Stanislaus County Office of Education
Child/Family Services
Tom Changnon, Superintendent
1324 Celeste Drive • Modesto, CA 95355 • (209) 558-4030 • FAX (209) 558-4061

Resource & Referral Handout

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

JANUARY

Snowflake, Suncatchers

Cut simple snowflakes: fold two square pieces of white paper two times, making smaller squares. Have the child make cuts into the folds. Then tape colored cellophane or tissue paper over the holes on one snowflake. Paste the matching snowflake over the other, to cover the rough cellophane or tissue paper pieces. The snowflake is ready to hang in a window or form the ceiling, where it can catch the light.

Snow Angels

After children are dressed in warm outside clothing appropriate for the weather, ask them to lie flat on their backs in the snow. Keeping their arms and legs straight, ask them to move them in large, sweeping movements to the side, as far as they can reach. Children enjoy seeing the patterns they've made, and the activity helps them to use their large muscles.

Birdfeeders

Ask children to select a pinecone for a feeder. Next they can spread peanut butter all over the pinecone, and finally sprinkle the peanut butter with wild bird seed or cornmeal. Let them hang the feeder on a branch, a hook, or a post outside the window where they can easily see the birds coming and going.

Snowcones

Have the children scoop a bowl of new-fallen, clean snow. To this add slightly thawed, concentrated grape juice, apple juice, orange juice, or pineapple juice. Insert a straw and a spoon, and let the child enjoy a cold winter treat. Maple syrup or sweetened evaporated milk can be used for additional flavors.

Calendar

Making and using a monthly calendar is a good way to help children keep track of the time and changing seasons. Make a calendar on a large piece of cardboard and draw squares and names of days in dark marker. Let the child decide a theme for the month, such as icicles or snowflakes. And make 31 of them to fit in each day space. Each month, change the number markers to another theme: valentines for February, kites for March, etc.

Soap Finger-paint or Play Snow

With a hand-held mixer, beat 1 cup of water with 2 cups of soap flakes. Whip until the mixture is the texture of whipped cream. Use as is or add food coloring if desired. Let the child paint on a cookie sheet or a piece of freezer paper.

Miniature Snowmen

Use toothpicks and marshmallows to create a snowman. Eyes, mouths, and buttons can be miniature marshmallows or raisins attached by pieces of toothpick, or cloves inserted by the stick end. Arms can be made from licorice or peppermint sticks, carrot slices, or pretzels.

FEBRUARY

Valentines

Provide red, pink and white paper, lacy doilies, glue, valentine stickers, felt scraps and glitter for making valentine cards. Show your child how to fold paper to cut a heart shape. Give help if needed. When the valentines are finished ask the child to decide what special people should get a card.

Dental Health Week

During the first week in February take your child to the dentists office. Have your child look in the mirror and look at the different teeth. Talk about how each tooth does a job of cutting, grinding or tearing food to make it easy to swallow. Stress the importance of regular brushing, flossing, dental cleanings and the use of fluoride rinses or topical fluoride.

Presidents' Day

Talk with your child about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln on their birthdays. Talk about their contributions to the United States. Mention who is president now. Discuss the many ways in which our country is the same as or different from the days of Washington and Lincoln. Tell your child that many things have been named after these famous presidents. Can the child name any?

Valentine Cookies

Let your child use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to prepare fresh sugar cookies for the oven. When the cookies are cool, let your child finish the treats by frosting each with red or pink icing and putting a candy heart in the middle. For variety, you might want to sprinkle the icing with cinnamon candies.

Winter Scrapbook

Give your child old catalogs, magazines, greeting cards and calendars to look through. Winter pictures might include people skiing, children making snowmen, and high snowdrifts. Talk about people who live in cold places. How do they dress? How do they travel? What do they eat? What do they do for a living? What do they do for fun?

Sugar Cube Igloo

Scoop out half of a large styrofoam ball and ask your child to glue sugar cubes all around it, leaving only enough space for a small, ground-level door.

