

# Early Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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## Talking, Reading, and Writing

Children begin learning about language in infancy. When parents and caregivers talk, read, play, and sing with infants, they create a foundation for them to develop language and literacy skills. While all children are unique and may begin vocalizing and saying words at different ages, they are constantly absorbing the sounds of language (phonological awareness) and how sentences are put together (syntax).

It is important for adults to speak slowly and clearly with children to provide an opportunity to differentiate between sounds and words. Make eye contact with children when you talk, use facial expressions that are related to what you are saying, and give children time to respond.

Make this interaction a pleasant experience that children want to repeat by allowing them to sit in your lap while you sing or read stories.

Provide children with opportunities to draw on paper using crayons or paint with large brushes. Manipulating writing instruments develops the muscles children need to write, and also

provides a foundation for connecting spoken language with written language. Talk to children about their art and write down any words or phrases they say on their drawing to strengthen the connection between talking, reading, and writing. As children begin connecting their pictures with what you write down, they learn that the words you write are symbols that represent



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## MAKING CONNECTIONS

When children create connections between the concepts they learn and use this knowledge in their daily lives, their learning becomes integrated and more meaningful. These connections often come naturally in play, such as when creating menus for their pretend restaurant during dramatic play. This practical use of language will provide a foundation children will build on as they develop their reading skills. How do you make connections between reading and language in daily activities? Can you think of ways to create similar connections between home and school?

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







## The Joy of Art

Art is the physical expression of creativity, experiences, and emotions that live inside each of us. When children have opportunities to explore art, they develop skills in critical thinking, language, literacy, social understanding, and emotional well-being. Children can also study and evaluate the work of other artists, and learn about the aspects of art that make it beautiful.

Create beautiful spaces for children. Frame copies of artwork from different cultures and time periods, add colored glass bottles to window sills to catch light, place sculptures made from clay or nature items on shelves, use hand-made blankets and pillows in cozy spaces, post pictures of different architecture styles in your building area, and display books of art that children can browse and take inspiration from. Display children's work in frames and on shelves so children feel proud of their work and reflect back on creating their art.

Start discussions about art by asking how a particular painting makes children feel, or by finding shapes within art. Teach

children the vocabulary related to art such as: perspective, elements, and tone; and describe the various shades of colors and types of angles, shapes, and textures. When children learn about art, it becomes easier for them to draw on that knowledge to create their own art and explain its meaning.

Encourage children to make marks on paper with crayons. As you add materials to the art area, demonstrate how to use them. Include different brush sizes, paint colors, drawing tools, construction paper, safety scissors, yarn, glue, collage materials, nature items (rocks, sticks, and pinecones), clay or dough, and sculpting tools (wooden dowels and cookie cutters). Create an inclusive atmosphere by choosing materials that represent a variety of skin tones and tape sponges around thinner tools to make them easier to hold. Once you have set up the art environment, enjoy sharing children's joy as they journey through the process of creating something beautiful.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume II* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).



# Is It a Cold or the Flu?

It can be difficult to tell the difference between the common cold and influenza (flu). In both cases, people are most contagious one day before symptoms begin, causing both illnesses to spread quickly from person to person. Although the flu and cold are similar, the symptoms for the flu are more intense than a cold.

With the common cold, there is usually either no sign of a fever, or the fever is mild. People may feel their energy level drop, but are still able to go about their daily activities. Cold symptoms can also include a stuffy or runny nose, severe hacking cough, and mild headache. The flu can include one or more of the following symptoms: a fever of 100.4° or higher, low energy levels, dry cough, sore throat, headache, congestion, loss of appetite, muscle aches, and chills.

Children and staff should stay home to rest while they are running a fever and feel too sick to participate in regular daily activities. Once the fever is gone and they feel well,

they may return to their program. Both illnesses are spread by airborne respiratory droplets and nasal secretions. When these germs land on toys and other shared surfaces, the illnesses can spread. Clean, disinfect, and sanitize surfaces and materials regularly to remove germs.

