

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2026



KID BITS

When did that happen?

Your child will better understand *yesterday, today, and tomorrow* if you use the words in everyday conversation. While helping her lay out clothes for school, you might say, "Yesterday you wore a skirt and sweater. Today you are wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. What would you like to wear tomorrow?"

Be a secret pal

Together, do something nice for a neighbor—without telling the person about it. For example, you could sneak over and shovel snow from a sidewalk or pick up branches from a yard. Or your youngster might secretly do one of his sister's chores. He'll discover he feels proud of himself, even if he's the only one who knows about it.

DID YOU KNOW?

A car seat in the backseat of your vehicle is the safest place for your child to ride. Be sure to follow the height and weight guidelines for your particular seat or booster, as well as your state's law. Learn more about car seat safety at safercar.gov/parents/car-seat-safety.htm.

Worth quoting

"The trees that are slow to grow bear the best fruit." *Molière*

Just for fun

Q: Why did the walrus stand on the marshmallow?



A: So it wouldn't fall into the hot cocoa!

Wonder-filled learning

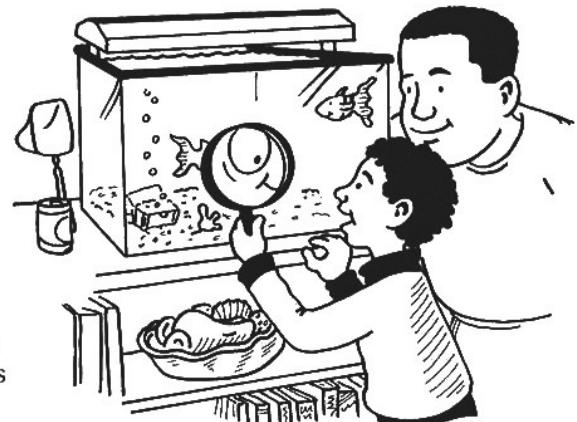
"I wonder..." Those two words can spark curiosity and get your child excited about learning. Guide him with "wonders" like these to motivate him to imagine, explore, and discover.

Take an up-close look

Your house is full of wonders. Ask your youngster to imagine what his life would be like if he had "magnifying-glass vision." What could he notice that he can't see now? Let him walk around the house with a magnifying glass to find out. Once he sees the tiny fibers on a knitted blanket or the scales on his goldfish, he may start to wonder what everything looks like up close.

Stop and think

Everyday run-of-the-mill experiences can inspire wonder. In a department store, have your child stand in front of a triple mirror to see all of his reflections. Do they go on forever? If you're at the bank's drive-thru, point out the vacuum tube and have him watch the canister go



up. When he wonders how it works, you can tell him it's like a vacuum cleaner sucking up dirt.

Create a "wonder board"

Does your youngster wonder how big ships can float? Has he ever thought about why he can't keep his eyes open when he sneezes? Let him make a "My Wonder Board" sign for your bulletin board. Then, as he wonders about something, help him write it down and add it to the board. When you have free time, show him how to find the answer in a library book or online. ♡

Make the most of mealtime

Use family meals to enjoy time together and to help your youngster become more responsible. Consider these tips.



Before: Get everyone involved in preparation. Your child is more likely to try nutritious foods she helps make. She might wash spinach for a salad or peel hard-boiled eggs.

During: Turn off the TV and cell phones, and focus on conversation. Uninterrupted face-to-face time encourages your youngster to practice talking and listening.

After: Little ones can clear the table, put away leftovers, and load the dishwasher. The work will go faster, and your child will be pitching in with chores. ♡

Take a stand against bullying

It's normal for youngsters to occasionally tease each other and get into arguments. But if one child repeatedly excludes, threatens, or teases another, it's time for a grown-up to step in. Here's how:

- Watch for warning signs that your youngster is being bullied. She might lose interest in playing with friends, have trouble sleeping, or pretend to be sick so she can stay home from school. If you



suspect bullying, talk to her teacher or school counselor.

Tell your child that she should always go to an adult for help if anyone threatens or hurts her—and that it isn't the same as tattling.

