DIRECTOR’S DESK

Welcome back to the second half of spring semester. We enjoyed a nice break to catch up and get ready for the good weather (warmer with rain) and fun times ahead.

The teachers have prepared for parent-teacher conferences (conference schedule is listed on page 3 of this newsletter). We do expect all families to sign up for a time to meet with your child’s teacher to discuss their growth and development since fall. Each teacher has a sign up sheet in the classroom with times they are available to meet. If the times offered don’t work for you please talk with the teacher to plan for a time when everyone is available.

April is a busy time of year with conferences, WOYC, and assessments. During the week of April 14th we will have enrollment week for returning families. Everyone who will need child care for summer and fall will need to stop up front and take about 10 minutes to fill out the re-enrollment forms. Janene will take a week to make placements and then the week of April 24th you will stop back up front to sign your contracts. The signed contract will hold your enrollment. The week of April 17th we will open enrollment to new families and you may lose your priority placement if you don’t have an application on file and you need care.

The applications for the May/June interim are available and due Friday, April 14th. After this date a 10% fee will be added for late registration.

During the week of April 24th the center will be participating in The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Week of the Young Child (WOYC). A calendar of events is posted in this newsletter on page 8. The week will be filled with opportunities for parent and child play, participation and learning. We will be hosting guest readers from the university as well as the NIU Drum Line. Each day has a theme and an opportunity for center wide participation. We love this week and the opportunity to appreciate our teachers for the amazing work they do educating young children to be smart, strong and healthy members of society. The parent advisory board will have a sign up sheet posted near the check in station for ways you can help contribute!

We will be applying for re-accreditation this summer and part of our self assessment is to get parent feedback. A NAEYC survey will be included in your enrollment packet! We need an 80% response rate on this survey so please take the time to fill it out!! Thanks!

Kristin Schulz
Hooray Spring has arrived! Our semester is just flying by!

In the last month we have seen so much growth in all of the children. The physical changes are the most obvious but I want to take time to mention some of the cognitive changes we have seen and the social and emotional growth in these wonderful children.

Watching these children begin to make connections, problem solving and engage in interactions with materials and with each other is incredible! One child might be working on sitting down after pulling up to stand position while others are figuring out that when they are on their tummy they can move by crawling, rolling and even pivoting. Turn taking is also an area that we are working on with each child as well as spatial awareness. Sign language is helping with communication adding the sign “stop” and “wait” will be helpful until they have the words. The big change we have seen is when they stop when they hear the word wait, or hand a toy over to an open hand when it was busy.

The children are showing preferences for certain centers in our classroom and engaging in material in those areas like the music center where the drum and shakers are being played individually and in groups. Singing Ram Sam Sam is the favorite song this month and everyone joins in with an instrument, shakers, pianos and drum! You should see us dancing to The Freeze! We have seen children with cups, pretending to drink and plates have been used as a phone to the ear and for holding some of the play food in the dramatic play area.

REMINDERS

- The last day of spring semester is May 13th. Full-day care is available during Interim (May 15th — June 10th); applications are due by April 8th. Anyone who requests care after this date will be charged the “extra care” fee; an additional 10%.

- Child care fees need to be paid in full prior to the upcoming semester.

- Summer and Fall child care applications are due during re-Enrollment week, April 10th–14th. Contracts will need to be signed the week of April 24th.

- Summer Enrollment for New Families will begin on April 17th, online application.

- 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. If you did not save your invoices for the year, you can obtain a record of your payment history.
As more of the children have become mobile, they are engaging with each other more. The climber and large motor activities have created some awesome social interaction as they follow each other, wait for turns on trampoline or play peek-a-boo with the tunnel, when Isabel climbed through the tunnel Harvey clapped for her! We are hearing the words “Hi” and “Done.” Children are waving hello and goodbye! Kellie and I are assisting the children with problem solving by encouraging them with our words, helping them when needed and acknowledging the problems. This is helping the children to become less panicked, to become more patient and independent and to figure out how to solve those problems, for example Jacob reached for a block while sitting up and as he fell forward he began to cry but after some encouragement and acknowledgment he stretched his arm and was able to reach the block!

Another big change in our room is independence. Meal times have really become a big part of that, as more children are eating table foods at the same time. We are establishing independent transitions with the children by having them walk or crawl out to the hallway to get in the buggy to go outside, or to the gate and sink to wash hands before meals or to come for diaper changes.

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**Calendar of Events**

**Parent Conferences** (Month of April): See page 9 for your child’s conference day!!

**NIU Cares Day— Saturday, April 22nd**— A team of teachers and students will be doing spring cleaning and gardening from 9-12pm. If your family would like to contribute materials or time please see the sign up sheet or Kendra for more information.

April 24-28 — **Week of the Young Child (WOYC) Guest Reader Program and Child Alumni Readers Welcome!** (See schedule on page 9)

May 5th — **Reading Day** (we are open as usual)

May 8 — **Finals Week**

May 15 - June 16 — **Spring Interim**
Henry turned one on March 21 and April birthdays include Finn, Violet and Giovanni! A sign of spring in our room is a bigger table in the kitchen and cots in the nap room! Isabel and Genevieve are now on cots because they are 15 months.

