



Dartmouth College Child Care Center Newsletter

Fall 2024

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Barnes, Ashley Young,
Calena Connor, Kira
Robinson

Franklin Came to Visit





From the Administrative Director

Sunnie McPhetres

The new year is settling in. Children are learning the routines in their new spaces. Relationships are being created with both children and adults. Did you know that creating relationships is the second most important thing that we do here at D4C? The first is keeping your children safe, but helping children form relationships is the second most important thing. In my view, that is more important than teaching children colors or shapes or how to walk in a line or how to sit in circle or how to move down a slide or how to hold oneself up on a chin-up bar or how to build a sturdy tower or even how to enjoy nature (that's third)!

I am sure that you see this in your children. When they really *click* with certain teachers or cousins or other children, they have a much different outlook on life in general. When they do not have a great connection, they are more apt to want to be at home with the people that they know love them best... you! We are fortunate that D4C teachers work so hard to create relationships with and between children. There are those rare times when a child doesn't find that certain adult needed, but that is a time to help them to see that there are so many different types of people in the world and that they will move on and will find people to connect with later.

Why do I feel that relationships are the second most important thing that we do? Relationships are an integral part of

- brain development (connections on the outside create and strengthen connections on the inside)
- emotional development (the more connected one feels, the more one can explore their own feelings and reactions, and the more empathy one can develop)
- academic development (the more secure a person feels in their relationships, the more open they are to learning and to failing on occasion)
- mental health (developing relationships gives children a space to vent or explode or cry or be silly or just be quiet without being judged)
- interpersonal skills (relationships are paramount to having give and take conversations – yes, even with babies, seeing life from someone else's point of view, and recognizing when you have hurt someone's feelings and figuring out what to do about it, the opposite is also true).

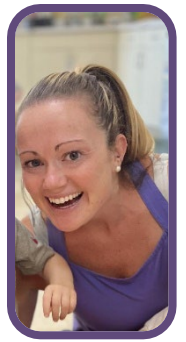
The next time that you notice a teacher's face light up when your child enters the room, or see another child come to give a hug when you arrive, or when you arrive at the end of the day and see a staff member snuggling with your child while reading a book, you can feel very secure in knowing that relationships are being built!

At the end of this newsletter, you will find a working paper from the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. It is long, but well worth the read if you are interested in a more scholarly take on children and relationships.

Take a look at each classroom's addition to this newsletter and see if you can spot the many ways that relationships are created and celebrated throughout the program!

From The Interim Director

Abby Plummer-LaBombard



It is the most wonderful time of the year. The leaves are piling up to jump in, children are picking out their Halloween costumes to soon trade in for snow suits. This fall has flown by. We have welcomed so many new families and new staff. Our building feels full again! Being fully staffed, we are able to cover classrooms for professional development and planning time, hold Lead Teacher meetings again, have extra hands for crazy days (like picture day), allow teachers to hold small group lunches and activities outside of the classroom, and give every child additional one on one time. I love looking out the window on the big playground and seeing teachers run up and down the climbers with the kids, because there are other staff members able to watch the kids playing in the sandbox or biking.

Our next professional development day will be on December 11th. The center is closed to children, while staff spend 8 hours together and learn something new. This year we will have two guest speakers. The first is Ymani Hawkins of Campus Services. She will do a training on being culturally responsible in early education. We are very excited to have her back! The second guest speaker is Carrie Becker. She is the founder of the organization, Transforming Early Childhood Education. We are very excited to welcome her as well!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

DCCCC Will Be Closed On The Following Days:

- Thursday, November 28, 2024 - Thanksgiving Day
- Friday, November 29, 2024 - Day After Thanksgiving
- December 11, 2024 - Professional Development
- Monday, December 23, 2024 - Winter Break
- Tuesday, December 24, 2024 - Day Before Christmas Day
- Wednesday, December 25, 2024 - Christmas Day
- Thursday, December 26, 2024 - Winter Break
- Friday, December 27, 2024 - Winter Break
- Monday, December 30, 2024 - Winter Break
- Tuesday, December 31, 2024 - Winter Break
- Wednesday, January 1, 2025 - New Year's Day

Reminder – Professional Development Day Closure

You already read about it in Abby's column, but this is another reminder that we will be closed on Wednesday, December 11 for a professional development day. The staff will be meeting together to learn many things and to validate the importance of creating relationships with each other!

Family Survey Open Until October 30

D4C staff aim to provide the best childcare experience for your children. We would appreciate it if you would fill out our Fall Family Survey. We welcome and appreciate all feedback. We welcome the opportunity to learn how we can serve you better. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Abby.

The link to the survey is here: [DCCCC Family Survey - Fall 2024 - Google Forms](#)

Winter Pajama Party and Sing-a-Long

We would love to have you join us for our annual winter pajama party and sing-a-long in the big multi on Friday, December 20 at 4:00 pm. All children and teachers will be invited to wear pajamas to childcare (if they wish).

Each classroom will prepare a song to lead for everyone to sing.

Families are invited and more than welcome to attend, in pajamas or your everyday clothes and sing along with us!

Thanksgiving Feast for staff

Wondering how to show appreciation for the amazing staff at D4C? Here is one opportunity. It has become a tradition for some families to volunteer to provide food for a feast for the staff the week before Thanksgiving. The offerings do not need to be related to traditional Thanksgiving foods. We love to try new foods from different cultures! The date of this year's feast will be Wednesday, November 20. Stay tuned for details on how to sign up to provide yummy dishes for our staff!



3rd Annual



Trunk Or Treat

Thursday, October 31, 3:30 pm

Trunk or Treat will be back by popular demand – we had such a great time the last two years, we decided to do it again!

For those who were not here previously, volunteer families park their decorated vehicles around the front oval and distribute “treats” when the children come around with their treat-bags. “Treats” will be non-food items.