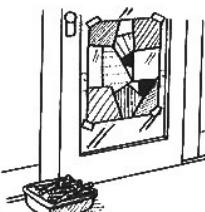
- If the school contacts you because your youngster takes part in bullying, ask your child to explain what happened. Then, focus on the other person's feelings—you could say, "She must feel so sad when you call her names." Next, have your youngster apologize, either in person or by drawing a nice picture for the child. Note: Stay in touch with her teacher to make sure the behavior doesn't continue.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Build writing muscles

This colorful "stained glass" project lets your child practice drawing on a vertical surface—which builds big and small muscles he needs for handwriting.

1. Tape a large piece of white paper to a sunny window or glass door at your youngster's eye level.
2. Have him use a black crayon to draw lines dividing the page into random shapes. *Tip:* Tell him to relax his shoulders and hold his wrist out straight.
3. Encourage him to use brightly colored crayons to fill in all of the shapes.
4. When he's finished, admire his stained glass art together. He might even want to make more for other windows.



Tip: Give him more practice using vertical surfaces by letting him write and draw on a chalkboard or dry-erase board.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.



2880 Pottsville Minersville Highway, Suite 210
Minersville, PA 17954

Hello, community helpers!

Would your youngster like to meet a firefighter or a police officer? These ideas will help him learn more about the jobs that community helpers do.

Visit. Stop by a fire station, or look for a community event like a police safety fair. The firefighters and police officers can show your child things he can't learn from a book. For instance, a firefighter might let him hold a helmet to see how heavy it is, try on boots, or even sit in a fire truck.



Pretend. Encourage your youngster to use imaginary play to explore community helpers. He could line up chairs and pretend to drive a bus, making sure "passengers" (stuffed animals or siblings) get on and off safely. Or he might have toy figures deliver mail or take care of people who are sick or hurt.♥

Q & A

Working with the teacher

Q: I'd love to help my daughter's teacher, but I have a busy schedule. How could I volunteer?

A: Your child's teacher will have plenty of ways you can lend a helping hand. Reach out with a note or a phone call, and tell her when you're available, such as mornings, evenings, or weekends. Maybe you could hang student projects in the hall or



make copies of worksheets before or after school.

Also, let her know about any skills you'd be willing to share. Do you garden? She may ask you to plant vegetables or flowers with students. Or if you enjoy crafts, you might decorate bulletin boards.

Your help is sure to be appreciated. And your daughter will see that her school is important to you.♥

Early Childhood



HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR PRESCHOOLER THIS WINTER TO KEEP THEM HEALTHY AND PHYSICALLY ACTIVE?

The cold weather often means more time spent indoors, which can lead to cabin fever and less physical movement presenting unique challenges for keeping preschoolers healthy and physically active.

However, by blending imaginative play with nutritional awareness, parents and educators can make healthy living fun and engaging throughout the winter months.

Keeping Preschoolers Healthy and Active in January

Promoting health in preschoolers involves a two-pronged approach: ensuring they get enough movement and introducing healthy eating habits in an engaging way.

The Nutritional Aspect: Eating the Winter Rainbow

Healthy habits start in the kitchen. January is a great time to introduce **"eating the rainbow"** as a fun game, utilizing seasonal produce.

1. Color-Themed Meal Challenges

Designate specific days for focusing on a certain color. For instance, "Orange Day" might feature sweet potatoes, carrots, and oranges. This turns mealtime into an exciting exploration and helps children visually track their diverse fruit and vegetable intake.



2. "Chopper Jr." and Cooking Involvement



Preschoolers love helping. Involve them in meal preparation with safe, child-friendly tools. They can wash vegetables, tear lettuce for salads, or use a plastic knife to "chop" soft items like bananas or cooked squash. This hands-on experience makes them more likely to try the food they helped prepare.

3. Healthy Smoothie Science Lab



Turn breakfast or snack time into a "science experiment." Let them choose different fruits, a handful of spinach (the "secret potion ingredient" that changes the color but not the taste), yogurt, and milk. Blending the ingredients is exciting, and they get a nutritional boost from a drink they created themselves.

Physical Activity: Banishing Cabin Fever

When outdoor play is limited, creativity is key to ensuring kids get the recommended amount of daily physical activity.

