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NEWSLETTER 2026

Newsletter for Niagara County Child Care Providers, Parents & Child Advocates



The first five years of a child's life are more crucial than we often realize. Infants and toddlers are not just learning basic skills, they are also developing social skills, building relationships, and mastering things like potty training.

A baby's brain starts as a blank canvas, shaped by our words, actions, and play. How we engage with them can impact their developmental milestones. Every small moment counts. Also, all children are not the same. Children hit milestones at their own pace.

Toddlers need a safe and loving environment, consistent routines, responsive interactions, opportunities for exploration and play, clear boundaries, positive reinforcement, and language stimulation to support their development in all areas, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

School-aged children can use support from adults in many ways, including love, guidance, and help with social skills. Spending time reassuring and guiding your child will allow them the freedom to grow.

Children absorb everything, whether through our actions or inaction. Interacting with them is vital for their growth into confident, well-rounded individuals. We may no longer remember our early years, but every experience shapes who we become. Your actions are important.

Niagara Community Action

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Legally Exempt: Debbie Perricelli,
and Nichole Jeffords

Business Specialist: Donna Striffler

CC Referrals: Mary Vance

Mission Statement:

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. is a countywide agency dedicated to reducing poverty in a collaborative effort by initiating and conducting programs of self-sufficiency. Our ultimate goal is to empower individuals and families to reach their fullest potential.

Office Closings:

December 24th & 25th
January 1st, 19th
February 16th

Contact Information:

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Resources for Child Care Providers

Help is available to provide support to all child care programs that need assistance with issues that may arise in their child care program. We may also have quality initiative grants for eligible licensed and registered child care programs.

We're here to help if you have a curriculum which isn't working for you, a disgruntled parent or a screaming child. We know these are just a sample of the issues you may face as a child care provider. We will come into your program to observe and assess. We then will help you by providing technical support, training and create a quality improvement plan. For more information about this service, please contact,

Chrissy Parfinski @ cparfinski@niagaracap.org

Or Call

716-285-8572 ext.120

Our referral counselor will be working with parents who need assistance in locating a registered or licensed child care program. In addition, she will work with providers to ensure that all information regarding child care vacancies is up to date in the referral database.

If you receive a *Provider Update Form* in the mail, please complete it and return it as soon as possible. As you may know, available child care slots are few and, in some areas, non-existent. If you have openings, please keep our office informed. A voice message which is available for calls after hours or e-mail is sufficient.

Contact us at: 716-285-8572 ext. 109

Or

Send an email to ccrniagara@niagaracap.org

What is Legally-Exempt Child Care?

Legally-Exempt Child Care is an option for families. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Child Care Services allows parents/caretakers to hire individuals to care for their child(ren). This is known as legally-exempt child care. A legally-exempt child care provider is not required to be licensed or registered to provide child care. Families eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) can choose this type of care, however, the legally-exempt provider/program must enroll with an enrollment agency in order to be paid. A legally-exempt child care provider can be someone that the parent/caretaker is familiar with like a friend, a neighbor, family member, or someone else known to the family. Care can be provided in the child(ren)'s home, the provider's home, or in another residence.

HOW TO APPLY TO BE A LEGALLY EXEMPT PROVIDER?

A family who is eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) can say that they want to use a legally-exempt provider. They will be given an enrollment packet which must be completed by the family as well as the provider. The enrollment forms are then returned to the Enrollment Agency (EA) which starts the enrollment process.

WHAT DOES AN ENROLLMENT AGENCY DO?

A New York State contracted Enrollment Agency (EA) can help a prospective provider enroll to provide legally-exempt child care. They can provide technical assistance, eligibility and share information about the regulatory requirements that must be met to be enrolled.

For more information, contact your local Department of Social Services.





Empire State Family Child Care Collaborative



Empowering Providers • Boosting Financial Health • Supporting Wellness



What You Get as a Member:

- ✚ Free One-Year Brightwheel License
- ✚ Business Coaching
- ✚ Health Benefits – Telemedicine/Health Insurance Navigator
- ✚ Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) Help
- ✚ Tools to Grow Your Business & Reduce Admin Time



What You Can Achieve:

- ✚ All Office of Children and Family Service (OCFS) Documents in One Place
- ✚ Lower Business Expenses
- ✚ More Time Back in Your Day-Less Paperwork
- ✚ Increased Retirement Savings
- ✚ Confidence in Managing Finances



12-Month Program | Limited Spaces Available

**Don't miss out on this opportunity to
streamline your business and boost your income.**



Ready to Apply?

