Greetings to everyone! February went by very quickly and now Spring Break is just around the corner. Fortunately, it means we are that much closer to some warmer weather (we hope). The children (and teachers) are really looking forward to getting outside a bit more than they have been able to!

We are very excited to tell you that we are just about ready to launch our new sign in/out system. We have had several parents testing this out so you may be noticing more and more people who are using the black screen that is sitting on the front blue counter. Janene will be contacting families who are here during Spring Break to start using it that week, and the remaining families will start using it as of March 16. Please stop up front whenever you have time so Janene can get you into the system. She will give you a code to start out and then you will go in (assisted by Janene) and scan your finger. This is how you will sign your child in and out from now on; how cool is that!! We will also be able to send you individual or group messages via the touch screen. This process will take the place of the sign in/out notebooks in the classrooms and all parents are required to use it for every drop off and pick up. If you forget to sign your child out one day, you will not be able to sign them in the following day. If this happens, you will need to stop up front and ask Janene to do it manually to get you back on track. We are really looking forward to the benefits this new program will provide us, and we hope it is a positive experience for you as well.

The Spring Semester is a very busy time for us as we are gearing up for many things. To help you keep track of everything, we have included a calendar of events later in the newsletter. During the last week in March we will be holding our Family Nights so mark your calendar now! We will also be planning many activities for the Week of the Young Child (April 13-17). More information about all of our events will follow in the upcoming weeks, so stay tuned. It’s also time to mark your calendar for parent conferences. They will be held during the last few days of March and throughout the month of April. Please check the calendar and the sign-up sheet for your child’s teacher’s designated conference week.

I know you are all busy with mid-terms so good luck on those! Please remember that the North Corner room is there for you to study, grab a snack, and relax. I hope everyone enjoys the upcoming Spring Break, whether you are traveling somewhere or using it as some well-deserved down time.

Chris Kipp
I hope everyone had a great time during our spirit week! Thank you so much to all the parents and children for participating. We had a great time coming up with the theme of each day. We asked the children what different things they would like to wear and dress up as, and they said superheroes! On Monday we had many children dress up as their favorite superhero. During group time on Monday we talked about what superheroes do and what we can do to be a super friend. There is a bulletin board in the classroom that shows how the children think they are super friends. Come in and check out the children’s responses!

I am glad that we have gotten so much snow recently. We have been talking about the snow and ice and how cold the weather has been and how water turns into ice. The children are really enjoying the snow outside and sliding down the snow hills with their slippery snow pants (when it’s warm enough to go out). We also brought some snow inside the classroom. We decided to use eye droppers and mix different colors in the snow to see what would happen.

We have been working a lot on literacy in the classroom. We printed out the children’s first and last names on pieces of paper and have them in the classroom so the children can see all of the letters in their first and last names. We decided to take this a step further and bring out clothes pins with upper and lower case letters on them. In this activity they were able to look for the letters in their names and attach the clothes pins to their name cards.

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**REMINDERS**

- Full-time child care will be available during Spring Break, March 9-13. The registration has passed so if you still need care please see Janene ASAP for any space that may be available. At this point, extra care fees will apply.

- Please be aware that classrooms will be combined during Spring Break due to low enrollment; and teachers will take time off or spend time out of the classroom to plan the curriculum.

- For those who pick up at the end of the day, please remember that our building closes at 5:30 so we need you to pick up and leave the building by this time.

- For tax purposes, our FEIN# is 36-6008480. We do not distribute statements regarding your child care payments. You need to track that information yourself, so we recommend for everyone to save your invoices as a way of documenting your annual child care expenses.
We are going to continue to work on recognizing letters and letters sounds during small group activities and group times.

A big and fun activity that we did this month was tracing our bodies! I hope you have seen them displayed in the hallway. The children tried to lay still on the floor and the teachers went around and traced their bodies. After we were done, we had the children get drawing materials and decorate their bodies. As the children were coloring their body tracings we talked about all of the different body parts that we have. Some of the children wanted to see how many fingers everyone had, so we counted our fingers and everyone had ten! We also talked about similarities and differences we have between all of our friends in the classroom. Some children wanted to copy onto their papers the exact clothes that they were wearing that day. The children got the marker colors of the shirts and pants that they were wearing. Some children even drew stripes on their shirts.

Please remember to bring all of the appropriate winter clothing for your child. We have been going outside a lot more and want to make sure your children stays warm with all of their winter clothes on. Please make sure your child has: winter coat, snow pants, snow boats, waterproof gloves, and a hat.

Spring break is almost here, it is the week of March 9!

Katilyn Ostenson and Jen Young

Calendar of Events

March 9-13 — Spring Break (Interim care must be requested in advance to avoid an additional charge)

Tuesday, March 24, 5:30-6:30 — Family Night for Preschool

Wednesday, March 25, 5:30-6:30 — Family Night for Infant/Toddler/Two’s

April 13-17 — Week of the Young Child

May 1—Reading Day (we are open as usual)

May 4—8—Finals Week

Parent Conferences (week of): March 30— Pam, Kendra, April, Kristi
April 6— Kellie, Barbara, Jen
April 20— Sherie, Christy, Jaquida
April 27—Carol, Klint, Krystal, Katilyn

Think Spring!!
Preschool Room 2

Has this been the longest winter or what? We are ready for spring, at least weather that is above 0! Speaking of the weather, we do go outside daily if the temperature is above 15 degrees. Please bring proper outdoor attire for your child and label everything with their name.

We would like to welcome our new friend Yazeed and his family to our center. We are so happy to have you with us!

This past month we have focused on letter recognition, nutrition, respect and responsibility, 3-D art and diversity.

