

zero to three news



Campus Child Care
division of student affairs

DIRECTOR'S DESK

Once again we are approaching the end of a semester, and more important, the end of a year! We hope it has been a good year for you at NIU and at the center. I have been very impressed with the amount of parent involvement the teachers have invited into their classrooms this past year so I hope you were able to participate in some way.

In the past few newsletters I have talked about the importance of allowing the opportunity for children to learn through play (versus imposing academics too early). I also discussed the importance of making sure your child is physically able to learn, meaning their vision, hearing, and language have been evaluated and follow ups with professionals (if indicated) have occurred. This month, I want to talk about the importance of seeking evaluation and assistance for your child when there are developmental concerns. Our staff is primarily trained and educated in the area of children's typical developmental patterns and milestones. We are, however, often able to detect what we call 'red flags'; signs that a child may not be developing typically (not that all children have to be the same) and may need some intervention or assistance. Generally speaking, children at this age are too young to receive a diagnosis (i.e., Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism) but we can detect indicators of what may be a future diagnosis or barrier for progress in the school system. I, therefore, strongly encourage parents to listen to your child's teacher with an open mind and act on the referrals or recommendations they give (which is typically an assessment by a specialist or your school district). I was recently reading an article entitled, "Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions" which details the most effective practices and features of early intervention programs. The key findings state that early childhood intervention programs yield benefits in academics, behavior, educational progression and attainment, delinquency and crime, and labor market success. Interventions carried out by better-trained caregivers and smaller child-to-staff ratios appear to offer more favorable results.

As a parent, I can completely understand how hard it is to hear what is perceived to be 'negative' feedback regarding your child. I would encourage you, instead, to view social, emotional, and cognitive delays or differences no different than you might view a physical disability. And know that the earlier you can identify and seek some type of assistance, the better it will be for your child's future. Also remember that we are happy to support parents and children who are going through this process. We embrace children of all abilities and realize that no two children are alike. So, in many ways, a parent seeking assistance for their child is NOT doing so in an effort to change them, but to help adults learn how to teach and help them so they can flourish. We don't want any child to be left behind.



Carly and JR having fun on the teeter-totter!

May 2009

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Lisa's letter talks about the summer program and the combining of classrooms. On page three, you will see a list of our staffing schedule for summer and fall semester. Keep in mind these can change if we have any circumstances that require us to reevaluate placements. We will be working on children's placements (for the 2/3's and preschool rooms) during Interim. We make decisions based on: moving groups of children together (intentionally keeping some together and separating others); connections made with teachers; and a balance between age, gender, and diversity. Also keep in mind that some of these balances can be thrown off by last minute withdrawals and enrollees.

Thanks to those of you who took the time to fill out a program evaluation; it's not too late to submit one if you are still interested. We always appreciate the feedback we receive from parents. The staff will review a summary of the evaluations prior to fall semester, looking at the ways in which we are doing well, along with areas that need some improvement.

Good luck with finals and a big congratulations to those who are graduating; what a huge accomplishment! Please keep in touch and feel free to visit at any time. We love to see how our alums are doing as the years go by!

Chris Herrmann
Director

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S DESK

Hello Preschool families. The semester has been a busy one to say the least.

Thanks to everyone who helped us celebrate Week of the Young Child by bringing treats for the teacher, joining us for breakfast with your child, or sharing a talent. We truly appreciate your involvement (and so do your children)! Remember, it does not have to be a special week for you to spend some extra time here; you are welcome to do this any time. Joining your child for lunch or offering to share a talent or skill is always welcome.

We will have five classrooms open this summer again (Toddler, 2/3's, Pre 1, Pre 4, and School-Age). Since Pre 2 and 3 are closed for the summer, those children will combine with another preschool room but will return to their original room in the fall. The children in Pre 2 will move over with Kendra in Pre 1 and the children in Pre 3 will move down to Pre 4 with Kristi. We will offer a school-age program for children ages 5-8 years during the 8-week summer semester. In the past, we invited kindergarten-bound children to join the school-age room and we plan to do this again. The school-age classroom is a great transition for children heading off to kindergarten. The curriculum is structured slightly different with activities that are more appropriate for the older child. The children tend to take walking field trips to many parts of the campus and learn a lot about the different departments.

We have several teachers who will be off this summer but will return in the fall; Diane M. (Pre 2), April (Pre 4), Barbara (2/3-2) and Kellie (Infant). If you have any questions about your child's teacher being gone in the summer, please feel free to talk with her (this mostly impacts the two preschool rooms).

