Quality ChildCare
For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. XIII, No. 1

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ **Foster curiosity and development through play**
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care
Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

Social Studies for Young Children

While social studies is often associated with older students learning about historical dates and maps, it is a vital part of early learning. For young children, social studies is a hands-on journey of discovery through daily play and routines. It goes beyond history and geography, helping children explore their own identity, families, and communities. Starting this exploration early is essential; it helps young children discover their identity and place in the world, laying a solid foundation for confidence and learning how to connect with others.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, social studies is an exploration of:

- **Self** - Learning about their unique traits, emotions, and their place within their family.
- **Family** - The people who love them, their family roles, and diversity within family structures.
- **Community** – Discovering their local environment and getting to know community members (e.g., police officers and firefighters) who ensure their neighborhood remains safe.
- **Geography** – Exploring immediate physical spaces, practicing simple directions like near and far, or looking at a map of their island.
- **History** – Grasping the basic passage of time through daily routines, talking about what happened yesterday, or looking at photos to discover past/present information about their family and heritage.
- **Civics** – Practicing sharing, taking turns, following classroom rules, and being a kind helper.



In this newsletter, we will explore what social studies looks like for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, focusing on activities that foster an understanding of self, family, and community.

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Self

Social studies begins in infancy as babies explore their hands and toes, their reflections in the mirror, and the familiar faces of their caregivers. As they grow into toddlers, they start to identify their own feelings, learn their names, and notice similarities and differences between themselves and their peers. This sense of self continues into the preschool years as they explore their unique traits, discover their personal interests through new experiences, and learn how they contribute to their family and community by taking on roles like helping with chores, comforting a friend, or following shared rules.

Try these activities with the children:

- **Infants** – Stand the infants in front of a mirror. Name their physical features, then talk about things they can do, such as "You smile with your lips." This activity helps infants learn who they are by seeing their own features.
- **Toddlers** – Trace children's outline on a large butcher paper. Encourage them to draw and color in their face, hair, and clothes. This supports their ability to learn and identify their own preferences and physical features.
- **Preschoolers** – Have children come up with three simple ways to keep them safe at play, such as "use walking feet" or "take care of our toys." Discuss why they are important and how they protect them.





Family

Young children learn about family in social studies by exploring their own household structures, shared traditions, and the diversity of other families. Infants learn to trust and bond with their caregivers and know the difference between family and strangers. As children grow into the toddler years, they begin to identify their family members by name and broaden their social circle from their immediate household to small groups of people they see every day. In the preschool stage, children begin to recognize their own sense of belonging within their family, proudly sharing the unique traditions and activities that make their family special.

Try the following activities to encourage children's understanding of their families.

- **Infants** – Look at family photos and talk about who is in their family. Family is an infant's first social group. This activity helps infants build trust, recognize familiar faces, and understand who cares for them.
- **Toddlers** – Tape printed photos of family members onto a wall or sturdy board at your toddler's eye level. Invite your child to point to or touch each photo as you talk about who they are and their roles in the family and community (e.g., pointing to Mom, who is a nurse and takes care

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of sick people, or Papa, who is a police officer). Your toddler learns who they are by seeing themselves in relation to their family members and discovering that they belong to a special group with shared names, homes, and routines.

- **Preschoolers** – Place an older family photo of each child as a baby alongside a current one. Talk with children about the differences and similarities they notice. This helps them visualize their growth over time and reinforces the sense of belonging and security that their family provides.

Community

Learning about community emerges later as children naturally develop outward – starting with self-awareness, moving to family, and finally exploring the broader neighborhood. Learning about community helps young children connect with others, respect differences, and feel like they belong. Infants explore their world through daily activities such as walks to see cars, animals, and their neighborhood. Toddlers show their curiosity through pretend play, such as acting as a mail carrier or construction worker. Preschoolers enjoy working together and learning how groups function. As they see themselves as part of a team, they love making up their own social rules.



Try these activities and ask open-ended questions about the world around them to foster their thinking and curiosity.

- **Infants** – Explore the community with infants by holding them by a safe window. Track moving cars, passing dogs, or rustling trees while labeling aloud. This helps infants recognize what is in the community and start to learn about the things in their neighborhood.
- **Toddlers** – Invite the children to go outside with you and look for community elements. Spot and point to visual anchors like stop signs, fire hydrants, mailboxes, and structures. This helps toddlers notice what is in their community outside of their home.
- **Preschoolers** – Provide children with small buckets and child-safe tongs for a "neighborhood clean-up". Walking around your yard or nearby playground to collect leaves, twigs, or litter teaches children their role in the community and the importance of helping others.

By incorporating these simple strategies, you can support children's social studies learning. These strategies can also be used during everyday play moments, such as elaborating on what children notice, sharing facts about their interests, offering hands-on activities, and providing visual props, all of which enhance young children's discovery of themselves and the world around them.

Training Opportunity

Using Loose Parts to Create Cultural Sustainable Environments

Register for Early Childhood Investigations Webinars to view this recorded webinar and earn a 1.5-hour certificate of participation. This webinar shares the importance of creating culturally sustainable spaces for children's learning and will define how loose parts support children's culture, identity, traditions, and history.

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Featured Activity
Pull-Apart Tree Bread

Adapted from: *https://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/a50528/pull-apart-christmas-tree-recipe/*



Ingredients:

- 7 mozzarella sticks
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- 1 lb store-bought pizza dough, room temperature
- 1 large egg
- 4 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- ½ cup parmesan, finely grated
- 1 Tbsp finely chopped parsley, rosemary, and fresh basil

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Cut each mozzarella stick into 5 pieces.
2. On a lightly floured surface, divide dough and cut into 2" squares (need 33 squares). Have keiki help wrap each square around a piece of mozzarella and form a tightly sealed ball.
3. Have keiki help arrange balls, seam side down, touching, on a baking sheet in a tree pattern.
4. In a small bowl, beat egg with 1 Tbsp water. Brush egg wash on dough balls.
5. Bake until golden, 15 to 20 minutes.
6. In a small bowl, whisk butter, parmesan, parsley, rosemary, and basil. Brush on tree. Sprinkle with parmesan and parsley before serving.

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library **www.librarieshawaii.org**

Making Faces: A First Book of Emotions
by Abrams Appleseed



This story features large, clear photos of diverse baby faces expressing basic feelings alongside a built-in mirror.

Mommy, Mama, and Me
by Leslèa Newman



This loving, rhythmic board book captures a baby's daily routine alongside their parents.

I Belong
by Cheri J Meiners



This warm and simple story reassures young children that they have a safe, cozy place in their home and playgroup.

The Family Book
by Todd Parr



This story explains that families can be big, small, identical, or completely different from one another.

Citations

Rocking and Rolling. Supporting Curiosity and Inquiry in Early Social Studies. (n.d.). In NAEYC. Retrieved August 10, 2026, from https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/spring2024/rocking-and-rolling

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