



**2009 Summer Sessions
Through Nature's Eyes
June 8-12**



**First-Plymouth Early Education Programs
Dimensions Research Classrooms**
2045 E Street, Lincoln, NE 68510
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Many of the best things in life are free (Juneberries)

Second through Fifth Graders get involved with nature and complex social interactions

text by Holly Murdoch, teacher; photos by Beth Pauley

Juneberries are one of the ingredients used by indigenous Americans to make pemmican. The students in Ms. Wike and Ms. Murdoch's groups have watched the berries ripen, picked them from our trees, tasted them fresh and smashed and blended them with lemonade concentrate for a Friday highlight of shaved flavored ice.

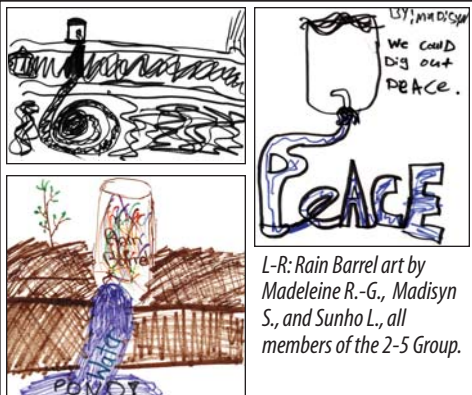
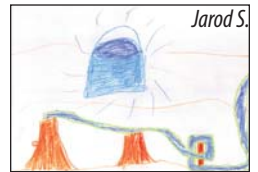
Waterways complete with waterfalls have been fashioned in our Nature Explore Classroom Messy Area. The process began with extensive indoor exploration of the building materials. During the next step it was important for the designers to walk the terrain of the designated building site.

Each student created a design plan reflecting their own blend of engineering and aesthetic elements. Manipulation and fastening together of the materials to create the whole structure took patience and persistence. High level social skills were

required as many builders negotiated the use of limited space and materials for the inclusion of their favorite ideas.

We also took two walking excursions to Antelope Creek where 130 million year old sandstone banks are accessible for investigation.

To get from one bank to the other children had to leap across the water. Madeleine R.G. explained that going from the south to the north was more difficult for her because of the perspective. The north bank had a hump to land on while the south bank was flatter. Madeleine said that the hump looked like an obstacle and required her to get her courage up before she could brave the leap. Madisyn S. was new to this experience last summer, and she remembers needing the support of classmates to cheer her on and lend a hand to help her across the water. This summer it was gratifying to see Madisyn be the first person on the north bank eagerly extending her hand to Madeleine to help her across.

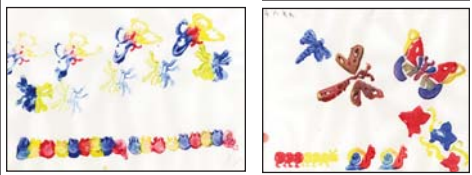


L-R: Rain Barrel art by Madeleine R.-G., Madisyn S., and Sunho L., all members of the 2-5 Group.

Through Nature's Eyes

Children looked at nature in a different way this week. They took time to observe and listen to the birds, bugs and animals on the Nature Explore Classroom and in the neighborhood. Stories, movement and music outside and inside all gave children the opportunities to use all of their senses to enjoy nature at its best!

Insect art by K-1 Group. Right: Talley W. Below, left to right: Josh W. and Anna S.



Side Notes:

- Don't forget to wear socks and closed toe shoes that fit properly. No flip flops or Crocs—these are dangerous when children are running and using the climbing equipment.
- Please apply sunscreen to your child/ren before coming to summer sessions.

June 27...

- Pioneers Park Nature Center, 10:30-Noon. Bring your Great Park Pursuit page for Pioneers Park; binoculars and camera (optional)

Summer Sessions Bookshelf

- Beetle Bop* by Denise Fleming
- Bugs* by Christopher Nicholas
- Dreams* by Peter Speir
- The Earth and I* by Frank Asch
- The Eeensy-Weensy Spider* adapted by Mary Ann Hoberman
- Insectlopedia* by Douglas Florian
- In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming
- Little Cloud* by Eric Carle
- A Tree is Nice* by Janice May Udrey
- The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle

Spring Creek Prairie donates Family Passes

A generous donation by Spring Creek Prairie in the form of a Family Pass is attached to the front of this newsletter. Use it to enjoy free admission for the whole family during the summer months. If you've never visited this prairie, you are in for a treat!

For more information about Spring Creek Prairie visit their website at springcreekprairie.org or call them at 797-2301. Spring Creek is located at 11700 SW 100th St., Denton, NE.

11700 SW 100th St. Denton NE 68339
www.springcreekprairie.org (402) 797-2301

Spring Creek Prairie is a 808-acre gem located just outside Lincoln, Nebraska's capital city.

Miles of walking trails to explore tallgrass prairie, wetlands and riparian woodlands.

Trail ruts from the Nebraska City - Ft. Kearny Cutoff, listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Barrier-free trails available

Unique nature gift shop

Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm
Sat - Sun 1pm - 5pm

Admission charged
Closed major holidays

Toddlers engage with nature using close observation and visual-spatial skills

text & photos by Kristine Luebke

Summer is a time for Toddlers to get to know each other better. Numbers (of children) are lower at this time so Toddler A and B Rooms combine into one group.

