



# Early

# Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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## Promoting Literacy

*Erica is an early educator who cares for a group of three and four-year-old children in her home. One of Erica's favorite things to do is inspire a love of reading. Let's take a look at how Erica promotes literacy in her child care program.*

The room is divided into areas where children can freely explore science, math, dramatic play, construction, art, music, and books. In addition to a specific area dedicated to books, there are books in all other areas.

There are books about frogs next to the fish tank with tadpoles, books about counting and patterns in the math area, cookbooks in the housekeeping area, books about building and architecture in the construction area, books

about colors and art in the art area, songbooks in the music area, story books in the book area, and lullaby books and books about going to bed in the nap area.



There are also books outside. Erica placed a plastic wading pool under a shady tree, lined it with a blanket, and then placed pillows and a basket of books inside. In the basket are books about things children may see outdoors, such as trees, insects, flowers, and the weather. Erica has also added a few books about emotions and relaxation for those children who need to take a break in a quiet space. Placing books in every area of the program shows children that books are valuable. It also

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## CHS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

You can find **FREE** educational resources at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org) such as:

- **News:** Resources and information about early education.
- **Workshops and Events:** Register for free workshops and events.
- **Blog:** Read about parenting, child development, health, safety, and more.
- **Podcasts:** Listen to recordings about child development in English or Spanish.
- **Parent Newsletters:** Tips and news for parents published twice a year.
- **Provider Newsletters:** Information for educators published quarterly.
- **Online Presentations:** Interactive presentations explore child development.
- **Free Educational Resources:** Family Education Program brochures, developmental stages wheel, activity book, character growth chart, and school readiness kit.



## Learning with Games

Board games and card games can be a wonderful learning tool because they offer children the opportunity to practice a wide variety of skills. As they play, children develop social-emotional skills such as cooperation, negotiation, turn-taking, a sense of fair play, and conflict resolution. Children practice math skills such as counting, one-to-one correspondence, and numeral recognition. They also have the opportunity to develop language skills through conversations about game rules, and build literacy skills by following the written directions or symbols in the game. Board games and card games are usually available to be checked out at public libraries, but you can also make your own games.

Use two-panel file folders, poster board, or a piece of large cardboard to make a game board. Invite children to think of a game theme, such as transportation, dinosaurs, or the ocean. Use a ruler to draw game squares, and write down the game rules children decide upon. They may need to vote or negotiate as they decide on the rules. Encourage them to listen to each other and be inclusive ("Is this something everyone can do?"). Children can use small toys, the caps from dried-out markers, or stickers on squares of paper as game pieces. They can use dice or create a spinner to determine the number of squares they can pass.

Use index cards to create card games. Children can make a matching game by drawing the same picture on two cards, or they can also use the same sticker on two cards. Once they have a dozen card pairs, they can lay them out blank side up and take turns flipping over cards until they find a matching pair. They can also make action card games where they draw a card, and each card depicts a different movement they need to perform. They can create a deck of scavenger hunt cards, or draw different pictures on cards and takes turns creating a story using those pictures. What other games can children create?



# Drowning Prevention

Drowning incidents involving children under five usually occur in swimming pools, wading pools, toilets, or containers of water. A child can drown in just a couple of inches of water. It can happen quickly, it is usually silent, and brain damage takes place within three to five minutes. The good news is that there are precautions adults can take to prevent life-threatening accidents.

Most children who drown are out of sight for less than five minutes. Never leave children unattended near water. If more than one adult is supervising children, then one person should be assigned to monitor water activities. If the “Water Watcher” needs to take a break, then another adult needs to take over. Caregivers who are supervising water play should be trained in CPR and first aid.

Set the stage for safety by following California’s Title 22 regulations, available at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing/resources-for-providers/laws-and-regulations>, regarding child care

program safety requirements for covers and fences for swimming pools, and latching toilets that are not in use. Check outdoor areas for any standing water that may be present from sprinklers or rain. When engaging in water play, only use small amounts of water and monitor activities closely.

Educate children about water safety and how to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. Explain that an adult should be there when you are playing with water or swimming. If you are taking children on a field trip to the beach, or other water location, establish safety rules with the children in advance, and ask for parent volunteers to help with supervision. You can find more information about water safety on the UCSF California Childcare Health Program website at <https://cchp.ucsf.edu/resources/health-safety-notes/prevent-drowning-0>.

Source: *Prevent Drowning*, by Jennifer Rogers (UCSF California Childcare Health Program, June 2024).



## Promoting Literacy

exposes children to different types of literacy. This supports children in understanding that there are different purposes for literacy; it can be used to tell stories, find information, or give instructions. When children create art projects, Erica offers to write down what the children want to say about their art. By doing this, Erica is showing them that their own words are valuable, and that spoken words can be preserved in print.

