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NEWLETTER 2025

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



<u>Sea turtle</u> walks are a popular event on Florida beaches in June and July when huge mama turtles weighing in at around 200 to 250 pounds come ashore to lay their eggs. About two months later, the tiny and adorable sea turtles hatch, but they don't just make a run for the water. They wait until the sand cools, which is usually at night, and begin their journey to the water. If you're lucky enough to see them at night, don't shine any light on them. It could really interfere with their sense of direction and set them off course. Summertime is a great time to conduct turtle activities with children. <u>Click here</u> for some great turtle activities that the children will love.

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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:

June 19th Juneteenth

July 4th Independence Day

September 1st Labor Day

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Meet our New Staff

Mary Vance Child Care Referral Specialist

My name is Mary Vance. I have over 20 years' experience working with children. Some of my best work includes volunteering in Pre-K - 3rd grade for 8 years. I went on to continue my education in Child Care receiving my Child Development Associate (CDA). I became a Lead Pre-K Teacher managing my own sensory learn through play-based pyramid model class which was my greatest accomplishment to date. My work is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children. I take pride in educating and teaching child care providers proper management and caring techniques when working with children. My future plans are to continue to provide families with the tools and resources needed to ensure proper care for their children.

Stephanie Long Infant & Toddler Specialist

My name is Stephanie Long, and I live in Niagara County, where I remain closely connected to my grandfather, aunt, and disabled mother, whom I've cared for since childhood. I hold an A.S. in Human Development with a concentration in Psychology and recently achieved my B.S. in Educational Studies with a specialization in Early Childhood Education. I currently serve as an Infant Toddler Specialist with the Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara, where I support caregivers and educators through inclusive, play-based strategies aligned with the NYS Early Learning Guidelines for children birth to age three. My approach integrates trauma-informed care using conscious discipline to promote emotional safety, co-regulation, and connection within daily routines and social play. I focus on outdoor learning, sensory exploration, and open-ended materials to foster developmentally appropriate, engaging experiences. I am certified in OCFS Health and Safety, Pediatric CPR/First Aid, and Medication Administration Training (MAT).

Chrissy Parfinski Child Developmental Specialist

My name is Chrissy Parfinski, and I am a Child Development Specialist with the Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara. I specialize in supporting healthy development in children from age three through adolescence.

I work closely with children, families and educators to create nurturing environments that promote physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Through observation and developmental assessments, I help identify each child's unique needs and collaborate with other professionals to ensure every child has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

O SUMMER FACTS FOR KIDS

- 1 Summer is the warmest season of the year.
- The first official day of summer is called the summer solstice.
- There are more hours of lightness than darkness in the summer.
- 4 Polar days are days without darkness.
- 5 Thunderstorms are most common in the summer.
- Some animals have fur that adapts to summer weather.
- 7 Fireflies are most active in the summer.
- 8 Sharks come closer to shore in summer.
- Many countries celebrate their independence day in summer.
- More people travel in summer than any other season.

oweareteachers

Eating healthy is important at every age. Offer children a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding on foods and beverages, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Here are some healthy CACFP(Child and Adult Food Program) approved recipes to create with your little ones.

Cranberry Applesauce

CACFP Creditable

Total Preparation Time 20 minutes

Serving Size 1/4 cup

Servings 16

Components Fruit

Ingredients

- 1 (12 oz) package fresh cranberries
- 4 cups of unsweetened applesauce
- 1 orange juice
- 1 teaspoon of grated orange peel
- 2 cinnamon sticks or 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1-2 tbsp maple syrup (optional)

Directions

Place all ingredients in a medium saucepan.

Cook ingredients over medium heat. If the mixture starts to boil, lower the heat. Stir frequently until cranberries are soft and have broken down.

Serve fresh off the stovetop, or it can also be served chilled or cooled to room temperature. The cranberry applesauce can also be placed in a blender to purée to the desired consistency. *One serving provides 3/8 cup fruit.*





Teddy Bear Smoothie

Total Preparation Time 5 minutes

Serving Size 3/4 cup

Servings 10

Components Meat/Meat Alternate, Fruit

Ingredients
2 (16 oz) bags frozen whole strawberries,
slightly thawed
4 large bananas
2 1/2 cups Greek yogurt
Make sure your yogurt is #CACFP Creditable!



