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• *Working together for children with disabilities* • INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS

SPRING 2012, VOL.12, NO. 3

Hip and Cool, Fruits and Veggies Rule

By: Heather Peracchio MS, RD, CD-N

University of Connecticut,
Extension Educator



This article is translated into Spanish on page 3. Ver la versión en español de este artículo en la página 3.

Produced by the State Department of Education Early Childhood Special Education Program and the Connecticut Birth to Three System in collaboration with the



University of
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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
College of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Sound nutrition is important for all age groups, especially infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities. Including fruits and vegetables at most meals is a great way to get you and your child's plate in shape. Fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Eating the recommended amount each day can boost the body's immune system, and may prevent or delay chronic diseases later in life like obesity, cancer, diabetes and heart disease. One of the best reasons to add more fruits and vegetables to your plate – they add taste, color and texture. Healthy eating habits develop very early in life so it is especially important that infants and children be exposed to many fruits and vegetables at a young age.

Soft, pureed, cooked vegetables and fruits should be added to the diet when an infant is six months old. It is important to introduce one new food at a time and wait four days before adding another new food. After each new food keep an eye out for allergic reactions or intolerance to the new food such as diarrhea, rash or vomiting. If any of these occur, consult with your infant's doctor. Only offer small amounts of the food at a time and refer to the table below, "Daily Feeding Guide" for how much should be offered a day. At eight months, start to offer your baby mashed or soft, cut up fruits and vegetables.

When it comes to good nutrition for your toddler or preschooler, all forms of fruits and vegetables matter – fresh, frozen, and canned. Most frozen and canned foods are processed within hours of harvest so their nutritional

value and flavor are preserved. Fruits and vegetables are good-for-you foods that can be enjoyed anytime. Here are some ideas for getting the most from your fruits and vegetables:

For Canned Fruits and Vegetables

When choosing canned vegetables look for those packaged with less salt, labeled "no salt added" or "low sodium." Look for canned fruits packaged with less sugar, labeled "packed in 100% juice," "unsweetened" or "packed in water." Did you know that fruits packed in juices contain less added sugar and fewer calories than fruits packed in syrup? Canned foods are recipe-ready, making them an easy addition to soups, stews and other one-pot meals.

For Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

Frozen produce requires little preparation – washing and slicing, for instance, is already done! Remember to choose frozen vegetables that are plain (skip the high-fat butter or cheese sauces). Look for fruits that are unsweetened to reduce sugar and calorie intake. When choosing frozen fruit bars or popsicles, be sure to read the label to learn if they're made with real fruit juice.

For Fruit and Vegetable Juices

While whole fruit and vegetables (fresh, canned, or frozen) are the best choice, certain types of juice can be a healthy part of your child's diet.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please send your ideas or suggestions for future newsletter topics to:

German.cutz@uconn.edu

Or call 203-207-3267

Thank you so much for your input.

If you choose to give your child juice, choose 100% juice instead of sweetened juice or fruit-juice cocktails. Serve juice in a cup, not a bottle, to avoid tooth decay. Also, don't allow your child to sip juice throughout the day, serve fruit juice only with a snack or meal. To ensure that your child isn't drinking too much juice, follow these limits from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Heart Association: 4-6 ounces or less per day. Infants under six months should not be served juice.

Daily Feeding Guide for Fruits and Vegetables

	Fruit	Vegetables
Birth-5 months	None	None
6-8 months	1-4T	1-4T
8-10 months	3-4 T	3-4 T
10-12 months	3-6T	3-6T
12-24 months	1 cup	1 cup
3-5 years	1-1 ½ cups	1-1 ½ cups

Picky Eating

There are many types of picky eating behaviors. Children often want to explore food and not eat the foods on their plate. Many children will be unwilling to try new foods. It is normal for children to be afraid to try new foods. It is important for parents and caregivers to role model good eating habits (like eating fruits and vegetables) so that children know they are safe foods to eat.

Many children will go through phases where they may only eat a certain type of food, commonly known as "food jags." Or children may refuse to eat certain foods because of their color or texture.

