

# Charles County Public Schools Office of Early Childhood Monthly Newsletter

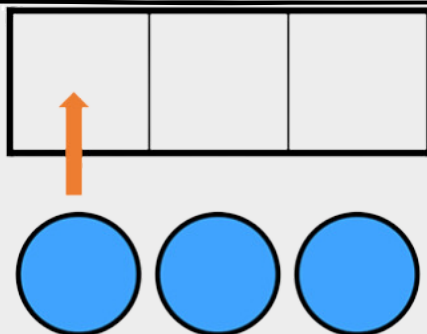
November 2023

Thank you for reading the Early Childhood monthly newsletter! This month we will be sharing fall activities to help children birth to 5 practice school readiness activities.

# 1.

## LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Vocabulary and oral language are good predictors of future reading success. Expose your child to new words through conversation, reading to them, giving your child an opportunity to respond to text, and through hands-on experiences. In the grocery store talk to your child about the items you are putting in your cart. For example, "We are going to buy apples. The apples we are buying are red, but there are also yellow apples and green apples. How many red apples should we buy? Help me count them as I put them in the bag. How do you think the apples will taste? I like apples. I think they will taste delicious." Please see information at the end of this document that shows examples of how to have a serve and return conversation with your child.



### Fall Leaves

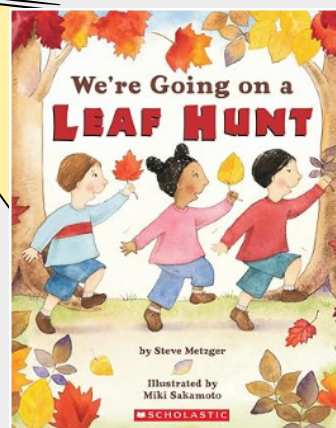
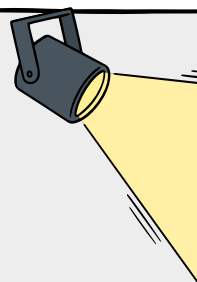
Take your child on a leaf hunt! Collect multi-colored leaves and then recite this rhyme:

**"Colors, colors all around.  
I see a \_\_\_\_ leaf  
fall to the ground!"**

Write this rhyme on a piece of paper. Have your child fill in the blank with the color leaf they found on your leaf hunt. Did you find different colors? Change for each leaf color found.

### Reading Foundational Skills: Phonological Awareness

Four-year-old children should be able to isolate individual words in a spoken sentence. For example, if you say, "The dog ran." your child should be able to hear three individual words; the-dog-ran. You can practice this skill at home by saying a sentence with 3-4 words. After you say the sentence, have your child repeat it back one word at a time. They can also hold up one finger for each word they hear, or you can line up 3-4 objects and your child can slide one object up for each word they hear in the sentence.