Contact us today to sign up or learn more!



Are you a registered family day care or licensed group family day care in good standing with OCFS?

APPLY NOW



SCAN HERE



CONTACT US

Chrissy Parfinski
Email: cparfinski@niagaracap.org
Phone: (716) 285-8572 ext. 120

Winter Word Scramble

1. **lcdo** _____

2. **nmwnaso** _____

3. **nigrfzee** _____

4. **cie** _____

5. **oftrs** _____

6. **wfksoaenl** _____

7. **soeglv** _____

8. **tha** _____

9. **tcoa** _____

10. **tbsoo** _____

11. **arcsf** _____

12. **olvehs** _____

13. **sswbonall** _____

14. **ddginesl** _____

15. **kngsii** _____



How to Make Your Own Air-Dry Clay

Kids of all ages love the sensory experience of exploring art through clay. This homemade version of air-dry clay uses inexpensive ingredients and results in a product that's silky smooth and easy to work with. Mix up a batch of air-dry clay today, and watch your kids enjoy hours of fun sculpting, squishing, rolling, and playing!

MATERIALS

- 1 cup white glue
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 tablespoons oil (a clear oil like baby or coconut oil works best)
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine the glue, vinegar, and oil in a medium mixing bowl and stir until well combined. Add the cornstarch and mix well.

Cook

1. Pour your mixture into a small saucepan and cook over low heat until it starts to resemble smooth mashed potatoes (this can take up to 10 minutes). *Let the mixture cool and rest off to the side until cool enough to handle.

Knead the clay

Transfer the clay onto a surface lightly dusted with cornstarch and knead well for several minutes until it loses its stickiness and becomes smooth and pliable.

Add color

1. You can use food coloring or liquid watercolor paints to create colored clay! Simply divide clay into sections, add a few drops of coloring, and knead well.

*Tip: Use plastic gloves if you're worried about messy hands. Create and play!

*Use this air-dry clay to create cute magnets, pinch pots, or ornaments. Let clay pieces dry completely before adding paint or other decorative elements. Wrap leftover air-dry clay in cling wrap and store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to two weeks.

How to Make Raised Salt Paintings

Raised salt painting is an all-time favorite kids' art activity that is loved by all ages from toddlers on up. And best of all, it only requires a few, simple materials! You probably have them all at home right now. All you need is white glue, table salt, and watercolors!

The best part about making raised salt paintings is that you can adjust it to whatever theme, holiday, or season you like! We love to make salty spiderwebs for Halloween and sparkly snowflakes in winter!

MATERIALS

- Bottle of white glue
- Table salt
- Shallow dish or tray to work on
- Liquid watercolors**watered down food coloring or watered down tempera paint.
- Paint brushes
- Cardstock, poster board, cardboard, watercolor paper, paper plates, or foam core.

Time needed: 30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Use your glue to draw a design or picture onto your cardstock.
- 2 Carefully sprinkle salt onto cardstock until the glue is thoroughly covered. *Tip to let excess salt fall away, use a baking tray to help to contain the salt.
- 3 Add color! Dip your paint brush into liquid watercolor paint, then, gently touch the salt-covered glue lines. Watch the paint magically travel in both directions!
- 4 Let dry thoroughly. The drying process may take a day or two. Once dry, display your new artwork!

You can use this glue + salt + watercolor technique to make words, nature scenes, squiggles, faces, and more! And, of course, make designs for whatever holiday or season you're celebrating!



Child and Adult Care Creditable Meals Food Program

Mango Smoothie

Breakfast/Snack



Ingredients:

- 2 lb. Frozen Mango
- 24 oz Low Fat Greek Yogurt
- 3 tsp Agave Syrup
- 1 ½ tsp Vanilla

Total Time: 5 Minutes

Serving Size: ¾ cup

Servings: 6

Components: Meat/Meat Alternate, Fruit

Directions:

1. Drain Mangos in a colander for at least 30 minutes to a hour.
2. Puree mangos in a food processor or blender on medium speed until they have a smooth consistency. Do not overmix!
3. Pour mangos puree over yogurt and stir well.
4. Add agave syrup and vanilla extract.
5. Serve ¾ cups.

