



Reminders...

... watch the weather when dressing your child for the day. We spend as much time outside as we can and want everyone to be comfortable.

... school will be closed

December 20–January 2 for our Winter Break. Remember, this is longer than LPS's Break. ... We will **NOT** follow Lincoln Public School's Calendar, but most vacation days and **ALL EMERGENCY weather closings of LPS** announced on the radio **will be observed by our program. If LPS is not** in session we will follow the Catholic School weather closing announcements.

Mark your calendars

Dec. 5-7... Annual Book & Toy Fair. Accomplish your holiday shopping without hunting for parking spaces! Scholastic Books, Discovery Toys, the always popular POGO Cards and products from our Nature Explore™ Sourcebook will be on display. A pizza lunch will also be available on Friday (order by today Tues., Dec. 4)! **Febr. 1...** Annual Family Night including a Spaghetti Feed and Basket Auction. We'll have fun activities for the entire family. Bring the whole gang, including your extended family and neighbors!

Nature Explore Family Club (NEFC)

The next meeting of the Nature Explore Family Club will be downtown at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, 12th and R Sts., Sunday, December 9 between 2 and 4 p.m., in the third floor lobby.

You are invited to take part in the Dimensions Reception to view prairie-inspired works of art created by the children in our program. Families will have the opportunity to see the many different ways teachers and children have extended their learning by bringing nature inside. We'll also hand out a nature activity you can try outdoors during the month! Contact Chris Kiewra (chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org) with any questions.

*Contributed by Chris Kiewra
Family Programs Coordinator*

Pre-reading and early literacy skills outgrowth of Spring Creek Prairie visits

By Barbie Jensen, Teacher

Who knew that three-, four-, and five-year-olds could interpret a part of their prairie fieldtrip experience by sketching "landscapes" and then painting them with watercolors?!

Since the beginning of the school year, our group has become familiar with a number of pre-reading and early literacy skills such as drawing lines, making dots, and finding shapes.

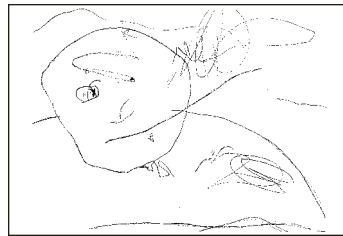
Following our prairie visit, the children were introduced to the work of two Nebraska artists – "Light in Late August" (a landscape of the Platte Valley), an oil on canvas painting by Keith Jacobshagen; and, a color photograph of a rural landscape with hay bales on Nebraska Highway 6 by Dana Miller.

We talked about the word

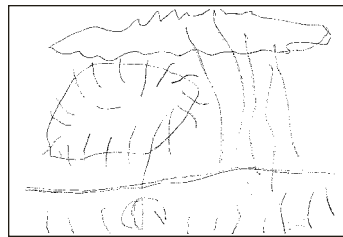
"horizon" and learned that it means where the earth meets the sky. The children connected this concept to their visit to Spring Creek Prairie by putting pencil to paper and moving their lines across the paper to create their own horizons. Other details from their experience were then added

to the sketch.

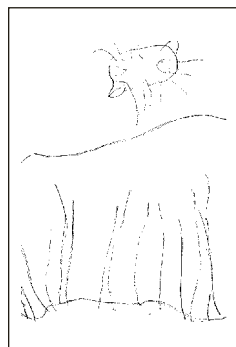
Copies were made of each child's original artwork to give them the option of working with different mediums to express the information they gained about the prairie and how it changes during the seasons (late summer, fall, winter and spring).



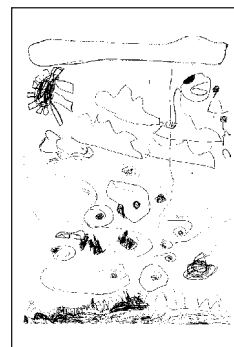
Nathanael T. – age 4



Levi D. – age 3



Sam L. – age 3



Gillian K. – age 4



Prairie exploration experiences adapted for Infants



Infants have been enjoying their own experiences with textures and the prairie.

Some of the older children visited the preschool Nature Explore™ Classroom and walked in the garden among the prairie



grasses. They also played with leaves and tasted herbs from the garden.

Mrs. Hoover helped us create a sculpture with plant pieces in styrofoam for our "greenhouse activity." We used soft dusty miller and lambs ear leaves and some pokey yew branches.

We also read books full of textures to touch, looked at pictures in NebraskaLand magazines, and listened to music with nature sounds by

William Eaton (Mrs. Jensen's brother!).

Lucy and Drew also experienced the first snow of the year when they braved the cold with teachers Miss Kris and Miss Joleen!

by Denise Topil



Teaching the joy of giving

By Michelle Zimmer
Parent and Programs Director

Setting up opportunities

Teaching to be a gracious giver is not something that we should expect from our children JUST at the holiday season. As with everything we teach children, they learn from repetition and it is up to us to provide opportunities for them to be able to give to others and be excited about it in the context of their own world.

We have a tradition in our house that started from the time our oldest son had his first "friend" birthday party. As the closets and toy boxes overflowed with toys, my husband and I decided that Logan simply didn't need all the presents he would get from his friends, and all the gifts he was also going to get from his "family" party. We began a tradition that gifts given at the "friend" party would then be donated and, since Logan and now Caden have been at Dimensions, the gifts go to the program. They both love helping me come up with the list of items they think their friends might want to bring and that the program "needs". Since this is their daily world and the items they help me come up with go right into the classrooms where they get to use them, they would become very excited about using "their birthday gifts". Now that Logan is older and he picks the place to donate, the key is that what he picks are things that are important to him. And no, I have never had a question about why they can't get the gifts. It has just become part of our birthday tradition.

