



**Reminders...**

...Mark your calendars for the Family Picnic on May 16.  
...No school May 26 (Memorial Day).  
...Last day of sessions for Infant/Toddler and Preschool is May 29.

**Nature Explore™ Family Club 2008 Calendar**

(10:30AM-Noon)  
May 10... Arbor Day Farm Picnic following

**Donations requested...**  
*Rolling out the red floral carpet –or– Hoping for Hummingbirds*

We are hoping to attract migrating hummingbirds to our Nature Explore™ Classroom. If we are successful, they may stay throughout the month of May. Here are some of the items that would help if you would like to make a donation:

- 2-4 hummingbird feeders
- nectar concentrate liquid or powder
- 2-4 shepherd's hooks, 4' to 5' tall
- 2 shepherd's hooks, 6' or taller
- Red flowering plants (tubular flowers produce the most nectar): Impatiens, Clematis, Coral bells, Geraniums, Azaleas, Begonias, Bee balm, Snap dragons, Honeysuckle (Lonicera), Fuchsia, Cannas (We are growing Foxglove, Hollyhocks, Larkspur and Sage in the greenhouse which will also attract hummers.)

**Fun hummingbird facts:**

- Hummingbird nests are 2 inches across and made from bud scales, lichens and spider silk.
- Hummingbirds eat fruit flies, aphids, small spiders and other invertebrate insects.

Information courtesy of the Wild Bird Habitat Stores, 56th & Hwy 2 and 1742 N. 48th St., Lincoln.

**Bookshelf**

- Counting in the Garden*  
by Kim Parker
- The Giving Tree*  
by Shel Silverstein
- Growing Vegetable Soup*  
by Lois Ehlert
- What Mommies Do Best*  
by Laura Numeroff
- Is Your Mama a Llama*  
by Steven Kellogg
- The Mother's Day Mice*  
by Eve Bunting
- What Color is Nature*  
by Stephen Swinburne
- In My World*  
by Lois Ehlert
- If You're Not from the Prairie*  
by David Bouchard
- Let's Dance*  
by George Ancona

**Visual recall of outdoor experience connects literacy and nature**

By Katie Sharp

Earlier this month, on a sunny spring day, Mrs. Jensen and I took our friends outside. I was expecting to only have fun enjoying the spring weather, but I am still surprised at the tremendous learning from that experience and the ones following.

The children enjoyed running on and rolling down a grassy hill outside of our school. They found a slope and transformed it into a slide. A large tree on the corner of the grass made the perfect hiding spot for hide-and-seek and tag. We enjoyed ourselves so much that the following week I spent small group time telling and recalling the story of our time outside.

**Recall time**

The children sat on the floor in front of the white board. I reminded them of the day we played outside and asked them to tell me what they remembered. The first thing was the hill. I asked, "How could I draw a hill?" Many children used their fingers to draw an arch in the air. I drew an arch on the board. To add more details, I asked, "Where is the hill at?" The children responded, "At school!" I drew a building.



Shannon K., age 4, tries the "slide." She later recalled playing tag with Andrew and Mrs. Sharp.

Emily asked, "Where are the bells?" I drew a tower shape and a few bells. Emily then said, "There's more bells all the way down." I added more bells to the tower. Then I asked what else they saw. Someone said "A slide!"

"How should I draw a slide?" I asked. The children showed me a downward line with their fingers. To practice adding details to a story, I asked, "What was by the slide?" They immediately responded, "Steps!"

**In their own words**

To help the children feel control and ownership of the story and drawings, I continued to ask questions. "How should I draw steps?" John Y. remembered a day that he and I had drawn a stair-step building he created in the block area, and he responded, "Like this." He used his finger to draw a step-like line in the air and I drew it on the board.

"What else did we do out there?" Seth responded, "We played tag." The children told me to draw people, so I drew two stick figures, one reaching toward the other. Then they started to remember

details of the landscape bushes, trees, the tree with 'honey', and the blueberry tree.

