

WEST VIRGINIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROVIDER
QUARTERLY

Head Start Celebrates 60 Years!

**Five Tips to Support Learning
Gaps during Summer**

Safety First This Summer

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WV Early Childhood Provider Quarterly is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of the West Virginia Department of Human Services and West Virginia Department of Health and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

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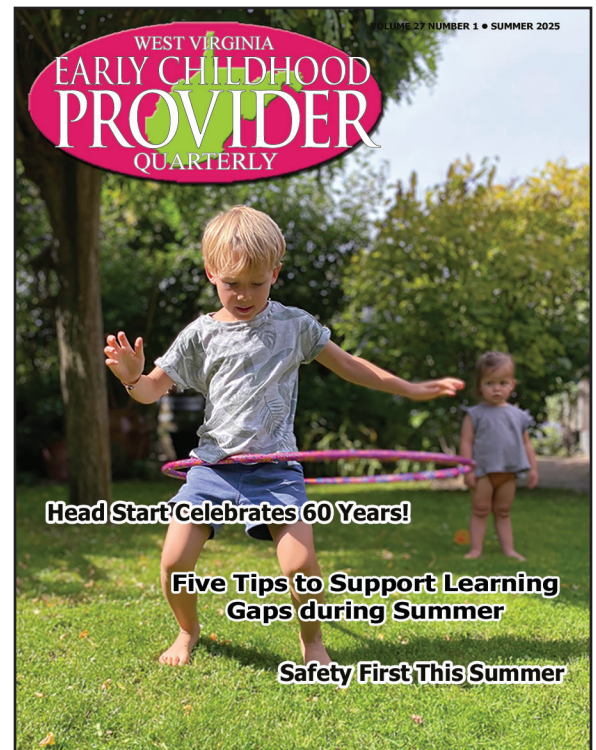
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| | |
|---|-------|
| 5 Tips to Support Learning Gaps in After School and Summer Programs | 3-5 |
| How High Quality Summer Programs Support the Whole Child | 6-10 |
| Happy 60th Birthday, Head Start! | 12-14 |
| Spotlight: EPIC Early Head Start | 15-16 |
| Head Start 60th Anniversary | 17 |
| Head Start Celebrates its 60th Anniversary | 18-20 |
| West Virginia 2024 Head Start and Early Head Start Profile | 21-22 |
| Safety First This Summer | 24-26 |
| It's Summertime! | 27-28 |
| Parent Blocks Newsletter | 30-33 |



Tips to Support Learning Gaps in After School and Summer Programs

Submitted by Sommer Robinson, Early Childhood Specialist,
Child Care Resource Center

Summer break should be a time for children to relax and have fun, but that also means it could lead to a learning loss, especially in reading and math. This is often called a summer slide or summer learning loss. To encourage children to keep learning when school is out, here are five tips to help parents and caregivers support learning.

Prioritize Reading. An easy way to encourage reading during the summer months is to take trips to the local library. Let the children look around, choose what books interest them, or even listen to books on tape. Some libraries have summer reading programs where they promote literacy and make it fun for all ages. Encouraging children to read to each other can help them to build on their comprehension and vocabulary skills. Let's not forget that children are easily influenced by their peers, so the more children see others their age reading, the more likely they may

be to pick up a book themselves. Let them be in control of what they are reading (as long as it is age appropriate). Reading something that interests them will be more beneficial than forcing them to read a book they aren't interested in.

Take Educational Field Trips.

Learning doesn't just have to be in a classroom setting. Children can learn from taking field trips to places like museums, science centers, landmarks, zoos, farms, or nature trails. Taking trips can make for opportunities for children to ask questions and engage in the environment they are in. Not to mention, taking educational field trips introduces students to experiences they might not have experienced before. Field trips and hands-on experiences can help students to remember information they learned. Sensory engagement can enhance memory retention and comprehension, making it

easier for them to recall later. Field trips also can help students develop an appreciation for arts, history, and diverse cultures. They can encourage children to be lifelong learners continually seeking new knowledge and experiences.

Don't have the means to take a field trip in person? Maybe the children want to see what Egypt is like? Try taking a virtual field trip! Let children choose a place they would love to visit or know more about and then you can utilize resources like Google and YouTube to navigate your "trip"! You could have them make a list of questions they want to know about or have them write down things they think might be true about that specific place, then they can see if they are right. With virtual field trips, the possibilities are endless!

Use Technology. Technology plays a crucial role in enhancing summer programs by offering

engaging learning experiences, facilitating communication, and improving safety. It also provides access to new technologies and skills, prepares students for future careers, and helps them maintain their academic skills over the summer break. The use of technology isn't just referring to computers, televisions, or tablets. Even though there are plenty of websites and free apps that cover different educational subjects, there are other types of technology to incorporate into summer learning as well. If possible, using robotics equipment requires the use of technology. It includes computer science, engineering, and even artificial

intelligence to help design, build, and operate robots. These kinds of activities help to keep math and reading skills working during the summer months. Reaching out to local high schools or universities may help in finding the resources for incorporating robotics into summer learning.

Let children use digital cameras or even tablets with cameras to take photographs. They can learn how the camera works with zooming in, cropping, and changing the filter on the picture. Cameras come in handy when on field trips or nature walks to help the children remember what they were learning.

Reach out via social media or by word of mouth to ask for old computers, cell phones, cameras, etc. so the kids can open them up and investigate what they are like on the inside. You can also incorporate virtual learning by looking for YouTube videos of specific items.

Get Out and Play! Gross motor activity in elementary-aged children provides numerous benefits, including improved physical health, enhanced cognitive function, and increased social skills. These activities promote overall development by strengthening muscles, improving coordination and balance, and fostering spatial



awareness, all of which are crucial for daily tasks and academic performance.

Find ways to have a minimum of 60 minutes of gross motor play each day during the summer months. Go for walks, go swimming, and play organized games. Intense physical activity can not only have positive effects on academic achievement such as increased concentration and improved reading and math skills, but can also help to reduce disruptive behaviors. Organized games and activities can help with focus, patience, teamwork, and other social skills.

Children can even be given a certain amount of gross motor tools, such as cones, balls, bean bags, and then be asked to come up with their own game. They would have to create the game, come up with rules for it, and then explain it to others and demonstrate how to play.

Do Good Deeds. Volunteering offers children numerous benefits, fostering personal growth, developing essential skills, and contributing to their community. It can enhance self-esteem, build social skills, and instill a sense of empathy and purpose. Volunteering can also improve academic performance, boost mental and physical well-being, and provide opportu-

nities for skill development. Volunteering and doing good deeds can challenge children to think critically and solve problems as well as enhance their learning and apply knowledge they already have to make community projects an educational experience. Encourage children to help their neighbors or friends, volunteer with a local group such as an animal shelter or nursing home. If you are in a summer camp or summer learning program, make it an end of summer goal to have a project completed for the community. It could be something as simple as sending letters to children's hospitals, or something a little larger like building a community food box (little free pantry/blessing box) or community outdoor library.

Volunteering will give children experience working with different entities in the community and learning about how they operate. It may even give them a sense of purpose and help them discover a new passion. Children may feel a new sense of compassion and understanding for others, which would broaden their perspective and encourage them to think beyond their own lives.

