The semester seems to be clipping right along. Mid-terms are over and now we are into November. I’m sure everyone is looking forward to a long holiday weekend coming up in a few weeks. We have had a fair amount of illness with flu-like symptoms. It seems to me this is going to be a long flu season. So please continue to monitor your child’s health and keep him/her home if they are too ill to actively participate in the normal day’s activities or if they have a cough and fever. And remember to inform Janene of your child’s symptoms. We will keep you posted of any updates via e-mail.

We regret to tell you that another teacher is leaving CCC. Dave Snow (teacher in Pre 3) resigned effective Oct. 30. He finished his master’s degree and is now pursuing his new career as a counselor for children and families at the Mildred Berry Center in Rockford. We will sincerely miss Dave, and all he brought to our program these past 3 years, but we also wish him all the best in his new venture. We are currently going through the hiring and interviewing process so we hope to find a replacement soon.

As you already know, we have been doing a variety of things to inform parents and teach children about the importance of character development. Sometimes we (as adults) become so focused on academics that we forget how important social skills are (and will ultimately enhance a person’s academic success). Any time I talk with a teacher in the school system, whether it’s kindergarten, high school, or college level, they all say the same thing .... Children need to learn how to be respectful to people and property. We need more civility in this world and basic common courtesy. I was always amazed (and pleased) that my daughter, who was a high school teacher for four years, often implemented early childhood practices in her classroom. She had a ‘book corner’ and a closet full of props and materials to help her students learn. She often gave assignments and allowed her students to choose the way they approached it. They might have the option to write a report, create a PowerPoint presentation, or make a video. She was accommodating a variety of learning styles to teach the same material. This is really what early childhood education is all about. We know that children learn by being actively involved in their environment. They need to learn the basics before they will be ready (and willing) to learn more concrete academic skills, such as reading and writing. I hope you have taken the time to look at some of the material that has been on display related to our ‘Character Counts’ topic. Another table will be set up in November so be sure to check that information out as well.
The teachers have also been incorporating this topic into their classroom activities. It’s something we do all the time but this year we are being more intentional in our approach. Here are some of the things the teachers have been doing in the classroom:

The infant room sang the popular song ‘The Itsy Bitsy Spider’ and also created a bulletin board with this theme to illustrate the character trait of ‘persistence’.

2/3-1 sang a song about sharing and did an activity with dinosaurs so they could participate in a sharing experience.

2/3-2 made a book of the children’s feelings and the faces they make. They had a group time talking about different feelings and asked the children what makes them feel happy, sad, silly, etc.

Preschool Room 1 talked about ‘filling your bucket’ by being kind to others. They talked about different ways to do this and created a classroom bucket that the children can fill with colorful shapes when they have demonstrated an act of kindness.

Preschool Room 3 laminated character traits on a variety of shapes and gave them to their families to use at home. This gave the children a visual when they exhibited one of these traits. They also have character development posters displayed throughout the classroom.

Preschool Room 4 made a ‘super friend’ chart in their classroom. They put the child’s name on the chart any time they see a child take the initiative to help a friend.

We have also purchased some great children’s books related to character building that teachers use in all classrooms. They discuss manners, being trustworthy, being a good citizen, being fair, caring, respectful, etc.

Feel free to talk with any of us if you would like more information. I am fortunate to have two great (and grown) children but there are ways in which I wish I had been more intentional about teaching some of these positive traits.

Chris Herrmann
Director

**REMINDERS**

- Although classes are not scheduled on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, CCC will be open for business as usual. This means everyone will be billed their regular daily fee even if your child does not attend. The Center will be closed on Nov. 26 & 27.

- Interim requests have been sent out. You must return this form by the due date if you need full-day child care any time during the Dec/Jan break.

- All children who are well enough to be in attendance at the center will be taken outdoors on a daily basis. As the weather turns colder, please dress your child appropriately for outdoor play and walks.

- The teachers will be holding parent conferences from early November through early December. Dates and times will be posted by your child’s sign-in sheet. All parents are expected to sign up for a conference.

