The Portage Project
Supporting Family Child Care Providers through Coaching

The Portage Project is a curriculum that supports appropriate practice and individualized planning for children. The Portage Project is widely used in home-visiting, center-based and family child care programs that serve children birth to six years old. Early childhood professionals support children by offering a range of experiences designed to meet individual needs and partner with families to provide experiences that support children’s school readiness.

The Fairfax County Office for Children is currently collaborating with a national organization, School Readiness Consulting, to expand access to the Portage in family child care homes throughout the county. School Readiness Consulting provides support to family child care providers to improve early learning through monthly coaching sessions and occasional large group meetings. Coaches focus on the introduction and implementation of the Portage curriculum and provide on-site technical assistance and professional development through observation and feedback to support individualized planning, appropriate adult-child interactions and family engagement.

For more information, email potler@schoolreadinessconsulting.com or call 1-877-447-0327 ext. 723.

Community

Neighborhood School Readiness Project

The Neighborhood School Readiness Project supports children’s successful transition to kindergarten by building neighborhood partnerships. These partnerships pave the way to sustained success in school and life.

Teams in 12 neighborhoods throughout Fairfax County work together to build a strong foundation for children’s success. Young children’s development is dependent upon their relationships and experiences with their family, early childhood professionals, school staff and other community members. When families, schools and communities unite to focus on children’s transition to kindergarten, children have the best opportunity to be successful before and after they enter kindergarten.

As early childhood professionals, family child care providers are important in supporting children’s school readiness. Each team includes a child care specialist who represents the family child care providers in that neighborhood and several teams have family child care providers as active members. Whether you are able to attend meetings or not, here are some ways that you can support the children in your care to be ready for success when they enter school:

- Visit your neighborhood school’s website to learn about events for children and their families such as ice cream socials, early literacy experiences or book fairs. Plan to attend with the parents of the four year old children in your care.
- Take children on a guided tour of the school.
- Invite a kindergarten teacher to your home to meet the children who will be attending kindergarten and observe them interacting with you and the others.
- Attend story times at your local library.

If you are interested in participating on a Neighborhood School Readiness Team, contact your child care specialist. Together you can ensure that all children are ready to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.
Active Play

Young children benefit from active play and in your early childhood program, you can provide opportunities for them to roll, run, jump, hop, skip, and climb everyday. When it is too cold to go outdoors, you can create indoor play areas. Use boxes and tunnels so that children can crawl through, climb over and under, in and out, while moving their bodies in active ways.

For more information on ways to enhance quality in your early childhood program, contact VirginiaQuality@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Virginia Quality is a state-wide program designed to support and improve quality in early learning programs.

Recordkeeping Resource for 2017

Are you looking for a system to make it easier to file your business taxes in the coming year? If you participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program, then check with your child care specialist to receive your copy of the 2017 Nutrition Calendar and Record Keeping System.

The National CACFP Sponsors Association designed this calendar to help family child care providers easily track their income and expenses. Keeping well-organized records will help you to file an accurate tax return at the end of 2017. It can also help you to calculate your business net profit and determine how well the business is doing.

The calendar also features resources for each month to support your business including:

- Physical activities and creative hands-on crafts to explore with children.
- Delicious and nutritious CACFP-approved recipes and snack suggestions.
- Nutrition advice and tips based on USDA Dietary Guidelines and the CACFP Meal Patterns.
- Reminders for major holidays, important tax dates, and submitting food program claims.
- Tips for recordkeeping and CACFP best practices.

If you currently do not participate in the USDA food program, this is a great time to join and receive this wonderful resource. What a fantastic way to get a jumpstart on organization and take some of the stress out of tax time by using this calendar in 2017!

To find out how to join the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact our office at (703) 324-8100.
OFC works in partnership with the Fairfax County Health Department to bring valuable resources and professional development opportunities to family child care providers. As a family child care provider, you also have the opportunity to share information with the families in your program about the wealth of services that the Health Department has available to residents of Fairfax County, the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, and the towns of Herndon and Vienna. Its mission is to protect, promote, and improve health and quality of life. Services are available throughout the county at Health Department District offices and other locations. Services include:

- Clinical and nursing services.
- Flu vaccines.
- Tuberculosis (TB) program.
- Dental services.
- Immunizations for schools, and communicable diseases.
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program.
- School health nursing services.
- International travel immunizations.
- Low-income Child Safety Seat Distribution & Education Program, 703-246-8820.
- Pregnancy testing.
- Maternity services.
- MOMS: Maternity Online Medical Referral Services.
- Speech and hearing, 703-246-7120.
- Screening for community-based Medicaid services.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) confidential testing and treatment.
- HIV/AIDS confidential testing, counseling and community education.

For Health Department office locations and hours, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd or contact their main information line, 703-246-2411, or TTY, 711.

### Winter Activities for Children

With a little planning and preparation, you and the children in your program can enjoy unique outdoor experiences all year round. Even in winter, the exposure to fresh air and exercise promotes health and wellbeing for you and the children.

To keep this experience safe and comfortable for everyone, it is important that children are dressed properly for cold weather. Encourage families to leave a set of hat and gloves. Then bundle up, go outside and have fun!

- Take a walk around the community. If you have small children who are unable to walk, invest in a stroller. Children will enjoy the change in scenery.
- Bring a variety of balls outside for some fun games.
- Visit your local playground.
- Use sand box toys in the snow.

Children can make castles and shapes just like they do with sand.

- Instead of building a snowman, build a snow worm – much easier for young children.
- If outside is below 32 degrees, blow bubbles outside and watch them freeze and shatter like glass when they pop – a great science activity.
- Snow squirt art – fill a squirt bottle with colored water and let children paint the snow.
- Go on a scavenger hunt!

1. Before you leave, allow the children to choose which items to collect, and make a list. For example, you could collect rocks, twigs, pinecones, leaves, etc.
2. Take a basket with you to collect the items, and cross them off the list as you find them.
3. Allow children to look at items close-up through a magnifying glass.
4. Once back home, children can create a book and label each item.
Join a Family Child Care Association

Active membership in a family child care association offers professional growth opportunities, networking with other providers, access to resources and knowledge of the latest updates and developments in the field. Contact your local chapter for more information.

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