



The Bennett Family Center Newsletter

Notes from the Director's Desk

Happy March Everyone!

We are looking for parents to participate on our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Committee. One teacher from each classroom participates on this committee, monthly, to discuss overall center-wide expectations of behavior. Our institution of the "STOP - Are you within an arm's length of an adult?" signs have seriously curtailed children running away from their parents and into the parking lot. I have even heard of it helping a family when they go to the mall! So if you are available for meetings on the second Wednesday of the month, from 2-3:30, please volunteer and join us.

Results of our security meeting with Risk Management will be on-going. Our first meeting was to go over the original review of our building to see what has been accomplished and then look for new strategies we will add to our plan. The staff will receive professional development on what is called the "5 Outs." This workshop demonstrates 5 strategies that adults can take when they feel there is a threat to the safety of the children or the building. These are different from a fire drill, tornado drill or our intruder event. This will give some peace of mind to everyone in thinking through a seriously dangerous event. We will also participate in what are called "Table Top Discussions." These are possible scenarios that will be presented to the staff, reviewed together as a group, and worked on to resolution. If you have a scenario that you have wondered about, feel free to share that with us either through email or in our Suggestion Box at the front desk. Speaking of which...we would love to see more suggestions in the Suggestion Box!

- Wendy J. Whitesell, Director



Friendly Reminders

- The center will be **closed from March 4-8** during Penn State's Spring Break.
- As we transition to spring, children will spend more time outside. Please be sure that your child's outdoor gear fits and is **appropriate for the weather**.
- **The PTO** is looking for a new president. If you are interested in the position or joining the PTO, contact Amanda Gallo!

Kindergarten Enrollment Still Open!



Spots remain available in the Bennett Family Center kindergarten class for the 2013-2014 school year. Our art-centric kindergarten program focuses on developing creativity and appreciation for the arts, in addition to the core competencies needed for success in elementary school. Please speak to Gail to schedule a tour or reserve a spot!



Say It Ain't Sue!

After 13 years, the Bennett Family Center's beloved cook, Sue Hane, is hanging up her ladle.

On Friday, March 29th the Bennett Family Center will bid adieu to a wonderful friend, teammate and cook as Sue Hane retires. Since the opening of BFC 13 years ago, Sue has served as the primary cook responsible for planning and delivering delicious and nutritious meals to everyone here at Bennett. In that time the kitchen has become a welcoming place, full of wonderful smells, laughs and great conversation; all in the midst of Sue and her team's daily hard work.



Coming out of high school Sue worked for Liberty Mutual until she became a mom and elected to stay at home to raise her four children. When her children were in school she began working part-time jobs while applying and waiting for an opportunity to open at Penn State. She has worked in food service and housing jobs at Penn State for the past 20 years. When a new child care center was set to open on campus, an old friend and coworker, Wendy Whitesell, knew that Sue would be a great fit for the center's nutritional needs. Since that time she has made the Bennett kitchen a core part of the cen-

ter's mission to serve children and families. "I love cooking for the children," she says. "I love to see how happy they are when they eat your food, and to know that they're getting what they need to play and grow strong. Seeing smiles makes my day."

Asked what she'll miss most about working at Bennett she said "I'll miss the children, and the staff. Everyone here is like a big family, and I think of myself as a mother to all. Food and family go together."

After retiring at the end of March, Sue will spend time with her own family, taking care of her 4 grandchildren and her mother, who is in her 80's. Otherwise she'll see what adventures come her way. "I have plenty of ideas—I'll just take on whatever life brings me!"

We'll certainly miss Sue here at Bennett. If you have a chance, please stop by the kitchen sometimes during the month of March to share your stories and give thanks for the motherly gift we've received at Bennett Family Center for all of these years. On the next page we share a few reasons why people think she is so special.

What Will You Remember About Sue?

'My morning buddy. We talk about whatever is happening in our lives. I especially enjoyed the conversation' -Joyce

'She's always happy, always positive, always there to lend an ear. And her Friday morning eggs are the best!' - Ms. Barbara

'She's so kind and loving. She's like a grandma to my girls. She's the grandmother of the building.' - Ms.Tana

'Sharing stories of our children as they were growing up right before our own eyes.' -Gail

'I feel like we are losing a grandma here! The kitchen won't be the same without her!' -Ms. Jenn V.

