



Children's Center

Bridgewater State University

October 2010

Fall Offers Families a Variety of Sensory, Seasonal Fun

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

These activities will help you and the kids enjoy fall's bonanza of sensory delights. Don't rush to fit them all in. Pick a few and enjoy them to the hilt; it will be time well spent and time well remembered.

1. Fall colors look best through clear windows. That calls for family window washing with sponges and squeegees. The wetter everyone gets, the more fun!
2. Gather cornhusks, milkweed pods, and pussy willows to make dolls or animals. Dried grain, grasses, and seeds can be glued on for hair and decoration.
3. Fall includes goodbyes, so stage a party to bid summer creatures a fond farewell. It's especially fitting for migrating species like geese, robins, or monarch butterflies.
4. Cross-country traveling makes birds thirsty. Set up a water station for southbound birds by placing an aluminum pie pan on a tree stump. Keep a log of species that visit your rest stop.
5. Visit a nursery and select a sugar maple tree to plant. Before going to the nursery, read *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* by Lois Ehlert (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1991). It's a lovely children's book that shows children how trees end up in nurseries for families to plant.
6. Set up a Sunflower Café for the birds! On a fence, tree, or wall, hang fall decorations made with items birds love to eat. Dried sunflower heads hung from twine make a perfect base. A grape vine wreath works well, too.
7. Give each child an instamatic or disposable camera and walk the neighborhood on a fall photo shoot. Kids can send doubles to family members who don't have a colorful fall.
8. Find a tree to sit under. Sketch it, watercolor it, or write a poem in its honor. Read a story under it, or go ahead, sing a song to it if the mood strikes you.
9. Stretch out in a family-size hammock to be showered with a downpour of leaves.
10. Make a "Leaves of My Park" identification book. Collect newly fallen leaves. Place them between the pages of a thick book to dry a week. Once dry, use glue-sticks or double-stick tape to attach one leaf per page into a notebook or journal. By each leaf, write down everything your child knows about it, i.e. name, size, shape, etc.
11. Use dried leaves to create collages. Collect many leaves of different shapes and sizes. Then arrange, and even overlap them, to look like other objects. The paperback children's book, *Look What I Did with a Leaf!* by Morteza E. Sohi (New York: Walker & Co., 1995) provides lots of inspiration for leaf art.
12. Plant bulbs for spring blooms: crocus, daffodils, tulips, hyacinth. So children take pride in the fruits of their fall labor, take *before* photographs as kids huff and puff during planting, then in spring take *after* photos with them by the blooms.
13. Have kids collect seeds from your flower garden. Show them how to organize them in separate envelopes, labeled and dated. Save them for spring planting.
14. Stroll an arboretum. As you walk, note and compare the differences between evergreen trees and the more colorful deciduous ones. How much detail can your children observe? *Autumn Leaves* by Ken Robbins (New York: Scholastic, 1998) is a good leaf identification book for preschoolers to age 8.
15. Visit an apple orchard. Help kids cook different recipes with apples. *The Apple Pie Tree* by Zoe Hall (New York: Scholastic, 1996) is a fun follow-up read for preschoolers to kindergarten.

Dates to Remember

October 11 - Monday

Children's Center closed for
Columbus Day
(no college classes)

October 12 - Tuesday

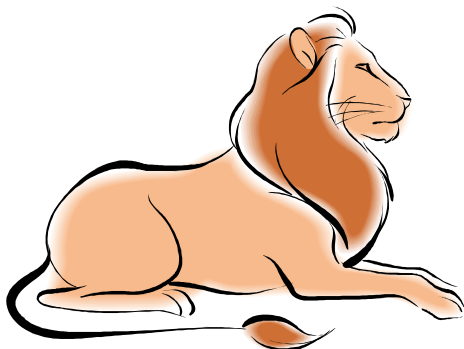
The entire college, including the
Children's Center, following a
Monday schedule
(Tuesday college classes will not
meet on October 12)

(continued on page four)



Curriculum Notes - Investigator Group

by Dan Anderson, teacher



Happy Birthday:

Orson	October 3
Jed	October 13
Mya	October 17
Victoria	October 24

With the month of September now behind us the children have begun to learn and feel comfortable with the daily routine of the Investigator classroom. For some the transition from home to school was a little stressful at first, but most now enjoy coming to school to play and learn with their new friends.

The Investigators started the year off getting to know each other and their new teachers. For the first two weeks of school we focused on getting acquainted with one another and with the daily schedule. The children learned new songs, friends' names and how to share some of their favorite toys. Some of the most popular activities were dancing to *The Popcorn Song* and *The Freeze Dance* and singing along with *The Three Little Pigs*. We've all started to become great friends!

