



All Children Considered

SPRING 2010

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

EXPERIENCES FOR LEARNING

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Connecticut's Museums Offer Rich Learning Experiences

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Introduction

How would you like your children to build a dinosaur skeleton, create a sculpture, build an airplane, or explore the stars? It's easy! Call on your neighborhood experts at local museums. Many offer programs specifically designed for different age groups, either at their site or through outreach programs to your organization. They also serve the needs of families through preschool, afterschool, home school, and school vacation programs.

Part I of this article provides an overview of museums whose primary mission is programming for children. **Part II** highlights art museums with children's programs. **Part III** provides one example of a museum that engages children through building projects. **Part IV** offers suggestions for ways to save money on these experiences.

Part I Children's Museums

Children's museums provide a fun and rich environment for children to learn about the world through their senses; everything in these museums is meant to be touched and played with! Children's museums also have early childhood educators who can lead more structured programs for families or groups. **The Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut** in Niantic offers the "Museum Without Walls" outreach programs and teacher development programs (www.childrensmuseumsect.org or 860.691.1111). **The Children's Museum** in West Hartford has outreach programs and a wonderful new Planetarium (www.thechildrensmuseumct.org or 860.523.7449). **The CT Children's Museum** in New Haven has "Mornings at the Museum" programs for family child care providers and tool kits for those interested in becoming licensed to operate a home-based child care program (www.childrensbuilding.org or 203.562.5437).

(Continued on next page)

From the editor...

Our Theme, "Experiences for Learning," responds to feedback received in our "Readers' Survey" last spring that requested more "Quick and Easy" activities for children. As a result, we have included articles that highlight practical information to help you enrich your children's intellectual, social, and emotional development. Our lead article highlights Connecticut's museums, a valuable resource to help you enhance your children's active learning. In

addition to our State Agency Updates, the Caregivers' Resource Corner, and the 2-1-1 Child Care Mailbag Q and A, we have included an excellent tool to help parents evaluate their children's developmental stages. As always, we welcome your suggestions on additional ways we can support your work with children.

Harry Mangle, Editor



Part II Art Museums

Art museums have become friendlier to families in recent years with new programs especially designed for children. The **Florence Griswold Museum** in Old Lyme has a program called “Little Pictures & Big Ears,” a tour for preschoolers followed by a “hands-on” activity in their education center (www.flogris.org or 860.434.5542). The **Wadsworth Atheneum** in Hartford has “Free Family Saturdays” with tours, activities and performances on the last Saturday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (www.wadsworthatheneum.org or 860.838.4046). The **New Britain Museum of American Art** has “Mini-muse” tours for preschoolers and kindergartners with stories and an exploration of shapes in art (www.nbmaa.org or 860.229.0257).

Part III A Museum for Building Things

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The **Eli Whitney Museum**, which is inspired by Whitney’s factory and inventions, encourages children to think and learn life skills. This is done by using their hands, eyes, and ears to experiment and complete projects from the many kits produced by the museum. The ideas for these projects, e.g., an oyster boat for Fair Haven, a game Mark Twain described

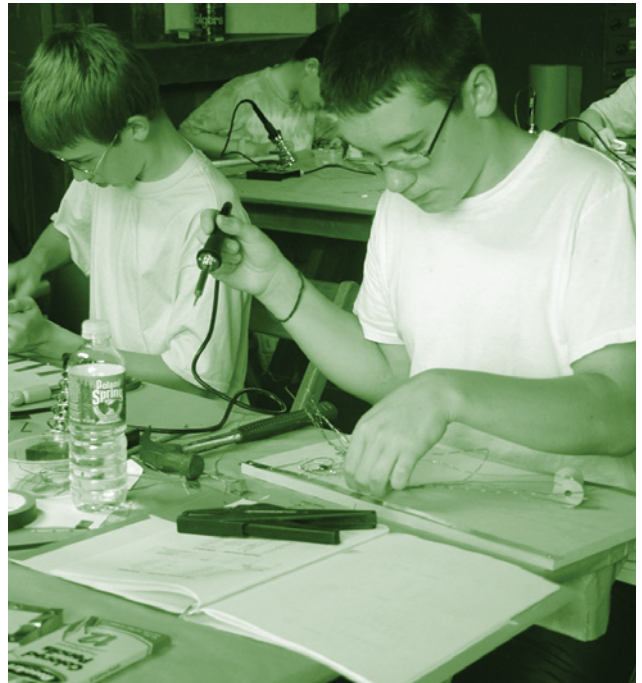
for West Hartford, and quarry trucks for North Branford, came from school teachers.

