



January 5, 2006

First-Plymouth Early Education Programs

DIMENSIONS
Educational Research Foundation
First-Plymouth Early Education Programs
dimensionsfoundation.org

NEWS

Executive Director's Message

by Nancy Rosenow

Happy New Year!

Welcome back to our second semester, and to many exciting activities and events ahead in 2006! Thank you so much to all of you who were so kind to donate to the Teacher Gift Fund. Our staff received their holiday "bonuses" (made possible by gifts from parents) during special parties where we celebrated our work with each other, our wonderful families, and of course the very special children we have the privilege of working with each day.

Thank you, also, to each of you who sent gifts and good wishes in other ways. I hope everyone knows how much the support of parents contributes to our ability to provide a wonderful program for children. We truly couldn't do it without the great partnership we have with each of you.

Looking Ahead to a New Semester

Looking ahead in 2006, I see Family Night being planned for February, a great Children's Concert coming in March, and a fun outdoor event on our new Outdoor Classroom coming in May. Our teachers will get the chance to attend (and make professional presentations) at the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in April. As we plan for children's learning, I know

many new opportunities to explore developmentally appropriate reading and writing, counting, singing and painting are being developed, as well as chances to create sculptures, work in the greenhouse, discover more of the wonders of nature, and continue to make friends and practice social skills. It's going to be a wonderful new year!

Helping Children Learn in the Best Way

Please be sure to read parent Jennifer Brinkman's wonderful article in the "Thoughts for Parents" section of this newsletter. She does a wonderful job of talking about some of the misconceptions that all of us can have about what "real" learning looks like for young children.

All of us on our staff study the literature and research about "developmentally appropriate practices" (see the sidebar for a definition). We see compelling research showing that if young children are given too much "skill and drill" learning too early, they miss out on meaningful learning that they'll need for the rest of their lives. The world is a much more complex place today than it was even 20 years ago, and we need to help children learn the skills they'll need to negotiate in a new way. When teachers are well trained in child

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What Does "Developmentally Appropriate Practices" Mean?

"Developmentally appropriate practices" describes an approach to education that focuses on the child as a developing human being and life-long learner. This approach recognizes the child as an active participant in the learning process; a participant who constructs meaning and knowledge through interaction with others, friends and family, materials and environment. The teacher is an active facilitator who helps the child make meaning of the various activities and interactions encountered throughout the day.

*From the article,
"Developmentally Appropriate
Practices: Right for All Kids"
by Danielle Houser and Cathy
Osborne of the Pennsylvania
Department of Education*

Upcoming Events

**Family Night is Coming!
Mark Your Calendars for
February 17**

Are you experiencing some of the “after-the-holidays-blahs?” We have a cure. Family Night is coming on February 17. It's a fun event to look forward to because it has something for all ages. See the enclosed flyer for all the details on the Spaghetti Dinner, free activities, and the fun Basket Auction.

You'll notice we've also enclosed a note from your child's teacher about the Basket Auction. Collecting items to use in making themed baskets for our silent auction has been a fun activity each classroom enjoys in January. In your note you'll see the theme of the basket your child's teacher has chosen, and ideas for items you might choose to bring to school to add to the basket. These items range from small to large in price, so please do what is comfortable for your family. The fun is seeing how putting everything together makes exciting baskets. Our auction will have both the baskets that appeal to all ages, as well as items that are geared just to adults. Thanks so much for joining with us in this whole-school event.

Children's Activities

A Whole-School Sing-Along

At the very end of December, most all the children in our school (from toddlers to kindergarteners) gathered to join Music Specialist Tina Reeble for a fun sing-along. We enjoyed singing holiday songs, winter songs, and songs about friendship and peace. The



pictures tell the story of what a heart-warming event it was!



