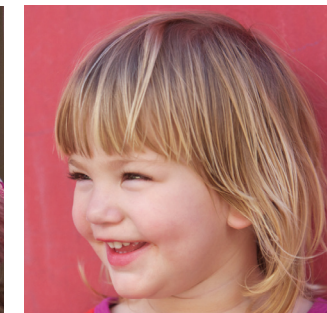




Summer 2013

Child Care Today



Supporting Quality Child Care Since 1974

Early Literacy A Key to Success

What is early literacy? Often referred to as emergent literacy, early literacy recognizes that for a child, learning to communicate is a process that begins at birth. The term early literacy does not mean that a child will read, write and communicate earlier than anticipated. Rather, it describes the imperative of providing children with the skills to support their ability to effectively communicate by age five. These are foundational skills that if not learned by the age of three, may not be acquired at all.

Literacy is not a set of isolated skills, but a set of processes that children can see as a means to achieving certain goals. Critical to the development of the skills a child needs to learn to communicate effectively is the interrelatedness of all parts of language: Speaking, reading, listening, writing and viewing.

Children are unique, and they learn in individual ways. Connections For Children works to ensure that families and child care providers have the resources they need to accommodate all early learners. It is our goal that each child is given the solid foundation they need to thrive, and early literacy is a critical building block to this foundation.

For many years, early literacy referred to “reading readiness.” A child was “reading ready” only when his or her reading and writing ability approximated adult level. Now, progressive childhood development

specialists refer to the term “emergent literacy,” recognizing that literacy does not take place at a moment in time, but that it is an emerging process unique to each child.

There are many things we can do to prepare children to read and write, while allowing them to engage in the process at their own pace. Getting children ready to learn is different from teaching them what to learn. This preparation involves more creativity and latitude than simply teaching academic skills.

How can you help children get ready to read? Expose them to a variety of written words, stories, print, and language. Read to them every day, share new words, and let them learn to be creative-allow children to have fun.

Remember – getting ready to read is very different from reading itself! Each child has his or her own path to literacy; Let’s support them along their journey!



Our Mission:

**Connections For Children
builds a stronger future
for children, families and
communities through
quality child care resources,
education and guidance.**

CONNECTIONS FOR CHILDREN
A Child Care Resource & Referral Agency
www.connectionsforchildren.org

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From the Executive Director



Last month, I joined scores of parents and child care providers – more than 160 from Los Angeles County Community Voices in Sacramento for Stand for Children, a day dedicated to speaking to our legislators about the importance of early child care and education. Our message was direct: Restore, Rebuild, and Reinvest in child care here in California.

Years of compelling research tells us that early intervention is key to helping children enter kindergarten ready to learn and remain on a trajectory for successful outcomes. During the first four years of a child's life, 90% of brain development occurs. These are the year's when children acquire the social, emotional and cognitive skills that will help them achieve. As the Business Roundtable points out, "The economic and social costs to individuals, communities, and the nation of not taking action on early childhood education are far too great to ignore."

Yet, over the past five years, we've seen \$1 billion in child care funding reductions. More than 110,000 low-income children have lost their space in early education programs. It is time to restore programs to assist families who can no longer access services, to reinvest and serve all eligible families, and to rebuild the child care infrastructure. We must do whatever it takes to help assure our children's well-being and safety.

President Obama has called for nationwide support for early learning. This initiative would ensure that our youngest citizens receive the quality child care they need to succeed throughout their school years. For California to answer this call, we must again invest in programs that support young children and their families.

By the time you read this, another year's State budget will be close to adoption. We will know if children are winners this time and if we've made a greater commitment to our future. Regardless of the outcome in Sacramento, each of us can make a difference.

Just as President Obama has set a visionary goal of leveling the playing field at the National level, we can all take a stand here locally. Your support of Connections For Children will be multiplied throughout our community as together we support quality child care and early education for all children.

Sincerely,

Patti Oblath
Executive Director



Phone (310) 452-3325

Hours

M, T, Th, F 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
W 8:00 am – 7:00 pm

Reasonable modifications will be made to make this document and/or our services available to all per ADA requirements.