If your children are not able to come to the museum, the staff may come to your program site and work with your group on location. They may lead activities or you may obtain kits from the museum to make boats, airplanes, xylophones, etc. Also available is a box of wood scraps (“Art Wood”) that is used for gluing and nailing in programs for all age levels. If you call the museum, be sure to mention that you learned about us from the *All Children Considered* newsletter and we will set aside a box of “Art Wood” that you can pick up any weekend! For more information about the museum, call 203.777.1833 or check the website at www.eliwhitney.org

Part IV Saving Money

Ways you can take advantage of programs at these museums without spending a lot of money are:

- Inquiring about free admission for children aged 5 and under.
- Getting information about offers of group discounts for field trips, usually for groups of at least 10 or 15 people.



- Finding out about organizations that may have scholarship funds to help you pay for a group. Always ask!
- Booking an outreach program to occur at your site is often less expensive than taking a field trip.
- Encouraging families to become members of a museum, which then allows free admission to that site for a year.
- Borrowing family museum passes from your local library.
- Checking about the “free admission” day that many museums host at least once a year.

Every museum has different fees, membership rates, and scholarship availability. Be sure to ask about costs when calling to inquire about a program.

To learn about yet another example of a museum learning experience, check out the article “Go Green with the Three R’s: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” in the *All Children Considered* newsletter, Spring 2009, Volume 17, No. 2, page 4 (www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/acc). For a complete listing of all different types of museums in your area, go to www.museumstuff.com/museums/connecticut.php.



Connecticut's Ages and Stages Child Monitoring Program

(Flyer to distribute to parents of young children)

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At what age should children sit up, hold onto a toy, or say their first words? Parents naturally have questions like these about their child's learning or development. One way families can have their questions answered, as well as keep track of how their child is developing, is through Connecticut's Ages and Stages Child Monitoring Program. This free, confidential program is available to families by calling the Child Development Infoline, a specialized call center of United Way of CT / 2-1-1, at 1.800.505.7000.

To access this service, a family submits an enrollment form obtained through the Child Development Infoline. Next, the

family receives an "Ages and Stages Questionnaire" in the mail to fill out and return for scoring. Questionnaires are available for children at 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 42, 48, 54 and 60 months of age. A Child Development Care Coordinator from the Infoline reviews the questionnaire and sends the results to the family and child's primary health provider (if the parent signs consent).

When a completed questionnaire identifies a concern about the child's development, the Care Coordinator will contact the family to discuss those concerns. He or she may suggest services for the child, such as an evaluation through the Connecticut Birth to Three System or through the local school district. Additional services may also be available through programs such as Early Childhood Special Education, Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, or "Help Me Grow."

Every few months, until the child is 60 months old, an additional "Ages and Stages Questionnaire" is sent out to parents to check on their child's development. These questionnaires with associated activities provide a fun, interactive

way to understand and provide opportunities to encourage as well as enhance the many developmental changes that children experience.

Last year, over 2,400 Connecticut families chose to participate in the free Ages and Stages Child Monitoring Program, which is supported by the Children's Trust Fund's "Help Me Grow" Program. Please call us at 1.800.505.7000 with your questions and concerns.



the U.S. Land Grant Colleges and Universities. One example of is the series, See the World Through My Eyes, from the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service www.arfamilies.org/family_life/see_world_my_eyes/

This resource provides twenty-two letters presented as if they were written from children to their parents, with titles such as:

- "There's a Monster in My Closet"
- "Hey! I was watching that!"
- "Hitting is my way of asking for help"
- "I said 'No!'"
- "I want to do it my way!"

