

Early

Learning & Education  
PROGRAMSWhat's  
Inside

Learning with Loose Parts 2

Teaching Children  
about Self-Care 3

Diversity Resources 4

Summer Treats 4

Time to Relax 5

## Wonderful Diversity

As children explore their own identities, they learn to appreciate the uniqueness of others and develop friendships. Educators can support children in appreciating diversity and building relationships by designing a curriculum and environment that are inclusive to all children, reflective of families' cultures, and dedicated to the exploration of social roles. This environment creates a sense of acceptance and community among children of all ages.

Select materials and activities that are free from bias. Books, toys, and other materials should represent a variety of cultures, ages, abilities, and social roles. Be intentional in your selections. Ask yourself, "Who does this represent? What does this teach? Who can participate?" Thoughtful

planning ensures that all children are included and represented. As you add cultural elements to the room, include items that are used or seen in the homes of the families in your program. Weave these materials throughout the environment so that children see themselves reflected in all areas and be inspired to share about themselves and their cultures.



As children grow more competent at distinguishing between similarities and differences in objects, they will begin to notice what is alike and different about the people around them. Including artifacts like woven rugs, a tortilla press, chopsticks, vases, clay pots, or family photos in your program gives children an opportunity to appreciate each

continued on page 4

## WELCOMING EVERYONE

As you read the following questions from the California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume III, reflect on the ways you can implement these ideas in your program.

1. What can you do to support children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to engage with peers who may not share that home language or culture?
2. How can you encourage interactions between typically developing children and children with special needs?
3. How can you partner with families in your program to support attitudes of acceptance and inclusion?

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



## Learning with Loose Parts

Loose parts inspire curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. A British architect named Simon Nicholson coined the phrase “loose parts” to describe materials that can be manipulated in an endless number of ways. Items such as recyclable plastics, natural materials, and paper are examples of loose parts. When children work with loose parts, they explore their own identities, try different solutions to solve problems, explore concepts deeply, express themselves and their culture, collaborate, negotiate, connect to nature and their community, and build an understanding of stewardship (protecting natural resources).

Educators can use books and cultural artifacts from families in displays to inspire the creative use of loose parts throughout the day. For example, a display of pots and vases from families’ homes or books with pictures of pottery can be placed in the art area near the clay. Loose parts for the clay may include wooden dowels, tile squares, pieces of pottery, and small stones. The following are ideas for loose parts that can extend children’s learning:

- **Counting, sorting, classifying, and matching:** buttons, beads, rocks, small stones, sea shells, ceramic tiles, seeds, lids, and marker caps from dried out markers.

- **Sound and music:** plastic and metal buckets, kitchen utensils (wooden spoons, spatulas, whisks, metal spoons), seed pods, acorns, pinecones, gourds, beans, plastic bottles with lids to fill, bells, pots, pans, and wind chimes.
- **Self-expression through art:** scraps of cloth, pieces of yarn, buttons, beads, tiles, corrugated cardboard and flat cardboard, feathers, cookie cutters, paint sample cards, wall paper, and items from nature.
- **Building and engineering:** wooden blocks, plastic rain gutters, small bricks, tree cookies, clamps, clothes pins, rope, plastic pipe pieces, bolts, metal washers, buckets, dryer vent hoses, rubber tubes, and strong tape.
- **Identity and social roles:** real utensils, chopsticks, pottery, mortar and pestle, tortilla press, woven baskets and blankets, sling carriers and cradleboards for babies, mirrors, slippers, and corn husk dolls.

Source: *Loose Parts 3: Inspiring Culturally Sustainable Environments* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky (Red Leaf Press, 2018).





# Teaching Children about Self-Care

Practicing self-care improves our physical and mental well-being. Children learn self-care strategies through observation and practice. When children observe adults choosing healthy foods, performing bedtime rituals, and taking time to relax, they are learning how to care for themselves. Educators can support the development of self-help skills through guidance and conversations.

Start by using the daily routine as a guide. Take advantage of transitions to talk to children about the benefits of what they are about to do. For example, "We are going to eat a healthy snack because nutritious food keeps our bodies healthy and helps us grow." During activities or play time, you might say, "We are going to read books so our brains have a chance to learn new things," or "We will dance to exercise our muscles." Create a routine for resting too. "It's time for our bodies to rest and relax. I will play soft music and we can close our eyes to enjoy it."

Teach children how to take care of their mental health. Show them how to identify and manage their emotions. You can model coping strategies by talking about your own feelings.

