

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Pg. 1

- Link to DDI Vantage Nutritionist's Blog
- Reminder

Pg. 2

- Letter from Executive Director

Pg. 3

- Early Intervention Consortium Flyer

Pg. 4

- Family Story

Pg. 5

- Pyramid Model

Pg. 6

- Screen Time and Child Development:
Finding a Healthy Balance

Pg. 7

- Sleepy Stars Activity

Pg. 8

- Valentine's Day Crafts & Book Ideas



Celebrate Valentine's Day with
Red and Pink Foods!
(Click the link below.)



Follow Us on Social Media

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Attention Early Intervention Families If you have a parent fee,
please remember to pay it each month.

Your bill will come by the method you selected. Either in an email
from no_reply@utah.gov or as a letter.

We love serving you and your family!

I'm reaching out to share something that feels especially important right now. Along with all Early Intervention providers in the state, DDI Vantage is preparing to go before the Utah Legislature to request critical funding support for Part C Early Intervention services—services that help children ages 0–3 with developmental delays and disabilities get the strong start they deserve.

Early intervention works. It changes outcomes for children, strengthens families, and reduces the need for more intensive services later in life. But right now, our programs are under significant financial strain. Without adequate funding, providers across the state face growing challenges in meeting the needs of the infants and toddlers who rely on these services.

Whether you are a parent whose child was supported through early intervention, a staff member who has given your heart to this work, a medical provider who refers families, or a community partner who believes in early support—**your voice and awareness matter.**

I invite you to take a moment to review the flyer included in this newsletter, and help us spread the word about the importance of sustained and increased funding for Part C services in Utah. **I urge you to reach out to your legislators and share why Early Intervention is so critical.** Together, we can help ensure that our youngest children and their families receive the support they need during the most critical years of development.

Key dates to know:

February 5 at 7:00 AM – The Request for Appropriation (RFA) is introduced

February 9 at 8:00 AM – Public comment will be heard

Thank you for being part of this community and for standing with us as we advocate for Utah's children and families.

Kellie Lyon
Executive Director



EARLY INVESTMENT STRONGER FUTURES

Participants in IDEAPartC Early Intervention birth to three demonstrated improved social-emotional skills, knowledge and behaviors— with...about one half catching up to a level appropriate for their age. -2022 ECTA

There is an urgent need for additional state funding for Part C Baby Watch Early Intervention to guarantee that families of children with developmental delays receive the specialized support critical for their growth and success.

THE PROBLEM:



- **Funding has remained flat.** While costs and children served have increased, frequency and intensity of home visits have been limited by budget constraints.
- **Programs cannot meet federal "Child Find" mandates,** leaving many eligible children undetected until kindergarten where they require costlier special education.
- **Utah funds only provide 1.7 hours per month per child** versus the 5 hour national average.



THE SOLUTION: \$4.5M ONGOING INVESTMENT

Additional investment is necessary to address years of unfunded growth.

Identify and serve more children early, when intervention is most effective and least costly.

Improve outcomes for Utah's most vulnerable infants and toddlers.

Increase monthly visits to meet individual child service needs.

Give 15,000+ Utah children the best start, while meeting federal requirements.

Strengthen professional workforce, with competitive wages.

THIS \$4.5 M ONGOING INVESTMENT ENSURES \$10.7M SAVINGS IN PART B SPECIAL EDUCATION COSTS, INVEST NOW—SAVE LATER.

THE NUMBERS:

15,764 CHILDREN

were provided critical services by highly educated early intervention providers this year.

47% OF THE CHILDREN

who exited the program avoided the necessity for future special education services.

\$10,700,000 SAVED

ANNUALLY by Part C Early Intervention.

9% DECREASE

in the per child early intervention funding—while costs to hire qualified professionals and overall operational costs continue to rise.

8 YEARS

since the last reimbursement rate increase for Part C Early Intervention services.

DID YOU KNOW WE:

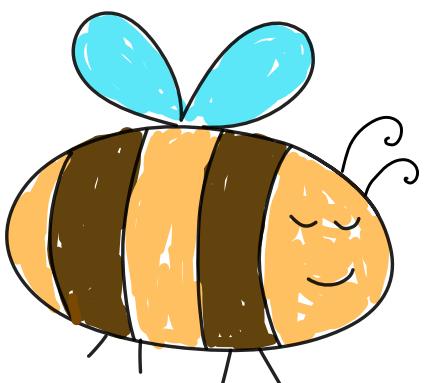
- Are special education for children from birth to age three
- Can not allow a waitlist.
- Must determine eligibility and set a service plan within 45 days from referral.
- Offer evaluations to every child with a substantiated case referred from DCFS
- Screen every child for health, hearing and vision problems.
- Provide physical, occupational, speech therapy, nursing and social work in the home.