Caregivers' Resource Corner

Children's Health, Behavior, and Development

- [The American Academy of Pediatrics Web site](http://www.HealthyChildren.org), at www.HealthyChildren.org, gives up-to-the-minute advice, backed by 60,000 American Academy of Pediatrics member pediatricians. This resource empowers parents and caregivers to be proactive about their child's health, whether it's learning about vaccines, their infant's needs, developmental milestones in their toddler, or how to stay connected with their teenager.
- [The Child Development Infoline](http://www.ctunitedway.org/cdi.html), at 1.800.505.7000, a program of United Way of CT/2-1-1, is a place where families can call with questions or concerns about their child's health, behavior, or development. To learn more about how this free service can help you and your children, go to www.ctunitedway.org/cdi.html.

Children and Family Safety

- [OnSafety](http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety) at www.cpsc.gov/onsafety is the new official blog of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Check here for the latest safety information pertaining to Children and Families.

Learning Resources for Quick and Easy Learning Activities

[Cool Math 4 Kids](http://www.coolmath4kids.com/)

www.coolmath4kids.com/

[Arts and Craft Activities](http://www.amazingmoms.com/html/kidsart.htm#quick_and_easy_art)

www.amazingmoms.com/html/kidsart.htm#quick_and_easy_art

[Making simple musical instruments](http://funschool.kaboose.com/fun-blaster/music/)

<http://funschool.kaboose.com/fun-blaster/music/>

Free Fact Sheets for Your Parent Bulletin Board

- [Research-based information on children's behavioral and developmental issues](http://www.ctunitedway.org/cdi.html) is available at no charge from

All Children Considered is published by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System. We welcome readers' comments and contributions. Please send correspondence to the editor via e-mail: Harry.Mangle@uconn.edu, (860) 570-9077 or to UConn Greater Hartford, 1800 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117-2659.

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4-H for Afterschool Kids: Learning by Doing

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"Learn by Doing" is a key concept of the University of Connecticut 4-H Youth Development Program. This concept, also known as "Experiential Learning," is based on the research that children learn best when their bodies and minds work together. It consists of these five elements: 1) Doing, 2) Sharing, 3) Processing, 4) Generalizing, and 5) Applying.

Each 4-H Project includes a "Helper's Guide", which identifies each of these elements while providing guiding questions and discussion points for the teacher.

How often do you hear from your kids, "It's too much like school- I don't want to do it!"? It's a common quandary for afterschool programs to balance learning and fun, especially when state or federal funding requires educational practices. This is where 4-H programs can help. Cows and sewing come to mind when many people think of 4-H, but it's so much more! Each *4-H Afterschool* curriculum even identifies the life skills, education standards, and success indicators for each activity, so all you have to do is get the supplies and jump in! The following example is excerpted from *Exploring the Treasures of 4-H*:

EDIBLE AQUIFER

Education Standard: NS.K- 4.6 (National Science, grades K-4)
"Personal and Social Perspectives, Changes in Environments" ¹

Success Indicator: Demonstrate how water and pollution get into an aquifer

Time: 20-30 minutes

Suggested Group Size: 2-20

Materials: 3 toppings of cereal, raisins, peanuts, or chocolate chips; prepared vanilla pudding; milk; liquid food coloring; clear cups and spoons (1 per child); serving dishes and spoons for toppings

Experiential Learning Activity:

1. DO -

- The first layer in the cup is pudding, the 'bedrock,' and the other toppings are the 'aquifer.'
- Spoon in at least 3 different toppings and tap the cup gently to settle the particles.
- Pour 1/3 cup milk (the 'water') into the cup and observe how it moves through the 'aquifer.' Discuss vocabulary of percolation, ground water, aquifers, and pollution.
- Pour the food coloring 'pollution' into the cup and observe.
- Finally, eat the aquifer!

2. SHARE- What is an aquifer and how do aquifers store water?

3. PROCESS- What does it mean when we say that water is contaminated?

4. GENERALIZE- Make a list of things in your house, school, or community that could contaminate an aquifer.

5. APPLY- Does polluted water concern you? Why or why not?

The Edible Aquifer is just one of hundreds of hands-on 4-H experiential learning activities offered at low cost through the 4-H Juried Curriculum project that includes a collection of 200 curriculum offerings that align with national education standards.

