



April 10, 2006

First-Plymouth Early Education Programs
Dimensions Research Classrooms

DIMENSIONS
Educational Research Foundation
dimensionsfoundation.org

NEWS

Executive Director's Message

by Nancy Rosenow

Announcing our New Dimensions Resources for Educators and Families!

We're very excited to share with you...before anyone else...our new Dimensions catalog that offers resources for educators and families based on all the research on visual-spatial learning that we've been engaged in here since 1998. For all of our families, we'd like for you to be able to order anything in our catalog WITHOUT paying the shipping or handling fee, so just cross that off the order form!! Coming at the end of April, we'll have e-commerce capabilities on our website so you will be able to order any items that way as well.

The first DVD (or VHS, if you prefer), called "Add New Dimensions to Learning!" gives an overview of how adding more experiences with building, nature and movement can enhance children's learning in enjoyable ways. You'll notice that some of our staff, as well as many of our national consultants, appear in the DVD. And many of the scenes of children were shot here as well!

Our Nature Explore materials have all been developed in collaboration with

the National Arbor Day Foundation. From the Nature Explore Club stories and activities to the Nature Explore Camp this summer in Nebraska City, there are wonderful resources that will help you and your child(ren) enjoy the wonders of nature together!

The Building Box Series features wonderful hand-crafted materials that will last for years to come, as well as great ideas to inspire children's creativity and learning in many ways.

Building Box – Towers includes:

- A top-quality, hand-crafted set of building blocks (made from natural, renewable, sturdy wood)
- Three replicas of famous towers (made from durable, earth-friendly pewter)
- Four large Photo-Fact Cards that tell fun stories about the replica towers... and about a tower that nature made!
- 16 water-proof, tear-resistant Image Cards that come with great activities to spark children's imaginations and strengthen skills in mathematics and literacy
- A fun Idea Book that will inspire children to use the Look-Move-Build-Sketch model as they explore all the wonderful items in their Towers Building Box

A Reminder about No School on Thursday, April 13 and Friday, April 14

Don't forget that we'll be closed for Spring break! We will be open again on Monday, April 17. And...remember that we will be closed on Friday, April 28 so that all of our teachers can attend the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children Regional Conference in Omaha. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to attend this wonderful event. We will be able to attend sessions presented from great speakers from around the country, and we will also be presenting two different sessions about our new Dimensions resources (including one focused primarily on helping children connect with nature).

A Reminder about Summer Registrations

Some of our summer sessions are filling quickly, so you might want to turn in summer registration forms soon if you haven't already done so. If you'd like to discuss a different payment plan (instead of paying a large part of the summer tuition up front), please speak with Linda Maack, our Financial Director, and she'll be happy to work with you.

Summer Volunteer Opportunities

We offer the opportunity for young people (who have completed fifth grade) to volunteer in our classrooms during the summer.

Volunteering is a great opportunity for youth to get many types of experience which will be invaluable as they mature into young adults.

If you have questions or would like more information, please call Michelle Zimmer at 476-8087 or email her at michelle@firstplymouth.org

Children's Activities

Happenings from Individual Groups

At a recent staff meeting teachers shared descriptions of some of the developmentally appropriate activities they've enjoyed recently in each individual group. We thought you'd enjoy reading about some of them:

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Knowing when to give a child their own space. Even infants and toddlers need this.

XXXXXX

In Toddler "B" we read the stories all week long. This works very well. Children love the repetition and often become the storytellers.

XXXXXX

We sing songs during transition times using sounds like La, la, la, la (the L sound) or Ta, ta, ta, ta, (the T sound) We read and spell the names of each child together as a group. J O E L identifying letters in the name with the person. I love our story times. It creates an appreciation and enjoyment of the written words, illustrations or oral storytelling.



XXXXXX

Make letters with your bodies.

XXXXXX

We (our group) has listened to a "beautiful" song several times during circle time and begun to learn the words. Then we added basic signs with our hands to the song. Now our children, even the youngest, can proudly sign and sing some words to this song, even showing their signs and singing for other children (groups) and teachers!

XXXXXX

Telling stories at lunchtime. Reading a rhyming story and having children pick out the rhyming words. Reading ABC books and taking time to point out whose names start with each letter.

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Dumping a box of silver coins in the middle of the block area we found that children gave us rich vocabulary describing the sound the coins made. Negotiating conversations, dividing coins, filling and dumping, placing whole body on top of the pile of coins and pretending it was snow to make snow angels. Multi-sensory experience.

Thoughts for Parents

The Importance of Helping Young Children Connect with Nature

"Many children today find it easier to stay indoors and watch television. I worry that children do not know what they are missing. Children cannot love what they do not know. They cannot miss what they have not experienced."

Mary Pipher, *The Shelter of Each Other*

"It is quite possible for today's child to grow up without ever having taken a solitary walk beside a stream, or spent the hours we used to foraging for pine cones, leaves, feathers and rocks – treasures more precious than store-bought ones. Today it is difficult to tear children away from the virtual world of the mall to introduce them to the real one."

Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, *The Geography of Childhood*

Research shows a dramatic decline in the amount of time children spend in the out-of-doors. Sandra Hoffert and John Sandberg (2000) cite the following statistics: Between 1981 and 1997, the amount of time U.S. children aged 6-8 spent playing outdoors decreased by four hours per week while the amount of time they spent indoors in school increased by almost 5 hours per week.

Today's children need more positive interactions with nature. One result of the reduction of children's direct experiences with the natural world is the rise of what researchers refer to as

biophobia or ecophobia, a fear of the natural world and environmental issues. David Sobel, in his article "Beyond Ecophobia", explains that "what is emerging is a strange kind of schizophrenia. Children are disconnected from the world outside their doors and connected with endangered animals and ecosystems through electronic media." Sobel goes on to explain that children are being exposed to frightening environmental issues at an early age, but are not first being given the opportunity to develop close personal connections with nature. "If we want children to flourish," Sobel says, "to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it."



Here in our programs we want children to have a chance to develop a sense of wonder about nature as they grow their

own vegetables in our greenhouse, take care of our worm beds, plant a new tree together, or play hide-and-seek games in the pathways that wind through native grasses and flowers. Children flourish as they spend time in nature, and their sense of themselves as kind, nurturing people increases. We hope you and your family find many opportunities to go outdoors together and enjoy the wonders of nature together as well!

Recent Events

Thanks to all....

...who helped make the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" Concert and Children's Festival a wonderful experience for all!

Some of our kindergartners participated in the performance as the broom army and water, and did a wonderful job! Here are some of the photos from that evening:



Mark your calendars for our Family Picnic & Farmer's Market... on our Nature Explore Classroom ...May 19.

Become a lasting part of the First-Plymouth Outdoor Classroom & Neighborhood Gathering Space....

...by purchasing an inscribed 4"x8" brick to be placed in the walking paths.

Each \$50 brick can include up to 27 letters.

Inscribe your family name, your children's, parents' or grandparents' names, a favorite pet ...anyone you would like to remember with this long-lasting honor or memorial.

To purchase your 4"x8" brick(s), please pick up a form (by any of the black boxes or in the Preschool office), fill it out and include a check made out to "First-Plymouth Early Education Programs."

Call 476-8304 for more information. Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs is a nationally accredited 501(c)3 organization.

Thank you for adding to the beauty of this wonderful space for children, families and our whole community!

Donations

Preschool & Kindergarten

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ✂ Craft feathers
- ✂ Masking tape
- ✂ Bubbles
- ✂ Sidewalk Chalk
- ✂ Craft Sticks
- ✂ Playdoh

On-going Donations:

- ✂ Kleenex
- ✂ Staplers
- ✂ Tape
- ✂ Small Dixie Cups
- ✂ Glue Sticks

Donations

Infant & Toddler

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ✂ Spring Colored Construction Paper
- ✂ Sidewalk Chalk
- ✂ Bubbles
- ✂ Playdoh
- ✂ Potting Soil

On-going Donations:

- ✂ Paper Towels
- ✂ Kleenex
- ✂ Small Dixie Cups
- ✂ 100% Fruit Juice

April Birthdays

Shelley Moser	8
Kris Van Laningham	14
Suzan Haley	18
Kathy Perry	20

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

April 13 & 14...NO SCHOOL for Spring Break

April 28...NO SCHOOL for Midwest AEYC Conference in Omaha

May 19...Family Picnic and Farmer's Market on our Nature Explore Classroom

May 24 & 25...Last day of Infant/Toddler and Preschool Sessions

May 29...NO SCHOOL for Memorial Day

May 30–June 2...Limited Summer Sessions Infant/Toddler ONLY

June 1...Last Day of Kindergarten Discovery Days Sessions

June 5...First Day of Summer Sessions

Community Events Held at First-Plymouth Church Open to Everyone!

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.

Tower Club II (Young Families/Young Couples)

Want to have fun and meet other couples with young children? Each month a group at First-Plymouth Church called Tower Club II meets for fun, fellowship and outreach to the community. If you would like to receive up-to-date information about events, please sign up for our e-messages. Please contact Staff Liaison, Addie Powell at 476-7550 or email addie@firstplymouth.org

In & Around Our Community

Pioneers Park Free Hikes

April 15-16: Buds & Blossoms
April 22-23: Earth Day Everyday

Lincoln Children's Zoo Opens: April 15

Baby Signs Parent Workshop

April 12. 6:30-8PM. Teaches babies & toddlers to communicate with their hands. Parents learn everything they need to know how to use Baby Signs. Pre-registration required. \$50 a couple (includes parent kit). (402) 617-0669; Union College, 3800 S. 48th St. www.babysignswithtracy.bravehost.com; babysignswithtracy@yahoo.com

Kids Fun Fair

April 22-23; 441-6545; Lancaster Event Center, 4100 N. 84th St.

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