Directions

Add strawberries, 2 bananas and yogurt to a blender. Blend until smooth. On a clear cup, draw with a food safe marker a teddy bear face (eyes, nose and mouth). Slice the two remaining bananas into 20 round pieces. Add two slices of banana to the rim of the cup to be "teddy bear ears. "Pour cold smoothie into the cup and serve. 3/4 cup provides 1/2 oz of meat alternate and 1/2 cup fruit.



Waffle Fruit Pizza

Total Preparation Time 10 minutes

Serving Size 1/2 waffle and 1/2 cup fruit servings

Number of Servings 10

Components Fruit, Grains

Ingredients

5 whole grain waffles (1 oz eq. each)

2/3 cup low-fat cream cheese, softened

1 tsp vanilla extract

5 cups of your choice of fruits (kiwi, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, banana, pineapple, etc.)

2 tbsp maple syrup (optional)

Directions

In a bowl, whisk together the cream cheese, syrup and vanilla.

Spread two tablespoons of the mixture evenly on top of each waffle.

Cut each waffle into 4 equal pieces that look like pizza slices.

Serve 2 waffle slices and 1/2 cup of mixed fruit on a plate. Have children add their own fruit topping to their fruit pizza!

One serving provides 1/2 oz eq. grains and 1/2 cup fruit.

The following recipes provide good sensory stimuli for children. Using the materials you have created will help children to gain better sensory skills.



Safe Kinetic Sand

Ingredients

- 1 cup baking soda
- ½ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp cream of tartar
- 3-4 tbsp water divided
- 10 drops liquid food coloring or as needed

Instructions

- 1. Pour the dry ingredients into a medium mixing bowl and stir until well combined.
- 2. In a small bowl, stir the food coloring into 3 tablespoons of water.
- 3. Pour 2 tablespoons of colored water into the dry ingredients and stir until combined.
- 4. Stir in the remaining tablespoon of colored water, mixing with your hands if needed in order to combine the ingredients more evenly.
- 5. Add small amounts of water (no more than 1 teaspoon at a time), stirring well between each addition, until the kinetic sand has the desired texture. It should be moldable like wet sand, but still feel fluffy and slightly crumbly.
- 6. Start playing immediately and store in an airtight container when not in use.



Pudding Slime

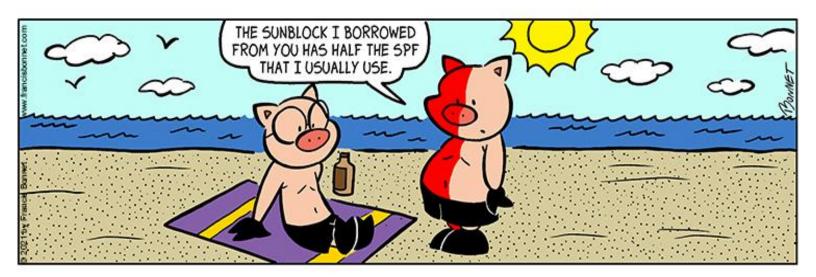
Ingredients

- 1/4 cup instant pudding mix any flavor
- 1 cup corn starch
- 1/3 cup warm water

Instructions

- 1. Add instant pudding mix and half of your cornstarch to a mixing bowl. Add 1/3 cup water and stir until slime begins to form.
- 2. Slowly add the rest of your cornstarch, stirring as you go.
- 3. When slime becomes difficult to stir with a spoon, finish mixing by hand.
- 4. If slime is still sticky, add more cornstarch. If slime is too thick, add more liquid until you have the perfect texture.

Please visit: <u>www.thecraftathomefamily.com</u> for more fun sensory ideas!



