



Children's Center

Bridgewater State University November-December 2011

Parents Can Help Kids Stay One Step Ahead of Germs

by Karen Stephens, director, Illinois State University Child Care Center

Though typically born into smaller families, the social world of today's children expands quickly. As early as six weeks of age, many children are part of child care centers or family child care homes. Our young also attend group programs sponsored by children's discovery museums and the like. Add in trips to the mall, fast food restaurants, or other people-intensive environments, and it means kids are exposed to a wide variety of germs. You know, those nasty little things that can raise havoc with children's health, parent's work attendance, and family life in general. In the home and beyond, there's a plethora of wiggly-jiggley organisms doing their best to thrive and survive among us — bacteria,

virus, parasite, flu bug, or a plain old cold germ. Some are helpful; some are not. Children's bodies are in the earliest phases of building up natural immunities, so they're especially vulnerable to illness causing germs.

Children's typical behavior gives germs more than a helping hand, too. Little ones are forever touching everything, germ-laden or not, and then putting their hands into their mouths or noses. The result is that children end up having, on average, up to 12 colds or flu episodes a year. That's a lot more than the average of two cases per year for adults.

An obvious goal of every home, child care center, and school is to keep kids healthy. To do that, all of us must become partners in preventing kids' exposure and susceptibility to illness. With a team approach, we can help limit the spread of contagious illness among children as well as adults. That spells good news for everyone. Prevention is fundamental to managing children's illness. Controlling kids' exposure to germs is the first fundamental step. Follow these tips conscientiously and your kids will be healthier now and in the future.

Build resistance to illness. Regular and adequate sleep helps the body maintain energy to fend off germs. Rest also helps the body repair itself after germ attack; that helps prevent illness from becoming severe or chronic.

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Cindy Plante, teacher

Staff News

Cindy Plante, who holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education from Bridgewater State University, began teaching part time in the Investigator classroom on November 7, 2011. She came to us from Triumph, Inc. Head Start of Taunton, MA where she has taught preschool since 1993. She also served as lead teacher at the Taunton Learning Center from 1990-1992 and at the Operation Head Start Program from 1978-1982.

Ms. Judy Ritacco will begin directing at the Children's Center starting December 5, 2011. Judy holds a Master of Education degree from Lesley University and comes to us from Quinsigamond Community College, Children's School where she served as lead teacher since 2008. She also owned and operated a licensed family and child care center for over twenty years. We are very excited to have her join our program. Once she begins her position on December 5th, Jane Doyon will begin teaching full time in the Explorer classroom with Eileen Estudante and Nicole West.



Dates to Remember

November 11 - Friday

Children's Center closed for Veterans' Day

November 22 - Tuesday

Enrollment Plans for 2012 form due

November 24 & 25

Children's Center closed for Thanksgiving

December 23 - Friday

Children's Center closes at 5:30 p.m. and reopens Tues., January 3, 2012. (January 3 - 13 were offered as optional weeks)

January 16 - Monday

Children's Center closed for Martin Luther King Day

Curriculum Notes - Investigator Group

by Debbie Drago, teacher

Happy Birthday:

Delilah	December 16
Landon	December 17

The past two months were very busy as the children continued to get to know each other and learn the rules and routines of the classroom. They have done well practicing their social skills, as well as learning to be more independent in self-help skills. We hope the dry erase and bulletin boards have been helpful to you to see what the children have learned.

As the teachers observed and interacted with the children, we expanded on their interest of insects from last month to observing nature around our playground. The children had fun taking some nature walks to observe the changes in the seasons. Before one walk we made a chart predicting what we may see and then charted what we actually



Allen makes a bird's nest. saw when we returned. The children enjoyed collecting pine cones, pine needles, leaves and sticks. We used our senses as we explored the grass, trees and flowers. The children looked for animals and talked about the different cloud shapes that they observed. They were excited to show what they collected and made nature collages for small group art.

Experiences in the natural world help children understand life cycles and seasons, make predictions, and become aware of the interdependence between plants and animals. (Young Children Journal, November 2010, p.98) In addition,

exposure to the natural world as they spend a significant time outdoors may help children to control their emotions and behaviors as well as attend better to activities. Children need a healthy balance between sit down activities and the space to play outdoors.