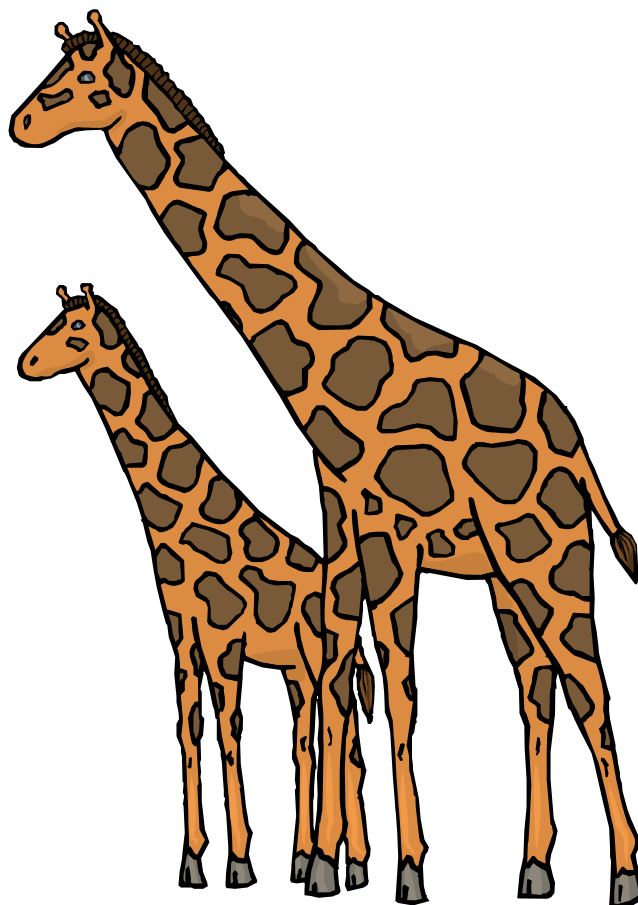
We noticed that many of the children were taking flights to Africa on the playground, and looking for various native animals once they reached their destination. Therefore, we

switched our focus to an African Safari theme. The children described what they thought Africa was like, what a safari was, and the different animals they could find there. We then found Africa on a globe and tried to figure out how we could get there from Massachusetts. We learned that we needed to take an airplane or a boat to travel there. The children also learned about the many different animals living in Africa and created several different art projects centered around them. It was a very exciting trip!

The Investigator Group would like to thank Dr. Sarah McQuarrie, BSU music professor, for enriching our program with weekly music activities. She has volunteered her time to sing songs and play music with the children each Wednesday morning. We

would also like to thank Dr. Greg Nelson, BSU professor of early childhood education, who will do math activities every Thursday morning with alternating groups of children. He will provide concrete experiences designed to expand children's knowledge of important mathematical concepts such as quantity, patterns, shapes, spatial relationships, and measurement. We are really looking forward to these fun activities each week.

The beginning of October means that Halloween will soon be here. We have noticed in the past that some children are frightened by masks and costumes. This year we will celebrate the holiday with fun games and activities instead of by dressing up. We will also make a special holiday treat in the morning for snack. It will be a fun filled day for sure!



Curriculum Notes – Explorer Group

by Joanne Hogan, teacher



Happy Birthday:

Puqi	October 1
Neave	October 7
Tyler	October 31

The month of September was a busy one as the Explorers settled into their new routines. The transitions that occur in the beginning of the year can be difficult and overwhelming for some children and you may have noticed a few tears in our classroom at one time or another. During the first few weeks of school we focused on helping the children to feel safe, secure, and happy. We encouraged interactions among the children so that they could make new friends and be comfortable in the classroom environment. In our mixed aged classroom, many of our returning children assisted in teaching their younger peers about our routines and have been supporting them emotionally. All of our activities revolved around friendship, feelings, and self confidence. We are hopeful that we will be able to build close, personal relationships that will last throughout the year.

As Eileen mentioned in last month's newsletter, we are taking a project approach to learning and our curriculum expands on and relates to the interests of the children. As many of you are aware, the children are very involved in the planting, maintaining

and harvesting of our center garden. This fall, as we were harvesting some of the cherry tomatoes, we discovered that an animal had dug a tunnel into the garden and was enjoying the fruits of our labor! After much monitoring of this tunnel, the children were thrilled to find a rabbit that was using this tunnel to gain entrance to the garden. We were lucky enough to be able to photograph our little visitor and decided to devote some time to studying rabbits. We asked the children what they know about rabbits and what they would want to learn about them. Some questions that the children asked were: "How do bunnies sleep?" "How fast do they hop?" "Where else do they live?" "What do they do at night?" We also made guesses about what bunnies like to eat and then left different vegetables in the garden to see if the rabbit was interested. Later, we compared wild rabbits with domestic rabbits and created many art projects that were related to rabbits or to the rabbit's garden home. After many songs, fingerplays, and stories, we hope that the children now have a better understanding of these adorable creatures.

Dr. Greg Nelson, an early childhood professor here at BSU, has volunteered to spend some time with the children and is introducing them to some age appropriate math activities. He recently worked with our Pre-K group, but will also be providing hands on activities for our younger children as well. Professor Nelson feels that spending time in the classroom will not only be of benefit to the children, but will also help him to educate the students in his early childhood courses. We look forward to seeing what Dr. Nelson has in store for us and will keep you updated!

