NEWSLETTER

Northern Tier Community Action Corporation

Head Start Program

January/February 2025

David Greene, Executive Director

From the Director . . .

Happy 2025! I hope that everyone had a great holiday and enjoyed special time with family and friends.

We are halfway through the program year. The children and teachers have been busy learning about the different studies in the classroom and helping our little ones learn socialization skills that will prepare them when they transition into kindergarten!

If you want to come in and help out in the classroom, read a story or join during circle time, we would love to have you. Please see your child's teacher to set up a time. If you have any questions are concerns, please feel free to reach out to me.

I hope you all have a great January; stay safe & warm!

Debra Sidelinger, Head Start Director

POLICY COUNCIL

Chairperson:
Phaedra Steele

Vice Chairperson:
Kayla Bond

Secretary:
JayLea Mosher

Next Policy Council Meeting: 2/13/25
10:30 AM via "Zoom"

Inside this issue:

Self-Assessment

Annually, Head Start programs must conduct a **Self-Assessment** of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal Regulations. The Self-Assessment must measure the program's strengths and areas for growth, allowing for continuous improvement of the program to increase impact for children, families, and communities.

Our Head Start program will complete an annual "Self-Assessment" beginning in January and ending in March. This is a formal process used to measure our Head Start's effectiveness in meeting program goals and objectives. Self-assessment helps identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement, particularly relating to the school readiness of children.

The self-assessment is part of the planning cycle for the Head Start program. The following information and/or documentation are used: community assessment, previous self-assessment, data points, program goals, action plans, policies and procedures, existing reports, surveys, and student data. Information is shared with Policy Council and the Board of Directors. Staff also completes a survey to gain their input.

How can you help?

First, you are welcome to educate yourself by clicking on this link in the ECLKS website and reviewing what the self-assessment is – Self-Assessment: Your Annual Journey | ECLKC (hhs.gov)

Secondly, please complete the Parent Survey, which will be sent home through REMIND. This information will allow us to gather information on how we can better serve your family.

The self-assessment is a reliable way to gain program information for our organization and create an action plan to prioritize and resolve concerns. This will generally facilitate the beginning of next year's planning, and it will help us address any immediate concerns so that our program can grow and flourish.

Contributed by: Debra Sidelinger
Head Start Director

Reading With Preschoolers

* **Reading and storytelling helps children learn about speech sounds, words, language, pictures and books.**
* **Reading stimulates imagination, develops social skills and helps children learn about the world.**
* **Try to read daily, and talk with children about the words and pictures in books.**
* **Preschoolers like alphabet, shape and counting books, and funny stories with quirky characters.**

Contributed by: Debra Sidelinger
Head Start Director

Social Media

Follow us on Facebook to stay connected with program news and happenings! Like "Northern Tier Community Action Corporation Head Start"

Policy Council

The next Policy Council Meeting will be held via "Zoom" on Thursday, February 13, 2025 beginning at 10:30 AM. We have vacancies in our Policy Council so if you have a child enrolled in our Coudersport, Elk/Cameron Home Base, Emporium, or Ridgway centers and are interested in serving, please let your Family Service Worker/Home Visitor know.

Playing with Stories: Using Books to Inspire Play

Reading children's books aloud sparks can spark a playful side in children!

Build a path to more play and learning by reading some of the stories below. The books will inspire ideas for playful activities such as art, crafts, dress-up, doll play, playdough, puppets, scavenger hunts, science experiments, stamping, and storytelling boards.

Here are some ways to use books for play with children.

Books and play activities

Color and Counting Books

- Favorite titles: ***Ten Little Fish*** by Audrey Wood and ***Go Away, Big Green Monster*** by Ed Emberley
- Play activities: counting objects around the house, crafts, playdough, stamping

More ideas: 10 rubber duckies from Mommy and Me Book Club

Rhyming Books

- Favorite titles: any book by Sandra Boynton
- Play activities: crafts, playdough, puppets, storytelling board

More ideas: Puppets for storytelling from The Good Long Road and Hush from The Good Long Road

Nature Books

- Favorite titles: ***In the Small, Small Pond*** by Denise Fleming and ***Birds*** by Kevin Henkes
- Play activities: crafts, scavenger hunts, science experiments

More ideas: Natural ice boats on Reading Confetti

Social Emotional Books

- Favorite titles: ***Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late*** by Mo Willems and ***Will You Be My Friend*** by Peter Brown
- Play activities: crafts, dress-up, playdough, puppets

More ideas: Clothes for a naked mole rat from Coffee Cups and Crayons

Job Books

- Favorite titles: ***Iggy Peck, Architect*** by Andrea Beaty and ***Even Firefighters Go to the Potty*** by Wendy Wax and Naomi Wax
- Play activities: crafts, dress-up, dolls, puppets

More ideas: Astronaut play from Imagination Soup and Cowgirl/cowboy fun from Imagination Soup

Fantasy Books

- Favorite titles: ***Pinkalicious*** by Victoria Kann and ***Chalk*** by Bill Thomson
- Play activities: puppets, play scenes, paper dolls, play kits

More ideas: Tea with a tiger from Rainy Day Mum and Harry Potter time from Imagination Soup

Contributed by: Tricia Juran
Education Manager

February Is Dental Health Month

Below are ways to encourage healthier smiles at home!