Parent conferences are winding down. Most parents have had the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher and go over the child development summary and portfolio. The portfolios are such a valuable window into your child's day here and I hope you have enjoyed reading through them. The teachers take great pride in completing the pages in these. I have sat in on many conferences again this semester and it is always a great opportunity to get to talk with the parents and learn more about your child and family. I also hope you enjoy being able to take the portfolios home now. Some teachers are giving them to the parents at the conference and some are waiting until the end of the semester. Either way we are glad you will have them at the end of each school year.

Good luck to you in your finals, papers, presentations, and jobs! For those of you not coming back until fall – have a wonderful summer and enjoy the outdoors!

Lisa Schmidt
Asst. Director



Summer Staffing

Infant/Toddler Room — Jen and Carol
 2/3's-1 — Kathy and Sarah
 Preschool 1 — Diane C. and Kendra
 Preschool 4 — Kristi and Stefanie
 School-age — Sherie and David
 Floater — Dawn
 Administrative Assistant — Kristin

Fall Staffing

Infant — Sherie and Carol
 Toddler — Kellie and Dawn
 2/3-1 — Kathy and Sarah
 2/3-2 — Jen and Kristin
 Preschool 1 — Diane C. and Kendra
 Preschool 2 — Diane M. and Stefanie
 Preschool 3 — Kristi and David
 Preschool 4 — April and Barbara

Please keep in mind that staffing assignments may change due to unforeseen circumstances.

REMINDERS

- Summer and Fall child care applications are past due. See Janene ASAP if you still need care.
- If you are faculty or staff at NIU, remember that you can sign up for the Dependent Care Assistance Plan (DCAP) during the Benefits Choice period in May. This is a reimbursement program that allows you to pay some of your child care costs with tax-free dollars. Contact Human Resources for more information.
- The last day of spring semester is May 8. Full day care is available during Interim (May 11—June 12); applications are past due.
- Child care bills must be paid in a timely manner to maintain enrollment in our program. Students with an outstanding balance will not be able to enroll for future semesters.
- If you are enrolling for summer semester, please remember that children must be enrolled for the **entire** semester and not just part of it. If you leave early, our withdrawal policy will apply.
- Child care rates for the fall semester will be posted to the CCC web site by the end of May; there is typically a 3-5% increase.

INFANT ROOM

This is the last newsletter article for the spring semester. I want to start off with some "thank you's". First of all Carol and I appreciate you attending parent conferences last month. Carol and I enjoy having uninterrupted time to talk to you about your child and his or her development. We hope that you value the time as well. Also we are glad so many of you were able to participate in Week of the Young Child activities. And lastly we thank you for giving us the opportunity to care for and nurture your child while you are at work or school.



The interim before summer semester starts May 11. The infants and toddlers will be combined in either the infant/toddler room or the toddler room. The room used will be based on enrollment and when the carpet gets cleaned in those rooms. Although you are not setting a schedule we ask that you keep in mind the daily schedule of the day. We would prefer all children be here before outdoor time so all children do not have to wait for the arrival of a child. Also there is no drop off during nap while the children are in the toddler and 2/3's room. It is too disruptive when the children are sleeping in one room.



When you return for summer or fall semester the children will be in the Toddler room. The teachers for the Summer Semester will be Jen and Carol. Then in the Fall Semester it will be Kellie and Dawn. There will be only a few slight changes in the classroom. One of the changes will be once all of the children reach 12 months; they will be eating the food on the lunch and snack menu and drinking whole milk. The meal times are scheduled and we can not serve the meal if your child is late and misses the meal. The children will also have a scheduled naptime after lunch. All of the children will be napping in the infant/toddler room because we will have too many cribs to be set up in the toddler room. The classroom is set

up to help toddlers with their developing need to be autonomous. The hand-washing sink is on the floor at their level so they can go up to the sink to wash hands. In the bathroom there are steps the children can climb up to get their diaper changed. When your child is ready for potty training there are small low to the floor toilets for them to use. You can go in the observation booth at look at the toddler room if you like before the semester ends.

Good luck on your finals. Have a great summer!

Reminders:

- Please be sure to have sunscreen, sun hat and sunglasses for your child for outside time. Sun damage begins during childhood and will show up later in life. The American Cancer Society website has good information on how to protect yourself from the sun.
- Please have extra clothing here for your child.

