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Children learn how to interact with the world around them through play and exploration. Preschoolers between three and six years old enjoy hearing grandparents tell stories about when they were young, planting gardens, engaging in pretend play, or experiencing different cultures. This natural curiosity leads them to learning about history and social sciences.

The California Preschool Learning Foundations defines social sciences as "a branch of learning that pertains to how people live together in the social world." Children build their knowledge of history and social science by learning about themselves, their personal history, and their community. The five learning areas to consider when planning the environment and

activities are: Self and Society, Becoming a Preschool Community Member, Sense of Time, Sense of Place, and Marketplace.

A sense of self and society is developed by exploring various cultures, relationships, social roles, occupations, and diversity topics. Create an environment that embraces different languages, traditions, and abilities by selecting diverse books and play materials. Dramatic play is a wonderful tool for exploring different roles such as being a parent, a doctor, or a store owner. These experiences lead children to think about where they fit in to the world and what they may want to do in the future. It also offers children the experience of a marketplace. When they pretend to be in a store

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COMMUNITY COUNTS

Consider how you create a sense of community in your program. Maybe children "vote" for activities, or look for ways to be helpers. Use the following questions to develop new ideas for building your program community:

- In what ways are you a good example for children to follow as they learn skills for being members of a community?
- What could you add to your curriculum and interactions to help children become more aware of the roles and occupations available to them as adults?

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





Supporting School Aged Children

Children go through many changes once they enter kindergarten. There are a variety of new academic expectations such as completing homework, doing more computer work, learning through group instruction, sitting for longer periods of time, and spending less time playing outside and socializing. Parents and educators can assist children as they adapt to these new expectations and environments by continuing to support their social and emotional skills.

Children who develop strong social and emotional skills will be more comfortable asking for help, work more easily with others, adjust to new situations with less stress, bounce back from disappointments, resolve conflicts in positive ways, and achieve success with more confidence. These skills help children approach their school environment with a positive attitude about themselves and their abilities. Children will also be more likely to develop friendships that help form a system of support for those times when they may struggle. Adults can help school aged children continue to work on their social and emotional skills by engaging in the following activities:

BUILD EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Continue to help children label emotions they are feeling and make suggestions of ways they can deal with their emotions in a positive way. Actively listen to children without judgment to develop a supportive and trusting relationship. Children need to know there are adults in their lives that they can rely on and talk to about how they feel.



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Spending time with family members who can tell stories about their past, offer them advice, help with homework, or share a hobby helps children understand who they are and recognize their own value. Encourage parents to spend time with their children and share their family stories and traditions.

GROUP PROJECTS AND GAMES

Group projects can be anything from using recycled materials to engineering a structure, creating an art mural, or putting together a show. Playing board games offers the opportunity to explore rules and decide what is fair. They need opportunities to build friendships, negotiate, and collaborate.





Personal Safety



Personal safety is learned through experience and guidance. Children become increasingly aware of their own abilities and personal safety as they grow. They learn to cross the street, walk with scissors, and prepare simple meals. They also learn to choose appropriate friends and stay away from strangers. Educators can help young children be aware of safety by identifying unsafe situations and attaching the phrase “this will help keep you safe” to explanations of rules.

Planning activities such as safety checks of the room or yard can provide children with the opportunity to decide what “safe” looks like. They can wear hats and carry clip boards to do inspections. Children can also learn about safety by studying community helpers. Try changing your dramatic play area into a doll hospital, animal hospital, fire station, police station, or ranger station.



As children begin using media tools such as smart phones, tablets, and computers, it is important to monitor their internet access, set parental controls to block inappropriate websites, and teach children what information can and cannot be shared digitally. The website www.commonsensemedia.org offers guidance on digital safety and citizenship, as well as age ratings for many social media sites and applications. Teaching children to take responsibility for their own safety will prepare them for those moments when adult guidance is not readily available.



History and Social Sciences

or farmers' market, they exchange goods for play money. This gives them experience in understanding that materials can be traded, bought, loaned, or exchanged.

Children learn to be community members by participating in decision-making, following rules, being respectful and resolving conflicts with others. Help children develop these skills by allowing them to help create classroom rules or vote on activities. Give children the opportunity to work through conflicts on their own, and only step in when absolutely necessary. Offer guidance on how children can express their feelings in appropriate ways and ask questions that help them negotiate and find a compromise.

A sense of time includes understanding things that have happened in the past, planning for future events, knowing your personal history, and noticing changes in other people or the world. Invite parents to help create a family book or poster that they can share with the class, or they can visit the room to share a traditional song, story, or recipe. Initiate conversations with children that involve them talking about something they remember doing, or explaining what they plan to do during the weekend or for a holiday.