Children can bring their costumes with them when they come to D4C on October 31. Teachers will help them to get their costumes on after rest time.

If your child does not usually attend on Thursdays, you are welcome to come with your child at 3:30 to participate. Anyone is welcome to come and participate with their child by either watching or walking around with them. If you choose to walk around with your child, we ask that you stay with your child’s class. Because we will be doing this in our driveway, we ask that you park up the road at the public parking area and walk to D4C. If you would like to take your child with you after the event, remember to check in with your teachers and sign your child out. If you have any questions, please reach out to Abby!

We are looking forward to another fun-filled Halloween!

D4C Staff for Fall 2024

We Are Fully Staffed!

Sunnie McPhetres, Administrative Director and Special Advisor on Childcare – 30 years
Abby Plummer-LaBombard, Interim Director – 6 years
Dawn Cote, Office Manager – 12 years in December
Karen Small, Administrative Assistant – 9 years in January

Ashley Ricard, Chickadee Lead Teacher – 7 months
Margaret Fraser – Chickadee Teacher – 3 years
Prajna Mohapatra – Chickadee Teacher – 2 years

Teresa Hahn, Chickadee Too Lead Teacher – 15 years in February
Michelle Ackerman, Chickadee Too Teacher – 4 years in January
Amy Flaherty, Chickadee Too Teacher – 1.5 months

Moya Stevens, Owl Lead Teacher – 15 years
Maya Lopez-Bowlin, Owl Teacher – 7 years in January
Jyanna Vaughan, Owl Teacher – 3 years

Michelle Joki, Hedgehog Lead Teacher – 1 month
Jenn Boudro, Hedgehog Teacher – 33 years
Emily Courtemanche, Hedgehog Teacher – 6 years in November

Josie Byam, Otter Lead Teacher – 3 years
Megan Widli, Otter Teacher – 2 years in November
Alejandra Gomez, Otter Assistant Teacher – 7 months

Cat Kaschak, Badger Lead Teacher – 3 years, currently on leave
Elizabeth Darragh, Badger Teacher – 3 years
Porsha Reynolds, Badger Teacher – 4 months

Viviana Rodriguez, Black Bear Lead Teacher – 5 years in January
Hannah Rowland, Black Bear Teacher – 3 years in February
Janny Gao, Black Bear Assistant Teacher – 1 year

Liz Harrington, Floating Associate Teacher – 13 years
Brendita Barnes, Floating Associate Teacher – 4 years
Ashley Young, Floating Associate Teacher – 1.5 months
Calena Connor, Floating Associate Teacher – 1.5 months
Kira Robinson, Floating Assistant Teacher – 1.5 months

That's a whole bunch of D4C experience! How fortunate are we?

News from the Chickadee Ones

Ashley Ricard
Lead Teacher

Margaret Fraser

Prajna Mohapatra

We have had a great first few months of the 2024-2025 school year! So far, we have spent lots of time getting to know each of the new children and establishing bonds with them. It is such a joy to build trust with all of your children! As infant teachers, we spend a lot of time observing our class to meet the ever-changing needs and cues of infants and toddlers. Infant's routines and development can change rapidly so each day may look a little different than the day before. Infants learn best through trust and bonding with their caregivers which is why responsive care is critical for this age group!

In September and October, we loved doing many fall-related crafts, played with Oobleck, lots of outdoor exploration, celebrated our first birthday of the school year and even had a fall sensory bin! Our class enjoys music (although sometimes our youngest infants need to snooze during class), another example of meeting needs on-demand.

Here are some snippets of our children so far this year:

Yunis is such a happy boy who loves enthusiasm and expression from his caregivers! He spends lots of time making the beginning sounds of words and exploring his environment by crawling and pulling up on things!

You can often watch Wesley's eyes navigate to the ceiling fans or to the windchimes in Abby's office as we take walks for a change of scenery. He is doing lots of gross motor learning such as rolling from his back to his belly and trying to "jump" when being held by his caregivers. He absolutely loves socialization and connects with all of his teachers!

Alice has loved having so many friends join her class that are around the same age as she is! She is gaining so much vocabulary and can put together two-to-three-word sentences! She loves painting and being outside. You can often find her and Hallie playing near each other with similar objects. We love to see how much she learns each day!

Hallie has blossomed so much over the past couple of months! You can hear her beginning to form some words and pull on your clothing or arms when she wants to show you something. She loves to sit in the baby swing and "loungue", which her teachers think is so silly! She loves exploring sensory activities and has exceptional fine motor skills!



Esther is often focused on working her gross motor skills and is starting to move more independently. She has established strong bonds with her teachers! She loves grabbing toys and banging them in front of her and enjoys music class!



Elias is such a smiley guy who loves just about anyone! He is currently working on army crawling and sometimes can get onto his hand and knees and rock. He enjoys exploring the sandbox outside and typically happy wherever he is!



Yaralyn likes to explore her environment and be with her friends. She has great fine motor skills and can pick up small objects with ease! She loves being outside and has gotten really good at climbing the ladder to the climbers.

Kaylee is slow to warm up to school, but has definitely begun to establish bonds with her teachers. She enjoys outside time and going down the slide. She loves bubbles and will say “more bubbles” if we turn off the bubble machine! She is taking a lot of steps through out each day without support!



Alden is starting to walk without holding onto things! He is very social and easily bonded with any adult or peer! He handles any transition with ease and enjoys exploring his environment! He has fun dancing, but may be “bashful” if you draw attention to his moves.



News from the Chickadee Toos

Teresa Hahn
Lead Teacher

Michelle Ackerman

Amy Flaherty

Happy Fall Y'All. Chickadee Too has been having a blast getting to know each other and are settling into a nice routine. We have new walkers, new crawlers and those of us practicing sitting and rolling. We celebrated our first birthday last week! So much change in such a short time.