Kellie Fuss
Head Teacher

TODDLER ROOM

Thank you for a great year in the toddler room! I can't believe the end of the semester is here already. For children who have scheduled care we will remain in the toddler room for interim, and then transition to the two's room for the summer and fall!

We have been taking the children up to visit the two's/three's classroom. They seem excited to see the new rooms and new toys to explore! Sarah will be moving up with the children for the summer and will stay in one two's classroom for the fall, and I will be in the other when I return from maternity leave. The two's classroom follows pretty much the same schedule we do, the areas of the classroom are a little more structured and they do more table toys. Since we have an older group of children in the toddler room we have already started doing similar activities and having the room arranged somewhat like the two's/three's classrooms. Also, another thing that is different in the two's/three's is that parents will be responsible for providing diapers. Let us know if you have any questions and we will put together a check-list to help you be prepared!



Thank you so much for your involvement in Week of the Young Child! We did many activities with the children this week. We read a book during group time called I am Black. It talks about the many different colors that our skin comes in, and how we are all unique. The children looked at their own skin and then picked a paper doll in a similar shade of multicultural paper. We took a picture of their face and glued it on and let the children decorate their doll. We also painted picture frames and put in a group picture so your child has a special memory of the class. Dressing up for "Fancy Day" and listening to the opera singer was an exciting new experience for us! Thank you for joining us for breakfast. Thank you for coming in and spending time in the classroom, we really appreciate it!



We've been really excited to spend more time outside exploring the big playground! The children have really been using their gross motor skills riding bikes, climbing on the climbers, and running around. It really is good for children to be outside exploring nature and getting fresh air!

Sarah and I enjoyed meeting with you for conferences. Thank you for taking the time to be here and we hope you enjoy their portfolios!

Thank you for participating in Book-It again. It is fun when we're reading a book at group time and the children will say, "I have that at home!" I know I've said it before, but this group of children loves

books and being read to! Keep it up, and their love of reading and books will grow!

Have a great summer!

Jen Young
Head Teacher

TWO/THREE'S—ONE ROOM



Hello and Goodbye to our families from 2/3-1. The year has passed by so quickly; however, there has been enough time to see such tremendous growth in our group of children. Stefanie and I feel privileged to have been part of the young lives in our room. We have been part of the transition from diapers to underwear. Just like the parents, we gave a great big hooray for that milestone! We have watched the children learn to put on their own socks, shoes, snow pants, and boots. Don't get too excited though. The children will probably have to learn to dress for outside again this coming winter. Hand washing has become a mostly acceptable part of the daily routine. The children are incredibly good at serving themselves at meals. Most of all we see excitement in their eyes, hear it in their voices, and watch their skills improve while playing alongside and with each other.

We extend a sincere THANK YOU to our parents for participating so readily in our classroom environment. Some of you have shared supplies and others have helped with cooking and art activities. We were even invited to tour "the castle" with Kade's mom Jennifer. Carys' mom Dana, donated the beloved husky dogs as a memento from that visit. Our parents have come on scheduled days to take part in the special activities we have planned like those of The Week of the Young Child and Family Gatherings. We would be unable to celebrate the success of a good year without your help!

As the children and parents look forward to "moving up" into the Preschool Rooms; we do, too. We will miss them; however, we know that they have matured and are ready to take advantage of the creative experiences that their new teachers will offer.

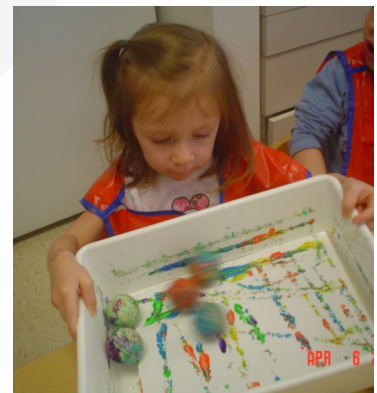
On that note I bid farewell with this parting quote by Albert Einstein:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

Stefanie and I easily can imagine these young children exploring and becoming an integral part of a bright future!

Thanks again!

