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Parenting SEEDS

June 2026: Issue 46

Activities & Concepts for your young child's growing ages & stages

Hello Families,

Ready or not, summer is almost here! If your childcare or school program breaks for the season you might be feeling anxious about filling your child's time or pressured to provide them with an epic summer. If your childhood was anything like mine, it was pretty low-key. As one of four children to a single parent, my summers were filled with adventures to the library, playing with neighborhood friends, and swimming at the town beach. We never traveled far from home, but boy, did we have fantastic adventures!

Participating in my local library's summer reading program lit me up! Packing a picnic dinner for a night swim at the beach- couldn't beat it. Pancakes for breakfast because we weren't rushing out of the house for school -- delicious. Sitting in the dark of night spotting fireflies -- magical! Watching my mother slow down and enjoy these little moments ...priceless.

*Continue reading for simple ways to enjoy summer with your little ones. Keep your eyes open for our **Local Family Fun** newsletter at the end of the month, sharing even more local, free activities for families this summer.*



Check out the full listing of trail maps [here](#).
Then head on out for an adventure!



Everyday Living with Children

*These are ways to invite your child into the work of your home--
having a real part of it builds their self-esteem.*

Folding Cloths

Yes, we know it is faster to do this yourself, we truly do! Yet, this simple chore provides your child with a learning opportunity plus a boost to their self-esteem. Here is a photo lesson for teaching how to fold a washcloth.

Teacher Tip: *The more **slowly** you share these lessons, the more detail you offer and the value you place on the contribution to your life as a family - the more the lesson will connect with your child.*

Folding a Washcloth Step-by-Step:

"Oh there are so many cloths! - how about you fold the ones that are just your size?"

"Let me show you, this is called a house lesson just like you have lessons at school with your teacher. I'll do it first then it will be your turn".

"Take one towel, smooth it out flat" show each corner - say "corner" and count the corners with your child.

"Do you recognize this shape? I know a shape that has four corners - can you guess it?" (rectangle!)"

"Okay, here comes the tricky part...let's bring this corner and this corner to meet these corners!"

"Now let's match the corners again to make it smaller. Did we get a new shape or just a smaller shape like before?"

"Now you can do it with the rest of the towels? Can you please stack them up?"

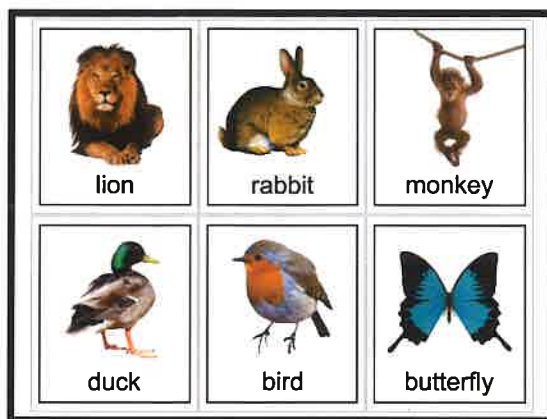


Play Idea for Indoors...

Game: Animal Mystery

Fun for the whole family!

Like the familiar game of *20 Questions*, but simpler. A fun way to encourage and model your child's growing communication skills.



1. Cut pictures of animals from a magazine, draw your own, or [print these](#)
2. Turn the pictures face down.
3. Have one person choose a picture, but do not show the other people what it is.
4. The other people ask yes-or-no questions to guess what the animal is: "Does this animal swim? Is it bigger than a cat?" After someone guesses correctly, another person chooses a picture and lets the others guess.

[Take a peek at similar ASQ activities for your 4-year-old here!](#)

Find more developmentally age-appropriate activities like this for your child by completing the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire)! Your completed questionnaire will connect you to an NPS Early Childhood Center team member for more insight into your child's development and for additional engaging activities to do at home!

Ready to take the ASQ?

Follow the Link: [ASQ Development Form](#)

photo credit: printable.samsung-easydrivers.com/

Play Idea for Outdoors...

Fun with Ice

At our Smith Playdate in Capen Garden last week, children delighted in freeing the plastic bugs from the ice using spray bottles, sponges, and salt shakers. It was by far the busiest center we offered in the garden that morning and grown-ups present were hatching plans to recreate this activity at home. Follow these steps and tips to keep your littles busy and cool this summer!