Kindergarten Activities

by Holly Murdoch

Kindergartners made butter by shaking whipping cream in a jar. To give the butter a rich yellow color we used Caroline Ingalls method (from the book Little House on the Prairie), which was grating fresh carrot into a little cloth bag and cooking it in cream a few minutes. The color can then be squeezed into the jar (or churn) to make the butter yellow. Ma did this in the winter because the cow's milk lacked the yellow color it had in the summer. The butter was also shaped in decorative molds because Ma wanted the dinner table to be pretty.

Director's Message (cont. from page 1)

development and are taught to be close observers of each child's individual needs and interests, rich learning can take place in the way that is right for EVERY child. Our children are actively involved in the learning process so that they become excited about reading, writing, counting, and the like, and develop interests that will encourage them to be LIFELONG learners.

On a personal note, I remember feeling just like Jennifer when my own children were preschoolers, more than 20 years ago. The concept of “developmentally appropriate practices” was just beginning then, so I had a lot to “unlearn” from my own concept of how

children should be taught. As I studied the professional literature about this way of learning, I also saw my own children's enthusiasm for learning growing. Neither one of my children learned to read before they went to kindergarten (like I had) but today my son's a PhD. student at the University of Minnesota, teaching classes on literature and truly in love with reading and writing. My daughter's a graphic designer in California who also loves words and pictures. It's exciting for me to see how much they CONTINUE to love learning. That's what we know can happen for every child when we teach in developmentally appropriate ways.

Thoughts for Parents

by Jennifer Brinkman

Meaningful Experience

During the three years that my daughter and son have attended First-Plymouth, I've been struggling to figure out how the program teaches them the skills I assume they need to know to be ready for school. In my former life, I had researched the need for funding early childhood programs. We have learned so much about the brain development of young children in the last ten years that proves that a quality program can make a world of difference in the outcomes of children. Birth to age three is a critical time of development when brain neurons are solidifying and where critical paths of learning can be lost forever – or at least made very difficult to reopen.

In spite of the fact that I can recite those concepts, my expectations for my own children's accomplishments have been tied up in recollections of my own childhood, instead of based on the knowledge I have gained in recent years. My mother says, "You knew how to read before you went to Kindergarten." I, myself, remember counting to 36 by 2s for my kindergarten teacher. My husband says he could write the numbers, "one," "two," "three," up to "one hundred" by the time he went to school. So when will my daughter start reading? How do her teachers plan to teach writing skills? Will my son be able to recite the alphabet by the end of the semester? For some reason I expected my checklist of learning to be fulfilled by some arbitrary timeline in my head.

My husband and I attended the parent workshop, "Raising Children Who Love

to Read," hosted by First-Plymouth on November 15th. As we listened to the presenter talk about the importance of reading and how it is incorporated into the daily program at First-Plymouth, I thought, "Great – more passive learning. When does the real teaching begin?"

Then Mrs. Rose reviewed the frequently asked questions of High Scope Learning Programs. It was like a light went off. High Scope believes that children will learn as concepts are incorporated into their own meaningful experience. Just like each of us learns in our own way, – some are visual, some are textual, etc., – so do our children. And the rote method or direct instruction does not encourage children, especially pre-school age children, to retain knowledge or pursue independent learning.

Although it didn't seem intuitive to me at first, the more I thought about it, I realized that weaving concepts about letters, numbers, reading, writing and math skills into experiences that children enjoy and self-direct is absolutely brilliant. If they pick up these skills and apply them in their own daily activities, they are more likely to retain the concepts and apply it in other situations.

I have been amazed at the progress my daughter has made learning letters, using math skills and pursuing knowledge related to reading and writing during the last year. Even though her day isn't structured around reading, writing and arithmetic, she is constantly demonstrating new knowledge. Frankly, I can't believe it took me so long to understand how she learns best. But perhaps I needed my own meaningful experience to finally understand how the learning actually works.



