



Winter 2026

# NPHS News



Volume 30, Issue 2

**Northern Panhandle Head Start, Inc.  
Serving Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, Marshall and Wetzel Counties In West Virginia**



## NPHS Inc.

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Head Start, Inc.  
Serving Hancock, Brooke,  
Ohio, Marshall and Wetzel  
Counties In West Virginia

Check us out on  
Facebook at  
**Northern Panhandle  
Head Start, Inc.**

### Inside this issue:

Child Development	1
Early Head Start	2
Education	2
Health	3
Safety	3
Up and Coming, New Staff	4
USDA Non- Discrimination Statement.	4

## Routines Matter

### Back Into the Routine

As we return to our school routine, we want to highlight how daily routines and using them consistently help young children feel safe, confident, and ready to learn. When children know what to expect, they are better able to manage emotions, behavior, and transitions at home and at school.

### Why Routines Matter

Consistent routines help children:

- Feel safe and secure
- Build independence and confidence
- Improve behavior and emotional regulation
- Strengthen communication
- Develop healthy habits for sleep, meals, and play

### The Importance of Consistency

Consistency makes routines effective. When routines happen the same way most days, children feel calmer and more confident. Frequent changes can lead to frustration, meltdowns, and difficulty with transitions. Familiar routines help children reset and feel grounded.

### Creating a Simple Routine at Home

- Focus on key times like morning, after school, and bedtime
- Keep steps in the same order, even if times vary
- Use the same words to describe routines
- Use pictures or charts to show what comes next
- Give transition warnings ("Fire more minutes, then clean up")

### Let's Work Together

At school, children follow consistent routines that support learning and emotional growth. When home and school routines work together, children are more successful. If you'd like help with creating a routine or visual schedule, please reach out. We're happy to support you!



**Amanda Ames, M.A.Ed., RBT  
Child Development & Disabilities Coordinator**

## Policy Council

2025-2026

Chairperson  
Kristen Owen

Vice Chairperson  
Trisha Lacefield

Secretary  
Position Open

Treasurer  
Position Open

Parliamentarian  
Gerald Vaughan

## Making Connections with Your Family This Winter

Winter often brings busy schedules, cold days, and more time indoors—but it's also a wonderful opportunity to slow down and connect as a family. Simple moments like reading a book together, singing songs, or talking about your child's day can help build strong relationships and support your child's development.

Try creating small routines that bring everyone together, such as family meals, bedtime stories, or cozy playtime on the floor. Even a few minutes of focused attention helps children feel safe, loved, and valued. For infants and toddlers, responding to their sounds, smiles, and movements strengthens early communication and trust.

As the days get colder, remember that warm connections matter just as much as warm coats. These everyday interactions help your child learn, grow, and feel connected all winter long.



**Beth Ott, MSSL**  
**Early Head Start Manager**

## Winter Wonder: Play & Learn With Your Little Ones

Winter is a great season to connect, explore, and grow with your child—whether you're outside in the snow or inside where it's warm. The activities below are *played with purpose*: they support early development, foster emotional safety, and give young children experiences that help build language, motor skills, curiosity, and calm.

### Why Winter Activities Matter

Young children learn best through hands-on play that engages all their senses. Seasonal play, like touching snow, sorting winter objects, or telling winter stories, helps your child explore the world, grow language skills, and develop social-emotional confidence. Talking with your child about what they feel, see, and smell also strengthens early communication skills.

### Fun, Developmental Winter Activities:

- **Winter sensory bins:** Create a “snow” bin with soft cotton balls, cold water, or sealed bags of anything that would provide a sensory experience like gel, cream, etc. Let your child touch, press, and explore while you narrate what they feel (“soft,” “cool,” “squishy,” “bumpy”) to build early vocabulary.
- **Indoor snow play:** Bring a bit of snow inside in a bin or bowl. With your help, toddlers can touch snow and talk about the sensations of cold, fluffy, or melting safely.
- **Ice excavation play:** Freeze small toys in ice blocks overnight. Provide droppers, warm water, and tools to discover the toys while talking about freezing and melting. This is tactile science play that builds problem-solving and curiosity.
- **Sensory art & crafts:** Making snowflake collages with stickers, cotton balls, or winter colors strengthens fine motor skills and gives space for expression.
- **Winter storytelling & songs:** Read a winter story together or sing songs like “Frosty the Snowman.” These promote language skills and emotional connection as children practice new words and think about characters and feelings.

### Tips for Play:

- **Follow your child's lead.** Let them choose what they want to explore and stop when they show they've had enough.
- **Comment, don't quiz.** Talk about what your child is doing (“You’re squeezing the ice!”) rather than asking lots of questions; this supports confidence and reduces pressure.

**Amber Boring,**  
**Education & Training Manager**

## Special Thank You

♦ **NPHS Board of Directors**

♦ **NPHS Parent Volunteers**

# Build Good Habits in the New Year

Volume 30, Issue 2

It's time to create family memories while learning some healthy and positive goal-setting resolution ideas. Some helpful ideas and tips start with planning, organizing your plan then creating your plan. By setting realistic goals, tracking your progress and supporting each other along the way can lead to lasting healthy habits for your entire family. There are many activities or themes to create but make them realistic for everyone! Even if it's one, strive to make it achievable for all.....

## Health & Wellness Resolutions:

- **Consistent Activity** - Family walks, bike rides, dances or play sports.
- **Hydrate with Water** - make water the primary drink, using fun cups or straws to encourage kids.
- **Emphasize "Eating the Rainbow"** - focus on eating colorful fruit and veggies, including kids in choosing and prepping them.
- **Prioritize Sleep** - Establish consistent bedtime routines for better focus and mood!



