

# Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## Curious Minds Want to Learn

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Curiosity motivates children to investigate, experiment, discover, and learn. As children develop their inquiry skills by observing and investigating, they gather knowledge about the world around them. From infancy, children begin developing their observation skills. They mimic the sounds they hear and the gestures or facial expressions they see. Eventually they begin creating their own sounds and move with purpose.

Toddlers begin to understand that they have the power to influence things in their environment. For example, a toddler might hit a pot with a wooden spoon, hear the sound, and then experiment with hitting it in different ways to see if it makes new sounds or changes the volume level. This example

demonstrates how children begin learning about cause and effect.

Children three to five years old are able to make predictions about what will happen, make observations, experiment, draw conclusions from their experiences, and document their

work. Children are naturally curious about nature. A child who notices dark grey

clouds might say, "It's going to rain." As an activity, she can then place containers outside in different places to catch rain. Afterwards, she can measure the amount of rain in each container and make observations about the volume of water in each.

For example, perhaps a tree's leaves filtered some rain as it fell, so the container under the tree is not full.

*continued on back*



### HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT TRUSTLINE?

In 1987, the California Legislature created TrustLine to be a resource for parents who are looking for unlicensed child care. TrustLine is the California registry of in-home and license-exempt child care providers, such as babysitters or nannies, who have passed a background check.

This is the only authorized screening program of in-home and license-exempt caregivers in the state that has access to fingerprint records from the California Department of Justice (DOJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and California's Child Abuse Central Index.

It is free for parents to use the TrustLine Registry to check the background of a potential caregiver. TrustLine can be reached by calling **1-800-822-8490**, or by visiting their website at **[www.trustline.org](http://www.trustline.org)**.



# Fun with S.T.E.M.



**S.T.E.M.** is an acronym for **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math**. It is often used by educators to describe the type of learning experiences they provide, but it has also become a way to identify careers that are based in one or more S.T.E.M. fields. It is important for children to engage in S.T.E.M. learning so that when they look for jobs in the future, they will have a wider variety of choices.

Research has shown that children develop a stronger understanding of S.T.E.M. concepts when they are learned together. A child who plants a seed can predict what it will look like (science), use a measuring tape to record growth (math), design a system for catching rain water for the plant (engineering), and use a spade to dig up weeds (technology). This would be considered a S.T.E.M. activity because skills from each subject are being combined and practiced in one project.

You can support your child's S.T.E.M. learning by planning simple projects and asking questions that extend their thinking like "What do you think will happen?" or "How does this work?"

Here are some activities to get you started:

- For infants, roll a pair of soft socks together into a ball. Roll it to your infant and encourage her to reach for it and throw it back to you.
- Toddlers can experiment with concepts of quantity and weight by filling and emptying toys from a bucket with a handle. As they lift the bucket, talk about how heavy or light it feels.
- Take a nature walk with preschoolers and collect fallen leaves, flowers, sticks, etc. Then ask them to sort items by shape, size, color, or texture in a muffin tin.
- School agers can bake cookies. Talk about how the cookie dough goes from a liquid to a solid. Teach your child how to read the recipe and follow directions.

To find information about S.T.E.M. activities, child development, or a parent workshop near you, visit our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org).

Source: "STEM: Making Connection in Learning," by Children's Home Society of California (2017).



## Healthy Breakfast Smoothies

Breakfast smoothies are easy to make and a great way to get a healthy start to the day. Children can help drop ingredients into the blender and push the button to watch the fruit liquefy. The following recipe is for a blueberry or a peach smoothie, but you can substitute any frozen fruit, or even add a banana.

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 1/2 cups frozen blueberries (or sliced frozen peaches)
- 1 cup low-fat Greek vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk (or dairy substitute)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon (increase it to 1/2 teaspoon if using peaches)

### Directions

Pour the oats into the blender first and blend them until they are a fine powder. Next add the frozen fruit, yogurt, milk, honey, vanilla, and cinnamon. Blend the mixture until it is completely smooth. Store it overnight in the refrigerator and stir it before serving, or serve it immediately.