By incorporating these strategies into your summer routine, you can help prevent learning loss and keep your children's minds engaged and

sharp during the summer break.

These strategies might not work every time or with every child, but consistency is key. You may need to alter your way of incorporating learning into each day. As long as you make it fun and the children are having fun, they will most likely learn without even knowing it!

The whole day does not need to be focused on educational activities but try to find ways to incorporate a learning experience in each day. Keeping children in a routine and having daily schedules will be beneficial to them, and for you, during the summer months.



How High-Quality Summer Programs Support the Whole Child

Submitted by Melissa Calabrese, M.A., Director, WVU Energy Express

Ideally, summer offers young children meaningful opportunities for discovery, joyful exploration, and continued learning. Yet for many children, the season can also bring academic setbacks, reduced social engagement, and fewer opportunities to stay active. Without access to structured, enriching activities, children are at risk of experiencing the summer slide, a well-documented loss of skills that they worked so hard to develop during the school year. Research shows that children from low-income backgrounds are most affected, losing more academic ground over the summer than their higher-income peers (Harry, S. 2023).

For low-income families in West Virginia, summer brings added challenges. When school is out, many children lose access to daily meals, increasing the risk of nutritional deficits. At the same time, families may struggle to secure safe, enriching activities to keep children engaged. These barriers are often magnified in rural communities, where resources and child care options are limited. Yet,



there is good news – high-quality, evidence-based summer programs have demonstrated success in bridging these gaps. By encouraging creativity, cultivating social-emotional development, strengthening academic skills, and promoting healthy lifestyles, high-quality summer learning experiences shape children’s well-being and long-term outcomes.

A Safe and Nurturing Space for Growth

For many children, high-quality summer programs offer a consistent, nurturing environment where they feel safe and support-

ed. Trained educators and mentors guide positive relationships, helping children feel heard, valued, and encouraged to take on new challenges. This sense of security and encouragement builds confidence and resilience, preparing children to navigate the school year and beyond with greater self-assurance and adaptability.

Beyond providing a safe and supportive environment, high-quality summer programs play a critical role in nurturing children’s emotional and social development (Schwartz, H. L., et al., 2018). These programs provide a wel-

coming space where children build friendships, practice collaborating effectively with peers, and navigate challenges with growing resilience. They also offer opportunities for children to express themselves, take on leadership roles, and build confidence. Shared experiences, whether reading a book together, acting out a play, or crafting cardboard creations, strengthen communication skills and contribute to a sense of agency.

Encouraging Creativity and Critical Thinking

Children naturally learn through play, and high-quality summer programs provide the perfect setting for them to activate their imaginations. Whether painting, writing stories, or designing original inventions, children are encouraged to experiment, take risks, and solve problems in creative ways. These experiences not only support cognitive flexibility, but also strengthen literacy and language skills, making reading and writing feel more natural, meaningful, and fun.

Importantly, creativity extends beyond artistic expression. It is essential for problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability. Group activities such as storytelling, improvisation, and cooperative art

projects help children learn to listen to various perspectives, negotiate differences, and appreciate the ideas of others. Through these experiences, children practice integrating their senses, emotions, and intellect.

As the world becomes more complex, creativity, alongside empathy, problem-solving, and critical thinking, is increasingly recognized as a key competency for lifelong success. The World Economic Forum, for example, identifies creativity and empathy as essential skills in an AI-driven workforce, while leaders emphasize its importance in shaping future leadership (Brandt, W.C. 2020). High-quality summer programs provide extended, low-stakes opportunities for children to develop and apply these capacities in joyful ways.

Bridging Learning and Play: Academic Benefits

While creativity sparks critical thinking, structured summer learning experiences ensure that children's academic skills stay sharp in a low-pressure environment. Summer programs blend learning with play, through storytelling, games, science experiments, and creative writing, making learning exciting and engaging. Without the stress of grades and

standardized tests, children can explore new ideas at their own pace, reinforcing academic skills that help them transition smoothly into the new school year.

Research confirms the benefits: children who participate in high-quality summer learning programs are more likely to maintain or even improve their academic performance, setting them up for long-term success (McCombs et al., 2019).

Summer Programs Strengthen Executive Function Skills

Beyond creativity and problem solving, executive function skills, such as working memory, focus, and emotion regulation, are essential for managing focus, behavior, and learning. Often described as the brain's air traffic control system, these skills help children process information, filter distractions, and make intentional choices. Research indicates that executive function, particularly working memory and self-control, is a stronger predictor of academic success than IQ (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, n.d.). While literacy and math remain central to education, a child's ability to apply knowledge, self-regulate, and adapt is just as important.

Executive function skills develop gradually, supported by the pre-frontal cortex, which integrates various brain functions to guide attention, behavior, and decision-making. While children begin developing these skills in infancy, their growth continues well into early adulthood, making early experiences and intentional support crucial for long-term success. Working memory helps individuals connect new knowledge to what they already know and is a strong predictor of academic achievement. Without strong working memory, children may struggle to follow multi-step directions, apply new information, or retain connections between concepts, making learning tasks more challenging.

Fortunately, working memory can

be strengthened through playful, engaging summer activities. Pretend play and games that involve evolving rules promote cognitive flexibility and sustained attention. Stories that build through repetition and cumulative structure, such as “The Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly”, support memory by reinforcing language patterns. Acting out stories like “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” enhances engagement and memory retention by combining movement and imagination. Additionally, modeling connections through reflective questions helps children link new experiences to prior knowledge, strengthening recall and comprehension. These strategies not only support memory development but also enhance cognitive, social, and language development.

Enhancing Literacy Development

Because strong literacy development skills rely on focus, comprehension, and memory, the development of executive function plays a direct role in academic success, and summer programs can provide the perfect environment to reinforce these skills. Shared reading plays a key role in literacy development by introducing new vocabulary, modeling fluent reading, and encouraging engagement with stories. Children strengthen their comprehension skills when they participate in interactive read-alouds, dramatize stories, or rewrite endings. Research indicates that children immersed in literature-rich experiences over the summer return to school with greater confidence in their reading abilities (Alexander, Karl et al., 2007).

Beyond direct instruction in reading and writing, creative storytelling and role-playing provide powerful opportunities to enhance language development. Singing rhyming songs, engaging in word-play, and acting out familiar stories support the development of phonemic awareness, an essential early reading skill. Literacy-rich activities like creating comic strips or writing scripts for a summer



puppet show allow children to connect reading and writing to their imaginative play, making literacy both fun and accessible. When these experiences are embedded into summer programming, children build foundational literacy skills while developing a deep appreciation for books, stories, and the power of language.

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

A well-rounded summer program nurtures not just the mind, but also physical health and overall well-being. High-quality summer programs encourage active play, whether through outdoor games, movement-based storytelling, or making big art. In a world where screen time increasingly dominates children's free hours, providing opportunities for physical activity is more important than ever for physical development, mental health, focus, and emotional regulation.