Teach children to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow. Show children how to wash their hands with soap and water before and after eating, after toileting, and after handling dirty items or playing outside. Handwashing is the best defense for preventing a cold or the flu.





# Talking, Reading, and Writing

their personal stories, and further develop the concept that printed word represents spoken language.

Include story books, non-fiction books about nature or other cultures, cookbooks, music books, newspaper sports pages, appropriate magazines, poetry books, and map books in different areas of the room. For example, include cookbooks in the dramatic play area, music books with instruments, non-fiction books in the science area, maps in the building area, books with art, drawings, or photos in the creative area, and story books, magazines, or newspapers in cozy areas. This intentional placement helps children understand that there are different types of literature, and that each has a specific purpose or use.

Interact with children and ask open-ended questions that inspire conversations about their work and extend their thinking. For example, if you join a group of children in the sandbox and they say they are cooking, you could say, "I'm really hungry; what could you make me to eat?" This simple question requires the child to hear your request, develop a plan, and communicate the plan back to you. These play-based conversations offer the perfect opportunity to hear children express their interests, thoughts, and feelings. They also provide the chance to introduce new vocabulary, ideas, or concepts that enhance the learning experience of children.

Provide children with different methods for re-telling or creating stories. Add puppets, dolls, stuffed animals, or flannel stories to the book area. When you read books to children, encourage them to discuss the characters and actions in the story. They can use art materials to create different endings or represent their favorite part of the story. Encouraging children to think deeply about the books they are reading helps them learn to organize and sequence the events, which will help them be more capable readers and writers later in life.

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

## PUPPETS

Puppets are an interactive storytelling tool for both adults and children. Place them in your reading and dramatic play areas for children to use. To make a puppet, gather together fabric glue (or hot glue gun), wiggly eyes or buttons, yarn, cloth scraps, and laundry marking pens. For infants and toddlers, sew items on securely, or draw on faces to avoid choking hazards and to keep the puppets washable.

- **SOCKS:** Tube socks can become a snake, worm, caterpillar, butterfly, fish, bunny, or person.
- **GLOVES:** Use cloth gloves or gardening gloves. Cut off the glove fingers and make finger puppets, or keep them attached and decorate each finger to represent a character in a song, such as the Five Little Ducks or Old MacDonald's Farm (each finger is an animal).
- **WOODEN SPOONS:** The bowl of the spoon can be the head. Twist chenille stems around the handle to create arms and legs, then cut and glue fabric scraps for clothes.



Source: Recipe adapted from <https://foodforhealth.kaiserpermanente.org/recipes> in September 2018.

## RECIPES

### Vegetarian Sweet Potato Chili

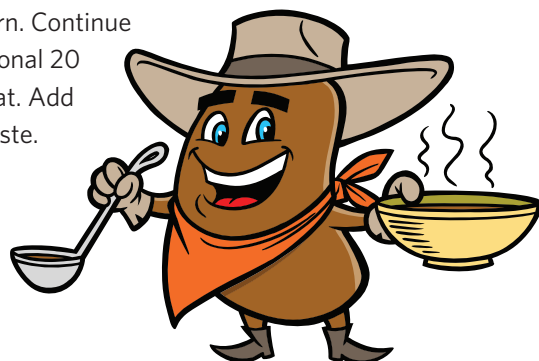
This hearty and healthy soup makes a filling meal, and children can help prepare it! Ask them to help wash vegetables, cut soft vegetables with plastic knives, and measure ingredients. The recipe makes six servings.