Source: Adapted from the website <https://www.fiveheartshome.com> in February 2018.







## Teaching Kids to Cook

Taking the time to teach your child how to cook will help him develop a healthy lifestyle, build his confidence, and be self-sufficient. Cooking will also increase your child's math, language and literacy skills, strengthen his large and small muscles, and give him the opportunity to explore science concepts. Spending time in the kitchen together is also an opportunity to socialize and enjoy each other's company. Cooking projects can be easy and safe to do with children. In fact, you do not even need a stove or oven to make simple snacks, side dishes, and sandwiches.

Start by creating a few simple kitchen rules for your child to follow. For example: An adult needs to be with you in the kitchen or always wash your hands before cooking. Base your rules and expectations on your child's age and abilities. Read the recipe with your child and talk about any new vocabulary words you see. Invite him to help you gather and prepare ingredients. Always demonstrate how to use cooking tools before you start.

Toddlers can use measuring cups and spoons, mixing spoons, bowls, baby spoons and forks, and craft sticks (use like a knife). Preschoolers can use a potato masher, whisk, spoons, forks, and plastic knives (or butter knives), a hand grater, egg beater, and rolling pin. They can also use appliances like a blender, electric hand mixer, wooden skewers (blunt ends), a vegetable peeler, and an apple corer with adult assistance. Supervise school age children learning to use a microwave, stove top, oven, rice cooker, blender, or waffle maker.

Begin with simple tasks like washing fruit and vegetables, tearing lettuce for a salad, adding ingredients to a bowl and mixing them, mashing potatoes, or peeling hard boiled eggs. Once your child becomes more skilled, introduce simple recipes he can make himself like spreading peanut butter and jelly on bread to make a sandwich, mashing a hard-boiled egg with some mayonnaise and a little salt to make egg salad, layering granola, fruit, and yogurt in a cup to make a yogurt parfait, or spreading peanut butter on a whole wheat tortilla and rolling it around a banana to make a breakfast wrap. You can find healthy kid-friendly recipes online at [kidshealth.org/en/kids/recipes](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/recipes). As your child observes you in the kitchen and his cooking skills grow, he will become more interested in nutrition and healthy eating.



Source: *Cooking Is Cool: Heat-Free Recipes for Kids to Cook* by Marianne E. Dambrá (Redleaf Press, 2013).

She can draw pictures to indicate how full the containers were and share what she discovered.

The natural world offers children the opportunity to observe the causes of and the effects of weather, how environments affect the growth of plants, and study the behaviors of animals. These experiences capture the curiosity of children and inspire them to develop their inquiry and investigation skills. Encouraging children to spend time outdoors will provide them with the opportunities they need to explore and learn.

Simple activities like: going for walks, hunting for bugs, looking for earthworms after it rains, flying a kite, planting a small garden, or caring for a pet, offer valuable learning experiences that can help prepare preschoolers for kindergarten. These activities benefit children by teaching them new vocabulary, developing empathy, and providing opportunities to investigate and strengthen critical thinking skills.

Provide children with a few simple tools they can use to investigate such as measuring

cups and spoons, a cooking scale, ruler, plastic containers, a magnifying glass, pencils and crayons for drawing observations or documenting discoveries, and books about the natural world from the public library. Help children write down their thoughts and observations, and encourage them to draw pictures of what they observe. When children have pictures and writing to demonstrate their thinking, it is easier for them to show others their ideas, and work together on projects.

Create a mud kitchen by gathering together old kitchen items and placing them outside near dirt that can be watered or fill dish tubs with dirt and add water. Play in the mud kitchen with children. Show enthusiasm as you pretend to eat the treats they make, and start conversations that stimulate children's critical thinking such as, "What will happen to the mud after it sits in the sun?" Take pictures of mud play and display them on the refrigerator or in a photo book where children can see them and reflect on their work. Use nature to inspire children's curiosity for learning and create memories that will last a lifetime.

## 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).

Source: California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 3 by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2013).

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