Nutrition also plays a critical role in a child's healthy development. Many high-quality summer programs provide free meals, helping to address food insecurity and ensure children have the energy needed to fully participate in learning and play. For example, WVU Extension's Energy Express summer program offers daily meals

that meet approximately 58 percent of a child's nutritional needs, supporting overall well-being.

The benefits of summer programming extend far beyond the season itself. Children who participate in enriching summer learning experiences return to school more prepared – academically, socially, and emotionally. They often exhibit stronger social skills, renewed confidence, and a sense of curiosity that will propel them forward. High-quality summer programs prevent learning loss and open doors to new interests, friendships, and skills that build the foundation for lifelong success.

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For more information about WVU Energy Express: <https://extension.wvu.edu/youth-family/youth-education/energy-express>

Playful Summer Learning Activities

These Energy Express-inspired activities emphasize the creative process over the final product, allowing children to take the lead in order to build confidence, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and a deeper appreciation for self-expression.

1. Friendship Portraits

Materials: Sturdy paper, markers or oil pastels, optional yarn, stick-ers, tape

Encourage children to create portraits of their friends. Have them sit across from each other and carefully observe their friend while drawing at the same time. After completing their portraits, ask each child to write on a paper, “Some of my favorite things about (name) are. . .” to celebrate their friendship. For a print-rich environment, display the portraits and descriptions on the wall.

2. Blow-Painting Buddy Creations

Materials: Watercolor paint, sturdy paper or cardboard, marker or pen, straw

Make playful art together by dropping small puddles of watercolor paint onto a sheet of paper. Use a straw to blow and spread the paint, creating fun splatters and blobs. Once dry, look at the shapes and use a pen to turn them into imaginative characters – add faces, hairstyles, or creative designs based on what you see. Encourage children to write or tell stories



about the characters on their paper. This activity fosters creativity while allowing children to see art in unexpected ways.

3. Packing Adventure

Materials: Cardboard box, household objects, paint, paper, pencil

Extend your reading by transforming everyday objects into exciting pretend play! Children create a homemade cardboard suitcase to “pack” for an upcoming trip related to a book you read together, whether fiction or nonfiction. Help children make a simple packing list and think about what essentials they might need, from snacks to stuffed animals. If traveling by bus, airplane, or train, they can create transportation tickets! This activity builds confidence and helps children explore new experiences through play.

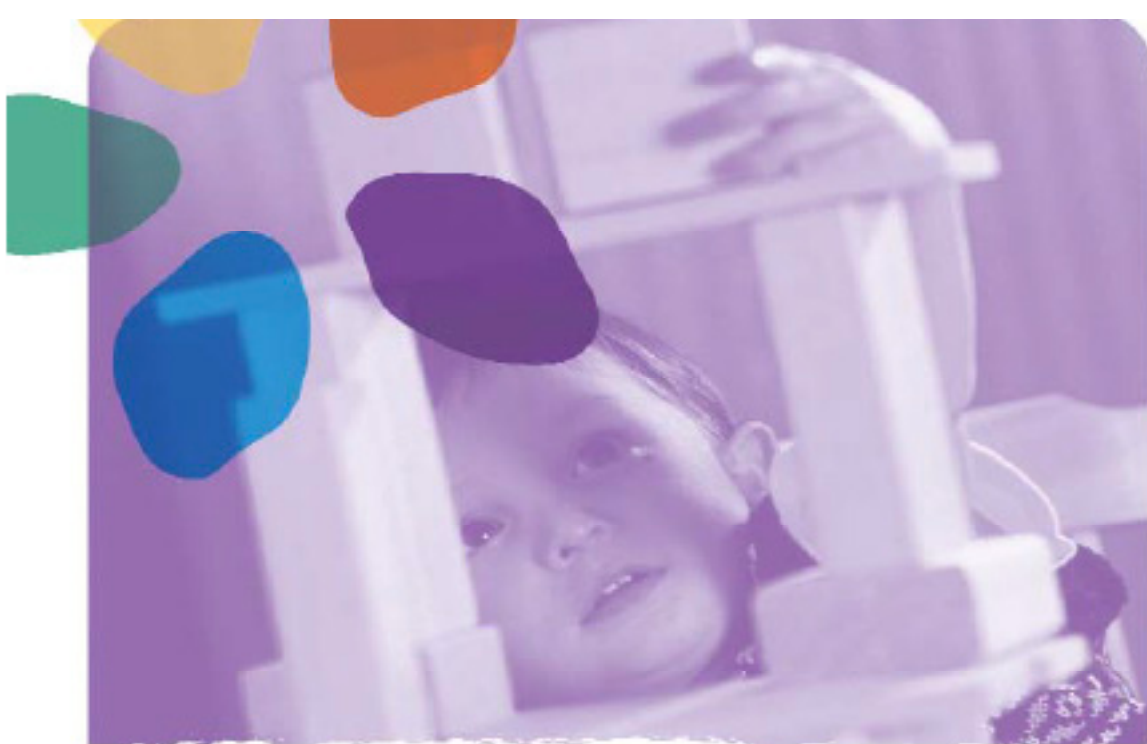
4. Summertime Snowball Story Swap

Materials: Paper and pencils

Bring a burst of creative energy with a storytelling snowball fight – no snow required! Have each child start by writing or drawing the beginning of a story on a piece of paper. Then, crumple the papers into “snowballs” and have a playful toss for about 15 seconds. When time is up, each child grabs a random snowball, unfolds it, and adds a few more lines to the story. Repeat for a few rounds until the stories feel complete. To wrap up, take turns reading the collaboratively written tales aloud.

5. Tea & Togetherness

Offer herbal tea in real teacups during snack time for a cozy and special moment. Pair it with any of the activities above or enjoy it while reading a book about friendship. This simple ritual adds warmth to the day, encouraging conversation, connection, and a love for shared stories.



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West Virginia

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services

Happy 60th Birthday, Head Start!

Submitted by Heidi Bach-Arvin, EPIC EHS/HS/PK Director



It is an honor to be a part of such an innovative and consistently evolving holistic program for children and families. In a time that includes so much uncertainty, Head Start continues to embrace and support “family” and the necessity of stabilizing the structure that supports each child through life. When technology appears to be the answer to many parenting questions, the program continues to emphasize engagement of people, face-to-face sharing and supporting one another – the true human connection.

EPIC Head Start, formerly RESA 8 Head Start, has been providing services to families in the Eastern Panhandle (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties) for 30+ years. During the late 1990’s a center was erected in each of the three counties, beginning the change from all home-based services to center-based services. In 2010, the program expanded its service age group, adding Early Head Start, serving prenatal to children age 3.

The pride of the program is the

connections that are created, nurtured, and supported throughout the year.

From the initial meeting for enrollment, staff begin building relationships, getting to know families so they can be met where they are. Staff jointly participate with each family to identify areas of strengths and needs for themselves and their child through the establishment of family and school readiness goals. Goals are revisited at home visits with their family advocate and at

parent-teacher conferences with classroom staff.

