



Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Embracing Diversity

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Fred Rogers once said, "As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has, or ever will have, something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression."

Embracing diversity involves practicing empathy on a daily basis, finding those things within both ourselves and others that make us unique, and discovering ways to respect and celebrate that uniqueness and allowing it to enhance the way we view the world.

It is important to begin conversations with children about different races, families, and cultures at an early age. Children begin

noticing similarities and differences between people at an early age. Infants gaze at all faces for the same amount of time, but by the time they are two years old they show a preference for faces that are similar to theirs. Starting conversations when your child is young is one way to let them know that they can talk with you about anything.



Approach these conversations with an open, calm, and positive attitude so that your child can learn how to talk about diversity without judgment. Between the ages of five and six, children can show the same level of implicit bias as adults. Implicit bias is an unconscious negative attitude

towards a specific group (or groups) of people. Ongoing conversations about diversity can help children learn to celebrate differences as important and valuable.

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LIMITING SCREEN TIME

Children use screens and media daily, but how much is too much, and what media is appropriate? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of two avoid using screens and children over the age of two use screens for no more than two hours a day. Support your child by setting time limits, keeping screens out of bedrooms, turning screens off during meals, and monitoring media for quality content.

Show your child that it can be fun to do other things like playing a board game or spending time outside. Visit the Common Sense Media website at <https://www.commonsensemedia.org> to find age recommendations and content ratings for games, television, apps, and more.

For the Love of Books

Infants love the sound of their parents' voices, and listening to you read out loud teaches your baby about language. Books with large, simple pictures, or photos of people's faces, are appealing to babies. Make reading times relaxed and enjoyable by holding your infant on your lap as you talk about the pictures and turn the pages of the book. Point to pictures as you name them, and your infant will learn to connect the object with its name.

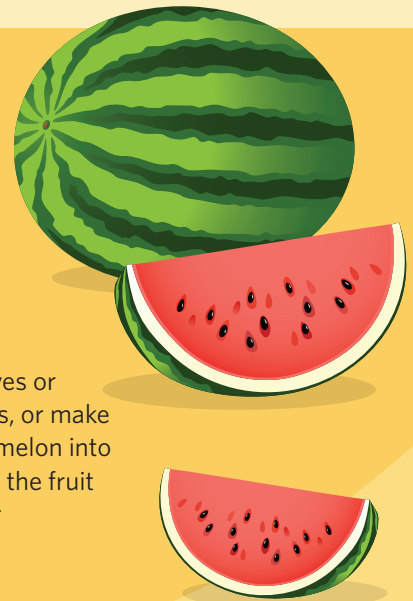
Make reading a part of the daily routine for toddlers. Set aside time to sit and share a book, such as before nap times or at night before bed. Toddlers enjoy books with simple pictures and sentences. Books with words that repeat, rhyme, or that can be sung are usually favorites. Some



authors toddlers may enjoy reading are Eric Hill, Donald Crews, Denise Fleming, and Eric Carle. Toddlers also enjoy singing or chanting simple nursery rhymes, such as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, *Patty Cake*, or *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*.

Preschool children can enjoy a wider variety of books. Try selecting rhyming books by Dr. Seuss, humorous books by Robert Munsch, critical thinking stories by Laura Joffe Numeroff, books about emotions by Audrey Penn, poetry by Shel Silverstein, and other authors such as Kevin Henkes, Ed Emberley, and more! Visit the public library to borrow books and join reading circles. Lead by example and let your child see you reading, because they will be more likely to enjoy books as well. Try to schedule at least fifteen minutes to read with your child every day.

School-aged children usually receive reading lists from their teachers, but the public librarian can also help your child choose books about subjects they are interested in. Continue making books part of your daily routine, let your child catch you reading every day, and remember these words of wisdom from *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!* by Dr. Seuss, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."



RECIPES Watermelon Treats

It is easy to become dehydrated in warm weather. Offer children water frequently, and serve fruits and vegetables that are high in water content for snacks. Try serving melons, cucumbers, celery, bell peppers, oranges, and peaches. Invite children to help make the following watermelon treats.

