



PSD Early Childhood Spotlight! December 2024



Providing Comprehensive Early Childhood Services
for families and children from birth to age 6!





SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Parents and Staff,

As we enter the final month of the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments we've achieved together and look ahead to the exciting opportunities that await us in the new year. This past year has been filled with growth and learning for our children, families, and staff. We've successfully implemented new educational programs that have enriched our curriculum and fostered a love for learning. Thank you to all the parents who participated in our workshops and events; your involvement is crucial to our community's success. Join us on December 15th for our annual holiday celebration! This is a wonderful opportunity for families to come together, enjoy festive activities, and create lasting memories.

As the weather gets colder, we want to remind everyone about keeping our children safe during winter. Please ensure your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor play, and remind them of the importance of staying warm. As we approach the New Year, we are excited to introduce new initiatives aimed at enhancing our programs. We will be seeking parent feedback through surveys in January, so please take the time to share your thoughts and suggestions. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our community. Wishing you all a joyful holiday season filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments with family and friends.

Warm regards,

Dr. Pamela Thomas
Head Start/Early Head Start Director

Teachers of the Month



Jenna Seal
CCP PRCC Site



Cynthia Samples, A.A.
EHS Nicholson



Aaliyah Stewart, CDA
EHS Rosa



Yolanda Smith
Picayune Head Start

EDUCATION – HS/PRE-K



Dear Head Start Families,

The weather is getting cooler! It is important to teach our children the importance of dressing in the proper clothing. As you all know, in South Mississippi, we may experience various temperatures throughout the day so dressing in layers is definitely a helpful tip. But, making sure that everyone is properly bundled up for outdoor play can take some time so we have a few fun, winter-ready ideas for you to practice with your child at home. These fun tips may help out at home as well so that you can spend less time preparing to go outside and spend more time outside playing with your little ones:

- Practice putting their jacket on without assistance.
- Practice using zippers to zip jackets up independently.
- Practice fixing inside out sleeves independently so that jackets can go on easily.

If you are looking for something to do with your child at home during the holidays, there are a lot of holiday activities that you can do to create lasting memories:

- Bake holiday cookies.
- Wrap presents for loved ones.
- Watch your favorite holiday movies.
- Sing Christmas Carols with your family.
- Make and/or decorate ornaments.
- Write a letter to Santa and receive a letter back. Mail it to the following address:
NORTH POLE POSTMARK
POSTMASTER
4141 POSTMARK DR.
ANCHORAGE, AK 99530-9998

We would also like to acknowledge our Teacher of the Month. This month our Teacher of the Month is Mrs. Yolanda Smith from Picayune Head Start. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. We appreciate you! We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
The Education Team
Ashley Veerkamp, Education Manager
Dinah Thanars, Teacher Mentor Coach
LaKeshia Price, Teacher Mentor Coach

Family Service Department December 2024 Newsletter

Family Service department thrive to keep our families informed of upcoming events, important dates and resources that can support the child's development and enhance family engagement. It is my privilege to update you with the Family Service edition of the newsletter.

Spotlight



Nicholson Early Head Start spotlight goes to Mrs. Amanda Tricoche, Amanda has the most In-Kinds throughout the center as a whole for the month of October. We appreciate her contribution and positive attitude she brings to the program.



Early Head Start-Rosa Site would like to SHOUT-OUT Ms. Ashli Herrera (Rm10) for donating popsicles for all of our classrooms and Ms. Zoey Trobaugh for donating can good collection boxes for all of our classrooms. Thanks Ladies!!!

Family Service would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the participants in the King and Queen Drive, the ceremonies was a success... Just a reminder the Christmas parade will be on December 2nd if you have a child participating on a float please get with your family Advocate on decorating the floats. The toys for tots will end on December 12th.