¾ cup provides 1 oz eq meat alternate and ½ cup fruit



Italian Chicken & Veggie Sheet Pan

Lunch/Supper



Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp Vegetable oil, divided
- 1 tbsp Italian Seasoning
- 8 Chicken Drumsticks 2 ½ Cups Brussel Sprouts, Halved
- 2 Cups of Potatoes, Cubed
- ¾ tsp Salt, Divided

Total Time: 40 Minutes

Serving Size: 1 Drumstick, 1/2 Cup of Vegetables

Servings: 8

Components: Meat/Meat Alternate, Vegetable, Second Vegetable

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450° F.
2. In a large bowl, add 2 tbsp of vegetable oil, Italian seasoning and 1/4 tsp of salt. Mix.
3. Add chicken to the bowl and toss to full coat each drumstick with the seasoning. Place drumsticks on a baking sheet pan.
4. In a separate bowl, add vegetables, 2 tbsp of oil and 1/2 tsp salt.
5. Mix together so oil coats all the veggies. Place veggies on another sheet pan.
6. Cook both sheet pans in the oven for 30 minutes or until the chicken reaches 165° F and veggies look crisp.
7. Serve 1 drumstick and 1/2 cup of vegetables for each child.

One serving provides 1 1/2 oz meat, 1/4 cup vegetable and 1/4 cup second vegetable.





Serving Meals “Family Style”



Your child is learning new skills through family style meals at child care. Food is offered in serving bowls and plates, and children serve themselves and talk with others at mealtime. Family style meals can help your child:

- Build confidence with practice.
- Strengthen the small muscles in the child’s hands.
- Decide how much to eat.
- Talk and connect with others.

Try Family Style Meals at Home

- **Place each food on its own serving plate or bowl.** You can start small by choosing one food item to pass around the table.
- **Sit down together.** Turn off the television and put down the phones for fewer distractions.
- **Pass each serving plate or bowl around to each person at the table.** Help young children pass the bowl or plate if needed.
- **Let each person serve their own food.** Teach children to keep the bowl on the table when serving themselves. Use the serving spoon to scoop the food.
- **Talk with one another.** Check out “Talk With Me” on the next page for ideas.

Support Young Children at Mealtime

1. **Sometimes new foods take time.** Children don’t always take to new foods right away. You may need to offer a food more than 10 times before your child might like it.
2. **Patience works better than pressure.** Offer your children new foods. Then, let them choose how much to eat. Children are more likely to enjoy a food when eating it is their own choice. It also helps them learn to be independent.
3. **Accept that it may be messy at first.** It will take practice for children to learn to serve themselves. But, the mess is worth the benefits. Letting them continue to practice will strengthen their skills—creating less mess.

Keeping Children and Staff Healthy

Please Review Section .11 of the appropriate Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Child Care Regulations

Ensuring a safe environment in your day care program is essential in protecting both the children and staff. By knowing and following the OCFS child day care regulations and your program's approved Health Care Plan, you can create a safe and healthy space for everyone.

Some items to consider are:

1. Conduct Daily Health Checks: Daily health checks should be routine practice when children arrive at day care. This helps identify any symptoms early on, preventing illness from spreading to other children or staff. If a child appears ill, ensure they stay isolated from others in an area where the child can be appropriately supervised, until the child can be picked-up.

2. Encourage Staying Home When Sick: Encourage both staff and children to stay home if they are feeling ill. Implement flexible leave policies that make it easier for individuals to stay home when they're sick. This can prevent the spread of germs and viruses.

3. Increase Hygiene and Sanitizing Practices at Your Day Care Program: Ensure children regularly wash their hands. Display helpful posters in prominent areas to encourage proper handwashing. Handwashing stations should be accessible and easy for children to use. Frequent cleaning of surfaces and toys is essential. Disinfecting high-touch areas like door handles, light switches, and toys should be part of your daily routine. Consider reducing the sharing of items that are difficult to clean. Ensure that each child has their own set of materials whenever possible.

