

# Network News

Child Care Resource Center Newsletter



## A MESSAGE FROM FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

By Jenn Perney

Every year on the Friday before Mother's Day, we celebrate National Provider Appreciation Day. This year, Provider Appreciation Day falls on Friday, May 9, 2026.

This is a day to honor those who educate and care for young children. Whether you are a family or group family child care provider, a child care center director or classroom staff, or work in this field another way, we recognize you! We know how hard you work every day. We see your dedication as an early childhood professional supporting working families, fostering child development, and nurturing young children.

The Family Enrichment Network Child Care Resource Center understands how important your job is. You are often unrecognized and not thought of, but we will continue to advocate for you. We will continue to fight to get the resources, pay, and benefits you deserve.

Thank you for your commitment, dedication and compassion to our children and community.

## Newsletter Highlights

CACFP Recipe

Sensory Break

Program Spotlight

Restorative Practice

New Child Care Programs

Spring Activities

Family Child Care Collaborative

Book Review

Infant Walkers Ban

Infant Lesson Plans

Years of Service



# Vroom

Brain building moments



## VROOM

By Rachel Dowd, Provider Services  
Coordinator

Check out this Vroom tip to try this  
spring!

### Name That Sound

When you're outside, pause and ask  
your child to "Name That Sound."  
Take turns guessing. Are you hearing  
children playing or a dog barking? The  
squeak of a swing or the chirp of a  
bird? Point out that some things, like  
ants, don't make sounds.

### Brainy Background

When playing "Name That Sound,"  
you're inviting your child to focus on  
the differences between sounds and  
figuring out what they are. This is an  
important skill for enjoying and  
learning language that will help them  
communicate with others.

Interested in more Vroom tips like  
this? Visit [vroom.org](http://vroom.org) or download  
their app for daily brain-building tips!

A cartoon illustration of a brown paper grocery bag overflowing with fresh produce. Visible items include a blue reusable bag, a red apple, a pineapple, a yellow bell pepper, and an orange pumpkin. The bag is set against a white background.

**Quiche Florentine**  
From: [cacfp.org](http://cacfp.org)

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 enriched pie crust (200 g)
- 6 cups fresh spinach, chopped
- 1/2 tbsp butter
- 3 large whole eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Bake pie crust for 8-9 minutes. Then allow to cool. Lower oven temperature to 350°F.
2. Sauté the spinach with butter over medium heat until spinach has wilted. Set aside and allow to cool.
3. In a medium bowl, mix all ingredients together including the spinach. Salt and pepper to taste. Pour mixture into pie crust and bake for 50-55 minutes.
4. Cut into 10 even slices and serve warm.

*One serving provides 1 oz meat/meat alternate, 1/2 oz eq. grains and 1/4 cup vegetable.*



## TAKE A SENSORY BREAK

By Abbie Bennett, Child Care Specialist

Have you ever heard the term “[sensory break](#)” and weren’t quite sure what that meant?

What is a sensory break?

A sensory break or “[brain break](#)” is a fancy word for just taking a regular old break from seated learning activities or sedentary activities. For children with sensory needs, this is often referred to as a sensory diet or sensory break. It is a time for them to gain the sensory input they need in their bodies to stay alert, on task, and focused.

Why are sensory breaks important?

Sensory breaks are a way for any child, whether they have sensory needs or not, to reset, decompress, and get the blood flowing back into their brains. We all know that children learn best through movement and exploring with their hands. Giving them breaks throughout their day lets their brains take a rest and reset, but they are also still learning vital life skills in these sensory breaks.

How often should you do a sensory break?

It has been suggested that children ages 3-9 need a break every 15 minutes. Also children younger than 3 can really not be expected to focus for much longer than 5-10 minutes, and some much less than that. Children in fourth grade and above it is suggested to have a break every 45 minutes.

Some Sensory Break Ideas:

Going outside for a walk, fidget toys, jumping jacks, running, skipping, yoga moves, swimming, biking, wall pushes, animal crawls, ball pass, chewing gum and swinging-just to name a few.

