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NEWSLETTER

2025

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



March 9th, 2025 @ 2:00 AM

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're 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 their milestone 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 shape who we become.

Your actions are important!

Niagara Community Action

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Infant & Toddler

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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:

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Welcome!

The Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara would like to welcome our new child development specialist, Chrissy Parfinski. Chrissy has many years of experience as a day care center director as well working in the classroom with all age groups of children. Chrissy is available to assist your program with a wide variety of topics including but not limited to behavior management, supervision, safety concerns and much more. Please help us welcome Chrissy to the Clearinghouse staff. Chrissy can be contacted at 716-285-8572 Ext. 120 or by email at CParfinski@niagaracap.org.

Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month is observed every April to raise awareness and prevent child abuse. It's a time to recognize the importance of communities working together to support families and prevent child maltreatment. The following are ways that you can help prevent child abuse and maltreatment.

- Be a trusted adult and help protect children in your community
 - Promote positive parenting and create a supportive environment
 - Know what to do if you think a child or teen needs help
 - Use social media to raise awareness and share resources
 - Use the hashtags #CAPMonth and #PreventioninPartnership
 - Include calls to action in your posts
 - Retweet and reply to others who are sharing content about child abuse prevention
 - Live-post and tweet events you host or are a part of during April
- Thank you for all of your efforts to protect children in our community.

Provider Appreciation Day!



National Provider Appreciation Day is May 9, 2025. Child care workers are celebrated on this day including teachers, nannies, and caregivers, all of who are essential workers in helping working parents continue to provide for their families. The day focuses on building awareness of the holiday, thanking childcare workers, and showcasing their contributions to their communities. From a simple thank you and gifts to social media posts and hashtags, this holiday is deserving of our attention. The Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara would like to wish all child care providers a Happy Provider Appreciation Day!

Safe Sleep Checklist for Infants

Safe Infant Sleep Checklist



Place **babies on their backs** for naps and at night until they are 1 year old. Make sure babies sleep on a firm, flat surface in their own crib, bassinet or play yard.



Choose a **firm mattress** and fitted sheet for baby's crib. **Remove toys, blankets, pillows, bumper pads** and other accessories from the crib.



Dress baby in a **wearable blanket, onesie** or similar clothing for every sleep. A loose blanket could cover baby's airway or make their body temperature too high.



Share your room, not your bed.

Place baby's crib or bassinet in your bedroom instead of letting baby sleep in the same bed with you.



Follow the manufacturer's instructions to assemble your crib. Make sure to complete and **submit the product registration card** to learn about any recalls or safety updates.



For more information, visit www.safekids.org

**SAFE
KIDS**
WORLDWIDE.

Infant Sleep Safety

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Safe Sleep website offers tools and resources to help pediatricians and healthcare professionals educate parents and caregivers about infant sleep safety.

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), is the leading cause of infant death. Safe sleep practices can prevent many SUID fatalities. The AAP's "Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations" provides evidence-based guidelines to reduce sleep-related death, supported by a detailed technical report.

Articles Worth Reading

- [Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment](#)
- [Evidence Base for 2022 Updated Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleep Environment to Reduce the Risk of Sleep-Related Infant Deaths](#)
- [Factors Associated With Choice of Infant Sleep Location | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