Proper ventilation helps reduce the spread of germs. If possible, open windows and/or doors before children arrive and/or after children leave to increase airflow. Encourage outdoor play except in extremely inclement weather. Fresh air can significantly reduce the concentration of germs inside classrooms, keeping kids healthier.

4. Teach Children How to Cover Coughs and Sneezes: Coughs and sneezes spread viruses. Educate children about covering their mouth and nose with the inside of their elbows or with a tissue. Having tissues and hand sanitizer readily available in classrooms encourages good respiratory hygiene. Have children wash their hands with soap and running water often, especially after wiping their nose.

5. Keep Groups of Children Separate: Keeping the same children together in one group reduces the risk of spreading illnesses. Day care staff can better supervise groups with fewer children, ensuring they provide proper care by meeting the emotional and physical needs of the children.

6. Provide Nutritious Meals and Snacks: A diet of whole grains, fruits and vegetables enhances the immune system. A healthy immune system reduces the possibility of severe illness in both children and staff. Food high in vitamin C and vitamin D help to combat the negative effects of increased time spent indoors which lowers exposure to natural sunlight during the colder months.

Business Information

In New York State, in-home child care providers often calculate “time-space percentage” to determine what portion of their home is used for business purposes. This figure is especially important for tax purposes, but it can also help you assess how much of your home is devoted to child care activities. There are two parts:

1. **Space Use** – Figure out the percentage of your home’s square footage used regularly for child care. Include areas used for play, meals, naps, activities, and storage of childcare supplies.
2. **Time Use** – Determine the percentage of hours in a year you use your home for child care, including both the hours children are present and the time spent on business tasks such as cleaning, planning, and record keeping.

To get the **time-space percentage**, multiply the space percentage by the time percentage. For example, if 50% of your home is used for child care and you use it for child care 40% of the time, your time-space percentage would be 20%.

This calculation is recognized by the IRS and follows NYS guidelines for in-home child care businesses, ensuring you are accurately tracking use for compliance and financial reporting.



The Importance of Positive and Respectful Communication in the Workplace

Effective communication is a cornerstone of organizational success. Within a professional environment, positive and respectful communication between employers and staff—and equally among staff members—is essential for fostering trust, collaboration, and efficiency. When communication is delivered with clarity and respect, employees feel valued and understood, which contributes to stronger morale and higher levels of engagement.

For employers, maintaining open and respectful dialogue with staff demonstrates transparency and accountability. It sets the standard for professional interactions and encourages employees to express ideas or concerns without fear of judgment. This type of communication strengthens leadership credibility, reduces workplace conflict, and supports a culture where employees are more likely to remain committed to organizational goals.

Equally important is communication among staff members. Respectful peer-to-peer interaction minimizes misunderstandings, promotes teamwork, and creates a more inclusive environment. When staff feel comfortable sharing perspectives and offering constructive feedback, they are better able to collaborate on problem-solving and adapt to changes. This sense of mutual respect directly improves workplace productivity and cohesion.

In conclusion, positive and respectful communication serves as the foundation for a healthy workplace culture. It enhances trust, strengthens professional relationships, and drives organizational success. By prioritizing clear, respectful dialogue, both employers and employees contribute to a stronger, more effective work environment.



The Pros and Cons of Technology for School-Age Children in New York State

Technology plays a big role in the daily lives of children across New York State. From tablets and laptops used in classrooms to smartphones and gaming systems at home, children have access to more digital tools than ever before. While technology offers many benefits for learning and social connection, it also comes with challenges that parents, educators, and caregivers must carefully balance.

Pros of Technology

One major advantage of technology is access to information. Children can quickly research topics, practice math or reading through interactive apps, and explore educational videos that support classroom learning. This makes learning more engaging and helps children develop digital skills they will need in the future.

Technology also allows for personalized learning. Many schools in New York use programs that adapt to a child's skill level, offering extra practice where it's needed and challenging students who are ready to move ahead. For children with special needs, technology can provide assistive tools that make learning more accessible.

Another benefit is communication. Technology allows children to stay connected with teachers, classmates, and even family members who live far away. In a diverse state like New York, it also helps children experience different cultures and perspectives through virtual experiences and global connections.

Cons of Technology

Despite these benefits, there are concerns about overuse. Too much screen time can reduce physical activity, which is important for healthy growth and development. It can also lead to sleep issues and make it harder for children to focus on in-person interactions.

