



# Dartmouth College Child Care Center Newsletter

February 2018

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**Office:** Jeff Robbins, Dawn  
Cote, Karen Small

**Floating Assistant Teachers**  
Terri Crane, Kristin Cole,  
Jenn Murphy,

**Floating Child Care Asst.**  
Megan Wheeler

## Staff News

### A Familiar Face in a New Role: Megan Wheeler (previously a substitute) is now a Floating Child Care Assistant

Megan is a NH native, born in Hanover and raised in Orange. When she is not working with children, she is an avid photographer and pet lover owning 3 cats and 2 rats. She loves hiking and swimming. Summer is her favorite season out of the four beautiful seasons N.H. has to offer. Megan looks forward to continuing her journey at DCCCC with all of the staff and the amazing children and families.



## A New Face in the Black Bear Room: Meet Heather Wittman



Heather Wittmann will be joining the Black Bears 4 days a week. She was born in Portsmouth, NH and lived most of her childhood in a small town in NH called Center Strafford. She has been a nanny, a high school biology teacher and a Physician Assistant. She left medicine in 2012 to stay home with her 3 kids. She is excited to get back to a career and working with children. She has been married for 21 years to her best friend and has 3 children (18, 16, and 14). In her spare time she loves to travel, go camping, read and garden. She is very excited to work with young children because she believes that they have such energetic, imaginative and inquisitive minds! She looks forward to getting to know the children and being part of the learning and fun in the Black Bear classroom!





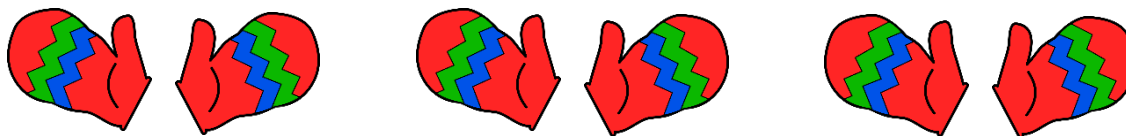
## From the Director

Dear Big Jeff,

We are feeling a little house-bound in our family. We do get outside on the weekends, but it's still too dark to play outside when we get home. Inside, even new toys are losing their luster. What can we do to get the rest of the long winter?

Signed

Stir Crazy



Dear Crazy,

I get it. Long days in December were snugly; long days in the winter can become constrictive. I love your instinct that getting outdoors is an antidote for many of life's ills. Before we leave that thought, if your child is old enough, don't rule out an occasional midweek evening foray into the dark and cold. Breaking the monotony by shaking things up lasts for more than just one day.

- Light a candle in the snow. Check it throughout the evening. Make up a bedtime story, "Goodnight Candle".
- Make a quick foray into the backyard with flashlights to watch the snow sparkle. It will give you something new to talk about when you come in.
- Dash out with some birdseed to throw on top of the snow. Guess what will eat it. Check in the morning to see when the birds arrive.
- Step outside to see the moon. Walk across the driveway and watch it "follow you." Don't try to explain it – the scientific process at this age is to learn to watch and notice. Understanding scientific principles comes later as thinking matures.

Here's a fun example of children's thinking.

*Walking at night my 4-year-old daughter kept staring at the moon above the trees. "I think the moon's following us," she said. "Papa, you stay here." She walked about 100 feet,*

*staring constantly at the moon.: Then she stopped and called out, "Papa, come here!" I did, while she kept gazing at the moon. Then she said, "No, it's not following us. It's only following ME!"* ([https://www.iusedtobelieve.com/nature/outer\\_space/moon\\_follows\\_you/](https://www.iusedtobelieve.com/nature/outer_space/moon_follows_you/))

But back to the indoors where you are spending most of your time. There's an article about sensory play later in this newsletter. It was written with preschoolers in mind, but the ideas adapt well to toddlers and young school-agers. "Messy play" can be an absorbing and relaxing activity for children. Picture yourself on a tropical beach wiggling your toes in the sand or letting it sift through your fingers – relaxing, huh?

Sensory play doesn't have to be messy. A few preparations make it easy to clean up.