We have been taking advantage of the mild Fall weather and getting out to play and have taken some strolls around the neighborhood. There has been some leaf collecting and exploring, sometimes we just like to watch them flutter down in the breeze. All the Chickadees painted a colored leaf picture that you can see on our art bulletin board.

We will spend the next couple of weeks exploring pumpkins large and small and discovering what fun activities we can do with them.

As you know, the weather here can vary quite a bit from day to day. Please check out your child's cubby and make sure they have weather appropriate clothing and a few changes of clothing for inside as well. It is helpful if you label them as well.

Those of you who are bringing in breastmilk for your child, please make sure the containers are marked with the child's name and the date the milk was pumped.

We greatly appreciate you not sending in peanut products and eggs. Thank you for keeping our Chicks safe!

I am excited for this year and all the fun-filled growth and development we will experience.

Teresa for Chickadee Too





News from the Owls

Moya Stevens
Lead Teacher

Maya Lopez

Jyanna Vaughan

We hope this finds you well, enjoying the sweater weather and braving the runny noses that come along with it! The Owls are enjoying the sun and playing to their hearts content as much as they can before the cold settles in. As we prepare for the colder months, we would like to give you a few cold gear tips in regard to clothing and how to dress up with it! For some items, we added some fun ideas on how to learn to dress up through play. Since some families may start to ask, because they're not used to the winters here, AND it is a real science to keep warm in New England, here's a list of websites for families:

General L.L. Bean Toddler options: [Search results for "toddler" | L.L.Bean \(llbean.com\)](#)

Mittens

The best mittens to buy, because they stay on best, and with the velcro on the side, we as adults can best help "put the thumb in the thumb hole". We will see MANY of these, so definitely label, please!

<https://www.llbean.com/llb/shop/88708?page=cold-buster-waterproof-mittens-toddlers>

FUN IDEAS: Read *Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb* by Al Perkins or simply start teaching your child how to make a thumbs up/"thumbs" to help put mittens on.

Socks

You can never have enough wool socks. The best part about wool is that when it gets wet, it doesn't necessarily get cold - it maintains your body temperature best. Really the best to prevent frostbite, since snow will always get in boots and melt, despite our best boot tucking.

[Toddlers' Katahdin Socks, Two-Pack | Accessories at L.L.Bean \(llbean.com\)](#)

You'll see many from Bombas, AND for every pair you buy, one gets donated. Help share the warmth!

<https://bombas.com/collections/toddler-socks>

For older kids (5+), support local from Vermont!: <https://darntough.com/>

FUN IDEAS: Have any scrunchies from the 90's? These are great to help your child learn through play on how to pull on socks! Slip them on your feet!

WOOL - it keeps its shape longer if you don't put them through the dryer every time, but it also takes a while to dry, so we run them through.

(There's a table on this page which explains the difference between wool and fleece: <https://silverbobbin.com/wool-vs-fleece/>)

Hats

Over the season, you will buy many hats! Hats with flaps help keep the ears warm, but also are the best for staying down as well as up and out of the eyes. Best advice is to buy as small as you can get. The main issue with this kind of hat is overly large ones have the tendency to turn and can then blind the child, so consider this as one item you may buy yearly.

[Kids' L.L.Bean Corduroy Trapper Hat | Accessories at L.L.Bean \(llbean.com\)](https://www.llbean.com/llb/shop/124536?page=kids-mountain-classic-fleece-hat-and-mitten-set-toddlers)
<https://www.llbean.com/llb/shop/124536?page=kids-mountain-classic-fleece-hat-and-mitten-set-toddlers>

Boots

Boots... you either find a good one, or you will eventually find a good one. Things to consider: does it have a strap to stay on the child's foot best, can they walk well in them, can snow get in, will the soles keep them from slipping on ice?

<https://www.llbean.com/llb/shop/52080?page=toddlers-northwoods-boots>
[Beverly Hills Polo Club Kids Girls Snow Boots. Waterproof, Slip Resistant, And Warm For Winter \(toddler\) - Color: Pink, 11 : Target](#)
[Toddler Frankie Winter Boots - Cat and Jack™ : Target](#)

***Some notes: short boots pair best with snowpants with tight elastic/stretchy ankles, that way no snow can get in. Also, if they fall off easily, please consider that snow can get thick and pull off boots very easily.

FUN IDEA: Buying cheap boots of bigger sizes for your dress-up station so they can practice putting them on. Even using their rainboots from earlier in the year works, too!

Other items to consider

Under Armour long-sleeved shirts (for your closet - your child can wear these under their clothes every day, because these are meant not to overheat)

Snowpants, snow suits, or snow overalls

Jackets with multiple layers

Fleece-lined pants (also for your closet)

Flannel

Neck warmers (scarves don't stay on as well)

Over-heating - one rarely gets too warm in the cold winter, but it can happen! You will also want to get to know your child's best layer combo that doesn't get them too hot, since this can cause perspiration, which in winter can be a problem, since this can get cold and freeze.

***Please consider that we do go outside every day. We will only stay indoors when it is dangerously freezing outside.

***The above are only some of many suggestions for what to buy and, in the end, you will know what best works for your family and your child(ren).

Ready to stay cozy warm for the winter,
The Owl Team



News from the Hedgehogs

Michelle Joki
Lead Teacher

Jenn Boudro

Emily Courtemanche

The Hedgehogs have had an amazing start to their year, they loved participating in our Farm Animal Parade, using the Manual Apple Peeler to make applesauce, celebrating Birthdays, exploring the milkweed pods on our walks, and enjoying our first Music Class with Brooke! Our Hedgehogs love venturing out into the woods to go on walks and explore the nature around us. We collected some Woolly Bear caterpillars and brought them into our classroom to observe and watch them grow and change before hibernation. Every day the Hedgehogs help us collect new leaves or flowers for them to eat! Our Hedgehogs have also grown so much since starting the year! They are striving for independence and insist on doing tasks for themselves. The Hedgehogs are so proud whenever they can dress or undress themselves independently. They have gotten so strong too; a few Hedgehogs can open the refrigerator door by themselves and are extra eager to help their peers open it. The Hedgehog Corn Maze will be displayed in the multi for us to romp through, so keep an eye (or ear) out! We have many more fun activities planned and cannot wait to share them all with you! The next family events are scheduled for the annual Hedgehog Pinata Parade Party that will be held on Oct. 29th as well as our 3rd Trunk or Treat on Halloween afternoon!