Lower the Risk of Sunburn, Skin Cancer, and Early Skin Aging

Sun damage to the body is caused by invisible ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Sunburn is a type of skin damage caused by the sun. Tanning is also a sign of the skin reacting to potentially damaging UV radiation by producing additional pigmentation that provides it with some, but often not enough, protection against sunburn.

Spending time in the sun unprotected increases the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging. People of all skin colors are at risk for this damage. You can reduce your risk by:

- Limiting your time in the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are most intense.
- Wearing clothing to cover skin exposed to the sun, such as long-sleeve shirts, pants, sunglasses, and broad-brim hats. Sun-protective clothing is now available. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates these products only if they are intended to be used for medical purposes.)
- Using broad-spectrum sunscreens with an Sun Protective Factor (SPF) value of 15 or higher regularly and as directed. (Broad-spectrum sunscreens offer protection against both UVA and UVB rays, two types of the sun's ultraviolet radiation.) These two types of UV light are proven to contribute to the risk for skin cancer: Ultraviolet A (UVA) has a longer wavelength. It is mainly associated with tanning and skin aging but can also lead to sunburn. Ultraviolet B (UVB) has a shorter wavelength. It is mainly associated with sunburn.

Consult a health care professional before applying sunscreen to infants younger than 6 months.

In general, the FDA recommends using broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, even on cloudy days.

In addition:

- Apply sunscreen liberally to all uncovered skin, especially your nose, ears, neck, hands, feet, and lips.
- Reapply at least every two hours. Apply more often if you're swimming or sweating. (An
 average-size adult or child needs at least one ounce of sunscreen, about the amount it
 takes to fill a shot glass, to evenly cover the body.)
- If you don't have much hair, apply sunscreen to the top of your head or wear a hat.
- No sunscreen completely blocks UV radiation. So other protections are needed, such as protective clothing, sunglasses, and staying in the shade.
- No sunscreen is waterproof. Check the instructions on your sunscreen for information about its water resistance and reapplication instructions if you are sweating or going in the water.

Only sunscreens in lotion, cream, stick, gel, oil, butter, paste, spray, and powder dosage forms can be legally marketed. Sunscreen in all other dosage forms – including wipes, towelettes, body washes, and shampoos – cannot be legally marketed.

It is important to read the label carefully to ensure you get the most potential benefit from sunscreen use.

- Only products that pass the FDA's broad-spectrum requirements, and therefore protect against UVA exposure, can be labeled "broad-spectrum".
- Sunscreens that are not broad-spectrum or are broad-spectrum, but lack an SPF of at least 15, must carry a warning: "Skin Cancer/Skin Aging Alert: Spending time in the sun increases your risk of skin cancer and early skin aging. This product has been shown only to help prevent sunburn, not skin cancer or early skin aging".
- Water resistance claims, for 40 or 80 minutes, tell you how much time you can expect to get the labeled SPF-level of protection while swimming or sweating.
- Manufacturers may not make claims that their sunscreens are "waterproof" or "sweat proof".
- Products may not be identified as "sunblock" or claim instant protection or protection for more than two hours without reapplying.

People of all skin colors are potentially at risk for sunburn and other harmful effects of UV radiation, so always protect yourself. Be especially careful if you have:

- Pale skin.
- Blond, red, or light brown hair.
- Been treated for skin cancer.
- A family member who has had skin cancer.

If you take medications, ask your health care professional about sun-care precautions. Some medications may increase sun sensitivity. Even on an overcast day, up to 80% of the sun's UV rays can get through the clouds. Stay in the shade as much as possible.

Sunlight reflecting off sand, water, or even snow further increases exposure to UV radiation and raises your risk of developing eye problems. Certain sunglasses can help protect your eyes.

