

Baby Steps Play and Learn Group Newsletter

August/September 2015



Baby STEPS in the 21st Century!

21st Century Community Learning Centers — which can be located in elementary or secondary schools or other similarly accessible facilities — provide a range of high-quality services to support student learning and development, including tutoring and mentoring, homework help, academic enrichment (such as hands-on science or technology programs), and community service opportunities, as well as music, arts, sports and cultural activities. Authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (and amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), the law's specific purposes are to:

- Provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students (particularly students in high-poverty areas and those who attend low-performing schools) meet State and local student performance standards in core academic subjects such as reading and mathematics;
- Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.

Although “students” are designated in statute as the intended beneficiaries of the program, the Department believes that younger children who will become students in the schools being served can also participate in program activities designed to get them ready to succeed in school.

The clause above allows Baby STEPS to include the Play and Learn Group with the programs we are offering. As a result of this, we will be asking where you plan to enroll your child in kindergarten. Attendance at any of the public schools within the district is not mandatory for your participation. Furthermore, we assume many parents of infants and young toddlers may not have an indication yet of where they will enroll their child. In any case, we need to collect data over the next four years and we appreciate your cooperation.

Play and Learn Group Schedule



Waimea Elementary School Room V-104

Mondays & Wednesdays: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Closed: Monday, Sept. 7 (Labor Day)

Honoka'a at NHERC Pavilion

Tuesdays: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

The goal of our play and learn group is to provide an opportunity for children not attending preschool to:

- 1) Play amongst other children
- 2) Participate in new learning experiences
- 3) Practice social and cooperative skills
- 4) Offer parents the opportunity to partner with their child in play, to strengthen the bond with their child, and to network with other parents and caregivers.






Registration is preferred in advance to ensure availability of space, materials, and snacks. Please notify us when you will be away for an extended time or when you enroll your child in another program. Play & Learn Group may cancel with little or no notice. Call Gail at 987-8710 if you have any questions or concerns.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Food is not included in the 21st CCLC budget so we will be charging a minimal fee of \$10 per child to help cover the costs of snacks for 3 months. Checks are payable to “Friends of the Future” or you may pay cash. A receipt will be issued upon request.
- We’re happy to reinstate the Baby Steps to Literacy program and will be sending book bags home with your children. The bags will be lent on a rotation basis and we appreciate timely returns.

The Baby STEPS Council is committed to helping all keiki on Hawaii Island to be healthy, be happy and to thrive by supporting families, strengthening practitioners and engaging communities.

Logon to www.babystepshawaii.org for more info about Baby STEPS to Stronger Big Island Families. Like us on Facebook!

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Baby STEPS to Stronger Big Island Families is a program of Friends of the Future (FOF2)

Baby STEPS is not just about babies and the Baby Steps Play and Learn Group is not just for babies. So what & who are we anyway?



By Gail Judd
Play & Learn Group Leader

I was at a meeting several years ago when a group of early childhood colleagues created the acronym STEPS after a lengthy discussion about how long it takes to get things going in Hawaii, especially in the field of early childhood education and care. We decided we've been taking "baby steps" and that several little accomplishments and small differences are what create improvement and advancement in our field. This is what came out of that meeting:

Baby STEPS to Stronger Big Island Families, a program of Friends of the Future, is an initiative created by individuals and organizations committed to helping all keiki on Hawaii Island to be healthy, happy and to thrive by supporting families, strengthening practitioners, and engaging communities. The Initiative, and particularly the Baby STEPS Council that advises it, are the anchors for early childhood efforts on Hawaii Island. Our work is organized into five priority areas creating the acronym STEPS: Support for Families, Transitions for Children, Excellence in Programs, Professional Development for Practitioners, Safety and Health for Children and Families.

In addition to the Baby STEPS Council, countless others contribute to the progress of Early Childhood on Hawaii Island.

Activity in the different programs depends on funding, causing some priority areas to be more active than others. We are extremely fortunate to have Michelle Kita, a Baby STEPS Council member, who volunteered to create a website and to keep things current. Because of the lack of funding for nearly a year, other than our annual Hawaii Island Early Childhood Conference and the playgroup, it's been rather quiet on our website. The same thing can be said for our Facebook page. We're looking to change that this year and appreciate the participation of the playgroup ohana in our efforts.

Our scope has widened a bit with the 21st CCLC funding, which extends from pre-kindergarten to high school. As a result, our staff has increased a bit too. Please logon to our website at babystepshawaii.org to find out more about who we are and what we do.

Many children entering kindergarten in our district have no preschool experience and family-interaction programs such as our playgroup are considered an option for school readiness. The Baby Steps Play & Learn Group was designed for children under five years of age, as we know that learning begins at birth. We welcome infants and toddlers, as well as preschool age children at both our sites in Waimea and Honoka'a.

Research has told us that children learn best through play and how play is an important part of a child's developmental process. The early childhood years are crucial formative years and they lay the foundation for future learning. For children under five years of age, a little bit of challenge mixed in with some fun is ideal. We strive to do that at our play and learn group sites. Please allow your child to struggle a little bit, and even to fail. He/she will learn perseverance and delayed gratification, among other things. We don't expect young children to walk in as perfectly behaved, super intelligent students. And most importantly, please know that sharing is a learned behavior. Sharing will come after they have had some practice taking turns, establishing relationships, and exploring their environment. I'll "share" more of that topic in future newsletters. In the meantime, have fun!