To learn more about *4-H Afterschool* and using 4-H activities in your program, contact the University of Connecticut Extension Center in your county at www.extension.uconn.edu or www.4-h.uconn.edu. Activities range from stand-alone projects like creating a structure using toothpicks and peas, making a mini first aid kit using a film canister, producing your own cloud and rainstorm, to multi-week projects like robotics, theatre arts, and yes, sewing!

More information on 4-H Curriculum is available at www.4-hmall.org/curriculum.aspx

Center for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Education (www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=4962&page=103) "Science in Personal and Social Perspectives Standards" 2-8-10.

Educational Requirements: Child Day Care Centers & Group Day Care Homes

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Some of my fondest memories working in child care centers and with my own two children are providing activities that fostered excitement, wonderment, curiosity, and anticipation. These wonderful times include:

- joining a child in the housekeeping area while they prepare you a gourmet meal of pancakes and sausage,
- watching them catch snowflakes on their tongues,
- delving into a finger-painting activity for the first time,
- parading down the hallways with musical instruments while singing “The Ants Go Marching One by One,”
- or just simply engaging in conversations with them about their day or what they liked best about their weekend.

Child care staff have the ability to provide these and other endless activities that promote developmental growth and lasting memories. In order to assure that your program meets state standards, the DPH educational requirements are listed below for your review.

DPH Licensing Regulation 19a-79-8a states that “Each Child Day Care Center and Group Day Care Home shall develop and implement a written plan for the daily program that includes a **flexible** schedule and shall be available to the parent(s) and staff. Child Day Care Centers and Group Day Care Homes shall have policies, procedures, and

activities that enhance the individual needs of the diverse population of children served, which includes children with cultural, language, and developmental differences.”

a. The plan **shall** include:

1. indoor and outdoor physical activities which provide opportunities for fine and gross motor development;
2. problem-solving experiences that facilitate concept formation, language development, and sensory discrimination;
3. creative experiences which allow children the opportunity to develop and express **their own** ideas and feelings in **all** parts of the program, including but not limited to,
 - A. art and media,
 - B. dramatic play,
 - C. music,
 - D. language, and
 - E. motor activity
4. language learning experiences that provide opportunities for spontaneous conversation, as well as experiences with books, poems, stories, and songs;

5. experiences that promote self reliance and build self esteem including, but not necessarily limited to, self care of body and clothing, care of possessions, and shared group responsibility for equipment and materials;

6. health education experiences that include modeling good health practices, sound nutrition, and safety awareness.

b. The program **shall** include:

1. Child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities;
2. exploration and discovery;
3. varied choices for children in materials and equipment;
4. individual and small group activities;
5. active and quiet play;
6. rest, sleep or quiet activity;
7. nutritious snacks and meal; and
8. toileting and clean up.

If you have any questions regarding these regulations or related topics, contact The Educational Consultant for your child care program or the DPH Child Day Care Help Desk at 1.800.282.6063.



Children's Literature and Social Skill Development

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Children's literature can be a useful tool for helping children develop skills for solving social problems. Through books in the classroom, children can explore common social problems with the help of the characters in stories. Another way that children's literature can help children develop social skills is by allowing them to experience different cultures and ethnic groups. Children come to realize that even though we all have differences, we all have similar feelings and emotions. The following three books demonstrate how you can use literature in this way with your children. For help in selecting other books appropriate for different ages, check with your school, local community children's librarian, or the website listed below.

Children can develop an understanding of themselves and others through books. In *David Gets In Trouble* (ages 4-7) by David Shannon, the main character, David, learns the value of telling the truth. Throughout the book, he tells one lie after another. However, in the end is relieved to find that his mother still loves him even after he confesses and tells the truth about his mischievous deeds. Children can relate to David and learn that being honest is best. A teacher can use this book to start a classroom discussion about how the children in the class can identify with David. Children can share times when they made a bad choice and how they resolved the situation. Children can also help David come up with other ways of dealing with his problems.

