

January 2026

Head Start Herald



From the Desk of Mrs. Tanya Coles, Head Start Director:

The entrance into a new year offers new opportunities, new experiences, and new routines! As adults, we are very aware of the new season-setting resolutions, goals, and plans for ourselves. Our little ones, however, are not as aware of what each New Year brings. As they transition home for the Winter Break, they may not realize that they have to return to school in two weeks. So here's a couple of tips to help with that process as we gear up for Monday, January 5, 2026:

- Keep the learning going! There are many resources available for families who want to continue the learning process at home.
- Re-launch the bedtime routine two to three days before school begins.
- Read books about school.
- Start talking about school early by reminding them about the fun they have while here and the friends they may see once they return to school.
- Talk about feelings: Understandably, there may be some hesitation with returning to school. We can help our little ones by teaching them the words and healthy ways to express the big emotions they may experience.

For more information about transitions, please visit: <https://headstart.gov/transitions>.

As you think about the transition from Winter Break at home to back in the classroom, please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's Teacher. Make sure you use our wonderful Talking Points app for all of your communication needs! This gives our families the opportunity to stay connected to their child's Teacher and it also helps us communicate with all of our families!

We are thrilled to be able to support the development of our students and as always, THANK YOU for gifting us with the opportunity to serve your family!



Tanya Coles, Head Start Director



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Day	Date	Time	Event
Thursday & Friday	1/1/26 & 1/2/26		Winter Break
Friday	1/2/26	11:30am	Walking Into A New Year @ Griffin-Yeates
Monday	1/5/26		Students Return
Monday	1/19/26		School Holiday—CLOSED
Wednesday	1/21/26	10:00am	Policy Council @ Griffin-Yeates or via Zoom
Friday	1/23/26		In-Service Day—NO SCHOOL
Monday	1/23/26	10:00am	Practice Based Coaching (virtual)
Monday	1/26/26		In-Service Day—NO SCHOOL
Tuesday	1/27/26	9:00am	Picture Day - Griffin-Yeates
Wednesday	1/28/26	9:00am	Picture Day - Bethel Manor
Thursday	1/29/26	9:00am	Picture Day - Yorktown

Please bring your child's backpack to school every day and ensure that you check it every morning and evening. For safety and security, children are only allowed to bring clear backpacks to school provided by Head Start. No toys, food, medication, or other items should be brought to school in your child's backpack.

****Facebook****

Like us on Facebook and keep up-to-date on all events and school closures.

<https://www.facebook.com/YorkCountyVirginiaHeadStart>

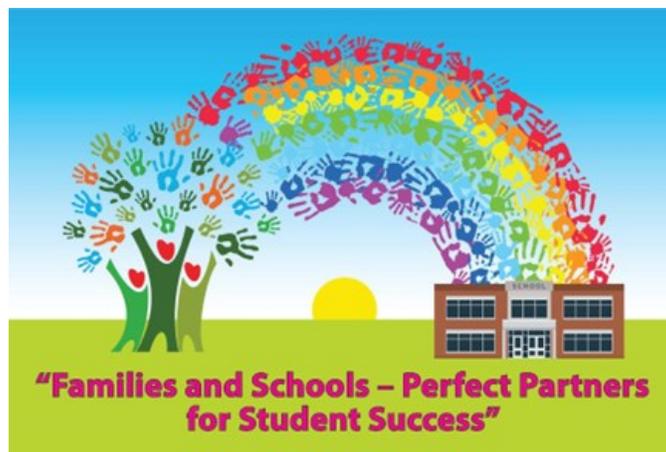
EDUCATION

We hope that everyone had a safe and happy winter break! The year 2026 is already upon us. January is the beginning of the New Year, and the teachers will be working diligently on the goals families set at the parent/teacher conference.

The program wants to ensure that we are doing everything to help your child reach their goals and appreciate your help. So, please keep up all the excellent work you are doing to help your child's reading, counting, and handwriting. Practice rhyming, letter recognition, and letter sounds with your child regularly to help your child at home. Practicing skills will increase your child's learning, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (VLP) scores and Virginia Kindergarten Readiness (VKRP) scores.

We have several family events coming up for the rest of the school year please join us!

Head Start Teaching Staff



Don't miss out on important information and meetings and exciting events! Check your email frequently for important information from Head Start!

You will be receiving **emails** and **text messages** from **SchoolMessage@childplus.net**

You will also receive emails from various Head Start staff members.

All of their emails will end with **@yorkcounty.gov**.



Dear Head Start Families,

We hope you have a joyful and restful winter break with your family! We understand that returning to routine after a break can be both exciting and challenging for preschoolers.

Transitioning Back to School

After time away, children may experience a range of emotions—from excitement to anxiety. It's natural for your child to need a little extra time, patience, and reassurance as they adjust back to the school day routine.