1. Indoor Obstacle Courses

Transform a living room or hallway into a "Ninja Warrior" course. Use painter's tape to mark "balance beams" on the floor, arrange pillows as "stepping stones," and drape blankets over chairs to create "tunnels." Encourage crawling, jumping, hopping, and balancing, changing the course layout weekly to keep it fresh.



2. Themed "Movement Journeys"

Spark imagination by taking imaginary trips that require physical engagement. Pretend to be a zookeeper and imitate animal walks (crab walk, bear crawl, hopping like a kangaroo), or be astronauts on a mission to Mars (jump around in "zero gravity"). Storytelling can turn simple exercises into captivating adventures.



3. "Freeze Dance" and Musical Games

Music is an excellent catalyst for movement. A simple game of "Freeze Dance" improves listening skills, balance, and coordination. Alternatively, a guided dance session to their favorite tunes is a fantastic, high-energy cardio workout for the entire family.

4. Active Cleanup Races



Make tidying up a physically active game. Set a timer for toy cleanup and turn it into a race. Challenge them to see how many toys they can put into the bin while jumping only on one foot, or carrying items one at a time across the room.

By making health and fitness feel like play rather than a chore, you can help preschoolers build a strong, healthy foundation that will last long after January ends.

CHARACTER BUILDERS

It takes patience and practice to teach good character to your child. These tips and ideas can help you encourage respect, kindness, honesty, and other important traits.



RESPECT

- Use play food to open a "drive-through restaurant" with your youngster. Take turns being the customer and the clerk. While you play, have her practice speaking respectfully by saying please and thank you. Examples: "Thank you for waiting. May I take your order?" "May I please have a slice of pepperoni pizza?"
- Following rules is another way your child can show respect. Together, list a few household rules, such as "We use nice words." Ask her to post the rules on the refrigerator as a reminder for everyone.
- Help your youngster name different ways she shows respect for herself, like eating healthy foods and getting exercise. Let her cut pictures from old magazines to stand for each idea (an apple, a bike). She can glue them on paper to make a collage.

KINDNESS

- Perform kind acts together. You and your child might pick flowers from your garden to brighten up a neighbor's day or make a get-well card for a sick relative.

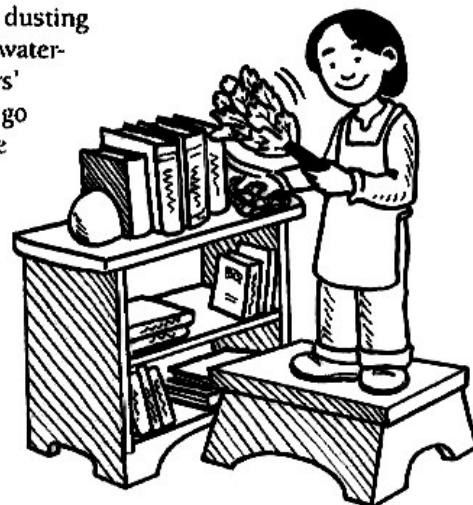


- This dinnertime activity will get your youngster thinking about kindness. Pass a small object (ball, paperweight) around the table, and have each person hold it while they tell one nice thing they noticed during the day ("Liam helped Sam when he fell on the playground").

- Can your child do kind deeds for others "just because"? Start a habit in your house of secretly doing considerate things for each other. Your youngster might make his brother's bed, or you could put a thoughtful note on your child's breakfast plate.

RESPONSIBILITY

- Let your youngster make coupons for jobs like dusting your furniture or watering your neighbors' plants when they go away. She can give the coupons as gifts to friends and family members. When they cash in the coupon, she is responsible for doing the job she promised.
- Give your child a pretend job as a person who helps others, such as a veterinarian, doctor, or crossing guard. Play along as she acts out the job and describes her responsibilities ("It's my responsibility to keep you safe while you cross the street").
- Have your youngster make a responsibility poster. Take photos of her doing responsible things, like replacing the cap on the toothpaste. She can glue the photos on poster board as a reminder of what responsibility looks like.



