



**Dear CLC Families,**

March 18, 2020

We want to thank you for your flexibility and understanding as we determined what actions to take this week in the face of the current pandemic. We greatly appreciate your help in taking every precaution to keep our community healthy and safe. During this hectic time, we want to provide you with some tools and tips to help your child/ren during this break from school. By the end of the week you will also receive an activity box by your front door. Please note that we were careful to wash our hands before preparing the boxes. We understand that not all of you will be staying home with your child/ren over the next two weeks. Please share this letter with whoever will be watching your child/ren. We address these letters to "families" because we know that children are raised by their village. It is in times like these that we must reach out to rely on that village – while also staying home and social distancing. It is a tricky time!

### **Communication**

How you choose to communicate to your child about this break from school and social distancing is, of course, up to you. We recommend being honest, clear, and keeping things simple. Something like this:

"There is a very contagious virus called Coronavirus. Most children won't get sick from it, but older people and sick people can get very sick from it. Because of this, it is very important that we take care of our community by staying home for a few weeks. If we do go out of the house, we must wash our hands before and after touching things that other people might touch. We also have to cover our coughs and sneezes with our arm to keep everyone healthy. After a few weeks at home it will be time to go back to school."

### **Routine**

One of the best things you can do for your child/ren is to set a routine. They experience a routine every day when at school and having that assurance of knowing what is next will help your child/ren be at ease during this period of unknown. If you have a calendar on hand, share it with your child/ren to show how time passes. In the morning, discuss what the plan is for the day – this will help in establishing the routine. Plans change, and children are incredibly flexible and resilient, but discussing the plan for the day, and checking in throughout the day to remind your child/ren about that plan, will ease anxiety and make for smoother transitions.

A visual daily calendar is perfect for our 3 to 5 year olds. Consider spending some time today or tomorrow to create one. Included in this letter are some ideas that you can incorporate into your child's routine.

### **"Screen Time"**

The term screen time is used to refer to the time a child spends alone looking at a screen (i.e. TV, iPad, phone, etc.). We strongly suggest limiting screen time to an hour a day in the afternoon. Evidence-based research shows that more than an hour of screen time a day for 3 to 5 year olds is harmful to their development. We also understand and fully empathize with the need that

many families have to work from home, get chores done, and have some adult time. These are extraordinary times, and screen time may be necessary for your sanity, so please do not stress if your child/ren are getting more than an hour. Not all screen time is equal. Watching a movie together as a family, for example, is not bad. When it comes to screen time, the research shows that the issue is when the screen is replacing human interaction, creativity, and physical activity.

We hope that the ideas in this letter will be helpful screen time alternatives.

### **Outside Time**

Go outside every day. Fresh air keeps us healthy and connected to the environment and world around us. This looks different for every family. You can play in a backyard, take a walk around your neighborhood or go on a hike in the woods. When doing these, be mindful of the amount of people in that environment. Look around for some off-the-beaten-path hiking spots.

Connecticut has many great forest parks that have few visitors. It's also seed-starting time. If you have soil and seeds on hand, you can begin that process with your child – egg cartons are perfect containers for starting seeds. Measure and record their size as they grow.

Some outdoor play ideas:

- Create an outdoor treasure hunt hiding little trinkets outdoors.
- Do a messy painting project – splatter paint a piece of plywood or old canvas.
- Set up an obstacle course.
- Use the nature scavenger hunt sheet in your activity box to identify and find bugs, plants, and flowers.
- Place paper on the ground outside and trace the shadows.

### **Connection with Friends**

To stay connected with CLC friends, your child/ren are encouraged to make pictures for their peers and teachers. Snap a photo of your child/ren holding up their picture and text it to their friend. In our activity kits, we are including a list of each child's name in your class to aid in this process. You can use this to practice identifying letters and spelling peers names, or writing names if your child is ready for that step. Make positive use of technology by having FaceTime/Google Hangouts/Skype calls with friends. Children can share the art they made for their peers in this way, or tell each other stories.

Try setting up a Story Time share with another family. For 15 minutes one parent can read a story to their child/ren and your child/ren over FaceTime/Google Hangouts/Skype. The next day you read a story! It's like a community story train.

### **Read, Read, Read**

You will find a Reading Log in your activity box – use it to write down all of the books you read with your child/ren over these next few weeks. When you return we will have a special party to celebrate all the stories that children read while on break.

At the CLC reading takes many forms – teachers read books out loud, children look at books alone in the cozy corner / reading nook, children and teachers do dramatic retelling of stories using props and puppets, and children create their own storybooks. Creative literacy activities include:

1. Create a shadow puppet theatre using a cereal box. A tutorial can be found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hL28SkHf1g>

2. Children love writing and mailing letters. Make sure to wash your hands first! Write a letter to a friend – let your child write their message on one side of a card and scribe what your child says on the other side. Stamp and address the letter and put it in the mailbox.
3. Create costumes using old clothes and act out the story. Record it and share it with us and your child's peers!
4. Do a story telling circle – one person starts the story, the next person continues it, the next person adds to it. Each person says one line of the story. Record it and write it down as your child/ren create the story. This lends itself to so much laughter!

### **Real Work = Math & Science Learning**

Snack and meal time are perfect opportunities for practicing math skills, and children often love helping in the kitchen. Children can help you measure, mix, peel, chop, and wash, practicing and developing fine motor and math skills as they do so. Children can help set the table, counting out how many plates and forks are needed, and clear the table, helping to fill the dishwasher. This is something most of the children do at the CLC on a weekly basis.