'Nobody ever went hungry with Sue around. If you did it was your own fault!' -Ms. Kim

'She's vibrant and lively. She made the kitchen are the heart of this center.' -Karen

'So very kind-hearted.' -Ms. Deb

'Sue is one of a kind!' -Ms. Joan

'She makes a great breakfast!!' -Everyone

'She's my grandma in State College! I'll miss all of her stories of family times and good friends.' - Ms. Gina

'She's always be-bopping down the hallway with a big smile. And she's always hoping she'll win the lottery!' -Ms. Alyssa

'I think of her as a mom. She's always feeding everyone, taking care of everyone. She always goes the extra mile.' - Ms. Jenn M.

Quotes from the Kids

"I like it when she makes some broccoli!"

"I love the green spaghetti!"

"Ms. Sue makes a goood mac-and-cheese!"

"Ms. Sue comes into our room to check on us. She brings more food!"

"I like her because she makes good food."

"She always tries to take good care of us."

"She smiles and is fun to talk to!"

"Best mac-and-cheese...EVER!"

"We ALL liked the meatballs!"

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

TEACHERS: BENEDICTA, LACY, & KRISTEN



How to Help Your Child Understand and Label Emotions

You can help your child expand his or her emotional vocabulary by teaching her words for different feelings. Once she knows and understands these words you can help her to label her own feelings and the feelings of others. For example, do you remember a time when your child had a meltdown at the grocery store or other public place? Perhaps you tried soothing your child by telling her to “calm down” and felt confused and unsure of what to do next when she continued the tantrum. Next time you can better help your child understand and deal with the emotions she is feeling by saying, “You look sad

and disappointed. Sometimes I feel that way too. I wonder what we can do to feel better?” Teaching your child about her emotions can be a fun and rewarding experience and prevent challenging behavior from occurring in the first place.



What to Try at Home

- Simply state how your child is feeling. “You look really excited! I see your eyes are big and your mouth is open.”
- State how others are feeling, “Wow, that little boy is really mad. I see he is crying and making fists with his hands. I wonder why?”
- State how you are feeling. “I am really frustrated that the lawn mower is broken. I think I’m going to take a break and come up with some solutions to this problem.”
- Use books as teaching tools. There is a huge selection of children’s books that focus on emotional literacy. Visit <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#list> where you will find a book list, book activities and other resources for teaching emotional literacy.

The Bottom Line

Children who have a strong emotion vocabulary:

Tolerate frustration better

Get into fewer fights

Engage in less destructive behavior

Are healthier

Are less lonely

Are less impulsive

Are more focused

Have greater academic achievement



PLACE TO GROW

TEACHERS: SARA, BETH, JENNA, & ALI



Creative Communication Tools

By Carol Skinner, PH. D
MidStep Centers for Child Development



Listening

It is estimated that we spend 55% of our time listening yet it is one of the least taught skills in school. Some psychologists believe to empathize with and understand a person's point of view is one of the highest forms of intelligent behavior. Good listeners put aside their own thoughts to listen to the ideas of other and try to understand what other people are saying.



A common listening sequence important to use with children:

Pausing: Using "wait time" after asking questions and giving your child time to respond.

Paraphrasing: Lets your child know that you are listening, that you understand or are trying to understand, and that you care.

Probing: Asking clarifying questions to help gain a deeper insight or to refine understanding.

Communication guidelines:

1. Communication begins by **listening and indicating you hear** the child's feelings and meanings.
2. Effective listening involves **establishing eye contact** and posture which clearly indicate you are listening. **Listen with your eyes!**
3. **Avoid** nagging, criticizing, threatening, lecturing, probing, and ridiculing.
4. Treat your children the way you treat your best friend.
5. Mutual respect involves **accepting** the child's feelings.
6. **Reflective listening** provides a mirror for the child to see themselves more clearly.
7. **Let the child learn.** Resist the impulse to impose your solutions.



RAINBOW CONNECTION

TEACHERS: JENNY, DEB, & JANELLE

Over the Spring Break, teachers will be working on our dramatic play area. Friends have really been enjoying this area lately, so we hope to keep expanding their fun learning experiences. I found this great explanation of dramatic play at:

<http://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler-development/toddler-pretend-play.aspx>

Toddler Pretend Play: Tips for Boosting Your Child's Imagination

It may not seem like a milestone, but if your toddler snaps your photo with a wooden block (it's a camera, silly!) or bundles her bear into a blanket, she's made an important development leap. Engaging in pretend play (also called symbolic play, imaginative play, dramatic play, or good old make-believe) means your toddler understands that she can choose one object (the block) to represent another (a camera just like Mommy's). That's a big concept, and a valuable one. Just think: Numbers and letters work the same way, with unique squiggles and shapes standing in for concepts of number and language.