The tree with 'honey' is a large pine tree that the children can walk under. On the trunk of this tree are several knots and Angelito noticed that inside the



Connor N., age 4: my favorite thing was rolling down the hill. I was going fast at the top.



knots is a honey-like substance. The blueberry tree is another pine-like shrub or tree that has small bluish grey berries on it. We had stopped to observe this tree on a previous outdoor adventure.

I drew each thing they recalled with their specifications. We added more bushes. We then remembered that we had rolled down the hill. I asked, "How should I draw that?" They responded, "With a person." I showed them how we had drawn people when they were playing tag, "Should I draw the person that way or should the person be like this (holding my hand horizontally)?" They said the person should be horizontal. Then I drew a stretched out coil line to show movement. I told them sometimes you can draw a line like this to show other people what is happening.

**A story in pictures**

Connor said, "I thought we were writing a story?" I answered, "We are. Are you thinking that there are not any words?" He nodded. I said, "Sometimes stories have words, but today we aren't using words for our story. What are we using?"

"Pictures!" We went back through

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**Celebrate Nature with Dimensions' New Artist's Garden...**

**Celebrate Nature...**

...and your child's sense of wonder that comes from first-hand experience in nature with the support of a caring adult.  
...as seen through the lens of the child's eye and interpreted through the languages of the art.  
...and the artist in every child with the creation of the Artist's Garden.



The arts are vital to the growth, development and self-expression of children. Our goal is to transform some of our Preschool Nature Explore Classroom space into a combination garden and children's art studio with a layout of small tables and stools for children to sit at when creating sketches, paintings and sculptures. This space will be tucked into the garden area beside butterflies and blossoms.

This is an optional fundraiser to help fund Dimensions' Artist's Garden on the Nature Explore Classroom. Artist Bob Hall has been commissioned to create beautiful, watercolor sketches of children on handmade paper approximately 6"x6" in size.

The sketches will be informal. Mr. Hall hopes to capture the



natural essence of children while they are engaged in work time.

Porridge Papers, 1422 South Street (www.porridgepapers.com), has continued their generous support of our programs with the donation of the homemade paper for this project.

Additional information and forms can be found next to the black payment boxes or by calling the office.

## Spatial learning documented

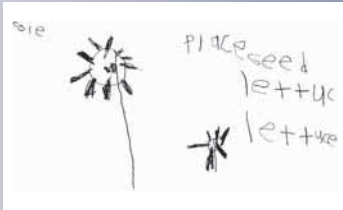
A recent activity in the greenhouse provided children with a spatial learning experience – that seeds and plants need their own place.

Left: Cole D., age 5, wrote the words “place” and “lettuce” to go with his drawing.

Center: Ty H., age 5, shows his awareness of the many little cells within the seed flat and that each seed has its own space.

These drawings represent the children’s awareness of the greenhouse and of space.

While in the greenhouse children will also include other items in their drawings that they were attracted to like the flower (right) that Jagger A., age 5, drew.



contributed by Holly Murdoch



An integral part of learning about drums at school this year has been each child’s opportunity to build their own drum. Toddler B children painted the frames of their drums before they were taped to create the drumming surface. Children were quite engaged in the whole process; one toddler even noted the similarity between wrapping the drum with tape and a caterpillar wrapping itself in it’s chrysalis! Keenan L., is thoughtfully watercolor painting his drum.

contributed by Chris Kiewra

## Nature Explore Family Club Notes

Submitted by Chris Kiewra, Mark Humpert, and Brooke Levey

The Nature Explore Families’ Club has enjoyed another year together! As our school year nears the end, we want to thank you for fantastic memories and wonderful times outdoors.