Other math and science learning ideas:

- Sort socks into pairs
- Sort materials by color
- Measure, record, and compare the size of objects around the house
- Hypothesize, observe, and record what toys sink and what toys float in the bath

Collect! Please consider collecting and sorting certain recycled and natural materials to bring back to school. Collections are a great way to develop math and science skills. Some materials worth collecting: bottle caps, small yogurt containers, rocks, pinecones.

### **Art and Sensory Exploration**

At the CLC almost all of our lessons happen through hands-on projects that usually look like art and/or sensory play. We use recycled materials in almost every art project. Creating a devoted space in your house where your child is allowed to get messy can help this process. There are a million ideas out there for art projects, so here are just some ideas for how to facilitate the process in the easiest way possible:

1. Lay an old sheet on a section of the floor in your house (do this outside on a nice table).
2. Place a table on top of the sheet. Cover table in newspaper.
3. Put out 3-4 art materials. For example: paint, sponges, paper. Another example: small recycled materials, glue, cardboard box.
4. For messier projects, find a shallow plastic bin. Place materials in the plastic bin.
5. Let child/ren explore and get messy and create whatever they create.

Art projects can also be more focused and directed by an adult or older sibling. Here are some ideas:

- Make musical instruments using recycled materials
- Create a shadow puppet theatre
- Make kites using sticks, paper, glue, and string

### **Free Play is the Work of Children**

It goes without saying, but we will say it anyway, free play is so important for young children. It is how they learn. Whether it be what we call "real world / dramatic play" – essentially pretending to be grown ups using dress up clothes and props – or "small world / building" – creating structures out of blocks and tubes, cars, trucks, trains, small animals and people, doll houses, doll

house furniture, etc. – children are learning as they play, especially as adults play with them. It is inevitable that children will get bored playing alone. Boredom is usually the feeling that comes right before a new idea hits and suddenly children are deep in their imaginary worlds. When your child expresses being bored, let them sit in that feeling for a little while before jumping in to fix it. See what happens. Also, as much as possible, try to play with your child/ren. We understand how difficult this can be when you are navigating working from home, parenting multiple children, or passing childcare responsibilities on from one family member to another.

One tip to provoke play: while your child is sleeping, consider rotating toys – i.e. take some toys out of their play area, and introduce something new to their play area such as some cleaned out yogurt containers, a big cardboard box, non-breakable bowls and spoons... get creative. These extra 10 minutes preparing their play space can transform how a child plays.

### **Gross Motor Play**

This also goes without saying – children need to move their bodies in BIG ways. Rough housing is really important. Try to create time for it every day. This can happen during free play time and/or outside. Creating intentional time for big movement activities will help children settle down during those quieter times of the day. Morning and evening dance parties are a great way to get out all that extra energy!

### **Suggested Daily Schedule**

*\*Timing is very flexible based on your plans for the day and needs as a family\**

7 – 8 Wake up/ Dress/ Breakfast

8 – 10 Indoor Free Play

10 – 11 Morning Snack, Story Time, and Art Activity

11 – 12 Outdoor Adventure

12 – 1 Lunch

1 – 3 Story Time, Yoga, Nap and/or Quiet Activities

3 - 4 Afternoon Snack and Art Activity

4 – 6 Indoor Free Play

6 – 7 Dinner

7 – 8 Bath / Bedtime Prep

### **About “Falling Behind”**

Preschoolers learn through free play, meaningful interactions with adults, and real life and hands-on experiences. Your children have gotten almost a full year of that. They are all doing fabulously and will be successful whenever they return to school. There is no pressure to teach your child anything in particular while they are home.

If you do want to continue with their academic learning, we are sending home their DOTS assessment binders. Feel free to refer to the assessment standards and create learning activities related to the standards. Feel free to add samples of their work to the binders!

If you would like to learn more about the CT Early Learning Developmental Standards here is the link to the digital copy: <https://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/earlycare/elds/ctelds.pdf>

And here is the link to DOTS (the assessment tool we use):

[https://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/ct\\_dots\\_progression\\_62518\\_for\\_website.pdf](https://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/ct_dots_progression_62518_for_website.pdf)

We were just about done getting through the whole alphabet. We had two more letter to learn all about: Y & Z ! Feel free to introduce and practice identifying and writing these letters.

If you do want to continue with your child's academic learning, we will be sending out optional weekly lesson plans to follow along with beginning next week.

### Other Resources

- The Regional Multicultural Magnet School has an evening **Story Time at 7 p.m.** – find them on Facebook.
- List of education companies offering **free subscriptions** due to school closings:  
<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/135609/list-of-education-companies-offering-free-subscriptions/>
- Shark **Story Hour Every Day @ 10 a.m.** – join on Facebook Live by following Atlantic White Shark Conservancy on Facebook.
- Beginning March 16 **FREE BREAKFAST & LUNCH** grab and go meals to ANY child, 18 years old or younger Monday – Friday 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Pick up: NLHS Multi-Magnet Campus, Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School, BDJ Multi-Magnet School Campus, and Harbor Elementary School
- **Go Noodle & Cosmic Kids Yoga** are \*active\* screen time resources
- **NatGeo Kids** is an excellent resource for educational videos.

### Hand Washing

And of course, practice good hand washing! The NAEYC and Ledge Light handwashing routine is the following: turn on water, get soap, scrub for 20 seconds, rinse, paper towel, turn off water.

### Support

If you need support of any kind, do not hesitate to reach out. We can all be reached by e-mail.

Stay healthy,

Ms. Ashley, Ms. Kelsey, and Ms. Martina