DIRECTOR’S DESK

I hope everyone had some time to relax during Spring Break. At least now we are having more spring like weather!

We are gearing up for the second half of the semester. The teachers are very busy preparing for parent-teacher conferences. We expect all families to sign up for a time to meet with a teacher to discuss your child’s progress and development. The exact week designated for your child’s teacher is listed on page 4 of this newsletter. Please sign up on the sheet by the classroom or work out another time with the teacher. We will also be celebrating Week of the Young Child (WOYC) during the week of April 13. We have some fun activities planned and will invite parents to participate in several ways. Please check the calendar on page 4 and get ready to have some fun! Another important part of celebrating WOYC is to acknowledge all of the hard work of our staff. We do this by planning some special activities for the teachers. We will be asking parents to participate by bringing in a healthy snack at the beginning of the week. More info will follow!

Once again we will be holding a re-Enrollment week for currently enrolled families during the first full week in April. Please stop up front to get a packet from Janene and allow 5-10 minutes to fill out the application for Summer and/or Fall semester(s), and to review/update your contact information. Janene will work on placements the following week and then contracts will be available for you to sign (to secure your space) during the third week. After that, we will open enrollment to new families so don’t delay in getting your child registered!! Applications for the May/June Interim will go out separately.

Please remember to sign your child in AND out each day at the check-in station up front. We are required, by DCFS and other agencies, to have drop off and pick up times documented for each child every day. This is not optional, so please do not treat it as such.

We hope to see a good amount of parent involvement in the weeks ahead. We (and your child) look forward to having you come in to share a special talent or activity, join your child for a snack, or a few minutes of painting. Before you know it, the semester will be coming to a close. Once again, we will be offering some light lunches for our students during finals week in the North Corner Room. We are happy to support you in the hard work you do as both a student and a parent. Both require extraordinary time and effort!

Chris Kipp
April showers bring May flowers, and hopefully not too much mud! We have really been enjoying the change in weather and the opportunity to spend more time outside. And although we spent the first day of spring break sledding in what we thought was the last of the snow, there’s always one more snowstorm!

Katilyn and I enjoyed spending time with you and your families at our family gathering. We hope you enjoy the take home activity and use it to practice letter identification, and as a fun movement exercise!

Jen will be meeting with her primaries the first full week of April for conferences, and Katilyn’s will be held the last week in April. We look forward to meeting with you to share the work your child has been doing this semester and to answer any questions you may have. Please fill out and return the pre-conference forms if you have any specific questions or concerns you would like addressed during the conference!

Toni, the 4-C social worker, has been visiting and implementing social-emotional group times with us. She was very impressed with the children’s knowledge of feeling words! When she asked if they knew any feeling words they responded with, “sad, mad, angry, frustrated, excited, lonely, irritated, and many more! They have a strong foundation from all that we have been doing in the classroom, and this will allow Toni to get more in depth with them during her group times. Social-emotional skills are the foundation that children need to help make the transition to kindergarten successful and we’re off to a great start!

If you’d like to learn more visit my favorite website at http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/. There are a lot of family resources and tools that you may find helpful. Katilyn and I attended a Conscious Discipline workshop the end of March and
will be using more and new strategies in the classroom as well!

We continue working on literacy in the classroom. This seems to be the topic that parents inquire about the most. I think there is a lot of focus on learning the alphabet and preparing to read and write. It’s important to remember that reading and writing is an activity we can encourage but that children will learn at their own pace. There is no magic age when all children will get it, and even in kindergarten the teachers expect that children will come in at different levels. We have an environment that is rich in print, meaning that we are modeling printing for the children daily, we have labels on all of the toy containers, we use many literacy props at circle times, we have a writing center, and we provide activities daily that use the alphabet. We also work on letter sounds, and rhyming games. This is something we may do as a whole group—usually through a song or a letter at a time. As we notice children are ready we will work more closely with them on sounding out small words as we’re reading books or doing an activity together.

The latest addition to our writing center is magnetic boards and magnetic alphabet letters and numbers. This will give children the opportunity to combine letters and to experiment with letter sounds. We often hear them ask, “What did I spell?” We will help them to combine the letter sounds into a word, even if it doesn’t make sense! You can encourage literacy skills at home by reading together or having your child read to you, help with writing lists for the store, playing alphabet games, or buying your own set of alphabet magnets for the fridge. If you’d like specific ideas or more information we’d love to help!