Teddy- Meet our oldest Hedgehog, Teddy! He loves playing the toy guitars and singing along to his favorite children's songs. You can often hear him singing "Old MacDonald" and "Wheels on the Bus" on the climber like a stage. When Teddy isn't serenading us, he enjoys playing in the sensory buckets with all of the assorted materials we use, pushing his hands deep into the materials to feel them all over his hands.

Oscar- Meet Oscar, he loves playing with vehicles and bringing in his diggers from home to share with his friends! Oscar enjoys playing with the garages and testing how the different cars drive down the ramps, figuring out which ones get stuck and which ones glide all the way to the bottom without a pause. Whenever outside, you can find Oscar in the sandbox working with the construction vehicles; always hard at work!





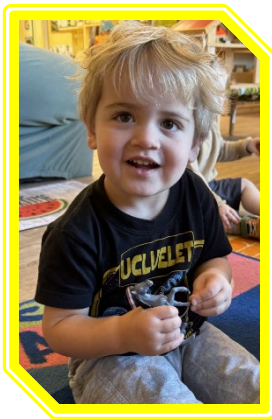
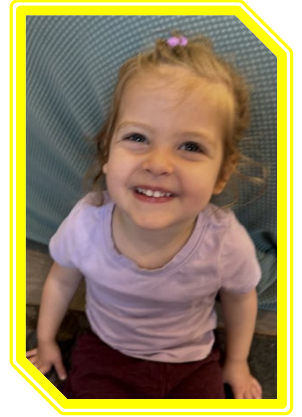
Silas- Meet Silas, he loves the color purple and is always smiling! You can often find him playing the purple guitar and singing along to "Wheels on the Bus" or "Old MacDonald" with his friends or playing in our sensory bins. Silas likes to pour the materials out of his containers and back into the big bucket before repeating his steps over and over. Silas enjoys watching the process of how things work and attempting to duplicate what he sees. While outside, Silas loves finding milkweed pods and pulling them apart to see all that is inside before tossing the feathery tufts into the air and watching them blow down to the ground.

Ivy- Meet Ivy! She loves to play dress up and try on as many costumes as she can before she picks her favorite. Ivy also enjoys pretend phone calls and spends lots of time calling all of her family members to say 'hello' and ask about their days. Outside, Ivy enjoys picking different flowers and making a small bundle of them to carry back to the playground. She also likes playing in the kitchen and pretending to use the oven so she can wear the oven mitts. Ivy is very interested in helping her friends and teachers, she always brings personal belongings back to their Hedgehogs whenever she notices something out of place!



Laila- Meet Laila! She loves going for walks and being outside. Laila loves running on the trails and trying to race ahead of her friends to be the "winner". She is often heard encouraging her friends to catch up with her from the top of the hill by yelling "C'mon" all the way down to them. Laila also enjoys looking at books with all of the beautiful pictures they have to offer. She also enjoys painting and other similar art projects; Laila can spend almost her whole morning painting at the table before circle time!

Sarah- Meet our youngest Hedgehog Sarah! She enjoys playing in the sensory buckets and filling the tiny containers as full as she can before they start to spill out and topple over. Sarah spends a lot of time exploring the science materials and persists until she reaches the result she was aiming for. Sarah also enjoys playing in the toy kitchen and cooking food on the stove; and she loves pretending to eat whatever she just made and sharing it with her friends.



Sebastian- Meet Bash! He loves to play in the sensory buckets and can spend almost the whole morning enjoying the materials available. Bash enjoys pouring or dumping his materials and pretending to cook something in the bins. When we had our oat buckets out, he insisted on baking apple crisps and applesauce! Bash also likes driving the big red bike around the playground and playing on the climber. Bash loves using the different ladders to climb up and then zip down the slide. On our walks, Bash races to the circle drains and tries to be the first Hedgehog to climb up!

Thiago- Meet Thiago! He loves picking apples from the tree outside and saving them to show his parents at the end of the day! Thiago is working on his coordination and enjoys playing soccer with his teachers or throwing balls with his friends. Whenever outside, Thiago finds a ball and asks us to throw it up to play roof-ball. He loves watching it roll down again and jumps around as it bounces to the ground, before rushing off to catch it.





Rhett- Meet Rhett! He loves to take care of babies and put them down for nap! In the mornings before circle, Rhett can be found playing the little guitars and singing an assortment of songs. Recently, he's been singing lots of the "Apples and Bananas" song. Rhett also likes playing with the tools and using them to fix the climber, his favorite tools are the drill and "seesaw" (circle saw/chainsaw). Whenever outside, Rhett can be found using the leaf blower or lawnmowers to complete all of his yardwork.

Cecilia- Meet Ceci! She enjoys taking care of the babies in our classroom and putting them down for nap; you can often find her on the circle rug covering the babies with blankets and rubbing their backs. Ceci also plays in the kitchen and cooks lots of food for her friends. Ceci is also a big fan of climbing and moving her body. She is usually one of the first Hedgehogs running down the trail and leading the way!



Pippa- Meet Pippa! She loves playing with her peers and helping them grab whatever items they need for their dramatic play games. She also enjoys playing with the tools and pretending to fix the climber and any other broken items around the room or taking wonderful care of all the baby dolls. Recently, Pippa has grown into a nurturer role and spends lots of time checking in on her peers and making sure they are all having a good time; if they are ever upset, Pippa pats them on the back and assures them that "It's okay" until they are feeling better.

