

## Teaching Staff

In order to provide the best possible experience for each child, teachers believe it is important to:

- Attend weekly staff meetings
- Regularly record observations of children's activities and develop a yearly portfolio of each child's work
- Plan with their team teacher to build on children's interests and needs
- Attend staff workshops on child development
- Participate in professional organizations such as local (LAEYC) and national (NAEYC) chapters of the Association for the Education of Young Children
- Attend national or regional educational conferences whenever possible
- Read and review new research and literature on quality early childhood education.



## Opportunities for Parents & Teachers to Work Together

We know that teamwork between parents and teachers is vitally important for children's well-being in early education programs. We welcome parents into our rooms and love talking together at any time. Parents' suggestions and ideas help us create the best program possible for children. Parent-teacher conferences are twice a year.

## Family Activities & Services

Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs believe in supporting families by providing a variety of social and educational opportunities, including:

- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Parent Information Night
- "Coffee & Conversation" parent group
- Family Picnic
- Open House
- Nature Explore® Families' Club

## Nature Explore Families' Club

Have you ever stood under a majestic tree in your neighborhood and admired its beauty? Or wondered how many different shapes of leaves you could find, or wanted to spend more quality time with your family? If so, the Nature Explore Families' Club is for you!

The free club meets monthly throughout the year and is open to all families who attend our program or First-Plymouth Church. The goal is to help children and families explore and connect with the natural world, and spend quality time together outdoors. Fun activities include learning about several aspects of trees and leaves, going fishing, nature treasure hunts, cloud watching, and much more. The club meets in a variety of natural settings in and around Lincoln.

If you would like to be a part of the Nature Explore Families' Club, or if you would just like more information, please contact Chris Kiewra, Outreach Liaison, at [chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org).



First-Plymouth Early Education Programs serve as research classrooms for the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, an independent 501(c) 3 organization.

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First-Plymouth Early Education Programs  
Dimensions Research Classrooms

Infant/Toddler/Preschool  
2010-11



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### Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire children, families and educators to connect more deeply with the world around them.

## Philosophy

Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs believe in a hands-on, experiential approach to learning. Through creative research-based experiences, children are provided with opportunities to:

- Grow socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually
- Improve problem-solving skills
- Make decisions and begin taking responsibility for those decisions
- Develop confrontation and negotiation skills in relating to other people
- Learn to accept and appreciate differences among people
- Gain divergent thinking skills as their own ideas and creativity are encouraged
- Develop a life-long love for learning.

Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs are open to children of all denominations and faiths. Although housed in a church building, no specific religious teaching is included in the program. Diversity among students is encouraged and affirmed as every effort is made to gain an appreciation for the pluralism of our society.

## Daily Activities

Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs' developmentally-centered approach to learning allows for a good balance between child-initiated activities and teacher-planned times. A consistent daily routine provides children with a sense of comfort and stability. A typical day might include:



### Discovery Times

Large, well-equipped rooms encourage learning through discovery as children choose from activities such as:

- Experimenting with paint and other creative art experiences
- Building with blocks and a variety of three-dimensional materials
- Exploring with science-related materials such as texture tables and nature items
- Dramatic play and dress-up



- Working with small-motor manipulatives like giant pegboards
- Language experiences with books, flannel boards, large crayons and more

### Snack Times

Healthy nutritious snacks are provided each day, and are part of a comprehensive health and nutrition plan. Families are invited to bring in healthy snacks.



### Story Times and Language Experiences

Children have daily opportunities to develop positive relationships with books as teachers read well-chosen stories and encourage children to explore books on their own. Our in-school libraries includes a large selection of the best of children's literature...both fiction and non-fiction. Children are also



encouraged to participate in story-telling, sign language and Spanish experiences and to explore writing implements. Teachers use the best and latest research to help support and encourage children's early literacy development.

### Resource People

Resource people, including parents and other community members, visit to share hobbies, skills, and information.

### Small Group Times

Each day small groups of children work with their teacher on projects involving early literacy, math or science concepts, art, manipulatives, or a variety of other topics. Teachers plan these activities around children's interests and needs.

*Infant schedules are individualized and they enjoy most of the activities listed above.*

### Connecting with Nature

Children learn in such a complete way when they have daily opportunities in our Nature Explore® Classroom to explore, experiment, draw, sketch, build, move, create music, write, look up information in books, and



participate in real work (like weeding a garden or feeding birds in winter). We are pleased to be able to collaborate with the Arbor Day Foundation and share the research and field-testing occurring each day in our classrooms with other children and families around the country.



### Music and Movement Times

Our teachers receive resources that incorporate High/Scope techniques and the latest research on quality musical experiences for young children that is implemented during Music and Movement and throughout other times of the day. In addition, special musical performances and unique musical experiences



for children are scheduled periodically throughout the year. Teachers have created field-tested and research-based experiences to help children best develop their large motor kinesthetic (movement) skills.

### Research

Since 1998 the research branch of our program (the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation) has been working with professors from Doane College and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; a neuropsychologist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha; and various other collaborators from around the nation on on-going research to study the benefits that come from children's connection with nature on a daily basis. Teachers have been researching many new techniques and materials for children to experience. We are offering workshops, home and classroom activity kits, and videotapes to both educators and parents to help support this vital learning throughout our nation.