1. Establish Healthy Dental Routines Early, and then Stick With It:

It is not the easiest thing to get children to remember to brush their teeth. Starting the process early will help them improve their habits as they grow up. Here are some steps to help with the process.

What is a healthy dental routine:

* Brush for 2 Minutes, In the Morning and at Night
* Floss at least once a Day

Make brushing a fun activity

* Do it together. That way you are also helping your teeth.
* Put on your favorite song that is 2 mins long to brush to.
* Dance while brushing and flossing
* Watch a 2min Disney or Pixar short

Explain why it is so important to brush and floss every day

2. Make Going to the Dentist Fun

* Show them that going to the dentist is not a scary place.
* Show them pictures and videos of the office before you go.
* Let them bring their favorite toy or stuffed animal with them to their visit.
* Some patients love to dress up to go to their visit.
* If you are fearful, try to avoid telling them that.

3. Maintain A Healthy Diet

Be mindful of how much sugar is in food or drinks. Eating or drinking lots of sugar can lead to cavities and tooth decay. Provide healthy snacks such as:

* Apples
* Nuts
* Cheese
* Plain yogurt

Watch out for snacks and drinks that have added sugars

4. Keep up with Regular Dental Checkups

Going to regular dental checkups is important to maintain a healthy smile. Keeping up with regular dental checkups builds a routine.

* The more children go to the dentist, the more comfortable they will be.
* The repetition of going to the dentist every six months when they are younger, the more likely they will continue it, as they get older.

Contributed by: Bonnie Halquist
Health & Nutrition Manager

Building Social Emotional Skills at Home

As children experience new routines, such as those found in our Head Start classrooms, you may notice new behaviors. Providing your child with an opportunity to talk about how they act and ways to manage the different situations that take place in school is important to developing their social and emotional skills. Their social emotional skills refer to how to express feelings and how to work with their new friends.

Below are some suggestions to develop these skills:

* **Puppets:** Talking with your child about problems and helping them think about solutions while using puppets is a great way to use feeling words like happy, sad, and angry. Children will sometimes share even more about their feelings to their favorite stuffed animal. Their stuffed animal can be more than just a snuggle toy. They can possibly help you with challenging times that occur in a lot of homes, like getting to bed on time.
* **Think out loud:** When your child hears your thinking process, it helps her understand how to cope and solve problems. "Whoops, my pocket has a hole in it. I better not put my keys in that pocket." This kind of self-talk helps our child learn ways to deal with everyday situations.
* **Read bedtime stories:** It can be magical to talk about problems for the characters in stories. Invite your child to share her thoughts and feelings by asking questions: "What do you think he should do? How do you think she feels? What would you do if you were the character?"

* **Do a job together:** Your child watches everything you do all day long. They want to learn about all things. Giving your child a chance to fold laundry, set the table, rake leaves, or water flowers is a good time to talk about helping others.

* **Play games:** Board games and outside games such as tag or hop-scotch offer time to practice to take turns, work together, work through frustration, and more. While playing games together, focus on fun instead of winning or losing.

* **Prevent problems:** Sharing is such an important piece of our Head Start community, but when your child is at home, it is okay to put away his favorite toy before a friend comes to play. Another way to prevent problems at home is to talk to your child using a step by step description of what you will do. It is important to prepare your preschooler of what will happen next.

Contributed by: Tricia Juran, Education Manager

Explore The Outdoors

With springtime on our heels, there will be more opportunities to explore the outdoors. Get down at your child's level and see the world from their perspective.

1. Go for a nature scavenger hunt.
Find something that:
Is a certain color
Is dry, wet, shiny, or pretty
Is tiny or huge
The wind blows
Crawls
Has no legs, four legs, or six legs
Or make up your own ideas!

2. Enjoy a scavenger hunt. Find a fuzzy leaf. Find a leaf that releases an aroma when crushed, such as sage. Try finding things in categories, such as items with bark, items that are high, or items with branches.

3. Observe trees. Watch for leaf and flower buds bursting in the spring, insects buzzing in the summer, and leaves changing colors in the fall. During all seasons, watch for visitors to the tree—birds and small animals looking for food or a resting place.

4. Find nature in surprising places. Look for places to explore near where you live. Nature can hide in the cracks of a sidewalk, under the stairs, in abandoned lots, or on the edges of manicured lawns. Don't worry if you don't live near an open field, a forest, a desert, or a seashore.

5. Press flowers and leaves. Find flowers and let them dry, pressed between the pages of a heavy book. Once they are dry, use them to make crafts. For example, put clear contact paper over the flowers to make a placemat. In the fall, try the same activity with leaves. Find orange, yellow, purple, red, or brown leaves. Find a dry leaf and crunch it!

6. Explore holes and mud. In an out-of-the-way corner, dig a hole and pour water in it to see what happens. Ask your child where she thinks the water goes. Play with the mud, squish it between your toes, and jump over or in the hole. When you are done, fill the hole with dirt again, and check it later to see what's growing there.

7. Explore seeds. Find some weeds! How are their seeds dispersed? Do the seeds cling to your clothes, are they carried by the wind, or are they flung when the seedpods are touched? Ask your child what he discovered during this investigation.

Contributed by: Tricia Juran, Education Manager