Emilio- Meet Emilio! He enjoys playing in the sensory buckets or building with items that he can then topple over. Emilio loves the cause and effect of building things up and watching them come back down again. Emilio also enjoys music, like playing our toy guitars with his friends or going to Music with Brooke on Tuesdays. Emilio is always dancing or singing along to the songs and whenever the song is finished, he instantly asks "Mas?"



News from the Otters

Josie Byam
Lead Teacher

Megan Widli

Alejandra Gomez

We have been busy Otters since our new group started at the end of August. In the Otter room we like to take things slow in the beginning. Typically we start out by having the first two weeks to settle in to the classroom and begin starting a routine. This year we were able to start a little earlier as these kiddos were able to visit often! We typically begin our routine times with bathroom breaks, snack time and lunch. Once Megan, Alejandra and I feel the kids have settled in and are doing well with their new routine we begin to filter in some of the curriculum activities and projects we do in the classroom. Franklin is a Juliana mini pig who silly enough used to live in my (Ms. Josie's) house. He used to go in and out like the dogs do and enjoys scratches just like the dogs! However, I do tend to find him a little more mischievous than the dogs. Franklin is just about a year and half and really enjoys snacks and laying the sun.

So far in the Otter Room we have settled in and gotten our routine down. We welcomed Mrs. Brooke back to the center and began our music class, and we have started in on our weekly curriculum. For the months of September and October, we have learned about the following themes.



- All about me
- Apples
- Fall foliage
- On the farm (meet Franklin)
- Harvest
- Pumpkins
- Halloween

After the new year we will start with our letter of the week and continue to add to our circle time routine. We have a small art project designated towards our letter of the week as well to put into our alphabet books. With our weekly letter we add in sign language for the letters as well! Something new and exciting this year is that we will be learning our weekly theme and some other fun words in Spanish thanks to Alejandra! Megan and I are also very excited to learn!



Let's meet our new Otters and a favorite thing or two!

Callen – I like trucks and playing outside with my toys at home

Charlotte – I like my mommy and I like to play on the swings

Desmond – I like to play with the police cars and the big fire truck

Ethan – I like to go home with my mommy

Freddie – I like to pick apples from outside and have my puppy at nap time

Logan – I like my Bubba and to play in my classroom

Otto – I like to play with the big trucks and play on the big playground

River – I like to read a book with my Daddy and eat my lunch

Sibyl – I like to play with the baby dolls and go outside

Simon – I like to play outside with River

Tesfay – I like tv and I like to play with my friends

Vera – I like to play with Sibyl and I like when my teachers do my hair

Violet - I like to play with the babies in my classroom and play outside on the slide



News from the Badgers

Cat Kaschak
Lead Teacher

Elizabeth Darragh

Porsha Reynolds

We are thrilled to welcome our new Badgers to the Badger Room! This is an exciting time for your child as they embark on new adventures, build friendships, and begin their preschool journey.

What Makes the Badger Room Special?

In the Badger Room, we celebrate each child's creativity and individuality. Many of our new Badgers are drawn to music and culture, and we've been exploring these passions together through fun, interactive activities. Whether learning new songs, dancing to different rhythms, traveling worldwide through art, or sharing traditions, we are happy to create a classroom full of joyful sounds and shared experiences.

Active Play and Exploration

The Badgers are always on the move! Our Badgers love engaging in active games like "What Time is It Mr. Fox," "Red Light, Green Light," and even soccer. We have gone on many adventurous Friday walks, where we practice our outdoor awareness. These walks are special opportunities to engage in mindfulness by listening closely to the sounds of nature around us—whether it's the rustling of leaves or the birds chirping, our Badgers are developing a deep sense of connection with the outdoors in the woods, fields, and big hills.



Young Scientists at Work

Our Badgers are honing their scientific skills with exciting STEM experiments. We've been exploring fascinating topics like the human body—learning about bones and the heart—including seasonal changes, such as why leaves change color in the fall. The children have also created their weather phenomena by making volcano eruptions, tornados, wind, and snow in jars! These hands-on experiments nurture curiosity, foster problem-solving skills, and allow the children to engage with the world around them.



Getting to Know Each Other

As we settle into the new school year, we have been focusing on getting to know one another, discussing feelings, and learning to express our emotions. We encourage our Badgers to talk about what makes them happy, excited, or even frustrated. Building emotional intelligence is a big part of our classroom, and it helps create a supportive environment for everyone.



Celebrations!

Already, we have had a birthday celebration, and some holidays have brought extra fun into our classroom! Celebrating special moments is important in building our community, and we look forward to continuing to honor birthdays, holidays, and cultural traditions throughout the year.

We are so excited to share this journey with you and your children!

Warm Welcomes from,

The Badger Room Team



News from the Black Bears

Viviana Rodriguez,
Lead Teacher

Hannah Rowland

Janny Gao

The first couple months in the Black Bear Room have been fast but fun filled! We all have finally adjusted to the new classroom, the new schedule, routine and expectations. We have spent a lot of time getting to know one another and building new relationships as well as exploring positive ways to express ourselves and our emotions. We continue to help one another with using our words, offering support and comfort and working together as a team listening to each other's ideas.

All the black bears have taken part in multiple writing workshops already learning how to write 3 letters at a time, identifying what each letter looks and sounds like and identifying words that start with each letter sound. They have pointed out that the letters can be sneaky sometimes since some letters can make the same sounds like C and K and love learning to spell some of their favorite words like friends names, animals, characters from movies, etc. Many of them already use a pincer grasp but we will be working on fine tuning these skills in the coming weeks using pencil grips to show the kids where to rest their fingers. Overall, the kids continue to be eager to learn more letter sounds and some have even said they can't wait to learn how to read after they learn how to spell.