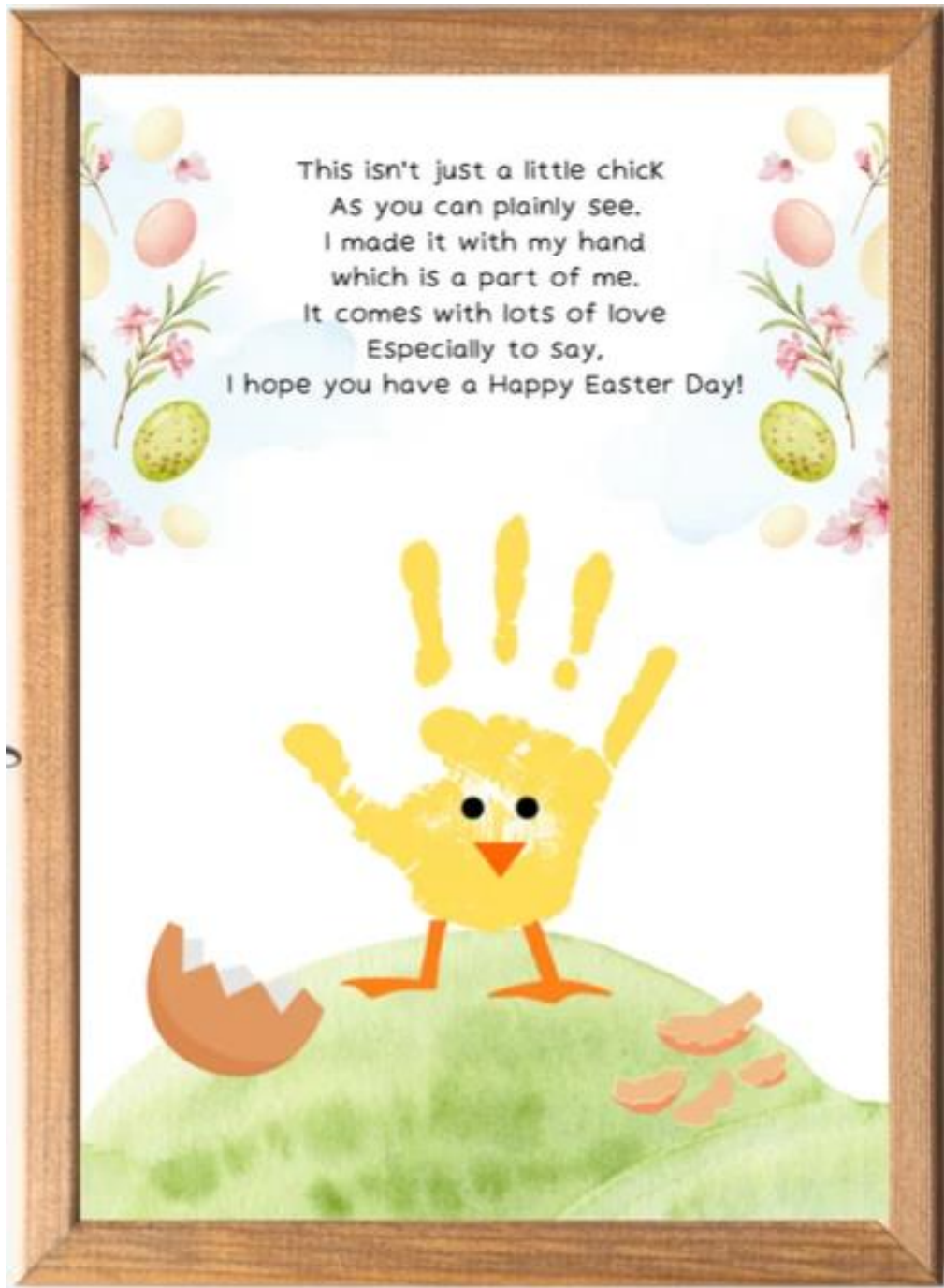
Spring Activities for Infants

Create this footprint leprechaun and have your children learn attached poem.



Hand Print Chicks

Create these adorable hand print chicks with your infants or toddlers to display or send home as a awesome Easter gift!



Do You Have a Toddler that is a Picky Eater?



Picky eating is a common phase in toddlers, between the ages of 18 months and 4 yrs. It is a normal developmental stage where toddlers assert their independence and explore their food preferences.

Some reasons why a toddler can be a picky eater are as follows:

- Sensory sensitivities to textures, tastes, or smells
- Preference for familiar foods
- Fear of trying new foods
- Lack of exposure to a variety of foods
- Underlying medical conditions (e.g., gastrointestinal issues, autism)

The following are strategies for encouraging toddlers to try different foods:

- Offer a variety of healthy foods by presenting a selection of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains at each meal.
- Make meals fun by using colorful plates, fun shapes, and playful language to make food appealing.
- Don't force your child to eat or make them feel guilty if they refuse.
- Be patient and persistent as it may take repeated exposure for your child to accept new foods.
- Set a good example by eating healthy foods yourself and show your child that you enjoy them.
- Allow your child to choose some foods by giving them some control and offering a few familiar foods alongside new ones.

The following is a resource on how to prevent a child from becoming a picky eater.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/120/4/e1069/71268/How-Do-Toddler-Eating-Problems-Relate-to-Their?searchresult=1>

Spring Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers

The following is a great science activity. Have the children determine if eggs will sink or float.