The warmer weather is allowing for more time outside and on the ground. We will be on the playground two times a day now, morning and at the end of the day, about 4:45, so please bring shoes for your child especially if he/she is crawling or walking. It is also hard to predict the temperature so still include hats and gloves.

This month, our creative expression included some water fun sometimes with bubbles and lots of dancing to various music. We also had opportunities to use markers and crayons. Painting with brushes and hands allow some color mixing to take place. Remember process not product with our young artists.

Also, parent teacher conferences are coming up the first week in May. Kellie and I each have a day to dedicate to our conferences so please sign-up if you haven’t done so already. The sign-up sheet is posted above the communication book. Kellie’s day is Tuesday, May 2nd and Pam’s is Wednesday, May 3rd. We look forward to meeting with you and sharing about your child. We also look forward to seeing you during our celebration of the Week of the Young Child April 24-28th. We will be sharing more information about opportunities to join us but remember you are always welcome in our room!

Kellie Fuss and Pam Yockey

TODDLER ROOM
I cannot believe this semester is half way over already! I hope everyone had a great spring break (I wish it looked a little more like spring outside!) This month Connor will be turning 2 years old, happy birthday to Connor.

This month we have continued to do cooking activities. The one the children enjoyed the most was making spaghetti. It all started with the book Victor Vito and Freddie Vasco. In the book, there are two polar bears that eat spaghetti. As we read the book, the toddlers brought dramatic play spaghetti over. Pre-1 had fake spaghetti in their media table, as we took an inside walk we saw the spaghetti and asked to use it when they were done. After Pre-1 was nice enough to give us their noodles, the toddlers explored the noodles with their fingers and hands inside our media table. In with the noodles, there were pots, pans, strainers, and ladles. The children pre-
tended to make spaghetti inside the media table. They spent a lot of time scooping and pouring with the ladies. We also talked about the feeling of the noodles, if they were soft or hard. We then made spaghetti for lunch! The children were able to touch and feel the hard noodles. We compared them to the noodles in the media table. The media table noodles were soft and bendy and when we tried to bend the hard uncooked noodles they would break. The children were able to break the pasta into a bowl, add butter and garlic salt to the noodles after they were cooked. After they cooled down they were ready for us to eat them. To say the least, the noodles were a big hit!!!! We will continue with the children’s interests and do more and more cooking activities as the semester continues.

As the toddlers are getting older, and many are turning two, they are using a lot more of their language skills. The children are really into naming their friends in the classroom. Katilyn made a book with all of the children and their names in it. The book is called Do You Know a Friend of Mine. As we read the book we sing, “Do you know a friend of mine, a friend of mine, a friend of mine, whose name is...” We go through all of our friends in the classroom and when we get their picture, we say their name and point to them if they are at school that day. The children are getting better and better with name to face recognition.

The children have been really into cleaning. The children see the teachers clean the classroom and their families clean their houses. We have pretend vacuums so the children can clean up any crumbs that may be on the carpet. As the children are getting more and more interested in cleaning, we brought in child size mops and brooms. The children enjoy sweeping and mopping the tile in the classroom. As they are cleaning, some pull the chairs out so they can get under the tables so they do not miss a spot. Over interim, the toddlers got so carried away with cleaning that they wanted to clean the hallway. We brought a bucket with us so we can pretend to dip our mops in water and brooms to clean the hallways all throughout the center. Thanks to the toddlers the center is looking squeaky clean! We will continue to clean the classroom in other ways, for example, using spray bottles to clean the easel and using rags and soap to help clean the tables.

A couple of reminders: Week of the Young Child- April 24-28th. Barbara’s conference day – April 20th. Kaitlyn’s conference day – May 1st. Look out for sign-up sheets outside the toddler room! I hope you have a great rest of your semester!

Katlyn Ostenson and Barbara Zeman
It is hard to believe that it is April already. It will be nice to enjoy some warmer weather. We will continue to use boots due to mud on our playground, once we are done with them, we’ll be sure to let you know.

Our dramatic play area has been very busy. The children very much enjoyed working at the ticket counter and taking flights to different places. The area was then turned into a house. We were able to add a doll house with accessories to support this new interest. The children were then interested in using a boat to travel to different places. They had the chance to travel in a boat together or to use their own boat made from cardboard boxes. The cardboard boxes then became fire trucks. We have recently transformed our fire trucks into cars. The dramatic play area is now used to be a mechanic where they can use tools to fix their cars. We will be transforming our dramatic play area into an eye doctor office. The children will be able to experience and become familiar with what it looks like to go to the eye doctor.

Making slime and play dough in our classroom has been enjoyable. We are also working on looking at different colors and mixing colors together to observe what happens. The children were interested in watching the reaction between vinegar and baking soda. It was enjoyable for the children to watch the reaction in different activities using food coloring. This month we will be starting a gardening unit in our room. We will experience how to plant, water, and watch different plants grow. In our classroom we will be practicing different ways to mix colors to see what colors we can make.

