

Making Connections with Each Other to Help Children Connect with Nature

Executive Director's Message

by Nancy Rosenow

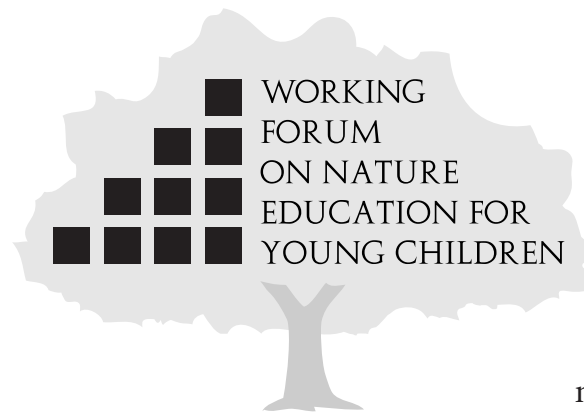
"Children are disappearing from the outdoors at a rate that would make them top of any conservationist's list of endangered species if they were any other member of the animal kingdom....Researchers are convinced of the depth of the connection between children's well-being and the environment, claiming that contact with nature may be as important to children as good nutrition and adequate sleep."

From Edward Gill's article, "If You Go Down to the Woods", in the Ecologist (October, 2005)

More and more research is showing that children need connections with the natural world as a regular part of their healthy growth and development, and are adversely affected if these connections do not take place often enough. Problems such as childhood obesity, biophobia (fear of the outdoors), and increased reliance on behavior-regulating medications are all being associated with children's disconnection from nature.

In response to these concerns,

an exciting group of early childhood educators, members of environmental organizations, and landscape designers and community planners from over 25 countries will be coming together this October at Arbor Day Farm in Nebraska City for a Working Forum on Nature



Education for Young Children. The Forum is being organized by the World Forum Foundation in collaboration with Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, The National Arbor Day Foundation, and Child Educational Center –m Caltech/JPL Community. Our staff is delighted that the Dimensions Foundation is serving as one of

the primary hosting/organizing groups for this event.

Other sponsors for the Forum include such international groups as The Nature Conservancy, Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots, Reggio Children, and the International Federation of Landscape Architects. Fifty people from around the world will be

serving as presenters and facilitators throughout the Forum, and will become the core of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children, a newly forming group dedicated to making nature education a sustaining and enriching part of the daily lives of the world's children.

Each one of our staff members will have the chance to participate in some way in this important event. Please be sure to watch for updates in future newsletters as the Forum occurs, and as follow-up plans emerge. We see exciting opportunities ahead for all of us, with our children benefiting the most!

Children's Activities...

Infant and Toddler Small Group Experiences

by Amy Jensen, Teacher

Small Group for our infants and toddlers is a time to be introduced to new materials and experiences. It gives them opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills with classic favorite activities as well. During these activities, we tend to focus on the process of the experiences. The whole experience is more important than the end product.

In planning small group, we start with a broad theme. Then we pick three activities related to that theme. We use these as the focal points for a week. For example, we used the pancake breakfast as a plan. We worked with circles all week long by coloring circles on circle placemats and making circle pancakes. We also talked about tables getting dirty when we eat, so one small group was cleaning tables.

It's important to have enough experiences for the children to choose from, but not too many. When one activity works really well, we can repeat it again and elaborate on the experience and allow the children to master different skills. Repetition is a key at this age.

This special time might not

Pancake Breakfast Thank You!...

A big thank you to the businesses who provided the delicious breakfast September 23:

- Ideal Grocery...milk and syrup
- Burger King...sausage and orange juice
- Stauffer's Cafe & Pie Shoppe...

include bringing home lots of finished products to hang on the refrigerator, but rather providing the children with a rich variety of experiences full of learning.

Discovery Days

Early Morning

Mrs. Guess and Mrs. Smith

Early Morning has been a combination of meeting new friends, getting acquainted with teachers and finding those special things in the room that make a great start to their day. Children are enjoying the train table, having parties in the house area and exploring the art area.