Parent engagement/participation is a critical piece of the Head Start program. Recognizing that every parent is their child's first teacher, the program strongly encourages families to volunteer in the classroom, attend family events and trainings, serve on parent committees, and most importantly serve on Policy Council. Policy Council is one of the two governing bodies of Head Start. The parents and community members that make-up this council approve activities to support active involvement of parents in supporting program operations, recruitment, selection and enrollment priorities, applications for funding and amendments to applications, budget planning for program expenditures, program personnel policies, and decisions regarding the employment of program staff, to mention a few responsibilities.

Policy Council members receive an extensive training on program components annually to ensure they are knowledgeable for weighing in on guidance and policy issues. Our Policy Council has numerous dedicated members who attend faithfully. Their feedback and insight provide the program with current challenges they and their community are facing, new

resources, and ideas of how needs might be addressed. Policy Council is an invaluable resource for the program.

Supporting preschoolers (3 to 5 years) has changed over the years. The mission of Head Start has not, continuously emphasizing children's learning through developmentally appropriate practices in safe and supportive environments. Engaging with and teaching preschoolers requires a committed focus on their social-emotional development. Our program utilizes Early Childhood Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) for classroom management. Positive Solutions, the parenting curriculum for PBIS, is provided to families to support and better understand social-emotional development. Solution kits are provided to families and every classroom to support critical thinking skills, social-emotional abilities, and classroom community building.

Mental health and wellbeing are additional pieces to the social-emotional focus. Our program's Mental Health Specialist initiated a Preschool Mental Health Advisory Council in November of 2022. The intention was to meet twice a year to get started. After the initial meeting the number of times was expand-

ed to monthly. The Advisory Council is comprised of a psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse practitioners and nursing students, parents, community collaborative staff, therapists, and educational personnel across neighboring states and counties. A topic discussed frequently is evidenced-based interventions for this early childhood age group. With the significant population growth, most notably in Berkeley County, the number of practitioners to address the many needs being observed of young children and their families is far from sufficient. Head Start offers multiple levels of intervention to support each child's successful educational future, but many needs require greater intervention and support than available.

Classrooms in each county collaborate with the Universal Pre-K program. Our Head Start is fortunate enough to provide transportation to as many children as we can reach within an hour. Our small dedicated staff of drivers make every effort to start and end the day with a smile and positive recognition. All components of the daily routine have meaning and a purpose from outdoor play to family style dining to choice time to transitions. Intentionality is the key from the start of the day, whether they are bus riders or

self-transport, until they return to their families at the end of the day.

The program also monitors the health of each child starting at enrollment by requiring a current physical, including immunizations, and a dental check. This provides us, in advance, information of any medical issue or accommodations that may need follow-up. The program screens each child within 45 days of enrolling for vision, hearing, speech, developmental and social emotional skills to determine if they are de-

velopmentally on track or in need of support services. Head Start works collaboratively with each of the three county school systems (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan) for those support services.

Within the past year, the program has met a goal of being able to offer blood lead and hemoglobin testing in-house. For years, the program has struggled with providers to have these tests done if assessments indicated the child was at risk. We have been able to catch lead levels that were above the 3.5 CDC reference level and

refer them to their health care provider for follow-up care.

There are so many pieces to the Head Start puzzle. Each piece truly fits into the next piece, addressing and working to provide stability, growth, empowerment, and achievement, not just for children but their families as well.

Change is not sustainable without the family structure being strong.



Spotlight: EPIC Early Head Start

Submitted by: Heidi Bach-Arvin, EPIC EHS/HS/PK Director

EPIC Early Head Start in Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan counties provides a plethora of services to the 144 families enrolled. With a focus on parent coaching, our staff goes above and beyond to help support all families in times of need and celebration. We have been fortunate to be able to collaborate with many local resources to help families achieve very important goals that they have set for themselves and their children.

Some of the partnerships include: Mary's Refuge- a home for unwed mothers. All 9 families living here are enrolled in our program.

Hagerstown Dental School- provides discounted preventative services to expectant mothers.

WVU Medicine- Epic Early Head Start collaborated with WVU Medicine to write our own nutrition curriculum, Healthy Habits. We use this curriculum to provide new, healthy, menu options which are cooked right at the home visit by parents and their children.

Vision/Hearing Screenings- We are fortunate to have access to evidence-based screening instru-

ments to screen for hearing/vision problems, which has led to children gaining access to the appropriate accessories which make the world a much friendlier place.

Team Building- Our staff consists of many former Head Start parents. We value team building and self-care and incorporate these strategies into all trainings possible so that we are able to provide outstanding services to families in the Eastern Panhandle.

Here are some recent highlights:



We met Brandy and her daughter when she was living in a hotel, after surviving an abusive relationship and battling addiction. Brandy has been enrolled in the Early Head Start program for a

year and half and today, Brandy continues to maintain her sobriety and has obtained her goal of finding permanent housing!



Emily and her family enrolled in Morgan County Early Head Start in October 2023. Since that time, Emily has fully participated in all of the services offered and is the mom of 2 thriving children. She has also been a Policy Council member. After deciding that a work from home position would work best for her family, she started her medical billing and coding certification in December of 2023 and completed it in February 2025. She is excited to move on and is currently seeking a remote position.



Kareen embarked on a transformative journey when she joined Early Head Start in August 2023, having relocated to a shelter four hours away from the life she once knew. Determined to create a better future for herself and her two daughters, she actively sought support from various community agencies. Her first major goal was securing stable housing; however, without a physical permanent resident card, this proved to be a significant obstacle.

Undeterred, Kareen partnered with Early Head Start to obtain a new permanent resident card. While awaiting its arrival, she remained focused on personal and professional growth including securing employment, enhancing her reading and writing skills, and developing her ability to express herself professionally.

After a year of perseverance, Kareen finally received her per-

manent resident card. Wasting no time, she immediately began applying for housing. Seven months later, her resilience paid off when she was handed the keys to her very first apartment. A powerful testament to her strength, determination, and unwavering commitment to building a brighter future for her family.



Angie and Steven are a loving couple who lost their housing and were forced to live in a tent on the top of a mountain, while expecting their first child. Tragically, this child passed while still in utero and their tent was destroyed, leaving them stranded. After months of hard work and with the help of Early Head Start and the WV Homeless Coalition, Angie and Steven now reside in permanent housing with their beautiful baby girl, Angel.



Makaylea discovered she was pregnant at 15 years old. Her beautiful baby girl was born in April 2023. Makaylea is a determined young lady who is dually enrolled in high school and college. She works 2 jobs and has been enrolled in Early Head Start for the past year, all while juggling Young Lives and Girl Scouts. There is no doubt that Makaylea will continue to achieve all the goals she has for herself.



Health Specialist, Sarah B attends an Early Head Start home visit to obtain a blood lead screening.



Head Start 60th Anniversary

Celebrating six decades of impact

A Legacy of Opportunity

For six decades, Head Start has been a cornerstone of early childhood education and family support. This milestone marks 60 years of providing comprehensive services to children and families, fostering school readiness, and promoting self-sufficiency. Join us as we celebrate the incredible impact of Head Start on generations of individuals and communities.

Voices of Head Start

Teacher/Staff Member:

Sharon - Early Head Start Center Based

"This year will makes 7 years I've been an EHS teacher. It means so much to me that I get to be the little's first teacher, it starts with EHS! I love what I do!!!!!"