- Dishpan of water? Cover the table with towels and toss them in the dryer.
- Hand lotion on a cookie sheet for finger-painting? Fill the sink and let your child wash it. Or rinse it and pop it in the dishwasher.
- Sand in a covered container? Cover the table with a cloth and shake it outdoors. Save the sand for another day.
- Birdseed in a baking dish? Toss it outside for the birds.

Cleaning up can be part of the fun, or at least easy, if you set the stage. A few clean-up supplies will help. Try a child sized dustpan (check the tenting section of the department store) or a lawn sale dust-buster – now THAT'S fun. A small bucket with a damp sponge and 1/8 of an inch of water is pretty fun, too.

Sounds like a lot of work? Not really. Keeping children engaged saves time in the long run, as well as reducing wear and tear on the psyche.

Play on,

Big Jeff



Tactile activities in the Otter Room



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Upcoming Hop Stop



### Pete's Posse with Sharon Comeau - HopStop Family Show (Hanover)

Sat Mar 17 2018 - 11:00 AM – Hanover

Sat Mar 17 2018 - 3:00 PM - Claremont

Music and dance for St. Patrick's Day.

## DCCCC Will Be Closed On The Following Days:

**-Monday, April 9, 2018, Staff professional development day**

**-Monday, May 28, 2018, Memorial Day**

**-Wednesday, July 4, 2018, Independence Day**

**(anticipated: Monday and Tuesday, August 27 and 28, 2018, Transition Days – subject to change)**

**-Monday, September 3, 2018, Labor Day**



## Thank you!

Thank you for each and every time you send a "This lunch is nut free" note. It helps us know that you have been thoughtful in your selection of lunch foods every day. The families and teachers of children with life threatening allergies offer their sincere thanks.

**Today's nut free tip from <https://www.foodallergy.org/common-allergens/tree-nut/is-it-a-nut>**

Avoiding a problem food becomes more difficult when it shows up in unusual places.

This can be especially confusing for people with nut allergies. That's because the word "nut" can appear in foods that are unrelated to peanuts or tree nuts—and therefore harmless to people with those food allergies.

The following foods are not nuts:

Butternut squash, Coconut\*, Nutmeg, and Water chestnuts

\*While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies coconut as a tree nut, it is actually a fruit. Most people with a tree nut allergy can safely eat coconut; consult with your allergist.

# News from the Chickadee Ones

Ali Wachunas  
Lead Teacher

Denise Ayers

Deserai Stone

My oh my, how the chickadees have grown. We are sad how fast time is flying by but thrilled to see how much the chicks have grown. This group is so wonderful and every day they are doing something new and exciting. The sounds of September have long dissipated and now we have laughs, coos, babblings, and screeches (our favorite!).



Our oldest, RJ, is turning into an active toddler. His laugh is contagious and he is exploring new ways of moving & climbing (everything). Andrew is just as active as RJ. He and RJ have become best of friends. They follow each other and are always greeting one another with hugs and kisses, and the occasional fighting over a toy.

Angela is on the move and making her way all over the chickadee corridors. She loves to talk and laugh and explore new toys. Then there's Fallyn. She has grown so much. She has developed such an awesome personality. She is moving all over the room and so close to walking. Aiden is crawling and exploring all the different textures as he begins trying new foods. Lucas loves his voice and has figured out how to make all sorts of new noises with his tongue/mouth. Simon has adapted well to the chickadees and he is such a pleasure to have. His favorite time of the day is lunch. Sonia is now sitting up on her own and working on her tummy time. She enjoys lunch & trying different foods. Dorothea is so close to sitting up on her own; she gets into the crunch position; we joke with her all the time that she will have abs when she gets older. Harvey, although our youngest, is not far behind the others. He is close to sitting up as well. His favorite activity is drinking his bottle; we love the noises he makes while he is doing that. He is very curious about the world around him and talking more and more. They all have developed such impeccable personalities. We love them so much and continue looking forward to them growing.





It is with much sadness that we will be saying goodbye to Lucas in the beginning of March. We are going to miss him so much. He has been with us since last July.