When choosing sunglasses consider the following:

- Choose sunglasses with a UV400 rating or "100% UV protection" on the label. ('UV400' refers to UV rays at the top end of the UV spectrum, up to the 400-nanometre wavelength.)
- These sunglasses block more than 99% of UVA and UVB radiation and provide the most protection against UV rays
- Do not mistake dark-tinted sunglasses as having UV protection. The darkness of the lens does not indicate its ability to shield your eyes from UV rays. Many sunglasses with lightcolored tints – such as green, amber, red, and gray – can offer the same UV protection as very dark lenses.
- Check to see if your tinted glasses have UV protection. If you are unsure, your eye care professional may be able to check for you. When you wear tinted glasses, your pupils dilate and can increase exposure of your retinas to UV light. Without UV protection, you are putting yourself at risk to harmful effects associated with solar radiation.
- Be aware that children should wear sunglasses that indicate the UV protection level. Toy sunglasses may not have UV protection.
- Even when you wear sunglasses, wearing a wide-brim hat and sunscreen can help further protect you from sun exposure.



The Benefits of Outdoor Play for Child Development

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulations require programs to offer daily outside play or, in the case of school-age programs, physical activity. See regulations 414.7(a), 416.7 (a), 416.7 (h), 417.7(a), 417.7 (h) and 418-1.7 (a). In addition, regulations 414.8(b), 416.13(a)(3), 417.13(a)(3) and 418-1.8 (b) also require staff who support the physical, cognitive (intellectual), emotional and social well-being of children.

Playing outside is a crucial component of holistic development fostering physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Now that the weather is breaking, rather than just taking neighborhood walks, place emphasis on getting the children outside to freely play and explore the environment. Both you and the children will reap the benefits.

The Physical Benefits of Play

Outdoor play enhances motor skills such as agility, balance, and coordination, while helping to prevent obesity through increased physical activity. Activities like running, jumping, and climbing help children refine their coordination and balance.

Children who participate in outdoor play have lower Body Mass Index (BMI) levels and a decreased risk of obesity-related health conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Children who play outside also enjoy additional benefits like improved immune function and better vitamin D levels due to sunlight exposure. These health advantages bolster their long-term well-being, making outdoor play an essential component of a child's daily routine.

Cognitive Growth

Engaging in activities in natural environments enhances problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills through using playground structures in which children must strategize movement and make decisions about what path to take.

Unstructured outdoor play fosters creativity by encouraging children to engage in imaginative play. In a natural environment, children are free to create games and scenarios enhancing their creative thinking and improving their ability to solve problems collaboratively, as they must work with peers to navigate challenges and develop games.

Emotional Well-being and Outdoor Activities

When children play outdoors, they practice empathy, cooperation, and collaboration, allowing them to form lasting friendships and build self-esteem through shared experiences. Outdoor activities can alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. The combination of physical activity and natural settings promotes relaxation, helping children manage their emotions and develop coping skills.

Engaging in consistent outdoor activities not only improves children's mental health, but also lays the foundation for a well-rounded and fulfilling lifestyle as they grow.

Socially and emotionally, outdoor play promotes cooperation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. Children learn to navigate relationships through interactions with peers, developing essential social skills like sharing and conflict resolution. These experiences not only nurture friendships, but also build a foundation of emotional intelligence that is crucial for their future success.

Additionally, unstructured outdoor play allows children to explore risks and face challenges, enhancing their resilience and self-confidence. As they learn to manage their environment and assess risks during play, they develop problem-solving skills and a deeper understanding of their own limits.

In summary, the holistic advantages provided by outdoor play ensure that children grow into healthier, happier, and more resilient individuals, thus laying a robust foundation for their future development.

Building Social Skills through Friendships and Empathy

During outdoor play, children play together, learning to navigate conversations, expressing themselves verbally, and listening to others. Engaging in outdoor activities, whether climbing, playing tag, or participating in team sports, promotes collaboration and teamwork. Through these experiences, children learn to set common goals, share responsibilities, and communicate effectively with their peers, leading to enhanced cooperation skills.

During outdoor play children learn to empathize with each other's feelings and needs, cooperate and resolve conflicts constructively. This foundation of empathy and cooperation is crucial as they forge deeper connections and develop interpersonal skills essential for their future.

Encourage children to spend more time outdoors by creating a routine where outdoor play is prioritized, making it a memorable part of their daily schedule.

