

DHCNE Parent Meeting
Thursday, 2/26/2015
6pm

Welcome & Introductions

Preschool Update
Enrollment

Now that Ms. Tomeka is back from maternity leave, we've created extra spots in the infant room. We also have a spot in the 1s, two spots in the 2s and two spots in the 3s & 4s and one spot in the older 4s/VPK.

NOTE: If you refer a family to DHC and they enroll, after they've been enrolled for at least 30 days, you get \$35 off your next month's tuition!!!

Round Up

Don't forget to shop at Goodwill stores for amazing new and used items. You'll be amazed at what you'll find! Also please ROUND UP at the register. When you "round up" the cost of your purchase, that money goes directly to DHCNE to be used directly for children (scholarships, new equipment, therapy services, etc).

Facility Updates

Michael Innes with Swing Sets by Design has been working on the lofts for our VPK, 2s and Preschool classrooms. He has everything almost completed, but is waiting on some Plexiglas that needed to be ordered. He anticipates putting everything together at the school in about 2 weeks. He would like for the entire project (including playground enhancements) to be completed late March or early April 2015.

Upcoming Curriculum Theme: Amphibians and Reptiles

During week 1, we'll be exploring Alligators and Crocodiles.

Some highlights include:

- Cooking Activity: Edible Alligator Nests
- Creating "swamps" in our Dramatic Play areas
- Making alligators using egg cartons

WE NEED: Please donate egg cartons (cardboard egg cartons work best).

During week 2, we'll be exploring Turtles/Sea Turtles/Tortoise

Some highlights include:

- Creative Expression: Painting coffee filter turtles
- Blocks: Children will use plastic reptile and amphibian animals and blocks to create a swamp with bridges, trees, look-outs and more.

During week 3, we'll be exploring

Lizards/Geckos/Chameleon/Iguana/Skink/Komodo Dragon/Gila Monster

Some highlights include:

- School Readiness: Ll is for Lizard. Children will make lizards using the letter L and their imagination.
- Ms. Kim will bring her Bearded Dragon (lizard) to the school this week. Children will be able to touch his bumpy skin, watch him eat, compare and contrast how he is similar or different from other reptiles and much more.

During week 4, we'll be exploring Snakes.

Some highlights include:

- Cooking: We'll make Snake Kabobs – using fruit, we'll design our very own edible snake
- Creative Expression: We'll use bubble wrap, rolling pins, paint, paper plates and scissors to create a super cool snake with scales!
- School Readiness: Children will use beads to create a patterned snake

During week 5, we'll be exploring Frogs, Toads, Salamanders and Newts

Some highlights include:

- Cooking: Edible Frog Eggs (using tapioca)
- Sensory: We'll add water lilies and frogs to the fluid play table for the older children and green shaving cream for the younger ones.

On Site Field Trips

We hope to have St. Francis or the Tallahassee Museum come out in April with some birds (probably different types of raptors).

Getting Ready for VPK and Kindergarten

Guest Speakers: Ms. Jennifer and Ms. Hillary (VPK Teachers)

Meet our Lead VPK Teachers:

Ms. Jennifer McArtor – She earned a Bachelor's of Science (Elementary Education) from University of Michigan and has been teaching at this school for 5 years.

Ms. Hillary Hopkins – She earned a Bachelor's of Science (Child and Family Sciences) from Florida State University. She's been teaching with the Dick Howser Center for 3 years.

Teachers discussed the VPK day. It is important for parents to understand that VPK is not sitting at tables or desks all day. The curriculum promotes a play based approach. Research shows that the more a young child is exposed to purposeful play in a quality preschool setting, the better they perform in Kindergarten. They cooperate better with peers, control impulses and are less aggressive than children who do not (Smilansky, 1990).

A typical day in a VPK classroom begins with:

Breakfast from 8:30 – 8:50am: If you arrive with your child after 8:50am, please ensure they've eaten breakfast already. Breakfast is not served after 8:50am.

Learning Centers: Children learn social skills, such as taking turns, sharing and negotiating for space to play. Math skills are reinforced when children clean up their space and put play materials away on organized/labeled shelves. Language skills are enhanced when children talk to other children, engage other children in their play, ask questions, follow directions and more. This "free" choice time, allows children to begin to get focused on learning.