The chickadees have been enjoying the snow both by going outside and bringing the snow inside. We have been busy with lots of art activities and practicing using our pincer grasps with

crayons. As a teaching team, we are always thinking about different things for the Chicks to do. We recently put a toy kitchen in the classroom and the children absolutely love it. They cook us pizza, tea, and oranges! Story time is something that is always going on in the Chickadees. They love books and love being read to. Many of them want the same book read over and over. Some of the chickadees favorite are: *The Big Red Barn*, *5 Little Dinosaurs*, & *My Car*.



We appreciate parents taking the time to meet with us for conferences. If you haven't already met with us, I put a little questionnaire in your child's cubby to fill out. Please get that back to us as soon as possible. It means so much to us that you all take time out of your days and schedules to meet with us.



Reminders:

- Check your child's cubby!-Make sure that their clothes are the right size and appropriate for all kinds of weather (yes we go out in all kinds). Check the clip for pictures/notes/etc.
- Breast Milk- PLEASE label with name & date. If it does not have this we cannot give it to your child.

-Nut Free Notes- Please make sure they are in your child's lunch box/food container daily.

-Communication-We are always trying to email as much as we can. Please call as much as you would like/email as much as you would like and never hesitate to ask any questions you have, no matter what they are about. We are not only here for your child but for you all as well.

BELOW are some articles that we found interesting & thought you would too

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3474391/>

<https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/232-toddlers-and-biting-finding-the-right-response>





# News from the Chickadee Toos

Teresa Hahn,  
Lead Teacher

Lori Higgins

Moya Stevens

## Winter greetings from Chickadee Toos

So much change, growth and excitement going on. Erin has moved up to the Owl room, where she is happily adjusting to a new routine. Zelda's language is exploding, she has new words every day. She is learning colors and starting to count. Ari is now with us 3 days a week. He is a busy guy, exploring the world around him. He has discovered his throwing arm. Solene is also producing lots of words and phrases, she too is beginning to count. Sam is his usual smiling self and wowed us this week with his newly acquired walking skills. Sabina is chatting to all her friends. She takes tentative steps and will be running around soon. Campbell continues to hone his sense of humor and keeps us thoroughly entertained with his silly antics. Netta has become a climber. She loves the multi where there are all kinds of climbing opportunities. Basil continues to be the happiest baby. She has learned to crawl and is busy exploring her world. Madison is our newest addition to the flock. She was an early walker and is now running with the crowd. Brielle is crawling and cruising around hanging on to the tables and toy shelves. Every time a gate or door opens, she makes a beeline to it to get out. Morgan is moving all around the room, rolling and scootching along. She has mastered the art of independent sitting up. Sanna is rolling and stretching to get to toys. She is practicing sitting and is making great progress. She definitely likes to be upright and in on the classroom action.

All of the Chickadees are very interested in books. We spend a lot of time reading, singing and just talking about the characters and actions in the stories.



February will be dedicated to winter and snow related activities. Hopefully we will get some fresh snow to play in. (our playground is a bit icy right now) We will have some special love and friendship activities surrounding February 14<sup>th</sup>. We also have 2 birthdays to celebrate Netta and Basil will both be one. We have 2 birthdays in March, Madison and Brielle will be turning one as well.

I have a few reminders for you all. Please remember to include a signed and dated no nut note each day in your child's lunch. (there are reusable laminated ones on our fridge, as well as just paper ones, but any piece of paper will do) We do have a diagnosed nut allergy in our room now. Thanks for your cooperation. Also if you could check your child's cubby to be sure they have size and season appropriate extra clothing. It would be great if your child had winter gear to go outside to play.

We have all really been enjoying our Tuesday morning music class with Brooke. The children respond to this with enthusiasm and are beginning to really participate in the music and movements.

Take a minute to check out the bulletin board with the new baby and current baby photos... my how we have grown!

Enjoy the rest of winter and let's hope for a little snow,

Teresa for Chickadee Too





## News from the Owls

Debbie Burnham,  
Lead Teacher

Wendy Irwin

April Buchanan

Dear Owl Families,

Have you noticed growth in your Owl in both ability and physically? We sure have!! Since coming back from winter break we are seeing more interactions with each other, more verbal skills and increased interest in our activities. With two children going to be a big brother and a big sister there is definitely interest in the baby dolls. When we come in for nap time several children go to get a baby to sleep with. Afternoons are often spent wrapping dolls in blankets to carry around.