## Mindfulness & Connection Resolutions:

- **Practice Gratitude** - Share daily appreciations or use a gratitude jar to build emotional resilience.
- **Family Reading Challenge** - Make reading fun, shared activity to boost creativity and reduce stress.
- **Limit Screen time** - Set family time limits, especially during mealtime or before bed, to encourage present moment connection.

## Kitchen & Food Resolutions:

- **Cook together Weekly** - Let kids help plan and prep meals to increase their willingness to try new foods.
- **Prepare One meal** - Adopt the "one meal" rule, where parents decide what is served and kids learn to try new foods without pressure.
- **Snack Smart** - Keep healthy food options available like fruits, veggies and whole grains.



Denise Musolino, BSN,  
Health & Nutrition Coordinator

## BBQ Chicken Pizza 12 Servings

### Ingredients

- 6 English muffins (whole wheat)
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 3/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 1/2 cups chicken breast, skinless, cooked (cut-up or shredded)
- 3/4 cup smoked cheddar cheese, shredded (or regular)

### Directions

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Heat oven to 450.
3. Slice English muffins in half and place on ungreased, large cookie sheet.
4. Cut up bell pepper.
5. Spread barbecue sauce on English muffins to within 1/4 inch of edges. Top with chicken, cheese, and bell pepper.
6. Bake 7 to 12 minutes or until cheese is melted.

[www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov)



## 10 Cold-Weather Safety Tips to Protect Children

1. **Layer up!** Bitter cold and snow can cause frostbite. Dress your child in several layers, and make sure their head, neck and hands are covered. Dress babies and young children in one more layer than an adult would wear.
2. **Play it safe.** Even when roads are closed to traffic, it's not safe to play or sled in the street. Visibility may be limited due to snowbanks and ice on the roads makes braking difficult.
3. **Beware of clothing hazards.** Scarves and hood strings can strangle smaller children so use other clothing to keep them warm.
4. **Check in on warmth.** Before kids head outside, tell them to come inside if they get wet or if they're cold. Then keep watching them and checking in. They may want to continue playing outside even if they are wet or cold.
5. **Use sunscreen.** Children and adults can still get sunburned in the winter. Sun can reflect off the snow, so apply sunscreen to exposed areas.
6. **Use caution around fires.** Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and outdoor fire-pits are cozy but can present danger – especially to small children. Use caution and put up protective gates when possible. If you've lost power or heat and are using alternative heating methods like kerosene or electric heaters, be sure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are working.
7. **Get trained and equipped.** Children should wear helmets when snowboarding, skiing, sledding or playing ice hockey. And to avoid injuries, teach children how to do the activity safely.
8. **Prevent nosebleeds.** If your child suffers from minor winter nosebleeds, use a cold air humidifier in their room. Saline nose drops can help keep their nose moist.
9. **Keep them hydrated.** In drier winter air kids lose more water through their breath. Offer plenty of water, and try giving them warm drinks and soup for extra appeal.
10. **Watch for danger signs.** Signs of frostbite are pale, grey or blistered skin on the fingers, ears, nose, and toes. If you think your child has frostbite bring the child indoors and put the affected area in warm (not hot) water. Signs of hypothermia are shivering, slurred speech, and unusual clumsiness. If you think your child has hypothermia call 9-1-1 immediately.

[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

**For Enrollment Opportunities  
in Head Start or Early Head  
Start, please contact Cher  
McKeever, Enrollment/  
Recruitment Coordinator  
304-233-3290**

"USDA Civil Rights Non-Discrimination Statement"

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

**mail:**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

**fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

**email:**  
[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a high-quality family-focused program uniquely designed to prepare children for learning and life.

## VISION STATEMENT

"Building foundations for life-long growth and development"

## Up and Coming

### February 2026

February 2—Family Satisfaction Surveys go out  
February 16—President's Day—No Class/No Staff  
February 18—Policy Council  
February 27—Family Satisfaction Surveys are due

### March 2026

March 18—Policy Council  
March 25—Hancock County, Brooke County, Ohio County, Marshall County, and Wetzel County Family Activity Night  
March 30—Sprint Break No Class/No Line Staff

### April 2026

April 1 & April 3—Spring Break No Class/No Line Staff  
April 3—Good Friday—No Class/No Staff  
April 15—Policy Council

### May 2026

May 13—Policy Council/Corporation Meeting  
May 15—Parent Banquets  
May 22—Staff Enrichment—No Class  
May 25—Memorial Day—No Class/No Staff

## Welcome All New Employees!

Ruth Stone

Gabrielle Cooper

Kailey Johnson

Anna Zills

Nichole Edwards

Noah Shaffer

Hannah Shreves



**NPHS is always on the lookout for committed individuals who want to serve the children and families of the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia.**

You can view our list of current openings, and the qualifications or requirements of each position, on our website at: <http://www.npheadstart.org/hr-and-employment/available-positions>

Full-time, part-time, and substitute positions available.

We appreciate your interest in a career at Northern Panhandle Head Start, Inc.

To learn about employment opportunities at NPHS, please contact our HR Department at 304-233-3290.

## Board of Directors News

The agency is seeking area professionals who are willing to serve on the Board of Directors. Do you want to make a difference in the lives of children and families in our communities? Consider membership with our Board of Directors. This group of dedicated professionals has made a profound impact on our program. They are the driving force, along with the Policy Council, in the decision-making process. Please contact Beth Ott, Interim Executive Director, with any questions regarding membership roles and responsibilities at 304-233-3290 or [bott@npheadstart.org](mailto:bott@npheadstart.org).