HONESTY

- Take turns thinking of examples of honesty, such as returning money someone dropped or not bragging to a friend that you can ride a two-wheeler if you really can't. Your child will learn more ideas about being honest as you talk.
- Encourage honesty by making your youngster feel safe telling the truth. When she owns up to a mistake, like taking your keys to play with them, thank her for being honest. Together, discuss what she could do next time (ask to play with them).
- Teach your child to make honest compliments. If she's writing a thank-you note for a gift she doesn't like, for instance, help her think of something nice to say about it without lying ("This shirt has my favorite cartoon character on it").

PERSEVERANCE

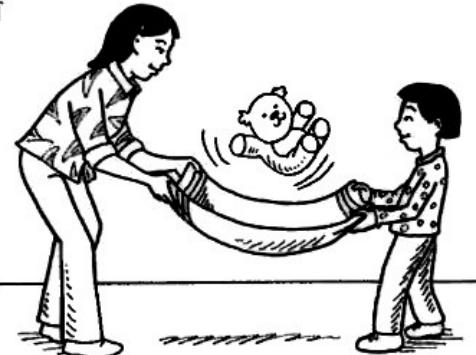
- Help your youngster practice bouncing back when things go wrong. Pretend to be frustrated about something, and together, think of ways to keep going. You could say, "I can't catch the ball!" And your child might add, "Let's keep practicing until you get the hang of it."



- Did you know that making butter can teach perseverance? Take turns shaking a container of cream until it forms a lump of butter—it will take a lot of shaking! Then, use the butter on toast. Your youngster will see the reward of staying with a job until it's done.
- When your child is learning to do something that's hard for him (say, read), cover a paper towel tube with plain paper. Each time he takes a step toward success, like recognizing a new word, let him add a sticker to his "stick to it" stick. Can he cover the whole tube with stickers?

COOPERATION

- This fun activity shows the power of cooperation. Grab one end of a towel while your youngster grabs the other. Place a small stuffed animal in the center. How many times can you toss the toy in the air and catch it without dropping it? You'll have to work together to keep the stuffed animal from falling.



- Suggest that your child and a playmate use teamwork to draw a picture. One can choose what to draw. Then, they can take turns adding to the picture. If they decide to draw a duck, for instance, your youngster might draw the body, and her friend could add the head.

- When you play with your child, take turns asking, "What should I do next?" Try to follow the other person's directions. Your youngster will practice the give-and-take that makes cooperation work. She might have you put her doll in a stroller, and then you could ask her to push it.

EMPATHY

- Here's a way for your child to practice recognizing others' emotions. Take turns making faces at each other. You might say, "Show me your surprised face." After he makes the face, he could ask you to do one ("Show me your sad face").



- Name something that people in your family feel differently about (say, bugs). Let each person describe how he feels. You'll help your youngster understand that people may have different feelings than he does. Example: "I like spiders, but they bother Mommy."
- What can your child do if someone is upset, angry, or afraid? Encourage him to consider responses to people's feelings. You might say, "Trevor looks unhappy. Maybe playing a game with you would cheer him up."

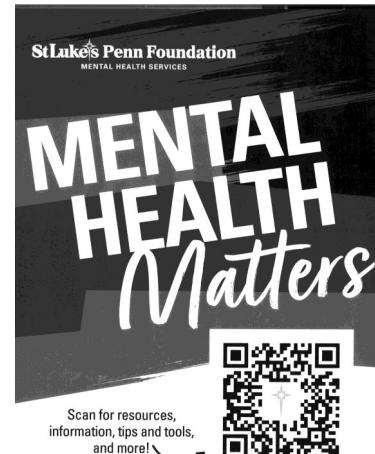


Mental Health Intentions You Can Set for the New Year

As we welcome the new year, many people make resolutions. But what if you set intentions instead? Unlike resolutions, which focus on specific outcomes, intentions are about aligning your values, priorities, and what brings you joy. Intentions can be empowering because they emphasize growth and flexibility. Here are 10 intentions you can set in 2026 to care for your mental health.