We read Chicka Chicka Boom Boom and followed it up with a small group activity. We filled a tub with sand, a tree, magnetic letters and magnetic wands. A teacher read the story while the children hunted for letters in the sand using the magnetic wands. Jaquida did an alphabet large motor activity placing letters in the hallway and having the children throw the ball at the letter she said.

Speaking with the children and watching them at meal times we decided to do activities on nutrition. We charted what children are eating before they come to school and we had the children make their own healthy lunch. Our class really enjoys cooking activities so we made pancakes and bread. The children learn to measure and mix and watch ingredients turn into something new! They also increase their social skills.

We read The Very Hungry Caterpillar and charted healthy and unhealthy foods that he ate. Sometimes it is hard to come up with different healthy snacks for children to eat. Below are a few we came up with as a group. Remember to always offer your child healthy snacks. If you tend to have a “picky” eater, make sure to offer a favorite food along with a couple healthy choices at meal times.

**Healthy snacks**

*yogurt*  *fresh fruit*  *eggs*  *frozen blueberries*
*veggies with dip*  *applesauce*  *mini quesadillas*
*cheese*  *oatmeal*  *granola*  *crackers*
*Jicama with salsa*  *peanut butter*  *almond butter*
*spinach salad (our kids love) with dressing*  *kale chips*

We have also incorporated an “I tried everything” chart in our room to encourage children to at least try everything that has been offered. This would be an easy thing to use at home!

We discuss respect and responsibility daily. One way to encourage this is to “listen” to our bodies. We want the children to start noticing things like hunger, fullness, and when they need to use the bathroom. Our bodies are remarkable machines and if we begin to instill this skill early we can put an end to childhood obesity and allow children to be in control of their bodies.
Since we have been inside a lot lately, we have offered many big body play activities. We allow the children to have “pillow fights” and wrestle on the mats. Not only does this allow growth and development of muscles, coordination and balance, it also provides a way for the children to practice social cues like body language reading and listening. Not to mention the benefits of releasing excess energy. These activities are supervised of course and are very important, especially to boys. Studies have shown that boys need physical contact with others as a way of communicating. If we offer these activities in a safe manner, the children can grow in many areas.

We brought in a huge box and the children poked holes in it and loved climbing in and out of it, using a flashlight while inside, and just hanging out with a friend in the box! Some days it’s the simple things that make us the happiest!

The children have been noticing the many different shades of skin in our classroom. We have read several books on how we are the same and how we can be different. We use multicultural paints at the easel and in planned and unplanned art. The children can mix and use a variety of skin colors and begin to understand that we are more than just colors, we can be friends and teammates and love one another for our uniqueness and our similarities, and that’s what makes the world go ‘round!

In the coming month we will be having our spring family gathering. We look forward to these as much as the children do. It gives us time to get to know one another on a more personal level and of course eat delicious food! We are also planning to have Sawyer’s mom visit our classroom and teach us more healthy eating habits. We plan to have the NIU police visit our classroom and teach us what police officers really do in their jobs.

Last but not least, we want to thank Dr. Baker’s office staff for letting us barge into their office to say “hello” and for being so generous and giving each child a super cute Victor E. Huskie stuffed animal! We had a great time!

April Kaiser and Jaquida Wynn

Preschool Room 4

We had a very exciting month! Krystal came to visit as well as some NIU students, from the Sophomore Day of Service, who played with us and read a couple of books. We also had a super exciting Spirit Week! We had some really crazy socks, comfy pajamas, reputable careers, a variety of sport team spirit, and unique favorite outfits. The children were super excited to show their spirit. Thank you for your participation.
On March 6th we will be saying good bye to Bri and we want to thank her for her help this semester. She has made some wonderful connections and helped keep the room stable while Krystal was away. Thank you Bri!!

After the excitement with the star fruit we sampled, we also tried pomegranate seeds and made pizzadillas! The children picked out the seeds from a section of pomegranates using their fine motor skills. They reported them being juicy and crunchy. I think that about sums it up too. We talked about how the juice was full of antioxidants and is often consumed through the juice form or is combined with another fruit. For the pizzadillas’, we used a tortillas for our base and then spread on some pizza sauce. Next we placed 4 pepperoni circles onto the sauce and sprinkled it with mozzarella cheese. We folded them over and let them sizzle on a skillet until they cheese was melted and warmed up. Every single child participated in making and eating their pizzadilla! It is a huge hit among preschoolers and a great snack to try at home.

With these frigid temperatures we have had a little bit of outside time and a lot of large motor time. The Pre 4 children immediately head to the traveling center to perform skills such as dancing, somersaults, skipping, running, galloping, and headstands. We have seen some teamwork and bucket filling as the children who have mastered these skills are helping and teaching the ones who are still working on them. With all of this practice we can really see the progress.

Our blue sensory tub has been popular as we brought in snow and sprayed it with colored water. We later added ice cream scoops and cones to prepare sundaes and snow cones. Next we added cornstarch and water to make a mystery mixture that hardens in the tub and melts as it is lifted into the air. The children’s interest in art came back when we put glitter paint at the easel! These creations are displayed on our closet doors.

In the “grocery store” in dramatic play, we practiced counting and experiencing real life situations by having an express lane of 20 items or less. The children needed to count their items to see which lane they would check out in. At group time, we talked about where everyone went grocery shopping and what they did while they shopped. Many talked about riding in the cart and walking. We also had some who helped put items on the counter to be scanned. Others talked about helping to bag the groceries. I suggested they also count the items they help with. We also counted to 20 while we made play dough. Each child could stir for 20 seconds. We played number recognition games and self-checked by counting the objects under the numeral. Consider adding these fun and easy suggestions to your next grocery trip.

Have a wonderful Spring Break! 

Kristi Hayward and Bri Wedhoff