Late Day

Mrs. Hoover

We are enjoying the outdoor garden – harvesting and tasting tomatoes and beans. We made salsa using the tomatoes, garlic and peppers from the garden!

One afternoon I let the children choose any 10 blocks in the Block Area. One child used his blocks to make the letters in his name! (He was excited.)

Late afternoon Discovery Days children have discovered lines and dots in their snack food (for example, in their pretzels).

pancake ingredients; and especially for their time and expertise in preparing homemade pancakes.

We'd also like to thank all of the volunteers who help make events like this possible! We couldn't do it without you.



The New POGO Cards Are Here!

by Linda Maack, Financial Director

I'm very excited to announce that we have POGO cards for sale!

A poster and laminated copy of the card have been posted in both the preschool and infant/toddler halls.

See for yourself how many great deals are available! You have the potential to save hundreds of dollars between now and the end of 2008 for only \$20! (The cards make great gifts, too!)

The new POGO card includes 97 eating establishments, 5 golf courses, 3 miniature golf courses, and 30 businesses. Many of them are a buy-one, get-one-free offer and you will save LOTS of money.

Cards are available in each office or with an order form. We hope you will support this, as it is our ONLY fundraiser, outside of events, for this year.

I also appreciate your on-time tuition payments (due by the first day of each month) so that we can meet our financial obligations. If you have questions about your statement, please let me know. We're off to a great school year!

Children's Learning at Preschool and Discovery Days Small Group Times

by Ann Watt, Art Specialist

For the past month, your children have been acclimating themselves to the school year: getting to know their teachers, adjusting to a new environment, adapting to a new routine, meeting new friends.

The key word here is "new". During the part of the daily routine called Small Group Time, teachers provide children with experiences that they may never have encountered such as exploration of clay or paint. They also introduce children to new materials that they will find in the rooms during Worktime.

In an effort to keep things as simple as possible while at the same time engaging children in enjoyable activities, our Small Group curriculum plan follows a particular concept for a length of time. We have chosen "Dot and Line" for our overarching concept to start out the year.

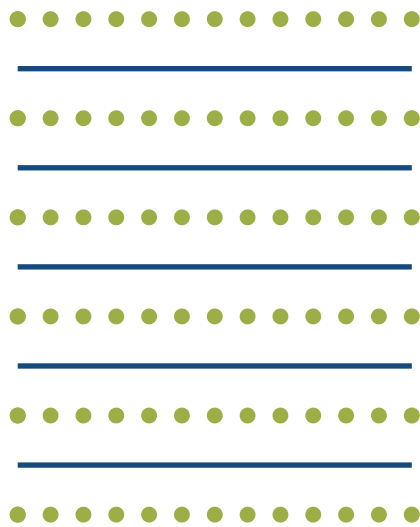
Dots and lines are basic to concepts found in both art and math and are also effective in teaching early literacy skills such as letter shapes and story sequence.

Children develop an understanding of concepts and make connections across disciplines.

For example, in exploring the

relationship between dots and lines children have been using not only art materials such as markers, crayons, watercolors, and oil pastels, but they have also been exploring body movement and music as they dance with scarves.

They have closely observed nature while looking for dots and lines during outdoor walks, while working in the greenhouse, and as they explore the outdoor classroom.



They have practiced their fine-motor skills as they formed dots and lines using pegboards, blocks, magnets, and scissors.

They have practiced early literacy skills by twisting pipe cleaners into letters of the

alphabet and using their fingers to trace letters and other shapes in the air while their teachers read books such as Harold and the Purple Crayon and The Dot.

This integrated curriculum plan is designed to help children explore and acquire the key concepts in ways that are comprehensible and accessible for their age.

As teachers provide many opportunities for children to plan, think about, reflect on, and revisit their own experiences, they increase the ability of children to make connections over time. This is the basis for critical thinking skills and creative thinking.



Thoughts for Parents

Birthdays...

We try to make sure birthdays are special days for every child by making decorated tags and singing to each birthday person.

