

Reminders...

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

...please return the class list note by October 19. We are ready to release the information and don't want to miss anybody who wishes to be included!

...please return your child's immunization forms. We are required by law to have these forms on-site.

(If you have any questions about either of the forms above, call the office at 476-8304.)

...we **will be open** October 22-26. Lincoln Public Schools will be closed this week but we will not. Remember, we no longer can offer care for older children because of staffing and space restraints.

...our offices **will be closed** November 8-9 while staff attend the National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in Chicago.

...POGO Cards are available in the office (expiration date is December 2008). If you are searching for that perfect gift the POGO Card offers money-saving options for anyone.

Mark your calendars

October 20...Nature Explore Family Club meeting at Pioneers Park (Chet Ager Building), 10:30-Noon. The weather is unpredictable so please dress in layers and wear comfortable walking shoes. For more information or to RSVP: chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org

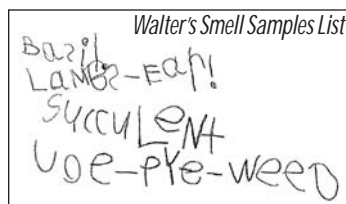
October 21...5th Annual Chili Cook-Off and aCross Lincoln Art Preview, 5-7:30PM, at First-Plymouth. Cheer on the Early Education Chili Team! Proceeds will benefit the Early Education Programs, among others. See the attached order form for more information or to order tickets.

December 5-7...Annual Book and Toy Fair. This is a great time to do some holiday shopping. We will be featuring Scholastic Books and Discovery Toys. The annual pizza lunch will also be available on Friday!

Lessons from Teachers' Nature Notes...

Walter (five and a half years old) entered the greenhouse asking if he could collect "good smelling leaves" from the garden. He took a bowl from the greenhouse to hold his collection. Jaden joined Walter in his exploration. Walter returned with Jaden saying, "I got a few of each except lamb's ear" (just one lamb's ear). He got a paper and pencil, then asked, "How do you spell basil?" He wrote four plant names with help as needed. Walter asked if he should put a period for punctuation after lamb's ear. I told him he didn't need to since he was making a list in a column. He replied "I'm going to put an exclamation mark!" then he said "Lamb's Ear!" with emphasis. At recall (later in the day) Walter offered his class "smell samples." The children were very receptive and were touching and smelling the leaves.

— Holly Murdoch's Nature Notes



Holly's Nature Notes provide insight into important learning that is taking place in our Nature Explore™ Classroom. For years teachers have recorded close observations of children outdoors, and we have created a "culture" of data collection and documentation. We expect to get "good data" from teachers'

Nature Notes. However we did not anticipate the influence teachers' documentation would have on children, who following their teachers' modeling, often take the initiative to draw and write – becoming researchers in their own right.

According to his teacher, Walter was comfortable initiating this activity because he'd had many previous experiences exploring the garden and greenhouse. He had learned about plants and their attributes. He had physically experienced the garden through whole body multi-sensory learning (e.g., closely observing leaves, touching them, smelling them, picking them). He knew about textures and smells. He had learned the names of specific plants.

In this documentation, Walter asked permission to collect "good smelling leaves" (demonstrating his respect for the Nature Explore Classroom rules). He was willing to share his experience with another child who wanted to join him in exploring, and later he was willing to share his "smell samples" with classmates, allowing them to touch and smell them (demonstrating social/interpersonal skills in sharing his discovery and expertise with others).

Perhaps most significantly this Nature Note entry illustrates Walter's development of literacy/language skills and his motivation to write. Through his

experiences in the garden, Walter is developing a rich vocabulary. How many five year olds make lists about succulents, joe-pye weed, basil and lamb's ear?

Walter wanted to record what he'd found in the garden. His work demonstrates what he already knows about writing (e.g., basic letter formation, writing from left to right, punctuating with periods or exclamation marks for emphasis). His teacher was scaffolding his learning by assisting him with spelling "as needed" and explaining about lists in columns.

Walter was completely engaged in his exploration of leaves and initiated both the collection of them and writing the list of plant names. This is what we call hands-on-experiential learning! A teacher on our analysis team commented that "teachers are always trying to understand how to motivate children to write... this is one example of a way to do that... get them outdoors and let them write about what they are totally engaged in." Time and again we have discovered that activities in the Nature Explore Classroom can provide an important link to literacy – Walter's story is just one example of this.

