



UPCOMING EVENTS...

January 22 & 23... Pajama Days; mark your calendars!

February 6... Family Night.

February 16... We will be closed.

Reminders/Requests...

♥ Watch your child's cubbie this week for our upcoming Family Club event flyer.

♥ We are always in need of mittens for children to borrow when they forget theirs so if you have any extras you would like to donate please give them to your child's teacher.

♥ Please dress children in layers and label all outerwear. Unless the weather is dangerously cold or snowing heavily time outdoors is an important part of every day.

♥ Family Night is Febr. 6... Save your baskets, ribbon or bows, we will gladly reuse them for the upcoming basket auction and watch your child's cubbie this week for our Family Night letter and information.

Thank you to...

♥ parents for your prompt payments over the winter break.

Donations...

- Kleenex
- Glue sticks
- Craft sticks (popsicle size)
- Playdoh
- Brown paper bags
- Band-aids

Helpful early literacy resources:

National Reading Panel

www.nationalreadingpanel.org

Reading Is Fundamental

www.rif.org

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)

www.ciera.org

National Institute for Literacy

www.nifl.org

National Institute for Early Education Research

www.nieer.org

National Black Child Development Institute

www.nbcdi.org

National Education Association

www.nea.org/parents/preparechild.html

Bookshelf

All You Need For a Snowman

by Alice Schertle

Cat and Mouse in the Snow

by Tomek Bogacki

First Snow in the Woods

by Carl R. Sams

The Hat

by Jan Brett

The Jacket I Wear in the Snow

by Shirley Neitzel

Look, Look... (Winter)

by Claire Warden

The Missing Mitten Mystery

by Steven Kellogg

We will **NOT** follow Lincoln Public School's Calendar, but will follow **ALL EMERGENCY weather closings of LPS announced on the radio. If LPS is not in session we will follow the Catholic School weather closing announcements.**

A world of possibilities: taking our work to others

By Nancy Rosenow, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation Executive Director

Years ago noted environmentalist Rachel Carson said, "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

Every day the wonderful teachers and administrative staff at Dimensions Early Education Programs, supported by our excellent Co-Directors, Sue Erdkamp and Michelle Zimmer, help children develop a sense of wonder about the world around them, and inspire a love for learning that we all hope and believe will last a lifetime. I know that parents see this in action every day and appreciate what a dedicated, caring staff we have. What I'm not sure everyone realizes is how the Early Education Programs also serve as research classrooms where much of the work of the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation is carried out.

Under the direction of our talented Research Director, Dana Miller,

teachers gather data daily which is then analyzed by three first-rate research teams. So much information about how children learn best, and how connections with the natural world can aid that learning is being documented on a regular basis. That research then provides a foundation for the many resources that the Dimensions Foundation, in collaboration with the Arbor Day Foundation, has developed as part of the national Nature Explore program.

The Nature Explore program provides hands-on workshops for educators and families; design consultation support for schools, parks, nature centers, zoos, arboretums, early childhood programs and others wishing to create or refurbish natural outdoor play and learning environments for children; field-tested natural components; and family involvement materials.

The Dimensions Foundation Nature Explore office (located at 6000 Cornhusker Highway) houses our workshops, design consultation, and Sourcebook divisions. During the

past fiscal year nearly 100 Nature Explore workshops were presented for educators all over the country, and to date over 125 unique Nature Explore Classroom concept plans have been created for organizations from California to New York and everything in between.

The exciting thing about taking our work to others is that we continually hear comments about how the Nature Explore resources are helping children's learning to increase and behavioral problems to decrease. And, most importantly, children are seeing the possibilities the world has to offer... the "magic" of growing and tasting your own food, the joy of creating your own music on a natural outdoor instrument, the fun of drawing a map of an intricate outdoor setting, the satisfaction of working with others to accomplish "real work." We really believe that children who grow up connecting with nature on a daily basis and who truly love learning will become adults who help create a more peaceful and beautiful world!

All those reminders rolled up into one...

As we jump back into January, we would like to give you some friendly reminders that help our teachers, the children and the program run smoothly. If you have any questions, please refer to your 2008-09 Information Book that was sent out in the summer or call the office at 476-8304.

