

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends,

I'm excited to share a new version of our newsletter! Here you will find information about Newark Day Nursery and Children's Center (NDNCC) as well as updates on public policy and legislative issues that will impact the children of Delaware. It is my hope that you will find the content informative and engaging. On that note, I welcome your feedback!

This is an exciting time at NDNCC. As another school year closes, we watch the children in our Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs prepare to transition to a new classroom or Kindergarten. Our School Age Care program has ended for the year and Camp at NDNCC is in full-swing. I have the pleasure of an office with windows that look out on our playground, and get to see the children enjoying the warm weather there and the shade of the wooded trails beyond. What a great job!

On behalf of the staff, Board of Directors, and (most importantly) families of NDNCC, I wish you a healthy, happy summer.

Sincerely,



John Fisher-Klein



Center-Based Learning in a School Age Setting

By: Dane Hutchinson, SAC Coordinator

Many of us are familiar with the concept of learning centers in an Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting, but rarely is it used in an afterschool setting. In late 2012, our school age staff began the task of reinventing our School Age Care (SAC) program to include center-based learning.

We first had to ask, "What is the benefit to center-based versus daily activities?" In our research we found that center-based learning encourages independent learning, positive social interactions, and multisensory learning. In a 2005 study from *Childhood Education*, learning station classrooms showed better, more efficient instruction, fewer behavioral issues, and a more efficient use of time.

After learning the benefits, we began planning our program. We knew we wanted to align our pro-

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gramming to school district standards while maintaining a light and fun atmosphere. We chose three core areas (Math, Science and Technology, and Arts and Humanities). Each week at least one center consists of a team activity to promote positive social interactions. We also include centers that emphasize cultural diversity. For example, one of our centers for Math included creating a mandala. A mandala is used in many eastern cultures to represent the universe; it is a series of symmetrical geometric shapes and is commonly made using colored sands.

Finally, we designed a reward system for positive participation. The students earned points for completing a center, being helpful, and having a positive attitude. Students have the opportunity to “spend” their points at the Center store for small items, or they can save their points to buy larger items.

The program started in February with a gradual shift from our old model. The results were astounding. We saw a marked increase in participation, with some groups showing double the participation in a few short months. The students are excited to see the new centers each week and many times will complete a center multiple times. One counselor has reported an increased interest in Science and Math over the past few months. A parent recently contacted us to tell us that her child comes home and shares the activities and even does some of them at home! Center-based learning has been so successful that we plan on implementing it into our summer program as well.

Public Policy Report

By: John Fisher-Klein, Executive Director

The past few years have brought substantial changes to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and School Age Care (SAC) in Delaware and nationally. As research has proven the value of these programs time and again, public policy experts and elected officials have embraced the opportunity to make investments, knowing the return will be significant.

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These investments include: \$22 million in Delaware Stars for Early Success and the Purchase of Care program to support tiered reimbursements for high quality care providers, more than \$50 million from the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, a comprehensive strategic plan, and, most recently, the introduction of President Obama’s “Preschool for All” plan.

In 2011, Governor Jack Markell and the legislature took monumental steps to improve the quality of ECE in Delaware. Through investments in Delaware Stars for Early Success, Delaware’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, and the Purchase of Care program of \$22 million, our elected officials were able to assist providers to offer higher quality services and simultaneously reward providers for doing so. Delaware Stars for Early Success provides an opportunity for providers to assess their programs, provides Technical Assistance to help those providers improve, and provides families with an easy-to-use method of choosing a quality option for their children. Programs are rewarded for increasing their level of quality through tiered reimbursements in the Purchase of Care program. Ultimately, more children from diverse backgrounds are receiving better services – a recipe for success!

With improvements already under way, children in Delaware were given another boost when the state successfully applied for funding from the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge. With the groundwork already started, Delaware’s application focused on:

- The expansion and Redesign of the Delaware Stars for Early Success (STARS) quality rating program,
- Building a professional, effective workforce of high-quality educators,
- Supporting the health and developmental needs of the whole child – this includes mental health services and the “Parents as Teachers” program, and
- Improving data to improve Kindergarten readiness and more efficiently target resources.

Those goals have come to life in the form of the Delaware Early Childhood Council's strategic plan *Sustaining Early Success: Delaware's Early Childhood Strategic Plan*. The plan, released in April, has four strategic goals.