Some classroom highlights from March –

**Parent Conference Perspective**

Parents, for the most part, have limited exposure to young children. Most families have one or two children and some extended family (nieces and nephews). Teachers, on the other hand, have worked with hundreds of children. They are also educated in child development and know what constitutes typically developing skills and behavior in young children. For example, many parents write on their child information sheet that their three-year-old is unable to share and many are concerned about this. Although this is an important skill to develop, we do not expect such a young child to have mastered this; they are still growing and learning and need much more practice! They also need more emotional maturity to comprehend the concept of sharing. A favorite saying, often attributed to young children’s behavior is, “If I like it, it’s mine; if it’s near me, it’s mine; if I’m building something, all the pieces are mine…”. On the other hand, a four-year-old may have unintelligible speech or social skills that are severely lacking. We will make a referral for this, knowing there is a delay, and services are probably needed. So please keep an open mind and utilize the expertise of your child’s teacher. They are here to help!

-Source: Parents’ Perspectives on Conferencing, Roslyn Ann Duffy, Exchange magazine, July 1997
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Parent Conferences (week of):
- March 30—Pam (Tod), Kendra (2/3-2), April (Pre-2) & Kristi (Pre-4)
- April 6—Kellie (Inf), Barbara (2/3-1) & Jen (Pre-1)
- April 20—Sherie (Tod), Christy (2/3-2), Jaquida (Pre-2)
- April 27—Carol (Inf), Klint (2/3-1), Katilyn (Pre-1), Krystal (Pre-4)
- May 4th—Make Up Week for any missed conferences

Week of the Young Child — April 13-18th (Center Wide—Spirit Week)
- Monday: Kick-off the week with a “Bubble Bonanza” (Stop up front to choose a container of bubbles for each child in your family. (Crazy/Mismatched sock day)
- Tuesday: Stop, Drop & Paint
  Parents are invited to take a few minutes to paint a picture with your child. Easels will be placed in the Large Motor Room & in the Inf/Tod hallway. All finished products will be displayed in the windows up front!
  (Crazy Hair Day)
- Wednesday: Stop, Drop & Paint
  Parents are invited to take a few minutes to paint a picture with your child. Easels will be placed in the Large Motor Room & in the Inf/Tod hallway. All finished products will be displayed in the windows up front!
  (Pajama Day)
- Thursday: Parent Performances— Share your talents or hobbies with us for a short 2min show case. Sign up sheets posted by each classroom. Questions: Talk with Barbara! (Fancy Day)
- Friday: Afternoon Snack Invitation— Come and have afternoon snack in your child’s classroom. Snack provided—Please sign up! (Red & Black Huskie Spirit Day)
- Mon-Fri: Teacher Appreciation Week— Please bring in a healthy snack to share with our staff! Treats can be dropped off every day with Janene, up front, to be labeled.
Cooking activities – pizza, ice cream in a bag, play dough
Art activities – alphabet prints, bubble wrap painting and prints, rolling pin rainbows, straw
Science experiments – sink/float, baking soda and vinegar, watching yeast react with sugar, making gak
Community experiences – visiting the NIU police station, Theodore (Katilyn’s guinea pig) came to visit, campus walk to elevators, classroom job chart

Preschool Room 2

Spring is finally here; and hopefully here to stay (crosses fingers)! We’ve had a long and cold winter and I didn’t believe the snow would melt, but it finally has. The children are now able to get a chance to go outdoors to play on the playground as well as take walks around campus.

A big thank you to those who joined us for Family Night! The children enjoyed spending time with their families and introducing their friends to their families. As told the day of Family Night, the children showed a great interest in 3D art so we wanted to share with you. They used boxes, strings, jewels, cut-out paper, sticks or whatever else they could get their hands on to build to show creativity. We hope you enjoyed the art display from the children!

The most popular place in our classroom is the block area. In the block area we describe the children’s action while they are engaged in block play which helps the children develop expressive language. When playing with blocks, children are building castles, police cars, towers, department stores, and houses. Asking open-ended questions encourage more conversation about your children block play and may encourage children to expand on vocabulary.