We have been receiving many boxes from amazon since ordering new activities for the classroom. We are all excited about the new magnet tile blocks and the floating penguins. Of course the construction trucks are already well used. When ordering new items Wendy, April and I look at children's interest and ability. We also plan ahead for upcoming activities such as matching items to favorite books. Right now "Caps for Sale" is a popular books so we got a "barrel of monkeys" to use when we focus on the book!! Wait to see what else we are putting out in the mornings!

The Owls love being outside. There is more space, more freedom to roam and paths to explore. What do we do when we cannot go outside? We bring the snow inside! We have a great time not only with snow, but also with the water table filled with water and toys frozen in ice. We do see a difference in the classroom on the few days that we are stuck inside-the children

are more active, at times in negative ways such as climbing on tables. We have even been known to take a few to the big multi from large motor play.

Throughout the day we have quiet times when children gather to read or sit in the rocking chair. There are times the room gets calm and the teachers just look around to see children organizing, on their own, a group play. That's when we try to get the camera quickly for a sweet photo!

We love spending time with your child and being a part of your community. Thank you for trusting us with your toddler.

Fondly,

Debbie, Wendy and April





# News from the Hedgehogs

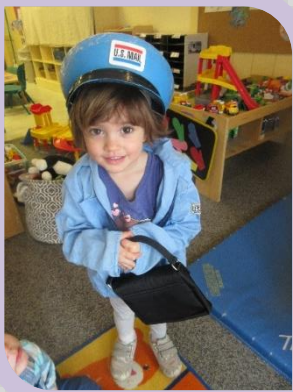
Jennifer Sprague,  
Lead Teacher

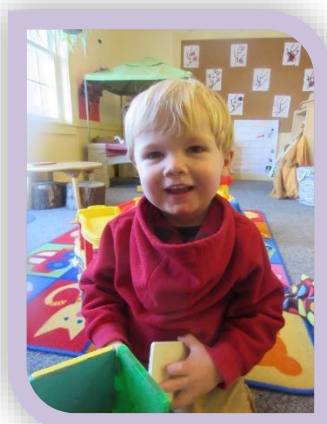
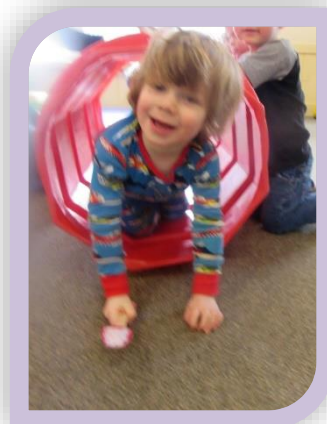
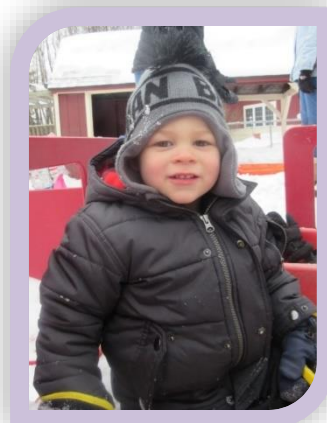
Jenn Boudro

Angelica Morrison

Hello Hedgehog Families,

Wow, I can't believe your child has been a Hedgehog for 6 months!! It seems like we were just meeting you for the first time. We sure have been busy Hedgehogs...coloring on the snow, backwards day activities, hiking on the trail, toothbrush day activities, and lunchbox day. Now we are writing letters to friends and family using our Hedgehog Post Office. We talk about what letters are in our name and in our friend's names. We are learning about how our mail system works and really enjoy putting stamps on our mail. We talk lots about caring for others and we have noticed how much the Hedgehogs help each other. Asking a friend to help open the refrigerator, giving a friend a turn with a toy/book, or helping a friend put their shoes on the shoe shelf. We look forward to watching your special Hedgehog continue to grow these next 6 months!





