

Kountry Kids Learning Center

February 2008

A letter from our director...

I want to thank the parents for being so patient and kind to me as the director of KKLC. I have learned a lot, and I am still learning. I am very proud of the staff. They are working very hard to prepare for the Qualistar rating, which will be held this month. As we approach the rating process I will be preparing parent information and explain the different areas of the classrooms and why it is important that these changes are implemented. The areas of the classroom that I will focus on now are manipulatives and dramatic play.

What we do and why

Manipulatives include puzzles; various table blocks, and other small construction materials such as Legos, Ring-a-Majigs, and collections of objects (including shells, bottle caps, and buttons). When children use manipulatives, they learn many new skills and concepts, including:

- Sorting and classifying things according to their own categories;
- Judging distance, direction, right and left, up and down; and
- Describing what they are thinking and doing.

When children use table toys in the classroom, we encourage them to talk about what they are doing. For example, we might say:

- “Tell me about the blocks you are using.”
- “How did you get those rings to fit together?”

We also ask questions that help children extend their thinking as they play with table toys. For example:

- “You grouped all the bottle tops by color. Can you put them together any other way?”
- “You’ve picked out all the pegs that are the same. Can you tell me how they are the same?”

These questions and comments are designed to help children become aware of what they are doing and develop their thinking skills.



Elders from BCHCC and children from KKLC meet once a week to work on intergenerational art projects, and the activity has been a favorite of many.

What You Can Do at Home...

Small colored cubes, those about one inch square, offer many opportunities for your child to build patterns and designs. These cubes can be made into a tower, a corral, or other formations, depending on the child’s interest. Colored cubes such as beads can be used to make patterns of colors and sizes: red, blue, yellow, and then repeat; large, small, medium, and then repeat.

You might collect various small objects such as buttons, seashells, rocks, and plastic bottle tops. You can give your child a tray to use on the floor if the surface isn’t level, or let your child sit at a table to play. Make suggestions such as sorting all the buttons that are the same color or all the beads that are the same size. Encourage your child to tell you about the design he or she is making or why things belong together.

Playing with table toys at home promotes a child’s development in many important ways. However, the most important contribution you can make to your child’s learning with table toys is to take an interest in what your child does, both at home and at school. We welcome you to the classroom at any time. In this way you can see for yourself how much your child is learning.

continued on next page...

Happy Valentine's Day!

What we do and why

The dramatic play area is a very important part of our classroom. In the dramatic play area children take on a role and recreate real-life experiences. They use props and make-believe about a wide variety of topics.

The ability to pretend is very important to children's later academic success in school. When children pretend, they have to recall experiences they've had and re-create them. To do this, they have to be able to picture their experiences in their minds. For example, to play the role of a doctor, children have to remember what tools a doctor uses, how a doctor examines a patient, and what a doctor says. In playing the role of a doctor, children have to be able to cooperate with other children and defend their own ideas.

When children are engaged in dramatic play in the classroom, we encourage them to talk about what they are doing. For example, we might say"

- "What do mothers do when children are sick?"
- "What kind of cake are you going to make: chocolate or vanilla?"
- "Why does your baby cry so much?"

We ask questions that help children extend their thinking and their play.

What you can do at home...

You can encourage the same kind of pretend play at home by having a box of dress-up clothes available or by putting a sheet over a card table and making a hideout for your child. Such activities are particularly good for a rainy day.

One way to extend your child's dramatic play is to collect different kinds of dress-up clothes and put them in boxes with pictures showing the contents. For instance, one box might contain an apron, bibs, cups, plates, spoons, small cooking utensils, a whiskbroom, and other objects for use in the kitchen. Another box might include hats with visors or recognizable insignia denoting an occupation, shoes, neckties, shirts, vests, coats, or trousers. A hospital prop box could hold nurses' hats, white coats, toy thermometers, stethoscopes, empty pill bottles, a small pillow, an eye patch, and a watch.

When the time is appropriate, you can give your child one of the boxes and encourage play by asking questions such as these: "What can we do about this sick baby?" or "Will you make grandmother a birthday cake?"

When you play pretend with your child, you are teaching important learning skills and spending valuable time together.

I have enclosed some poems and songs, an activity calendar, and special monthly, weekly, and day celebrations.

Pretending

Pretending; a beginning.

Pretending; an ending.

Pretending; a stretching.

Pretending; a blending.

Pretending; a flowering.

Pretending; a surprise.

Pretending; a coping.

Pretending; a disguise.

Pretending, a trying

The world on for size!

- Jean Warren

Infant Room News...

Well, January has come and gone, and we are ready for a new month. First of all, we would like to wish a very happy first birthday to Jorji. May she have a very happy day and many more to come!

I am reaching out to my parents to help me with a project that we are doing in the classroom. I would like to make a Family Tree with all of our infants and their families. I am asking for a family photo and four pictures of your infant - birth to the present time. It would really help me a lot.