- Child care fees need to be paid on time to avoid late notices and termination of child care.
Hello families! With the fall semester being about half over, the teachers in your child’s classroom are gearing up for a very busy time. Parent conferences are soon going to be offered in your child’s classroom. The teachers spend a great deal of time working on each child’s portfolio and Child Development Summary. Since there are many new families to the center, I would like to spend just a moment to talk about the Child Development summary. The summary is a developmental assessment tool used to document what skills a child is in the process of working on and what skills s/he is proficient at concerning all areas of development. The same assessment form is used for both semesters (fall and spring); as this is a good record for growth and progress that you will see. After reviewing the Child Development summary, you and your child’s teacher will have the opportunity to discuss goals for improvement and growth for the upcoming semester. The teachers will often document goals based on their developmental assessments of each child and parents are welcome to add to these goals.

I would like to thank all the parent volunteers who helped to make our book fair a success again this year. Our book fair is our only fund raiser for the center and we appreciate support through volunteerism and/or purchasing of books. Our center roughly earned about $600. On top of this, we also had a large amount of books purchased by parents from the teacher’s Wish List cards. Thanks so much for all your generous contributions.

Our Character Counts! initiative has been exciting this year so far. Reading through all the activities the classrooms are doing from Chris’ letter is encouraging. The children are being provided intentional experiences in their learning at CCC on positive character building that will be carried with them as they grow. The elementary and junior high schools in many communities have really taken on character building as a goal. Each month a school may focus on a particular trait; trustworthy, honesty, good citizenship, etc. This is a grand and relevant goal for the schools; however, by the time the children are in grade school, it can be challenging to change or influence already established habits. Early childhood is the prime moment to start introducing and implementing life enhancing skills.

Finally, I would like to let you all know that I will be attending an early childhood conference November 18-20. Preschool 3 head teacher Kristi Hayward will be joining me as we travel to Washington, DC for the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC) annual conference. This is a highly attended conference with usually around 25,000 - 30,000 early childhood professionals from just about everywhere. Kristi and I are sure to come back with some valuable information to share with the rest of our staff. During the time Kristi is gone, teachers from Pre 1 and Pre 2 will be assisting in Pre 3.

Enjoy the rest of the fall weather as it will soon start to feel like winter! Good luck with the rest of your semester.

Lisa Schmidt
Assistant Director
Preschool Room 1

It’s hard to believe that November is already upon us. I hope that everyone’s semester is going well. Our room has been extremely busy. The children are still spending a lot of time in the block area. They have been building house boats, space ships, and airplanes. A lot of the children have been using the writing box that is in the block area to make maps and lists. I have written down a lot of grocery lists and the children are coming up with some very interesting items to buy. While this area is always busy it is also the area where everyone disappears right before clean up time. It’s amazing how quickly such an active area can empty out. Since we are seeing this trend in all areas of the classroom we have really been stressing the importance of taking responsibility for our own materials and we are making sure that we send the children back to clean up before they move on to another activity.

We have been continuing our Character Counts curriculum by discussing how to treat our friends and how to make our own decisions. At this age children are discovering the power of their words. They see that they can either hurt someone’s feeling or make them feel better. Because of this awareness we sometimes see children using unkind or impolite words with their peers or adults. We have been discussing the consequences of these actions; either other children will not want to play with you or you will not get the help you need from an adult unless you use more considerate words. It is very hard for children to stop and think in the moment and these are concepts that will need to be worked on over and over again. This also ties in with making our own decisions. Children tend to follow their peers and sometimes this can get them in trouble. If we can get the children to stop and think about what they are doing they usually make the right decision, but again this needs to be practiced many, many times.

We are lucky enough to have a special center camera that is made just for children. In the last several weeks we have been letting the children take pictures of objects and people around the classroom. We have been getting a lot of pictures of the floor, ceiling and objects that we can’t quite identify but we have also seen some really good shots. We will be compiling a classroom book with a page or two of each child’s unique view of their surroundings. The classroom has also become very involved in movie making. We have made several academy award worthy films. The children love to see themselves up on the screen. We will be continuing to explore this whole different area of creative expression.

Kendra and I will be holding parent conferences the week of November 16-20. There will be sign-up sheets posted by the sign-in book. There will be one for each of us so make sure that you are signing up on your child’s primary caregiver sheet. If none of the times listed will work for you, let us know, we will be glad to figure something out. Kendra and I take parent conferences very seriously and spend a lot of time preparing for them. We ask that you first take the time to sign up and then please be on time. We sometimes have another conference right after and it isn’t fair to make the other parent wait. Thank you for your cooperation.
In closing, I wanted to mention that Kendra put out a calendar for you to sign up on if you want to come and interact in the classroom. You could do a specific activity such as read a book or do an art project or you can just come and play. I know that everyone is really busy but if you have some time the children really enjoy having their parents be a part of our classroom.