Black bears have loved our multi day and hike days on Wednesdays and Fridays (although we haven't had many hikes yet due to the weather). During the hikes we have ventured on, the kids have really enjoyed being in the woods, spotting the trees that have changed color, hunting for bugs, throwing rocks in the stream, saying hello to ray school friends on the playground in passing, collecting rocks, pinecones and leaves and so much more. While in the multi, the black bears have shared the space really well with the younger classes, do a great job being safe when engaged in big climbing or jumping activities and do a great job making all friends in the multi feel included in their games.



The Black Bears have really enjoyed our curriculum themes so far and truly can't wait for many of the fun themes to come. As many of you know, we do an emergent style curriculum that usually changes each week and the themes are determined by what we see the kids are most interested in or what holidays or things are happening out in the real world. Some of our favorite themes done so far have been- fall week (with apple taste testing, applesauce making, pumpkin seed roasting and more), farm week (with a butter making activity and a visit from Josie's real pig Franklin), seasons week (with snowball dodgeball, ice skating relay, beach ball, harvesting plants and veggies, etc.), an all about me week (where children brought in family photos and their favorite books, food, stuffed animal and an a item to represent their culture), and a kindness/feelings week (focused on ways to support each as a class, develop classroom rules together, feeling musical chairs and scenario games and ways to handle tricky emotions without harming others, etc.). Currently we are doing a food curriculum followed by a cooking curriculum in which kids will learn all about the food groups, healthy vs. unhealthy foods, how to follow a recipe, do some cooking



projects and learn about cooking safety. We all look forward to exploring community helpers with some visitors each day in the upcoming weeks as well as exploring some other festive holiday themes like Halloween/spooky creatures, thanksgiving, and our holiday curriculum.

Believe it or not we have already celebrated some children and teacher birthdays including Rowan, Samuel and Hannah in September and Leo Z in October but we look forward to all the birthdays yet to come. Here are a few of the black bears favorite things about the year so far:

Signy- "I love multi time!"

Palmer- "I love the special snacks we've made for birthdays and the apple taste testing we did and making apple sauce!"

Rowan- "I like playing all the games we've played so far at circle time!"

Walter- "I love playing games at tables and in the afternoon like Twister or The Crow Apple Tree board game!"

Timothy- "I love racing on the red bike outside, feeding the fish and watching the fish tank, playing with all the toys and the little stuffies in our buckets, delivering orders in the kitchen area using the bell and learning how to pump on the swings!"

Olive- "I really love playing in the multi w/ my friends!"

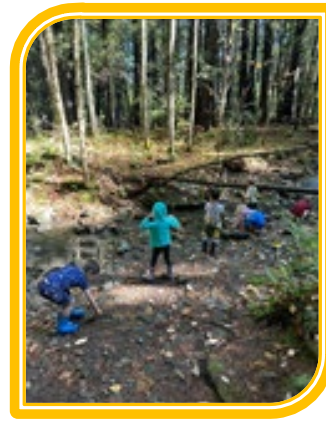
Robin- "I love playing in the multi, being outside on the playground, helping put out choices for tables and bringing lamby to school with me each day!"

Leo Z- "I loved playing snowball dodgeball and all the other games you teach us circle!"

Thank you and we look forward to sharing with you again in the winter!

Love,
The Black Bear Team!

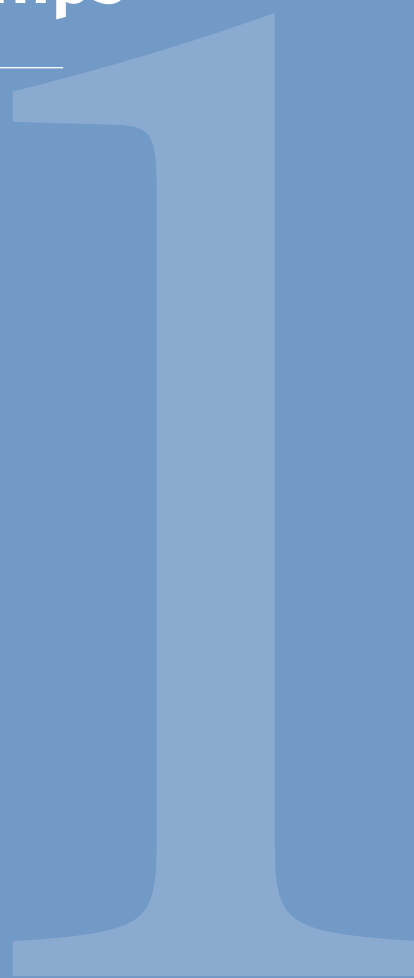




NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships

WORKING PAPER 1



Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, housed at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, is a multi-disciplinary collaboration designed to bring the science of early childhood and early brain development to bear on public decision-making. Established in 2003, the Council is committed to synthesizing and communicating science to help inform policies that promote successful learning, adaptive behavior, and sound physical and mental health for all young children. For more information, go to <http://www.developingchild.net>.

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The Issue

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS ON THE QUALITY AND RELIABILITY OF A YOUNG CHILD'S relationships with the important people in his or her life, both within and outside the family. Even the development of a child's brain architecture depends on the establishment of these relationships.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6}

Growth-promoting relationships are based on the child's continuous give-and-take ("serve and return" interaction) with a human partner who provides what nothing else in the world can offer – experiences that are individualized to the child's unique personality style; that build on his or her own interests, capabilities, and initiative; that shape the child's self-awareness; and that stimulate the growth of his or her heart and mind.

Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development – intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and moral. The quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes that really matter – self-confidence and sound mental health, motivation to learn, achievement in school and later in life, the ability to control aggressive impulses and resolve conflicts in non-violent ways, knowing the difference between right and wrong, having the capacity to develop and sustain casual friendships and intimate relationships, and ultimately to be a successful parent oneself.