Contributed by Dr. Dana Miller,
Dimensions' Research Director

Special thanks to Holly Murdoch, who documented Walter's exploration, and Joyce White and Kathy Tichota, members of the Preschool data analysis team.

Earthmoving Equipment Exploration

While outside for a small group magnifying exploration activity, Seth spotted a piece of earthmoving equipment in the parking lot. Soon everyone's attention was focused on the earthmover. We followed lines on the concrete parking surface



toward the machinery (which turned out to be a front-end loader).



We explored the loader using our eyes and hands. A friend pointed to the claw-like part of the scoop. I said, "They look almost like fingers." John said, "Those cut through it (hard dirt)." While exploring the side of the machine Andrew stopped by the cab steps. "They're pokey. Look at that wheel,

it's big," he said, as he moved his hands in a circle around the wheel. Jake observed, "I'm bigger than this wheel."

Everyone enjoyed the time spent exploring something that we do not get to see very often. The children were very interested in the front-end loader. When they saw it again later in the afternoon all of their attention was focused on it as workers loaded it into a trailer to haul away.

Contributed by Katie Sharp

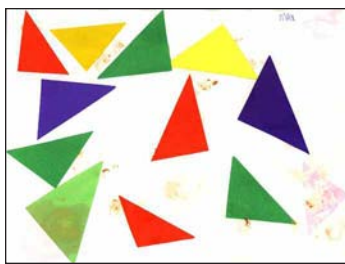
Infant/Toddler Notes

The Infant Room has focused on colors and rainbows. We looked at colors in books and objects. We learned how to sign colors and say rainbow in Spanish (arco iris). Our bodies and arms learned how to make rainbow shapes and we danced with colored scarves.

Small group activities for the infants revolved around red, blue, green and yellow duplo blocks, natural blocks and larger cardboard blocks. We created rainbows on coffee filters using markers and water. Outside, we sketched with sidewalk chalk. The Nature Explore Classroom was a fun space to blow bubbles, search for worms and match nature's colors to peacock feathers.



contributed by Denise Topil, Kris Sieckmeyer-Hajny and Joleen Podtburg



Children in Toddler A have been exploring triangles and colors with magnets and wood blocks. As an art project, they glued colored triangle shapes onto pieces of white paper. Children learned the sign for green, yellow, orange, and red (the colors of many fall leaves). Children explored red, yellow, green, and orange crayons on construction paper. We've also been enjoying fall music about falling leaves while gently tossing silk leaves into the air.

contributed by Kathy Marshall, Joy Cleary



Moving, Moving, We Love to Move!

When we travel from place to place in our building, we move in different ways. We pretend to be butterflies, birds, fish, dinosaurs, or quiet little mice.

With Mrs. Tichota's group we get out our magic wand, say a few magic words and turn into flying, hopping or crawling critters to travel over to the Music and Movement blanket.

We practice and experiment with moving our bodies in a "space bubble." We each have a felt rectangle to stand on. We reach out our arms and legs – high, low and all around – to see if our space bubble is touching anyone else. (This helps us to identify our own personal space.) Sometimes it's hard to know where our body ends and someone else's begins. (Thank you to Tina Reeble for putting this activity into our Music and Movement plan.)

Sometimes I Curl Up In A Ball is a great story to help us move our bodies. The wombat in the story moves in many ways, so we move, too! We copy the things he did. Other story ideas for movement are From Head to Toe, In the Tall, Tall Grass and In the Small, Small Pond.

You could also try these movement ideas with your children. Pretend to:

- be a seed and grow into a plant or flower
- be an egg, hatch into a caterpillar, make a cocoon or chrysalis, and hatch out as a moth or butterfly

- be an animal that hatches from an egg (like a bird, turtle, snake, duck, chicken, etc.)

I asked the children in my group "What is your favorite way to move?" Braeden said, "Jumping."

Gabe showed us a Power Ranger move.

Grant said, "I like it when we get to make our shapes (with our bodies)."

Judson said, "I like to jump in a circle."