Have the children fill plastic eggs with different items, then have the children hypothesize whether they will sink or float. Have the children pass the eggs around so the children can feel if the egg is heavy or light. Some ideas for fillers include LEGO bricks, feathers, coins, rocks, and dry pasta. You can create a chart to track the guesses. Children will be excited by the results of the activity and have fun during the activity.

The Importance of Literacy for School-Age Children



School-age children's literacy skills include reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension. They also learn to recognize the connection between letters and sounds. Good literacy skills are the foundation for all other subjects that children learn in school. Literacy skills include the following:

- **Phonological awareness:** Recognizing rhyming words, syllables, and individual sounds
- **Print awareness:** Noticing print, knowing how to handle a book, and following the written word
- **Vocabulary:** Learning new words
- **Spelling:** Using approximate spelling based on sound identification
- **Comprehension:** Understanding what is read

Literacy development progresses in stages. Some of the stages are listed below.

- **Early literacy:** Learning about sounds, words, and language
- **First and second grade:** Reading familiar stories, decoding unfamiliar words, and using pictures and context to figure out unfamiliar words
- **Elementary school:** Developing grammar and pronunciation and using more complex sentences

Children who are having literacy difficulties may need to go back to the basics which include:

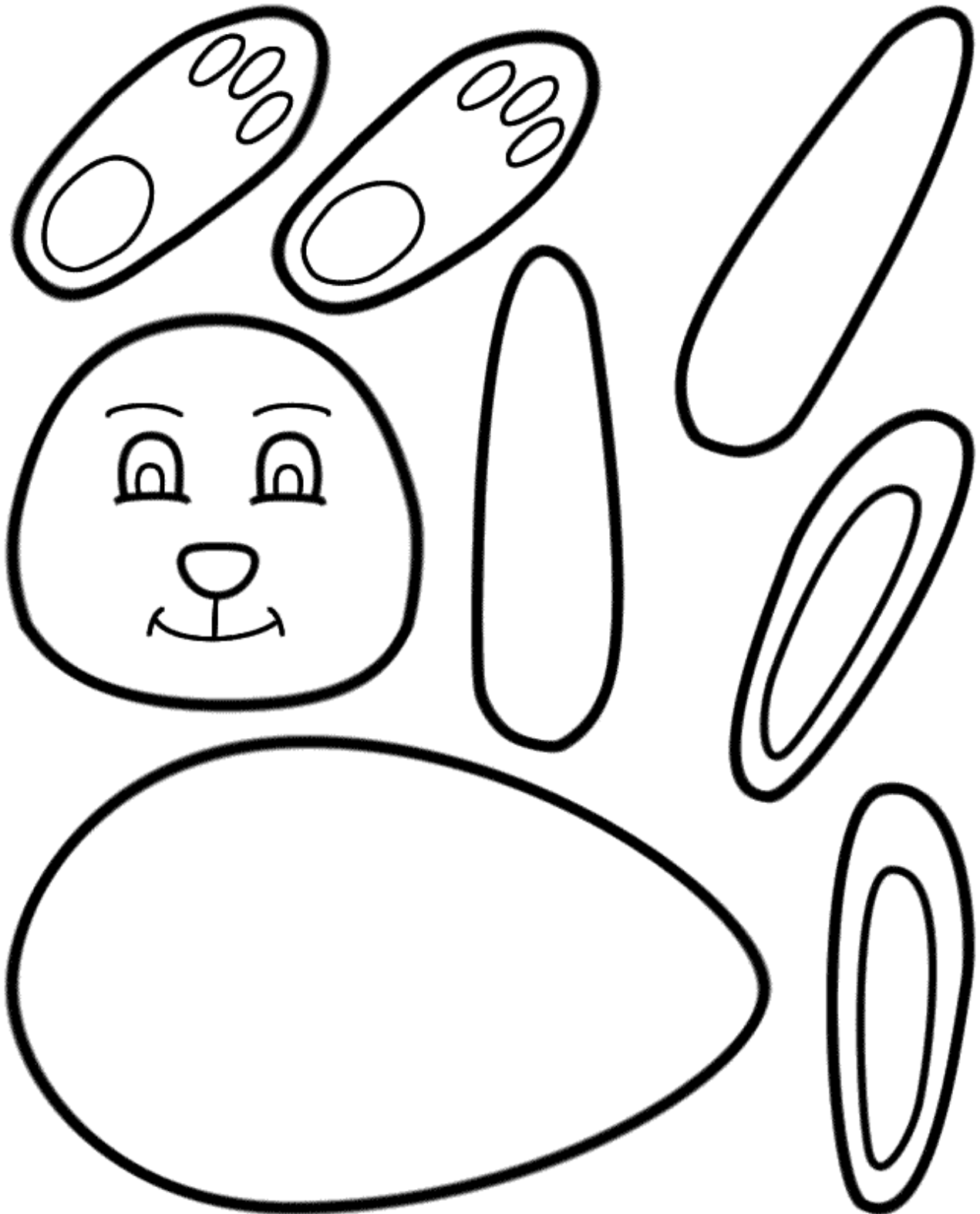
- Practicing letter sounds
- Recognizing alphabet letters
- Practicing writing letters
- Making rhymes or playing with rhyming words