In-Kinds

Total In-Kind for the month of October

| EHS | Amount | Head Start | Amount | CCP | Amount |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Early Head Start | 23,687.88 | Picayune HS | 17,966.28 | Annie's | 13,679.96 |
| Nicholson | 12,467.17 | Poplarville HS | 3,417.29 | PRCC | 3,271.32 |
| | | Pre-K | 13,266.01 | | |

Upcoming Events December

| Early Head Start | Nicholson Head Start | Annie's | PRCC |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Christmas Parade 12/2 | Christmas Parade 12/2 | Christmas Parade 12/2 | Christmas Activities 12/2-12/06 |
| Christmas Week Celebration 12/16-12/19 | Christmas Spirit Week 12/16-12/19 | Christmas Spirit Week 12/16-12/19 | Christmas Party/ Exchange Gifts 12/6 |
| Christmas Party/ Santa 12/19 | Polar Express/Christmas party (wear PJ's) 12/19 | Christmas Party/ secret Santa 12/19 | Christmas Parade 12/13 |
| Head Start Picayune | Head Start Poplarville | Pre-K | |
| Christmas Parade 12/19 | Christmas Parade 12/13 | Christmas Parade 12/2 | |
| Christmas Spirit Week 12/11-12/15 | Christmas Activities Picture with Santa 12/16 | Christmas Spirit Week 12/11-12/15 | |
| Christmas Party/ Exchange Gift 12/19th | Christmas Party exchange gifts 12/19 | Christmas Party/ Exchange Gift 12/19th | |

*** Toy's for Tots Deadline (December 12th)

**NO School (Christmas Break) December 20th Return January 6th

EDUCATION – EHS / CCP

Greetings for the desk of the Early Head Start Educational Staff,

As we approach this holiday season, we are excited to bring you a variety of engaging activities for December. Here are some winter-themed crafts, holiday story time recommendations and a few activities that will help develop your child's fine motor skills.

Winter Wonderland Art: Encourage your child's creativity by engaging in winter themed art creations. Create a snowman collage or design a winter landscape by using cotton balls and paint. Make winter trees by using paint and finger prints. Do some hand print art, using paint, ink pads or even dough prints of your child's hand. These types of art creations make wonderful Holiday keepsakes. These activities not only enhance fine motor skills, but also introduce children to the magic of winter.

Festive Story Time: Read holiday themed books together as a family. Story time is not only a fun and engaging activity, but it also helps foster a love for reading and language skills. Some recommended titles include: "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", "Ginger Bread Baby", "The Night Before Christmas" and "The Snowy Day".

Holiday Sing Along: Singing together encourages social interaction, language development, and coordination. Some great songs children love are "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer", "Jingle Bells" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas".

Winter Exploration: Melt ice with salt and watercolors. Engage your child's inner scientist with this gorgeous experiment-turned-art creation. A block of ice, some coarse salt and liquid color are all you will need for an activity that will absorb your child's attention as they learn how salt and water melt ice.

Family Involvement: Decorate for the holiday season together and share any family traditions, stories, or recipes that are meaningful to you. We encourage you to involve your child in these activities to foster creativity, learning, and family bonding.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season filled with love, joy, and cherished moments.

Charlotte Nixon, EHS Education Manager
Tonya Spier, EHS Education Manager
Robette Watts, CCP Education Manager

Family Community Engagement Coordinator



Top Toy Safety Tips

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month: The awareness of Safe Toys and Celebration is centered on:

Safety Tips to keep in mind this holiday season:

- *No toys with sharp objects or edges.
- Avoid darts, pellet guns and other firearms as gifts, especially to children.
- Remember to avoid toys that can be choking hazards especially for children under the age of three. Remember the rule: If it can fit through an empty toilet paper roll, then avoid it for young children.
- Avoid hard candy for young children.
- Remember to avoid toys with strings longer than 12 inches for children less than three years old as it can be a strangulation hazard.
- Avoid slingshots or other projectile type of toys.
- Avoid toys with magnets for young children.
- Give children under 10 only toys with batteries and compartments that can only be opened by an adult (such as a screw sealed battery chamber) and don't let them play with batteries. Plug-in toys should be only for older children.
- Buy durable toys that will not break or shatter into pieces or release toxic substances.
- Observe video game age-ratings. They are there for a reason.
- Read all warning labels carefully on toys and decorations.
- Safety gear for sports like helmets and goggles when gifting for sports related activities
- Remember to supervise your children at all time

Mental Health and the Holidays: Stress for kids



We tend to believe that the holidays are a magical time for children and that the stress of it all is only felt by the adults. However, our kids are under stress, as well. What are the signs to look for, and how can we help them?