Diane Coleman
Head Teacher

Preschool Room 2

Happy Fall to All! Yes it (Fall) is definitely upon us, hence the unpredictable weather and changing leaves. This is a perfect time to remind everyone to make sure to bring weather appropriate clothing to school (hats, gloves, thick coats etc.) as we cannot rely on the weather to stay consistent during this time of year. This is also the time of year to start thinking about fall parent conferences. These conferences are very important and considered mandatory. This is a time for Diane and I to review with you your child’s progress throughout the semester. We will be sharing pertinent information regarding your child’s general development and going over portfolios at this time. Our week has been set for November 9th through November 13th and conference sign-up sheets are located by the sign-in booklet. We understand that this may be a busy time of year for you, so we are willing to be flexible with time slots in order to accommodate your schedule.

In other news, our classroom has been very festive with many activities associated with fall. We’ve done apple tasting which was a big hit! The children tasted 8 different kinds of apples and they commented on each after they tasted it. We ended up with no leftovers as the children ate all of the slices. We also made homemade applesauce that the children were able to assist in by using the apple corer/slicer/peeler device. Then they helped to mash and mix the cinnamon and brown sugar. Other fall happenings include pumpkin decorating, nature walks, corn in the sensory table and making a scarecrow. We also cut open a large pumpkin and did a counting and guessing activity with the seeds inside where the children all guessed the number of seeds they thought would be inside and we counted them together.

Did you know ....?  

A common misconception about the Latino Resource Center is that you have to speak Spanish to visit the Center or that you have to be Latino. This is absolutely false. We welcome students from ALL backgrounds.
Diane and I, along with our Kish intern, Lyndsey, are beginning to introduce farm concepts to the children. Lyndsey is a great resource for this since she comes from a family of farmers and has access to a variety of things related to farming. We have an ongoing healthy eating initiative that will be incorporated with the farm theme. By reading books like *Tops & Bottoms* by Janet Stevens and *Heartland* by Diane Siebert and doing activities such as vegetable tasting and fruit and vegetable matching games the children are introduced to farming concepts (particularly fruits and vegetables) in addition to gaining an appreciation of the importance of farming and healthy eating.

On a completely different note, you may have noticed that we’ve added a computer to the room. The computer is intended to be used as an alternative teaching tool with a large selection of instructional games available for the children to use. Knowing that children have different learning styles and preferences we have decided to incorporate the computer in order to offer the children a chance to learn in a variety of ways that meets their particular needs. With that said, we have established some rules and computer time is closely monitored by all of the teachers.

As the semester progresses Diane and I are becoming aware of some behavioral changes in the children. Particularly, tattling and the use of manipulation tactics on peers (saying “I’m not going to be your friend if you don’t…”). As we continue to work on character building we plan to curb these undesirable (yet age appropriate) behaviors by introducing books and activities that deal with similar scenarios and by providing the children with appropriate language and ways of handling themselves in certain situations.

This is early notice but I wanted to let everyone know that in January I plan to attend a large early childhood conference in Chicago that will cause me to be gone on a Friday. As that time approaches there will be signs posted as to who will cover my hours in the classroom. This will be the second year I have attended this conference and I look forward to this career advancing educational opportunity.

Have a great rest of the semester!  Stefanie Echols, Teacher

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**Schedule of Parent Conferences**

The sign-up sheet is located by each classrooms sign-in book. Conferences are 30 minutes long.

**Nov. 2-6** — 2/3-1 (Kathy & Sarah) and Pre 4 (April & Barbara)

**Nov. 9-13** — 2/3-2 (Jen & Jamie) and Pre 2 (Diane & Stefanie)

**Nov. 16-20** — Toddlers (Kellie & Dawn) and Pre 1 (Diane & Kendra)

**Nov. 30-Dec. 4** — Infants (Sherie & Carol) and Pre 3 (Kristi)
Preschool Room 3

Have you filled a bucket today? Thank you for attending our “Character Counts” Family Fun Night! The children have been busy filling buckets and singing the song throughout the day. I was delighted when I had a conversation with a child about their behavior towards another child. The child said, sadly, that s/he had dipped into another child’s bucket. This was great progress and just another tool to use to practice social skills with children. We have loaded our naptime book box with character related books. Reading these books before naptime and bedtime is a great time to focus on important messages children need to hear. Children seem to naturally reflect when they are winding down to sleep. Children will often remember things and recall events that happened throughout the day. The children have also talked about using table manners more at mealtimes since we have been reading books on this topic. We have started the interview process for our first book titled, Being a Good Friend by Pre 3. Keep up the good work on building your child’s character!