Make Crystals

If you live where it snows, have your child look carefully at some snowflakes as they land. Explain that each snowflake is a lot of tiny ice crystals. Say that crystals are particles with certain shapes and edges. Make crystals by dissolving some sugar, boric acid, or Alka-Seltzer in water and then waiting until the liquid evaporates. You will want to let your child observe the different crystals through a magnifying glass.

MARCH

St. Patrick's Day

In honor of the day, let your child wear green and do activities with green things. Help the child cut out a shamrock. Talk about things that are green, like grass, some clothes, plant leaves, a crayon, limes, baby brother's eyes, a garter snake, evergreen trees, or the hose. For snacks today you can have toast with mint jelly, celery sticks, cucumbers, green peppers, pea soup, and green beans. Green Kool-Aid and lime-aid can be served for drinks.

Potato Prints

Cut a large potato in half and have your child draw a design on the inside. With a knife you can cut out the potato around the design. Let your child print the design in paint on paper. The print might be hung up, or used as wrapping paper or the outside of a greeting card.

First Day of Spring

On March 21st or 22nd talk about spring. Explain that today there will be the same amount of darkness as daylight. If you live in northern climates, this is a good time to start garden plants inside. Tomato's, peppers, tubrous begonias and other bedding plants can be started in small peat pots or most any container. Your child can put in the seeds and cover them with dirt. Each morning you and your child will want to observe the plants' progress until it is warm enough to put them outside in May. Take frequent walks and discuss the signs of spring.

Baby Animals

Visit a pet store or a farm and let your child have a chance to see some animals like fish, and birds, that hatch from eggs, and some animals like kittens and puppies that are born live. Discuss how baby animals' parents care for them. What do they need that human babies need? How are they like human babies? How are they different? Most children like to pet or touch young animals.

Maple Syrup

Take a trip to a maple syrup farm or woods when the sap is running. Let your child see how the sap is gathered. If possible, watch how the sap is made into syrup. Have pancakes and maple syrup for a snack or breakfast.

APRIL

Nature Walk

Take frequent walks with your child in order to look for the changes happening as trees bud, then blossom, as bulbs send leaves and stems up through the ground, and as summer birds fly back to the area. Have your child tell you about the signs of spring. How does the wind sound as it blows the treetops? How do different birds sound? What colors are the grass, the shrubs, the flower blossoms? How do the flowers, the mud, and the mushrooms smell? How do pussywillows, bark, and flower blossoms feel?

Finger Jello Easter Eggs

Provide rinsed and dried "blown out"egg shells and let your child fill them with finger jello. When the jello has set, the egg shells can be cracked and the jello eggs removed.

1 – ½ packs unflavored gelatin
1 – 6 oz. Can frozen grape juice concentrate
¾ cup boiling water

Thaw juice, then stir in gelatin. To boiling water add the gelatin/juice mixture. Stir constantly until gelatin dissolves. Pour into egg shells and refrigerate until set (usually about 2 hours).

Easter Baskets

Square plastic slatted berry boxes are ready-made baskets when a pipe cleaner or heavy string handle is added. For a fancier basket, colored ribbons can be woven in and out of the holes.

April Fool's Day

Tell your child that on April 1st, April Fool's Day, people often play jokes on each other. To demonstrate, you might put out forks instead of spoons today with bowls of cereal for the family. Or you might put your jacket on backwards. Play a nonsense game with your child. Have your child correct such statements as, "The cat was barking, "I love winter, because the days are hot," "Let's get in the swing and drive to the store," or "I love to watch bread melt."

April Showers

Since it's often rainy in April, discuss the importance of moisture. Plants and seeds need a lot of rain in order to sprout and to grow. Farmer's fields need water to grow the corn, wheat, and other crops we eat. Dress your child in boots and rain gear. Provide an umbrella, and go for a walk to a neighbor's house, a nearby store, or the mailbox. When you get home, ask your child to draw a picture of what it looks like on a rainy day.

Wind Chimes

Provide your child with a long sturdy stick. Tie cord strips of different lengths to canning jar lids. Then tie the other end of the cords to the stick. Buy a cord tied in the middle, hang the stick from a tree branch. Your child and family will enjoy hearing the chimes as the wind passes through them.