Child Care Champions and CFC ROCCS for Healthy Kids

Raising healthy, thriving young children is a constant theme in the work of Connections For Children. About two years ago, we launched Child Care Champions for Healthy Children to help ensure that children, parents and early childhood educators have access to the resources that promote wholesome nutrition and safe physical activity in the child care setting.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates have tripled. In fact, nearly one in three low-income children in the U.S. are overweight before their 5th birthday. In California, more than 17% of low income children between two and four years old are considered obese. Recognizing this epidemic, Connections For Children targeted children's health as a strategic goal.

With children spending several hours each day in child care programs, early childhood educators are instrumental in encouraging healthy meals and active play. A seed grant in 2011 from Kaiser Hospitals Foundation West Los Angeles allowed us to pilot the educational Child Care Champions program for about 25 family child care providers. The program is inspired by the Nemours / Sesame Street curriculum for improving health and increasing activity levels in the preschool environment.

Child Care Champions combines hands-on training with supportive on-site coaching, empowering early childhood educators to make positive changes for young children's health. Child care providers not only learn how to guide children towards healthy choices, they learn how to involve the children in decision making. Making nutritious snacks becomes a group learning activity for all ages as children measure, mix and cook healthy ingredients. Children participate in outdoor play, nature walks, and gardening: All fun endeavors that promote healthy activity.

Child Care Champions will soon expand to reach even more child care programs. As a partner in the Reducing Obesity in Child Care Settings (LA ROCCS) program of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Connections For Children



has hired Mai Pham, a children's nutrition and activity specialist who will offer training and coaching throughout our service region. Pham shared her excitement about LA ROCCS. "I love health education, and I'm thrilled with the opportunity to help child care providers make the small changes in nutrition and activity levels that will add up to a big difference," she said.

Beginning this summer, Connections For Children will hold obesity prevention training events twice a month for child care providers, early childhood education programs, and parents.

Together, we can help reduce the incidence of childhood obesity. As early childhood educators serve more nutritious meals and explore more options for age-appropriate activity, our children will grow up healthy and strong, ready for success in school and life.



Working Together to Promote Early Literacy

Fostering early literacy skills in children is something that Connections For Children knows first-hand. For a child to do well in school, learning to communicate and getting ready for reading and writing are a “must.” When young children are cared for outside of the home, parents who partner with the providers and early educators can more effectively nurture and promote the child’s early literacy and learning.

According to Cynthia Pacheco, Quality & Career Coach at Connections For Children, “Early literacy skills are the basis for learning for the remainder of a child’s life. These skills, which should be developed beginning at birth, become the foundation for later reading, writing and speaking.”

Child care providers, parents and other family members will make a tremendous difference in preparing children to be ready for school by supporting and believing in their child’s ability to learn. It is

through positive, meaningful relationships and experiences that children will gain the confidence to explore the world around them and develop the critical early literacy skills that provide the foundation for learning.

CFC offers a wealth of resources for parents and child care providers and helps everyone who cares for young children understand the critical process of early literacy. Our “Family Time,” program offers a space for parents and caregivers to bring their children for interactive storytelling, music, games and other learning activities.

“Fun Visits,” provide an opportunity at the child care site to engage young children in activities that promote communication and learning typically using a children’s story

to enhance and reinforce each experience. Coaching programs led by CFC Child





Parents and Providers working Together

Tracie West, a Family Child Care Provider runs “First Friends by the Sea” in the South Bay. When asked why she felt her role in helping children develop early literacy skills was so important, she shared how much kindergarten has changed over the years. Kindergarten has become so much more academically focused and often the social and communication skills also necessary to do well in school are lacking. Tracie works with the children in her care and their parents to view early learning as a partnership and an ongoing, lifelong process, emphasizing that children learn best at their own pace. While Tracie is helping children learn through play and exploring enriching activities including stories, cooking, drawing and pre-letter recognition, for example – she is also encouraging parents to reinforce these concepts at home and through community activities and events. Tracie loves her career as an early educator and works hard to make learning fun for the children she cares for.