Preparing the ice blocks:

- **Layering:** For an even spread, fill your bowl, container, or muffin tin halfway with water, add a few toys, and let it freeze. Then, add the rest of the toys and top with water before freezing completely.
- **Choosing the Toys:** Opt for solid, sealed plastic figures. Avoid squirt toys with small holes, as they can trap water, freeze, and leak later.
- **Pop the Ice Out:** Run the bottom of the container under warm water for a few seconds to release the ice block before handing it over to your child.

Recommended child-safe tools:

- **Spray Bottles & Droppers:** Fill spray bottles or eye droppers with warm water (and a dash of salt to speed up the melting). These tools are great for building fine-motor strength in children's hands!
- **Toy Hammers:** If using larger, sturdy chunks of ice, give them small, lightweight toy mallets.
- **Salt Shakers:** Let them sprinkle a bit of table salt on the ice to watch it crack and melt.

ProTips:

- **Add Sensory Elements:** Before freezing, you can add food coloring, glitter, or sequins to the water to make the ice block more visually stimulating. Look [here](#) for more ideas.
- **Set Up:** This activity can get quite messy! Setting the ice block in a large sensory bin or placing it directly on the grass outdoors makes cleanup a breeze.
- **Spray Bottles:** not all spray bottles are the same! Look for bottles with trigger levers that small hands can easily wrap around for squeezing. Dollar stores are a great spot to find inexpensive small spray bottles. Fill with cold water on a hot day for misting and cooling yourselves off!

Books We Love...

Let's Do Everything and Nothing

by Julia Kuo



***"We'll rest, we'll doze, we'll be.
We'll do everything and nothing,
for being together is the best journey yet."***

A beautifully illustrated picture book highlighting the joy in small and big moments between children and their caregivers. Whether sharing a special adventure or an ordinary day it's being together that matters most.

Request *Let's Do Everything and Nothing* from your local public library [here](#).

Listen to *Let's Do Everything and Nothing* [here](#).

More books about appreciating everything and nothing...



Summer Family Playgroup Schedule

*Playgroups are for children ages 0-5 and their caregivers.
Playgroups are free and open to anyone regardless of residency.*

***Summer Playgroups at the Northampton Parents Center:
Tuesdays only from 9:30-11:30 am from June 30 - August 11***

Try one of our neighboring playgroups!



Today! *Pay by donation to support the Northampton Parents Center*



FREE! Summer Meals for Children Return
Schedule coming soon...

Free



Northampton



Gratis



WHAT IS SUMMER EATS?

Summer Eats is a federal nutrition program designed to ensure that all youth (18 and under) have access to healthy meals during the summer.

HOW IS THE SUMMER EATS PROGRAM FUNDED?

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), known in Massachusetts as Summer Eats, is a federally funded program. Summer Eats program operators, such as Northampton Public Schools Nutrition Department, receive federal reimbursement for free healthy meals they serve to children and teens.

CAN I PICK UP THE MEALS AND BRING THEM HOME?

NO, due to federal regulations, caregivers are not permitted to pick up meals for children and take them home. Meals must be consumed on site with the child present.

DO I NEED TO REGISTER OR SIGN UP MY CHILD?

Nope! At all Summer Eats Sites, kids and teens can just show up and enjoy a free meal.

WILL WE NEED IDENTIFICATION?

Absolutely not! No identification will be asked for in order for a child or teen to enjoy a free meal through the Summer Eats program.

WHAT TYPES OF MEALS ARE PROVIDED?

All meals served in Summer Eats must meet nutrition standards established by the USDA. Fruits and vegetables are provided with every meal, along with whole grains.

The Summer Eats menu will be available online:

- Instagram: @EATFRESHAMPTON
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/eatfreshhampton-112073860523477/>
- NPS webpage: <http://www.northamptonschools.org/freshampton>



Find a Free Meal Site here:



¿QUÉ ES SUMMER EATS?

Summer Eats es un programa federal de nutrición diseñado para garantizar que todos los jóvenes (menores de 18 años) tengan acceso a comidas saludables durante el verano.