Creating Safe Outdoor Spaces

Safety is paramount in outdoor environments. Closely supervise activities and design settings that prevent injuries. Invest in quality, safe play equipment and ensure that outdoor areas are free from hazards like sharp objects or steep drops. Add adequate fall protection under all climbing equipment, no matter how high. Teach children about their environment to raise awareness and contribute to their safety.

Outdoor play is more than just an enjoyable pastime for children; it's a fundamental part of their development journey. By offering a blended benefit of physical exertion, cognitive challenges, emotional resilience, and social interaction, outdoor play serves as a crucial building block in nurturing well-rounded, healthy, and happy individuals.

References

- Why Outdoor Play Is Essential for Healthy Development | NAEYC
- Benefits of Outdoor Play for Kids: Why It Matters Miracle Recreation
- The Benefits of Outdoor Play: Why It Matters
- The Importance of Outdoor Play for Children Community Playthings
- Playing Outside: Why It's Important for Kids HealthyChildren.org
- Playing outdoors | indirect

Explore the different definitions of play and why it is so important in this News You Can Use. This is useful information for home visitors, program staff, caregivers, and others serving infants and toddlers through Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. Play benefits every aspect of child development as infants and toddlers explore their world and their bodies, while also learning about and mastering relationships and social skills.



BABY TEETHING SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

Irritability

Crankiness, wakefulness, rejection of food. These are common baby problems.

Drooling

Probably the easiest, most noticeable sign of a baby moving into the teething phase is the presence of excess saliva.

Weight Loss

Appetite may wane during symptomatic teething days. This is to be expected, but if you see the numbers continue to drop week after week, this is a big red flag.

Rashes

You may notice a rash on the face, neck, orchin. If you suspect your baby is teething, rashes are pretty common

Hands (or toys) in the mouth

When it's a symptom of teething, you will generally see more gnawing.

Flushed cheeks & temperature

Some babies also have a slightly raised temperature, but still within the non-fever range and flushed cheeks.

Sleep deprivation

Your mini-me may have periods of wakefulness during teething pain. Sustained sleepnbut days and nights

No signs

You can be one of these lucky ones that find no signs. If you do, congratulations!

Nursing, and bottle feeding issues

A baby who is teething will often bite. If you're a breastfeeding mama you probably know this all too well.

Topical Drugs and Teething Jewelry Used for Teething Have Risks

Topical medications (used on the surface of the gums) containing benzocaine or lidocaine offer little to no benefit and are associated with serious risks when used for teething pain in children. These include creams, gels, and homeopathic teething tablets.

Benzocaine, a local anesthetic (a drug that temporarily numbs), is the active ingredient in several nonprescription oral health care products including Anbesol, Cepacol, Chloraseptic, HurriCaine, Orabase, Orajel, and Topex. These products should not be used for teething pain in children because they can be dangerous. Using benzocaine products can lead to a serious, and sometimes fatal, condition called methemoglobinemia in which the oxygen-carrying capacity of red blood cells is greatly reduced.

Topical oral viscous lidocaine solution, a prescription drug used to treat certain types of mouth pain, also should not be used to treat teething pain in infants and young children. It can cause grave harm such as heart problems, severe brain injury and even death. In addition, topical oral viscous lidocaine solution can cause seizures in infants and young children when too much is applied, or it is accidentally swallowed.

The FDA also has received reports of death and serious injuries to infants and children, including strangulation and choking, caused by <u>teething jewelryExternal Link Disclaimer</u>, such as amber teething necklaces.

What You Can Do to Ease Teething Pain

If a child's gums are swollen and tender, gently rub or massage the gums with your finger, or give the child a firm (not liquid-filled) teether made of rubber to chew on. Make sure the teething ring is not frozen. If the object is too hard, it can hurt the child's gums. Be sure to supervise children so they don't accidentally choke on the teething ring.

If you have questions about any medication, contact the FDA's Division of Drug Information at 1-855-543-3784 and 1-301-796-3400, or druginfo@fda.hhs.gov. The pharmacists are experts at interpreting information for the public.

