



# Harbor Happenings

Cover: Milo  
Photo Credit: Milo's Mother, Erin Martinez

FALL 2023

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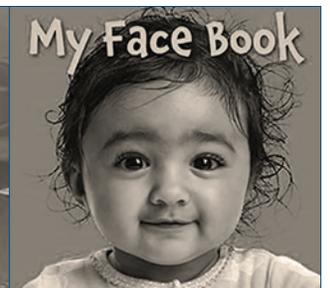
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## Inclusion in a San Pedro Community

By Erin Martinez, Mother & Monica Sanchez, HRC Service Coordinator



Milo enjoys a book

Inclusion is the act of including or the state of being included. This moment of inclusion that featured Milo, an active, happy, and sweet three-year-old, inspired people to continue conversations about the importance of inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Milo started this journey at only a few months of age when he was referred to Harbor Regional Center for services in the midst of

COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to worrying about the changes the pandemic would bring, Milo's parents were also trying to understand his diagnosis and supports in order to create a plan to ensure he reached his developmental milestones. Milo accessed the Neurological and Physical Abilitation (NAPA) Center where he was able to receive occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy. He also participated in social and

recreational activities such as horse riding through Manes for Movement and basketball through the Challengers Sports Program. Even though Milo was able to receive the needed therapy and supports, inclusion was always a concern for his family. They wondered what experiences Milo would encounter in the upcoming years, and, if he would be able to form friendships within his community. Milo's journey was difficult, but the family's journey to



Milo on the field

acceptance was also difficult as they navigated many unknowns regarding Milo's health. "During this time, mother chose not to participate in Milo's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting," shared Monica, Milo's Service Coordinator.

Milo and his family had to navigate various challenges to ensure that his needs were being met. Initially, the family felt they were not being heard and felt as if everyone

they came across minimized Milo's abilities. His family did not want Milo to have these negative experiences, and wanted Milo to be viewed as having the same abilities as his peers even though he needed additional support. Some other challenges the family encountered were financing all of Milo's therapies and having to travel far to receive therapy.

"During our first phone interaction, my main focus

was to validate Erin's (Milo's mother) feelings and meet her where she was emotionally. We were able to focus on Milo's strengths, and only talk about what she felt comfortable sharing. Without intending to, we ended up having Milo's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting." Monica shared, "In the moment I learned that Erin was a great advocate for Milo, and that I was lucky to work with Milo as he is a sweet, loving and determined boy."

## Inclusion in a San Pedro Community ...Continued

One day during a walk with mother in their neighborhood, Milo noticed a group of children across from him and was curious about what they were doing. Erin began to panic, as past interactions with others had been negative. Erin recalls, "I saw the group of boys staring at Milo and as the momma bear that I am, I was defensive; then the children ran over, approached us, and asked if he wanted to walk with them and play with their remote control car." Erin remembers feeling taken aback, feeling hopeful and a sense of relief

for Milo. Mother captured a video of this transformational moment on the social media platform, Tik Tok, and the video was highlighted on the Fox News. This was a re-affirming moment for Milo and his family, to see how the community is embracing inclusion. Erin wants to continue to work with the community on bridging the gap in regards to inclusion for Milo and other children with similar diagnoses and abilities. She hopes that people see the potential that individuals like Milo have, despite the challenges they

may come across.

Erin shared that through social media, she has been able to find a community of support with other families that are going through similar experiences. Social media has been a place where Milo's family has found comfort, connections, and information to further support Milo. These platforms have been a source of strength and hope for Erin to continue moving forward.

### Milo on Fox News

[www.foxla.com/  
video/1168818](http://www.foxla.com/video/1168818)

or Scan me!



### Milo on TikTok

[www.tiktok.com/@erinmeowmartinez/  
video/7186475881198652714](https://www.tiktok.com/@erinmeowmartinez/video/7186475881198652714)

or Scan me!