Another challenge is exposure to inappropriate content or online risks. Even with parental controls, children may come across harmful information or face cyberbullying. This highlights the need for adults to monitor and guide technology use.

Lastly, not all families in New York have equal access to reliable internet or devices. This digital divide can make it difficult for some children to keep up with homework or participate fully in online learning opportunities, widening educational gaps.

Conclusion

Technology for school-age children in New York State offers both exciting opportunities and real challenges. When used thoughtfully, it can support education, creativity, and connection. However, parents and educators must set clear limits, encourage balance with outdoor play and social activities, and ensure that all children have fair access. Striking this balance will help children gain the benefits of technology while protecting their overall well-being.

Building Problem-Solving Skills in Young Children (Ages 3–5)

Problem-solving is an important skill that children begin developing in the preschool years. At this stage, children are naturally curious and eager to figure things out for themselves. By practicing problem-solving, they learn how to think through challenges, make decisions, and build confidence in their abilities.

Why It Matters

- **Confidence:** When children find solutions on their own, they feel proud and capable.
- **Social skills:** Problem-solving helps children learn to share, take turns, and work out disagreements with friends.
- **Critical thinking:** Asking “What can I try?” encourages flexible thinking and creativity.

How to Support Problem-Solving at Home

- **Ask guiding questions:** Instead of giving the answer, try “What could you do next?” or “How else can we try?”
- **Model problem-solving:** Talk through your own challenges, such as “Hmm, the lid is stuck. I’ll try twisting it a different way.”
- **Celebrate effort:** Praise children for *trying* different solutions, not just for getting the “right” answer.



Activity: “The Missing Piece Challenge”

Goal: Practice problem-solving, patience, and teamwork.

Materials Needed:

- A simple wooden puzzle or a few large puzzle pieces (you can even cut a picture into 3–4 pieces)
- A small basket or box

How to Play:

1. Hide one or two of the puzzle pieces around the room.
2. Give the children the puzzle board with some pieces missing.
3. Say: “Uh-oh! We have a problem! Some of our pieces are gone. How can we solve this?”
4. Encourage children to share ideas: “Should we look around the room? Work together? Take turns searching?”
5. Once found, complete the puzzle and celebrate solving the problem together.

Extension: For social problem-solving, set up a pretend “problem” during playtime (like two dolls wanting the same toy) and invite children to brainstorm fair solutions.



School Age

Are you scratching your head for Valentine's Day craft ideas for your students this year? February is packed full of big days on the classroom calendar — from Black History Month to Presidents' Day and everything in between — so how do you balance the fun of a heartfelt celebration with all that you still have to get done in February?

Get ready for the ultimate list of kid-appropriate classroom crafts for Valentine's Day that's been carefully created by our teacher team! Read on for science-based Valentine's Day crafts, ideas that will bring in math and writing and so much more!

In putting this list together, we had a few criteria. We wanted to develop a list of crafts that:

1. Wouldn't make too much of a mess in the classroom
2. Would apply to a variety of grade levels (you'll find crafts for kindergarten, 1st grade, and even those upper elementary grades here)
3. Won't take too much time out of the school day
4. Won't cost you an arm and a leg in extra supplies
5. Will give your students a taste of the joy of this sweet holiday



Nixed from the list were ideas that didn't fit the criteria — which means you aren't going to see those awfully cute hearts one of our teachers used to have her second graders sew because they proved to be too much work in the long run! As a bonus, we did add a few that have educational applications to the list, too!

Valentine's Day Craft Ideas for the Classroom **Make Stained Glass Heart Window Decorations**

Looking to decorate the classroom for Valentine's Day and teach kids about the words translucent, transparent and opaque in one shot? Creating faux "stained glass" hearts combines a Valentine's Day craft for the classroom with a hands-on lesson that shows how beams of light are impacted by different materials.

How to make faux stained-glass hearts with your students:

1. Print out our heart template (it's free to download!), and trace it onto a piece of black cardstock.
2. Draw a smaller heart inside and cut out the inside heart to create a frame.
3. Stick a piece of clear contact paper on one side of the heart so that the sticky side comes through the middle.
4. Trim off any excess contact paper.
5. Have your students stick small pieces of tissue paper all over the inside of their hearts, completely covering the sticky side.
6. Once they've finished covering the contact paper, cover the tissue paper with another piece of contact paper.
7. Trim off any excess.

