



Head Start Newsletter for Parents of Preschool Children

Northeast South Dakota Head Start Program, Inc.

August – October 2023

Playing – it's more than what you think!

We are so excited to have this year of playing, learning and developing under way! The routines are in full swing and everyone seems to be enjoying their time with Head Start! Many parents ask us why the children “just play” for part of their time at Head Start.

The following poem, “Just Playing” explains how the many activities Teachers and Home Visitors carefully plan ahead of time are actually helping your child learn the things they need to by doing what they do best – playing!

One of the tools your Head Start Teacher or Home Visitor uses as a base for planning their activities is the Creative Curriculum. This is a guide for setting up the classroom into learning areas, planning specific learning activities, involving parents in their child's learning and assessing each child's progress. Throughout the year, a different area of this curriculum will be highlighted, so you can find out more about what your child is doing, how it helps them further their development, why it's so important for us to include in the program, and things you can do at home with your child.

For children who will be moving on to Kindergarten next year, we will also be highlighting “Transition Activities” for parents to do at home to help with your child's readiness skills.

If you have any questions about the Creative Curriculum, transition, or your child's learning, be sure to ask your Teacher, Home Visitor, or Education Coordinator.

Dates to Remember

August 8

Policy Council and Board
of Directors Meeting

August 21

Sisseton & Webster Child
Services Begin

September 4

Holiday

September 6

Child Services Begin

September 12

Policy Council & Board of
Director Meeting

October 9

Holiday

October 10

Policy Council & Board of
Directors Meeting

JUST PLAYING

When I'm building in the block area,
Please don't say I'm "Just Playing".
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
About balance and shapes.

When I'm getting all dressed up,
Setting the table, caring for babies,
Don't get the idea I'm "Just Playing".
For you see, I'm learning as I play;
I may be a mother or father someday.

When you see me up to my elbows in paint,
Or standing at an easel, or molding and shaping clay,
Please don't let me hear you say, "He/She is just playing".

For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm expressing myself and being creative.
I may be an artist or an inventor someday.

When you see me sitting in a chair,
"Reading" to an imaginary audience,
Please don't laugh and think I'm "Just Playing".
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.

I may be a teacher someday.
When you see me engrossed in a puzzle,
Or some "plaything" at my school,
Please don't feel the time is wasted in "Play".

For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning to solve problems and concentrate.
I may be in business someday.

When you see me cooking or tasting foods,
Please don't think that because I enjoy it, it is "Just Play".
I'm learning to follow directions and see differences.

I may be a chef someday.
When you see me learning to skip, hop, run and move my body,
Please don't say I'm "Just Playing".

For, you see, I'm learning how my body works.
I may be a doctor, nurse or athlete someday.
When you ask me what I've done at school today,
And I say "I just played".

Please don't misunderstand me.
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning to enjoy and be successful in my work.

I'm preparing for tomorrow.
Today, I'm a child and my work is PLAY! -Author Unknown

Playing With Your Child

In today's world of balancing work and home schedules, parents find it hard to have quality time with their children. It is essential for parents to make the best use of time they have with their children. Your child needs time with you to relax and play.



Playing with children builds lasting bonds. Playing allows parents to appreciate the uniqueness of each child. Playing with children can also be a stress reducer for over-worked parents. Laughing and relaxing are important to your own well-being.



Try to spend individual time with each of your children. When a parent or sibling plays a board game with a child, shares a bike ride, plays baseball, or reads a story, the child learns self-importance. Your child's self-esteem gets a boost. You are sending positive messages to your child when you spend quality playtime with him. From these early interactions, children develop a vision of the world and gain a sense of their place in it.

Family activities are important for the whole family. They help develop strong family bonds, which can last a lifetime. Families who play together are more cooperative, supportive and have better communication. Have movie nights and game nights, or go for walks together. A game night allows parents to teach children to take turns, how to win, how to lose and methods of sequencing events. Listening to music together by singing along, or playing rhythm instruments will help children to listen for and recognize patterns in music, which will assist with math skills in school. If you are a single parent or have only one child, invite family and friends over to play!

Praise for the Accomplishments of Children

Children need to feel that the significant people in their life notice what they do and are proud of their accomplishments. This message can be given by a hug as well as with words. A baby's first step, the creation of a pretty picture, or blocks stacked into a tall tower are obvious times for praise.

Less obvious times are good too – for example, when a messy child shows the slightest sign of neatness, or when she has completed a task without being asked to do it.

It doesn't matter how the accomplishment stacks up in relation to other children, the important thing is that the child accomplished something.

A good rule of thumb is to praise children as often as – or more often than – you correct them!