**Book  
Spotlight:  
"We're  
Going on a  
Leaf Hunt"  
by Steve  
Metzger**

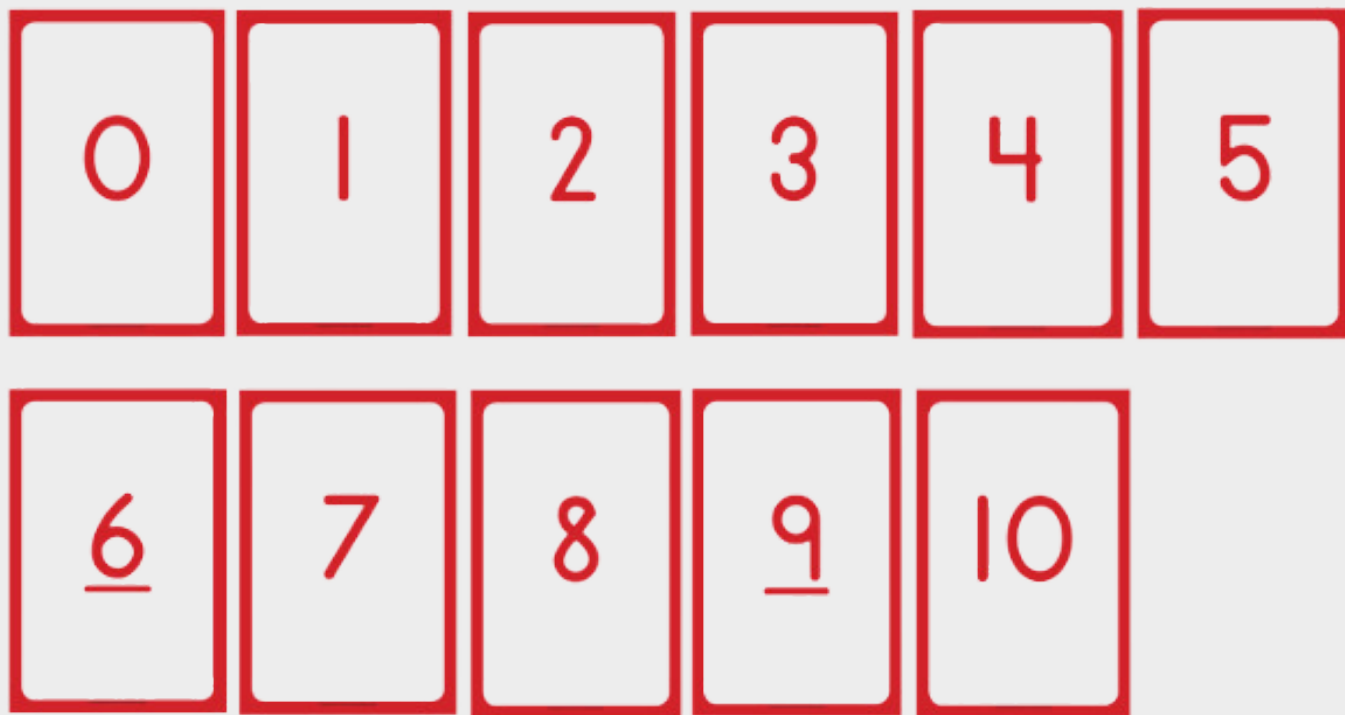


## 2.

### MATH- Identify Written Numerals 0-10

Practice identifying the numerals 0-5 first, then add in 6-10.

- Show your child a numeral, name the numeral, and have your child repeat the numeral back to you.
- Choose a numeral. Go on a number hunt around your home or neighborhood. Have your child look for that numeral. As they find the numeral, have them name it and repeat back to them “Yes, that is the number \_\_\_\_.”
- Write each numeral on an index card or post it note two times. Mix up the cards and place them face down. Have your child turn over a card, name the numeral, and then match the two numeral cards that are the same.



## SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS

I can self-regulate by taking three calming breaths.

Take a balloon breath!

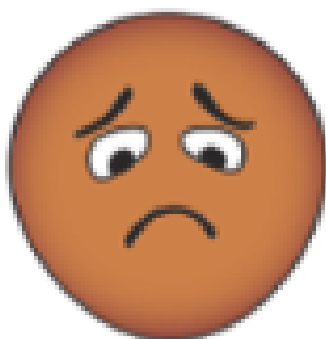
- Place your hands on top of your head and interlace your fingers
- Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms, inflating a balloon.
- Release the air in the balloon by pursing your lips, exhaling slowly.
- Lower your arms and making a “pbpbpbpbpbp” sound.

[Watch the Breathing Exercise: “Balloon Breathing”](#)

## Balloon Breathing!



## Identifying Emotions



**Sad**

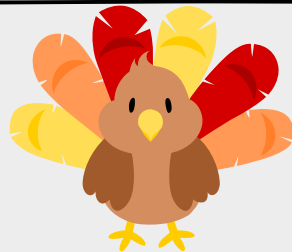
- What makes you sad?
- How does your face look when you are sad?
- How do you feel when you are sad?
- How do you know when others are sad?

# 4.

## FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Create your own fine motor turkey by using a recycled bottle, add eyes and a beak. Place cotton balls or colored pom-poms in a bin or bucket and have your child feed the turkey. Scaffold the difficulty of feeding the turkey by using the following order.

1. Have your child place the pom-poms in the bottle with their hands.
2. Using kitchen tongs or a spoon encourage your child to pick up the pom-poms and feed the turkey.
3. Using tweezers or a clothespin pick up the pom-poms.