Taking the time

As we rush around this holiday season, it is really important to take time to stop and realize that we aren't going to teach our children anything about the joy of the season, and especially the joy of giving, if we don't give them a chance to help in this process. Sometimes it's easier to do all the purchasing without the kids, but they are missing out on the excitement and happiness that comes from giving a gift that really means something to

them (and remember, it doesn't always have to be purchased.)

Let me tell you how Caden opened my eyes to this life's lesson. We went shopping to pick out gifts for all his teachers last year and as we were standing in the aisle I asked him if he would like to give this particular gift that I picked out to his teachers. He said no and picked up this very interesting polka-dot candle holder and said that is what he wanted to give them. We spent some time going back and forth about what he should get his teachers. (I just couldn't let him get those polka-dot candleholders – I work there and what would everyone think!!) Of course, after some very nice motherly persuasion, we chose what I wanted. Well, my husband took Caden shopping for my Christmas gift (at the same store) and guess what I got for Christmas? I opened my present on Christmas and staring back at me was that polka-dot candleholder. Obviously this was something that was beautiful to him and I should have respected that and let him get it for his teachers.

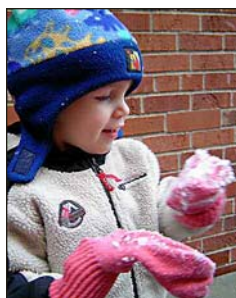


Becoming part of "their world"

Since parents sometimes ask at this time of year what our teachers would like to have for the program, we came up with a list (see list at right) of items for their classrooms. This is by no means something that you should feel obligated to do, but since there are parents who like to give in honor of the teachers here are some suggestions to help with your gift-giving. If you would like to choose something off our list, I encourage you to involve your child in the process of buying the gift and giving it to the teacher. It is exciting for them to see the gift in the Block Area or read the book at Small Group Time. I guarantee you, you will hear about it when you pick them up!

So remember to stop for a moment during this holiday season and let your children have that joy of giving; then find other ways throughout the year to teach them this fulfilling way of life.

Snowflakes fall on excited toddler friends



Toddler A friends were delighted to explore the first

snow fall from inside and were full of anticipation to go outside to play in the snow.

Nathan was excited that the snow clung to his mittens. The children caught snowflakes on their tongues and made tracks with their feet. Lazlo tried to "blow" the snow from a teacher's hands.

contributed by Kathy Perry

Newsletter photos contributed by Theresa Frey, Kris Steckmeyer-Hajny, Beth Pauley, and Denise Topil

snow of the season this year! They watched



Holiday Wish List for Early Education Programs

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| Small Colored Wooden Blocks (Gordman's, Shopko, etc.) | Animal (Earl May) Wooden Birthday Cake or Pizza (Toys R Us) | Pipe Cleaners Craft Sticks |
| Brio Trains Small Cars and Trucks CD Players Magnatiles (See Mrs. Van Laningham) | Healthy Plastic Food (for House Area) Shape Sorters (for Infant Room) Board & Plastic Books (for Infant Room) | <i>Plants for the Greenhouse: (can be purchased at local Garden Centers):</i> Staghorn fern Polka-dot plant Orchids (ask for easy-grow varieties) |
| Bike for the Gym (See Office for Details) Books for Library (See Book Fair Teacher Wish Lists) | <i>Disposable Items:</i> Glue Sticks Washable Markers Crayola Watercolors Construction paper Rolls of Scotch Tape (for Dispensers) | Cactus Christmas Cactus Heliotrope Arborescens (or ask what might grow in a greenhouse kept at 55°) |
| Farm & Wild Animals & Insects (London Bridge Toy Store) Cardinal Stuffed | | |

Art display at Lied Center this month

By Ann Watt, Art Specialist

Artwork created by Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs students will be displayed at the Lied Center for Performing Arts during the month of December. We are proud to be participants in the Center's "Studio For Students" program for the fourth year in a row.

This year's artwork features individuals as well as groups and represents learning processes based

on children's interests and ideas following fall visits to Audubon Spring Creek Prairie in Denton.

The exhibit, on the third floor balcony lobby, is open for viewing weekdays, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., and during Lied Center performances. A reception will be held Sunday, December 9, from 2-4 p.m. I hope you will take some time during this holiday season to enjoy the exhibit and support our student artists!



Toddler B enjoys nature experiences

Children have been enjoying learning about the prairie in a variety of ways the past couple of weeks – by walking the path through the prairie grasses in the Preschool Nature Explore Classroom, watching video taken at Spring Creek Prairie, and, by taking a barefoot walk through natural items that can be found in the prairie.

Barefoot children stepped in and out of trays filled with various textures like leaves, damp dirt, small rocks, dried grasses, or sand. Some of the Toddlers said the dirt felt

"squishy" under their feet. The children created their own nature paths by having the soles of their feet painted

(they said it felt "ticky"!) and then walking on sheets of paper! This was a fun experience emphasizing use of our senses of touch and smell. It was also great for using lots of vocabulary words to describe textures and scents!

Contributed by Chris Kiewra, Teacher



Nature Explore™ Classrooms are part of a national initiative involving the partnership of Dimensions and the Arbor Day Foundation.

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