Another quote from the "Developmentally Appropriate.." article (see page one):

"Discovering what works best for all children requires knowledge of each child, knowledge of how children learn and clear learning outcomes. With these core components in place, other program areas can be planned, such as physical environment, teaching strategies, classroom management, materials, curriculum, evaluation, family education, staffing and staff development. The developmentally appropriate practices approach to early childhood education uses this framework. When all early childhood programs begin to respond to the individual needs of the learner, work within the context of realistic developmental expectations and use meaningful learning experiences, all children will benefit."

Donations

Preschool & Kindergarten

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ⊙ Glue Sticks
- ⊙ Washable Tempera Fingerpaints
- ⊙ Dry Erase Markers

On-going Donations:

- ⊙ Kleenex
- ⊙ Playdoh
- ⊙ 100% Juice
- ⊙ Masking Tape

Donations

Infant & Toddler

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ⊙ Red and Pink Construction Paper
- ⊙ Valentine Stickers
- ⊙ Small Lunch Sacks
- ⊙ Paper Plates

On-going Donations:

- ⊙ 100% Juice
- ⊙ Crackers
- ⊙ Kleenex
- ⊙ Wipes

Birthdays

Julie RoseJan. 18
Linda Maack.....Jan. 23
Joleen Podtburg.....Jan. 23
Tami Britton.....Jan. 29

Mark Your Calendars . . . Upcoming Events & Important Dates!

Wednesday, January 4

Back in Session! We hope your holidays were filled with lots of family fun and relaxation!

January 16 & 17

Full Day Discovery Days

Friday, February 17

Annual Family Night (Children's Activities, Spaghetti Dinner and Basket Auction)

Thursday, March 2

Open House

Community Events Held at First-Plymouth Church

Open to Everyone!

"Rebuilding" After Divorce Workshop

Based on the Rebuilding Workbook by Bruce Fisher, Ed.D. Join facilitator, Kathy Foster Lehnert, LMHP, starting Tues. Jan. 24-March 14, 7-8:30 PM in Calvert Parlor at First-Plymouth. \$25 (includes book and materials). Call Addie at 476-7550 or email addie@firstplymouth.org to register.

Two New Pilates Classes Offered

Pilates Classes (six sessions) taught by church member, Deborah McCauley, \$30. Thursdays: Jan. 19-Feb. 23, 5:30-6:15PM in the Chapel. Mondays: Jan. 23-Feb. 27, from 9-9:45AM in the Youth Room. Send check to First-Plymouth, attn: Addie, 2000 D St., Lincoln, NE 68502. Indicate class you are enrolling in. Limited Enrollment.

Ballroom Dancing with a Hint of Latin

Four Thursdays in February, 2, 9, 16, & 23, from 6:30-8 PM in Mayflower Hall. \$20 per person. Sign up with a partner or come solo and we'll try to match up pairs. Put on your dancing shoes and dance away the winter blues. Taught by Don & Polly Anderson (please write checks out to Polly Anderson)

Grief Recovery Workshop coming

Explore the dynamics of grief and recovery from a loss of any kind. Topics include Staying Open to Grief, Grief Recovery: How Does it Work? Confusion About Stages, When Is It Time to Begin to Recover? Myths about Dealing with Grief, Not Knowing What to Say, and Participating in Your Own Recovery. Nine Tuesdays, April 18, 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13 from 7-8:30 PM, Calvert Parlor. Cost \$50, includes workbook. Led by Becky Walkowiak, RN, LMHP and Laurie Reinsch, LMHP.

In & Around Our Community

Pioneers Park Free Hikes

Jan. 7-8: Insects in Winter
Jan. 14-15: Mammals in Winter

Jan. 6-8

Sesame Street Live! "Super Grover, Ready For Action" Tickets from \$11.50 to \$17.50 Performances are 7PM Jan. 6, 10:30AM and 2PM on Jan. 7 and 2PM on Jan. 8. Good seats remain, on sale now. Pershing Center, 226 Centennial Mall South, box office 441-7766, open noon to 5PM M-F and during events on evenings and weekends. www.pershingcenter.com

Newsletters and Program information can be found on-line . . .
www.firstplymouth.org or dimensionsfoundation.org