We have been using our hands and fingers to do many activities with eye droppers. The eye droppers were used to paint a picture with as well as adding vinegar to baking soda. The children have been working the how to throw a ball or object. It was fun to practice throwing through a hula hoop and into a basket.

In our classroom we are continuing to work on a few things. The velco board is still being used where we add buses as we see them out the window. We will now add fire trucks, police cars, motorcycles, and other forms of transportation as we see them. This has been a great
activity for the children as they are learning to categorize as well as engage in simple math concepts.

The Week of the Young Child (WOYC) will be April 24th- April 28th. Information is on page 9 of this newsletter with what activities will be going on during the week.

Conference dates are rapidly approaching. If Sherie is the primary teacher for your child your conference will be held on Monday, April 3rd from 9:00-4:00. If Jennifer is the primary teacher for your child your conference will be held on Monday, April 10th from 9:00-4:00. The conferences will be held for 15-20 minutes long. Please keep in mind if you do not have care for your child on the day of your conferences that you can bring them and they will be invited to play in our classroom during your conference time. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Jennifer Weber & Sherie Newman

TWO/THREE-2
What a busy month we have had! We have been enjoying the fluctuations in the weather and expect the warmer spring temperatures to be upon us soon. Please remember to bring in extra clothing for your child that is more suitable for the warmer weather. We will continue to wear our winter gear until the weather becomes more stable and until the mud dries in the yard. We included an image to help you understand how we dress the children during certain temperature ranges. The children at this age are clear communicators and can verbalize if they are hot or cold. We listen to the children and respect how they are feeling.

McDonald's donated cups with lids and straws so we could all drink our smoothies together!!
Kendra and I have also scheduled a fine-motor activity time each day where the children focus on activities that build the small, but very important, hand muscles. Activities have included placing rubber bands around soup cans, pushing pom-poms through small openings, stringing beads, placing cotton swabs into small holes in the top of recycled food containers, puzzles, and coloring, just to name a few.

Please remember to provide fine-motor experiences at home as this will definitely reinforce what is being done here in the classroom. We are hoping these activities will bring improved ASQ scores which we will be asking you to repeat again at home very soon. Thank you!

A new classroom study is underway! We have enjoyed our wind and air study, but the children’s interests have seemed to shift to fire fighters and fire trucks. Experiences will include books about the topic, fire safety discussions, a dramatic play area equipped with dress up hats and coats, small fire trucks and a fire house, hoses to pretend to put out fires and walkie-talkies, phones and personalized fire badges. A visit from a real fire fighter on a real fire truck will help to bring this study to life!

Please remember that parent/teacher conferences will be conducted a little differently this year. Kendra and I will each have one day to complete our conferences with our individual primaries. The conferences will be about 30 minutes in length and will give us the opportunity to discuss completed assessments and to review goals. Kendra’s conferences will take place on Tuesday, April 4th from 9:00 - 4:00 and mine will take place on Tuesday, April 18th from 9:00 - 4:00. Please see the sign-up sheets outside the classroom door. We look forward to meeting with you!

Leslie Dolan & Kendra Nenia
Parent Conference Schedule Changes– Up and coming for April-

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New this semester– Each teacher is being given a full 9-4pm shift out of the classroom to conduct parent conferences. We do require families to meet with staff for a 20 minute conference and goals setting period. We value our relationship with you and the home school connection for your child’s benefit. We will remain flexible with families who have trouble meeting this time frame but ask that you keep to your day as best as possible to help us manage all of the meetings we need to get through over 5 weeks.

April 24th-28th

Music Monday– A musical break at 10:00, 12:15, and 3:30. NIU Drum Line will visit CCC at 4pm. All are invited! (NIU Spirit Day or Wear Red and Black)

Tasty Tuesday– Each classroom will choose and cook a healthy recipe. Families may be asked to help provide ingredients. Also consider sharing one of your families favorites to be included in our CCC cook book! (Mismatch day, wear different patterns and colors the more the better.)

Work Together Wednesday– Follow the obstacle course! All day long find ways to work together! (Fancy Day)

Artsy Thursday– All classrooms will help chalk the sidewalk in front of CCC! Other ideas include, decorating the trees and using art to create movement and cheer. (Favorite Color Day, choose your favorite.)

Family Friday– Families are invited to participate as guest readers, bring in older CCC alumni if possible. Parent’s only, stop in the conference room for muffins and coffee to go! It’s our way of saying thank you for being our partner! (Pajama Day, wear your comfy PJ’s to school.)

* Preschool will have an Art gallery on display all week in Pre-3 (Rm 128). Stop in at any time!
On Saturday, March 25th our staff participated in A.L.I.C.E Training. At the lead of the NIU PD and with support from Counseling and Consultation services we practiced a number of scenarios to help prepare us in the most up to date evacuation and safety training protocols.

The training lasted three hours and the staff practiced in each age group and classroom space. Going into the training all staff were unsure of what to expect and a little hesitant, but after the training we all have a clearer understanding of how to respond to keep all children safe.

In this day and age we don’t want to ever have to use this but it’s best to be prepared. If you would like more information about this program please follow this link. http://www.niu.edu/publicsafety/safety-education/alice.shtml