Erica also encourages children to create and share their own stories by making puppets, fabric with clothespins to create clothes, and other props available in the dramatic play area. Children enjoy acting out their stories while Erica films them to share later with their families. A transition tool Erica likes to use to announce story time is a large colorful tote bag. Each morning before the children arrive, Erica fills the tote bag with books to read aloud, as well as any props or puppets to help engage the children's interest. If there is a book with a recorded story or song, Erica makes sure it is ready to play. When it is story time, Erica puts the tote bag on her shoulder, walks to the open area where they read stories, sits down, and begins to look in her bag. The children see her and walk over to sit down with her, eagerly asking what is inside.

*Spreading literacy across all areas of the program makes it accessible for children, and connecting books to things they are interested in helps children develop their own reading preferences. Children are more likely to be lifelong readers if they are encouraged to enjoy books when they are young.*

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

## CREATIVE WRITING

Language is creative, enduring, and beautiful. It can inspire new ideas, preserve history, document research, and teach us about other people. Language can be found in the stories and songs you share with children. How do you teach children that all language is valuable? By showing them that their thoughts and ideas are important enough to be written down, shared, and saved.

Making books with children teaches them that their words are valuable. 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. Add them to the book area where children can enjoy reading them. Some books you might make are: story books, songbooks, favorite things, nature journals, and emotion journals. What kind of books will you create and share today?

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

## RECIPES

### Frozen Yogurt Bark

This tasty treat provides children with a snack that is high in protein. Children can help mix the ingredients and prepare them for the freezer. As you wash fruit and mix ingredients, talk about the colors, shapes, and tastes. Once frozen, talk to children about how the yogurt changed in the freezer. Remember to ask parents about any food allergies before cooking with children.

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups of Greek yogurt, plain
- 2 tablespoons of maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup of blueberries
- 1/2 cup of strawberries
- 1/4 cup of pistachios, chopped

#### Directions

In a bowl, whisk the yogurt with the maple syrup and vanilla until combined. Place the mixture onto a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Spread it across the parchment in an even layer. Top the yogurt with blueberries, strawberries, and pistachios. Freeze it for four hours, or until it is frozen. Break it into pieces and serve.

Store any leftover pieces in the freezer in an airtight container for up to three months. You can also try making this with different kinds of fresh or frozen fruit, nuts, or seeds.





# Learning about My Community

The following activities can be used to support children in learning about their community, who lives in their community, and what a community needs. A child's family is their first community. As they grow, their understanding expands to include people in their child care program or school, neighbors, and employees at familiar local businesses.

Encourage children to work on projects that require cooperation between them and others, such as creating a mural, building a structure, developing a game to play, and taking care of a garden. Working cooperatively helps children understand how members of a community can support each other in times of need.

**Activity:** Friend of Mine (Song)

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** You and your voice.

**What you do:** Use the following song to introduce infants to the names of the other children. Sing this song to the tune of *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. "Will you meet a friend of mine? Friend of mine? Friend of mine? Will you meet a friend of mine? This is my friend (say a child's name as you point to them)." Repeat the song until all the children's names have been sung.

**What they learn:** Infants learn to recognize other children by their name and listen to the sounds of language. They also practice motor skills by clapping along to the song.

Source: Accessed from the website

<https://preschooleducation.com/songs/music-songs-friendship> in January 2025.

**Activity:**

Mr. Grocer Had a Store

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:**

You and your voice.

**What you do:** Invite

toddlers to gesture as they sing to the tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm": "Mr. Grocer had a store, yum, yum, yum, yum, yum. And in his store he had some milk, yum, yum, yum, yum, yum. With a gulp-gulp here and a gulp-gulp there, Here a gulp, there a gulp, everywhere a gulp-gulp. Mr. Grocer had a store, yum, yum, yum, yum, yum" (more verses: apples - crunch, carrots - munch).



**What they learn:** Toddlers develop muscles, coordination, and learn about a familiar place in their community; the grocery store. They also learn the names of food that can be found in a grocery store, which can open a discussion about healthy food choices.

**Activity:** Map My Home

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** White paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and rulers.

**What you do:** Invite children to draw a map of a room in their home. It can be any room. Encourage them to be as detailed as possible by drawing windows, doors, furniture, and any other objects. Offer to write down any words they would like to add.

**What they learn:** Children develop a sense of place by recalling a familiar location and drawing it. This helps them build observation skills and knowledge of their family community. Mapping also helps develop spatial awareness and pre-math skills such as measurement and geometry.



# Learning about My Community

**Activity:** My Neighborhood

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** Large white paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and rulers.

**What you do:** Ask children to design a neighborhood alone or as a group. They need to decide what is necessary for their community (police, school, grocery store). Request that they be as detailed as possible.

**What they learn:** They learn to evaluate what a neighborhood needs to survive and decide who will live there. Ask open-ended questions that encourage them to consider what cultures will be represented, what jobs, what kind of money they will use, and what laws they will follow.



## ABOUT CHS

For over 133 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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