## News from the Otters

Stephanie Cummings,  
Lead Teacher

Jordan Rosenzweig

Vipasha Oza

Jane Wolfe

Greetings from the Otter Room,

My, how the Otters are growing! We don't notice it since we see the Otters everyday but when we are looking back at their photos from the beginning of the year, we can see the change in their face as they lose their 'baby faces'. The Otters are becoming more independent every day. Putting on snow suits daily has really helped with their independence as they now only need a little help with zipping up zippers and putting on mittens. The Otters are ALL using the potty, some children are successful, others just sit. We are keeping this experience very positive for them as any interest in the potty is a good one. We are very thoughtful to the language that we use with the children so they don't become disheartened when they can't put 'pee' or 'poop' in the potty or if they 'pee or poop' in their diaper. We often say "That's okay, we will try again later" (in relation to sitting on the potty and nothing happens) or "You missed to make it to the potty this time, let's clean you up so that you can be comfortable" (for accidents in diaper or underwear).



The New Year started off on a sad note in the Otter Room. After serving DCCCC and the Otter Room for the majority of his life, poor Ralph passed away. Stephanie took him home for Winter Break and carefully cared for him as his condition began to deteriorate. He passed away on December 27th. After this happened, the question then become 'How do we tell the children?' Stephanie notified the parents in advance who told their children in a quiet moment at home. On their first day back after the break, activities were carefully planned to answer children's questions about the event. Pictures were displayed in the room and Stephanie led a circle where children were able to tell stories of their favorite memories of Ralph. The children remember Ralph fondly and seem to understand that Ralph has gone away.

On more positive notes the Otters have enjoyed several themes since the last newsletter. The weather co-operated before it melted and turned to ice for us to enjoy a Winter/Mitten and Snow theme. We made snowflake twirlers which add a 3D decoration to the Otter Room, a popular activity was making ice rainbows with fresh snow and colored spray bottles. The Otters were requesting



fresh snow throughout the morning to keep this activity going. The Otters enjoyed a Winter Wonderland Walk which was luckily planned on a snowy day to make it more magical. More recently the Otters went on a hike to try and find a Groundhog hole to celebrate Groundhog Day. Another highlight and possibly the favorite activity of the year so far was saving trapped animals from the ice. The Otters used little hammers to break the animals free from the ice. Some friends spent over an hour hammering away and asking to turn it over to get at the animals. Once the last animal was out, the Otters declared "They are free!" We hope with 6 more weeks of winter and a decent snowfall that we can utilize the skis and snowshoes and enjoy all that winter has to offer.

Before the Winter Break, we celebrated St. Nicholas' Day, the Otters learned lots of facts from Henry as he explained the event to his friends. In the afternoon, Otters cleaned their boots and left one of their boots in front of their cubbies with the hope that St. Nicholas would leave something in them while they napped. The children were excited to see the clementine's that were left in their shoes/boots as they put them back on after nap. We learnt about gingerbread for a week: we listened to different variations of stories, decorated gingerbread men and build houses. The Otters also enjoyed cooking and baking the gingerbread which ran away when we opened the oven – they were hiding in Jeff's office! We quickly retrieved them and enjoyed them for afternoon snack, as the children ate them, they stated "We are eating their legs first, so they can't run away again!"







At the end of January, we had the most popular theme yet: India. What a fun week we had! It was great that Vipasha had the opportunity to share her culture in the classroom and the Otters just loved it! On the first day of the theme, Vipasha wore a Sari and the children were amazed by the color and fabric. They counted the bangles on her wrist and quickly noticed the Bindi on her head. Vipasha brought in Bindi stickers for the Otters to wear. Leila won the award for keeping it on the longest – 4 days! Some of the activities that took place were: painting lotus flowers on an easel, making and rolling dough tortillas, throwing tempera paint at paper cut outs, singing Hindi songs, decorating Rangoli patterns, learning about Indian vegetables, decorating a Toran for the classroom, peacock lettuce spinner art, Bollywood dancing and the highlight of the week, Vipasha drawing Henna on the children's hands and arms with face paints. The Otters kept still as they watched in amazement as Vipasha created beautiful artwork on their hands. The Otters now have a greater understanding of Vipasha's culture and ask her lots of questions. Every time Vipasha brings in lunch, the children ask her what vegetable she has in lunch. They all try to pronounce the name once they know what it is.