Literature can also assist children in understanding social differences between them and other people. Children of different abilities work side by side in classrooms and are expected to interact well together. In *Leo The Late Bloomer* (ages 3-7), by Robert Kraus, Leo's father becomes increasingly concerned because his son is not developing at the same rate as other children. He worries that his son will not achieve critical developmental milestones. He waits, watches, and frets. Leo's mother, who is kind and reassuring, understands that not all children develop

at the same pace so she asks her husband to be patient with Leo. In the end Leo blooms and becomes the lion that his father has been waiting for. Just like Leo's father, we all have late bloomers in our classrooms. By reading this book children can learn to have patience with themselves and their fellow classmates.

In the same way that books can help children understand differences, they can help them see similarities. Children's books are powerful because children can relate to the characters in the story. In her book, *Whoever You Are* (ages 0-5), Mem Fox shows that children from all over the world may look and speak different languages, but that they all still laugh, smile, and cry. One line from the book states that, "but inside, their hearts are just like yours." All children can learn from this. They can share times in their lives when they too have laughed, smiled, or cried. What made them do this? Have any of the other children in the class experienced the same?

The books above can all lead to teachable moments as we help children prepare for new experiences, explore their fears, and develop their social skills.

Ed. Note: To choose books for children of all ages, go to www.readkiddoread.com/home



Department of Social Services (DSS)

<http://www.ct.gov/dss>

Upcoming Training Opportunities for Child Care Providers

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The Child Care Bureau Office of the Administration for Children and Families has made available to state teams in its Region I¹ the following two federal "train the trainers" training events. Both events include strategic planning sessions to establish plans for rolling out these training initiatives in child care programs during state fiscal year 2010-2011.

The teams will then bring the training back to their states to incorporate the information into on-going work leading to improving each state's child care system of technical assistance, training, and support.

The Early Childhood Consultant Infant/Toddler Training Modules

Human development in the first 3 years of life occurs by leaps and bounds. This developmental foundation is so important that infant/toddler caregivers must be aware of each child's developmental progress. In a child care setting, knowledge of a child's development is accomplished through observation, developmental screening, and regular assessment.

In Connecticut, child care licensing regulations² require child care programs to have access to consultants (education, health, mental health, etc.) Consultants can play an important role in helping infant/toddler caregivers understand the definitions, concepts, and processes that support understanding the developmental progress of young children.

The purpose of these training modules is to provide consultants with information to support their work with individuals and child care programs serving infants, toddlers and their families.

(Continued on next page)

I Am Moving, I Am Learning (IMIL) Training: A Proactive Approach to Preventing and Reversing Childhood Obesity in Child Care

Childhood obesity has risen dramatically in the United States in the past decade, particularly among young children from low-income and minority groups.³ Lack of physical activity and poor nutrition are significant contributors to childhood obesity.⁴

Overweight children are now suffering the precursors of chronic diseases and negative health consequences formerly seen only in adults. If this trend continues, children of this generation are not likely to live as long as their parents. Research shows that childhood obesity can be prevented and even reversed by teaching young children to be active and make healthy nutrition choices.⁵

The IMIL training is designed to enhance the work early childhood providers already do as it can be seamlessly integrated into existing curricula and classroom routines. It seeks to increase the quantity and quality of physical activity for young children, and promote the importance of good nutrition for children and their families. It acknowledges the importance of the mind-body connection, reinforcing the fact that being physically fit fosters healthy early childhood development which translates into successful learning.

The two Connecticut train-the-trainer teams are coordinated by the Department of Social Services. For more information, contact Amparo García at amparo.garcia@ct.gov

¹ States in Region I: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

² CT Department of Public Health, Statutes and Regulations, Child Day Care Centers and Group Day Care Homes. www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/daycare/pdf/Statutes_and_Regulations_Centers.pdf

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight children and adolescents 6–19 years of age, according to sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, selected years 1963–65 through 1999–2002 www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/bus/bus04trend.pdf#070

⁴ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Healthy Youth www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity/

⁵ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Healthy Youth www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity/

Quick and Easy Learning Experiences

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The following learning experiences will help you keep children actively engaged in learning. They have been excerpted from *The School Age Note of the Day*, a series of free curriculum and program activities that are emailed each day and can be adapted for children in a variety of care settings. To obtain this resource, see the notes below this article.