What Pretend Play Teaches

Empathy: In pretend play, your toddler (sometimes literally) puts herself in someone else's shoes, whether it's a parent, a teacher, a farmer, or a princess. (This is quite a self-esteem booster, too: She can be anything she wants to be!)

Language skills: As she chatters to her dolls and stuffed animals about her playtime plans, your toddler is strengthening her vocabulary and practicing her speech. When she gets a little older and begins to play more cooperatively with other kids, she'll learn powerful lessons about the power of language ("Now you put your baby to bed there, and I'll put mine here...").

Problem solving: That little brain is constantly thinking as she spins scenes in her head. What can she use to take a picture? What does she need to do to get Teddy ready for bed? Again, when other kids enter the scene (in a year or so), there'll be a whole new layer of complexity. Who plays what role? What if Hannah doesn't *want* to be the daddy, or even play house at all? Then it's time to start learning the art of negotiation!

Courage: Toddlerhood can be a fearful time, and pretend play is a safe way for little kids to work out their feelings in a safe environment.



Best Pretend-Play Props

- Containers and boxes of various shapes and sizes
- Dress-up clothes, shoes, hats, bags, and aprons
- Kitchen and household items, both toy and real
- Kits such as a doctor kit or a toy workbench and tools
- Puppets, stuffed animals, baby dolls, and caregiving items



UNIVERSE OF WONDER

TEACHERS: COLLEEN, ERIN, & JOAN

The children are currently showing an interest in the Magic Tree House books by Mary Pope Osborn. This interest led us to build our very own "Jack and Annie Tree house" within the classroom! The children really enjoy learning about and using the "real" tools and creating their own masterpieces!

Woodworking With Children Children can be taught to use the woodworking area appropriately and learn to respect tools – just as in any other area in the classroom. For children ages 4 years and older, the benefits and the learning associated with this activity far outweigh the potential for problems, if implemented and supervised correctly.

Why Woodworking? As children explore with tools and wood, they will use large and small muscles. Sawing, for example, requires large movement, while holding a screw in place requires small-muscle coordination. As children make decisions about design, shape and type of wood to use, they participate in problem-solving skills. If children are working together to saw a piece of wood to build a bridge, they practice social skills. These skills may carry over into real-world settings (Skeen, Garner, & Cartwright, 1984).



Woodworking also allows children another avenue for creativity. When children are provided with enough materials, technical assistance, and limits, they can experiment as they wish. As they become more skillful, they can use more advanced tools and develop their ideas accordingly. It is important, however, that children not be required to imitate models provided by others. Children may become frustrated when their resulting product does not resemble the model provided; they may give up rather than explore other possibilities. Remember, the planning and building process is more important than the finished product.

As children successfully complete their projects, even if the project is sawing a piece of wood in two, they are building self-esteem. When they use their constructions in other play episodes their self-esteem is enhanced. Children's work does not have to be complete in order for them to feel a sense of accomplishment. As with other successes, seeing some progress can keep a child going.

Woodworking Benefits & Skill-building

- Eye-hand coordination
- Dexterity/fine motor
- Problem-solving
- Role-playing
- Creative thinking
- Imagination
- Independence/self esteem
- Stress reliever (pounding)
- Matching/classification



SEA OF DISCOVERY

TEACHERS: ALYSSA, GINA, & JENNY



Play is very important for children when it comes to learning. We often use the terms pretend play or make-believe play that reflect a critical feature of the child's cognitive and social development. An important benefit of early pretend play may be its enhancement of the child's capacity for cognitive flexibility and, ultimately, creativity.

Play is also essential to early learning; children need to be actively involved in their play in order to develop basic learning skills, this is also a way for young children to learn about her/him self and their world around them. Quality play also plays a role in children's language, physical development, thinking and creativity skills. Talking with a baby and toddler about what is happening around him/her while playing and responding to their sounds, words, and gestures lays the foundation for healthy brain development, as well as future success learning how to read and write at school. Active play in a safe environment is important, open space with materials to allow children to move their bodies and use their senses are demonstrated every day in the Sea of Discovery room. Through play, children learn how to get along with others, and interactive experiences will help set the foundation for future friends. Lastly, creative play experience comes from a child's interest and abilities.