A new teacher has joined us this summer. Nicole Carl graduated from the University of Northern Iowa. For the past year and a half, she has been a substitute in the Lincoln Public School Systems and in surrounding areas. She is excited to get to know all of the children and parents at Dimensions!

Spending time outdoors keeps children busy using close observation and other visual-spatial skills. Toddler friends have been learning the sign for tree



Teddie K. takes a very close look.

and have been able to identify different types of trees while on their nature walks. Many friends used magnifying glasses to find bugs, like roly polys, worms, spiders and butterflies, on the Infant & Toddler Nature Explore Classroom.

The Toddlers looked upwards to find white, fluffy clouds. Some clouds looked like motorcycles, trees, and even like an airplane.

Drew L. experiments with the wind while using the twirler.



Hudson W. examines roly polys creeping across the table.



The children figured out that the same wind that made the trees “dance” and the twirlers spin made the clouds move, too!

Inside, children replicated cloud scenes on blue paper.

During Music, children incorporated nature by making wind sounds, hopping and creeping like bugs, and dancing with scarves like the clouds. These movements helped the children internalize their learning, making it more concrete.

Water play with sink or float activities gave the toddlers an early look at science. A nature hunt, where we looked for some of the objects we talked about this week, helped bring our week to a close.



Gavin G. creates a cloud scene.

Preschoolers explore trees and clouds and bugs

by Cindy Heinzmann & Denise Topil

We visited some nearby trees this week. We found small trees, taller trees, and “really, really giant” trees. We felt the bark

and leaves, looked way up through the branches and leaves, and held hands to make a circle around a tree. Then we made bumpy bark rubbings, too. Our recently planted cherry tree was even growing a cherry!

Trees by Aileen Fisher
Trees just stand around all day and sun themselves and rest. They never walk or run away, and surely that is best
For otherwise how would a squirrel or robin find its nest?

Clouds by Aileen Fisher
Wonder where they come from?
Wonder where they go?
Wonder why they're sometimes high and sometimes hanging low?
Wonder what they're made of, and if they weight a lot?
Wonder if the sky feels bare up there when clouds are not?

We created our own rainstorm with sound effects using our bodies and the floor (patting our legs for rain, clapping and pounding on the

floor for thunder, then patting more quietly as the rain came to a stop, then out came the sun and a rainbow was in the sky – we made our hands go up in an arch.)

It was a cool, cloudy day, perfect for cloud watching. Some children saw clouds shaped like: dinosaurs, robots, a dragonfly, and a bear. Others talked about storm clouds,



Mrs. Reeble and Ms. Frank's class moved like frogs!

thunderstorms, and tornado clouds that are swirly. While gazing up at the clouds, we drew our own clouds on blue paper with white or black crayons.

Can you move like a bug... leap like a grasshopper... creep like a caterpillar... fly like a butterfly?

When It Comes To Bugs

by Aileen Fisher

I like crawlers,
I like creepers,
hoppers, jumpers,
fliers, leapers,
walkers, stalkers,
chirpers, peepers...

I wonder why
my Mother thinks
that finders can't be keepers?



Mrs. Heinzmann, preschoolers fly like a butterfly!

We went on a bug hunt and tried an activity called “Bush Bugs.” We placed a white cloth under a bush and gently shook the branches. It was so exciting to see what fell onto the cloth: ants, spiders, beetles, moths and ladybugs! We looked more closely with our magnifying glasses.

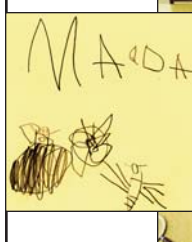
We are anxious to try the stream that the older children are constructing on the Nature Explore Classroom. We're going to float some nature items on the water (and some might sink, too)!

Preschool Group

text by Joyce White

Children described attributes of the Botanicals (part of the Nature Samples, “Pods, Cones and Botanicals,” available in our Nature Explore Sourcebook) as they manipulated them into habitats for (plastic) bugs and butterflies.

Four of our friends, Eli K., Magda M., Erik B., and Colin H. sketched their creations so that we could recreate them. Eli closely observed the geometric shapes of the Botanicals of a butterfly. “See, a butterfly!” he announced, pointing to the Botanicals on the table.



Top to bottom: Eli K., Colin H., and Magda M. carefully sketched the Botanicals as they were arranged on their trays.

Bugs and water are part of nature discoveries for K-1 group this week

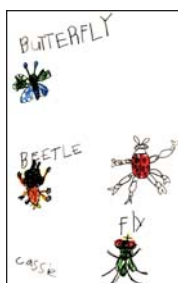
text & photos by Kris Van Laningham

The students of Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Van Laningham investigated nature this week.

They looked at clouds and then described and sketched what they saw. The children also looked closely at bugs outside and inside and then sketched the bugs.

The beginning of the week was spent experimenting with water and how it flows by using Marbleworks to see how pathways and gravity work together. Then everyone joined with the 2-5 Group and made a stream in the Messy Area on the Nature Explore Classroom. They

used closed tubes, open gutters, a rubber pond liner (to prevent the water from soaking into the earth), tree cookies and mulch to create the stream. It was exciting to see children working together and making the stream flow!



Cashel M. organized a marbleworks path to try with water.



Atticus W. enjoyed cutting lettuce from our raised bed garden and tasting it.

Nature Explore™ Classrooms are part of a national initiative that we are working with in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation.

Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs is a non-profit 501(c)3.

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