Article from [lemonlimeadventures.com/sensory-break-ideas-for-kids/](https://lemonlimeadventures.com/sensory-break-ideas-for-kids/)

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT - YOUNG WONDERS

The remaining state aid needed for the YWCA to begin construction of the Intergenerational Campus Project was recently announced as part of Gov. Kathy Hochul’s \$25 billion five-year Housing Plan. The project will create nearly 70 new housing units in Binghamton and double the capacity of the YWCA childcare program, “Young Wonders”.

The \$34 million project includes the renovation of the former Urban League Community Center

at 45 Carroll St. into a new and improved childcare facility. Young Wonders Childcare Center will relocate from 80 Hawley St. to the former Urban League Community Center, increasing enrollment from 45 slots to 96 for children as young as 6 weeks up to the age of 12. Construction for the project is expected to begin by the end of 2026 and be completed by 2028, which the executive director of the YWCA of Binghamton and Broome County, Carole Coppens said is a “rough estimate.”  
Read more at [pressconnects.com](https://pressconnects.com).



## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

By Brittany Craig, Early Childhood  
Mental Health Consultant

### What are Restorative Practices?

A framework for building community through relationships, understanding, and accountability. The focus is on open communication which helps develop social/emotional skills in our children.

### Traditional Discipline

- Punishment for breaking the rules
- Focus on the rule and not the behavior
- Punitive consequences
- Adult authority
- Doesn't teach "why"

### Restorative Practices

- Repairs the harm
- Restores the relationship
- Understanding the impact of behavior
- Collaborative
- Solution-driven

### Why Restorative Practices?

- Positive classroom environment
- Repairs hurt and harm in relationships
- Teaches skills that benefit children's future
- Effective Learning Environment
- Positive Behavior Support and understanding

### ECE Classroom Strategies:

1. Affective Statements: To build empathy and strengthen relationships.
  - Emotion-based language and communication to help children identify their feelings
  - Genuine and authentic
  - "I feel [emotion] when [behavior] because [impact]."
2. Quick Connect Questions: To make connections as a classroom between peers and teachers.
  - Utilized daily to encourage noncontingent conversations as a class
  - Allows class to learn about their peers
  - Can be used during morning meeting, lunch time, snack time
  - Calendar put out each month to directors
3. Community Building Routines: To develop safety and belonging in the classroom
  - Morning Meetings and feelings check-in
  - Shout-Outs- allowing a peer to say something positive about another
  - Morning Greetings- Allow children to choose how they want to greet the teacher upon entering the classroom (hug, high-five, wave, fistbump, etc).

continued on the next page...

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICES CONTINUED...

4. Community Classroom Agreements: To give children a sense of autonomy and to develop belongingness
- Developing classroom rules together as a whole class that can be agreed upon
  - Discuss choices in how to fix mistakes that happen
  - Place somewhere in the classroom so everyone can visually see
  - Use painted handprints as “signatures” on the agreement
5. Restorative Conversations: To guide children through conflict and problem-solving. To guide in mending harmed relationships
- Guide children through conflict by using questions like “What happened?”, “Who was affected?”, and “How can we make it right?”
  - Opportunity for reflection
  - Making it right rituals
  - Help children come up with solutions



## INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION

Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is an early intervention that benefits young children, by pairing a mental health professional with an early childhood educator (provider) to improve the child’s social, emotional and behavioral health.

The intended goals of this service are to reduce challenging behaviors, improve social-emotional skills, promote healthy relationships, decrease stress and burnout in early childhood educators (providers), and improve the overall quality of the classroom/program.

## SAVE THE DATE

The 4th Annual Fall Conference will be held on Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup> in Binghamton.

This all-day professional development day will bring you a national/state quality training right in our own backyard.

It started as a conference primarily for child care center staff to have a day to come together with others from the field and learn from state and national speakers, but anyone in the early childhood field is welcome to attend. Topics are relevant for all modalities of care. The agenda and registration will be out late-summer.



## **SIMPLE SPRING TIME ACTIVITIES**

From, PBS Kids, April 4, 2016.  
Author: Mary Hope Garcia

1 Play in the rain. Put on your rain gear and play in puddles! See who can make the biggest or most stylish splash. Make mud pies—don't be afraid to get dirty, revel in the gooey globby mess! Do the Dougie or the robot and sing in the rain. Collect rain in different containers and listen to the sounds of raindrops as they hit a metal, plastic or glass container. Float a boat made out of recycled items, paper or twigs and leaves.