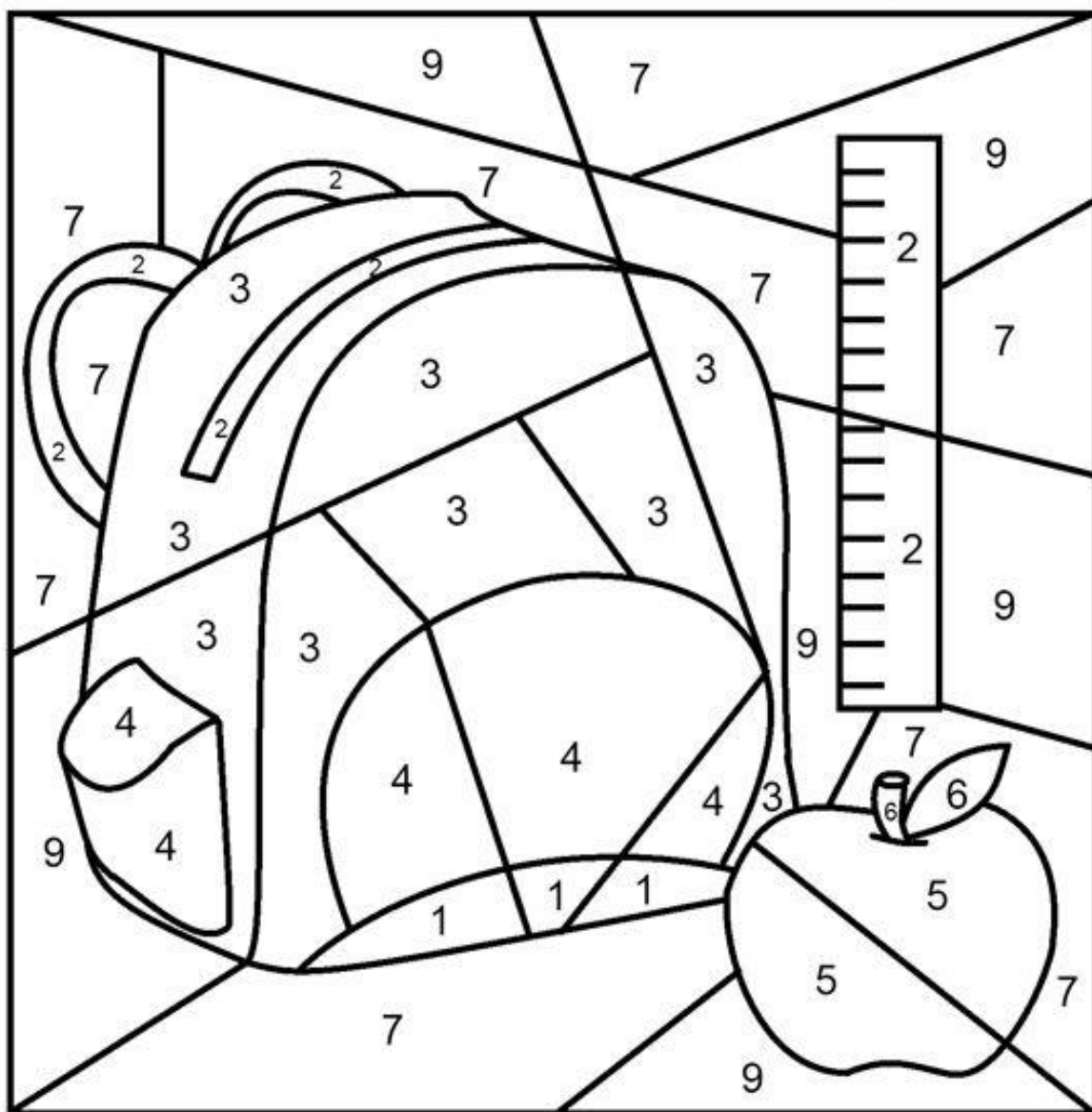


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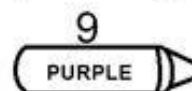
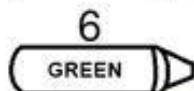
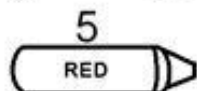
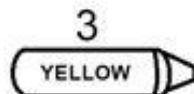
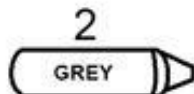
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Mealtime Conversations DO'S AND DON'TS for Preschoolers

During mealtimes, it is important to make positive comments that help children and don't hinder them when developing eating habits. Here are some examples of what to say and not say during mealtimes.

"This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry."

"These radishes are very crunchy!"

Phrases like these help to point out the characteristics of food. They may encourage children to try new foods.

"Do you like that food?"

"What is your favorite food?"

"Everybody likes different foods, don't they?"

Phrases like these make children feel like they are in control of their eating habits and shifts the focus toward the taste of food.