Many children in our classroom enjoy building blocks. This helps develop basic learning skills including creativity as he or she constructs a unique structure of their own design; physical development as he or she enhances fine motor abilities; and thinking skills as they explore relationships among object size, shape and balance. Open ended toys (boxes or blocks), push and pull toys develop great large motor coordination and strength. Sand and water table are used frequently throughout the classroom. Each week we try to add different themes in our water and sand tables based off of the children's interests. Construction and dramatic play (dress up, and kitchen areas) seem to have the children's best interest, based on what they like we try to incorporate new clothing and new construction tools throughout the classroom. A school atmosphere in which pretend games are encouraged, or even tolerated in the curriculum of children has also been shown to lead to even greater amounts of imaginativeness and enhanced curiosity, and to learning skills in preschoolers or early school-agers.



GARDEN OF WONDER

TEACHERS: KIM, EDIE, & BARBARA

The Importance of Music

Your children are exposed to music on a daily basis. We move to music, we sing songs with rhymes, letter sounds, and following direction, we sleep to music, we use music for transitioning from one activity to another, and we play instruments.



What does music have to do with early childhood education and why so much music?

It has been proven that exposure to music and musical experiences help young children both emotionally and intellectually.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children exposure to music during the early years enhances the learning process by promoting language development, creativity, coordination and social interaction. Our brains look for meaning and patterns.

Music lays the foundations for literacy through rhythm, rhyme, listening, and patterning. By singing to a familiar tune children will remember easier because they build on what they already know. Singing encourages correct pronunciation of words, enriches their vocabulary, and promotes language development through the use of rhyming patterns; by using rhyming patterns children are able to remember more details. We use familiar tunes like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Happy Birthday, and Mary Had A Little Lamb to teach different concepts such as counting by 5's and 10's, butterflies and caterpillars, simple addition and subtraction. Music also helps boost tired minds and bodies by singing or listening to upbeat music. By listening to calming music children stay more focused and on task for longer periods of time.

Children are also introduced to different cultures through music. They are exposed to new languages, rhythm patterns, and instruments by listening to music from other cultures.

Everyone has musical ability. So keep singing, dancing, and listening to music with your children. And remember "Sing like no one is listening, and Dance like no one is watching"



STEPPING STONES

TEACHERS: DARLENE, WHITNEY, & KELLY

Why Play is Important in Infant-Toddler Development



Play is the main way children learn and develop ideas about the world. It helps them build the skills necessary for critical thinking and leadership. It's how they learn to solve problems and to feel good about their ability to learn. Children learn the most from play when they have skilled teachers who are well-trained in understanding how play contributes to learning. Most child development experts agree that play is an essential part of a high-quality early learning program. **Play is not a break from learning—it's the way young children learn.**

Researchers are finding more and more connections between children's play and the learning and social development that helps them succeed in school. For example, pretend play helps children learn to think abstractly and to look at things from someone else's perspective. Pretend play is also connected to early literacy, mathematical thinking, and problem-solving.

When children play, they learn skills that contribute to school success:

Using one thing to represent another

Through pretend play, children learn to use their imaginations to represent objects, people, and ideas.

Using language and telling stories

Through pretend play, children develop their skills in using language and in telling and understanding stories.

Using experimentation and logic

When children play with materials such as blocks, clay, sand, and water, they develop skills in logic. They experiment with cause and effect, with counting and sorting things and solving problems.

Developing self control and social skills

As children share materials and play together, they learn to cooperate, listen to others, stand up for their own ideas, handle frustration, and empathize.

Learning to enjoy learning

When children do activities they have chosen, learning is enjoyable. It's based on their own interests and gives them a sense of competence. Studies show that children's attitudes of curiosity, motivation, and competence are key to success in elementary school.



KINDERGARTEN

TEACHERS: JENN, WENDY, & TANA



WE ARE READING!!!

At this point in the year we are really working hard on our reading & pre-reading skills. We have the alphabet sounds under our belts & we're looking for opportunities to use them!

Here are a few tips taken from Scholastic & National Center for Family & Literacy to help your child along!



- * Provide a consistent time and place to read together.
Make it a positive experience so that your child will look forward to your time together.
- * Practice at least three to four nights a week for at least 15 to 20 minutes.
The extra practice reading aloud can help your child read more fluently, accurately, smoothly and with expression.
- * Listen to your child read.
This is an effective way to help your child become a better reader. The effort you take to make this an enjoyable time also can help your child have a positive attitude about school.
- * Wait before helping your child when he/ she makes a mistake.
Sometimes other words in the sentence can help him figure out the unknown word.
- * Praise your child for correcting themselves and using clues to figure out words on their own.
This will help build your child's reading confidence.
- * Keep a variety of reading materials available throughout your home.
The more your child is exposed to books and reading materials, the more interested he or she will be in learning to read.