In the classroom the children have been busy creating things out of the recyclable materials, floam, and playdough. We are in need of more reusable recyclable items so please bring anything you have to the classroom. We have used the large blocks to create many vehicles, forts, restaurants, etc. We also experienced feet painting. The children discovered it tickled when the teacher painted their feet but they were able to paint their own feet without it tickling. We had a great big pumpkin donated by our Infant teacher, Sherie. We read a National Geographic Kids book called Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin Pie by Jill Esbaum before we explored our pumpkin. We touched the pumpkin outside and inside. We smelled it inside and outside. We scooped out seeds with gloves on and with our bare hands. We included math by counting to see how many we had. We took turns painting the pumpkin and put it outside right by our door to the playground. We worked together to make playdough. We did things a little differently this time by measuring all the ingredients into our drinking cups so the children could see how much of each ingredient was used side by side. We had drinking cups of cream of tarter, flour, water, oil, and salt to compare. We talked about the importance of using a recipe and what they thought would happen if we didn’t use an ingredient or too much or too little of one.

Did you know ….?

Did you know ... there are over 300 recognized student organizations at NIU? Students who get involved with campus activities outside of the classroom have higher graduation rates than their counterparts who do not get connected. Student Involvement & Leadership Development (SILD) can help you find an activity or organization that fits your interests and lifestyle and adds to your collegiate experience. SILD is located in the Campus Life Building, Room 150. Check us out! www.niu.edu/studentinvolvement (815) 753-1421
Thank you so much for donating books from our wish list! We absolutely love them and the children are very exciting when we read a book with a donated sticker. We read it before we start the actual story so they understand how generous and important it is to give to others. The book fair was a very exciting time for us. One of the books I had introduced at the beginning of the semester was Jon Scieszka’s, Trucktown Truckery Rhymes by David Shannon, Loren Long, and David Gordon. This is an example of one of the truckery rhymes in the book.

“Patty Cake Patty Cake Dumper Dan. Dump me some dirt as fast as you can. Slide it and drop it and mark it DD, and put it in the lot for Melvin and me.”

The children love singing familiar tunes with different words. I had wanted to get a book with the same characters in it so the children could get to know who they were singing about. The one I chose from the book fair was Jon Scieszka’s Trucktown The Spooky Tire by David Shannon, Loren Long, and David Gordon. I had no idea the impact it would have on the children. They loved hearing a spooky voice and the combination of suspense and humor at the end of the story. The children walked around the classroom saying, “Who Took My Golden Tire?” in a spooky voice.

Upcoming events include our parent conferences the week of November 30th to December 4th. There will be a sign-up sheet posted. Please refer to the "Primary List “so you can sign up under your child’s primary caregiver. If the time slots are not convenient for you please let us know and we can arrange a better time. I will be in Washington, D.C. at the annual NAEYC conference from November 18th -21st. NAEYC stands for the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Attending this conference allows me to attend workshops and trainings from the most prestigious presenters in the field. These conferences allow teachers to learn about the latest information and inspire teachers to continue to grow and develop in their profession. The information is shared with other teachers and benefits the center as a whole. High quality exhibits provide the teachers with the latest materials for the classroom. This is often where teachers can purchase new science activities, sensory materials, recently published books, etc. When the doors open to the exhibit room the teachers look like the children when the doors open to go outside. Can you imagine thousands of teachers running and screaming with excitement? I can’t wait! I am so grateful for this opportunity and look forward to sharing with you what I have learned. I hope you are having a fabulous semester. Please don’t hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you!

Kristi Hayward
Head Teacher

Preschool Room 4

Can it be November already?? Holidays are right around the corner?? How did that happen?? Time flies when you have fun!! Just ask anyone in Pre-4!! Woohoo Pre-4!!