Circle Time: This is a focused learning time that is predictable (singing the same songs, helping with the calendar, predicting weather, exploring the alphabet and phonics). This is also the time that teachers "scaffold" the day. Scaffold means to plan the day and discuss how the day will go, explore new vocabulary, skills and concepts, etc. This helps children later on, when they are having trouble making good choices or transitioning to another activity and getting the maximum benefits from learning centers.

Learning Centers: This is when the teachers implement the lesson plans created by Ms. Kathryn (Education Coordinator). Children explore the curriculum theme in a different main center each day, as well as in small group centers. These centers include cooking, school readiness, creative

expression, blocks, dramatic play and gardening (when it warms up a little).

Playground/Patio: By this time of the day, children NEED to get out into the fresh air, spread out and play with friends. Both VPK classes go to the playground and patio at the same time, so this is the time that the children get to interact with children not in their class. Children have more room and can create murals on the chalk wall or patio floor, build with large blocks, paint on easels and experience more social interactions.

Lunch time: The “VPK” day is over at 12n when lunch is being served, however learning time continues. During meals, teachers infuse math, science, language and more. We explore number sentences, graphing and in depth discussions about where our food comes from and how it grows. Children also get serve themselves, using scoopers, tongs and spoons. Our goal is that when our children attend Kindergarten, they are totally independent and confident in their meal time skills and manners.

The afternoon begins with naptime, then open centers, more outdoor time, and then it's time to say “Good-Bye” for the day.

You'd be amazed at all of the learning your child does each day in VPK, while they are having fun playing. Kindergarten teachers report that the skills they value most are independent thinking, problem solving, being a good friend and following directions. If you can do these things, you can learn the rest!

Ms. Jennifer and Ms. Hillary also discussed ways that parents can get their child ready for VPK or keep their skills sharp over the summer before they start Kindergarten (see attached packet for more ideas). The key to getting your child ready to learn and focus more (which is a requirement for VPK and Kindergarten) is playing with a purpose....having fun and making mistakes along the way, with a caring adult to help gently guide.

Upcoming Teacher Curriculum Trainings

In an effort to ensure that all teachers are prepared to implement Creative Curriculum, Ms. Kathryn (Educational Coordinator) has scheduled several trainings in February, March, April and May. Each training is at least 4 hours.

February Training (February 7, 2015): Theories to Play – focused on the major theorists and research related to early childhood.

March Training (March 23, 2015) and April Training (April 18, 2015): Interest Areas - Applying Theories and Research in a “Real-World” Classroom. Our focus will be creating inviting and educational interest areas, daily activities, routines, transitions, mealtimes and scaffolding.

May Training (Date TBA): Will focus solely on implementation and use of Creative Curriculum.

In June, July and early August, staff will begin using Creative Curriculum (June – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and July/August – Trees). By mid-August we'll be fully trained and ready for full implementation.

Communication

Do you get our e-mails?

We send informational email out almost every week. These emails may include information on upcoming events and festivals, reminders and updates and the quarterly newsletter. If you don't get our emails, you're probably missing out on a lot of information.

Do you follow us on Social Media?

If not....you're missing a lot. We will soon be posting videos of special projects, circle time songs and more! Join us on FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and/or Pintrest!

Important Dates:

Parents Night Out Friday, March 20, 2015 6pm - 11pm

NEW LOWER COST:

We have lowered the price \$25 for the first child and \$15 for additional siblings

SIGN UP

Sign up at Ms. Amber's desk or see Ms. Kim, Ms. Kathryn or Ms. Amber to save a spot for your child.

Our teachers have scheduled lots of indoor and outdoor playtime; we'll be baking St. Patrick's Day cookies and watching a movie. Don't forget that we also serve dinner. All staff are 1st Aid and CPR trained and know your child.

We guarantee that they'll have an amazing time!

Next Parent Meeting Thursday March 26th from 6 – 7pm

Teacher Planning Day: Monday, March 23rd ~ DHC CLOSED ~

Spring Fling: Friday, April 3rd from 3:30 – 5pm! Celebrate spring with us. We'll have fun and developmentally appropriate activities for your child, an egg hunt, face painting and tattoos!

VPK Graduation: Friday, May 15, 2015 ~ tentatively scheduled for 7pm at Imagine School Cafeteria