If you would like to send a non-food treat, please consider stickers or special cups or napkins. Because of safety issues, no gum or balloons, please.

Dress for Outdoors...

We know (and our research confirms) that young children benefit tremendously from regular contact with nature and the outdoors. We'd like to ask that you please keep dressing your child for outdoor play so we can go out even when it truly becomes "Fall-like" weather. Thanks.

Spanish with Senora Smith

Children (of all ages) are enjoying meeting with Senora Jen Smith to learn words and phrases in Spanish. (Thanks to our children who are already fluent in Spanish for helping Senora Smith teach the rest of their friends.)

hello...hola

goodbye...adiós

see you next time (or, until then)...hasta luego

Donation Requests

Emergency Clothes

We are in need of some of the following items to replenish our emergency clothes supply. If you would like to donate any of the following, please put them on the shelf in the closet next to the elevator:

- Girls Underwear
- Boys Underwear
- Socks
- Pants (easy to get on and off; sizes 4, 5, 6 and 7)

Newsletter Paper

This issue of your child's newsletter marks a return to the larger 17x11 folded format (compared to the previous 14x8.5 size which we went to because we had that size of paper). Feedback tells us that you would like us to go back to the larger format. If anyone would like to donate a ream or two of 17x11 white paper, it would very much appreciated!

Preschool & Kindergarten

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ⊙ Glue Sticks
- ⊙ Fiskars Children's Scissors
- ⊙ Paper Punches

On-going Donations:

- ⊙ Toilet Paper Tubes
- ⊙ Small Boxes
- ⊙ Plastic Spoons
- ⊙ Plastic Forks
- ⊙ Paper Plates

Infant & Toddler

Needed for upcoming activities:

- ⊙ Pipe Cleaners
- ⊙ Shaving Cream

On-going Donations:

- ⊙ Plastic Spoons
- ⊙ Paper Plates

Staff Birthdays

Dana Miller10/13

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

October 9 ... Full Day Discovery Days

October 30-31 ... No School (Fall Break)

November 1, 2, 3 ... Full Day Discovery Days

November 14 ... Parent Workshop 7PM

November 15-17 ... Parent/Teacher Conferences

November 15-17 ... Holiday Gift Fair

November 17 ... Family Holiday Lunch

November 23-24 ... No School (Thanksgiving Break)

November 27 ... Full Day Discovery Days

Dec. 21–Jan. 2 ... No School (Winter Break)

Events Held at First-Plymouth Church Open to the whole community!

Tower Club II...

... is a First-Plymouth group of couples and families seeking to connect with others through friendship, fellowship and service to the community. Their next event is Oktoberfest, Sat. October 14, 6:30 PM, at Amanda & Garrick Dabbs home. Traditional ale and Brats will be provided, bring something to drink with (ex. a cup/mug/stein) and a side dish (German if you like) to share. Call or email the Dabbs at 202-3086 or amgardabbs@yahoo.com to RSVP. For info. call 476-7550.

4th Annual Chili Cook-Off Challenge Fundraiser

The First-Plymouth Singles Ministry is sponsoring their 4th Annual Chili Cook-Off and Raffle Fundraiser at First-Plymouth Church (20th & D Streets), Sunday, Oct. 22, from 5-7:30 PM. Many of the church's ministries will have their own booth and chili recipe (including the First-Plymouth Early Education team!). All proceeds will benefit Lincoln's Friendship Home, First-Plymouth's Early Education Program, First-Plymouth Youth Mission Trips, IYA Matt Talbot's Kitchen Fund, and Lincoln's Inter-Faith Housing Coalition. Taste different chili recipes and vote for your favorite. Tickets \$5 if purchased before the event; \$7 at the door. Children under 5 admitted free. Call 476-7550 for tickets or more info. Come support the First-Plymouth Early Education team!

First-Plymouth Halloween Ball

Sunday, October 29, 6-8 PM at First-Plymouth Church. All ages are welcome to attend this Halloween Fun filled night. Enjoy games, activities and other Halloween fun! Call Kathie at 476-7550 for more information.

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