Additionally, there may be pressure to get dressed up, take perfect family pictures, and be in a good mood for meals and events when that may not be how they are feeling inside.

"When you add in the fear of the illness still circulating in our communities, changes in school routines or even the death of a loved one, this holiday season may be particularly challenging for kids, and we should be sensitive to their feelings and needs," says Lisa Hardesty, Ph.D., Mayo Clinic Health System psychologist. "Remember that stress can be a natural and automatic physical, mental and emotional response to challenging events, and most children don't yet have the coping skills to navigate through on their own."

Some signs that children are stressed may include emotional outbursts, increased irritability, trouble sleeping, withdrawal from others, struggles in school, frequent complaints of headaches or stomach aches, and increased defiance.

"Irritability and anger are common signs a child is overwhelmed because they are trying to get out of a situation that is causing them discomfort," says Dr. Hardesty.

Here are some tips for helping your child manage stress:

Plan ahead. Identify potential "pitfalls" and reduce barriers to success. For instance, make sure to promote optimal sleep and nutrition prior to new holiday experiences, and recognize that the level of activity and noise may be triggers for most children.

Consider creating space for them to express themselves. Children need help putting words to the complicated feelings they are experiencing. Depending on the age of the child, this may involve coloring or painting, or describing the emotions they are experiencing.

Set clear expectations. Children thrive on routines. Outline examples of behaviors you will and will not tolerate. When correcting children, tell them what you want them to do rather than what not to do. For example, instead of saying, "Stop chewing with your mouth open," try saying, "Please chew with your mouth closed."

Act, don't react. When children act defiant, take a deep breath and calmly correct behavior. Don't mirror their anger level. Remind yourself that your children are impressionable, and your words matter.

Pick your battles. If their behavior is simply irritating, try to ignore it. The moment they do something positive, compliment them. Sometimes children simply want a reaction, so try to react to the positive behaviors immediately instead of the negative. Also, be OK with children sitting out activities that cause them discomfort or anxiety.

Try to use humor. A good laugh doesn't just lighten a mood; it also activates and relieves the body's stress response. Find a way to laugh by redirecting children's attention toward positive games and activities, such as reading comics or playing a game. <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mental-health-and-the-holidays-stress-for-kids>

Disabilities Services

Greetings parents, friends and family:

December is International Persons with Disabilities Awareness Month and here at Picayune Head Start and Early Head Start we are committed to creating an inclusive environment that welcomes and supports children with disabilities. **ALL CHILDREN**, regardless of ability, are provided with equal and fair access to learning and growth opportunities.



PHS and EHS offer individualized support for children with disabilities that may include specialized instruction and accommodations to foster development, services like physical, occupational and speech therapy, and assistive technology.

I would like to highlight one of our previous EHS students now HS students. Elliott White. He came to us not speaking in EHS and HS. The Teachers as well as the Providers all worked together providing sign language and Social Emotional skills needed to make his life prosperous! Elliott White is now talking beyond our belief and doing exceptionally well with his communication skills. Because of the resources provided through EHS and HS we are all amazed of his exceptional progress.



Upcoming parent trainings and recommended resources:

Our family resources and educational opportunities are available to any family who are seeking workshops, training sessions, and support groups. Take a look at our offerings:

- Resources: *Tools to Grow*, personal library of various books and resources upon request.
- Educational Materials: Helpful topics can be searched on Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube.
- Parent Training: Topics such as "Simple Activities to Increase Preschooler's Attention Span, and Ways to include Children with Autism." In-person training available upon Request.