Stated simply, relationships are the "active ingredients" of the environment's influence on healthy human development. They incorporate the qualities that best promote

competence and well-being – individualized responsiveness, mutual action-and-interaction, and an emotional connection to another human being, be it a parent, peer, grandpar-

Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development.

ent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, teacher, coach, or any other person who has an important impact on the child's early development. Relationships engage children in the human community in ways that help them define who they are, what they can become, and how and why they are important to other people.^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13}

In the words of the distinguished developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner: ... *in order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last, and always.*

What Science Tells Us

NURTURING AND STABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH caring adults are essential to healthy human development beginning from birth. Early, secure attachments contribute to the growth of a broad range of competencies, including a love of learning, a comfortable sense of oneself, positive social skills, multiple successful

relationships at later ages, and a sophisticated understanding of emotions, commitment, morality, and other aspects of human relationships. Stated simply, establishing successful relationships with adults and other children provides a foundation of capacities that children will use for a lifetime.^{14, 15, 16, 17}

The “serve and return” interaction between parent and baby – in which young children naturally reach out for interaction through babbling, facial expressions, and gestures and adults respond with the same kind of vocalizing and gesturing back at them – builds and strengthens brain architecture and creates a relationship in which the baby’s experiences are affirmed and new abilities are nurtured. Children who have healthy relationships with their primary caregivers are more likely to develop insights into other people’s feelings, needs, and thoughts, which form

child care setting also influence the development of important capabilities in children, including greater social competence, fewer behavior problems, and enhanced thinking and reasoning skills at school age. Young children benefit in these ways because of the secure relationships they develop in such settings, and because of the ways in which the caregivers provide cognitively stimulating activities and support for developing positive relationships with other children. Unfortunately, the generally poor quality of care provided in many child care arrangements in the United States does not support these benefits because of high caregiver turnover, poorly designed programs, or inadequate preparation of staff. Current research also suggests the additional risk that a greater amount of time in out-of-home care during infancy may be associated with greater disobedience and aggression by the time children enter school.^{12, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33}

Children who develop warm, positive relationships with their kindergarten teachers are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more self-confident, and achieve more in the classroom.

a foundation for cooperative interactions with others and an emerging conscience. Sensitive and responsive parent-child relationships also are associated with stronger cognitive skills in young children and enhanced social competence and work skills later in school, which illustrates the connection between social/emotional development and intellectual growth. The broader quality of the home environment (including toys, activities, and interactions within the family setting) also is strongly related to early cognitive and language development, performance on IQ testing, and later achievement in school.^{12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26}

Young children also learn a great deal from each other. They learn how to share, to engage in reciprocal interactions (e.g., taking turns, giving and receiving), to take the needs and desires of others into account, and to manage their own impulses. Just being around other children, however, is not enough. The development of friendships is essential, as children learn and play more competently in the rapport created with friends rather than when they are dealing with the social challenges of interacting with casual acquaintances or unfamiliar peers.^{27, 28}

The warmth and support of the caregiver in a

Relationships are important to school adjustment. Children who develop warm, positive relationships with their kindergarten teachers are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more self-confident, and achieve more in the classroom. Relationships with peers also are important. Children who experience greater peer acceptance and friendship tend to feel more positively about the school experience and perform better in the classroom.^{33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38}

Children have different ways of interacting with their peers. Some are gregarious, others are too shy to get involved (although they want to), some need time to “warm up,” and others are not as interested in being sociable. All of these variations fall within a normal range, and it is essential to differentiate among the many potential reasons (both biological and environmental) that a young child may have limited or difficult interactions with others. Playing cooperatively, making friends, and sustaining friendships over time are not always easy. Any child with severely limited peer involvement is at considerable risk for significant adverse developmental consequences.^{39, 40, 41, 42, 43}

Secure and stable relationships with caring adults assure that young children are adequately nourished; protected from dangerous illnesses, exposure to toxins, and hazards that

can lead to preventable injuries; provided preventive health check-ups; protected from excessive stress; and afforded predictable daily routines that convey a sense of security. These influences contribute significantly to healthy brain development and depend upon the care and support provided by individuals in the community as well as in the family.^{12, 44}

Young children are highly vulnerable emotionally to the adverse influences of parental mental health problems and family violence. One of the most extensively documented of these vulnerabilities is the negative impact of a mother's clinical depression on her young children's emotional development, social sensitivity, and concept of themselves, effects that have been demonstrated in both developmental research and studies of brain functioning. Young children who grow up in seriously troubled families, especially those who are vulnerable temperamentally, are prone to the development of behavioral disorders and conduct problems.^{45, 46, 47, 48, 49}

Animal studies have shown that the quality of the mother-infant relationship can influence gene expression in areas of the brain that regulate social and emotional function and can even lead to changes in brain structure. The nature of the relationship also can have long-term influences (into adulthood) on how the body copes with stress, both physically and emotionally.^{15, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60}

Science indicates that the quality of early parent-child relationships can be strengthened, but successful interventions are more difficult to achieve when relationships are significantly troubled or disturbed. Preventive interventions also can produce a variety of positive outcomes, depending on the extent to which the knowledge and skills of the staff and the quality of the implementation are matched to the magnitude of the challenges being addressed.^{12, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65}

Popular Misrepresentations of Science

AS THE PUBLIC'S APPETITE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION about the development of young children is whetted by exciting new findings, the risk of exaggerated or misleading messages grows. Within this context, it is essential that scientific fact be differentiated from popularly accepted fiction.

Contrary to common assumptions, scientific evidence shows that the influence of relationships on development continues throughout the lifespan. These relationships are not more important at a particular stage of a child's life compared to another, but the nature of those impacts does vary by age and developmental status.⁴

In contrast to frequently cited concerns, science indicates that young children can benefit significantly from secure relationships with multiple caregivers (within or outside the family), while their attachments to their parents remain primary and central.¹³ There is no credible scientific evidence to support the claim that close

relationships with other nurturing and reliable adults who they trust, especially early in life, interfere with the strength of the young child's primary relationship with his or her parents.