Open ended questions I asked Randal:
- Oh Randal I see that you have cars, connectors, and people sitting on the blocks, what are you building?
- What will happen if you put that block on top?
- Is the store you built taller than you?

Children were also given the opportunity to recognize letters through block play. Letters were added to the hollow blocks. As some children were building they called out the letter that were presented before them.

There children were very excited about the workbench and tools. They wanted to know the name of each tool and the significance of it. This was a great way for the children to use eye coordination, fine motor skills and knowing that safety is the top priority so they must wear goggles, and a teacher must
The children are having a blast building with boxes! KC built a rocket ship with three boxes. When I walked over to KC and asked what he built, he said, “A rocket ship and the white box is the engine that gives my rocket ship the energy to blast off into space.” Then I asked him what did the brown boxes represent and he responded, “The brown boxes are for my bodysuit that will protect my body when going into space.” Arts and crafts allow children to use their big imaginations and creativity.

We are excited for the month of April! We will be celebrating the Week of the Young Child which will be April 13-17. The purpose of WOYC is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families as well as to recognize early childhood programs and the services being provided which meet those needs. We hope you will be able to join us. We welcome parent involvement so if you would like to participate come on out! Stay tune for the upcoming events for the WOYC.

Parent conferences are scheduled on two different weeks for our classroom. Conferences with April for her primaries are the week of March 30- April 3. Conferences with Jaquida will be held the week of April 20-24. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss all of the growth in your child!

Jaquida Wynn and April Kaiser

Preschool Room 4
We have been working on fine motor development and encouraging pattern recognition as the children have been interested in creating their own bead necklaces. As they string the small beads they are working on control of the small muscles in their hands. We encourage them to notice different patterns while using the beads as well.

Parent’s, Adults, Caregivers, and siblings—do you have a hidden talent, or not so hidden, you would like to share? On Thursday, April 16th during the WOYC you can share your talent from 10–10:30 in the Large Motor Room. You will have up to 2 ½ minutes to perform. You can dance, juggle, play and instrument, do magic, recite poetry, read a short story, sing, all in English or in another language. Please sign up to entertain and engage the interests of the young children here at CCC.
As all of the snow has been melting we noticed there was a lot of garbage outside of our building. We had been talking about filling buckets at home and in the classroom but have now extended that to things we could do to fill buckets at the community level. The children then decided that picking up litter outside would be something we could do. After cleaning up the front of our building we were playing on the playground when some of the children noticed there was also trash on our playground. They decided this would be another great way to help!

We have changed dramatic play to a police/fire station. We will be having guest speakers come in to talk with the children about these jobs. We will also be able to walk to the police station to take a tour of the station, talk to some officers and see a police car! We will discuss what police officers and fire fighters do and how they help the community! We will also be able to connect this back to filling buckets and helping people in our community.

The children have begun to show an interest in reading familiar books in front of each other. A lot of the children have been choosing a book to share with everybody else at group time. While reading in front of our peers we are preparing ourselves for speaking in front of groups, familiarizing ourselves with reading concepts and just gaining confidence in ourselves! We have extended off of this by encouraging the children to be the authors and illustrators of their own books that they can then share with the class.

We have been exploring magnets in the science area. As we use the magnets we talk about the differences we notice between the magnetic and the nonmagnetic materials. We have walked around the classroom to see what is magnetic in our classroom. We also have an activity set up at the science table where the children can separate materials into two groups based on them being magnetic or nonmagnetic. We also painted with magnets while using magnet wands to move magnetic balls through the paint!

Thank you for those of you who were able to come to Family Night. We love being able to spend time getting to know your family better. By bridging together your child’s home and school life you’re helping to build a solid foundation for school success!

Reminder:
Kristi’s conference week is March 30th- April 3rd
Krystal’s conference week is April 27th- May 1st

Please sign-up for a time to meet with your child’s primary teacher. If the times listed do not work for you talk to Kristi or Krystal and we will be happy to find a time that works for both of us! We look forward to being able to share and receive information about your child and get to know your family even better!

Krystal Kennedy and Kristi Hayward