**"I saw the group of boys staring at Milo and as the momma bear that I am, I was defensive; then the children ran over, approached us, and asked if he wanted to walk with them and play with their remote control car."**



Milo with his parents

## Tips on Toddler Development

By Kathie Sarles, Early Childhood Specialist



Research tells us that the age range of 0-3 years is a “critical stage” of development. This is the timeframe when the brain is growing and making more “connections” at a rapid rate than at any other time. Children are developing rapidly in all areas simultaneously: gross motor, fine motor, communication, cognition and emotions. It is up to parents or caregivers to provide their children with the environment that will enable the development of all these skills within their own unique timeline. By equipping yourself with knowledge on the next steps in development, you can create an environment that encourages growth. This will lessen some pressure placed on “developmental milestones.”

Below are a few tips that parents/caregivers can incorporate into their daily lives to help all children grow, develop and to be the best that they can be!

**1. Create and keep a routine** that your child can anticipate. Routines create order and give your child a sense of security and safety. Routines provide a child with structure, lowering anxiety and allowing them to attend and learn. It is essential.

**2. Use your child’s name** often throughout the day in order for them to begin to have self-identity. Make sure they know they belong to a family, naming each member. This is necessary for positive social/emotional growth. Creating

a family album is also a great idea.

Make sure you are using your child’s given name throughout the day, and praising and acknowledging them when they respond. This is both a social emotional skill, and a receptive communication one. Offering choice is another way to encourage the developing self, as it allows the child to make their own decision and learn what they like. The parent sets up the choices from which the child can choose.

**3. Imitation is essential** for focus and learning. Give your child time to imitate and play games that encourage imitation both verbally and with motor skills.



Singing songs with gestures, playing back and forth games and making silly sounds encourage imitation. Imitation also includes daily life skills like how to eat with utensils, dress, and calm their emotions. Be aware that children are often watching. Give children time to learn the skill and then practice it! Praise all attempts.

**4. Play is the action a child takes to learn and grow** in their understanding of the world and people around them. Play is necessary and meaningful for skill development.

Play includes: open-ended exploration of materials using all of their senses, functional play using items like



puzzles and blocks, pretend play using daily themes like eating, sleeping and bathing, and reciprocal play, like ball play with parents and other children. Be your child's play mate and demonstrate turn taking using words like, "My turn, your turn."

**5. Use Books! Children need to hear a word 500 times** before they attempt to say it! Talking, singing and reading to your child every day helps to reach that number!

Incorporate books into your daily routine at least twice a day. Make sure books are available for your child to handle on their own. At first, just "read" the pictures of the book, pointing out items and labeling them. Ask your



child to "find" the items you labeled. Be expressive and excited about what you are reading. As they grow, you can read simple stories that are fun and have repeating words or actions, as this engages the child in the book.

**6. Movement: Children need to use their bodies** in reciprocal motions daily in order for both sides of the brain to "talk" to each other and form pathways.

Children need to move, and explore for a good portion of EVERY day! Inside movement helps them to understand their body in space and negotiate obstacles. Outside movement helps with balance, strength and coordination. Swinging,

## Tips on Toddler Development ...Continued

By Kathie Sarles, Early Childhood Specialist



sliding, jumping and kicking are all essential movements that help the body grow and neurons connect.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for Early Start Services and you would like an assessment for a developmental delay or disability, visit our website at [www.harborrc.org/applicants](http://www.harborrc.org/applicants).

Also reach us by email or phone.

For individuals three years old and under, email [intakeunder3@harborrc.org](mailto:intakeunder3@harborrc.org) or call (310) 543-7927.

For individuals over three years old, email [intakeover3@harborrc.org](mailto:intakeover3@harborrc.org) or call (310) 543-7928.

Infant and Toddler  
Nutrition  
From CDC



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### Additional Resources

- [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
- [www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-toddlers](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-toddlers)
- <https://casel.org/systemic-implementation/sel-with-families-caregivers/>
- [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)

# Snack and Mealtime Routines & Strategies

By Seka Metran, Occupational Therapist

Food and Drinks for  
6 to 24 Month Olds  
From CDC



## Environment

Make sure your child's highchair or chair is supporting them appropriately.

