

## Health and Wellness Newsletter for Early Childhood Educators

# Healthy Eating, Active Bodies, Healthy Minds

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## INVESTING IN THE EARLY YEARS OF LIFE LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY LIFESPAN

Investing in improving children's development at the beginning of life is probably the most effective strategy for realizing the health potential of all Americans.

The United States has not adequately invested in children's health for a long time. Child health promotion is an investment with long-term benefits in their lifespan and economic returns to society in terms of lower health care cost and increase economic productivity (Guyer et al., Academic of Pediatrics 2009, Commission to Build a Healthier America, 2008). A large body of evidence now supports that investing in early childhood makes sense. The American Academy of Pediatrics support findings that high quality early childhood education and childcare for young children improves their health and promotes their development and learning (American Academic Pediatrics, 2005). There are multiple ways in which early childhood education benefit children and families, indirectly and directly. For example, children attending early education programs are more likely to go to the doctor regularly and get their immunizations because they are required by the schools. Often children also get dental screenings. Additionally, preschool children and their parents often learn about health, nutrition, and physical activity, which can result in lifestyle changes and prevent obesity and malnutrition.

Most early childhood programs also offer parenting education and support that leads to less abuse, neglect, and injury in the home.

The potential health benefits of early childhood education programs are significant especially for children living in poverty. In the most recent State of the Union address, President Obama presented a proposal for universal Pre-K education. Some evidence to support the President's proposal includes:

- In the United States, obesity is a growing problem. A combination of eating high-calorie, low-nutrient foods, and spending less time doing physical activity and more time in front of the computer or television has contributing the rise of childhood obesity from 5.0 percent to 13.9 percent among children 2-to-5-years old.
- Contributing to malnutrition is the rise in food insecurity among children living in poverty. Food insecurity is associated with childhood obesity
- Early childhood programs offer parenting support and education, improving the home environment and helping the child have a more stable and nourishing home. They also contribute to the development of the child's cognitive, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills

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Photo: Network for a Healthy California



#### Sources:

Early Childhood Education Pathway for Better Health Policy Brief. April 2013, Issue 25

Heed the President's call for early childhood education, Minnesota Post  
<http://www.minnpost.com/co>

A new Entitlement? The Right to Preschool-Associated Press <http://www.npr.org/te>

## Teacher's Corner

# Creating Opportunities

School-based gardening programs provide opportunities for children to decrease sedentary behavior. This is particularly important for children who are less inclined to participate in strenuous, non-competitive activities (Phelps., et al 2010). This information offers early childhood providers the opportunity to create a wide range of physical activities for a child and use the garden for multiple educational purposes. Try to use the resources and environment you have and draw on available community resources.



**Domain:**  
**Social and Emotional**  
**(SSD)**

### Sense of Self, Confidence

Children will develop and display a sense of self and confidence in their abilities. Participating in activities or when talking about the garden, children can express their cultural identity

### Setting Up The Garden

Ask children to help you design a garden and select a theme. Some possibilities include: Salsa Garden, Cultural Garden, or Butterfly Garden. Each child can express with confidence their knowledge about gardening at home or with members of their community. Using Popsicle sticks, magazines, or drawings, ask children to create an imaginary outdoor or indoor garden on large piece of paper.

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



**Domain:**  
**Physical Development**  
**(PD)**

### Digging and Raking

Children can be in the garden for 5 minutes daily, or more minutes if less days a week. Both digging and raking are “high-intensity” physical activities and develop a love for the garden. Children can use the spade to dig a bed. They can also use their small rake and rake leaves or any debris.



**Domain:**  
**Language and Literacy**  
**Development (LLD)**

### Planting and Harvesting

Children can act out their understanding of plant cycle from seed to fruit. As an alternative you can ask each child to write the part of the plant he/she would like to eat. Each child writes a word on a piece of construction paper and glues it to a Popsicle stick. For each word the child creates a movement.

**Source:**



Desired Results Developmental Profile -  
Preschool© DRDP-PS© (2010).