2 Catch the wind. Create a wind sock, kite, pinwheel, or weather vane and learn all about the wind. As you're crafting, ask your kids questions: Can you see the wind on a windy day? How do you know it's there? What did it sound like? What did it feel like? Get more ideas on learning about the wind from Curious George.

3 Go on a walk or bike ride. Observe the natural world as you make your way through the woods or park.

Senses walk: Use all of your senses to experience spring. Smell the flowers or grass. Listen to birds chirping. Feel the smoothness or roughness of a rock.

Shape scavenger hunt: Look closely and you'll find shapes all around you. Bonus points for spotting 3D shapes such as a cube, cylinder or sphere.

Color walk: Find items for every color in the rainbow (remember it's ROYGBIV).

ABC walk: Look for items that start with each letter of the alphabet.

Learn about trees: Identify trees by their leaves, bark, seeds and branches.

Nighttime walk: Listen for nocturnal creatures such as bats and owls.

Make a masterpiece: Collect items on your walk to create art. Paint sticks or rocks, press flowers, make sun prints, or mix some flower potion.

4 Plant a garden. Reconnect your child with the wonder of nature by showing her that a tiny seed can grow into a plant. Keep this simple by planting an herb garden or planting in containers. You can also choose plants to create a garden that attracts specific animals such as a bird or butterfly garden.

5 Watch for wildlife. Make a bird feeder and go bird watching. Look under a rock or log for creepy crawlies. Spy a spider weaving its web. Watch squirrels playing atop trees. Search for animal tracks.

6 Look to the skies. Lie down and watch clouds. Let your imaginations run wild as you spot shapes in the clouds. Let your child stay up past bedtime to count the stars, or better yet, to go stargazing.

7 Go on a picnic. Spring is the perfect time for a picnic — there are no mosquitos or flies yet! Bring a blanket and some delicious sandwiches or snacks. Turn it into a booknic by bringing along books.

Need more ideas? If you are in Chenango County, contact Roberta to come to your program. Email [rcaldwell@familyenrichment.org](mailto:rcaldwell@familyenrichment.org) or call 607-723-8313 ext. 1522

## EMPIRE STATE FAMILY CHILD CARE COLLABORATIVE

By Toni Dougherty, Family Child Care Network Specialist

Did You Know, there's a program designed just for family child care providers?

Running a family or group family child care program means wearing a lot of hats. The Empire State Family Child Care Collaborative is here to help support the business side of your program so you can focus more on what you love—caring for children and families. Through this program, providers have access to tools, resources, and direct support that help simplify the day-to-day work of running a program and give you a little more time back in your day.

One of the biggest benefits is free child care management software through either Brightwheel or Playground. These platforms can replace many of the paper forms required by OCFS by keeping attendance, child records,

and family communication all in one place. They also help strengthen family engagement by making it easy to share updates, photos, and reminders with families throughout the day. Another feature providers love is the built-in financial tracking, which helps keep invoices, payments, and reports organized. When tax time comes around, much of the information you need is already there—making the process a whole lot easier.

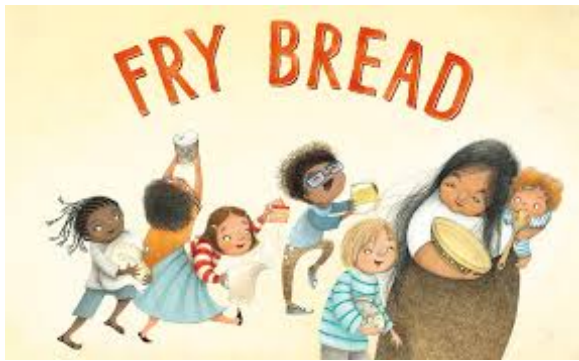
As part of the Collaborative, I work directly with providers to help with whatever they need most—whether that's getting started with the software, organizing program records, or talking through simple business pieces like enrollment tracking and communication with families. It's also a great opportunity to connect with other providers and be part of a peer group that understands the work you do every day.