How to Cope with a Picky Eater

Remember picky eating is usually temporary and you can do many positive things to help your child learn to try new foods. Many times if children participate in growing, shopping, or preparing foods they may be more likely to eat those foods. Here are some tips to consider:

- Grow a vegetable plant in a windowsill or let children help in the garden
- Encourage children to help select fruits and vegetables at the store
- Encourage children to help out in the kitchen, paying close attention to their age and abilities (perhaps washing fresh fruit or helping to stir)
- Make meal time "stress-free" time. Talk about fun and happy things. If arguments occur at meal times, children may learn unhealthy attitudes toward food.

- Instead of asking, "Would you like carrots for dinner?" Ask "Would you like carrots or sweet potato for dinner?"
- Offer your child a variety of foods
- If possible, offer the same foods to the whole family, toddlers and preschoolers do what they see more often than what they hear. If you are saying "eat your broccoli" but you do not have broccoli on your plate the children may not eat the foods offered to them.
- Make food fun. Get creative in the kitchen and allow children to explore the texture and color of new foods.

Research shows that children that help in the kitchen try and like new foods more, gain confidence, learn early math and science concepts, develop small motor skills, learn new vocabulary and learn responsibility with clean up. For more tips on how children can help in the kitchen or recipes for making food fun, visit: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/picky-eaters.html>



Frescas y Divertidas: Reglas de Frutas y Vegetales

Por Heather Peracchio MS, RD, CD-N.
Universidad de Connecticut, Educadora de
Extensión

Una nutrición adecuada es importante para las personas de todas las edades, especialmente, infantes, pequeños, y niños de edad pre-escolar con necesidades especiales. Incluir frutas y vegetales en la mayoría de comidas es una buena forma de mantenerle a usted y sus niños en buena condición física. Las frutas y vegetales vienen llenos de vitaminas, minerales, y fibra. Comer las cantidades recomendadas cada día ayuda a su cuerpo a mejorar el sistema inmunológico, y puede prevenir o dilatar enfermedades crónicas como obesidad, cáncer, diabetes, y enfermedades del corazón. Entre las razones para agregar más frutas y vegetales a sus platos es que agregan sabor, color y textura. Los hábitos de comidas saludables se adquirieren a temprana edad, así que es importante que los infantes y niños prueben muchas frutas y vegetales a temprana edad.

Puré suave y cocido de frutas y vegetales debe agregarse a la dieta de un infante cuando tenga 6 meses de edad. Es importante introducir una nueva comida cada vez y esperar cuatro días antes de agregar otra comida. Después de cada nueva comida ponga atención a reacciones alérgicas o intolerancia a nuevas comidas, como diarrea, irritaciones de la piel, o vómito. Si cualquiera de éstas ocurre consulte con el doctor de su infante. Ofrezca cantidades pequeñas de comida cada vez y refiérase a la tabla de abajo, “Guía de Alimentación Diaria” para determinar cuánto debe ofrecer en el día. A los 8 meses empiece a ofrecer a su bebé frutas y vegetales amasados o suaves.

Cuando se refiere a la buena nutrición de sus pequeños y pre-escolares, todas las formas de frutas y vegetales son importantes – frescas, congeladas,

y envasadas. La mayoría de comidas congeladas y envasadas son procesadas unas horas después de cosecharse, así que preservan su sabor y valor nutricional. Las frutas y verduras son buenas para usted y pueden disfrutarse en cualquier época. Aquí hay algunas ideas para obtener lo mejor de las frutas y vegetales:

Frutas y Vegetales Envasados

Cuando escoja frutas envasadas busque los paquetes que contengan menos sal, que tengan la etiqueta “No contiene sal” o “Bajo en sodio”. Busque frutas envasadas con menos azúcar, y que la etiqueta diga, “Empacadas en jugo 100%,” “sin azúcar” o “empacadas en agua.” ¿Sabía que las frutas empacadas en jugos contienen menos azúcar agregada y menos calorías que las frutas empacadas en mieles? Las comidas envasadas vienen listas para usarlas en recetas y son fáciles de agregarlas a sopas, cocidos y otras comidas de cacerolas.