The following are some child friendly nature web sites:

- www.childrenandnature.org
- www.nwf.org
- www.hookedonnature.org

In celebration of Halloween, the teachers planned some festive art projects, made blueberry pancakes for snack and read Halloween stories. The children enjoyed talking about their costumes and what they did for Halloween with their families.

With Thanksgiving quickly approaching, we are excited to learn about our children's families. Some activities will include graphing how many people are in our family, drawing family portraits and talking about what we like to do with our families. We will also talk about Thanksgiving and will plan some fun related activities. If you have any talents or would like to share information about your profession, please speak to Joanne, Debbie or Cindy to schedule a visit.

In early December, the teachers will be scheduling parent conferences. At that time, you will be able to view the conference form and photos on the Teaching Strategies website. Please let us know if you are having any difficulty accessing the website. We look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss your child's progress this semester.

Also, due to the holidays quickly approaching, we anticipate that the children will be excited to talk about their family's celebrations and traditions. In



Math Fair, November 3, 2011

December we will focus on some holidays by planning some festive art projects and fun group times. Please share any family recipes you may have, we would love to try them for snack.

Notes:

Math Fair:

Thank you to Dr. Greg Nelson, BSU math professor, who organized a fair with his students on Nov. 3. The children enjoyed playing math games in the cafeteria. These games focused on recognizing different shapes, making pattern jewelry and counting objects.

Fall weather:

The weather continues to be unpredictable each day. It would be helpful to please dress your children accordingly. Please label as much clothing as possible to avoid losing your child's belongings.

Lending Library:

We are still accepting gently used books to our lending library. Thank you to all who have given books in the past. You can put them in the box near the shelf in the hallway. Also, please help yourself to a magazine or parent paper.

Family Photos:

Please bring in a family photo soon. We would like to share them at group times and display them in the classroom.

Curriculum Notes – Explorer Group

by Nicole West, teacher

Happy Birthday:

Audrianna	December 13
Samantha	December 16
Sophia	December 16

After spending time in September getting to know each other, we noticed the children were very interested in playing restaurant in the dramatic play area. We took advantage of this interest and began talking about Healthy Foods and Healthy Bodies. During this topic, the children began learning about which foods were good for their bodies and which were not, as well as learning about other ways to keep their bodies healthy. They made collages using pictures of healthy foods, this way they were able to see what foods they already ate that were good for their bodies. We charted which was our favorite food, experimented with painting using potatoes and apples and we even got to taste some healthy apples to see which one were our favorite!

As many of you could have probably told from the classroom, we spent the last few weeks focusing on discovering Space and documented the children's progress in learning. We had noticed the children showing interest outside on the playground in playing aliens and space rockets, so we decided to take a vote asking what the children wanted to learn about. From that we developed our curriculum to explore the planets, astronauts, space ships as well as aliens. The children were fascinated by this topic and were extremely engaged. Throughout this unit, they got to make their own planets after learning about which ones were already in the solar system. They got to explore many different ways to make planets, some with shaving cream and others with painting balloons. After making their planets they had the opportunity to tell us about them and if they



Ryan prints with apples.

were like the ones we already see. Another activity the children enjoyed was building their own control panel to put in a space ship blasting off to space! Using a space shuttle that was built prior to our project, we left it up to the children to make it their own. They created space jackets, telescopes and laptops to help complete the shuttle.

As you can see, we explored space in many different ways. We started off by making a web of what we thought was in space and revisited the web as a closing activity to see what we were right about it and what new information we had learned. We explored videos online of space shuttles taking off, asteroids in space, a shooting star as well as astronauts working and living inside their shuttle. The children created their own space stories, individual in the Tuesday/Thursday group and as one big group for the Monday/Wednesday/Friday children. By now you should have space experts living at home with you!

Next, we noticed the children were getting interested in babies so that is the new direction we're going in. Please try to give us your child's baby photo soon so that we can begin building our gallery. On the notes of babies, most of you already know Nicole is expecting her own baby in late December. So after we re-

turn from the winter break, she will be taking a few weeks off and is expecting to be back in early February.

Special Events

On October 6th, we participated in Read for the Record with the Community Service Center on campus. Each classroom had a volunteer from JumpStart come and read Llama Llama Red Pajama to the children. Jumpstart generously donated a copy of the book to each of the children as well.