As the needs of the children change, we have adapted the carpet area for our active and energetic group of Otters. We have replaced the kitchen area with a set of mats for big body play. This has been a huge benefit to the Otters and teachers. We are definitely not saying 'no running in the classroom' as the children are able to use this space to get rid of their excess energy and then return with an engaged body to table choices. Some of the children have adapted gymnastic moves on the mats. They are able to do handstands by climbing their feet up the mats. They have also created their own unique move called the 'diaper change', as you can imagine this involves them making a diaper table pose and then elaborating on it by extending their legs in the air.

We are excited for the coming weeks and months, we have Chinese New Year to celebrate in a few days and have a Wales week to celebrate St. David's Day, the Patron Saint of Wales. Stephanie looks forward to bringing her culture into the classroom at the end of this month with activities to reflect her culture. As the weather becomes warmer, we will be using the outside to help with our themes, as spring approaches, the children will help to plant seeds to grow flowers and vegetables for our planters. We have lots of exciting things to look forward to in the coming months.

We will be having a parent snack on February 27th at 4pm. We hope that you will be able to join us for this event.

On behalf of the Otter Team,  
Stephanie



## News from the Badgers

Terri Hollis,  
Lead Teacher

Miranda Arruda

Judy Labrie

Salutations,

The Badger Room has been forever changing in terms of environment, activities, growth, and capabilities. The task for Badger teachers is to consider all those moving thoughts as we plan our curriculum. All the Badger children and teachers have sincerely enjoyed and continued basing our curriculum on a focus book. It gives us guidance and ideas that Badgers relate to because of the familiarity of a much loved book. A few weeks back our focus book was BUNNY CAKES. An obvious direction with this particular book seemed to be the much loved activities of cooking soooooo we had a “cooking” station. There were some pretty interesting concoctions cooked up. Several of our art projects were food based. This was a great time to talk about different types of food groups. We made our own pizzas, and as you might have suspected there were many variations. The pizzas tend to match their personalities. We have the *pile on as much as possible* kids, and the minimalists.

We always hope that your children enjoy each focus. There are of course some that just seem to take off, and have a level of enthusiasm the entire time. We seem to be in one of those right. The book that we are currently using to guide our curriculum is *Teddy Bears Picnic*. This book just seems to be written as a curriculum planner. We had learning discussions all about bears. Your children wanted to learn more, no matter how much information we gave. Their questions were very thoughtfully thought out. Just for the sake of tying in my original point. The questions they asked and attention has definitely shown that their cognitive capabilities have changed, as well as the ability to have good back and forth turn taking conversations. Here are just a few things that your Badgers learned about bears

- There are eight species of bears
- They are omnivores (that was very fun to say) fancy word for eating both plant and meat.
- They are great hiders
- They live all over the world except for Australia and Antarctica.
- The colder the area they live in the longer they will hibernate (deep sleep). In warmer regions they do not hibernate.

- They hibernate so they do not need to worry about finding scarce food in the winter.
- They are such good climbers because they are very flat footed with claws.
- They have great senses, but smell is exceptionally good, they smell danger from miles and miles away.

WOW!

One of the favorite activities was our dramatic play opportunities. We had three bear caves or dens set up, with stuffed teddy bears to join in play. Several warm brown fuzzy blankets and material pieces were draped to help create a cozy spot. We created bear masks from pizza rounds. We did some math games and sorting using counting bears. We had a great time looking and searching for counting bears that were hidden throughout the multi area. Brooke our music teachers even helped support us by singing and doing some songs based on bears. Thanks Brooke, how lucky are we?

If you have any ideas on books that you think would help contribute to our fun and learning please let us know.

Our next book will be *How Full is your Bucket?* Valentines is always a fun time for children and adults alike. Rather than making being kind, loving, and thoughtful a flash event we thought it would be appropriate to have a book that helped us to think about those attributes more long term.

Thank you to families who took the time to meet with Badger teachers for conferences. It is not always easy to break up your day. It is a great time to sit and talk eye to eye, no disruptions, about your forever growing children.

