I was recently at a restaurant eating breakfast and I noticed a grandmother at the next table with 2 young children, about 5 and 7 years old. They were looking bored while waiting for their food. The Grandmother pulled out a couple of I Spy books for them and for 15 minutes they browsed through the books, while Grandma pointed to pictures held by the younger brother and asked questions. They would laugh and smile and chat. Watching them I sadly realized that it had been quiet awhile since I had seen children reading in a public place.

Fortunately, I observe children reading books often because I visit child care providers in centers and homes. Reading... alone, with each other and with their teachers and providers... is a favorite pastime for children in early learning and child care. This is encouraging in light of a report on the most recent study from a major pediatric research center where the authors conclude:

"Kids need to be stimulated in ways that engage them through interaction with people and books and games, and in ways that teach them creativity and allow them to be physically active. Television interferes with learning."  

The researchers define “screen time” as the time children spend watching any type of media including videos, video games, the internet and TV. They found that 40% of children 2 years and older are watching screens a minimum of 3 hours a day. Young children develop their brains by learning about the world around them though engagement with other people and interacting with elements in their environment. Watching a screen is sedentary and teaches children to passively receive the information offered, usually in quick bites. Television does not interact back with children so it makes it challenging for them to develop the skills to differentiate between what is real and what is fantasy. Mostly though, excessive screen time can interfere with developing meaningful relationships with the people around them. Participation in active play contributes to children's’ social, emotional and physical development. Quiet time where children read, play with manipulatives and piece together puzzles can be physically calming and mentally stimulating.

The American Academy of Pediatrics continues to recommend that children under 2 should not watch any TV and children between age 2—5 years should be strictly limited to two hours of screen time a day.

Just know that every hour spent in a screen-free early learning environment where children are reading, playing games and learning how to socialize with others... is helping them to understand how they fit into the world around them and engage with real, live people!
In honor of Nutrition Month, we are including the favorite recipes prepared at this month’s Menu Planning in Action STARS training. Over 40 child care providers gathered at Verdant Health and prepared a number of foods that demonstrated some of the new guidelines for feeding children in child care. After preparing foods together, we tasted and voted on our favorites based on the likelihood that the kids would enjoy them too.

The gold medal winner was the Mango Salsa which we served with black bean, corn tortilla quesadillas. The silver medalist was the homemade Ranch Dressing served with the colorful and crunchy Super Hero Salad. The Asian Noodles was the bronze medal winner and our most popular whole grain dish, made with whole wheat spaghetti noodles and a honey-sweetened ginger, soy dressing. You can download all the recipes on our child care website, under: Nutrition and Wellness.

Watch How to Cut a Mango! ...and find out all about mangos: facts, nutrition and what a mango tree looks like!

Here is the winning recipe: Mango Salsa (Makes 4 cups):

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 large, ripe mangos, peeled, pitted and diced
- 1 small minced red onion or 2 small shallots
- 1 medium sized, finely chopped red bell pepper
- ¼ c chopped fresh mint and chopped cilantro,
- Juice from 2 limes, 1 teaspoon ground cumin,
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 lime, juiced
- 2 teaspoons lime zest
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder

**INSTRUCTIONS**
1. Finely chop mango, peppers and onion and mix together. Squeeze limes in bowl and mix with spices and olive oil. (Or…add ingredients to a Cuisinart and pulse until desired consistency.)
2. Chop mint and cilantro and add to the mix.
3. Mix all the ingredients together and serve with quesadillas, tacos, enchiladas or tortilla chips.

---

**March Distance Learning Class: Staph Infections Including MRSA**

MRSA: In the last two decades, this four letter acronym has sparked concern across the country. Did you know that MRSA is a staph infection, but one that is more resistant to certain antibiotics? Did you know that there are steps that you can take in your child care or preschool to prevent the spread of MRSA?

To learn more about this topic, take our March online distance learning course:

[Staph Infections Including MRSA](#)

If you have any questions about the course or about MRSA, contact our Public Health Nurse, Bonnie Decker, at 425-339-5228, bdecker@snohd.org

---

**March Distance Learning Class: Promoting Health by Reducing Screen Time**

The average child under the age of 10 spends around 5 hours a day in front of screen such as a TV, computer, or game system. Screen time is not only a sedentary activity, but can also influence behaviors and values in young children. Too much screen time has been linked to childhood obesity, regular sleep, disruptive behavior, depression, violence, and lower academic achievement.

In this class you will learn about the effects of screen time on children, how to minimize the consequences, and explore alternatives to screen time in early childhood environments.

To learn more about this topic, take our March online distance learning course:

[Promoting Health by Reducing Screen Time](#)
Visit Our Website to Access Classes!

Snohomish Health District is now posting class materials to our website when they become available. You no longer need to pre-register for classes and classes are no longer being emailed out.

To access the current class, visit our website at: http://www.snohd.org/Children-Family/Child-Care-Providers/Training-for-Child-Care

Snohomish Health District provides distance learning classes for Snohomish County child care providers on a variety topics. These STARS-approved classes are being offered at NO COST. They are designed to take about 2 hours to complete. You have until the end of the current month to complete and return the test and evaluation (either via email or US mail). Once your test has been reviewed, you will receive a certificate via email. STARS credit will be entered into MERIT. Further detailed instructions will be included with the course materials.

NOTES: Due to staffing and time constraints, tests and assignments will be processed for providers who either live or work in SNOHOMISH COUNTY ONLY. Thank you for your understanding.

Upcoming STARS Classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Course Description</th>
<th>To take this class:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Staff Infections Including MRSA</td>
<td>Available for download on our website during March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Promoting Health by Reducing Screen Time</td>
<td>Available for download on our website during March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Preventing Reportable Illness</td>
<td>Available for download on our website during April</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The UW Center for Public Health Nutrition offers Free Online STARS trainings covering a number of health and nutrition topics including Breastfeeding Support, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Child Care.

Please link to the website for a full list of classes and information on how to complete them for STARS credit. (http://depts.washington.edu/uwcphn/work/ece.shtml)