- The child's feet should be rested on a footrest or on a stable surface. If your child's feet are dangling, they may need additional foot support.

Limit distractions

- Screen time and shows that have bright and fast paced lights may overstimulate developing brains.  
Instead, try:
  - Lowering the volume
  - Dim screen brightness
  - Limit screen time during meals

## Place Setting

Continue to expose your child to foods with different textures, colors and preparing them in different ways in order to lessen pickiness and rigidity at snack/mealtime. Limit pressuring them to eat the food, instead try to promote exploring.

- Use one (1) tray or plate (try not to use plates with dividers)
- Add at least one (1) new or non-preferred food
- Have some of the child's preferred food
- Offer a utensil: spoon or fork
- Provide something to drink such as water or milk (not a full cup/bottle)
- Have a "learning" bowl that is used for child to place unwanted food

## How A Dress-Up Tradition Improves Speech and Language Skills

By Erin Mance, Speech-Language Pathologist, and Maria Rivas, Client Services Manager, Early Childhood Department



For the last 11 years, Harbor Regional Center's Early Childhood Department have participated in helping our Speech Pathologists bring Halloween fun to the individuals we serve. It started out as a walk around our campus in Torrance, where the children visited each floor of the Early Childhood Department to work on their speech and

language skills by saying, "Trick-or-Treat" to get their bags filled with goodies. During the pandemic, the tradition transitioned to an outside event called, Trunk-or-Treat, where our teams creatively converted their car trunks to display different children's themes. The purpose of Trunk-or-Treat was to provide children under the



age of three with the opportunity to experience the spirit of Halloween in safe and fun manner. Children who participated had the choice to dress up as their favorite character. They were able to go from trunk to trunk to play games, collect LOTS of goodies, and have fun! This event allows for great connection among the families

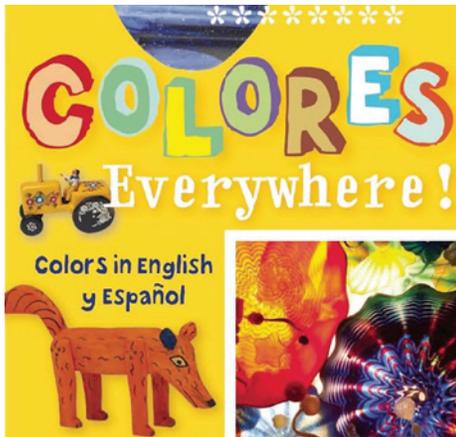
we serve, their therapists, and their service coordination team. It has been amazing to see the excited faces of the little ones and the camaradery amongst the parents. The team at Harbor looks forward to hosting this event every year and are excited to expand this opportunity for children under the age of 6 this year!

## What's New at the Family Resource Center?

The Harbor Family Resource Center is available to provide individuals served by regional centers and their circles of support with information and resources. Our resource library houses hundreds of new items that are available for early childhood, school age, teens, adults, and families! Visit our locations anytime between Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 5PM. We are looking forward to seeing you!

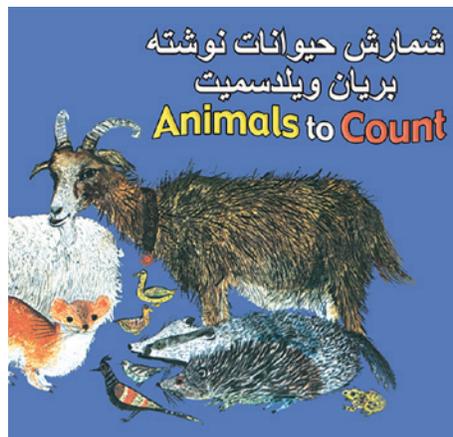
### Bilingual Books for Toddlers

We have several bilingual board books available for you and your child to explore together. These books offer simple stories with illustrations to help your child identify and label everyday objects in two different languages! Examples of some of the titles and languages available are:



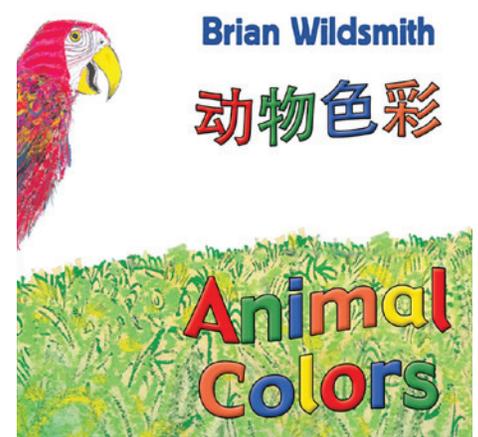
#### Colors Everywhere!

Spanish & English  
By Madeleine Budnick



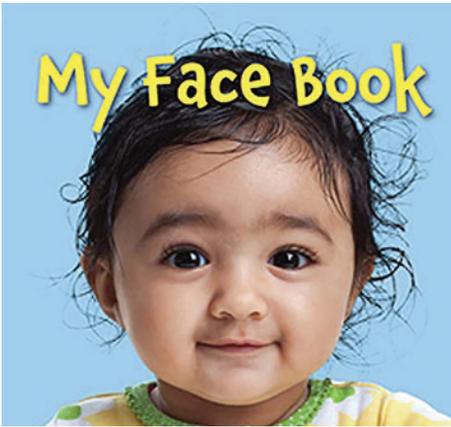
#### Animals to Count!

Farsi & English  
By Brian Wildsmith



#### Animal Colors

Vietnamese & English  
By Brian Wildsmith



## My Face Book

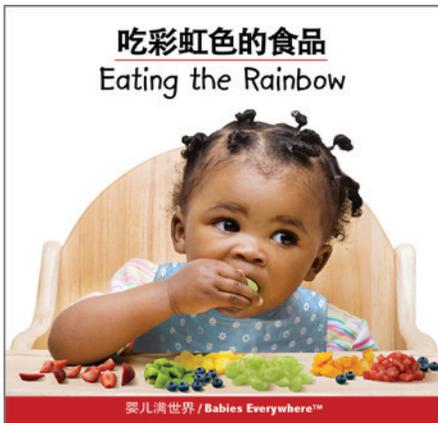
Japanese & English  
By *Star Bright Books*

The Family Resource Center is currently open to the public at Torrance, Long Beach, and Norwalk locations. Call or email us with questions!

Phone: (310) 543-0691

Email: [resource.center@harborrc.org](mailto:resource.center@harborrc.org)

Here are a few examples of materials we have available for lending!