#### Ingredients

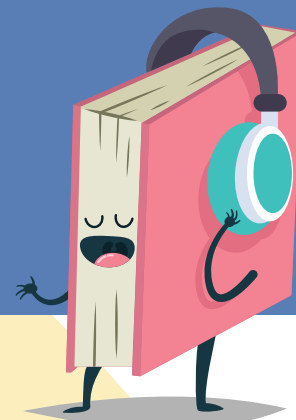
- 1 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup green bell pepper, chopped
- 1/4 cup red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup zucchini, chopped
- 1 cup carrot, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup water
- 3 cups diced tomato
- 1 cup mild or medium salsa
- 3 cups sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 can (28 oz.) red kidney beans, drained
- 2 cups or 1 can of corn, drained
- Salt and pepper as needed

#### Directions

Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot and stir in the bell pepper, zucchini, carrot, and garlic. Sauté for about 5 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Stir in the water, tomatoes, salsa, and sweet potatoes. Simmer on low heat for 20 minutes and then add the kidney beans and corn. Continue cooking for an additional 20 minutes over low heat. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve it warm with a few crackers.



# Sing Me a Story!



Music supports children's healthy development in a variety of ways. It improves their phonological language as they practice distinguishing between sounds and listening to repetitive vocabulary. Children also organize and sequence information as they sing and play music, helping them to develop math, memory, and literacy skills. The following books are based on songs that you can sing and use to support language, literacy, and cognitive development. If you are not familiar with the songs, you can listen to them by streaming them with your preferred online service.

**Book:** *The Babies on the Bus* by Karen Katz

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** The book, baby dolls, and a small cardboard box decorated as a bus.

**What you do:** As you sing to the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus," turn the pages of the book and demonstrate the movements. Once the babies are familiar with the song, introduce the school bus and baby dolls. Use these props to act out the song, and then place the props where mobile infants can play with them.

**What they learn:** Infants connect new vocabulary to pictures, gestures, and props. They also imitate sounds and mouth movements as they watch you sing. Practicing mouth movements helps strengthen the muscles they will need as they learn to talk.

**Book:** *Head, Shoulders Knees, and Toes* by Annie Kubler

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** The book.

**What you do:** Sit with toddlers and show them the book, asking them to point to their head, shoulders, knees, and toes. Then sing the book while pointing to the appropriate parts of the body. When you observe that the toddlers are able to maintain their balance while they move, increase the movement challenge by having them stand as they sing and point to their bodies, or sing about different parts of the body such as, "eyes and hands, arms and legs, arms and legs."



**What they learn:** Through repetition and movement, toddlers learn how to identify the parts of their bodies. Toddlers also practice keeping the same rhythmic pattern while they substitute different words. This helps them practice organizing information and builds their cognitive skills.

**Book:** *Singing in the Rain* by Tim Hopgood

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** The book, the song (available online), plastic eye-droppers, and foil. Optional materials include Chilean rain sticks, African rasps, and drums.

**What you do:** Play the song as you turn the pages of the book. Then ask children to close their eyes as you play the song again, and encourage them to identify the instruments they hear. Talk about how rain can create a pattern of sound. Give children a sheet of foil, cup of water, and an eye-dropper. Ask them if they can create a rhythm, or beat, on the foil by dropping water on it like raindrops. Children can compare the sound of those single drops to the sound of rain sticks, or use drums to mimic the sounds of thunder and rain.

**What they learn:** Children practice sound discrimination and phonological awareness as they identify the different instruments. They also learn to look for musical patterns or rhythms in natural events like rain, and build memory skills as they re-create those patterns with drums.



# Sing Me a Story!

**Book:** *This Jazz Man*  
by Karen Ehrhardt

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** The book and a selection of jazz music for kids like Greg and Steve's "Scat Like That" and "Three Little Pigs Blues," or Maria Muldaur's "Put on a Happy Face."

**What you do:** Ask children if they have heard of jazz music. Talk about the instruments pictured before the story. Sing the book to the tune of "This Old Man" and ask children to clap their hands or snap their fingers to the beat. Read it again to review new vocabulary. Draw attention to the imaginary words that imitate instruments or create a new sound. This is called "musical scatting." Talk about the musician biographies at the end of the book as well. Listen and move to different styles of jazz music with children, asking them to identify the instruments they hear as well as any scatting.



**What they learn:** Children improve their sound discrimination skills as they experiment with different musical patterns and vocalizations. They also learn new vocabulary and discover famous jazz musicians.



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

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