Ana Melgar, a local Family Child Care Provider on the Westside of Los Angeles, is also a huge advocate of building partnerships with parents to promote early literacy. The majority of the children in Ana’s care are under the age of four. At Ana’s place, the focus on early literacy begins as soon as a child comes under her care.

No matter how young the children are, everyone participates in daily story time. All children gain exposure to hearing the way words are formed, and as they get older, begin to learn simple to complex words and develop vocabulary. Each week Ana prepares a small sack for each child with a story book in it for parents to read at home. During “circle time” at the beginning of the day-children can share their thoughts about the books they were read at home. All other activities, including flash cards, music and art have an age-appropriate focus on developing important early literacy skills. Connection For Children, joins with Ana to ensure that there are plenty of books for kids to take home and keep, and Ana even builds holiday events around ‘book giving’ for each child under her care.

Parents are part of the daily learning experience, and are asked to make time on a rotating basis to facilitate a “story time” or other activity with the children.

Ana and Tracie are just two examples of the wonderful synergy that can exist in caring for and educating our most vulnerable children when we all work together in support of early learning for young children.

Development Specialists, allow providers to share teaching challenges on a more one-on-one basis and together with their coach, can develop the best solutions for their educational environment. And, our no cost training program for child care providers offers trainings in early literacy, as well as the opportunity to interact with peers who may be experiencing some of the same teaching challenges.

Before a child turns three, exposure to reading, talking to your children and modeling communications for them is key. Make getting ready to read and write a wonderful exploration, rather than a chore, and children will thrive.



Why I Serve

Mary Norvell

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to join the Connections For Children Board about two years ago after talking with the Executive Director, Patti Oblath, and learning that there was a strong need for someone to join the Board with a background in Human Resources. I was very familiar with the agency and their mission – and as someone who truly understands the importance of quality childcare from both a personal and a professional standpoint – I wanted very much to support Connections' work.



As a working mother with a small child, I knew the value of having qualified child care people for my daughter. Now my daughter is a pre-school teacher. I am very proud that she became a professional in this field. In addition, my career in Human Resources (most recently as the Human Resources Officer for the Los Angeles Region) taught me a lot about employee concerns. Having access to qualified child care created a benefit for the employer as well as the employee.

Throughout my career as a Human Resources professional, I've encountered so many parents who were challenged in one way or another to be able to find quality child care. In fact, that was a frequent conversation with employees over the years. Parents without quality childcare find it difficult to go to work without worrying about the needs of their children.

I so enjoy my role as a Board Member with Connections For Children and I am excited to have the opportunity to take on two new roles that allow me to use my skills and background to further the organization's development. This year, I have been elected as Chairperson of the Board Development Committee that recruits and selects new Board Members. Also this year, I will have the opportunity to serve as the Board liaison to a special project provided by the Taproot Foundation that will help Connections For Children build a long-range strategy and plan for Board Development. I love having the opportunity to work with the Board and staff – it is such a nice group of people with such diverse and wonderful backgrounds.

Connections For Children Welcomes New Board Members

We are pleased to introduce three new members of our Board of Directors:

Curtis Graham, a partner at Freeman, Freeman, Smiley representing clients in a variety of litigation and business matters, has a strong commitment to community service and has served on the Board of the Los Angeles Children's Museum. Curtis is an Adjunct Professor at the Graziadio School of Business and Management at Pepperdine University, teaching courses in general business, business law and critical thinking. We are fortunate to have Curtis' keen understanding of the vast world of not-for-profit organizations, his background in the law and his commitment to our mission.

Shirley Pe, as General Manager of Metro Cab in Santa Monica, brings a wealth of experience in transportation sales and marketing, as well as company operations, and business and community development. She is active with several Chambers of Commerce, serving on the Boards of Directors in Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Santa Monica and Torrance. Shirley's strong background in sales and marketing, combined with her passion for our organization is a tremendous asset to CFC.

David Shaw, CEO and founder of Quantum Health Inc. came to our organization late last year through the Taproot Foundation. David, a communications and marketing expert, headed a creative team of pro-bono professionals that together, created a beautiful annual report that tells the story of Connections For Children. David's company, Quantum Health, formulates and markets natural over-the-counter health products. His business and entrepreneurial knowledge, paired with his creative, thoughtful approach to planning and marketing, will help to ensure success as Connections For Children builds our communications strategies over the next several years.