"I feel frustrated that this is not working the way I want it to. I am going to take a break and do something else, and then I will try again." You can teach children how to take deep breaths, listen to music, draw a picture, or rest when they feel overwhelmed or upset. Learning how to practice self-care will provide children with the tools they need to take care of their own health for a lifetime.

Source: "Childhood Mental Health: Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being" by Children's Home Society of California (Family Education Program Brochure, 2018).



# Wonderful Diversity

other's uniqueness and builds both appreciation and acceptance. Encourage children to explore social roles through dramatic play and plan activities that require collaboration; such as painting a giant mural together, building a large structure from loose parts, or working together on a long-term project.

Children will continue to explore diversity and friendship throughout their school years. Once they begin noticing physical similarities and differences, they will discover that there are other differences among people such as languages, traditions, and beliefs. Help children navigate conversations about sensitive topics such as skin color, exceptional needs, or poverty while you model respect and appreciation for all people in your tone of voice, gestures, and vocabulary. Encourage parents to spend time in your program so that children can see how you and other adults interact with each other.

Provide a selection of board games from other countries that school age children can play such as Mancala, Go, Backgammon, Chess, Jacks, and Dominoes. School age children can also read a variety of books that represent different perspectives and cultures such as *Mrs. Gorski, I Think I Have the Wiggle Fidgets* by Barbara Esham, *Big Moon Tortilla* by Joy Cowley, *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Wyeth, *Family Pictures* by Carmen Garza, *Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles, or *The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China* by Ed Young.

As children learn more about the people in their community and build friendships, continue encouraging them to consider the perspectives and needs of others during activities, guide them as they negotiate disagreements, and engage them in shared activities that strengthen friendships. Our world is a diverse place filled with wonderful people and ideas. Preparing children to approach new people and situations with an open mind will help them discover new friendships and appreciate the uniqueness and value in the people around them.

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

## DIVERSITY RESOURCES

Including culturally diverse and anti-bias activities in your daily curriculum helps children accept, value, and respect all people. Learn more by exploring the following resources:

- "Developing Empathy to Build Warm, Inclusive Classrooms" by Susan Friedman, available at <https://www.naeyc.org>.
- "Diversity in Early Childhood Programs" by Francis Wardle, available at <http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com>.
- *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* by Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (NAEYC No. 249, 1989).
- *Creative Resources for the Anti-Bias Classroom* by Nadia Saderman Hall (Wadsworth Publishing, 1998).
- General Information and Resources: <https://www.kidactivities.net/diversity-and-multi-cultural-intro-and-links>.
- *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs* by Stacey York (Redleaf Press, Revised 2003).
- *Start Seeing Diversity: The Basic Guide to an Anti-Bias Classroom* by Ellen Wolpert (Redleaf Press, 2005).
- *Ten Languages You'll Need Most In The Classroom: A Guide to Communicating with English Language Learners and Their Families* by Garth Sundem, Jan Krieger and Kristi Pikiewicz (Corwin Press, 2008).

## RECIPES

### Summer Treats

Invite children to make one of these healthy snacks. Teach children kitchen skills such as how to use a whisk and cheese grater safely.

#### Banana Pudding Parfait

##### For 2 servings you will need

- 1 package instant vanilla pudding
- 2 cups cold nonfat milk
- 4 graham crackers, crumbled
- 2 bananas, sliced

##### Directions

- 1 Combine pudding mix and milk in a medium bowl and beat it with a wire whisk until it is blended, then let it sit for 5 minutes.
- 2 Put 3 tablespoons of pudding in the bottom of each bowl.
- 3 Sprinkle a heaping tablespoon of graham cracker crumbs over the pudding.
- 4 Layer banana slices on top of the crumbs.
- 5 Repeat steps 1 through 4.
- 6 Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.



#### Crunchy Apple Roll-Up

##### For 1 serving you will need

- 1/2 medium apple
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 whole wheat tortilla
- 2 to 3 tablespoons crispy rice cereal
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon (optional)

##### Directions

- 1 Shred the apple on a cheese grater.
- 2 Spread a thin layer of peanut butter over the tortilla.
- 3 Spread apple pieces in an even layer over the peanut butter.
- 4 Sprinkle with cereal and add cinnamon if desired.
- 5 Roll up tightly and cut in half.



Source: Recipe adapted from <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe> in March 2019.