¿CÓMO SE FINANCIA EL PROGRAMA COME EN VERANO?

El Programa de Servicios Alimenticios de Verano (SFSP), conocido en Massachusetts como Summer Eats, es un programa financiado por el gobierno federal. Los operadores del programa Summer Eats, como el Departamento de Nutrición de las Escuelas Públicas de Northampton, reciben reembolsos federales por las comidas saludables gratuitas que sirven a niños y adolescentes.

¿PUEDO RECOGER LAS COMIDAS Y LLEVÁRMELAS A CASA?

NO, debido a las regulaciones federales, no se permite que los cuidadores recojan las comidas para los niños y se las lleven a casa. Las comidas deben consumirse in situ con el niño presente.

¿TENGO QUE INSCRIBIR A MI HIJO?

No. En todos los sitios de Summer Eats, los niños y adolescentes pueden simplemente presentarse y recibir una comida gratis.

¿NECESITAMOS IDENTIFICACIÓN?

Por supuesto que no. No se pedirá ninguna identificación para que un niño o adolescente reciba una comida gratis a través del programa Summer Eats.

¿QUÉ TIPO DE COMIDAS SE OFRECEN?

Todas las comidas que se sirven en Summer Eats deben cumplir las normas de nutrición establecidas por el USDA. En todas las comidas se sirven frutas y verduras, además de cereales integrales.

El menú de Summer Eats estará disponible en línea:

- Instagram: @EATFRESHAMPTON
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/eatfreshhampton-112073860523477/>
- Página web de NPS: <http://www.northamptonschools.org/freshampton>

Encuentre un sitio de comidas gratuitas aquí:



August Playdates
for 2026-2027
Kindergarten Students!

Come play at your school!
Children, parents, and
principals can start getting
to know each other
and have fun.

Bridge Street School
Jackson Street School
Leeds Elementary School
RK Finn Ryan Road School



5:00-6:00 pm
at your school's playground
Tuesday, August 19
Wednesday, August 25*

*Including school tour



¡Citas para jugar en agosto
para los alumnos de jardín de
infantes del ciclo escolar
2026-2027!

¡Ven a jugar a tu escuela!
Niños, padres y directores
pueden empezar a conocerse y
divertirse.

Escuela Bridge Street
Escuela Jackson Street
Escuela Primaria Leeds
Escuela RK Finn Ryan Rd.



De 17:00 a 18:00
en el patio de recreo de tu escuela.
Martes 19 de agosto
Miércoles 25 de agosto*

*Incluye visita escolar

ParentChild+

Equal Possibilities From The Start

Contact ParentChild+ Coordinator Mandy Gerry to learn more:

mgerry@northampton-k12.us



We have openings for families!!!

**FREE toys and books each week with
two 30-minute home visits**

*ParentChild+ is a free home-based literacy, school readiness, and parenting programs for **Northampton and Hadley parents and their toddlers and preschoolers**. It promotes learning and language development through the use of books and toys.*

*Northampton/Hadley Family Connection is based at the Northampton Public Schools' Early Childhood Center and staff work in partnership with the Hadley Public Schools. All area families are welcome to engage in playgroups, events, workshops, and more. You don't have to live in Hadley or Northampton to engage with us - **all are welcome!***

Did a friend forward this email to you? You can join our mailing list to receive future newsletters at this link: [Subscribe!](#)

Sincerely,

Your friends at the Northampton/Hadley Family Connection (CFCE)

Ashley Miller: Coordinated Family + Community Engagement Program Specialist

Laura Frogameni: Preschool & Partnership Coordinator CFCE/CPPI

Mandy Gerry: ParentChild+ Coordinator & Hadley Family Playgroup Facilitator

Pamela Smith: Early Childhood Program Assistant

Phone: (413) 587-1471

Email: earlychildhood@northampton-k12.us

Websites: ecc.northamptonkschools.org www.hadleyschools.org/

Social Media: [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#)



The Northampton/Hadley Family Connection (NHFC) is funded by a Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE) grant from the Massachusetts Department of Early Childhood and Care to the Northampton Public Schools. Thank you, EEC!



Planting seeds is what we do; nourishing strong roots and branches.

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Early Childhood Center
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