This month the infants are going to be learning about Chinese New Year, Valentines, Abe Lincoln, and George Washington. I am looking forward to these themes, and I believe that the infants will have fun learning.

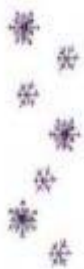
Just a few reminders: Please remember to bring extra clothes and shoes for your infant. We will be working on crawling and walking, and clothes may get dirty from play or food accidents. Also remember to keep your infants fingernails trimmed. They like to grab and touch, and nails sometimes get in the way!

Toddler News...

We had a good start to the new year! All the toddlers are growing up so fast! We have lots of fun activities planned for the month of February. The children will be learning about Groundhog's Day, Valentine's Day, Lincoln's Birthday, and Washington's Birthday. Our activities will be based on these holidays.

Our Valentine's party will be at 2 p.m. February 14. We appreciate all the parents for signing up to bring goodies. Our toddler class has no birthdays to celebrate this month, but we want to wish happy birthdays to the babies and preschoolers who are celebrating them this month. Also, the Bent County Health Care Center would like to invite all parents and children to attend a Valentine's Dance from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. February 13. It would be great to have the kids there to come dance with the elders. Music will be provided by Fred Darnell & Friends.

Snowflakes Falling Down



*One little snowflake
Fell upon the ground.
Nobody noticed,
It didn't make a sound.*

*Two little snowflakes
Followed him down.
Nobody noticed
When they hit the ground.*

*Three little snowflakes
Whirled and twirled around,
Falling at last,
On the frozen ground.*

*Four little snowflakes
Plain as plain can be,
Fell upon the ground
But did anybody see?*

*Five little snowflakes
Gently settled down.
At last, snow was spotted
Falling to the ground.*

*The children started counting
As the flakes came falling by
But soon they had to stop,
They couldn't count that high!*

- Jean Warren



Valentine's Day Party!

2 p.m. - February 14

Valentine Exchange, Treats, Activities

Wear your Valentine Colors!

Parent participation is encouraged!



Preschool News...

We had a great month in January. Our curriculum focused around the colors white and blue, and we also learned about winter, cold, and snow!

We started our fun socializing event this month with the elders from the Bent County Health Care Center. The preschool children join together with the elders each Tuesday morning for painting and coloring along with great socializing! The school-age children also participate in Intergenerational art with the elders each Friday morning. This is so much fun for everyone!

Our curriculum for this month will be exciting! The first week we will focus on Groundhog Day; week two we will learn about Valentine's Day; and the third week we will learn about President's Day. The last week of the month we will focus on the color red.

Our Valentine's Day party will be 2 p.m. February 14, and the children will enjoy a Valentine exchange. (Lists for parents are available by the sign-in book.) We will also enjoy treats and activities throughout the day. (The parent volunteer sign-in is located above the sign-in book.) Parents, we would appreciate all your participation! We also hope to see all the children in Valentine colors that day (red, pink, and purple).

Happy birthday to our February kids:

Jasmine Avila - Feb. 11

Jack Murphey - Feb. 17

Jorji Ratzlaff - Feb. 22

Kourtnei Van Egmond - Feb. 26

Kristina Ratzlaff - Feb. 28



Also, congratulations to our Big Girls who are now potty-ready!

Josie Decker

Andrea Lopez

Good job! We are proud of you!

February Celebrations

American Heart Month

National African American History Month

National Children's Dental Health Month

Feb. 17-23 Children's Authors & Illustrators Week

2 - Groundhog Day

3 - Bean-throwing Festival (Japan)

5 - International Pancake Day

Mardi Gras begins

7 - Chinese New Year begins

Wave All Your Fingers at Your Neighbors Day

14 - Valentine's Day

18 - President's Day

21 - Lantern Festival (China)

29 - Leap Year Day

The Heart of a Child

*Behold the heart of a child.
Take hold the heart of a child.
So bold the heart of a child.
Like gold the heart of a child.
Never cold the heart of a child.
Never old the heart of a child.
Never mold the heart of a child.
Unfold the heart of a child.
Behold the heart of a child!*

-Jean Warren



Winter Bear Songs

Hibernating Bear

Tune: "Up on the House Top"

There once was a bear
Who loved to play
In the woods - every day.
But then the winds
Began to blow
And soon the ground
Was covered with snow.
Oh, Oh, Oh, ice and snow
Oh, Oh, Oh, I better go-o.
In my cave to sleep all day
Until the cold winds go away.

- Jean Warren

Bears in Snow

Tune: "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean"

When the snow starts to fall.
The bears hurry inside.
To their warm caves
There all winter, they'll hide.
Snow, snow, snow, snow
When the snow does blow-o-o.
Snow, snow, snow, snow,
When the snow does blow.
The snow will cover their caves.
Like a fluffy white rug.
Inside the bears will sleep
All cozy and snug.
Snow, snow, snow, snow
When the snow does blo-o-o.
Snow, snow, snow, snow,
When the snow does blow.

- Adapted by Jean Warren from the poem "Here In a Cave" (author unknown.)
