

# January 2020



## Play Centers at West Towson Elementary School

6914 North Charles Street

Towson, Maryland 21204

410.494.7134 ~ [www.playcenters.org](http://www.playcenters.org)

Hours of Operation: 7:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. / 3:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.



This organization and its materials are not affiliated with, sponsored by, or endorsed by Baltimore County Public Schools, the Superintendent, or this Baltimore County public school or office.

FROM DIANE MELLOTT, CEO/COO

### Is It Safe to Play Outdoors in Winter? (an excerpt)

#### Fresh air is healthy

Studies have shown that contrary to the common belief that “exposure to cold air causes a cold,” fresh air is good and healthy. When children and adults spend a long time together in indoor spaces that are small, overheated, and poorly ventilated, germs and illnesses pass easily from one person to another. In fresh, outdoor air, children do not have to re-breathe the germs of the group and the chance for spreading infection is reduced.

#### Outdoor play is healthy even in winter

Children of all ages enjoy and benefit from playing outdoors in all except the most extreme weather. Daily outdoor play is healthy and burns energy. It gives children an opportunity for a change of environment, a balance in play and routine, and large muscle activities (gross-motor development). Even children who are mildly ill but active should go outside if the weather is not severe. Staff and children alike will feel refreshed when fresh air is part of the daily routine. Taking children outdoors daily, even in winter, can be a healthy part of their schedule and is safe when clothing is appropriate.

#### Improve indoor air quality

Germs causing disease multiply in warm, dark, damp environments, so it is important to keep the environment clean and dry. Adequate ventilation, humidity, and temperature control help us resist illness and increase our ability to get well after sickness. Colds, sore throats, and other infections of the respiratory system are common in cold weather and are usually caused by viruses. Child care providers have the potential to improve the health of children in their care by having children play for extended periods outdoors in the fresh air.

Handwashing is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of infection in a child care setting.

[https://cchp.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tkssra181/f/wint\\_en0910\\_0.pdf](https://cchp.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tkssra181/f/wint_en0910_0.pdf)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Will Meister

Welcome to the New Year!

THEMES

It's a New Year  
New Year, New Me  
Under The Big Top  
We Have A Dream  
DIY Week

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Charles Macy Nora  
Ella Hazel Colin

FROM ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE (AR)

Questions about your account ?  
Questions about Military Subsidy or the MSDE Scholarship?  
Please contact the  
AR Coordinator / Subsidy Specialist, at 410.296.4880, ext. 111.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

Thursday, January 2  
Baltimore County Public Schools Reopen

Monday, January 20  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday - Observed  
School and Play Centers **CLOSED!**

Friday, January 24  
Baltimore County School - **Early Dismissal**  
Play Centers, Inc. will operate from  
early dismissal until 6 p.m.

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## ❧ PARENTS' CORNER ❧

### Important Ways Family Dinners Can Make Kids' Lives Better

By: Katherine Lee

How often do you sit down together as a family to eat dinner? If the answer is something along the lines of "not much more than a couple of times a month" or "whenever we can fit it in here and there," it may be time to figure out how to make family dinner a priority, and make sure it becomes a regular part of your family's routine schedule. Why It's Important to Eat Dinner With Your Kids Why is it so important to eat dinner with your kids regularly? One reason is that family dinners have been associated with all kinds of positive outcomes for kids. Many studies have linked family dinners with a wide-range of benefits, including lower rates of obesity, better academic performance, and even increased resilience against bullying. Another, and perhaps even more important reason, is that dinnertime is a perfect opportunity to catch up with your kids and talk over the day and get closer to each other as you strengthen your relationship. "Kids open up at random moments," says Lynn Barendsen, executive director of the Family Dinner Project, a nonprofit organization that works to give families the tools and information to make it easier to incorporate family dinners into their lives. Unwinding over a meal after a busy day at work and at school is a perfect time to allow kids to talk about what's on their minds.

When you consider how many positive outcomes are associated with something as ordinary as having dinner with your kids, it becomes clear that this seemingly simple activity is one of the most important things families can do together. Here are just some of the many ways regular family dinners can have a positive effect on your child's development and behavior.

Research has shown that when kids regularly eat dinner with their families, they will be more likely to have healthy eating habits and less likely to be obese.

Kids whose parents eat dinner with them regularly are:

- Less likely to be overweight
- Tend to eat more healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits and drink less soda

More likely to continue to eat a healthier diet when they grow up and make their own choices

Strong Mental, Social, and Emotional Skills

Studies have shown that kids who regularly eat dinner with parents experience psychological and emotional benefits such as:

- Higher self-esteem and resilience
- More positive family interactions
- Lower rates of substance abuse
- Lower risk of teen pregnancy
- Lower rates of depression

Better body image and reduced risk of developing an eating disorder. Better social and emotional health (One study found that kids who have regular family routines such as eating dinner, reading, or playing together are more likely to have empathy, understand emotions, and form positive relationships with others, among other social and emotional health factors.) Better Performance in School and Better Behavior Kids who eat with their parents regularly have been shown to perform better academically. Specifically, kids who regularly ate family dinners had the following traits:

- Higher grades (One study from the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) study found that adolescents who ate dinner with their families about 3 to 5 times per week were twice as likely to get As in school compared to classmates who rarely ate family dinners, according to The Family Dinner Project.
- Reduced risk for delinquency
- Ability to have complex conversations
- Stronger vocabulary skills and higher reading scores

While nothing we do as parents can guarantee that our kids will turn out to be happy, healthy, kind, and well-adjusted individuals, it's clear that making family dinners a regular part of our daily schedules is a great way to boost kids' chances of being healthier physically, mentally, and even emotionally. Of course, other factors, such as a family's socioeconomic background, the quality of the relationship between parents and kids, and whether or not a mom works outside of the home can all affect kids' development, and it may not be just eating together that influences how kids' happiness and health. (Recent research from Cornell has tackled just this issue, and found that, even when adjusting for other factors like socioeconomic background, race, and family structure, kids were less likely to be depressed when they ate regular family dinners with their parents.) But regardless of exactly how much family dinners can influence kids' development, one thing is certain: There is no downside to parents regularly spending time with kids just doing an ordinary activity like eating together and talking and growing closer. There is only plenty of benefit, for both parents and kids.

For more information, please visit <https://www.verywell.com/why-family-dinners-are-important-620053>