Literacy supports reading, playing with rhyme, singing, talking, and games. Find ways to incorporate literacy with the children in your care. For additional information on promoting literacy, please visit.

[A Text-Based Intervention to Promote Literacy: An RCT | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

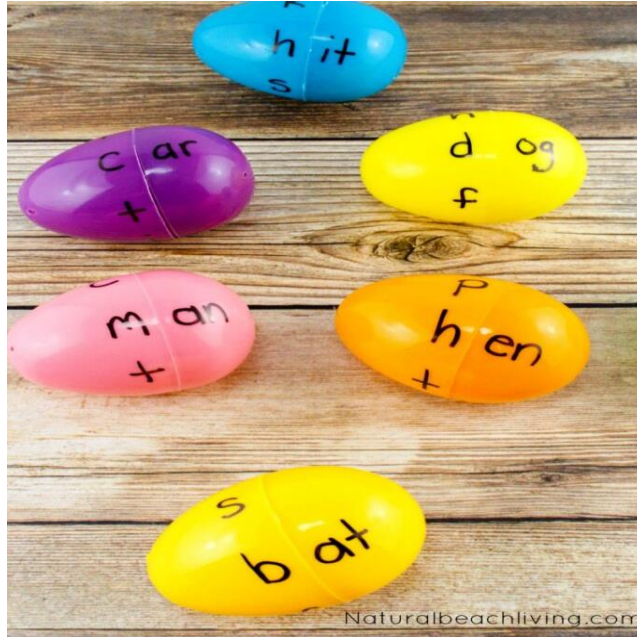
Activities for School-age Children

Create this funny Easter bunny by having the children color, cut and glue the pieces of the bunny together. See how creative each child can be and how many different colored bunnies you have when finished.



Twist Eggs Word Family Game

To enhance literacy skills, write several letters vertically on one half of a plastic Easter egg. Then write a common ending on the other half. With just a turn or twist of the egg halves, students can make different words. Try using these words when they're [writing poems!](#)



Twist Egg Compound Words Game

Switch up the game by writing words on each side of the egg and have the children put the words together to make a compound word.