"Is your stomach telling you that you're full?"

"Is your stomach making a hungry, growling noise?"

"Has your tummy had enough?"

Phrases like these help children to recognize their hunger cues when they are full. This can prevent overeating.

"It's okay that you didn't want to try this food."

"If you like, we can try this food another time."

Phrases like these promote decision-making skills. They also focus on children's food preferences instead of the amount or types of foods consumed.

"Eat that for me."

"If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad."

Phrases like these teach children to eat for your approval. This can lead children to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and themselves.

"Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas."

"You have to take one more bite before you can leave the table."

Phrases like these teach children to ignore fullness. It is better for children to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

"See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?"

Phrases like this imply that the children were wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or themselves.

"No dessert until you eat your vegetables."

"Stop crying, and I will give you a cookie."

Phrases like these imply that some foods are better than others. Using food as a reward promotes emotional eating because the food is used to cope with their feelings.



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LEARNING KINDNESS

Children don't learn kindness by accident. They learn it by the teaching they receive, the way they see others interact, and by practicing gentle treatment of others. Teaching children to think of others takes very little effort. There are plenty of opportunities in an average day to instruct youngsters how to be nice. For example, while waiting in the line at the post office, you can explain that you wait your turn because others are in front of you.

You can teach children how to answer politely when someone asks them a question. You can even pose quizzes for them when situations arise: what would be helpful for that man on crutches?

The first and often most challenging place to teach children to be kind is at home. Daily interactions with siblings can be used as learning situations. Encourage little ones to express anger in ways that don't hurt anyone, and to find solutions to problems that are fair to everyone. Although family members will always have times of disagreement, they can begin to think of how other people feel. Kids who are raised in an "anything goes" atmosphere cannot be expected to know how to play nicely with other children.

Even more powerful than teaching is modeling. If you are rude to others, your children will quickly learn to be discourteous also. If you yell at sales people because you aren't waited on promptly, or mutter obscenities at fellow drivers, your children will treat others with contempt.

Young people treat others the way they are treated. How many times do we thank toddlers for helping, or ask that they walk faster instead of demanding it?

Children need to be listened to and taken seriously, even if their ideas seem a bit trivial to us. By respecting children's points of view and really listening to what they have to say, we help them learn how to react to others.

When youngsters are treated with love and respect at home, they will be much more likely to be kind to friends away from home!

SLEEP AND YOUR CHILD

How You Can Build Healthy Sleep Routines

Sleep is important to how your child learns, grows, and even behaves. Children who get enough sleep regularly do better in school and have fewer behavior issues. A regular bedtime routine can help your child get enough sleep. It can also make bedtime easier for you!

Ideas to Build Your Own Bedtime Routine!



How Much Sleep Does Your Child Need?

AGE GROUP

HOURS THROUGHOUT THE DAY INCLUDING NAPS

Infants (0-12 months)

14-15 hours throughout the day

Toddler (1-3 years old)

12-14 hours throughout the day

Preschoolers (3-5 years old)

11-13 hours throughout the day

School age children
(5-12 years old)

10-12 hours



How Do You Know When Your Child Isn't Getting Enough Sleep?



"He gets really excited and hyper. He wants to run around and won't sit down, but I know he really needs to rest"

"Her teacher says she has a hard time paying attention and doesn't want to join in or loses interest."

"He will have a melt down that normally wouldn't cause that reaction. It's because he either didn't get a good nap or didn't sleep well the night before."

"Moody, he gets really moody. And I check in to ask if he's tired."

"She just sort of falls apart when she hasn't had enough sleep, and starts acting out."



If your child shows these signs, they may need more sleep or fewer interruptions at night.

Tips for Building a Bedtime Routine:

- **Set a regular bedtime.**
Including the weekends.
- **Start your child's bedtime routine about 30-60 minutes before their bedtime.**
This allows your child to recognize its time for bed and for you to spend quiet time together.
- **Pick out clothes** and other things your child may need.
- **Provide an area that is safe, comfortable, and mainly used for sleep** so there will be fewer interruptions.
- **Offer quiet activities.**
Reading a book or listening to soft music helps if your child is struggling to fall asleep.
- **Turn off the TV or video games.**
These make it harder for your child to fall and stay asleep.
- **Limit drinks.**
Beverages high in sugar or caffeine before bed such as juice, tea, soft drinks should be avoided.
- **Offer time that allows for quiet conversation.**
Talk about your child's day, favorite things, or sing a quiet song together.

What Do You Like to Do With Your Child Before Bed?

"We like to read a few books. Sometimes she will read them back to me."

"We sing my favorite song from when I was a child."

"We like to snuggle a few minutes before bedtime. It is my favorite part of the day."

"He likes it when I scratch his back for a few minutes. It really helps him calm down."



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