# Time to Relax

Learning when to take a break and how to relax are important skills for building self-regulation and resiliency. Introduce these relaxation techniques to children when everyone is calm, and then practice them daily until you see children using them on their own. The activities below were adapted from the book *Breathe, Chill* by Lisa Roberts (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

**Title:** Ocean Drift

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** A comfortable place to sit (preferably a rocking chair) and ocean sounds (<https://youtu.be/WHPEKLQID4U>).

**What you do:** Take three deep breaths to calm your own body, then approach the infant, smile, hold out your arms, and ask, "Would you like to relax with me?" If the baby signals he is ready to be picked up, move to the chair to cuddle. Gently stroke the baby's head and arms as you listen to the ocean sounds together. As you gently stroke the baby, use a soothing tone and slowly say, "The waves move in and out, in and out."

**What they learn:** Skin to skin contact and a soothing voice helps infants relax. Cuddle time also strengthens your relationship with the infant and helps him feel safe and secure.

**Title:** Blowing Bubbles

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** Bubble wands, bubble solution (<https://artfulparent.com/how-to-make-homemade-bubbles>), a container or bucket, and outdoor space.

**What you do:** Gather bubble wands and fill the container with bubble solution. Invite children to join you on the grass and distribute bubble wands. Ask them to blow on their wands (slow and fast, hard and soft) and see what happens. Then, ask children to dip their wands into the bubble solution and try again. Allow children to continue experimenting with the bubbles. You can ask questions such as "How do you make bubbles? What happens if you breathe slowly?"

**What they learn:** Toddlers engage in deep breathing through play as they explore the concept of breath and air. Children are able to see the impact of their breathing and begin to regulate their own breathing.

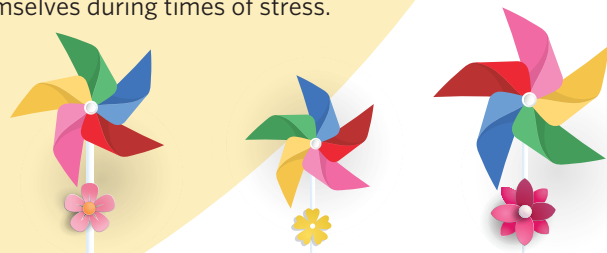
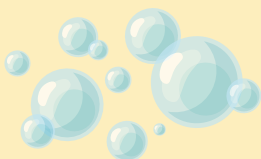
**Title:** Pinwheel Breathing

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** Hot glue gun, pinwheels ([https://youtu.be/Shl\\_3qzmXJg](https://youtu.be/Shl_3qzmXJg)), and artificial flowers (<https://youtu.be/A9EKcBoLlQ>).

**What you do:** Purchase or make pinwheels and flowers. You will need enough for each child. Use the hot glue gun to attach a flower to the stick of the pinwheel, or to the back of the pinwheel. Now you are ready to show children how to take deep breaths. During group time, invite them to practice smelling the flower (breathing in through the nose) and blowing on the pinwheel (breathing out). Explain that when we feel angry or frustrated our bodies speed up, but if we breathe with the flower and pinwheel, we can help our bodies feel calm. Practice with the pinwheels each day and place them around the room so they are available when needed. If you notice a child could benefit from deep breathing, you can offer them a pinwheel.

**What they learn:** Children learn how to take deep breaths in through their nose and out through their mouth. This is a self-regulation tool that empowers them to calm themselves during times of stress.





# Time to Relax

**Title:** Thunderstorm

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** No materials are necessary.

**What you do:** Invite children to sit in a large circle. They can sit on their knees or with their legs crossed. Explain that you want them to create a pretend thunderstorm so their bodies can relax. Guide them through the following steps: Motion the children to begin “the rain” by using their fingertips to lightly tap their legs, torso, shoulders, and head. Instruct them to tap a little harder as the rain increases. Then, guide them to alternate patting the floor with one palm and then the other to grow louder, moving up their thighs to their head. Then, have them pound the floor with both fists to sound like thunder and rub the palms of their hands together quickly to represent lightning. Slowly, take the storm back down to a light rain. End by having the children stay on the floor like a

puddle and continue to rest for a few minutes. Ask children to think about how their bodies felt before, during, and after the thunderstorm.

**What they learn:** Children practice releasing pent up energy and negative emotions through light exercise. They discover that movement can be a tool for reducing stress and managing emotions.



## ABOUT CHS

For over 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 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).

© 2019 Children's Home Society of California

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](http://www.chs-ca.org/for-providers/provider-newsletter).



Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
PERMIT NO. 32415

[www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org)

CHILDREN'S  
HOME  
SOCIETY OF  
CALIFORNIA

