

Reminders...

...Dec. 5-7: Parent/Teacher Conferences. Be sure to sign up on the sheets provided.

...be sure to check out the attached Born Learning Flyer. **This is your ticket** (literally!) for the whole family to enjoy a fun time at the Lincoln Children's Museum on Nov. 17. Dimensions First-Plymouth Early Education Programs will be there with a Nature Explore Activity for attendees to participate in.

...our offices **will be closed** Nov. 22 & 23 for Thanksgiving Break.

Mark your calendars

Dec. 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!

A Huge Thank You to...

...**Scott Gwartney and Macaroni Grill** for gifting our staff with holiday luncheons. We traditionally gather as a staff to recognize our strengths and talents and to enjoy time together. We're looking forward to our time at Macaroni Grill!

Watch for...

...**what children and teachers are thankful** for in our next newsletter. As Thanksgiving nears we give thanks for our many blessings!

"Reusables" in the Art Area

by Ann Watt

In the Sept. 18th newsletter, I provided some background information about Small Group planning. Since then, Small Group times have been buzzing with activity as children used a wide variety of materials to learn new concepts based on line, shape, form, and color.

They discovered that with two dots you can form a line, that lines can have different qualities (thick, thin, straight, wavy, zigzag), and that lines can be joined together to create two-dimensional shapes such as circles, squares, and triangles. When shapes are three-dimensional, they are called "forms". For example, squares joined together to form a cube or triangles make up a pyramid.

Children explored shapes in many ways including looking at books; making body shapes; helping to make (and eat!) pancakes; creating self-portraits; and taking outdoor observation walks. They practiced using fasteners such as tape and glue sticks and art tools such as scissors, colored pencils, and crayons. They used small manipulatives such as colored blocks, parquetry shapes, and puzzles.

Your children have also been exploring recyclable materials such as small boxes, fabric pieces, and milk jug lids along

with other materials. Although talk about environmental issues is not age-appropriate, the Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs focus on the Earth-friendly aspect of reusing materials. It is our belief that children must learn to love the world before they can save it.

When we use recyclable materials in the art area, I like to call them "reusables" to emphasize their creative purpose. Creating with reusable materials helps children to develop cognitive learning skills by stimulating the imagination to do the following:

- to look at one thing but see something else
- to manipulate objects in space – either physically or mentally – and see them from different perspectives, and
- to change the context of an item (i.e. a paper towel tube becomes a tower)

In addition, building with reusable materials helps to develop observation skills and hand-eye coordination, promotes decision-making and verbal language skills, and provides the opportunity to express ideas. *(If you would like to donate reusable materials, please take note the items on the poster and list in the main foyer of the school.)*

We value the process of learning as opposed to mass-produced products. Look upon the treasures your child brings



home as communications borne of real exploration, thinking, and processing. They can tell you a lot about your child or at least act as a conversation-starter!

Tree Care 101

Mrs. Haley and Mrs. Murdoch's class took time out of their day to nurture trees. First they fed the trees compost that worms in our worm tank in the greenhouse had enriched. This meant they had to sort the worms out of the dirt before using it.



Then three-year-old Claire carefully watered Little Maple. "I helped her (Sugar Maple Tree) get some water for her and let her have food to eat. She will grow now," she informed us.



Four-year-old Nolan placed a blanket of mulch around the Tulip Tree. "I was moving the blanket away from the tree so mice won't eat it." Mrs. Murdoch tells us that mice and insects live under the mulch so we make an "empty nest" around the tree. The mulch also keeps moisture in and weeds out.

Contributed by Joyce White

Toddlers Use Their Senses for Exploration

Children have been active in feeling, tasting, hearing, smelling and mixing color.

Children listened to and felt the dried red and brown leaves crush in their hands...sounds like fall. Nathan smelled dried spearmint and said "Smells like bubble gum". Some friends tasted the pods from a purple bean and/or a green leaf from lemongrass (these can be found in our Nature Explore™ Classroom). We looked inside a pumpkin and found white seeds (with no hesitation to taste them) and felt the orange "goop". We "felt" color

between our fingers as we moved blue, red, green and yellow paint on white paper. We used spray bottles (with a mixture of water and paint) on a large sheet of paper and saw dots. Mira felt red dots on her face by spraying the bottle towards her...this was a surprising feeling! When we were done, our paper looked like a swirl of rainbows. We also found rainbows on a wet paper towel after wiping off our pumpkins colored with markers. Our hands helped tell stories about color by incorporating sign language.