MAY

Make a Puzzle

Cut a page from a seed catalogue, calendar or magazine. Help the child glue it to a stiff backing such as posterboard or cardboard. Next cut the backed picture into several large pieces. Let your child put the picture back together again.

May Day

Make cone-shaped paper baskets. Roll the paper into a cone shape and then staple it closed. Add a handle. Your child can gather real flowers or make paper ones to fill the baskets. Then go along while your child delivers the basket to a friend's house. Let the child hang the basket on the door handle, ring the bell, and then hide close by as the basket is discovered.

Straw Play

Help your child use straws to make letters, shapes, designs, and entire pictures. Straws make handy counting objects too.

Mother's Day

Explain that the second Sunday in May is Mother's Day, a special time set-aside for children to say thanks to their mothers. Let your child help choose a gift for your mother and your mother-in-law: the grandmothers. Don't be surprised if your child makes a special gift for you as well.

Plant Study

Go outdoors and look for all the new buds. How are they alike? Different? Explain how each bud will open into a new leaf or flower. Watch the buds each day until the blossom or leaf has opened. Cut a few small trees or shrub branches loaded with buds. Put them in a vase with water and watch as they open up. Flowering shrubs and fruit tree blossoms often make both colorful and fragrant centerpieces. When the flowers open in the yard, allow your child to pick a few for a bouquet.

Backyard Picnic

May is a good time for you and your child or your child and friends to have an outdoor activity. Let your child help make a sandwich and choose a raw vegetable, fruit and drink. Take a blanket to spread on the ground, or a cloth to cover an outdoor table. You may want to take a ball, a tricycle, some toy cars or a doll so your child has something to play with. The picnic can be in your own yard, a park, or any safe, grassy open space.

Soap Carvings

For this rainy day or quiet time activity, you need a soft soap and a spoon. Let your child whittle away at the soap, saving the small shavings to use mixed with water, for liquid soap. The sculpture doesn't have to be anything in particular.

JUNE

Father's Day

The third Sunday in June is the day we say thanks to our fathers. Help your child make a simple card or gift for Dad. The gift might be a paperweight turtle made from one large rock with 4 or 5 small rocks glued to it for the legs and the head. Your child should sign the card, even if the signature is just a scribble.

The Library

Visit your nearest library or bookmobile as often as possible. Most libraries offer enrichment programs such as children's story hours and family book fairs and film festivals. Let your child choose the books. And remember to read aloud to your child frequently. A person is never too old to enjoy hearing a story read aloud.

Outside Play

Provide any or all of the following for your child's summer play: a sandbox with plastic toys, a wading pool, a trike, a swing set and balls. If you lack this basic equipment, take your child to parks, playgrounds, and friends' houses.

Insects

As soon as the weather is warm, we begin to see an endless variety of insects. A study of these small creatures satisfies a preschooler's curiosity while encouraging skills of observation at the same time. Have your child collect a few harmless insects: a beetle, a June bug, a grasshopper, a moth. Explain that insects are alike in many ways. See if your child notices the similarities; three pairs of legs, three body sections, antennae. If the child misses something, you can give a hint. A magnifying glass is needed for this activity. After observing the insects, let them go.

Plant a Garden

There are many gardening chores that a young child can do. The child will feel important while at the same time you will be getting a job done: Break the ground up with a shovel, rake the soil to get out large matter, pick out and discard rocks and weeds, tie string the length of the garden to two sticks, poke the sticks into the ground at one foot intervals to mark the rows, furrow the rows with a hoe, drop seeds in the rows, cover the seeds with soil, mark each row's contents, and water the ground gently but thoroughly. Once the seeds sprout, weeding, thinning, watering and harvesting will be regular tasks you and your child can share.

Macaroni Art

For this activity, you'll need different sizes and shapes of raw macaroni, glue, and cardboard, felt, or small boxes. Ask your child to glue macaroni to one of the stiff backings. The finished projects can be protected with hairspray, colored spray paint or glitter.