Frutas y Vegetales Congelados

Los vegetales congelados requieren poca preparación – lavarlos y cortarlos, y de hecho ¡Están listos! Recuerde escoger vegetales congelados sin otra cosa (no elija los que vienen en margarina o salsas con queso). Busque vegetales congelados sin azúcar, para reducir el consumo de azúcar y calorías. Cuando seleccione barras de frutas congeladas o helados asegúrese de leer la etiqueta para saber si están hechos con jugo natural.

Jugos de Frutas y Vegetales

Aunque las frutas y vegetales enteras (frescas, envasadas, o congeladas) son la mejor opción, ciertos tipos de jugos pueden ser una parte saludable en la dieta de sus hijos. Si decide darles jugos a sus hijos, escoja jugos 100% en lugar de jugos azucarados o cocteles de frutas. Sirva el jugo en un vaso, no en botella, para evitar caries en los

dientes. También permita que sus hijos consuman jugos durante el día; sirva jugo de frutas solamente con meriendas o comidas. Para asegurarse que sus hijos no estén tomando mucho jugo, siga las instrucciones de la Academia Americana de Pediatría y la Asociación Americana del Corazón: 4-6 onzas o menos por día. A los infantes y niños menores de 6 meses no se les debe dar jugos.

Guía Diaria para Consumir Frutas y Vegetales

	Frutas	Vegetales
Nacimiento-5 meses	No	No
6-8 meses	1-4 cucharadas	1-4 cucharadas
8-10 meses	3-4 cucharadas	3-4 cucharadas
10-12 meses	3-6 cucharadas	3-6 cucharadas
12-24 meses	1 copa	1 copa
3-5 años	1-1 ½ copa	1-1 ½ copa

Niños Difíciles para Comer

Hay muchos tipos de comportamientos que hacen difícil comer. Los niños generalmente quieren explorar comidas y no comer la comida que está en su plato. Muchos niños no estarán dispuestos a probar nuevas comidas. Es normal que los niños tengan miedo probar nuevas comidas. Es importante que los padres y cuidadores de niños muestren buenos hábitos para comer (como comer frutas y vegetales), de manera que los niños aprendan que es seguro comer las comidas. Muchos niños pasarán por fases donde ellos solo quieren comer ciertos tipos de comida, comúnmente conocidos como “niños difíciles para comer.” Nuestros niños pueden rechazar comer ciertas comidas por su color o textura.

Cómo Manejar A Niños Difíciles para Comer

Recuerde que los hábitos difíciles de comer son temporales y usted puede hacer muchas cosas positivas para ayudar a sus niños a aprender a probar nuevas comidas. Muchas veces si los niños participan en cultivar, comprar, o preparar comidas pueden estar más interesados en comer esas comidas. Aquí hay algunos consejos que puede considerar:

- Cultive un vegetal en la orilla de una ventana o deje que sus niños ayuden en el jardín.
- Motive a sus niños para que le ayuden a escoger frutas y vegetales en la tienda.
- Motive a sus niños para que le ayuden en la cocina, pero ponga atención a su edad y habilidades

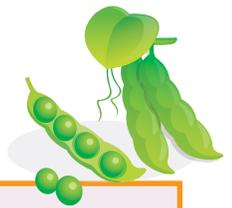
(algo como lavar fruta fresca o ayudar a menear un jugo).

- Hagan que el tiempo de comida sea “libre de estrés.” Hablen sobre cosas divertidas y felices. Si hay discusiones durante la comida los niños pueden aprender actitudes no saludables respecto a la comida.
- En lugar de preguntar, ¿Te gustarían zanahorias para la cena?, pregunte ¿Te gustarían zanahorias o camote para la cena?
- Ofrézcales a sus niños variedad de comidas.
- Si es posible ofrezca la misma comida a toda la familia, pequeños y pre-escolares hacen lo que les dicen, más que lo que escuchan. Si usted dice, “come tu brócoli,” pero no tiene brócoli en su plato, los niños pueden no comer la comida que tienen servida.