Picking up and dropping off your child(ren):

- Child(ren) should use the steps (not the ramp.) We have seen children not stop and run directly in front of vehicles.
- Bring all your children in the building with you. It is not safe to leave them unattended in vehicles.
- Park in a designated parking spot. Please do not block the steps, ramp or block other cars.

Snacks:

- Snacks should be healthy. No Sweets, Please! This includes Birthday snacks. Our philosophy is

to promote healthy eating for all children.

- Packages should be store bought and unopened.

Clothing/Belongings

- Mark all clothing and belongings.
- Check the Lost & Found for any of your child's things. *Any unclaimed items will be given to the City Mission.*

Cubbies

- Make sure that you check your child's cubby for important information and read your newsletter for updates and great articles about what is happening in our program.
- Please send birthday invitations in the mail, NOT in cubbies. *This can cause hurt feelings when children see other friends getting invitations and they don't receive one.*

Emergency Information & Contacts

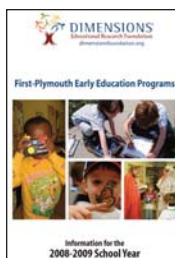
- Call the office if your emergency contact information has changed.
- It is important that we have 2 **current** contact numbers where



someone can be reached in case of an emergency, every time that you drop off your child. *If those numbers are not what you have written on your forms, please leave the numbers with the teachers.*

Remember, children will be going outside everyday unless it is extremely cold. So, please bring the appropriate clothing (boots, hats, mittens or gloves, winter coats) everyday for your child.

As we hear the children sing about teamwork, we are constantly reminded of how we have to work together. We appreciate family members, (moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, older brothers & sisters, etc), teachers and other staff that all work together to make the best experience possible for our children at Dimensions. Thank you.



Get Ready to Read! with your children

You are the key

As the parent of a preschooler, you play an important role in your child's development. Preschoolers are continually gaining important knowledge and skills that will help them learn to read, write, and succeed in school when they get older. It is important that you observe your child carefully and regularly share your observations with teachers, caregivers and health care providers.



Each child is unique

It's likely that your child will learn to read, and over time will become a good reader. But we also know that children take different paths while learning to read. They develop early reading skills at different rates and through different kinds of experiences. For some children, learning to read may seem effortless. Others may struggle with the same kinds of learning that appears to come naturally to other children their age. So when should you be concerned? Even when children develop differently, there is a typical or usual path of development that should guide your thinking. Many children struggle with learning at some point during their development. Most will catch up with a little bit of extra practice and individual attention. However, you are right to be concerned if your child appears to be having difficulties, especially if he or she is seems frustrated.

Parents are often the first ones to realize that their child may be having trouble. Sometimes teachers mention that they are concerned, and it's not unusual for pediatricians or health care providers to suggest that you "keep an eye" on some aspect of a child's development. Whether or not you agree with these warnings, the bottom line is: don't wait. Gather information that will help you make an informed decision, and take action as early as possible, because research has proven that earlier is better when it comes to providing help.

Early is Better

If your child is having difficulties learning, it's never too early to start looking for ways to help him or her experience success. Maybe you think your child should be able to do something that he or she is not yet doing. And maybe you think that, overall, your child's development is right on the mark. In either case, you can take the lead to find out if your child would benefit from some extra or specially targeted help. There are many people who share your goal of helping your child succeed. You can ask a teacher, principal, school nurse,

neighbor, librarian, pediatrician or clergy person to point you in the right direction. Remember, with the right instruction and support, almost all children can become successful readers right from the start.

Here's what you can do next...

Be an observer

Here are some things to watch out for as you observe your preschooler:

- Very small vocabulary and/or slow vocabulary growth.
- Often unable to find the right word and speaks in very short sentences.
- Struggles with learning the names of letters of the alphabet, matching letters to sounds, and rhyming.
- Difficulty remembering sequences (numbers, alphabet, days of the week).
- Difficulty pronouncing simple words.
- Difficulty understanding simple directions and following routines.
- Difficulty learning colors and shapes.
- Extremely restless and easily distracted, compared to other children of the same age.
- Fine motor skills slow to develop. Has difficulty holding crayon or pencil, picking up small objects with fingers, copying basic shapes.
- Strong avoidance of certain activities, like storytelling and circle time.