Tips to Support a Smooth Transition

1. Talk About School:

Begin conversations about returning to school a few days ahead of time. Talk about their teachers, friends, and fun classroom activities.

2. Re-Establish Routines:

Gradually return to regular bedtimes, mealtimes, and morning routines a few days before school starts.

3. Create a Calm Morning Routine:

Lay out clothes and pack bags the night before. A peaceful start to the day helps your child feel more comfortable.

4. Acknowledge Feelings:

Let your child express any worries they have and reassure them that it's okay to feel nervous or unsure.

5. Celebrate the Return:

Make going back to school something to look forward to with a special breakfast or drawing a picture for their teacher.

We're Here to Help

Our Family Services team is here to support you and your child every step of the way. Whether you need ideas for morning routines, strategies for managing big emotions, or just someone to talk to—we are here for you.

Let's work together to ensure a smooth and positive transition back to school for all of our children. We look forward to seeing their bright smiles and hearing about their winter adventures!

With warm wishes,

Family Services



From Selective to Curious: Helping Kids Feel Confident About Food

It is normal for young children to be selective or “picky” eaters. Many young children go through stages where they only want to eat certain foods or say “no” to trying new ones. To support children and families at mealtimes, Head Start staff should understand the difference between typical selective eating and eating problems that need extra help.

What is Typical Eating?

The Ellyn Satter Institute says eating changes based on hunger, routine, and emotions. Most children are born with the ability to eat in a healthy way. But they are also naturally cautious around new foods, especially vegetables, which can taste bitter. This is most common in toddlers.

Children usually need to see a food 10-20 times before they feel ready to try it. And they may need to taste it eight to 15 times before they like it. A calm setting and regular chances to explore food help children build healthy eating habits over time. Helping children feel confident about exploring new foods supports healthy eating goals identified by the Make America Healthy Again Commission.

Eating behavior also changes over time. Around age 1, babies start wanting more control. They might push away spoons or try to feed themselves. Toddlers often say “no” to new foods. Their appetite can change from day to day. Preschoolers become more willing to try new foods. They are more likely to notice whether mealtimes feel calm or stressful.

How to Talk to Selective Eaters

The way you talk about food can help children feel curious instead of pressured. Avoid saying things like “just one bite” or “try it”. Instead, use gentle words that invite the child to explore:

- Explore food together: Try saying, “We can open the yogurt together. You hold the cup, and I’ll peel the top.” Exploring with a trusted adult helps children feel more comfortable.
- Use sensory words: Describe how the food looks, feels, smells, or tastes. For example, “This kiwi feels fuzzy. Inside, it’s green with tiny seeds. It tastes juicy and a little sweet. You’re smelling it—what do you think?”
- Connect new foods to familiar ones: Help children see how a new food is like something they already enjoy. Try saying, “This oatmeal looks kind of like applesauce, which you liked.”
- Share your own experience: Talk about how the food feels to you. Say something like, “This pineapple is sour, and my mouth feels tingly when I eat it.”
- Respect their choices: If a child turns away from food, don’t force it. Say “I see you’re turning away from the zucchini. That’s OK! I means your not ready yet.”

Following **U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines**¹, you should never force children to take food they don't want. Letting children serve themselves helps them feel more in control and comfortable.

When to Ask for Help

More selective eating is common. But some children might need extra help if:

- They avoid almost all foods for weeks or months.
- They are not growing well or not getting enough nutrition.
- They feel pain while eating or are very sensitive to textures or smells.
- Their eating habits changed after something stressful or traumatic happened. **How Children Respond to Stress and Trauma**² and **Trauma and Nutrition**³ explain how trauma might change a child's eating habits.
- They have medical or developmental conditions or take medications that affect their eating. **Children with Special Health Care Needs**⁴ explains how you can plan to care for a child with a condition that affects their eating.

If you notice any of these signs, talk with a professional like a registered dietitian or the child's health care provider.

Selective eating is a part of early childhood development. Most children grow out of it with time and support. Using positive, gentle words during meals helps children feel safe and curious about trying new foods.