Music

You don't need expensive instruments to help children experience the fun of creating music. Here are two ways to combine common recycled materials with creativity and imagination to encourage children's emerging artistic abilities:

Horn: Requires a paper towel roll, waxed paper, rubber band and pen. Decorate the paper towel roll with construction paper or paint. Cover one end of the paper towel roll with waxed paper and secure it with a rubber band. Punch a row of holes along one side of the roll with the tip of a pen (A staff member may want to do this for younger children.). To play, sing a tune into the open end of the horn.

Guitar: Requires an empty shoebox, rubber bands, and a ruler. Remove the cover from the box. Stretch the rubber bands around the box. Attach the ruler to the back of the box on one end to act as the arm of the guitar. To play, strum or pluck the rubber bands.

Additional instruments can be dreamed up with empty oatmeal containers, dried beans, paper plates, empty 2-liter plastic bottles, empty plastic coffee containers with plastic lids, etc. For more ideas, check out <http://funschool.kaboose.com/fun-blaster/music/>

MATHEMATICS

Jumping Around with Math

This game gets everyone moving and doing math at the same time! Before you start, decide what the group will count by. For younger children, choose 1 or 2; for a mid-level challenge, choose 4.

To play:

1. The whole group gets in a circle.
2. Start counting by the chosen number (for example, if counting by twos, the first child says 2, the next says 4, the next 6, and so on). Everyone jumps when someone says a number ending in 0 (e.g., 10, 20, 30).
3. Keep counting and jumping until you reach or pass 100.

4. Next time you play, add more actions. For example, clap on an even number or stamp a foot on multiples of 3.

For more ideas on putting math into everyday activities and conversations with children, go to *Mixing in Math* at <http://mixinginmath.terc.edu>.

READING

Choosing Engaging Books for Children

Award-winning author James Patterson has created a Web site for parents and educators to help make children lifelong readers. The site, www.readkiddoread.com, features numerous links to find books for kids of all ages. Each link is organized by ages (i.e., 0 to 8; 6 and up; 8 and up; and 10 and up). Upon clicking on a title in a particular category visitors discover even more titles and a review of the book. There are also links to classic titles in several categories, suggestions for books that boys will enjoy, suggestions for how to get children to read, and a contest that afterschool professionals could use as an activity in which children identify first lines from books.

Ed. Note: The learning activities above are just a few of many compiled by *School-Age NOTES*, the trusted provider of quality resources for afterschool professionals since 1980. *The School-Age Note of the Day* is a free resource that is sent daily via email. To sign up, go to www.schoolagenotes.com.

Please share the newsletter with all staff.

Child Care 2-1-1 Mailbag

Question: In addition to the regular story time offered within my child care program, are there other ways that I can encourage literacy?

Answer: Yes, there are. We know from research studies that reading to young children as often as possible increases their reading and writing skills as they get older. Reading to them at an early age improves their ability to make assumptions, understand content, and recognize new words. Additionally, it builds their imagination and creates an enjoyable positive connection between children and the person reading.

Here are some of the ways to incorporate and encourage literacy and strengthen a child's love for reading:

- Have a variety of board books as well as cleanable plastic books for infants and toddlers, who tend to put things in their mouths.
- Use picture books, lift-a-flap books, and various sized books to engage children's curiosity.
- Incorporate books in learning centers that are related to the activity in the area (e.g., books about space in the science center, art books in the art area, and cooking books or those with character puppets in the dramatic play area).



- Start a lending library in your program where children and parents/guardians can “sign-out” books.
- Encourage families to read to their children at home by setting goals for the number of minutes and books read to their children.
- Have volunteers (parents, guardians, or others) visit to read books with the children, and then do a related activity.
- Find out if there is a mobile library in your community that could visit your program. If feasible, plan a field trip to your local library for story hour or to have children get library cards.
- Network with community businesses to sponsor your program by donating age appropriate books or inviting employees as book buddies who come to read to children.

For additional ideas from a Child Care Referral Specialist or to seek a training workshop on literacy, call 2-1-1 Child Care at 2-1-1 or 1.800.505.1000.

