The Day Care and Early Education Curriculum Planning Guide for February, March, and April

With "custodial care" the nemesis of parents, educators, and funding sources, a prime concern of child-care and early education people, and that includes teachers and family day care providers as well as other caregivers and administrators, is finding ways to provide the high-quality developmental care that all of us want for our children. In this issue of Day Care and Early Education, devoted to "things to do and how to do them," you will find the first in a series of four month-by-month curriculum planning guides to daily activities for preschoolers, articles on preparation for reading, discipline, concept and motor development, and dance among others, and enough activities to keep you and your children busy for quite a while. And, though it might not be obvious, virtually every activity has "readiness" of some kind built right in. So go ahead—enjoy! They're good for you, and the children too.

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BY ROSE BLUE

FEBRUARY

You made it and it’s a good feeling. Half the work year is over. The kids are growing up and you’re proud of them, and of yourself. It’s time for a stretch, a pat on the back, and a plan for the future. The first page of your brand new 1980 calendar is gone, along with the snows of January. Now you can look forward to including good food and Valentine’s Day in your plans for a bright, warm February.

Time to remind the children that the calendar page on the wall is now February, but the season is still winter. And time to remember how rich a learning time winter can be.

Add a seasonal number to your rhythmic movement time. The children fold their arms in a huddling motion as they move to and fro and chant the refrain:

Winter’s cold
Shiver, shiver, brr.

Winter’s cold
Shiver, shiver, brr.

The children can also do rhythms to winter motions. They move to rhythm records using wintry weather exercises. For instance, everyone moves around the room walking in deep snow, trudging down icy steps, or catching a floating snowflake. You and the children can think of many more winter steps. After all, rhythms are a creative learning time.

No harm in reminding the children about proper winter dress. A little fashion show is always fun. The children can model their winter clothing as you describe hats, boots, scarves, and so on. If there’s any snow on the ground, you might want to go out into the yard and build a snowman, then dress him for the weather—scarf, hat, buttons for his coat. Now there’s a way to have a social studies lesson, an art lesson, a science lesson, and fun, all the same time.

The children are learning to keep warm in winter. We need fuel in winter and there’s an energy crisis. But there’ll be no energy crisis when your children move around. Not if you teach them that their bodies need the right kind of food for fuel. And when you plan an easy, nutritious breakfast, you are teaching science, social studies, and math and reading readiness. All you need to serve for breakfast is orange juice, cereal, bread, and milk.

Fresh oranges are available all winter long. The children can look, touch, and smell the orange. Talk about its color and shape. Then cut the orange in half, doing a little math readiness by talking about halves. A hand orange squeezer is quick and efficient. The children can take turns squeezing the oranges. Then pour the juice and serve.

Use a good hot wheat cereal. It’s important to remember that the first ingredient listed on a package is the main ingredient. So be sure your cereal lists whole wheat first. Read the package directions aloud and ask the children to help you in following them. The children can also help pour the cereal into the saucepan, pour in the liquid, and stir. Different kinds of bread would be a good idea at your breakfast: whole wheat, raisin bread, pumpernickel. Then pour the milk and breakfast’s on.

There are lots of good winter stories to help with reading and math readiness, and art besides. Children love bears and bears are great for learning about getting through the winter and hibernating animals. You can use Buzzy Bear’s Winter Party by Dorothy Markinko (Franklin Watts). After you read the story the children can illustrate it, or even put on a little play.

Acting out the story of The Three Bears is also great. You can use your stuffed animals if you have a big, little, and middle-sized one, and do a kind of puppet show. Otherwise, the children can act it out directly. The housekeep-

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ing table can serve as a set, and all you need are three chairs, three bowls, and so on. For props, the children can help set the stage, and once you have a cast, the curtain’s up. The children will see a play and get reading and math readiness too.

Still enjoying bears? Here’s a bear chant to add to your creative rhythm time. Seven children are needed, a doctor, a mother, and five bears. The bears jump as the children sing:

Five little teddy bears jumping on the bed
One fell down and hurt his head.
Mother called the doctor and this is what he said
That’s what you get for jumping on the bed.

Each teddy bear falls down in turn, but it’s all in the spirit of fun, games and learning.

February is a rich month for holidays. Besides Valentine’s Day, we celebrate the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.

You can make Lincoln’s birthday a bit more real by putting a little music into your plan. You can play the record of “Old Dan Tucker,” Lincoln’s favorite folk song. Or if you have a piano, you can play the melody. Get a little rhythm band together, and have the children join in by clapping, singing, and playing cymbals and tambourines. Everybody doing a great job? Then how about a surprise box with a shiny new Lincoln penny for each child?

A good art activity is a Lincoln’s birthday log cabin picture. You can color it, or cut log strips from construction paper and paste them on drawing paper or contrasting colored construction paper.

Valentine’s Day is a good opportunity to teach shapes. (And to think that you didn’t know the pretty red heart was math readiness.) A good idea is to

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