Red Fruit Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cubed watermelon
- 1 cup halved strawberries
- 1 cup sliced cherries
- 1 cup raspberries
- Chopped mint, to taste

Instructions:

Children can help wash the fruit and use plastic knives or butter knives to halve the strawberries, slice cherries, or make watermelon cubes. An adult needs to cut the watermelon into pieces that are easy for children to handle first. Toss the fruit and mint in a large bowl and serve. Save the leftover watermelon to make slushies.

Watermelon Slushy

Cube watermelon (about one cup per person) and freeze it for at least four hours. Add the frozen watermelon to a blender and puree to a slushy consistency. Pour it into cups and enjoy!



Writing for Wellness

Writing activities can be beneficial to the wellness of both children and adults. The ability to express ourselves through writing helps us record our personal stories, reflect on situations or feelings that may cause us anxiety or stress, and express ourselves creatively. Through journaling, we can explore our feelings, reduce stress, and gain a better understanding of ourselves and others.

Between the ages of three and five, children begin to develop a deeper understanding of print and language. They learn to tell their own stories and express themselves through drawing, painting, and other art projects. The images in their pictures become more detailed, and they are able to describe their thoughts, feelings, and stories in their artwork. Use books to model how writing can express what people feel, such as the books *If* by Sarah Perry and *Imagine a World* by Rob Gonsalves. Reading poetry is another way to encourage creative writing. Poetry often rhymes, which gives it a musical quality that appeals to children. Poems can also combine words that would not typically go together. This encourages children to think of language as a creative tool. The book *Breathe and Be* by Kate Coombs introduces children to poetry that describes feelings.

Plan opportunities for you and your child to draw or practice writing together. Children can journal by drawing, making collages, or using stickers and photos. Adults can help them write any words they want to add. Decide on a time when both you and your child can sit down to write each day. For example, after dinner, you can invite your child to write by saying, "Let's take some time to reflect on our day." And then, both of you

can write in your own journals. When you journal with your child, it models how important it is to reflect and write.

Engaging in writing activities helps children discover their voice, develop their own opinions and ideas, reflect on their lives, cope with their emotions, understand themselves, and express themselves creatively. Writing can help children lower their anxiety and build their resilience. They can look back at their previous journals to remember the positive things in their lives and reflect on how they overcame their obstacles. For more ideas about how to encourage creative writing and journaling, visit our website at www.chs-ca.org and read our blog *Writing Activities to Promote Wellness*.

Sources: Excerpt from the CHS blog *Writing Activities to Promote Wellness* accessed in February 2024 from <https://www.chs-ca.org/blog/entry/writing-activities-to-promote-wellness>.



The *Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP): School Age* is an assessment tool used to monitor the development of school-age children. The DRDP defines awareness of diversity as being able to “show awareness, acceptance, understanding, and appreciation of others’ special needs, genders, family structures, ethnicities, cultures, and languages.” You can help your child develop an awareness of diversity and appreciation for others by talking with them about similarities and differences, and engaging them in activities that build empathy and understanding.

Build empathy by offering your child dolls or action figures that have both similar and different physical characteristics. Include materials that allow children to practice caretaking during play such as a blanket, bottle, or doll clothing. Engage your child in conversations that encourage them to see different perspectives. For example, “If you were at school and no one spoke English, how would you ask for help?”

Read books that explore different types of families such as *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman, *All the Colors We Are* by Katie Kissinger, *Home Is in Between* by Mitali Perkins, or *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña.

These books include diverse family structures like adoptive families, step-families, single-parent families, two-mom and two-dad families, and families with a mom and a dad. Visit <https://socialjusticebooks.org> to find more book titles.

Art projects allow children to develop their self-identity and explore the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Invite your child to look at themselves in a mirror and draw a self-portrait. Children can then draw portraits of friends and family members from memory, or by looking at photographs. Talk about the physical characteristics in the portraits; discuss what is alike and different. By exploring what makes all of us unique, you can teach your child to embrace diversity.

Sources:

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP): School Age by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

“Talking to Very Young Children about Race: It’s Necessary Now, More than Ever” by Rosemarie Allen, Amy Hunter, Erin Barton, and Ben Riepe (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 7/20/20).



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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