Alumni, Parent, and Teacher/Staff Member:

Ashley- Early Head Start Center Based

"I went to Head Start as well as my siblings. My sister's teacher is now my supervisor who has been with Head Start for 45 years +. My daughter went to Head Start for a year and a half & now I teach for a local Early Head Start. My husband also went to Head Start and his mother was a faithful volunteer everyday."

Alumni and Teacher/Staff Member:

Charli - Head Start Center Based, Early Head Start Center Based, Previous Head Start Student

"As a child I attended Head Start at ages 3 & 4. I truly believe Head Start has helped me grow and come out of my shell. When I started as a 3-year-old I was very shy, and by the second half of the year I was coming out of my shell. Now 20 years later I am entering into Head Start as a Family Educator and I am beyond excited."

Parent and Teacher/Staff Member:

Regina - Head Start Parent, Head Start Center Based

"I have been with Head Start for many years the first few years was when my girls attended Head Start when they were 4 and 5 years old . The experience they had with Head Start was amazing. Their teachers were wonderful and my girls loved them and the teachers loved them. I worked for Head Start as an assistant teacher for 6 years and loved it. The teacher I worked with was wonderful. We had a great team. After a few years I came back to work for Head Start and have been working for them as a Behavior Support specialist for a year now. I have 13 children on my case load and I love working with them all. The new job has been rewarding and I'm continuing to learn new ways to interact with the children I have. I would recommend Head Start to all parents of young children. It continues to be a great experience and program to all children and families"

Head Start Celebrates its 60th Anniversary

Submitted by Karen Browning, Coalfield Community Action Head Start
Director of Children's Programs

Where it All Began...

The Head Start program was founded as part of the War on Poverty under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Sargent Shriver led a panel of experts to develop a comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs of disadvantaged preschool children. The result was Project Head Start. Since then, the Head Start program has grown from an eight-week demonstration project in 1965 to include full-day and full-year services and numerous program options. Head Start programs have served children and their families in urban and rural areas in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories.

Children's development must be a priority in our society. In order to properly support child development, it is vital that children are exposed to and participate in environments that are safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate.


There is no better way to do that than to become involved in a Head Start program!

In order for children to truly succeed, the family unit as a whole must be strengthened and supported. Head Start recognizes that parents are a child's primary and most important teacher. The program strives to build on that family unit to help identify strengths and support challenges. As a result of this foundational belief, Head Start's positive effects have been proven time and time again. It is the most consistent and most successful school readiness program in the country.

Head Start Services

Head Start (services for 3–5-year-old children) and Early Head Start (services for children Birth – 3 years old) support comprehensive development for children from birth to 5 years of age.





Head Start is a program that supports the whole child. While individualized early learning activities and school readiness activities are important and offered through the program, other ancillary services are provided as well. Those services include support for Health/Mental Health, Nutrition/Healthy Foods, Parent Involvement, and Family Development.

- **Early Learning:** Teachers facilitate individualized learning to promote children's readiness for school and beyond. Through planned and spontaneous instruction, relationships with adults, and play, children grow in language and literacy, understanding early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.
- **Health:** Children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, and oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services, and ensure that children are receiving the services they need.
- **Family well-being:** Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.

These services are provided in a variety of different platforms:

- center-based programs (children come to a classroom)
- home-based programs (Home Visitors provide programming to children and parents in their homes);
- child care partnerships (Head Start and local child care centers partner together to provide developmentally appropriate programming for children)

Regardless of the chosen model, in every platform, Head Start provides support in the areas of: cognitive development, school readiness, health-care, parent involvement and education, family support, and social/emotional support.

Children are truly our future and it is vital to ensure that they have the best possible foundation in their first years of development. That is where Head Start Programs come in by promoting the school readiness of children who, otherwise, would not experience a "Head Start".

The Head Start program's purpose is to promote the school readiness of young children. School readiness means...

- children are prepared for school,
- families are supporting their children's learning, and
- schools are ready as children transition into kindergarten.

Local Head Start services are delivered by both public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies. Head Start agencies design services for children and families that meet the needs of their local community while following the Head Start Program Performance Standards. These agencies receive grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), that are administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS). Some local communities and states contribute additional funding to expand Head Start and Early Head Start services to include more children within their communities. OHS provides oversight to the agencies that operate Head Start programs. OHS also offers federal policy direction and a training and technical assistance system to assist grant recipients in providing comprehensive services to eligible young children and their families.

Head Start in West Virginia

WV Head Start Programs partner with many local and state agencies to ensure any support that is needed for children is available and ready. WV leads the country in the provision of Universal Preschool for Early Childhood. Core partnerships to provide the foundation for this process include representatives from Head Start, Boards of Education, Special Education, Child Care Programs, and DHHS. This "Core Team" coordinates early childhood programming on a local level to ensure children have access to the best quality early childhood programming possible. For a snapshot of the impact Head Start has had in West Virginia, the following information, compiled by the National Head Start Association, reflects what Head Start looks like in West Virginia. (You may access this Fact Sheet by visiting go.nhsa.org/state-profile)

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE AND SUPPORT WV'S HEAD START PROGRAMS!

For information about specific celebration activities, training conferences, or to locate the Head Start Program closest to you, visit www.wvheadstart.org





NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

West Virginia

2024 Head Start & Early Head Start Profile



SNAPSHOT

“In West Virginia, a former addict found support through Head Start and is now working to support a group of mothers who are all suffering with depression. ‘I never would have stayed in that waiting room if you Head Start weren’t there with me,’ the mom said. ‘That’s walking beside somebody.’”

[Home Visitors in West Virginia Approach Families with Empathy, Understanding](#)



BY THE NUMBERS

\$83,461,598

FY23 Funding

7,784

Funded Seats Statewide

6,682

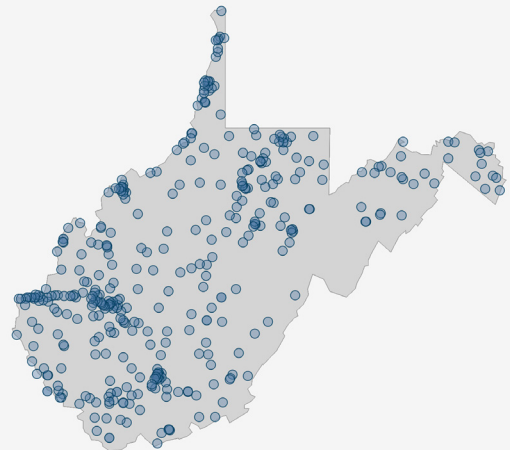
Funded Head Start Seats

1,102

Funded Early Head Start Seats

385

Head Start and Early Head Start Centers Statewide



Visit nhsa.org/locator to view maps in detail with congressional districts.



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

The National Head Start Association is committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in life. Since 1974, NHSA has worked for policy changes that ensure all income-eligible children have access to the Head Start model.