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/documents/drdp2010preschooleng.pdf>

Photos: Network for a Healthy California;  
California Desired Results Developmental Profile—  
Preschool© DRDP-PS© (2010)

## Physical Activity Classroom Breaks

*Digging and raking are high-intensity physical activities for children. Weeding, mulching, hoeing, and sowing seeds are classified as moderate physical activities.*

### BRAIN BREAK: Dig and Hoe

**Sung to:** “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean”

In my garden, I like to work  
In my garden, I dig the ground  
In my garden, I grow big vegetables  
And have lots of flowers around.  
Dig, hoe, dig, hoe  
In my garden, this grow, grow, grow;  
Dig, hoe, dig, hoe  
In my garden things grow



**Source:**

PreschoolEducation.com - Music & Songs : Garden  
<http://www.preschooleducation.com/sgarden.shtml>

## Garden is Physical Activity for Children

There is new evidence that support anecdotal assumptions about gardening bringing physical benefits to children. Traditionally, it has been accepted that gardening has an impact in nutrition knowledge, fruits and vegetable preferences, and children's willingness to try new food. Gardening is a moderate activity (Sin-Ae Park, et al., 2013, Ainsworth et al., 2000) and depending on an individual weight, 30 minutes of gardening activities can burn between 128 and 205 calories (Harvard Health Publication, 2006). Children can engage in at least 10 gardening activities, digging, raking, weeding, mulching, sowing seeds, harvesting, watering, planting, transplanting, and being a bug detective. Teacher can use this opportunity to use the gardening as a laboratory for meeting several of the educational standards. UCCE Alameda County information, training and materials are available for teachers. Contact your UCCE staff when she visits your site or check our website at [cealameda.ucdavis.edu](http://cealameda.ucdavis.edu)



### Sources:

Journal of Extension

<http://www.joe.org/joe/2010december/rb5.php>

Hort Technology electronic journal

<http://hortech.ashspublications.org/content/23/5/589.abstract>

## Plant a Salad Garden

You can prepare the garden to grow Spring vegetables and some herbs. Children can prepare a seasonal salad using some of the vegetables. Vegetables provide Vitamin A, Vitamin C, folate, potassium, and fiber.

Some seasonal vegetables include:  
Peppers, radishes;  
Greens: spinach, collards and lettuce  
Herbs: parsley, dill



## Educational Resources for Early Childhood Educators

### Teacher Resources

#### HEALTHY HABITS FOR LIFE RESOURCE KIT

<http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/EveryDaysAHealthyDay.pdf>



Photo: ANR Repository

### Additional Online Resources

#### [American Horticultural Society:](#)

Offers financial resources, a national list of youth gardening organizations and curriculum, and a national registry of youth gardens.

#### [California School Garden Network:](#)

Offers free activities, information and research on gardening with youth.

#### [Cornell Garden Based Learning:](#)

Provides activities, how-to instructions, program tools and ways to connect with others.

#### [Life Lab:](#)

California-based nonprofit provides educational workshops and resources on engaging young people in gardens.

#### [National Gardening Association—Kids Gardening:](#)

NGA's Kids Gardening website includes resources on funding, curriculum, and more!

#### [School Garden Wizard:](#)

Resources and step-by-step templates for teachers

### Selected Children's Literature on Health and Wellness

#### OUR SCHOOL GARDEN!

By: Rick Swann  
Illustrated by: Christy Hale  
ISBN-13: 978-0983661504

#### MOLLY'S ORGANIC FARM

By: Carol Manor and Trina Hunter  
Illustrated by: Trina Hunter  
ISBN-13: 978-1584691679

#### FIRST PEAS TO THE TABLE: HOW THOMAS JEFFERSON INSPIRED A SCHOOL GARDEN

By: Susan Grigsby  
Illustrated by: Nicole Tadgell  
ISBN-13: 978-0807524527

#### THE CURIOUS GARDEN

By: Peter Brown  
ISBN-13: 978-0316015479

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