Fall has been an exciting time in our classroom! We have taken many nature walks and discovered so many different types of trees, leaves, nuts, pumpkins and squash!! We have observed the textures, colors and smells of nature. We cut open a pumpkin and helped scoop out the pulp and seeds. We cut open several squash and gourds to see what was inside! We left the variety
of items out on the table for exploration and observation! We even made a scarecrow for the playground with the help from our friends from the other preschool classrooms! We stuffed him with straw that Barbara brought in; he looks great! Pam also made an “emotional scarecrow” for the classroom. Each day the scarecrow would have a different expression and the children would discuss what type of emotion the scarecrow was feeling and talk about what kinds of things make them feel the same way; great activity Pam!! We feel children learn so much more through hands-on experiences and we offer a variety everyday!

We have a super hero headquarters in our dramatic play area. The children love to pretend they have super powers and this helps develop a sense of control and makes them feel empowered. We, of course, have rules to keep everyone safe. We have also incorporated geography in this area. We made a map of the world and talk about what parts of the world super heros can go to, to help others! This also enhances our “character counts” program.

We have put the wood working bench in our classroom. The children have enjoyed using tools to try to open up the nuts we found on our walks so we decided to add tools to our curriculum this month. The children will have the opportunity to learn specific tool names and the proper way to use each tool. We will also talk about safety when using tools. Speaking of safety, we are going to be doing a “stranger danger” lesson. We plan to have each child make a safety card that will include their name, weight, height, and fingerprint. We will be sending home an activity for you to do with your child. Details will be coming soon!

Building with Legos and Magna tiles has been a favorite the entire semester. We may be changing these out or adding to these very soon to expand on the children’s creativity and skill levels. We have been learning to play board games with rules and larger group games with rules. The children are getting pretty good at counting and moving pieces around the boards correctly. We are reinforcing turn taking and listening skills and playing as a group (personal space and kindness toward others.) When our classroom bucket gets filled, the children have decided to have a pajama party! More details at a later date!

We would like to thank all of our families and friends who made our book fair a huge success! Thank you to those who purchased books for our room! Our children love to read, whether it be on their own or as a group, books are always a favorite! Also, thank you to each family for taking time to come in for a conference and being a part of your child’s development. We are here for you and your child. If you ever need to talk to us please feel free to set up a time. Remember you can always join us for a snack, do an activity or just observe in the booth! We would love to have you join us!!

Thank you for all you do!! We hope you have a great month!

April Kaiser
Head Teacher
Reports of violence, brutality and aggression make the news headlines so often, one can lose sight of a powerful way to influence society for good – caring for children. After all, only years from now, they will vote new laws into being, run the government, and raise children themselves.

Dr. Mary Pipher, a renowned psychologist and anthropologist, states, “Character is that within a person which governs moral choices…it is teaching the young to make wise and kind choices.” There are a number of strategies parents and child care providers can use in everyday life to highlight what is right and to encourage children to think about the consequences of their actions.

To build character in children, parents and child care providers can:

- Be aware of situations that represent opportunities for character-developing decisions. Things like cutting in line or hanging-up the phone on someone are excellent examples of opportunities for discussion. Taking children to circle times or play groups gives them an opportunity to interact with others and learn about values such as sharing, friendship and manners.

- Encourage children to come to them when a decision is difficult, and help children walk through the various scenarios and outcomes.

- Acknowledge when they model wrong behavior to children and talk with them about it.

- Talk to children about decisions they have made and ask them questions such as how they feel about the choice and whether it was a good choice or a bad choice. Let the children talk first. Hearing how they arrived at their decision is helpful in knowing where they need assistance. This is one way to help children to develop a conscience.

- Give children an allowance. Let them learn how to waste or lose money and then how to spend, save, invest, and give wisely.

- Take every opportunity to teach children about thankfulness and gratitude.

- Limit television viewing (one hour per day is plenty). Watch television together with the children and discuss what they see. Negative examples can be excellent teachable moments if time is taken to discuss why they are wrong.

- Review their own behavior by asking themselves how good the character is that they model.

- Practicing patience, tolerance and forgiveness during delays and disappointments models healthy behavior for the children.

- Actively teach lessons with love, hugs, stories, conversation, books – use whatever avenues are possible to teach the lessons that children need.

Source: “Teach Your Children Well” by Madelyn Swift and Victoria Mathies.