We also enjoyed a special math carnival with Professor Nelson's students on November 3rd. They created many different math activities for the children. A good time was had by all!

Reminders

The weather these days appears to be unpredictable so please be sure you are sending in appropriate outdoor clothing. Should it snow, we ask you send in snow pants, winter boots, a hat and mittens. We will continue to go outside as long as the temperature does not get too cold.

We will be conducting Parent-Teacher conferences in December and January. Keep an eye out for the sign-up sheet. We will be sending out progress reports through Teaching Strategies. If you have any questions, one of us is always available to talk to.



Aubrey creates a balloon planet.

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Routine exercise, indoors and out, keeps the body's system in good working order. Moist breathing passages help repel germs, but dry indoor furnace air dries out breathing passages. That's why, when properly dressed for the weather, outdoor winter air is especially good for kids. Outdoors there's also less concentration of germs than inside.

Good nutrition gives the body's cells the building blocks for ongoing health. Healthy cells fend off germs; poorly nourished cells are at greater risk of invasion. When poorly nourished, children's damaged tissues take longer to repair to restore health. Every body needs plenty of fluids throughout the day. When well hydrated, blood carries germ-fighting cells more efficiently and effectively, and breathing passages are protected with a layer of moisture. Serve kids plenty of water and 100% juices.

Teach effective hand washing. Help children become responsible partners in maintaining their own health. They contribute to everyone's wellness by preventing the spread of illness. A good way to start is to read them the entertaining book, *Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting but . . . Invisible Germs* by Judith Rice. After reading the book kids will be motivated to learn the best health prevention procedure around — diligent hand washing. No kidding, it's the easiest, most effective, and even the cheapest way to get rid of germs that cause illness. (For children kindergarten to grade 3, the book *Germs Make Me Sick!* is also a good introduction to fending off germs.) Kids (and you) should wash hands before and after eating, before and after diapering, after toileting, coughing or sneezing and using a tissue, before and after cooking with an adult, after playing outside, and any other time hands are heavily exposed to dirt or germs. Just dipping hands in water doesn't do the health prevention trick! Here's how kids must learn to wash hands: Wet hands under running water, lather with mild liquid soap

(cakes of soap harbor germs), thoroughly rub soapy fingers and hands for about 20 seconds, rinse germs and soapy water down the drain, dry hands, and use a paper towel to turn off water because faucets harbor germs. (Hint, to help kids wash long enough, sing a song like the "ABC" song or "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" while washing.) Frequent hand washing can cause skin to chap more easily. Those small breaks in the skin pave another way for germs to invade. After hand washing, teach children to use a bit of hand lotion as a moisturizing barrier.

Reduce exposure to germs at home and child care. When entering a group, ensure your child arrives with clean hands, nose, face and, if applicable, diaper. Your child's setting should follow stringent and consistent cleaning and sanitation practices. Look at the environment from your child's point of view. Is a tissue easy to find and reach? Are sinks convenient for children? Are liquid soap and paper towels right nearby? Does an adult remind children to wash hands after sneezing, blowing their noses, toileting, soiling hands, and before eating? Are food preparation areas and eating surfaces cleaned and sanitized to ensure healthy meal service? Does the environment have a genuine fresh smell and clean appearance, rather than an overwhelming covered up smell that occurs when pine-scented sanitizer is merely poured or mopped over a dirty surface?

Don't send ill children to a group setting. Become familiar with contagious illness that prevents a child's attendance at child care or school. Programs have a list of such illnesses in their parent handbook. When children become ill, provide adequate time for their full recovery, otherwise illness returns and spreads more easily. Ill children feel safest and most comforted when at home with a parent, so utilize your company's sick leave and family leave policies. If you face times when staying at home with your child isn't an option, here are ideas to pursue. • Plan ahead. Seek out a

trusted relative, neighbor, or friend to be on call to care for your child when you can't. • Network with other child care or school parents so you can barter sick day child care services. • Inquire about back up or ill child care programs in your area. Such programs might be operated by a social service agency or even a nanny agency. A child care resource and referral program can help you locate one in your area.

About the Author — Karen Stephens is director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. She writes a weekly column for parents in her local newspaper. Karen is author of two books and frequent contributor to *Child Care Information Exchange*.

Stephens, K. (2002) Parents can help kids stay one step ahead of germs. *Parenting Exchange*, health & safety library #1.

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