Although young children certainly can establish healthy relationships with more than one or two adults, prolonged separations from familiar caregivers and repeated "detaching" and "re-attaching" to people who matter are emotionally distressing and can lead to enduring problems. There is no scientific evidence to support the belief that frequently rotating relationships with large numbers of adult caregivers provide valuable learning opportunities in the early years of life. Although the importance of sustained, reliable relationships within the family is well understood, the need for stable and predictable relationships in child care settings is acknowledged less frequently, and the disruptive impacts of the abrupt changes related to high caregiver turnover are too often disregarded.^{66, 67}

The Science-Policy Gap

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS is old news. The importance of other family relationships (with fathers, siblings, and grandparents) is semi-old news. The impact of these relationships on the development of the brain is new news. And the important influence of relationships outside of the family – with child care providers, peers, teachers, neighbors, and other adults and children in the community – is even newer, because these individuals are often valued more for what they do than for the meaning of their role in the life experience of very young children. Greater understanding of what science tells us about the importance of a range of relationships for early childhood development leads us to think about many areas of policy and practice in a new light.

“Quality” in early child care and education, for example, is often defined in terms of adult-child ratios, group size, physical facilities, and, more recently, cognitively oriented curriculum. But “quality” is perceived differently when we view child care as a prominent feature of the environment of relationships in which young children develop. The importance of ensuring that relationships in child care are nurtur-

problematic when viewed in relation to extensive scientific evidence of the vital importance of establishing a strong and healthy mother-infant bond beginning in the early months of life. They elicit even greater alarm when viewed in the context of concerns about the potential adverse effects on very young babies of early and extended experiences in out-of-home child care arrangements of highly variable quality.^{71, 72, 73}

For mothers receiving welfare support under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), federal rules require that states impose work requirements of 30 or more hours per week.

Although modifications are permissible, about half of the states do not exempt mothers of children less than 12 months of age, and some states permit mandated maternal employment beginning a few weeks after a baby’s birth. When viewed as an adult-oriented employment policy, TANF can be a subject for reasonable debate. But when examined from a child-oriented perspective, it reflects a wide gap between what we know about the importance of early family relationships and what we are doing to promote the health and well-being of our nation’s most vulnerable young children.^{74, 75}

Parental leave policies in the United States currently provide parents of young children with few options.

ing, stimulating, and reliable leads to an emphasis on the skills and personal attributes of the caregivers, and on improving the wages and benefits that affect staff turnover.^{12, 68, 69, 70}

Parental leave policies in the United States currently provide parents of young children with few options. A maximum of only three months of unpaid leave is assured for parents of newborns, and these policies cover only about half of American workers. Of those who are eligible for leave, only those who can get by without earned income can afford to take it, and fewer than half of workers even have this option without risking loss of their jobs. These policies seem highly

Implications for Policy and Programs

THE SCIENCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT is sufficiently mature to support a number of well-documented, evidence-based implications for those who develop and implement policies that affect the health and well-being of young children. Five compelling messages are particularly worthy of thoughtful consideration:

When considered within the context of a child's environment of relationships, the concept of school readiness is not exclusively a matter of fostering literacy and number skills. It must also include the capacity to form and sustain positive relationships with teachers, children, and other adults, and develop the social and emotional skills for cooperating with others.^{66, 76, 77}

When viewed as an important part of a child's environment of relationships, early childhood education must strive to involve young children in reciprocal learning interactions with teachers and peers rather than isolated "pre-academic" work, and it should capitalize on children's natural interests and intrinsic drive to learn, rather than follow an adult-determined agenda. Stated simply, young children learn best in an interactive, relational mode rather than through an education model that focuses on rote instruction.⁷⁸

Extending the length and coverage of leave currently provided under the Family and Medical Leave Act would provide the critical necessities of time and economic security that are required for parents to develop the nurturing relationships with their children that are essential to healthy development. Much can be learned from other industrialized nations that promote greater parental choice and child well-being by providing subsidized parental leave for those who wish to stay at home with their babies, and affordable, decent quality, early care and education for the children of those who choose or are compelled to return to work.^{73, 78}

In the absence of consistent evidence that maternal employment intrinsically helps or hurts most children, science has little to add to the ongoing political debate about whether paid work should be a mandated requirement for mothers on public assistance. Nevertheless, emerging data that

suggest that maternal employment in the first six months of an infant's life may be associated with later developmental problems, and concerns about the potential adverse impacts of extended out-of-home child care experiences on young children's social development and

Stated simply, young children learn best in an interactive, relational mode rather than through an education model that focuses on rote instruction.

behavior, require thoughtful public discussion. Each raises serious concerns about the potential harm of mandated maternal employment and the limited availability of affordable, high quality child care, particularly for the already vulnerable babies of low-income women on public assistance. It is time for society to weigh the evidence carefully and fashion a more thoughtful policy for parents in the workforce, particularly for those who earn low wages.^{12, 79, 80}

Traditional child welfare approaches to maltreatment focus largely on physical injury, the relative risk of recurrent harm, and questions of child custody, in conjunction with a criminal justice orientation. In contrast, when viewed through a child development lens, the abuse or neglect of young children should be evaluated and treated as a matter of child health and development within the context of a family relationship crisis, which requires sophisticated expertise in both early childhood and adult mental health. The regularized referral of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect from the child welfare system to the early intervention system would assure appropriate developmental and behavioral assessment and treatment as needed. Child abuse prevention strategies that emphasize both the developmental needs of children and the importance of community-based supports for families provide another clear example of how we can close the gap between science and practice for our most vulnerable young children.¹²

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