Kathy Coffman
Head Teacher



TWO/THREE'S—TWO ROOM

Howdy! It is so hard to believe that this is the last newsletter of the semester! The semester has just flown by. At first it seemed like the winter would never end and we would never see green grass again – but with a little faith and patience Spring arrived!! We have been enjoying the trikes outside and being able to take off our socks and shoes to dig our toes in the sandbox. This is a good time to get new sunscreen and encouraging your children to wear a sun hat and/or sun glasses. We will be spending more time outside in the morning and afternoon. Please remember we don't allow children to wear sandals to school- they don't protect their toes or heels when we are on the playground. Thin socks and tennis shoes are the best for outdoor play.



In art, we have had so much fun creating collage pictures and finding new materials to paint with. Barbara brought in an old window screen for the children to paint on with a piece of paper underneath. The screen creates a textured look on the paper. An all time favorite in our room is the spin art- we may have seen our circles displayed during the Week of the Young Child at the entrance. We also had the children paint with a garbage can- a clean one!! We lined the can with a garbage sack, placed paper at the bottom and let the children drip or shake the paint off the brush. This is the technique we used for the Week of the Young Child art display. We hope you enjoy all the pictures your child has brought home from the past semester. One parent looks in the room for her daughter's art so she knows what she will be hanging on her wall next. I have had parents frame some of their children's art and put it in their office at work or display it in their homes. Some other ideas are using it as a background in a scrap book, wrapping paper, framing some for gifts to family members and decorating the child's room with their artwork.

In science, we have become Weather Watchers! The children are observing the weather and we are documenting it on poster board for them to look at and discuss. We will count all the cloudy days, sunny days, rainy days and other days we have at the end of the semester. We are also introducing the days of the week (the days we are at school) with this simple activity. Our plants are growing!! The children who planted bean seeds, and the seeds that grew, have taken them home. It would be a good idea to get them planted into some soil and keep them watered and in a sunny spot. The flower sprouts are doing better since we have been able to get them outside for a little sunshine in the afternoon. The children have kept them watered and have been giving them plenty of attention! You will be getting the flowers at the end of the semester.



In our world of math, we have created some fun dice games for the children. The first activity was to have the children roll a die and find the corresponding symbol. We expanded this idea by making a grid game. Grid games are like bingo cards- this is how the children play. First they roll the die and place the corresponding number of counters onto their card (grid). Grid games provide opportunities for children to create mathematical relationships by using interesting manipulative counters to create, compare, and quantify sets. It is amazing how quickly the children set the dots on the die and know what number it is. We also made a rain gauge to measure the amount of rainfall. The children experienced observation, predicting and measuring with this activity.

We want to wish Kyra and her family the best of luck. Victoria is graduating from the Nursing Program in May. We will truly miss you, Kyra!! Come back and visit us!

FYI- For the children who are enrolled for interim care starting May 11, we will be in 2/3's-2 room for the entire interim. We will continue to visit preschool rooms. The summer session will start on June 15th and that is when they will go to their assigned preschool room. You will receive a letter about an Open House so you can visit your preschool room before the summer session begins.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!!!

Barbara and I would like to say Thank You to all of you. We appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedules for a Parent Conference. We enjoy watching your child grow and learn. It is amazing how much they change in five months! We enjoyed having the breakfast and activities with you during the Week of the Young Child. Your thoughtful words and generosity are overwhelming!! We hope your child enjoys their pillow case for many years. The tours on campus have been so much fun; thanks for taking the time to give us a tour and share part of your day with us. The children really begin to understand that their parents have a special place to go and that they just don't disappear or go home!!

For all of you who have finals - Good Luck! For everyone else who probably has a ton of paper work for the end of the semester - Good Luck to you, too!

To the children who will have a summer break - be safe and have fun. We hope to see you in the Fall.

Thanks for such a wonderful year with your child; because of them we are better teachers today. All of them will always have a special place in my heart.

Sherie Newman
Head Teacher

Frozen Fruit Pops (website: familyfun.com, 2009)

Chill out on a spring or summer day with these sweet frozen treats.

- 3 C grape juice or fruit punch
- One 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/4 C lemon juice
- Twelve 3 oz. paper cups
- 12 wooden sticks



Step 1

Mix juices and sweetened condensed milk with a wire whisk. Transfer the mixture to a container with a pouring spout. Put the paper cups into a square pan and fill the cups, almost to the top, with the juice mixture. Put in the freezer for 1 hour.

Step 2

After 1 hour remove the cups from the freezer and place a wooden stick in the middle of each "pop". Return to the freezer for 5 hours. To serve, peel off the paper cup. Frozen pops will keep in the freezer for up to 2 weeks if kept in a plastic bag. Makes 12 pops.