### Arbor Day Farm

Once again we are holding our last club event in Nebraska City at Arbor Day Farm, May 10th, 10:30AM-Noon. Because of our collaborative partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation they have generously agreed to waive the admission fee for all participants! Tree seedlings are not included with our admission but can be purchased separately. There is also a new Discovery Ride (tickets: adults/\$3.50; children 3-12/\$2.50; 2 and under/free) which will take people on a tour of the Farm. After exploring, families are invited to bring their own picnic lunch and meet at the tables just outside Tree Adventure. Remember, anyone is welcome to attend whether you have been to any previous activities or not! Please RSVP to Chris Kiewra at 476-8304 or [chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org](mailto:chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org) (so we have an idea for how many will be attending).

### Fishing

Although our fishing day was cancelled due to weather, we encourage you all to try fishing on your own.

Some helpful tips from Nebraska Game and Parks Fishing Guides:

- use simple equipment
- don’t force children to bait or remove fish from hooks,
- use your time together to share stories and enjoy nature all around you.

Information packets full of tips from Game and Parks are available in the holders near the Preschool and Infant/Toddler payment boxes. Feel free to take one home!

### Green Hour

The National Wildlife Federation sponsors an on-line program called “Green Hour” to encourage everyone to spend at least one hour outside daily. Visit their website at [www.greenhour.org](http://www.greenhour.org) to sign up for the free program. You will receive fun weekly tips for nature play with your children (a great opportunity to take advantage of over the summer). The same website also offers Nature Find (under “Get Involved”): enter your zip code to find nearby locations to get out to and enjoy!



Nature Explore Family Club members listen to Brooke Levey at Arbor Day Farm last year.

## Visual recall (cont.)

the pictures we had so far, and I ‘read’ them the story of our trip outside.

Seth remembered he was hiding behind the tree so I drew a face peeking out from the tree. Andrew said he remembered hiding behind the bushes, so I drew a face peeking up from behind the bushes. John remembered that Anna and he had hid behind the wall. I drew a wall with a face peeking out from behind it.

The last detail we added was another hill because the children remembered we also ran down the hill. I drew a person on the hill, and then we also added the stepping stones that are located in the ground at the top of the hill.

Then I told the children they would get their own piece of paper to tell the story of being outside. With markers, they spent several minutes depicting what they remembered from being outside that day.

Connor’s favorite thing was rolling down the hill. Anna liked that too. Shannon wrote about playing tag with Andrew and I. Jake wrote about running. I spent time talking to every child about their story and writing the words they told me.

### Nature and literacy connect

The following staff meeting fit perfectly with this event. We discussed the connection of nature and literacy. Our picture drawing/story telling is a perfect age-appropriate way to record the event that took place outside.

The next Wednesday at small group time we returned to the same room. The children immediately noticed that the pictures had been erased, but that they were still visible. So we went back through and rewrote our story. They remembered every detail! Alexander had been gone the first day we wrote; he added some new details to our story. At the top of the hill with the stones, he remembered a gate. I drew the gate the way he told me to. The children then remembered the tunnel that borders the courtyard area of the church. After deciding how to draw the tunnel, I drew an arch above the hill with the



John Y., age 5, whisks down the “slide.”

He remembered “the wind was blowing when we were running.”



stones. The children were satisfied and we continued with our other plan for small group.

### The importance of experiences

This seemingly insignificant outdoor event turned into an enriching literary and visual recall experience. My main goal in going outside was for the children to have fun. When I decided to draw about the outdoor time I was not sure how well it would go. I had forgotten to take into account the importance of experiences for children. This would not have been as successful if the children had read a story about going outdoors. They were so eager to portray this event because they had a physical and visual memory of what had happened.

Children have an amazing ability to recall from visual memory events in which they have actively participated. When children have the opportunity to move their bodies or manipulate something, it helps them to make concrete connections in their brains.

I also cannot forget that these children had time to process. The outdoor event took place on a Wednesday, we did not attempt to recall it until the following Monday. This time lapse allowed them to process the event and store it in their visual memory. We were then able to recall and describe the event with details.

After this wonderful, inspiring experience, I have been reminded that for children movement and time (and fun!) are powerful memory aides.

Photos by Chris Kiewra, Beth Pauley and Katie Sharp

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](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org) or [www.firstplymouth.org](http://www.firstplymouth.org)