Activities found on <https://www.teacherlists.com/blog/easy-valentines-day-crafts-for-the-classroom/>

5 Benefits of Outdoor Play in the Winter

Baby, it's cold outside! Whether it's windy, rainy, snowy, or just plain freezing, it's tempting to snuggle up and stay indoors during the winter. But don't let the weather conditions trap you inside! From boosting your kids' immune systems to building gross motor skills – and so much more – cold weather outdoor play offers endless social, emotional, and physical benefits. And it's fun!



Before you head out, remember that children's bodies lose heat faster than adult bodies do, so be sure to dress your little ones in several lightweight layers, including a hat, glove, scarf, and boots to prevent heat loss through the extremities. As a rule, kids need one more layer of clothing than adults do in cold weather. They can shed a layer or two as long as they are moving around and generating heat.

Then head on out to reap the benefits of outdoor play in the winter, including:

Physical Exercise

Your child's physical growth doesn't take a break for the winter, and their energy levels don't decrease with the thermostat! Extended inactivity can damage children's muscular development and cutting off kids' physical outlets can drive the whole family crazy. Changes in weather give your child a chance to experience different environments and practice different physical skills. A walk or even a slow jog against the wind or through the snow is a great way to get some cardio and breathing brisk, cool air is a nice break from the germs that recirculate in indoor environments. Building a snowman, snow maze, or snow fort will also get your kids' hearts pumping. Jumping and splashing in puddles builds balance and coordination. And dragging their sled up even the slightest hill builds muscles!

Boosted Immune Systems

Research shows that kids who play outdoors and spend more time being active outside generally have better overall health than those who don't. This is true in all seasons, but research also indicates that as the immune system adapts to colder weather, it gets better at fighting infections. So, the more outdoor physical activity your child gets in the cold weather, the stronger their immune systems will be. As previously mentioned, playing outside in the winter gives kids a break from the germs and bacteria that thrive in warm, humid, indoor environments.



Increased Creativity and Imagination

Just as different materials stimulate artists to create different types of art, the materials found outdoors in winter stimulate different types of imaginative play! Kids can use snow to build a snowman that looks like their teacher or a snow cave for their dolls or toy cars. They can create outdoor sculptures using pinecones, twigs, and sticks or a snow mandala made of rocks. Bring out the mixing bowls and spoons and make frozen snow pies. Take a nature walk and collect leaves, and berries, then create a frozen outdoor ornament or use your finds to create an outdoor winter themed sensory bin (just don't leave those little fingers exposed for long!). On your walk, ask your kids to tell you a story about where the animals go in the winter and what they do to stay warm.

Better Social and Emotional Skills

While you may not want a bunch of crazed kids racing around your house all winter, outdoor winter play is a great way to encourage social skills and get all that wild energy out! Invite your child's friends to meet you at the park. Challenge them to their own Winter Olympics to see who can build the highest snow hurdle or jump in the widest rain puddle. Put their problem-solving skills to the test with a winter obstacle course they build themselves. Encourage them to work together and to persevere even though it's cold! And you'll help them build grit and resilience. You can also reap the benefits of outdoor winter play as a family. Commit to taking a walk together each day and let the power of nature help you unwind and destress.

Active Brains

Winter is a wonderful opportunity for some early childhood education at home! Take a walk and count your steps, talk about where the rain comes from and where it goes or what happens to the leaves on the trees. Discuss how the winter changes animal habitats and diets. Search for objects that start with "S" for snow, "W" for wind, or "R" for rain. Then go home and draw or paint what you saw!

The importance of outdoor play – even in the winter – can't be overstated. Kids who play outside every day are healthier, happier, and stronger than those who don't. Winter outdoor play builds kids' brains and bodies and provides mental and emotional stimulation for better overall health. So, what are you waiting for? Grab your hat, coat, and kiddo, and head out into the cold!



Winter Fun for Kids:



When there's lots of snow, but it's too chilly to go outside, our kiddos can still embrace the fluffy white goodness from nature by bringing snow indoors for an afternoon of imaginative play! Best of all, all these activities are edible in case anyone takes a little nibble!