Activities that involve geography or ecology help children learn a sense of place. Children use geography to navigate familiar locations such as a classroom, or even the streets they drive on to go home. Ask children to follow a treasure map to find a desired object such as a dinosaur egg (cantaloupe painted white), or help you draw a detailed map of the classroom. Build children's knowledge of ecology by planting a garden with children or adopting a class pet. Taking care of plants and animals, picking up trash, and caring for the natural world inspires stewardship. Developing children's interest in history and social sciences prepares them to be active and thoughtful members of society.

Source: California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume III by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2012).



CONFIDENTIALITY

Families feel more welcome and safe when they know you will respect their confidentiality. Parents may not know that the law requires you to maintain confidentiality, so make sure you tell them that any information they share with you about their family is safe. Confidentiality is more than keeping paperwork private. It includes sharing information with others, or speaking about something private where you can be heard by other adults or children.

This also includes keeping health and behavior information private. For example, if one child bites another child you may not share the names of the children involved with parents. If there is a contagious illness in your program such as chicken pox and you need to inform parents, you may not state the names of the children infected. Create a space in your program where private conversations can happen. It can be challenging to keep private information confidential, but doing so builds trust and creates a positive atmosphere that supports partnerships.



Popcorn Balls

Popcorn is a warm, fun treat for fall. Make popcorn even more fun by letting children help you make popcorn balls. An adult will need to handle hot items, but children can help mix and form popcorn balls.

- Popcorn (1/2 cup kernels, or one 3.5-ounce package of plain microwave popcorn)
- One 10-oz bag of marshmallows
- 1/4 cup of butter
- Vegetable or olive oil to grease hands
- Optional: candy corn, cereal, pretzel pieces, chocolate chips, butterscotch chips

Directions

Pop your popcorn. As you scoop it out into a big bowl, remove the un-popped kernels and burned pieces. Melt your butter in a large bowl in the microwave. Add the marshmallows, and microwave for 2-3 minutes, stirring after at the end of each minute. Once the butter and marshmallow mixture is melted and gooey, fold in the popcorn. Get creative and try adding some of the optional ingredients.

Allow it to cool just enough so that it can be handled. Grease your hands well with the oil and form into small 2 inch balls. This recipe should make about 20 popcorn balls. Lay the balls on wax paper to set. Once they have cooled they can be eaten, or wrapped in plastic wrap to store for a few days.

Source: Adapted from www.instructables.com/id/Easy-Popcorn-Balls/

My Community and Me

Try the following ideas to help children become familiar with who is in their community and to learn what a community needs to work well.

WILLOUGHBY WALLABY WOO

Age group: Infants

What you need: You and your voice.

What you do: Sing the song *Willoughby Wallaby Woo* as you smile and point at each baby when you say their name. Replace the first letter of the child's name with a "W" and end by saying the child's name. "Willoughby Wallaby Wessica, an elephant sat on Jessica..." End with singing: "Willoughby Wallaby Woo, an elephant sat on you, Willoughby Wallaby we, an elephant sat on me."

What they learn: Infants listen to different sounds and begin to identify others by name.

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.



MAP MY HOME

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Masking tape, chart paper, markers, stickers, measuring tape, and a stopwatch.

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.

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.

Child Care Referral Policy

Children’s Home Society of California’s (CHS) Resource and Referral (R&R) Program provides child care referrals to parents within CHS’s designated service area to all parents requesting services regardless of income level or other eligibility requirements. Referrals are provided to parents based on their specific needs. CHS refers to child care centers, license-exempt child care centers, and licensed family child care homes.

In order to promote quality child care for children, CHS will:

- Assist parents seeking child care, but will not make recommendations.
- Provide written information about selecting quality child care.
- Recommend that parents visit facilities before making a decision.
- Inform parents of their right to review licensing information about providers.
- Maintain confidentiality of all information received from the parent.
- Not discriminate against any individual or group based on race, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, handicap, or income.

CHS reserves the right to discontinue referrals to a provider when:

- Licensing, law enforcement, or another regulatory agency has substantiated a complaint involving the health, safety, or personal rights of children; or actions that would impact the care or services to children.
- CHS is informed of an ongoing investigation regarding the health, safety, or personal rights of children; or actions that would impact the care or services to children.
- CHS has received a complaint regarding the health, safety, or welfare of a child and CHS is waiting for a response from the local licensing agency regarding the results of the complaint.
- The provider has been issued a probationary license or a corrective action plan.

CHS will notify the provider in writing when it is determined that CHS will discontinue referrals to the provider because of one of the above items.

ABOUT CHS

For 125 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 childcare 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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If you would like additional copies of this newsletter to share with parents or other child care providers, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org/for-providers/provider-newsletter.



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