To learn more or join the Collaborative, feel free to reach out: 607-723-8313 ext. 1679 or [tdougherty@familyenrichment.org](mailto:tdougherty@familyenrichment.org)

## NEW CCRC STAFF - TONI DOUGHERTY

Toni Dougherty graduated with her bachelor's degree in 2020 and has built her career in early childhood education as an educator, director, and mentor/coach. Over the years, she has worked closely with children, families, and educators, developing a strong passion for supporting providers and helping programs grow. Toni enjoys connecting people with resources, sharing ideas, and creating supportive environments where both educators and children can thrive. Outside of work, Toni enjoys spending time with her two children, hiking, and being with her animals. She values time outdoors, staying connected to her community, and supporting others who share a passion for helping children and families succeed.





*Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne

Take a walk in Kenya with Handa and her basket full of 7 wonderful fruits. But, there is a mystery cooking! Her delicacies are missing only to be replaced with a surprise. The book is beautifully illustrated and includes activities and discussions pertaining to the book.

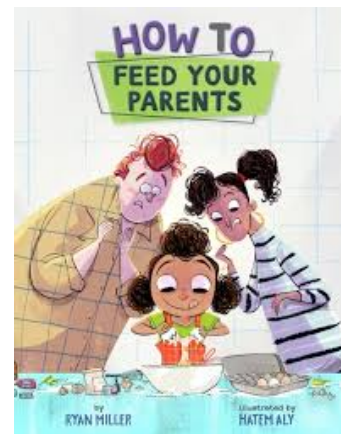
## BOOK REVIEWS

By Cathy Lee, Health & Wellness Supervisor

Reading offers a different kind of nourishment than the meals you serve to children in your care. It also offers a different sort of physical development beyond physical activity. Reading is a recipe for creativity and imagination. Reading is action plan for brain development, learning and small motor skills, such as turning pages or illustrating stories. Reading also brings us all together in a world where we might be separated by screens. I have decided to share a few of my favorite books, with a brief review of each one. I hope that you enjoy these books and share some of your favorite books with others!

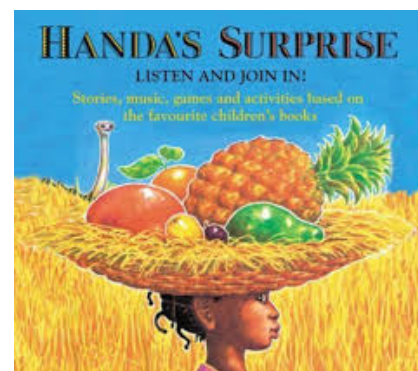
*Fry Bread –A Native American Family Story*  
by Kevin Noble Maillard

This book is a warm celebration of a modern Native American family that blends traditions and cultures that span our country though the sharing of Fry Bread. I could smell the aroma of Fry Bread and hear it crackling over a fire as I read the book. Food can bring families and friends together and remind us that food is part of everyone's history. A recipe for Fry Bread is included.



*How to Feed Your Parents* by Ryan Miller

What would it be like if a parent's favorite meal was elbow macaroni mixed with orange-colored powder from a packet? What would happen if a child realized that if she ever wanted to eat more than nuggets and noodles at home, she would have to commandeer the kitchen herself? Matilda Macaroni comes up with a plan! This is an entertaining book that turns the tables and includes a recipe that picky parents can help prepare.



## HOMEMADE PLAYDOUGH

By Allie Drake, Training & Coaching

Supervisor

Looking for something fun to make with the kids?

Make some homemade playdough!

What skills does playdough help with?

- Fine motor skills- Strengthens small muscles in the hands and fingers
- Imagination- Mold, and shape into anything
- Communication- Children talk about their creations

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour (plus extra for kneading)
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 1 cup lukewarm water
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Food coloring (optional)

Instructions

- In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and cream of tartar.
- Pour in the vegetable oil and water, then mix until a dough forms. You may need to add a bit more flour if the dough feels too sticky.
- If desired, knead in a few drops of food coloring until the color is evenly distributed throughout the dough.
- Knead the dough for several minutes until it becomes smooth and elastic.
- Store the playdough in airtight containers to keep it fresh.

Add ins and enhancements to make playing even more fun:

- Glitter
- Googly eyes
- Buttons
- Pipe cleaners
- Straws
- Toy animals
- Legos

## INFANT WALKERS BANNED

A bill prohibiting infants from using walkers in New York childcare facilities was signed into law by Gov. Kathy Hochul on March 2, 2026. The law takes effect 90 days after the bill is signed (May 31st).