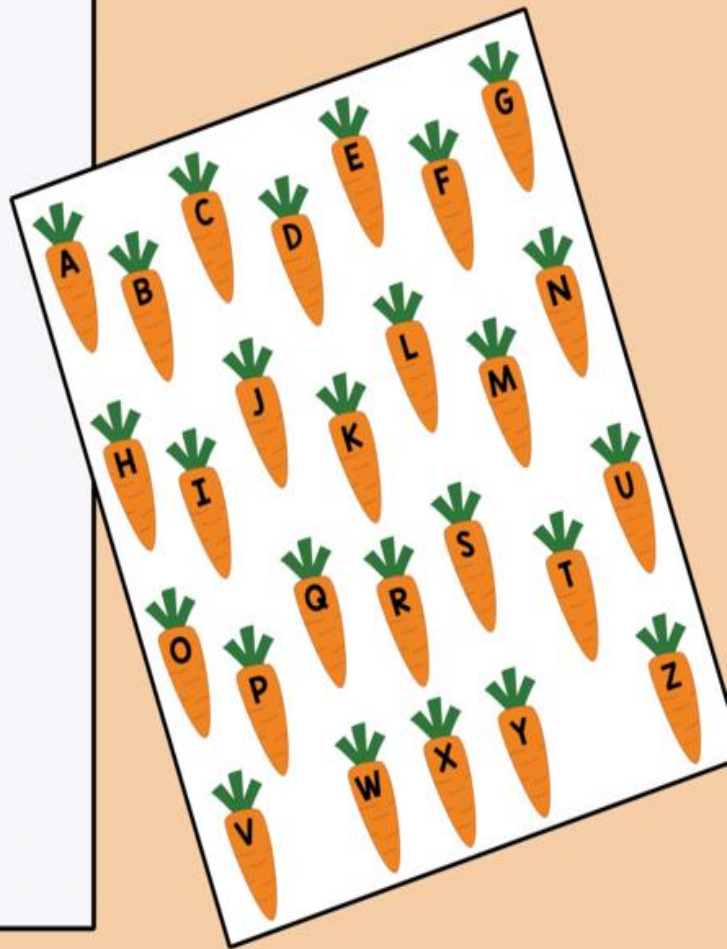
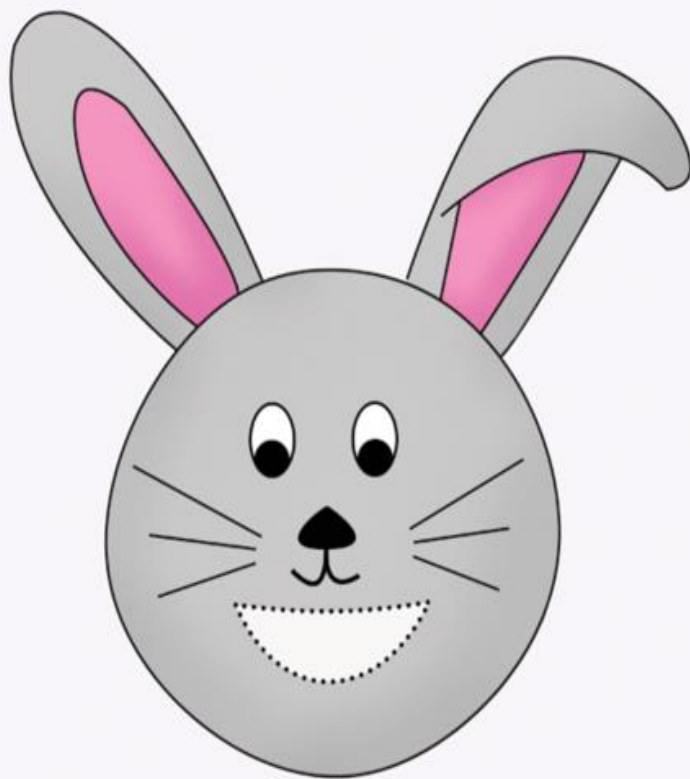


Sorting Eggs by Parts of Speech

You can create activities that help children reinforce parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and more with this easy-prep plastic egg idea. You can hide them for a seek-and-find game or just have children pick the eggs from a basket and sort them one by one. This activity is great for school-age children and can be adapted to meet the needs of individual age groups of children. Creating different ways to have the children participate will keep the children engaged in the activities. Use your imagination and have fun!



Feed the Bunny ABC Activity



You can use sight words, letter sounds, shapes or colors and numbers on the carrots to feed the bunny. His game can be adapted for all age groups.

Healthy Spring Recipes



Fresh Rainbow

- **Baby carrots:** Baby carrots are a versatile, fresh and fun ingredient I always have around for snack trays. They're full of vitamins and perfect for making healthy holiday treats.
- **Hummus:** Hummus is another staple ingredient I always have around. It's loaded with plant-based protein and makes the perfect dip for veggies, crackers, and pita.
- **Mini circle cheeses:** My kids love mini circle cheeses like Baby Bell. However, you can use gluten-free crackers or vegan cheese instead if you want to make this recipe dairy-free.



Carrot Hummus Cups

- Baby carrots
- Hummus
- Parsley

Use a toothpick to make a hole in the top of each carrot. Break off a small piece of parsley and put it in the hole. Place the carrots in little cups (I like these [disposable cups](#)) of hummus.



Bunny Faces

- Mini circle cheeses
- Celery – cut into “whiskers”
- Baby carrots – cut in half for ears
- A large carrot – cut into a triangle for nose
- [Mini chocolate chips](#) – for eyes

Assemble the cute bunny faces by pushing the baby carrots into the top of the cheese for ears. Place the rest of the pieces on to make a bunny face.



