



# BLUE GRASS HEAD START COMMUNITY CENTER

## NEWSLETTER

MAY

2017



### Dates to Remember

May 9<sup>th</sup> Planetarium am session

No pm session this day.

May 10<sup>th</sup> Planetarium pm session

No am session this day

May 18<sup>th</sup> – 4 am and 8 am Closing Exercises

May 22<sup>nd</sup> – 4 pm, 5 pm, 8 pm, 7 and 2 Closing Exercises

May 23 – Closing Exercises  
Picnic



### Here are 7 ways to foster a long attention span:

- 1) Minimal entertainment and stimulation.** Babies are creatures of habit and can become accustomed to expect entertainment rather than doing what comes naturally — occupying themselves with their surroundings. Constant stimulation leads to an exhausted parent and an easily bored, over-stimulated child. Infant expert [Magda Gerber](#) taught that [babies do not naturally become bored](#). Parents do. Babies are entranced by the way their bodies can move, and the sights, sounds, smells, nooks and crannies of life that we adults take for granted. They need uninterrupted time to experience those things and assimilate them.
- 2) No TV or videos for the first two years.** TV and videos are the most drastic way to undermine your child's developing attention span because they engage and overwhelm a child's attention rather than encouraging the child to actively flex his focus muscle. Imagine the powerful pull of the TV screen in a restaurant. You can be sitting with the most fascinating people in the world, and still you find your eyes drawn to the damn TV. (For an in-depth study on the TV issue, I highly recommend *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think – And What We Can Do About It*, by Jane M. Healy, Ph.D.)
- 3) A safe, cozy “YES” place.** In order to remain occupied for extended periods of time, a baby must have a safe place. This can begin with a bassinet or crib, and grow with the baby to be a playpen, and finally a cordoned-off or gated play area. A too large area where there are unsafe objects available to a child is not the relaxed environment the baby needs for extensive concentration. Babies cannot play for long periods of time when they are distracted by the tension of parents worried about safety and the interruption of “NOs”.
- 4) Simple, open-ended toys and objects.** Unless distracted, babies are inclined to examine every inch of a simple object, like the pattern on a cloth napkin, and then experiment, i.e. wave it, mouth it, place it over their faces, and scrunch it into a ball. They are apt to tire of, or become over-stimulated by objects that they either cannot comprehend (like rattles and other mysterious noisemakers) or toys that they passively watch, listen to, and have a single function: like musical mobiles or wind-up toys. Those toys grab the child's attention rather than strengthening his ability to actively focus and investigate, similar to the way TV and videos do.
- 5) Observe. And don't interrupt.** Observing the way our babies choose to spend their time makes us realize that they are not just lying there, but actually *doing* something. That something might be gazing towards a window, at the ceiling fan, or grasping at dust particles in the sunlight. Every time we interrupt our baby's musings we discourage his concentration. When we observe we can see when there is a break in the action, i.e. the baby averts his gaze from the wiffle ball he was prodding with his fingers and turns to look at us. We can

then ask to pick him up for a diaper change without diverting his attention and interfering with his train of thought.

6) **Baby gets to choose.** Simple fact: children are more interested in the things they choose than the things we choose for them. Therefore, allowing a baby to choose what to do in his play environment rather than directing him to our choice of activity (a learning game, puzzle or flash card) will better engage his interest, focus and heightened concentration. Children who are given plenty of opportunities to focus for extended periods of time on activities they choose are better able to pay attention in situations later (like school) where activities are adult-prescribed.

7) **Don't encourage distraction.** It is common practice to distract a baby with a toy on the changing table to "get the job done." But this trains babies to NOT pay attention. Diaper changes, baths, and feedings are not dull, unpleasant chores for babies. Babies are interested in *all* aspects of their lives. They want to be included in each step of a task that involves them and be invited to participate as much as they are able. When we teach a baby that he should *not* pay attention to activities he's an integral part of, how do we then expect him to develop a healthy attention span?



## CATERPILLAR CHICKEN TORTILLA WRAPS

### Ingredients

- 12 frozen Banquet® Original Chicken Breast Tenders (12 tenders = 7 oz)
- 1/3 cup Peter Pan® Creamy Peanut Butter
- 4 spinach herb-flavored flour tortillas (10 inch)
- 1 cup matchstick-cut carrots (from 10-oz pkg)
- 1/2 cup thin English cucumber strips
- 72 thin pretzel sticks
- Roma tomato, optional



### Directions

1. Microwave chicken tenders according to package directions. Meanwhile, spread peanut butter evenly on tortillas. Top tortillas in center with chicken tenders, carrots and cucumber.
2. Fold sides in; roll up burrito style. Cut each wrap in three pieces. Carefully insert 3 pretzel sticks each into both lower sides of each wrap piece to resemble caterpillar legs. Arrange pieces playfully on serving platter. Place Roma tomato at front of wrap pieces to resemble caterpillar head, if desired.