 1/2 x11), index cards, pens, markers, hole punchers, chenille stems or yarn, glue, and safety scissors.



I Am Unique and Wonderful!

What you do: This project will take several days. Invite each child to make a list of favorite foods they eat at home. Explain that they are each going to make their own favorite recipe book that includes stories. Give them several index cards they can take home and explain that they can ask their parent or another relative to help them write out their favorite recipes on the cards and bring them back. Ask children to also bring photos of the family members who made the recipes. Invite them to glue their recipe cards onto construction paper to make

the pages of their book. Next to the recipe card, they can place the photo of the family member who created the recipe and write down any stories or information about them. Then, they can make a cover for their book, hole punch the pages, and use chenille stems or yarn to hold them together.

What they learn: Many home recipes are passed down through generations. This activity gives children the chance to learn more about their families and share their food preferences with friends.



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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