Consumers and health care professionals should notify the FDA of any adverse side effects when using drugs and devices the agency regulates by reporting them online to <u>MedWatch</u>, the FDA's Safety information and adverse event reporting program, or by telephone at 1-800-FDA-1088.

Outdoor Activities for Toddlers

- Create a pet rock. Go for a walk in search of a rock. Go home and paint the rock and then place the rock outside.
- Make a bird feeder out of string and cheerios. My Little Three and Me has a great post with how to create this with pipe cleaners. Read it here.
- Play in the dirt. Get your shovels, hand rakes, or even some toy cars/trucks you don't mind getting dirty. <u>Busy Toddler</u> has a creative idea of adding in a <u>carwash</u> <u>element</u>.



Nature Name collage



Have the children gather outdoor trimmings and turn them into name art.

Kids love this chance to design their name using a variety of outdoor supplies.

You will need pieces of cardboard or a paper bag with the name of each child.

Cover the name with glue and have the children decorate their name with the outdoor trimmings.

Activities for School-Age Children



<u>Nature Scavenger Hunts</u> are the perfect way to combine the excitement of a treasure hunt with the wonders of the great outdoors. As kids embark on their scavenger hunt, encourage them to observe and explore their surroundings.

Encourage them to touch, smell, and listen to the natural elements around them. This activity not only keeps them engaged but also helps them develop a deeper appreciation for nature.

The scavenger hunt items can be adapted each time to keep children interested.

Pool Painting Credit to: Kim Lowe



This is a fun outdoor activity that children will love. Turn a kiddie pool into a creative adventure for kids. You will need white paper, plastic balls, a kiddie pool and tempera paint.

Tape your paper to the bottom of a plastic kiddie pool. Dip balls into different colored paint and drop the balls into the pool. Have each artist swirl the pool to create their own design.

Popcorn Drop Relay Race Credit to: Douglas Merriam

First, you'll need to make two pairs of shoe cups. Use a push pin to poke holes in the bottom of clear plastic cups. Push a wide rubber band through the holes to create a strap.

To play the game, split the children into two teams. The first player straps cups on the top of their shoes and fills them with popped popcorn from a bag at the starting line. Then the player hustles to a basket on the other end of the lawn. After the player



dumps out the cup of popcorn into the basket, they race back. The next player follows suit.

The race is over when one of the bags of popcorn is empty. Measure the popcorn in the baskets to see which team got the most popcorn in the basket.

Bubble Wrap Hopscotch Credit to: David Roth

Save your bubble wrap and get hopping! Kids and adults will love popping the bubbles with this backyard idea.

First, cut bubble wrap into nine rectangles. Then, use a permanent marker to give each rectangle a number from one to nine.

One player tosses a small stone or object into one of the numbered squares. The player skips a turn if the stone lands outside of a numbered square.

Once the stone lands on a numbered square, the child can step on every available space except the one with the stone, being careful not to touch an outside line.

Where two numbers are side-by-side such as 5 and 6, the child must jump using both feet simultaneously.

Once they reach number ten, the child must turn around and return to start.

Outdoor Word Game



Credit to: Joe Polillio



This party game is F-U-N! Engage kids with this challenging outdoor spelling game. For a 72-piece game set, purchase a 4x8-foot sheet of Masonite from a home improvement store. At the store, have it cut into 8-inch squares.

Apply a letter to each square—you'll repeat the alphabet twice except for the letters Q and X.

To play, each player gets ten letters. The first player spells a word on the ground. Then, the next player must build off that word. The player with the fewest letters at the end wins!

Frisbee Toss Credit to: Laura Doss



Aim and toss! This simple backyard game for kids starts with a repurposed cardboard box and gets all ages into the action.

Cut a rectangular hole on both sides of a cardboard box. You want the hole large enough to fit your Frisbee comfortably.

Decorate the box with colorful tape, paper, or paint.

Grab a bunch of Frisbees, and off you go! The winner is the one who gets the most Frisbees to land inside the box by aiming for the hole.