contributed by Kathy Marshall, Joy Ritchie



Preschoolers Enjoy Fall Fun and Trip to Spring Creek

We have had fun singing songs at Music and Movement Time about Autumn and Halloween. There are many days you can hear children singing songs as they work. We have also been singing "The Earth is Our Mother" (we must take care of her). We add different nature pieces and different family names to the lyrics (for instance, "the flowers are our cousins, we must take care of them"). It is a good way to connect family and the earth. One day we used straws and connectors outside around "Tall Fiesta" the maple tree by the preschool office. We sang the "Earth is Our Mother" song as we built. Gina and Gavin even made triangles of the straws to hang on the maple tree branches.

Our trip to Spring Creek Prairie was a wonderful experience. The children had a terrific guide named Deb. She did an amazing job of connecting preschoolers appropriately to the prairie. This is my 19th year of teaching



preschoolers and she was one of the best guides I've ever had for a field trip. We first met in the building that houses their prairie information... stuffed animals (Lauren loved the coyote and connected it to our "Stories From Home" experience last year with the blue coyote), tables for drawing and writing, puppets, an aquarium for caterpillars, beautiful artwork by Nebraska artists, and large windows to look out at nature.

Deb took us outside to walk up a hill, around a pond, and to the hillside with prairie grass that was over the children's heads. As we walked we found deer prints, wooly caterpillars, grasshoppers, milkweed and many other items. Children were so engaged. Deb took us



single file into the tall grass and we sat in a circle to hear the story of traveling on the prairie by wagon (Laura Ingalls). We pretended to be an insect looking through the grass. We laid flat on our backs to look up at the sky and listened to the world around us. Then we sketched what we saw (many drawings included the insects that landed on the children's paper, even the stinkbugs!)

I hope your children shared something about their trip with you when they got home. Here are questions you could ask to jog their memory about their trip to Spring Creek Prairie:

- 1) Did you hold a wooly caterpillar?
- 2) Did the grass tickle you when you walked through it or when you laid down in it?
- 3) Did you see any prints on the path?
- 4) Did you see any birds? (we saw turkey vultures and gulls on our visit)

Contributed by Kris Van Laningham



The next meeting of the Nature Explore Family Club will be Saturday, November 10th 10:30AM-Noon at Pioneers Park Nature Center (outside of the Prairie Building).

Nature Explore Family Club Info

In October we met at the Chet Ager Nature Center at Pioneers Park on a spectacular fall morning. We watched bird-banding, looked for leaves, caught frogs, and played hide-



and-seek in the tall prairie grass. We look forward to another fun adventure

this month as we explore the prairie and make up stories together! Dress in layers and be prepared to play outside. Feel free to bring a snack along for you and your children to munch on! Remember, everyone is welcome whether you have signed up previously or not.

So we know how many to plan on for the day please RSVP to Chris Kiewra by calling 476-8304, extension 247, or by sending an email to chrisk@dimensionsfoundation.org



Infants Show Off Their Halloween Fashion and Enjoy the Outdoors



The focus for the Infants has been on size, opposites, Fall and colors. They explored the world of make believe by dressing in costumes and experimenting with face painting using fall colors (even the teachers had fun with this!). Puppets were used to demonstrate different sizes (e.g. small bird puppet and large



bird puppet). Infants looked at brightly colored board books that pictured different sizes (e.g. hippo and mouse) and opposites like black and white.

Nature provided more opportunities for the infants to compare big (trees) with small (leaf). The Texture Table was stocked with hay, leaves and corn stalks to hold, smell and even taste! We also took advantage of the warmer weather to go for nature walks where we experienced the feel



of the breeze and sun on our faces and the smells of fall.

During Music and Movement Time we continued our fall theme in "Way Up High in the Apple Tree" and "Five Little Pumpkins." We also revisited dots and lines with sticks and pom poms, first in the Texture Table and then by gluing them onto paper.

We learned new signs for: walk, small, big, and tree. Our new Spanish words were: grande (big) and pequeño (small)

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

Bookshelf

My Opposites / Mis opuestos by Rebecca Emberley

My Colors / Mis colores by Rebecca Emberley

Apples and Pumpkins by Anne Rockwell

Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni

Color Dance by Ann Jonas

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler

Whoever You Are by Mem Fox

Newsletter photos contributed by the Humpert Family, Beth Pauley, Denise Topil, Kris Van Laningham, and Joyce White

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