- Hagan que la comida sea divertida. Sean creativos en la cocina y permitan que los niños exploren la textura y color de las nuevas comidas.

Las investigaciones indican que los niños que ayudan en la cocina prueban más comidas nuevas, ganan confianza, aprenden conceptos de matemáticas y ciencias a temprana edad, desarrollan su sistema locomotor, aprenden nuevo vocabulario y aprenden la responsabilidad de limpiar. Para más consejos sobre cómo pueden ayudar los niños en la cocina o con recetas para hacer la comida divertida, visite:

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/picky-eaters.html>



Update: Early Childhood Special Education

Maria Synodi, Coordinator

Early Childhood Special Education

Public school professionals have their lens on the developmental, functional and academic growth of young children with disabilities. The lens may not have as sharp a focus on food and nutrition which are at the core of a child's growth and development. Adequate nutrition is essential. The International Food Policy Research Institute has identified that poorly nourished children are often found to have delays in cognitive and motor development and are more susceptible to chronic illnesses.

Most, if not all early childhood programs, include a portion of time in the day for children to eat. Here are a couple of eating and nutrition tips for consideration:

- Children can be picky eaters. Teachers can provide a variety of

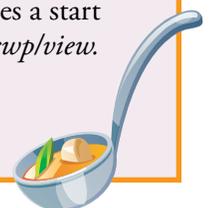
foods and textures for children to explore and experience. Finding fun ways to introduce new foods and involving children in making choices can help a picky eater overcome their hesitation at trying something new.

- Children can need support in the exercise of eating. Biting, chewing, sipping, drinking and swallowing all require the muscles of the mouth to work. Teachers can provide soft and hard foods, in small manageable bites, that provide opportunities for children's mouth and throat muscles to develop and ensure the child's safety when drinking and/or eating.
- Support children's independence and self-sufficiency. Allow children to participate in the snack or lunch time routine. Pouring, serving, cutting, using utensils, etc., all engage children in the process. Individual accommoda-

tions or modifications should be made to allow children to feed themselves.

- Let eating be fun. Have children help prepare their own foods. Cooking time together in a classroom provides rich opportunities in the areas of language, motor, cognition and social skills.
- Engage children's parents. Children and their families represent multiple cultural and ethnic groups, each with foods and food experiences that are as unique as the children and families we serve. Introduce that diversity into your classroom.

Lastly, know your resources. There are multiple resources available for classroom teachers. The State Department of Education's website on child nutrition provides a start <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sdel/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320670>



Birth to Three Update

By Linda Goodman, Director,
Birth to Three System

The Birth to Three System spent the winter evaluating proposals we received from a number of different agencies who wanted to operate Birth to Three programs (general, autism-specific, and deaf/hard-of-hearing specific) in the future. State contracting standards required us to put all of our contracts out for bid this year since they were all expiring June 30, 2012 and had not all been re-bid since 1996. As you read this, selections have been made and contracts are being written to start July 1, 2012. Not every agency that submitted a proposal was chosen because in some areas of the state, we actually had proposals for more programs than we needed. But, we want to assure all families, that if the program in which your child is

currently enrolled was not awarded a new contract, the state will still continue to contract with that program until all of the children that were receiving services from that program as of June 30, 2012 have left the Birth to Three System or until that agency decides it no longer wishes to continue to offer services and asks us to cancel their contract. Our goal is to cause as little disruption to currently enrolled families as possible.

One of the very positive things to come out of this process was that we required that each proposal include a video of a home visit and a video of a supervisor and the provider critiquing how the home visit went – could she have included the parent a little more or a little differently in the activities? Was there a brother or sister in the home that could have participated? Did the provider answer all of the parent's questions?

