



# DIRECTIONS



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## EARLY CHILDHOOD ECDC DIRECTION CENTER

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Visit us at:  
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## The Early Childhood Direction Center

*In addition to providing confidential information and referrals on infant and preschool programs and services, we link families to respite and recreation programs, support groups, counseling, medical services and financial support.*

*We also provide ongoing community training programs to both parents and professionals. Contact our office to tailor a workshop to your unique needs.*

S.I. ECDC is funded by The Office of Special Education of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and locally sponsored by Staten Island University Hospital, North Shore – LIJ Health System.

### MESSAGE FROM ECDC

Now that the warm weather of summer is here, we encourage parents to enjoy and appreciate the learning opportunities that make themselves available as children spend more time outdoors. Everyday activities at home or in the community can offer children the ability to learn and develop while having fun! We have included some wonderful suggestions for parents to plan simple activities for summer learning.

***We wish everyone a happy and safe summer!***

### To our "Turning 5" Families

**All of you should have received your child's Kindergarten *Final Notice of Recommendation*. If you have not been notified and do not know where your child will be attending in September, we are available over the summer to help you in getting this resolved.**

**In the event you have concerns about placement and services after your child starts kindergarten, you should contact your local School Assessment Team to discuss. If you can't find resolution at the local school level, we suggest you contact Advocates for Children Helpline at 1-866-427-6033, email the DOE central office at [turning5@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:turning5@schools.nyc.gov), or refer to Arise Coalition Website at [www.arisecoalition.org](http://www.arisecoalition.org) for assistance.**

**Best wishes during the coming year as you continue your involvement at your child's new school!**

### Apps For Young Children

An iPad or touch screen tablet can be a useful tool in teaching developmental skills to young children. With its interactive abilities it can be a hands-on approach to learning. It can be used as a tool to support skills such as communication, fine motor, cognitive and social skills. There are thousands of "apps" or applications specifically targeted for users with special needs. It can also be an alternative to augmentative communication devices.

Every child is an individual. Know your child and his/her needs. Carefully consider what apps to use.

Here are some helpful links:

- <http://momswithapps.com/apps-for-special-needs/>
- <http://appstore.ikidapps.com>
- [http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/main/library\\_special\\_needs\\_apps.html](http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/main/library_special_needs_apps.html)
- <http://bridgingapps.org/i-am-a-parent>
- [http://www.socialnavigatorapp.com/social\\_navigator.php](http://www.socialnavigatorapp.com/social_navigator.php)

### Cognitech Café offers Assistive Technology

**Support** through August to help discover how assistive technologies may help address learning, communication, vision, hearing and physical access needs. Parents can email for a free apt [ATHelp@me.com](mailto:ATHelp@me.com) or call (917) 586-8000.

**Extraordinary Minds** provides an empowering and supportive approach to individuals and their families to build upon strengths and remediate deficits present due to a developmental delay. All of the programs are based in a developmental, family-based methodology, where both parents and students learn to be better communicators, think flexibly and have more meaningful and successful interactions.

Services include private family consultation programs with Laura Hynes, Relationship Development Intervention program certified consultant. Programs are customized to meet the individual needs of each family. Laura also provides group family training sessions where parents learn how to change the way they are communicating and interacting with their child to improve the child's ability to be an active participant in his or her environment.

Social groups focus on the core socialization deficits including communication, flexible thinking and social coordination.

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## EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES FOR SUMMER LEARNING by Dolores Reig, M.S. Ed

So the children are home for the summer. Lazy days with nothing to do, or exciting, fun-filled days packed with activities. Either way, we worry about September and the changes they will face in a new class and frequently in a new school. We don't want our children to fall behind, yet part of us wants them (and us) to enjoy summer as "down time". So how do we prepare them and still enjoy special summer time together? Easy! We call it "play", and it is really the best way to help a young child learn.

These activities are a playful and indirect way of addressing basic concepts and skills children will need in school. Included are sensory awareness, basic science information, increasing focus and attention span, small and large motor development, basic math concepts, vocabulary and expressive language skills, learning to wait, observe and comment appropriately, having an objective and working toward it, flexible thinking, imagination and creativity.

Also addressed is the over-riding concept of literacy, in general. During all of these activities, talk to your child, have conversations, listen carefully to what he/she is trying to express. Expand on a child's phrases, give information about where you are, what you are doing, what you are going to do, how you are going to do it and who you may meet on the way. Play pretend games like "what if..." ...all dogs started talking our language? ...we could fly like birds? ...you were the mommy/daddy and I were the child?