© 2024 by the National Head Start Association

For citations and additional fact sheets, visit go.nhsa.org/state-profile



HEAD START'S MODEL

Nationwide, Comprehensive, Multi-Generational

In the nearly six decades since its founding, Head Start and Early Head Start has served nearly 40 million children and their families. Innovators and small business owners, police officers and members of the military, nurses and teachers, and even members of Congress—our alumni represent the vast and diverse fabric of our country. From early math and reading skills, to confidence and resilience, Head Start and Early Head Start helps children build the skills they need to be successful in school and life.

Head Start and Early Head Start takes a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of young children and their families.

There are four pillars in every program.

Education: Learning experiences support intellectual, social, and emotional growth

Health Services: Immunizations, dental, medical, and mental health support, nutritional services, and early screenings ensure healthy development

Family Involvement: Opportunities for parents and caregivers to be involved in decision making, participate in classes, and volunteer in the program strengthen families

Wraparound Support: Tailored services meet local and individual needs and link children and families to community supports.



CHILDREN

43,494 Home Visits Conducted Throughout the Year

154 Pregnant Women Served

4,703 Newly Enrolled Children Completed Behavioral Screenings

955 Children Received Care for a Chronic Health Condition

7,590 Children Received Preventative Dental Care

6,634 Children Up-to-Date on Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Screenings

Participation in Head Start improves the likelihood of educational success, including a “2.7% increase in high school completion, an 8.5% increase in college enrollment, and a 39% increase in college completion. These estimates imply sizable, long-term returns to investments in means-tested, public preschool programs.”

[Prep School for Poor Kids: The Long-Run Impacts of Head Start on Human Capital and Economic Self-Sufficiency \(2021\)](#)



FAMILIES

492 Homeless Families Served

6,627 Families Received Services that Promote Family Outcomes

2,180 Fathers Involved in their Child's Educational Experiences

“The key takeaway is that **the benefits of Head Start appear to transfer from one generation to the next** in a substantial way... These results imply that cost-benefit analyses of Head Start and similar early childhood interventions underestimate the benefits of such programs by ignoring the transmission of positive effects across generations.”

[Breaking the Cycle? Intergenerational Effects of an Antipoverty Program in Early Childhood. \(2022\)](#)



COMMUNITIES

762 Head Start and Early Head Start Classrooms

2,807 Total Head Start and Early Head Start Staff

5,768 Parents Employed, in School, or in Job Training

“Head Start generates a net present value of \$1,204 per child who attends”, far exceeding the costs of the program. Additionally, “25 years after participation, **Head Start reduces the incidence of poor health**. These health impacts have large economic significance, as the U.S. annually spends \$144 billion on health conditions that limit work.”

[The physical and mental health returns of Head Start 25 years after participation: evidence from income eligibility cutoffs. \(2023\)](#)



WEST VIRGINIA EARLY CHILDHOOD
Training
CONNECTIONS
AND RESOURCES

Financial Support For Training Opportunities



We have funds available to:

Assist with State Early Childhood
Conferences

CONTACT INFORMATION

(304) 529-7603
1-888-WVECTCR
tcr@rvcds.org



WVECTCR has grants available to assist with early childhood conferences statewide. The funds are limited and available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Funds should be requested at least 90 days prior to the event.

APPLICATION INFORMATION



www.wvearlychildhood.org

This program is being presented with financial assistance as a grant from the West Virginia Department of Human Services and the West Virginia Department of Health and is administered by West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a program of [River Valley Child Development Services](http://www.wvearlychildhood.org).

Safety First This Summer

Submitted by Harmony Vance-Tissenbaum, West Virginia Child Care Health Educator

As summertime rolls around it brings with it wonderfully warm days. As the weather permits more outdoor play opportunities, it is a great time to take your children outside to allow them all the developmental benefits of outdoor play that aid in their gross motor, brain, and social development. However, with these opportunities to learn, grow, and exercise come some risk. “According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year, more than 200,00 children go to U.S. hospital emergency departments with injuries associated with playground equipment” (National Safety Council). Knowing this statistic, we want to be vigilant in maintaining our outdoor play areas. A few items to monitor to ensure that the children in your care are playing in a safe environment are surfaces, equipment, and supervision.

Surfaces

When looking at a playground, it is important to take a look at the ground and think about what the purpose of that designated area is and what surface material is being used. Is it somewhere for riding toys? Then it should be a smooth surface for them to ride easily and without obstacles that could result in injury. This may look like a concrete pad. Is it an area designated to run, kick balls, and play other yard games? Then you would want a surface that is flat and without holes or divots that could lead to falls and twisted ankles. This may look like a large grass area. Does the area hold slides, swings, or climbing equipment? Then it needs to have the appropriate surface for potential falls. The National Safety Council has determined that the majority of playground injuries, almost 80 percent, are due to falls. In regard to the surfaces used for these areas, referred to as “use zones,” West Virginia Child Care Center Regulations state the following:

13.5.h.2. Use zones are extended by at least six (6) feet in all directions from the perimeter of indoor climbing equipment, and the use zone surfacing is constructed of material that has an American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) rating for the critical fall height of the equipment. The use zone surfacing shall be securely fixed in place.

13.5.h.3. Climbing equipment for children under twenty-four (24)



months may not exceed thirty-two (32) inches in height. If the climbing equipment is located in the designated area for children under twenty-four (24) months, then the use zone shall extend at least thirty-six (36) inches.

A few of the more common surfaces that are approved by the ASTM are a solid rubber surface, pea gravel, rubber mulch, and engineered wood fiber (not CCA-treated). These are all impact-absorbing materials that will help to prevent an injury from falls.

Equipment

Now let's turn our attention to the equipment being used. Regardless of whether it is big or small, it should be frequently checked to make sure that it is in good condition and that there are no broken or missing parts. Children could easily choke on small screws or broken off pieces and the integrity of the equipment could be inhibited and no longer sturdy enough to support a child's weight or play. These checks should be conducted prior to children entering the play area. If damage or other issues are found, the area should be closed or roped off to keep children away from the play area.

Equipment should also be not only age but developmentally appropriate as well. Your equipment needs to be size appropriate to the child and within their skill level as to prevent injury and to improve the quality of their playtime. It also needs to be of high quality. This means that it should be designed for the purpose of high-volume play like child care or public parks. Equipment that is marked for residential use should be avoided.

Along with this we want to make sure that any equipment is being utilized for its intended purpose. "13.6.e.1. All outdoor equipment [must be] installed, maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions" (West Virginia Child Care Regulations). This will help to prevent injuries, as well as unnecessary wear and tear on your play equipment.

Supervision

Supervision is a key aspect of keeping the children in your care safe whether you are in or outdoors. One of the key aspects of a child care provider's job is to keep the children in their care safe and to prevent

injuries. A large part of this is adequate supervision.

3.1. Adequate Supervision. -- The observation, oversight, and guidance of the individual child or groups of children, by the staff member taking responsibility for the ongoing activity of each child or group of children so that the staff member is close enough to intervene, if necessary, to protect the child from harm. Adequate supervision requires the staff member's physical presence, knowledge of the child's program of activities, individual needs, habits, interests and special problems, if any, and the acceptance of accountability for the child's or groups of children's care" (West Virginia Child Care Regulations).

