



Reminders...

...please return the class list note as soon as possible. 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, don't hesitate to call the office at 476-8304.)

...our offices **will be open** October 22-26. Lincoln Public Schools will be closed this week but we will not. Remember that we also 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.

...we have a good supply of POGO Cards available in the office. The expiration date is December 2008. If you are having trouble thinking of that perfect gift the POGO Card offers money-saving options for anyone. See the attached sheet if you are interested in ordering one or more cards.

...we also have copies of "If You Give a Pig a Pancake" left over from the Pancake Breakfast. Each book is \$2. Call or stop by the office if you would like to purchase a copy.

Lessons from Teachers' Nature Notes...

While getting ready for circle time under a pine tree, Henry pointed to a knot on the tree trunk and said, 'Hey (teacher), look at this.'

Teacher: *It looks like the tree is leaking.*

Henry: *Yeah, it's syrup.*

Teacher: *Let's touch it* (children touched it)

Henry: *It not smell like syrup.*

Teacher: *Nope*

Henry: *It sticky like syrup.*

Henry touched his pointer finger and thumb together then opened them over and over, making them stick.

When (another teacher) said, 'we need pancakes' Henry replied: No – it not syrup! *(from teacher's nature notes based on observing Henry – 2 years 11½ months old)*

Nature provides a powerful venue for discovery and in this case, age-appropriate early science learning. When Henry discovered sap oozing from a tree trunk, he formed an elementary hypothesis – "it's syrup". After all, he knew about syrup and it looked like syrup. He tested his hypothesis by touching the sticky texture, working it between his finger and thumb over and over again and smelling it. In the end, he reported, "no – it not syrup!" Henry was so convinced of his conclusion that when another teacher suggested "we need pancakes" (Henry could have

easily deferred to the teacher), he insisted the sticky texture was not syrup.

Thanks to Miss Theresa's Nature Notes (written documentation based on close observation of children) we have this wonderful example of a young child's science learning. Through Henry's multi-sensory investigation of tree sap, he not only examined the properties of sap but at the tender age of almost 3, he became a young scientist. He did what scientists conducting experiments have done through the ages – formed a hypothesis, tested it, and based on the "data" he collected, rejected his hypothesis. Henry practiced his close observation skills in examining the sap and exercised critical thinking skills in arriving at a logical conclusion. It seems noteworthy that after experimenting with tree sap this young child rejected his earlier hypothesis. Henry has provided us with an excellent example of deductive research, albeit at a toddler's level.

For almost ten years now, teachers at Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs have closely observed and documented children's learning. Two analysis teams meet weekly to analyze the data and identify key insights. Our data suggest that the Nature Explore™ classrooms at First-Plymouth (Dimensions' research

lab schools) are exactly that – venues where important learning occurs for young children. Our data illustrate that children are developing and honing many important skills that we believe will help them more successfully negotiate their worlds as they grow up. Some of these skills include:

- close observation skills
- visual-spatial skills
- language/literacy skills (*notice young Henry's use of a simile in his dialogue with the teacher: "It sticky like syrup."*)
- math skills
- science skills
- body awareness /kinesthetic skills
- interpersonal skills
- intrapersonal skills
- construction and engineering skills, and
- creative representation.

For more specific detail on the above skills, see the link to the skills list PDF on the research page of the Dimensions' website. All of the skills identified on the list were drawn directly from our analysis of teachers' close observations of children.

Watch for future "Lessons from Nature Notes..." to read more about our research and your child(ren)'s learning.

Contributed by Dr. Dana Miller, Dimensions' Research Director

Special thanks to Theresa Frey, who documented Henry's experiment, and Holly Murdoch and Denise Topil, members of the Infant/Toddler data analysis team.

Notes from the Greenhouse...

I remember asking children as a teacher/naturalist if they "brought their tools" with them on our outdoor walk. The children looked at me "funny" saying they left their tools at home (phone, keys, hammer, etc.). I explained that they brought their tools with them everyday (five senses – touch, hearing, smell, sight and taste).

As the greenhouse facilitator I try to excite children about the simple nuances each season brings; the falling acorns and leaves on the path, the flowers blooming and the importance of pollinators (bees) in the garden.

I ask the children to stop, look and find different seeds on our

Nature Explore Classroom and observe the different "packages" they come in; to find seeds that fly in the wind (milkweed) or are carried by birds and squirrels (acorns, etc.).

The children learned about seeds in our Greenhouse by making seed strips (expanding on our "Lines and Dots" in the Art Area). Children planted the strips or took them home.

Each season provides us with simple nuances if we take the time to stop, look and enjoy! Remember to ask your child... Did you bring your tools to school today?!

*Contributed by Jody Hoover,
Teacher and Greenhouse Facilitator*

Infant Room Activities

The Infant Room is focusing on using recycled materials in our small group experiences. (Our program and First-Plymouth Church are partnering to rethink, reduce, reuse and recycle.)

We helped infants create shakers out of pop bottles and nature items.

They especially enjoyed placing small rocks and acorns in their shakers. They were able to **look** closely at materials, choose what they liked and then carefully **build** their shakers. Then we **moved** with them by dancing and shaking them during our music and movement time.

The infants enjoyed building with other recycled items, too. We attached velcro strips to items to



encourage the infants to put together and take apart different pieces.

The children also experimented with a variety of "Found Sounds" including wooden spoons, bubble wands and formula scoops. These activities are always a big hit with the infants! We even built sculptures to be used as center pieces for the Pancake Breakfast.

Some of our other activities included a trip to the Greenhouse and learning new sign language signs... "stop", "more", "in", and "out".



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

We'd like to thank all of the volunteers, staff and families who helped with this year's Pancake Breakfast/Toy Sale. A special thank you to Ideal Grocery (milk and syrup), Stauffer's Pie and Coffee Shop (pancake batter), Barry Schwab (for preparing pancakes) and Smart Chicken (sausage).

We'd also really appreciate all of the parents who have provided healthy snacks in the classrooms. A big thank you to Macaroni Grill for the wonderful buffet they catered to us recently!

Pancake Breakfast/Toy Sale, Recycling Event Photos



Newsletter photos contributed by Beth Pauley and Joleen Podtburg.

Bookshelf

Little Cloud by Eric Carle
Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert

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