Cited Sources:



Family Story

DDI Vantage has truly been a blessing for our family. Having therapists come directly to our home has made the process so much more comfortable and convenient, especially for our son. He's been able to receive consistent therapy in an environment where he feels safe and that has made a big difference in his progress. DDI Vantage has been incredibly supportive - offering not only therapy but also valuable tips, strategies and resources that have helped us support his development every step of the way. We are so grateful for everything they've done to help our son succeed.



Grow Family

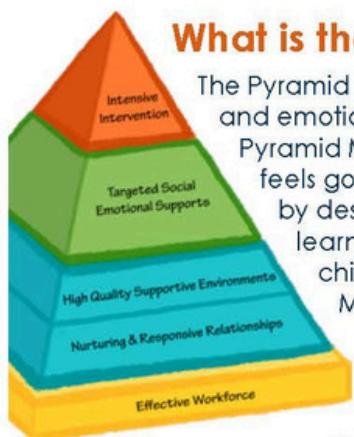


We have something important to share with you!

Research¹ has shown that the skills your child needs to be successful in the future are social and emotional skills!

The more socially skilled children are, the more likely they are to succeed in school. Because this is so important for your child, we are using the Pyramid Model in our program.

What is the Pyramid Model?



The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development of our children. The goal of the Pyramid Model is to create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. This is accomplished by designing classrooms that promote engagement in learning and by building positive relationships among children, families, and staff. In our use of the Pyramid Model, our classroom staff will work together to ensure that all children understand behavior expectations, receive instruction in social skills, and those who are struggling receive individual support.

The Pyramid Model illustrates that the foundation for helping children develop social and emotional skills is nurturing and responsive relationships and high quality environments. The middle of the Pyramid, teaching of social and emotional skills, is provided to all children with some children receiving additional teaching and support. The top of the Pyramid shows that a few children will need the foundation, the middle AND individualized intervention to address challenging behavior.

To use the Pyramid Model, our program established a leadership team that will provide ongoing support to our staff and families. Our leadership team looks forward to sharing some of the important work we are doing, including teaching program-wide expectations, partnering with families, training staff in teaching strategies, providing classroom coaching to help teachers implement, and using data for decision-making. Stay tuned for ongoing updates about the Pyramid Model in our program!

What is gained by using the Pyramid Model?

FAMILIES

- Receive information on how to help promote children's social and emotional skills
- Team with teachers to help children grow and learn
- Receive support for preventing and addressing behavior problems

TEACHERS

- Are effective in helping children learn social and emotional skills
- Strengthen classroom management skills
- Have information and resources to support families

CHILDREN

- Increase their social and emotional skills
- Improve in their readiness for kindergarten

¹ Jones, D. E., Greenberg, M., & Crowley, M. (2015). Early social-emotional functioning and public health: The relationship between kindergarten social competence and future wellness. *American Journal of Public Health, 105*, 2283-2290.

Screen Time and Child Development: Finding a Healthy Balance

Research shows that too much screen time in early childhood can affect language, play, sleep, attention and overall child development. Because technology is such a common part of daily life today, it's not about eliminating it completely but using it in moderation and with purpose to create a healthy balance that supports development.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends children:

- Under 18 months: Avoid screens (except for video calls with family and friends)
- 18–24 months: Choose high-quality, educational media viewed with an adult to help them understand what they are seeing.
- 2–5 years: Limit to 1 hour/day of the same quality content viewed with an adult.

Effects of Too Much Screen Time:

- Shorter attention span
- Behavioral issues
- Difficulty transitioning between activities
- Less social interaction with other people
- Delayed speech or language
- Fewer opportunities for physical movement and exploration
- Poor posture
- Sleep disturbances

Tips to Reduce Screen Time:

- Set clear “screen-free” times like during meals or before bed.
- Create “tech-free zones” in the home like the bedroom or play areas.
- Use timers for gentle transitions away from screens.
- Model healthy media habits as caregivers.
- Offer alternative choices such as reading a book or playing with toys.



Screen-free Activities to Try Instead:

- **Sensory Play:** Explore safe sensory bins (full of dry cereal, pom-poms, fabric), squish playdough, stack cups or blocks, or enjoy simple water play with cups, bowls, and bath toys.
- **Physical Play:** Try tummy time with toys or mirrors, a soft crawling path using pillows or tunnels, push-pull toys for new walkers, or a short dance break together.
- **Social Play:** Play peek-a-boo, use toy phones or kitchen sets for pretend play, look at board books, or build with blocks and shape sorters.
- **Calming Play:** Create a cozy reading corner with blankets and stuffed animals, listen to soft music or lullabies, or sort toys by color or size for a soothing activity.