Egg Chicks

- Hard-boiled eggs
- 1-2 teaspoons [mayonnaise](#) per egg
- A large carrot – cut into a triangle for a beak
- [Mini chocolate chips](#) – for eyes
- Carrots/hummus to help the egg sit up

Cut the egg in at the 1/3 point. Carefully scoop out the yolk. Mash the yolk up with mayonnaise and scoop back into the larger egg portion. Top with the other 1/3 of the egg and add chocolate chips/carrots for the eyes/beak.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Creditable Recipes

Build Your Own Taco

Ingredients	• ¾ cup dry lentils, rinsed
• 2-3 tbsp taco seasoning*	• 1 tbsp vegetable oil or olive oil
• 1 cup shredded cheese*	• 1 cup fresh tomatoes, diced
• 2 cups shredded lettuce	• 8 (28g) soft flour tortilla*

Directions

1. In a medium pot, add 3 cups of water and the lentils. Bring to a boil, then cover. Reduce to a simmer and cook for about 20 minutes or until lentils are tender but not mushy. Drain liquid.
2. In a large skillet with 1 tbsp oil, add lentils, taco seasoning and 3 tablespoons of water to the skillet.
3. Mix ingredients together and cook for 5-6 minutes.
4. On each plate, add ¾ cup lentils, ⅛ cup diced tomatoes, ¼ cup lettuce, ⅛ cup cheese, and 1 tortilla.
5. Have children build their own tacos.

One taco provides 1 ½ oz equivalent meat/meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable and 1 oz equivalent grains.

*As a best practice, choose ingredients that are whole grain, low-fat or low in sodium when possible.

Beefy Macaroni

Ingredients	• 1 pound (90/10) ground beef
• ½ cup diced onions	• 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
• 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce	• 2 cups beef broth*
• 4 oz (1 cup) dry whole wheat macaroni pasta^	• Salt (optional)

^For accurate measurements, pasta should be weighed before cooking.

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook ground beef and onions over medium-high heat for 5-10 minutes.
2. Once fully cooked, add the tomato sauce, Worcestershire sauce, beef broth, and macaroni pasta.
3. Season with a pinch of salt to taste.
4. Mix ingredients then bring liquid to a boil.
5. Cover skillet and lower heat to a simmer.
6. Cook for 20 minutes or until macaroni is tender. Add more broth or water if needed.

½ cup provides ½ oz equivalent grains and 1 ½ oz equivalent meat/meat alternate

*As a best practice, choose ingredients that are whole grain, low-fat or low in sodium when possible.

The Importance of Safety and Supervision



The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has regulatory standards related to supervision. The following information was originally included in the OCFS January 9, 2025 Dear Provider Letter. It is crucial that you review this information and share it with all staff in your child care program.

Providing competent supervision to children is the most critical role of any child care provider. Lack of competent supervision can lead to dangerous situations like young children wandering away from staff, or being left behind on buses, playgrounds, or in classrooms. Even when children are located and returned to their parents/programs, the lapse in competent supervision placed them at risk of serious harm. It is imperative that we acknowledge the severity of these situations and seize the opportunity to examine and improve supervision practices. Here are some strategies and reminders to all staff and caregivers on this important topic.

Regulatory Standard for Supervision • 41*.8(a): Children cannot be left without competent supervision at any time. Competent supervision includes awareness of and responsibility for the ongoing activity of each child. It requires that all children be within the caregiver's range of vision and that the caregiver be close enough to respond when redirection or intervention strategies are needed. Competent supervision must take into account the child's age as well as emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Regulations outline staff-to-child ratios and maximum group sizes to protect the safety of the children. Regulations are the minimum requirements a program must follow. There may be times when your program needs to increase the number of staff to properly supervise the children in your care.

Supervision Strategies: Supervision is basic to safety, the prevention of injury, and maintaining quality child care. Competent supervision is required when children are both indoors and out; whether playing or at rest. Competent supervision is necessary when children are on a field trip, and when they are being transported in a motor vehicle. Supervision is a constant. Parents trust caregivers and teachers to adequately supervise their children at all times.