JULY

Costume Box

Summer is a good time to start or add to a dress-up box for imaginative play. If during spring-cleaning you find clothes that no longer fit a family member larger than your children do, toss them in the box. A variety of headgear, footwear, pants, shirts, and dresses should be available for the child to use in changing identities. Attics, trunks, and garage sales are also sources of old clothes. While reading to your child, you can discuss costumes and uniforms. Talk about the dress of people doing different kinds of jobs. What do doctors wear? Ballerinas, Firefighters, Bakers, Welders, Skaters, Policemen, Zoo Keepers?

Fourth of July

Make America's birthday a special time for your child, your child's friends, and the family. Plan a parade for the neighborhood. Children enjoy decorating their tricycles with red, white, and blue streamers, old playing card in the spokes, and tin cans hanging off the back. When the tricycles are ready, have the children all line up at your house. Set the time of the parade and provide balloons and noise makers for the children. If there are no sidewalks where you live, adults can lead the parade carefully down the side of the street. Parents and relatives of your child and your child's friends will enjoy watching the parade.

Water Play

Set basic rules. No running in and out of the house while wet. Keep mud, sand, and food out of the water. Use a towel to dry off before going back inside. Keep the water in the pool. Fill the wading pool and provide your child with plastic bowls, measuring spoons, cups, floating toys, plastic soap bottles and spray bottles. Encourage your child to pour water into containers, to see what floats, and to bathe dolls. You don't have to provide much more than the supplies and supervision.

Box Play

Find large boxes to give your child for play. The child's imagination will find endless uses for them. A large enough box will make a puppet theater, a store, a fire station, a garage for a tricycle, a lemonade stand, or a construction site for large play toys like a dump truck, a road grader or a stem shovel. Slightly smaller boxes can be stacked side by side and formed into a train. The child can draw windows, doors, and train wheels with markers. Open-topped cars can be used for passengers lie dolls, children, or cargo of stuffed animals, if you have a circus train. Another box can be the dining car, where a variety of crackers, cheese slices, raisins, celery and cucumber sticks and water are being served. Snacks or meals can be served on paper plates and in paper cups.

AUGUST

Charades

With a group of children or one child and an adult, a pantomime game is always fun. Use simple motions and situations with which the child has some experience. Do animal walks, like that of an elephant, a snake, a cat, a dog, or a duck. Do home activities like sleeping, bathing, dressing, cooking, washing, dishes, reading, writing, sitting, watching television, rocking in a chair, climbing stairs, folding laundry, brushing hair or teeth, watering plants, playing the piano, and eating. Eating pantomimes might involve certain foods eaten in a special way, like licking ice-cream cones, eating soup, eating spaghetti, or sipping through a straw. Do going places, like driving a car, riding a bicycle, steering a boat, riding in a plane or in a space ship. Children take turns guessing the actions.

Mars

Let your child change the regular play area to represent another planet, like Mars. You might help by drawing strangely shaped buildings on cardboard or freezer paper. Your child can color them and cut them out as a background wetting. You can explain that earth people have not been to Mars, so we don't know if there are life forms there. It's up to your child to imagine what Martians might look like and do. Maybe your child will want to wear a funny hat and talk in a broken, monotone voice while on Mars. Maybe your child will want to squat or walk with a funny waddle there. Encourage your child's friends to take on new identities when they're playing on Mars.

Box City

Provide a variety of small boxes in different sizes and shapes, glue, scissors, markers, and paper to build a miniature town. When the houses, the post office, the pharmacy, and the store are completed, trees can be made of actual small branches held up by a playdough base and covered with paper leaves. Small toy cars can be driven on cardboard or playing card roads, and parked in box garages. Encourage your child to keep a certain scale and to add details such as flowerbeds, Easter grass for lawns, cotton for chimney smoke, and accessories. Let your child keep the village set up as long as possible.

Magic Picture Frame

Give your child an empty picture frame and test the powers of observation and imagination. Say, "When you look through the frame, you'll be in a fairytale land. Tell me about it." Everything might be triangular, food might be purple, ants might be larger than people. Anything goes, because it's all-imaginary. Say, "This time when you look through the frame, everything will be upside down." Tell about it.