The area in which children play can have all the appropriate equipment and surfaces, but without the supervision of care takers who enforce playground safety rules and monitor their movements and playground activities, children are still at a higher risk of injury. "In fact, researchers say lack of supervision is linked with nearly half of playground-related injuries" (Dr. Julie Gilchrist). It is the responsibility of those working in child care to make sure they are able to see and hear the children in their care at all times, and for activities that involve more risk like climbing or water play care takers need to be within arm's length to be able to intervene quickly if necessary.

More safety Information

The surfaces and equipment you use along with having adequate supervision can go a long way in helping to keep your playground safe, but it is not an all-encompassing list. For more information on these topics and other safety tips, reach out to your region's Child Care Health Educator or Child Care Nurse Health Consultant for more safety information and training. Their contact information can be found on www.wvearlychildhood.org.

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It's Summertime!

Submitted by Candy Morgan, RN, WV Child Care Nurse Health Consultant

Summertime is the perfect time to enjoy the great outdoors but along with all of the fun that can be had comes the opportunity for mishaps. Take precautions to minimize the risks of health problems related to outdoor activities. Picnics and cookouts are popular summer events but can leave you feeling ill if food isn't handled carefully. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offers key tips to protect yourself and others when preparing, transporting, and serving food outdoors. Always rinse produce before eating. Be sure to keep raw meat, seafood, and poultry wrapped and stored away from other foods to prevent contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw. Be aware that bacteria grow faster in warmer weather so be careful to make sure food is kept at a proper temperature. The FDA recommends that food not be left out for more than two hours. When the

temperature is above 90 degrees, food should not be left out for more than one hour. When grilling, take care to cook food thoroughly and have a clean platter ready to place cooked food on. Do not forget to practice good hand hygiene while preparing, serving, and eating food outdoors.

Playgrounds and nature walks can be a source of fun and exercise, but one must be cautious when participating in these activities. If you are outside for an extended time, remember to drink fluids regularly and don't push your limits. On days when the temperatures are extremely high, limit outdoor activities during the peak hours of 10 a.m.-4 p.m. To protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays, use sunscreen and wear protective clothing, such as a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses. Sunburn and dehydration aren't the only concerns during outdoor activities. Children should also be monitored for symptoms of heat related ill-

nesses. Heat-related illnesses can progress to a medical emergency if left untreated. For someone experiencing muscle pain, have them move to a cool place, drink some fluids, and rest until the cramps subside. If someone complains of nausea and/or cramping, has pale skin that is cool and moist to the touch, guide that person to a cool place. Place cool cloths on the body to accelerate the cooling process and offer sips of fluid, if it can be tolerated. Someone who becomes confused, has a bright red face, possibly complaining of headache or dizziness may be experiencing heat stroke. If this occurs, call 911 immediately. While you wait for Emergency Medical Services to arrive, make sure the person is lying down in a cool area out of the sun. Do not give the person anything to drink.

Poisonous plants commonly grow on fences, walls, and trees. Rashes of poison ivy and oak are caused by urushiol, a substance in the sap

of the plant. Avoidance is the best way to prevent this issue. American Academy of Dermatology states a way to identify poisonous plants is “leaflets of three, beware of me.” If you think you have touched one of the poison plants, act quickly to prevent the rash. The American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA) suggests that you wash the area gently with dishwashing soap or laundry detergent, then rinse.

Another issue that you may encounter during your time outdoors is insects. Bees can be irritating to some but for those with known allergies, they can be cause for serious health issues. To keep bees away, wear light-colored clothing and avoid scented soaps and perfumes. Do not leave food, drinks, and garbage outdoors uncovered. Treat a bee sting by scraping the stinger away in a side-to-side motion with a credit card or fingernail and then wash the area with soap

and water. Keep epinephrine auto injectors close by for those who have known allergies. Watch for signs of allergic reaction to stings, which typically happen within the first few hours. If a child’s lips or tongue begin to swell, or if he or she complains of tightness of the throat or difficulty breathing, administer epinephrine, if available. If not available, call 911 immediately. Any time you have to use epinephrine, you should immediately call 911 or go to the emergency room.

If your walk may include areas with tall grass or wooded areas, wear long sleeves and pants.

You can use insect repellent with DEET to ward off ticks and mosquitos. Do not use insect repellent/ sunscreen combinations. Sunscreen may need to be reapplied often, but DEET should not. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for careful use of any product. Check yourself and children

for ticks upon return from walks. If you find a tick, remove it by grasping it as close to the skin as possible with tweezers and pulling gently, but firmly. Early removal is important because a tick generally has to be on the skin for 36 hours or more to transmit Lyme disease. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends cleansing the area of the tick bite with antiseptic. Treatment for any mishap is always available, but prevention is even better. If you would like more information, schedule the training “Summertime Safety” with your local Child Care Nurse Health Consultant. Stay safe and have a great summer.

Information obtain from Handling Food Safely While Eating Outdoors | FDA

<https://www.cdc.gov>

Information obtained from <https://www.aad.org>

Poison ivy, oak, and sumac: What should I do if I touch a plant?



Do you know a child who is not *moving *hearing *seeing * learning or *talking like others their age?

By 3 months,
Does your baby...

- grasp rattle or finger?
- hold up his/her head well?
- make cooing sounds?
- smile when talked to?

By 6 months,
Does your baby...

- play with own hands/feet?
- roll over?
- turn his/her head towards sound?
- holds head up/looks around without support?

By 9 months,
Does your baby...

- sit alone or with minimal support?
- pick up small objects with thumb and fingers?
- move toy from hand to hand?

By 12 months,
Does your baby...

- wave goodbye?
- play with toys in different ways?
- feed self with finger foods?
- begin to pull up and stand?
- begin to take steps?

By 18 months,
Does your baby...

- cling to caretaker in new situations?
- try to talk and repeat words?
- walk without support?

By 24 months,
Does your baby...

- point to body parts?
- walk, run, climb without help?
- get along with other children?
- use 2 or 3 word sentences?

If you are concerned about your child's development, get help early.

Every child deserves a great start.

WV Birth to Three supports families to help their children grow and learn.

To learn more about the
WV Birth to Three services
in your area, please call:

1-866-321-4728

Or visit www.wvdhhr.org/birth23



WV Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.

Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"

Volume 21, Issue 3, Summer 2025

The Summer Slide

Submitted by Kristin Smith, Afterschool Early Childhood Specialist, Connect Child Care Resources and Referral

Awe, summer break! The time between the end of an old school year and the beginning of a new school year. A two to three month break for students to make memories, relax, and not think about school, right? This is what a lot of people think about when it is time for that long

break. Did you know that on average, children can lose nearly two months of reading skills and three months of math skills during summer break?

When those children return to school, they will have to re-learn these skills before they can retain new material. In a

2020 study by Annenberg Brown University, researchers determined that the average student lost 17-34 percent of the previous year's learning gains throughout summer break. In addition, they found that students who lose gains during summer break are more likely to lose gains in future summers.

When children "turn their brains off" for the summer, they can regress academically, losing some of the academic gains they made throughout the school year. This loss that children experience is known as "The Summer Slide".

Supporting youth to be happy and healthy during break is so important throughout the summer but how can you support them academically?