Give the Gift of Early Literacy

The gift of early learning is one of the greatest gifts imaginable. Did you know that a gift of \$25.00 can provide brand new children's books for a family child care home? A \$50.00 gift can provide books, learning games and other curriculum support. \$75.00 can provide enough learning materials to support a session of "Family Time," a program designed to promote early learning and empower caregivers to support literacy and language development.

Connections For Children would like to thank Southern California Edison for their commitment to Early Literacy and support of our "Child Care Champions For Early Literacy" program.

There are so many different ways that we can support the gift of early learning. Here are just a few:

- There are some great crowd funding sites today that can empower you to fundraise for your favorite cause. Is a milestone birthday, anniversary or special occasion coming up? Sites like "Fundly," "Crowdrise" and "First Giving," allow you to set up your own campaign, share your goal with others and get the word out to everyone you know.
- One of the most important lessons we can share with our children is the importance of giving to others. Teaching our children how to share and how to give to those less fortunate, is a lesson they will take with them the rest of their lives. Children can donate a gently used book or toy; they can ask friends and family to support them with donations as they work towards a specific goal in a run, walk or other event. Your child's next birthday could be an opportunity to share the importance of giving.
- American Express – Members Give (SM) Program - The gift of early literacy has never been easier. If you have an American Express card, their "Members Give," program provides several different ways that you can give the gift of learning. You can make an outright donation and earn membership rewards. Through Members Give, you can set up recurring donations throughout the year and ensure that children have the gift of early learning all year long. You can even purchase a "charity gift certificate," for friends and family that will allow them to make a donation to a favorite charity of their choice.

You can find more information about Members Give at www.americanexpress.com.

- GoodSearch - You can support early literacy by going on www.GoodSearch.com. There are now four different ways you can raise money for Connections For Children. Check out GoodSearch, GoodDining, GoodSurveys and GoodShopping today. There is no cost to join.
- Would you like to make a donation in support of early literacy, or do you have a fundraising idea you would like to share with the Connections For Children Fund Development Team? Please call Lisa Daggett at 310-452-3325 x211 or send an e-mail to lisad@cfc-ca.org.



RALPHS AND FOOD4LESS COMMUNITY SHOPPING PROGRAM

You can help us raise money as you shop for wonderful summer fruit and other healthy treats.

Committed to supporting education and the community, the Ralphs and Food4Less Rewards programs help customers to save money while donating to the non-profit organization of their choice.

SIGNING UP IS EASY, JUST FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

For Ralphs - sign up for a Ralphs Rewards Card at a store near you (not to be mistaken as the former, Ralphs Club Card). Visit the



Ralphs Community Contribution page at www.ralphs.com and click on the "Participant" sign up. You will have the option of selecting "Connections For Children" as your educational organization to receive Ralphs Rewards earnings. Our NPO number is 90569. If you signed up last year, please note that Ralph's requires re-registration on or after every September 1.

For Food4Less - request a Food4Less Rewards Card by calling or visiting the Connections For Children Office at (310) 452-3325. Or, you can email Lisa Daggett at lisad@cfc-ca.org. Once you receive your card, you must register the card online at www.food4less.com/community_rewards.



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In order to save paper, in addition to our two hard copy editions of our newsletter each year, we will continue to send regular e-newsletters. If you haven't done so already, please join our e-mailing list through Facebook or our website at www.connectionsforchildren.org.



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We Want to hear from you!

– your input is important to us.



Let us know what is working well with the children in your care, and your story may be featured in a future edition of “Child Care Today,” or our monthly e-newsletter, “Connecting with Connections.”

Also, let us know what you would like to see in our newsletters, that we are not including now. We will incorporate the best ideas into future editions of our newsletter and credit you with the submission.

Please send your feedback to Lisa Daggett at lisad@cfc-ca.org.

In addition to our paper newsletters, we will continue to send out monthly e-newsletters, in response to feedback that our readers like both hard copy and briefer, monthly e-updates. If you haven't yet joined our e-mailing list, you can do so on our website at www.connectionsforchildren.org.