SEPTEMBER

First Day of Fall

On September 22nd, take a walk with your child to look for signs of seasonal change. Take along a big bag for collecting interesting leaves, acorns, cocoons, small twigs or pieces of bark, pretty rocks, pinecones and nuts. Ask your child to tell about anything that might be a sign of autumn: squirrels gathering and hiding nuts for the winter, animals growing thicker fur, geese flying south in vee formation, colorful leaves falling, and people raking.

Leaf Pressing

Place leaves between two layers of waxed paper and press carefully with a warm iron. The wax will melt onto the leaf and protect it from fading and crumbling. The pictures can be used as placemats or given by your child as an inexpensive gift to a relative or friend.

Making a Wreath

Cut a wreath shape from heavy cardboard and let your child glue on fall collectibles gathered on a nature walk. Cover all the cardboard area with seeds, nuts, and pinecones, and then coat with a layer of hair spray, varnish, or colored spray paint.

Fall Cleanup

Ask your child to help you gather all the tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, lettuce and annual flowering plants like geraniums, begonias, and marigolds before the first hard frost. If your family is unable to either eat, can, or freeze all the garden produce, let your child take goody bags to friends and neighbors. If you are able to put up the crop, your child might enjoy helping you wash the vegetables, snip ends off beans and put lids on canning jars.

Sock Puppets

Trim a mateless old sock with eyes, nose, ears, lips, and hair. Features can be pieces of felt, yarn, or paper, and small buttons glued or sewn to the sock.

Play Clay

Mix together 3 cups of flour, 1-1/2 cups salt, and 1-1/2 tablespoons of alum. To the dry ingredients add 3 cups of boiling water and stir everything until mixed. Put on a waxed paper covered board and let cool for about ten minutes. Add ½ tablespoon of salad oil and knead for six minutes. If desired, separate the clay into a few portions and different colorings. Clay should last 3 or 4 months if refrigerated in an airtight plastic container.

Paper Clip Jewelry

Show your child how to clasp together enough paper clips for a bracelet, a necklace or a belt. The child will want to wear the jewelry or perhaps hive some to friends.

OCTOBER

Fire Prevention Week

This is a good time to talk with your child about ways to prevent fires from starting. We don't play with matches or lighters; we don't use candles or fire around gas; we clean up burnable trash like waste paper. Show your child all the ways to get out of your house if a fire ever should start. Tell the child if a fire starts, people should leave the building right away and go to a phone to call the fire department. Visit the fire station if it is close enough.

Paper Bag Masks

Have your child make a mask out of a grocery bag with large holes cut in it for eyes, nose and mouth. The child can glue on ears shaped like those of a rabbit, a dog, an elephant, a mouse, or a cat. Hair can be made from yarn, straw, curling ribbon, Easter grass or paper strips.

Window Painting

Before you start the fall window-cleaning chore, let your child have a creative experience. Let your child spray windows with having cream and then finger-paint. Children will enjoy the activity, and afterwards you can get the windows cleaned up for winter.

Plant Spring Bulbs

Read the instructions for planting various flowering bulbs such as daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, day lilies, and lilies of the valley. Find out how deep and how far apart they should be planted. Dig the holes accordingly; then let your child drop the bulbs in and cover them with dirt. You'll want to mark the spots so you'll know where to look after the snow melts.

Halloween Party

DECORATIONS: Go to a farmer's market, grocery store or even your own backyard garden to let your child choose pumpkins to turn into jack-o-lanterns. With a magic marker the child can draw features, as well as the line around the top. You can cut the line, then let the child remove the pumpkin's top and scoop out the pulp and seeds. Finish carving on the outline made by your child.
BATS: Draw a simple bat on black paper and cut it out. Then give your child scissors, black paper and pencil. Say, "You can make some scary bats to hang in the windows." Don't expect the child's shapes to be perfectly bat-like—but at the very least you'll be decorating in Halloween colors.
GHOSTS: Let your child help you drape an old sheet from an outside branch. Stuff the head with newspaper and tie a string around the neck area. The ghost will billow in the breeze for an eerie effect.
ACTIVITIES: Play pin-the-nose-on-the-witch, bob for apples, fish for goodies behind a cloth, and have costume competition with prizes.

NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving

Tell your child how the pilgrims crossed the ocean in a ship called the Mayflower and landed in out country at Plymouth Rock. Their first winter was hard, and a lot of the settlers starved, froze to death, or got sick and died. But in the spring, a friendly Indian taught them how to plant corn and other food crops. By the next fall the pilgrims had much food and they were thankful. They invited the Indians for a huge meal of turkey, venison, corn, fish, ducks, berries, squash, and breads, and everyone gave thanks for the harvest and good friends. Every fall we still celebrate that first Thanksgiving with friends and family. People gather all over America for a meal of thanks for the good things we have.

Turkey Pictures

Ask your child to hold one hand flat on a piece of white paper. Draw around each finger and then take the hand away. The thumb is the turkey's head, and needs to have an eye, a beak, and neck skin. The child can draw feet and color the feathers, which are the outlines of the other fingers. Display the picture or send it to a relative for a Thanksgiving Day card.

Teepee Reading Room

When the weather gets cold outside, children will be spending more of their time indoors. This is a good opportunity to create an interesting play area for the child. Make a teepee by leaning two long boards in an upside down "v" pattern against the wall in the corner of a room. Staple cloth to the boards and cut an opening slit in the middle near the floor. Your child can decorate the teepee with designs cut from colorful pieces of felt glued into place. The teepee will serve as a quiet retreat to curl up with a book, dress a favorite doll, or perhaps have a snack. It won't be sturdy enough or large enough for rowdy play.

Organizing

An indoor activity for a blustery November day is to clean a room, a cupboard, a closet, and attic, or a basement. Start with your child's room. Let the child help you take everything out of the area to be cleaned. Next vacuums, dust, washes or paint the inside. When it's dry, ask your child to help you put the things back. As you go through the clothes, ask your child to try on anything that looks too small, so you can put it aside for a younger child. Before putting toys back, say "Remember this rattle? You played with it when you were a baby." If your child isn't using the toy at all anymore, it might be a good time to pack it away too, and make more room in the closet. Let your child help decide what should be put away.

DECEMBER

Jell-O Christmas Trees

Mix a large package of green jello and let your child help pour it into paper cones. The cones can stand upright in a pan of ice in the refrigerator. After the trees have set, your child can apply whipped topping snow and cake sugar decorations before serving to the family.

Advent Calendars

Anticipation is the magic of Christmas. Let your child help make an advent calendar to keep track of the days prior to the holiday. Cut a 4" by 42" piece of green or red felt with pinking shears. Then tie 24 strings of the opposite color yarn through the felt at even intervals, leaving double ends showing through the front. Tie a piece of wrapped candy to each pair of strings. Then every day in December your child can untie and eat one piece of candy, keeping close tabs on the time until the big day arrives.

Tree Decorations

Strawberries: Glue small seed beds at intervals all over the shell of a whole walnut. Spray the nut red and add a pair of small green felt leaves and a string to the top.
Pinecone Trees: Small pinecones sprayed with color or gilt can be trimmed with colored glitter or sequins and glue.
Sodas: Use a small plastic medicine cup for the glass. Stuff it with ice cream colored yarn or "art" chenille, with cotton on the top for foam. Add a tiny piece of straw and a hanging string.
Colored Bows: Your child can help tie small bows from ribbon to hang on the tree.
Wreaths: Have your child trim a small cardboard circle with cotton. Trim a picture of your child to a circle shape and place in the middle of the little wreath. Add a string for hanging.

Christmas Baking

Start a tradition for your child to enjoy and remember every Christmas to come. You may want to make an ethnic or old family recipe that has been passed on for generations. Maybe your choice will be cut-out sugar cookies, date cookies, fruit cake, rosettes, popcorn balls, or bread. Whatever you choose, make it a special family holiday event.

Gifts

Talk to your child about gifts. What are they? Why are they special? Explain that gifts are expressions of love and friendship. Say that the size and cost of a gift are not as important as the idea of doing or giving something to make another person happy. Gifts come in all shapes and sizes. Friendship or love can be expressed by giving a cookie, apiece of gum, or a handmade card. Friendship can also be in the form of a smile, an offer to wipe the dishes, or a gesture to help someone zip up a jacket.

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