Up and coming:

October means that Halloween will soon be upon us. We would like to

acknowledge this holiday in a "low key" manner. In past years many children have been overwhelmed and even frightened by a costume party. With that in mind, we will be providing the children with a special treat that we will make with both groups on the day that they are scheduled to attend. We will also celebrate with holiday related songs, stories, and age appropriate activities.

Reminders:

Please label all of your child's personal belongings (especially bedding and stuffed animals). There are a large number of children enrolled at the Children's Center and things do get mixed up when they aren't labeled.

The weather has been unpredictable lately. Please have a sweater or light jacket in your child's cubby.

We cannot have any peanuts or tree nut products in the classroom due to children's allergies. Please read the labels on the products that you send in for lunch carefully. Peanut and tree nut products found in lunch boxes will have to be sent home. Please understand that we are simply trying our best to protect those with food allergies from contact with these foods. Thank you!

Children's food allergies and new nutrition guidelines have prompted us to rethink how we celebrate birthdays in the classroom. We have decided as a center to acknowledge children's birthdays with a special crown for the birthday boy/girl, a card created by his or her classmates, and special privileges throughout the day. We will no longer celebrate birthdays with cake, ice cream, and other sweet treats. If you have any questions about this new policy, please see Eileen, Joanne, or Nicole.

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16. Go through your recipe file and select your family's favorite fall recipes. Older children can type the recipes into a computer. Print the pages to create your own fall cookbook. Younger kids can illustrate the book with fall drawings and stickers. Send autographed copies to friends and relatives.
17. Go on a butterfly hunt. Younger kids can make a color list of butterflies they find. Older kids can list species they identify and the plants they feed on. Sketching butterflies is a natural extension of their observations.
18. Bundle up in a blanket, sit on a candlelit porch, and listen to fall night sounds. Listen for crickets, cicadas, tree frogs, and the backwards whinny and cooing of the eastern screech owl. *Wind Says Good Night* by Katy Rydell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) is a good bedtime story for porch reading; it's all about night sounds.
19. Take a caterpillar hunt. Touch them gently. How do they feel? Where are they going?
20. Find a corn maze to meander. Afterwards, read *Corn Belt Harvest* by Raymond Bial (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991). If you chance upon chewed on corncobs, ponder what might have eaten them. The children's book, *Raccoons and Ripe Corn* by Jim Arnosky (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1987), *Whitetails for Kids* by Tom Wolpert (Chanhassen, MN: Creative Publishing International, 1991), or *Whitetail Magic for Kids* by Daniel Cox (Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 1997) can give the kids some clues!
21. Visit a pumpkin patch or attend a pumpkin festival. Buy a pumpkin for home cooking. Try out a *from scratch* recipe for pumpkin. Together, read *The Pumpkin Patch* by Elizabeth King (New York: Viking Penguin, 1996).
22. Visit a park and, where allowed, make a campfire. Without a doubt, make s'mores! If you're adventurous, cool nights make for wonderful tent sleeping, even in your own backyard.
23. Have kids collect fall nuts, berries, feathers, and foliage to create centerpieces for the coffee table or fireplace mantel.
24. Have kids cut out fall pictures from nature magazines. Glue them to cardboard then cut them into large pieces for a fall puzzle.
25. Use colored chalk to create fall murals on your concrete porch or sidewalk.
26. Go for a hayrack ride. Talk about the scents and sounds.
27. Treat your neighbors to beautiful front porch displays using nature decorations.
28. Canoe or kayak a river or lake. Spy hawks and great blue herons, and banks overflowing with fall flowers like aster, ironweed, yellow cup plants, and wild sunflowers. (Wear lifejackets!)
29. Bike or walk wooded trails in parks. Breathe the scents of fall. How do kids describe them? On the way home, recall wildlife you saw.
30. Go to a fall festival to get ideas for crafts children can make for holiday gifts.
31. Watch a Homecoming Parade. Root for the home team!
32. Twirl amongst falling leaves and pretend you're in a leaf blizzard.
33. In the middle of the yard (not in ditches near cars!), rake leaves into piles and JUMP!
34. Make turtles or other animals out of nutshells squirrels leave behind.
35. Collect pinecones. Add string to hang them from a tree branch or balcony railing. Cover the pinecones in peanut butter and then roll them in birdseed. Hang the pinecone feeders in trees for a bird feast.
36. Watch a spider spinning a web. What gets caught?
37. Put large white socks OVER hiking or tennis shoes. Take a walk in woodlands or an open, grassy field. At home, count how many different seeds the socks collected.
38. Turn over a stone or log. Using a magnifying glass, investigate the pathways and homes creatures have made there.
39. Fly a kite in brisk fall winds.
40. Chase puffs of milkweed seeds as they fly by. Where do they go? Catch them if you can. How do they feel?

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*.

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