Competent supervision strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Know the children in your care:** Does a child struggle with transitions? Is one child a risk taker? Do you have a child that likes to hide? Knowing the children in your care helps you anticipate their needs and develop an individualized plan of supervision for those children.
- **Stand in strategic positions** so all children are always in range of vision. Program spaces (indoors and outdoors) should be designed with visibility that allows constant unobstructed adult supervision. Staff should circulate around the area so that their range of vision moves with the children.
- **Take attendance frequently:** Taking attendance is an ongoing process that continues throughout the day; it is not only recorded upon arrival/departure. Attendance should be updated whenever a child enters or leaves the group. There are many ways to record attendance. One option is form OCFS-6027, Child Care Attendance Sheet - Seven Days, or some programs chose digital attendance systems.
- **Name-to-face checks** should be done at regular intervals throughout the day, at every transition, and when leaving one area and arriving at another. Name-to-face checks means saying the child's name aloud and then looking at the child's face to confirm. Simply counting heads can result in a

mistake, as the same child may be counted twice. Frequent attendance taking accounts for the children presently in care and alerts the caregiver if a child is missing. Using a reminder tone or musical clock that sounds at timed intervals is a way you could remind staff to take attendance consistently throughout the day.

- **On the move:** Supervision challenges often occur during transition times, especially when the group moves from one area of the program to another. Establish and practice simple safety rules. Procedures that are consistent and predictable help children feel safe and the caregiver to maintain structure. Remind young children of the rules and practice them around transition times. This can include a procedure for lining up to leave or re-enter the program. Assign children a line partner (“a buddy”) so they look for their partner when lining up.
- **Staffing changes:** Transitions are not limited to just the group’s movement. They also occur when staff change within the room (breaks, change of shift, etc.). Develop a method by which all caregivers discuss attendance before taking responsibility for a group of children. Caregivers must know who is in their care at all times. Arrival and departure times also can be challenging, as parents and children often require staff attention, and sometimes commotion increases the risk of lapses in supervision. It is critical that staff have a plan to maintain supervision of the children during times of increased activity.
- **Transportation:** Children must never be left unattended in a motor vehicle or other form of transportation. The program must develop and follow procedures that guarantee a child will not be left alone on a bus, including a procedure to ensure that all children have departed the vehicle. Children often fall asleep in motor vehicles, so every seat must be checked before leaving the vehicle every day, every time. Each year, hundreds of children are left unattended in motor vehicles and many die as a result.
- **Field Trips:** Before you travel off site, make a plan and discuss it with all staff present. The director must approve all plans for field trips, including the type of activity, developmental needs of children, and whether there is the need for additional staff to provide competent supervision. Talk to the children about the field trip and discuss safety rules. On the day of the trip, children and staff might wear matching colors so the group is easily identifiable to everyone. Never allow children to go into a public restroom alone (when possible, include both male and female staff on the field trip). Conduct name-to-face checks every five minutes when you take children in a public setting. Caregivers must know who is in their group at all times. Children’s behavior and the environment can change without warning, despite having a solid plan in place. So be prepared and expect the unexpected.
- **Have a plan:** Programs are required to establish and maintain a supervision plan. The plan should include policies regarding staff refraining from activities that may distract them from maintaining competent supervision. Caregivers are prohibited from personal use of mobile phone while supervising children. Other distractions include personal conversations with other staff, cleaning, administrative tasks, etc. Providers and directors should make a regular practice of checking that staff and caregivers remain focused on and engaged with the children. Programs should frequently review, revise, and train staff on supervision expectations, plans, and policies.



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If you are unable to locate a child in your care: CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY! Notify law enforcement that a child cannot be located and provide as many details as possible: an accurate timeframe of when and where the child was last seen; the child's name and age; a description of the child's physical appearance; clothing the child is wearing; etc. There must be no delay in contacting police. Police will conduct a thorough search and investigation while you continue to maintain the health and safety of the children in your care. After getting help to look for the missing child and securing the safety of all other children, regulations require you to notify the parent and

your OCFS regional office. You are a mandated reporter and required by law to also notify the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR). The mandated reported hotline number is 1-800-635-1522.

The staff of the Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara would like to thank all child care providers for their dedication to ensuring the safety of all children throughout Niagara County!

Thank
you

The text 'Thank you' is written in a black, cursive font. It is framed by two decorative pink leafy branches, one positioned above the word 'Thank' and one below the word 'you'.