References:

Hill, D., Ameenuddin, N., Chassiakos, Y. R., Cross, C., Hutchinson, J., Levine, A., Boyd, R., Mendelson, R., Moreno, M., & Swanson, W. S. (2016). Media and young minds. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 138(5), e20162591. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2591>

Muppalla, S. K., Vuppulapati, S., Reddy Pulliahgaru, A., & Sreenivasulu, H. (2023). Effects of excessive screen time on child development: An updated review and strategies for management. *Cureus*, 15(6), e40608. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.40608>

Sleepy Stars

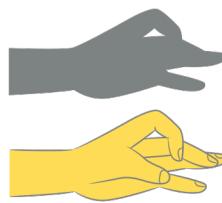
Sleep is so important to our health. No matter your spaces, sleeping arrangements, or evening routines, bedtime can be a great opportunity to relax and bond. As your child colors this page, read the ideas in each star aloud and choose one to try together once the lights are low tonight.

When the day is done, we can...



Talk about it. As you do the activities, talk together about how you are feeling! ("I love how your fuzzy blanket feels on my skin," "These sheets are cool and soft," "These shadow bunnies are moving so slowly, they're making me sleepy," and so on.)

Try these easy shadow puppets!

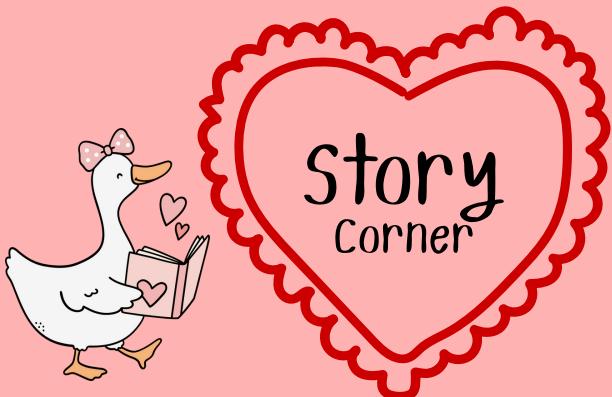




We love crafts that utilize recycled materials! For this craft, you simply fold a toilet paper roll to mimic the shape of a heart and use tape to hold it into place. We used our Crayola Washable paint and a sheet of construction paper.

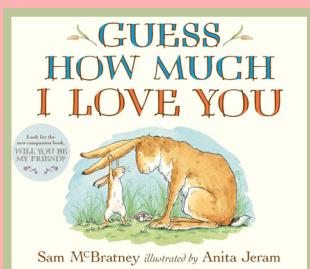


<https://littlelearningclub.com/valentines-crafts-and-activities-for-preschoolers/>



Story Corner

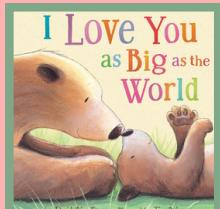
Some ideas for Valentine's themed books to read to your child.



Guess How Much I Love You

By: Sam McBratney

Illustrated By: Anita Jeram



I Love You as Big as the World

By: David Van Buren

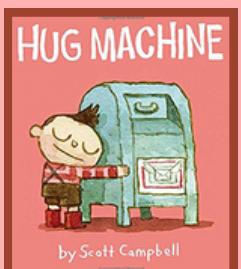
Illustrated By: Tim Warnes



Love Is

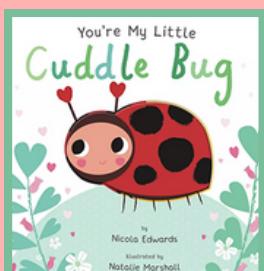
By: Diane Adams

Illustrated By: Claire Keane



Hug Machine

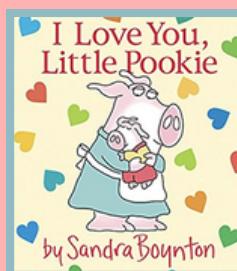
By: Scott Campbell



Cuddle Bug

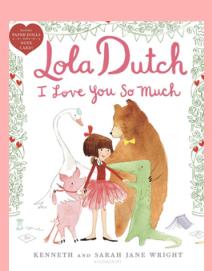
By: Nicola Edwards

Illustrated By: Natalie Marshall



I Love You, Little Pookie

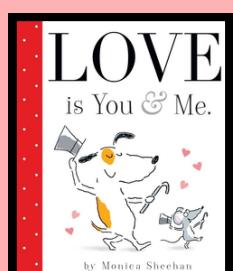
By: Sandra Boynton



Lola Dutch I Love You So Much

By: Kenneth Wright

Illustrated By: Sarah Jane Wright



LOVE is You & Me.

By: Monica Sheehan