1. Enable Delaware children to become the healthiest in the nation—physically, emotionally and behaviorally.
2. Assure that all Delaware children have access to high-quality early childhood programs and professionals.
3. Create an aligned and effective early learning system, birth to third grade.
4. Sustain system improvement.

The Council and numerous partners have already started work on this plan.

Most recently, ECE has received national attention as a result of President Obama's "Preschool for All" plan. In his State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool to every child in America. Since then, details of the President's plan have been released. The plan includes three major goals.

1. Providing High-Quality Preschool for Every Child.
2. Growing the Supply of Effective Early Learning Opportunities for Young Children.
3. Extending and Expanding Evidence-Based, Voluntary Home Visiting.

As you can see, a great deal of resources are being put into Early Childhood Education and School Age Care. Given the evidence of the importance of this care and its impact on children, we look forward to continued progress toward a state and nation that supports the vision of Newark Day Nursery & Children's Center: Every child will develop the skills to be prepared for future success.

Environmentally conscious?

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ciron@newarkdaynursery.org
your email address to receive future
newsletters electronically.**

Letter from the Board of Directors

Newark Day Nursery and Children's Center (NDNCC) is among a very few childcare organizations that operate as a nonprofit organization. Our mission to provide the highest quality early childhood and school age services to educate, enrich, and inspire children and youth from culturally and economically diverse families is supported by a group of dedicated volunteers from various walks of life. With their focus on the governance of the agency, one of the Board's primary responsibilities is to develop and implement a strategic plan.

In 2012 NDNCC's Board and staff, with the help of experts from the Nonprofit Center at LaSalle University, worked diligently to create a comprehensive strategic plan for the next three years. The plan, a result of months of research and solicitation of stakeholder input, contains five goals:

1. Ensure future financial viability, with emphasis on providing affordable services.
2. Increase visibility.
3. Broaden, deepen, and diversify services.
4. Maintain high quality governing body and governance practices.
5. Attract, enhance, and retain a high quality workforce.

The Board and staff have developed a list of objectives that we believe will help us achieve these goals.

As with any nonprofit organization, there are many ways you can help. While financial gifts are always welcome, gifts of time and talent can also have a significant, long-term impact. If you are interested in supporting NDNCC's strategic plan, please contact John Fisher-Klein, Executive Director, at jklein@newarkdaynursery.org. If you wish to speak directly with me or another member of the Board of Directors, John would be happy to facilitate that.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Donofrio
President, NDNCC Board of Directors



- Early Childhood Education
- Before- and After-School Care
- Summer Camp at NDNCC
- Community-Based Outreach Services

Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and a five-star Delaware Stars program

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The Newark Day Nursery and Children's Center is dedicated to providing the highest quality early childhood and school age services to educate, enrich, and inspire children and youth from culturally and economically diverse families.

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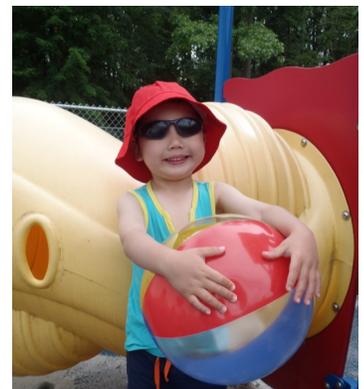
What's new with our Early Childhood Education Programs?

By: Bobbi Budin, Program Director

Our Early Childhood Education (ECE) classrooms have finished the first full year utilizing our new children's assessment tool – Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). The program has many features, one of the best being that it covers all ages we serve. A child will have one measure from the Infant room through Pre-Kindergarten. TSG aligns with the State of Delaware's Early Learning Foundations on which we base our lesson plans. Additionally, it correlates with Creative Curriculum, a research based, comprehensive curriculum for children birth to five. Both Creative Curriculum and TSG are approved by Delaware Stars for Early Success. First-year reports indicate our children have made good, age appropriate progress. The learning opportunities will continue throughout the summer with preparations for transitions for the fall.

Recently, I had a conversation with a preschool student about summer safety. I thought I'd pass along the list this child generated.

- Wear sunscreen
- Wear a bike helmet
- Drink water when it's hot
- Don't run in sandals
- Hold a grown up's hand when near the street
- Don't hit bees
- Wash your hands
- Wear a seatbelt if you're a grown up or sit in a car seat if you're a kid



I believe these are all great suggestions!

Have a wonderful summer season and be safe!