- Continued on the next page

WV Parent Blocks Newsletter is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of West Virginia Department of Human Services/Bureau for Family Assistance/Division of Early Care and Education; West Virginia Department of Human Services/Bureau for Family Assistance/WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; West Virginia Department of Health/Bureau for Public Health/Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; and West Virginia Department of Health/Bureau for Public Health/Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Home Visitation Program and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

It is important to keep in mind that younger children are typically referred to as primary students, which are grades K-2 and older children are considered intermediate students, which are grades 3-5. Whether you work in a school age summer program, or are a parent or guardian, there are a lot of things you can do to help avoid this summer slide.

READ

Children will not gain reading skills if they are forced to read materials they are uninterested in. Try to offer books and reading materials of interest. Encourage and help children read directions to games or signs that may be seen as you are out. You can also play word games together.

You can pair younger children and older children together as reading buddies. Older children can help the younger children sound out words and practice fluency. For those younger children who are struggling readers, the older children could read age-appropriate books to them and point to the words as they read. As the younger child advances, they could start tracking the print as they are being read to. This even works well for an adult reading to a child.

Local libraries often have free events going on throughout the summer that are available to the public. Just taking kids to a library, getting their library card, and being able to explore and

check out books to their liking can be very exciting and spark their interest.

With all of this being said it is important to remember that those younger children may just be beginning to learn their letters and sounds. They are not readers just yet, so ask those children to recognize letters in certain materials and you can ask them the sounds that those letters make. When it comes to print materials, they can find those letters in them or search for letters or simple words as you see printed materials. Also, play letter recognition and simple word games with them.

WRITE

Keeping a daily or weekly journal is a great way for children to keep up with their writing skills and keep track of those summer memories being made. Younger children who have yet to master writing complete sentences can draw a picture and explain their picture as you write a sentence about it. Then ask the child to copy the sentence. Older children can write a few sentences or a paragraph. Not only does this help with writing skills, but it also incorporates art and language development. If the children read their sentences aloud, they can hear if their sentences make sense.

People often make lists to stay organized. List-making helps people organize their thoughts and express them in written form.

Suggest your child keep lists for various purposes, such as summer goals, materials needed for an activity, to-do lists, friends to keep in touch with, and many more!

If they have friends or family members they want to keep in touch with, help them write letters or postcards. We know that technology has allowed us to reach out to someone within seconds, but letter writing can make for a memorable experience. This helps children practice composing thoughts and expressing them on paper, while also staying in touch with loved ones. It also makes for a great learning experience by going to purchase stamps, writing addresses correctly on envelopes, placing them in mailboxes, and flipping up that little red flag when they are ready to send.

DRAMATIC PLAY

Dramatic play has endless possibilities to help children with reading, art, writing, language arts, and even math. Help children brainstorm and research different places they would like to recreate for dramatic play, for example McDonald's. If you are able to, take them there to experience it. They can come back and create lists of what may be needed, how much they would ask for the prices, and make promotional signs. Then using recyclable materials, the children can create props to mimic items for their play area.

Narrative plays are when chil-

dren act out roles for characters most likely from books, movies, or shows. Children could write out the scripts of what the characters can say. Then create a list of materials they need to perform the play. Using recycled materials, they can create props to make scenes. Offering a variety of old clothes can spark their imagination and creativity to dress up for different roles.

Although we want to limit the amount of time children spend on technology, instead of playing an app, encourage them to record the play. Children can also plan and write an info commercial to go along with their dramatic play, and then record it.

MATH

Encouraging children to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts are important, but there are also a multitude of ways numbers and math can be incorporated into everyday experiences. Play math based games where numbers, counting, and keeping score are core to the game. Card games like Uno and other board games often require these skills to play the game.

Younger children can simply benefit from counting forward and backward, seeing numbers and writing them down. Math talks can occur wherever you may be. This involves asking children things like “How many do you see?” Or, “If I took two apples

away, how many apples would be left?” “How many more apples would you need to have 10 apples?” Recognizing shapes in the environment you are in and asking how many sides the shape has is an easy way to talk about math with children.

Math also involves money, time, and fractions. You can offer pretend money during their play and ask questions about amounts. If you are out at a store, encourage children to keep track of how much items are by writing them down and encouraging them to add it up. Have children help you check the time, preferably analog not digital, and add up how much longer until something else occurs. Baking with children is fun and involves a lot of measuring, so fractions are being practiced.

These are just a few ideas that can help with math skills, but as a former elementary school teacher, math facts are extremely important for children to know. Instead of offering flash cards, use them in games. Play a matching game where kids match the facts to the sum. Set a timer and make a goal to get so many facts within an amount of time. This could be called “Beat the Clock”. Offer 2 dice that the children can roll and either add or multiply the two numbers depending on their age. Have them write out the facts and sum as they go like $2 \times 5 = 10$. You could call this “Roll the Dice”. This same concept can be used with a

deck of cards like in the game of “War”. The classic game of BINGO can be used in multiple ways for math facts.

The summer slide can affect multiple children throughout their summer break. Finding exciting, fun ways to keep your children interested is needed to prevent this slide from happening. Forcing children to read, write math facts, and play games they are uninterested in will not help. Your encouragement and involvement is needed for these skills to be practiced. The most important thing we can do as adults is talk to and support our children.

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SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN

MAKING THE MOST OF FAIRS, FESTIVALS, AND PARADES

WEST VIRGINIA INFANT/TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION



Spring, summer, and fall in West Virginia often include lots of fairs, festivals, and parades. This is a great time for young children to explore different foods, music, animals, and fun new experiences. It can also mean that young children may experience unfamiliar sounds, smells, lights, and crowds. Preparing young children in advance, and a little pre-planning, will help to make the experience enjoyable for all! Fairs and festivals are a great way to explore the state, both in your own area and beyond.

WWW.NURTURINGWVBABIES.ORG



To access more resources of the West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association, please scan the QR code.

Start with a plan. Begin with making sure the festival, fair, or parade is the right fit for your family. Other considerations could be the time when you attend, how long you attend, and what activities your family would be interested in seeing. Visit the areas that your family is most interested in first, in case you need to leave early. Depending on the length of time you will be staying, you may want to bring:

- comfort item for naptime,
- snacks to stretch between meals,
- sunscreen for hot days,
- jackets for cooler evenings, or
- change of clothes for water rides.

Consider sensitivity to sounds, lights, and costumes. Some children LOVE loud noises, bright flashing lights, and characters in costumes. Others do not. If your child is sensitive to these things, you may consider:

- bringing ear plugs or head phones, or leaving the event earlier before all the loud noises begin.
- avoiding activities with bright lights, or attending in the daytime when the lights are not as bright.
- redirecting the child away from an area that has characters in costumes. Children should not be made to interact with characters in costume if feeling anxious or afraid.

Recognize your child's need to have some quiet time if feeling overwhelmed. Signs that your young child is feeling overwhelmed:

- irritable or crying,
- anxious,
- agitated, or
- clingy behavior.

Plan for breaks and look for quiet areas. Sometimes, fairs and festivals will offer a sensory room that offers young children a quiet place to rest and recharge.