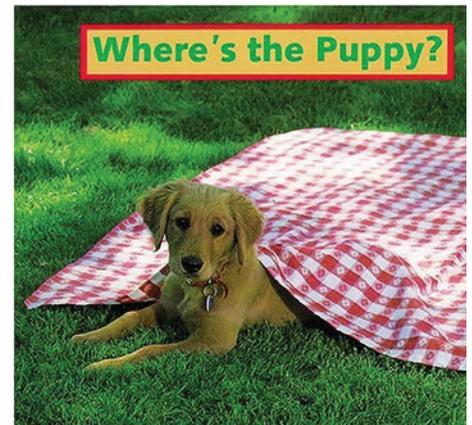
## Eating the Rainbow

Mandarin & English  
By *Babies Everywhere*



## Hip, Hop

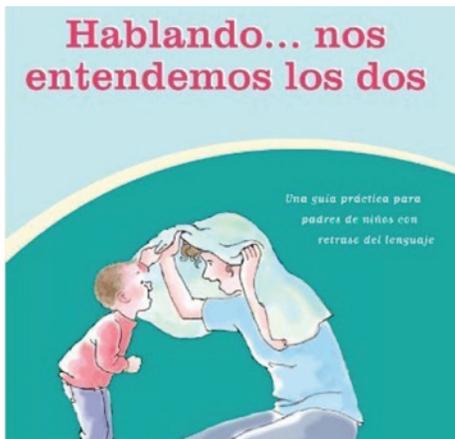
Urdu & English  
By *Catherine Hnatov*



## Where's the Puppy?

Korean & English  
By *Laura Dwight*

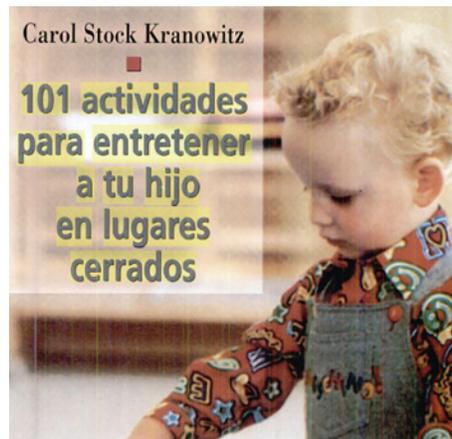
## What's New at the Family Resource Center?...Continued



### Hablando...nos entendemos los dos (By Talking...We Understand Each Other)

*By Jan Pepper and Elaine Weitzman*

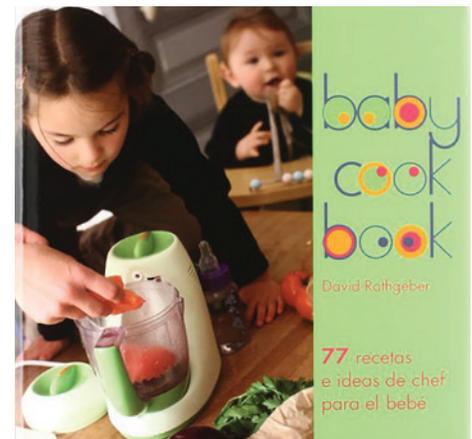
This is an illustrated guide that uses simple language to help you encourage language development in everyday settings. This book is appropriate to use when a child is in their earliest stages of language development until they start making short sentences. This book will help you create communication goals and it also has a section on building a foundation for literacy.



### 101 actividades para entretener a tu hijo en lugares cerrados (101 Activities to Entertain Your Child)

*By Carol Stock Kranowitz*

Do you ever find yourself in a public setting with your child and they need something to do? Perhaps you are on a plane, in the grocery store, or the doctor's office and your child is fussy and needs something to do. This book will help you to prepare for these situations with simple activities you can take on the go that will assist with keeping your child entertained and happy.



### Baby cook book: 77 recetas e ideas de chef para el bebé (Baby Cookbook: 77 Recipe Ideas for the Baby Chef)

*By David Rathgeber*

Cooking for and feeding babies and toddlers can be a daunting task! You might be struggling with feeding your child healthy food due to pickiness or fear of trying new things. This book will help you to create food that is visually appealing to your child while also being a healthy option. It also gives fun suggestions on how to involve your toddler in food preparation.



## !Dígalo en señas! Lenguaje de señas Americano (Say it In Sign Language)

*By Lucas Soto*

A guide to learn American Sign Language with all instructions written in Spanish. This book is easy to use and presents illustrations and photos of American Sign Language in action. This book is helpful for Spanish-speaking individuals who are trying to learn how to communicate in American Sign Language.



## Guía de la Ley de Educación Especial: Una Guía para Padres, Maestros y Otros Profesionales Académicos (The Everyday Guide to Special Education Law: A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Other Academic Professionals)

*By Lic. Randy Chapman*

This is an incredibly useful tool for parents to get the best possible education for their child. This book will

help give you the confidence to advocate for your child's needs in the school setting. It explains what a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is, what an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is, and how to resolve issues that may come up with the school in regards to services for your child. This book is straightforward and easy to understand, perfect for those starting down the IEP path for your child.



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