Was the provider using and promoting developmentally appropriate activities for the child? As a result of having to submit these videos, many programs have told us that they intend to continue this practice. It's a great way for families to have a video to refer to if something wasn't clear the first time; for one parent to be able to show the other parent what happened during the visit; for parents to look back to see how much progress their child has made; or for families to exchange information with child care providers or even other early intervention providers who are on the IFSP team. Program supervisors may find it a good way to help staff improve their skills. And since taking a short video is now as easy as using a cell phone, there's no good excuse anymore for not embracing this technology.



Resources

Websites:

Birth to Three System

<http://www.birth23.org/families/FamilyHandbookI.pdf>

This website offers information on children from birth to age three. Parents with children with special needs may be interested in the Family Guidebooks that describe how the Birth to Three System can help them.

Nutrition Standards for School Meals

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/nutritionstandards.htm>

The new meal requirements will raise standards for the first time in more than fifteen years and improve the health and nutrition of nearly 32 million kids that participate in school meal programs every school day. The new standards align school

meals with the latest nutrition science and the real world circumstances of America's schools.

Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/pdf/parent_engagement_factsheet.pdf

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) recently released Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health. This new resource defines and describes parent engagement and identifies specific strategies and actions that schools can take to increase parent engagement in school health activities.

Let's Move: Health Problems and Childhood Obesity

<http://www.letsmove.gov/health-problems-and-childhood-obesity>

This article, from the White House Let's Move Initiative, addresses health risks for children who are overweight or obese. This website also provides resources on food and nutrition, physical activity, and much more.

Nutrition Policies and Guidance: Feeding Infants

http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/CACFP/Feeding_Infants/Feeding_Infants.pdf

Guidance on feeding infants (birth through 11 months) and meeting the requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Infant Meal Pattern, including a crediting guide for infant foods.



Birth to Three State Interagency Coordinating Council Update

By Dr. Mark Greenstein, ICC Chair/Developmental Pediatrician

It seems so long ago when I read Emily Perl Kingsley's essay "Welcome to Holland", where a parent describes starting a trip to Italy and arriving in... Holland?, about how it feels to learn that your child has special needs. It has always struck me as a very powerful illustration about the unexpected and still does. I was thinking more generally about the unexpected and it dawned on me: earthquakes, tornadoes, autumn snowstorms with power outages for over a week, springtime weather in January are also unexpected. One week without power left me dazed and confused; trying to hold my

work life together with little to no sleep; pretending that things were fine while they were not. I think I got just a bit closer to what life is like for many on a daily - not just brief - basis, when living in "Holland".

So, what lessons did I learn? Well, looking back, I learned that what got me through were several things: planning and organization, a sense of humor, and friends/community—admitting that I could not do this alone. And that was from the brief disruptions, not ongoing pressures to juggle so much.

And why am I writing this? Well, because we at the state's Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (the ICC) need the help of families to do what we are here to do: advise and assist the Department of Developmental Services to do THEIR job, helping families who have children who need early

intervention supports. And families often need other families to bring to everyone's attention the juggling acts they have to do, the underappreciated issues that make up everyday life. I don't want to add to anyone's burdens, but if you are the parent of a child who has needed help, perhaps you can also "pay it forward" by helping us. Please consider being a voice for families and children on the ICC. We meet about 6 times a year and parents are very important (essential) contributors to our work. Even if you don't want to be on the ICC, parents can participate on our subcommittees and/or make statements during the public commentary part of our meetings.

Want to learn more? Please contact me, Mark A. Greenstein, the Chair at 860-714-5319 or one of our support staff (Eileen McMurrer) at 860-418-6134. I look forward to hearing from you.



Providers' Perspective

Helping Children Learn to Like Healthy Foods

By Monica Belyea, MPH, RD,
Preschool/Childcare Nutrition
Consultant in Middletown

The key to ensuring children's nutritional health is helping them learn to eat a variety of healthy foods and limiting sugary or fatty sweets and snacks. It sounds simple, yet we all know how challenging it can be. Besides taste preferences, children with special needs may have additional texture or temperature limitations that can make meal times even more stressful.