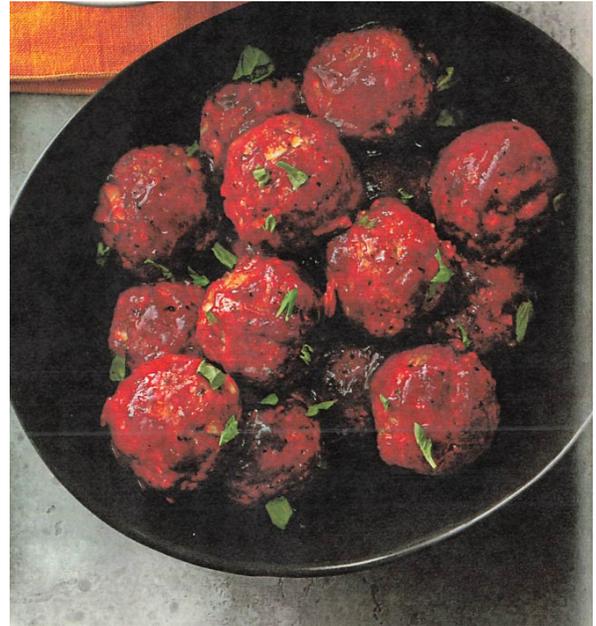
1. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/offer-versus-serve-family-style-meals?>
2. <https://headstart.gov/publication/how-children-respond-stress-trauma?>
3. <https://headstart.gov/nutrition/health-manager-orientation-guide/trauma-nutrition?>
4. <https://headstart.gov/health-services-management/health-manager-orientation-guide/children-special-health-care-needs?>



Sneaky Turkey Meatballs

- 1/4 head cauliflower; broken into florets
- 1/2 cup finely shredded cabbage
- 1 Tbsp. potato starch or cornstarch
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1tsp. Sea salt
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 lb. ground turkey

Optional: Barbecue sauce and fresh basil leaves



1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place cauliflower in a food processor; pulse until finely chopped. Transfer to a large bowl. Add the cabbage, potato starch, vinegar, salt, basil, and pepper.
2. Add turkey, mix lightly but thoroughly. With an ice cream scoop or with wet hands, shape into 1 1/2 inch balls. Place meatballs on a greased rack in a 15x10x1 inch baking pan. Bake 20-24 minutes or until cooked through. If desired,, toss with barbecue sauce and top with basil.

Freeze Option: Freeze cooled meatball mixture in freezer containers. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Heat through in a covered saucepan, stirring and adding a little water if necessary. Serve as directed.

2 Meatballs: 125 calories, 6g fat (1g saturated fat), 50mg chol., 370mg, sod., 4g carb. (1g sugars, 1g fiber), 15g pro.

Diabetic Exchanges: 2 medium-fat meat

Ingredient Price Comparison

Sneaky Turkey Meatballs

Ingredients	Walmart	Aldi
1/4 head cauliflower	\$0.91 (1/4 of \$3.64)	\$0.82(1/4 of \$3.29)
1/2 cup finely shredded cabbage	\$0.97 (\$1.94/1/2 of 10 oz bag)	\$0.70 (\$2.09/1/2 of 14 oz bag)
1 Tbsp. cornstarch	\$0.25 (\$1.92/16 oz	\$0.20 (\$1.75/16 oz box)
1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar	\$0.50(\$3.92/8.45 fl oz bottle)	\$0.50(\$3.92/8.45 fl oz bottle)
1 tsp. sea salt	\$ 0.25 (\$1.48/ 4.4 oz bottle)	\$ 0.35 (\$1.75/3.5 oz bottle)
1/2 tsp. dried basil	\$0.20 (\$1.00/1 oz bottle)	not available
1/2 tsp. pepper	\$0.25 (\$3.66/ 3 oz)	\$0.18 (\$2.75/ 3 oz)
1 lb. ground turkey	\$5.48/lb of 93% ground turkey	\$5.19/lb of 93% ground turkey
BBQ sauce	\$1.98/bottle Kraft BBQ Sauce	\$1.89/bottle Burman's BBQ Sauce
Total	\$10.79 Approximate	\$9.83 Approximate

REMINDER

Please call 890-3888 to discuss your child's health status before coming to school, if your child or anyone in your household has been diagnosed with or exposed to RSV, COVID-19, or another communicable disease. We want to do all that we can to continue to protect Head Start's children and staff. It is a confidential matter but it is our reality. We cannot protect your child, other children, and our dedicated team if we are not aware. We ask that you please make us aware so that we can problem-solve together. It is the only way that we can limit the spread of viruses that are spreading in our community. Thank you for your cooperation.

JANUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				 SCHOOL HOLIDAY	 TEACHER WORKDAY	In Service
				New Years Day	In Service Day: No School	Classroom Visitor
					Walking Into A New Year @ GYC @ 11:30am	Winter/Spring Break
						Closed
						Event/Meeting
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Students Return		RIF Reader GYC / BM @ 9:00am			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			RIF Reader GYC @ 9:00am			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	 SCHOOL HOLIDAY		RIF Reader GYC @ 9:00am		 TEACHER WORKDAY	
	Martin Luther King Jr. Day				In Service Day: No School	
			Policy Council @ 10a (GYC/Zoom)		Practice Based Coaching Mtg. @10:00am (Zoom)	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	 TEACHER WORKDAY	Picture Day @ GYC	Picture Day @ BM	Picture Day @ YKT		
	In-Service Day: No School		RIF Reader GYC @ 9:00am			