Eric said, "Move it, group-us." He showed us a jumping, spinning move. He said, "It means, with Mrs. Heinzman's group."

Lance moved his head side-to-side and said, "tick-tock."

Sophie said, "I would run outside."

Emma S. got up and showed us "jumping."

Maison showed us several statue shapes with her body and called it "circles."

Emma E. "wiggled" in her chair.

Enjoy moving with your children and watching them move!

Contributed by Cindy Heinzman

Bookshelf

Brown Bear, Brown Bear by Eric Carle

From Head to Toe by Eric Carle

Sometimes I Curl Up In A Ball by Vicki Churchill

In the Small, Small Pond by Denise Fleming

In the Tall, Tall Grass by Denise Fleming

Lunch by Denise Fleming

Newsletter photos contributed by Theresa Frey, Kris Sieckmeyer-Hajny, Beth Pauley, Katie Sharp, Joyce White

Notes from the Greenhouse...

Special thanks to Jody Hoover, Greenhouse Coordinator, for helping children in Toddler B learn more about plants, insects and soil this year!

On our inaugural visit, Mrs. Hoover led the children on a wonderful stone path through a variety of plants, inviting them to touch and smell as we moved along. Children used words like soft, pokey, smooth and sticky to describe what they touched. Many of the children were surprised to find that their fingers stayed sticky after touching a nicotina plant.

Inside the greenhouse Mrs. Hoover showed us how the greenhouse works to keep plants



cool in the summer and warm in the winter. She passed around scented geraniums and lemon balm for the toddlers to touch and smell. The "grand finale" for our group was touching and smelling the rich compost and the critters that live in it. The "red wigglers" (worms) and roly poly bugs stole the show. We spent lots of time closely observing the composted soil looking for anything that moved. Using fine motor skills the

children picked up the tiniest of creatures with squeals of delight... "It tickles when he wiggles on me!" Helen exclaimed!

Contributed by Theresa Frey

Magical Experiences Inside and Out

Mrs. Haley, Miss Ragland and Ms. White's group enjoyed a magic show this month. The magician was Mr. Ramos, the grandfather of Ray Ramos.



After visiting the Spring Creek Prairie, Mrs. Haley and Ms. White's group created an interactive bulletin board. The children cut long grass out of butcher paper and then drew pictures of things they saw on the Prairie. They closely observed many different colors, tall

grasses, frogs, caterpillars, tracks in the mud, a pond, and grasshoppers... there was so much to see!

The class has created movement throughout the day representing the Prairie. They tunnel low on the ground like the Prairie dog. They stretch and sway like the tall grasses in the wind. And on the Nature Explore Classroom, they pretend to be Prairie dogs hiding in the tall grass from the bobcats.

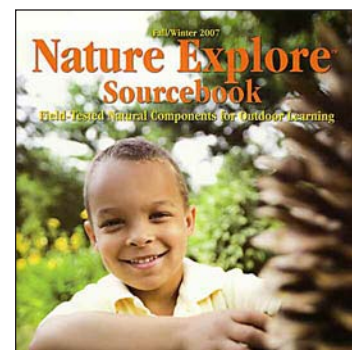


Contributed by Joyce White

Order from the Fall/Winter Nature Explore Sourcebook

Here is your chance to bring the Nature Explore Program to your own backyard! (Nature Explore items could make interesting holiday gifts, too!) As you know, all of the products in Nature Explore Sourcebook are based on the field testing that happens here at Dimensions. Field testing occurs as groups of children and our trained teachers interact with the materials and record observations over a period of time. Observations are collected and reviewed and patterns are noted. Information on safety, durability, educational value and children's interest are collected. As you can see, your children are a HUGE part of this process and an invaluable resource!

Two great ways to bring the Nature Explore Program home with your child are Tree Blocks (#3935) and Geometric Blocks (#3941 & 3942). You can find these items on pages 8-



9 of the Sourcebook. Using blocks is more than just about playing, it's about discovering and beginning to understand simple physics and basic engineering concepts. Blocks also support and strengthen math and observational skills. Building with blocks with your child is a great way to interact and to see just how much they know and have learned about these concepts.

Please call 1-888-908-8733 or email explore@arborday.org with questions about any of the products in the Source book.

Contributed by Jason Kelly, Sourcebook Manager

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