Keeping in mind the strategies we use to support children's development in other ways, we can create a supportive but challenging *food* environment where children learn to eat new foods using Elyn Satter's Division of Responsibility. Adults offer the foods we want children to eat and create a supportive setting. Children choose whether and how much they will eat of the foods offered. Giving children, especially young children, control over these two aspects of eating allow them to follow their internal hunger cues and eat just enough.

Children are often more open to trying new things at preschool. Providers can offer new, healthy foods at snack or mealtime and communicate with parents about the types of foods, textures and temperatures children eat.

Children may need to be introduced to a food and try it several times before they learn to like it.

Providers can also set a good example by sitting and eating with children, using healthy foods in play and therapy and never offering food or candy as a reward. Likewise, adults should not reward children for eating healthy foods. A simple "congratulations" is enough otherwise we risk encouraging children to overeat to please us.

For more information on creating a healthy mealtime environment in preschools visit the Feeding Young Children in Group Settings: <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding/index.html>. To learn more about the Division of Responsibility visit <http://www.ellynsatter.com/>.



Information for Families and Professionals

Is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

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Produced in Office of Communications, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Connecticut. Graphic Design by Dean Batteson

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Parent Perspective

Young Children and Healthy Eating: A few ingredients for success

By Nancy Prescott, Robin Grondahl & Lauren Morley

Parents of children with special needs have long been champions of healthy eating. Regardless of the nature of their children's needs, parents report "...most of us know what to feed and what not to feed our children – it's the actually getting them to eat that is the issue."¹

Developing healthy eating habits is a challenge for all us. Here are a few parent suggestions to help you on your journey:

- Recognize that healthy eating is a habit that starts with us. The foods we buy, grow, prepare and enjoy should be the same healthy choices we offer our children. Even if kids have diet limitations, involve them in shopping, planting vegetables or fixing healthy snacks.
- Introduce new foods to add to family favorites or traditions. Supporting children (and adults) to try new foods can be a challenge. Make trying new foods one of your healthy eating habits. Start early. Add foods that are similar in color or texture to the ones that your children already enjoy. If your children eat plain Cheerios, try multi-grain Cheerios next time. If pieces of banana are a hit, try pieces of apple or pear.

Try roasting veggies like cubes of sweet potato, carrot or tomato with a little olive oil. Add spices like curry powder, cumin or Jamaican Jerk seasoning to make food interesting. One parent told us cinnamon became her new best friend!

- Give your children plenty of time, when adding new foods, Encourage a small bite, one try of the new food for several days, perhaps as long as two weeks. It's not a battle, it is the idea everyone keeps trying new things and sooner or later, we just might be surprised how much we like them!
- Work towards creating relaxing mealtime habits. Knowing what we should do and making that happen every day is not always possible. Find things that work easily for your child and family. Sit down together, play soft music, use special dishes with colorful characters or small plates to help with portion control, offer stickers or games after dinner, the possibilities are endless.

The wisdom and experience of other parents is invaluable. Connecting with other parents who have solved similar challenges is probably the best advice we can offer to help you make healthy, happy eating become a reality for your family.



¹ *Promoting Health and Wellness for Children with Special Health Care Needs Family Booklet*, Family Voices, January 2008

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This newsletter is available in English and Spanish. Visit the Birth to Three website at www.birth23.org and click on Publications, or the Department of Education website at www.sde.ct.gov, then click on the Early Childhood link.

Este boletín está disponible en inglés y en español. Visite el sitio del Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años en www.birth23.org y pulse a Publicaciones o el del Departamento de Educación en www.sde.ct.gov. Pulse entonces el enlace 'Early Childhood' (educación Temprana en español).

CHILDREN'S ARTWORK WANTED!

You are invited to send pictures or other artwork that your child has done. We would like to start an "art collection" for possible inclusion in future Birth through 5 News newsletters. Please mark the artwork with the artist's first name and age and mail to:

Dr. German Cutz,
Editor, UCONN CES
67 Stony Hill Rd.
Bethel, CT 06801

Or send by e-mail to: german.cutz@uconn.edu

No artwork will be returned. We look forward to receiving your child's works of art!