- 1. Practice gratitude:** Express appreciation for what you have instead of focusing on what you lack.
- 2. Prioritize mental health:** Make time for self-care, learn coping mechanisms, and explore new hobbies.
- 3. Sleep well:** Getting enough quality sleep can improve your mood and mental health.
- 4. Practice compassion:** Be kind to yourself, forgive mistakes, and write down daily affirmations.
- 5. Reduce screen time:** Be conscious of how much time you spend online and how it impacts your mental health.
- 6. Celebrate progress:** Celebrate each milestone, no matter how small.
- 7. Meditate:** Create time each day to focus on your intentions.
- 8. Spend time with loved ones:** Spending time with people who make you feel safe and loved can be a mood booster.
- 9. Get involved in the community:** Volunteering at an organization or joining a local club can build comradery and trust.
- 10. Seek professional guidance:** Consider talking to a therapist, counselor, or other professional. St. Luke's Penn Foundation has a caring team of professionals who can help. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Remember, the most important thing is to be intentional about making time each day to do at least one thing to care for your mental health and well-being.



For information on community resources or Geisinger St. Luke's services contact Angela Morgan, Community Health, Geisinger St. Luke's 484-658-4022 or email at Angela.Morgan@sluhn.org or <https://geisingerstlukes.org>

Child **fyi** Things you need to know—all in one place!

Emergency Closings and Delays

In case of an emergency closing or delay due to weather, an announcement will be made on the local radio and television stations.

All decisions regarding the emergency closing or delay of either Program-wide or a specific centers will be made with your child's safety and well-being as our primary concern. The cancellation or delay will be aired on the stations below:

WMGH	Tamaqua	FM 105.5
WPPA	Pottsville	AM 1360
T102	Pottsville	FM 101.9
WPAM	Pottsville	AM 1450
WNEP TV	Scranton	Channel 16*

* Download the WNEP APP at:

Androids: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/>
iPhones: <https://apps.apple.com/us/iphone/today>

Cancellations and delays will be made as early as possible. We will be specific as to whether it is the Head Start and PreK Counts Programs only or the Child Care Program (which includes the Administrative Office) that will be closed or delayed.



MEETINGS

Policies Committee

Friday, Jan. 9th
10 AM In-Person Meeting
 (a ZOOM link for the meeting will also be emailed to members)

Community Outreach Committee

Thursday, Jan. 15th
10 AM In-Person Meeting
 (a ZOOM link for the meeting will also be emailed to members)

Policy Council

MONTHLY MEETING
Mon., Jan. 26th at 9:30 AM
In-Person Meeting

(a ZOOM link for the meeting will also be emailed to members)



Old Man Winter is here!!! With that in mind we wanted to remind you that Child Development, Inc. uses a message system to alert parents and staff when our centers or classrooms are closed due to inclement weather or other emergencies.

We also use this message system to inform and remind families of other important Program and center events.

It is important that we have a **current e-mail address** for you to receive these e-mail messages.

Please make sure you also keep all your **emergency contact information accurate and up-to-date**.
You can check with your Family Advocate to confirm or update your emergency contact information.



Enroll Your Child TODAY!

Give your child the best possible start on their educational journey in our preschool program!

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC. helps prepare children both academically and socially for a smooth transition to kindergarten.

Most families qualify, we are federally and state-funded and we provide a variety of services, including:

- A focus on education to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- Health screenings and support, including dental, mental, and physical health.
- Nutritious meals, such as breakfast and lunch.
- Family partnership to empower parents as their child's most important teacher.



570-544-8959 | Ext. 210



8 LOCATIONS

- Fountain Springs
- Schuylkill Haven
- Mahanoy City
- Shenandoah
- Pottsville (2 centers)
- Tamaqua
- Saint Clair



~ REFER A FRIEND ~



Do you have a friend or relative with a preschool age child (or children) and lives within Schuylkill County? If so, please give them this coupon to complete and return to you so you can turn it in to your child's teacher or family advocate.

Date: _____

Referring Family: _____

Child Name: _____

Referred Family: _____

Child Name: _____ DOB: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Best time to call: Morning Afternoon

Family is interested in the following center: Fountain Springs Mahanoy City Pottsville Pottsville 2
 Saint Clair Sch. Haven Shenandoah Tamaqua

MISSION STATEMENT

We work with families and the community to provide high quality, comprehensive early childhood education with an emphasis on family involvement and supportive services that prepares each child for success in school and a lifetime of learning.

Child Development, Inc.

Families Head Start PreK Counts
 Child Care Early Intervention Community