The bill defines, "'Infant walker' shall mean a fully enclosed mobile unit with a seated area and wheeled base that enables a child to move on a horizontal surface when propelled by such child while seated or standing within the enclosed unit." Walking toys that a child pushes in front of them and doesn't sit in are still allowed.

Bill sponsor Assemblywoman Amy Paulin says infant walkers have caused "horrific tragedies." "There have been instances where a baby has seriously hurt themselves because, in a walker, they can move faster than an adult could reach them to keep them safe". Research has also shown that walkers do not promote independent walking, Paulin added, and instead can cause "delayed development of the skills needed to pull themselves up, balance, and take unsupported steps."

Read more about the bill at

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S8776>



## LESSON PLANNING FOR INFANTS

By Victoria Allen, Infant Toddler Specialist

Yes, babies need curriculum too! While it may seem like they are too young to “get anything” out of an activity, they are little sponges born ready to learn.

Lesson planning for infants focuses on responsive, individualized care built around daily routines (feeding, changing, sleeping) ensuring learning happens naturally as well as through play-based interactions. They should target key developmental areas like social-emotional, physical (tummy time, motor skills), and language skills, using activities like music, sensory play, reading, and mirroring their interests to foster exploration and strong relationships. Plans should be flexible, integrating teacher-led moments with child-choice time and emphasizing repetition and observation to support each baby's unique journey.

Here are a few general tips:

- Do activities hand-over-hand or with teacher help
- Keep child goals in mind, ex, plan an activity to practice crawling, etc.
- Be prepared to fail, if something doesn't work, come up with plan B
- Build trust by following the infant's cues and interests
- Always talk about what you're doing or learning about
- Turn routines into learning opportunities, ex. Counting friends, transition songs
- Art can be with hand or footprints as well as exploring various materials
- Singing songs with motions or finger-plays holds focus
- Point and picture-walk through books rather than reading every word
- Get and share ideas with co-workers, admin, or anyone
- Don't overthink it, just keep it simple and have fun!

Do you need more ideas or assistance working with infants and toddlers?

Contact Victoria today! She can come onsite to your program to assist you one-on-one!

Email [vallen@familyenrichment.org](mailto:vallen@familyenrichment.org) or call 607-723-8313 ext. 1678. Or come to one of her upcoming training opportunities:

*The Power of Teaching with Intention and Joy* on April 28 in Norwich

*Reflecting on Your Room and Routine* on June 11 at Fayette Street, Binghamton

*Language and Literacy* on June 23 at Cherry St, Johnson City



## FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS YEARS OF SERVICE

### CELEBRATING YEARS OF SERVICE

Congratulations to the following providers who are celebrating years of service in the months of April, May, and June.

#### Tioga County

Rose Deangelis - 31 years

Rochelle Pursell – 2 years

Shannon Wheeler - 24 years

Diane VanOrman- 31years

#### Broome County

Lisa Beylo – 19 years

Rebecca Beylo – 19 years

Annette Chalker – 22 years

Kelsey Chapman - 1 year

Lisa Knapp – 23 years

Fathima Rizna Assan Farook – 4 years

Latoya Foster – 12 years

McKenzie Lewis – 1 year

Lizette Olivares – 19 years

Wendy Poyer – 18 year

Candace Vandermark – 8 years

Gabrielle Vega – 7 years

#### Chenango County

Samantha Bennett - 8 years

Beverly Christie – 35 years

Peggy Marango – 26 years

Heather Mierke – 17 years

Stacey Mowatt – 25 years

Brandi Pasanen – 7 years

Lisa Wright – 9 years

## NETWORKING GROUPS

Do you want to connect with other early childhood educators in our area?

Join one of the FEN Facebook Groups!

There is one for everyone in the field.

Go to the Family Enrichment Network Facebook Page and look under Groups to request to join.



**FEN CCRC Family/Group Family Child Care Provider Networking Group**

**FEN CCRC Child Care Center and SACC Staff Networking Group**

**FEN CCR&R Child Care Center/SACC Director Networking Group**