It's best to watch your child in different settings at different times. Use a notebook or pad to write about what your child can and cannot do.

Remember, you do not need to write down everything. Jot down notes about your child's strengths and problem areas that concern you.

And don't forget to ask your child some specific questions about things that are easy or hard for him or her to do. Don't stop there...also ask your child for ideas about how to make learning easier and more fun!

Remember, most children exhibit one or more of these worrisome behaviors from time to time. However, if several of these behaviors persist over time, you

should seek the advice of a qualified professional such as a teacher or other early education professional, doctor, nurse or social worker.

Take action

If your observations and experience cause you to be concerned about your child, what you do next can make all the difference. The more you know about how to get help for your child, the better off your child will be.

- Talk with everyone who knows your child: your child's teachers or early care providers, doctor, nurse or health care professional. Share details about your concerns and ask for feedback and specific recommendations.
- Have your child's hearing and vision checked regularly.
- Talk with other parents who have children of the same age to see whether they have similar concerns about their children.
- Go to a public library to gather information and check out your concerns in books or on the Internet. Ask the librarian to point you in the right direction.
- Call or go to your local school district office and request information. Keep in mind that going to the school district and asking for information or help does NOT mean that your child is headed for a special education evaluation. School personnel can be very helpful and can often lead you to help and resources that are free.

You can help

There are so many ways that you can help your child to get ready to read. Even if it's only for a few minutes, look for fun ways to incorporate early literacy activities into your daily routine. Your child will love the one-on-one time with you and will look forward to repeating this special time day after day. Ask your child's teacher, care provider or your local librarian for ideas about activities that will strengthen your child's skills. Watch for and keep a record of changes and growth. Here are some ideas:



- Read to your child every day.
- Point out words and letters that you find in your daily routines, while shopping or traveling through the neighborhood.
- Sing songs and share nursery rhymes.
- Go to the library and read books together.

Here are some **free resources** you can find on the Get Ready to Read! Web site:

www.GetReadytoRead.org

- Use the online version of the *Get Ready to Read!* screening tool with your child.
- Print out the Home Literacy Checklist and check it for ideas from time to time.
- Print out the Classroom Literacy Checklist and share it with your child's teacher or early care provider.
- Print out *Get Ready to Read!* activity cards and try some early literacy activities with your child and even with a small group of his or her friends!
- Play the *Get Ready to Read!* online games.
- Go to our partner page and find links to the Web sites of the *Get Ready to Read!* national partners for more exciting ideas and fun activities.

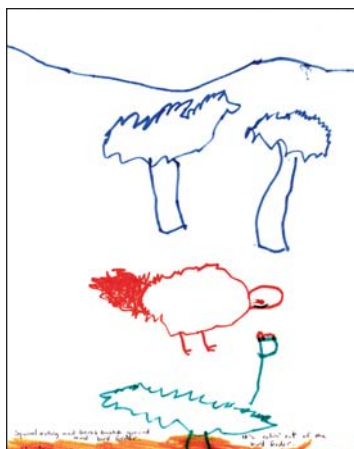
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Children's drawings show what they notice and what they like

text by Holly Murdoch, teacher

After finishing their lunch, children were given the option of using small blocks and toy dinosaurs or sketching the squirrels outside the small group room window.

Hunter T., Daniel B. and Logan W. sat on the floor beside the windows and recorded what they saw. Hunter (left)



noted the busy squirrel tail. He used organic lines to characterize the trees, sky and the ground. Daniel (center) drew imaginary apples falling which his squirrel ate. He observed there were actually two squirrels within the range of what he saw from the window. Logan (right) used geometric and organic shapes to depict the built and natural features within his view.



Request...

We can always use (and very much appreciate) donations of black oil sunflower, safflower, niger and mixed birdseeds. We scatter the mixed seed on the ground for the sparrows, juncos and cardinals. Niger attracts the finches — we are still waiting for them to appear. Safflower seed is loved by chickadees and cardinals but the squirrels leave it alone. By feeding the birds, the children are presented with many opportunities for close observation of our feathered friends!