Unicorn Sprinkle Snow

Make snow magical with a few shakes of majestic unicorn sprinkles! The snow turns pretty colors, and the sprinkles add to the sensory experience for kids. Use plastic scoops, cups, or cookie cutters to add to the fun.

You will need:

- Large bowl
- Fresh scoop of snow
- Unicorn sprinkles (also available in Shark sprinkles at Walmart)

Directions: Scoop up fresh snow in a large bowl and a generous amount of sprinkles!

Kool-Aid Snow Painting

Little Picassos will enjoy adding bright colors to snow and can work on their hand-eye coordination skills, too!

You will Need:

- Spray bottle
- Paint brush
- Large bowl
- Fresh snow
- Packets of Kool-Aid

Directions: Fill a plastic squirt bottle with water and add in a packet of Kool-Aid. Shake well. Adjust the nozzle to have a straight stream and paint. Or, place different colored mixes in cups and use a paintbrush to paint on the snow.

Stacking Snowball Tower

Build a snowball tower, work on counting, or even mixing colors – the possibilities are endless! With only a few supplies, this activity will provide hours of chilly entertainment for kiddos of all ages.

You will need:

- Fresh bowl of snow
- Packet of Pop Rocks, or
- Food Coloring, or
- Kool-Aid packets
- Ice cream scoop
- Shallow bin or edged cookie sheet

Directions: Mix in pop rocks, food coloring, or Kool-Aid to color the snow. Scoop the snow into balls and stack them on a cookie sheet or shallow dish. Be creative, make patterns or see who can build the tallest tower!

Snowy Small World Bin

From a jungle to an ocean or farm, with a little color and imagination, kids can transform snow into a wonderful world of play!

You will need:

- Clear shallow bin
- Food coloring or Kool-Aid packets
- Plastic animals or toys
- Spoon or scoop

Directions: Gather fresh snow and make sections of different colors. Choose a theme and build it by packing snow or using a spoon or scoop. Add in animals, toy cars, boats, and more to transform snow into a little world!

Guided Reflective Practice Checklist

Reflective practice is the process by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experience.

“How you are is as important as what you do.” – Jeree Pawl

Why enhance your reflective capacity?

- Enhance relational quality
- Increase intentionality in decision making
- Promote psychological safety in teams
- Build professional resilience to buffer against burnout and compassion fatigue
- Align with principles of cultural humility to maintain curiosity and enhance empathy

Reflective practice is the process by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experience.

Before You Start

- Set aside intentional time for reflection each day
- Practice calm, consistent breathing
- Determine a transition activity (ex. drink of water, mindful minute, get up and stretch)
- Remove distractions (Close up/contain other tasks, priorities, etc. - write a note, save work, close windows on the computer screen)
- Get comfortable and relax your body

Why is mindful breathing important?

- Breathing is an important grounding technique to help center yourself when both positive and negative feelings arise.
- Deep, belly breathing can help restore calm when feeling stressed.
- Mindful breathing has proven health benefits and can often increase serotonin.



Guided Reflection Exercise

What are my intentions as I walk into this interaction?
What are my hopes? What are my worries? What can I bring into the space to support this relationship/ interaction?

- Maintain mindful breathing
- Reflect on both big and small interactions
- Be curious; resist the urge to jump to conclusions
- Notice what is coming up for yourself emotionally, physically and cognitively

I am aware of how I am feeling. I am aware of what I am thinking and what my body is doing in the moment.

- Keep breathing
- What did I learn?
- What feelings were coming up?
- What went well? What didn't go as well?
- How am I pulled to react in comparison to how would I like to respond?
- Is there action that is needed?

Reactive vs. Reflective

Reactive Process

- Immediate
- No planning
- Reacting based on our own feelings
- Limited consideration of other's feelings, perspectives and history
- Culture of "putting out fires"

Reflective Process

- More time to consider nuance
- Intentional
- Self-awareness
- Increased openness to other's feelings, perspectives and history
- Culture of identifying and addressing the underlying cause of "fires"

Remember, reflective practice requires... **PRACTICE.**

Find more resources at:

zerotothree.org/reflectivepractice



ZERO to THREE
Early connections last a lifetime