We are proud of our children's accomplishments and the hard work of our dedicated staff. Thank you PHS and EHS parents and the Picayune community for making a small town a good place for all children to thrive.

Upcoming events

Here's a listing of our upcoming events:

- *Toys for Tots: December 2nd-13th*
- *Bike Raffle: December 2nd-16th (HS location)*
- *Christmas Parade: December 2nd*

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions, suggestions, or to simply share your success story. We value your feedback and input!

Peace and blessings,

Ann Brock
Disability Coordinator for Early Headstart
abrock@pcu.k12.ms.us
601-749-3306

Sonya Lather-Newkirk
Disability Coordinator for Headstart
slather@pcu.k12.ms.us
601-799-1716

DECEMBER 2024 HEAD START / PRE-K / EARLY HEAD START (CENTER-BASED) MENU

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| 2. Breakfast: Oatmeal, Diced Peaches, Milk, Water Lunch: Spaghetti & Meat Sauce, Spinach, Fresh Baked Roll, Applesauce, Milk, Water | 3. Breakfast: Biscuit with Egg Patty, Mandarin Oranges, Milk, Water Lunch: Hamburger Steak w/ Gravy, Green Peas, Fresh Baked Roll, Strawberries, Milk, Water | 4. Breakfast: Rice Chex Cereal, Diced Pineapple, Milk, Water Lunch: Grilled Chicken on Bun, Broccoli, Diced Pears, Milk, Water | 5. Breakfast: Grits, Applesauce, Milk, Water Lunch: Cheese Pizza, Steamed Carrots, Diced Peaches, Milk, Water | 6. Breakfast: Waffle, Kiwi, Milk, Water Lunch: Hamburger on Bun, Sweet Potatoe Fries, Applesauce, Milk, Water |
| 9. Breakfast: Cheese toast, Applesauce, Milk, Water Lunch: Chili on bun, Yam Patty, Strawberries, Milk, Water | 10. Breakfast: Grits, Mandarin, Milk, Water Lunch: Cheesy Chicken w/Rice, Turnip Greens, Corn Bread, Diced Pears, Milk, Water | 11. Breakfast: Oatmeal, Diced Peaches, Milk, Water Lunch: BBQ Chicken on Bun, Sliced Baked Potatoes, Diced Pineapple, Milk, Water | 12. Breakfast: Biscuit with Egg Patty, Applesauce, Milk, Water Lunch: Hamburger on Bun, Broccoli, Diced Pineapple, Milk, Water | 13. Breakfast: Chex Cinnamon Cereal, Diced Pears, Milk, Water Lunch: Baked Chicken Tenders, Fresh Baked Roll, Steamed Carrots, Mandarin Oranges, Milk, Water |
| 16. Breakfast: French toast, Applesauce, Milk, Water Lunch: Hamburger on Bun, Baked Sliced Potatoes, Milk, Water | 17. Breakfast: Cheesy Grits, Diced Peaches, Milk, Water Lunch: Red Beans& Rice, Spinach, Fresh Baked Roll, Mandarin, Milk, Water | 18. Breakfast: Chex Cinnamon Cereal, Milk, Water Lunch: Spaghetti & Meat Sauce, Steamed Carrots, Fresh Baked Roll, Blueberries, Milk, Water | 19. Breakfast: Oatmeal, Mandarin, Oranges, Milk, Water Lunch: Grilled Chicken on Bun, Baked Beans, Diced Pears, Milk, Water | CHRISTMAS BREAK: NO SCHOOL |
| 25 | | | | |
| CHRISTMAS BREAK: NO SCHOOL | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| CHRISTMAS BREAK: NO SCHOOL | | | | |

Picayune School District Early Childhood Programs - (601) 799-4702

- Early Head Start - Rosa ● Early Head Start – Nicholson ● EHS CCP – Annie’s Kindergarten & Daycare ● EHS CCP – Pearl River Community College Child Development Lab School ● PSD Pre-K Program ● PSD Head Start – Picayune ● PSD Head Start – Poplarville