### 1. AT THE BEACH

- a. **Sand & Water Play:** dig holes, pour water, make moats/ponds, watch as water seeps back into the sand – Why? Dig deeper & reach water level where water seeps up into the hole – Why? Build structures, use wet sand, dry sand, pour water over them and experience erosion; use plastic measuring cups, funnels, shovels, spoons, cookie cutters; what happens to a wet sand structure when it dries out?
- b. **Collectables:** shells, rocks, sea weeds, sticks, found objects (check for safety), sort objects by size, color, texture, count, (what is there most of?), use to decorate sand structures and for conversation. Tell stories about when *you* were a child.
- c. **Water Play:** is it cold, warm, cool, does it feel colder on your feet or your tummy; run in water that covers the feet, then ankle deep, then knee deep, which is easiest? Hardest? Why? How much water can you hold in your hand? How far can you toss the water? Which is the best way to splash? (Hint: you need air *and* water.) Sit or stand and let the waves wash away the sand around you. Differences between high tide and low tide, where does the water go? What else changes? Try pushing a ball under water then releasing.

### 2. AT HOME

- a. **Plan meals together.** List favorite foods, in what order will foods be eaten? (*get flexible here!*), make a shopping list (*child can check off items in the supermarket*), create recipes with pictures children can read, help them "cook" (fruit salad, Jello squares, ice pops, veggies and dip, popcorn, chocolate covered strawberries, (*think "healthy" but make exceptions.*)
- b. **Visit the local ice cream "parlor."** Decide in advance the route getting there (is there more than one way?), what flavors you each like (are they similar, same or different?), how served (cup/cone), what "add-ons" you will choose (rainbow or chocolate sprinkles, nuts, fruit). Experiment by tasting a new flavor on each visit.
- c. **Use the Internet.** Show your child how to search the web for a play dough recipe. Print it out and make it with your child. Search out fun places nearby to visit with your child. Discuss and compare different places and each of their advantages and disadvantages. Write lists or, for an older child, create a simple spread sheet and help your child understand the information in age appropriate ways.
- d. **Pretend Spaces.** Create imaginary areas in your home with sheets and tablecloths spread over chairs and tables. Encourage your child's imagination and creativity. Invent animals, foods, sounds. Pretend to be different people, ones you know and ones you make up. Travel to and explore real and imaginary places without leaving your living room. Have conversations about what you are doing and planning.

### 3. TRAVELING IN THE CAR

- a. **I'm thinking of...** (Like "I spy...") "I'm thinking of something in the kitchen that keeps things cold." For older children: "I'm thinking of something you can look into." Or choose something outside the car (birds/trees/poles/cars/people). ...or a vegetable/animal/ person/imaginary character. Use your imagination and your child's interests. Give hints, have the child ask "yes or no" questions. Reverse it so you guess and ask the questions.
- b. **Music Time:** Sing or hum along with the radio or CD, clap or tap to the beat, dance in your seat. Listen to and talk about different kinds of music – how it makes you feel (happy/sad/excited), melody going up or down the scale, loud and soft, fast and slow. BE the radio – make up silly songs with your child. Let the "lyrics" be from his/her experience, what you are doing or where you are going at the moment. Find rhyming words. Don't worry about singing voice, no judging here, just have fun!

4. **WHERE ARE WE?** Whether walking or driving, check the scenery passing by: have we been here before? Does it look familiar? How is it different? What's up ahead? Where should we turn? Be ready to get "lost" and discover how to get back on track.

5. **OUTDOOR PICNICS:** In your back yard or the park. Discuss what you are going to eat, why some foods are easier to eat outside than others (ice cream melts, soup spills), how you will eat without a table, without chairs, without TV (!). Encourage discussions about the environment, bugs are part of the real world, how will you deal with their peskiness? On a rainy day, have an indoor picnic, same rules. Pretend you are on a desert island where there is no fire = no cooked food. What raw foods can you eat? Pitch a tent in the back yard and discover how to have fun without electricity. Play flashlight "I spy".

This is just a "short list". Remember to count things whenever you can, sort objects into different categories, have real conversations with your child, "read" signs in the real world (curbs say "stop", green lights say "go"). Discover things together, don't try to have all the answers, ask open-ended questions, be creative, use your imagination, be a role model, use "I wonder..." statements. This is *not* about entertaining your child; it is about helping your child develop more competency and independence in multiple life-skill areas. Look at the stars together, be lazy and bored together, plan your days together, even those days when adult errands have priority, just include your child and keep speaking *with* each other. School will begin in less than two months, but summer can feel like an endless vacation for a child. Practice being "childlike" and seeing the world through your child's eyes. Relax, enjoy your summer...