Fine motor activities help develop the smaller muscles in your child's hands and fingers. This will help your child to practice hold, grasp, pinch, and grip objects. This will eventually build to help your students to hold a pencil and eventually write.

## ACTIVITY SPOTLIGHT

The following events are happening across the county for the birth to 5 age group.

- Toddler Chef is hosted by the Charles County Recreation, Parks & Tourism is for ages 2-6. Young chefs will explore a variety of culinary adventures, creating uniquely themed snacks. Link to register:  
[https://charlescountymd.myrec.com/info/activities/program\\_details.aspx?ProgramID=30540](https://charlescountymd.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=30540)
- Early Childhood Story Hours are hosted at five local Elementary Schools for children ages 2-5 that are not currently enrolled in Charles County Public Schools. You may register for any location. You do not need to reside in that school zone.



Click the images or scan the QR to register!



# 5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return

from *Filming Interactions  
to Nurture Development*  
(film)

Child-adult relationships that are responsive and attentive—with lots of back and forth interactions—build a strong foundation in a child’s brain for all future learning and development. This is called “serve and return,” and it takes two to play! Follow these 5 steps to practice serve and return with your child.



Serve and return interactions make everyday moments fun and become second nature with practice.

By taking small moments during the day to do serve and return, you build up the foundation for children’s lifelong learning, behavior, and health—and their skills for facing life’s challenges.

**For more on serve and return:**

is a video coaching program that aims to strengthen positive interactions between caregivers and children. FIND was developed by Dr. Phil Fisher and colleagues in Eugene, Oregon.  
**For more about FIND:**



1

Notice the serve and share the child’s focus of attention.

Is the child looking or pointing at something? Making a sound or facial expression? Moving those little arms and legs? That’s a serve. The key is to pay attention to what the child is focused on. You can’t spend all your time doing this, so look for small opportunities throughout the day—like while you’re getting them dressed or waiting in line at the store.

**WHY?** By noticing serves, you’ll learn a lot about children’s abilities, interests, and needs. You’ll encourage them to explore and you’ll strengthen the bond between you.



2

Return the serve by supporting and encouraging.

You can offer children comfort with a hug and gentle words, help them, play with them, or acknowledge them. You can make a sound or facial expression—like saying, “I see!” or smiling and nodding to let a child know you’re noticing the same thing. Or you can pick up an object a child is pointing to and bring it closer.

**WHY?** Supporting and encouraging rewards a child’s interests and curiosity. Never getting a return can actually be stressful for a child. When you return a serve, children know that their thoughts and feelings are heard and understood.



# 5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return

from Filming Interactions  
to Nurture Development  
(fi)nd

Did you know that building a child's developing brain can be as simple as playing a game of peek-a-boo?



3

**Give it a name!**

When you return a serve by naming what a child is seeing, doing, or feeling, you make important language connections in their brain, even before the child can talk or understand your words. You can name anything—a person, a thing, an action, a feeling, or a combination. If a child points to their feet, you can also point to them and say, “Yes, those are your feet!”

**WHY?** When you name what children are focused on, you help them understand the world around them and know what to expect. Naming also gives children words to use and lets them know you care.



4

**Take turns...and wait.  
Keep the interaction  
going back and forth.**

Every time you return a serve, give the child a chance to respond. Taking turns can be quick (from the child to you and back again) or go on for many turns. Waiting is crucial. Children need time to form their responses, especially when they're learning so many things at once. Waiting helps keep the turns going.

**WHY?** Taking turns helps children learn self-control and how to get along with others. By waiting, you give children time to develop their own ideas and build their confidence and independence. Waiting also helps you understand their needs.



5

**Practice  
endings and  
beginnings.**

Children signal when they're done or ready to move on to a new activity. They might let go of a toy, pick up a new one, or turn to look at something else. Or they may walk away, start to fuss, or say, “All done!” When you share a child's focus, you'll notice when they're ready to end the activity and begin something new.

**WHY?** When you can find moments for children to take the lead, you support them in exploring their world—and make more serve and return interactions possible.