On behalf of Badger Teachers

Terri

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## News from the Black Bears

Liz Harrington,  
Lead Teacher

Barb Merchand

Heather Wittman

Can you believe that it's already February? My- how time flies! It feels like only yesterday our Black Bears started their journey as bear cubs in late August. We have enjoyed playing, learning and laughing together over these past months. We have loved and appreciated all of the families who have contributed their time and expertise with our Black Bear family: whether it be a chance to read a story, teach us an art project, or take time to come and share a special family pet or special celebration. Through these experiences, Black Bears are able to see that our own families are an extension of our classroom family. We always encourage you to come and spend some time with us!

Black Bears have been busy in the dramatic play center as caring veterinarians, pet owners, or as the pets themselves. You know your pet will always be in great care when brought to our classroom Vet Space!

We've enjoyed all of the pets who have come to visit us our classroom. Emme shared her guinea pig Cici, Micah and Talia have shared their dogs Teo and Simon, and Dagny made a special video to share her fish Pineapple, Tickle Wiskers, Stripey, Rainbow, Te Ka so we could see where they lived and what they looked like. We look forward to more visits, videos, and pictures of our special pets- and we're going to create some imaginary pets too. Black Bears enjoyed chatting with Dr. Makiko Mizutani, a vet student at UC Davis, who answered some of the questions we have been wondering about veterinarians and their role with the pets that we love. I believe that technology can be a wonderful accessory in a



classroom, as long as it is used to support and expand a child's learning experience- and not as a "babysitter." Thank you to Zahra, Soroush's mom, for helping us set up such a wonderful experience!

In the Black Bear room, we use a wide variety of writing implements such as markers, crayons, colored pencils, and pens. We utilize clipboards and our nametags to help us keep track of information we may find important or document things that we observe. We might write notes to our families or friends about things we want to remember or do with them. Black Bears are starting to play and explore with the components and shapes found in letters, such as the "Big Lines/Little Lines" and "Big Curves/Little Curves" from Handwriting Without Tears. Starting this month, I am pleased to announce that we will be initiating a pen pal program with two Pre-K programs at The Center for Young Children and Families at Plymouth State University and Sandwich Children's Center in Sandwich, NH. We will start by introducing ourselves to the other class in a group letter and as the project progresses, the Black Bears will begin to write their own individual letter. It will be exciting to receive responses- and to see where these places are in the state of New Hampshire! The Black Bear room also loves receiving mail from family and friends. If you are traveling on a work trip, a vacation, or just want to send us a quick note- we would love to hear from you. You can send postcards or letters to: Dartmouth College Child Care Center (c/o Black Bears) 21 Reservoir Road Hanover, NH 03755.

This crew of Black Bears absolutely loves to create and preform shows throughout our classroom! As we continue through the rest of this winter, we will begin to discuss with the Black Bears what story they think we should turn into a show that we can perform, record, and share with



our families and the entire school! This project, which will happen over the course of many months, will focus on the parts of a story and the various components needed to put on a theatrical performance!

Since our last newsletter, we've said Happy Birthday to: Conrad, Scarlett, Lawrence in October, Fred in November, and Dagny in January! We look forward to celebrating Anna Sofia and Micah's birthday in February, Lucas and Sam in March, and Austin in April!

Until Next Time,  
Liz, Barb, and Heather





# 10 Ways to Use the Sensory Table

Preschoolers use their senses to explore and learn about the world. To encourage these explorations, teachers can fill the sensory table with substances and materials for children to touch, smell, see, and hear. Try these ideas to encourage sensory play with items that are fun, affordable, and promote learning.

## Let's stay dry!

**1** **Button, button, who's got the button?** Fill the table with buttons, scoops, containers, ice trays, tweezers, and laces. Let the pouring, sorting, categorizing, stringing, comparing, and creativity begin. Purchase hundreds of buttons in bulk online for less than \$10.

**2** **Explore the properties of seeds (corn, thistle, or bird).** Include one or more kinds of seeds with scoops, containers, scales, and funnels. Find seeds at a farmers' supply store or online. Recycle the seeds by feeding squirrels or dropping them off at a local wildlife center.

**3** **Small pebbles or gravel, plus items of your choice.** Small pebbles or gravel make a great surface for various habitats and settings. Add zoo or farm animals, insects, small construction vehicles and workers, or natural items such as sticks and pinecones.

**4** **Bottle tops and egg cartons.** Line the bottom of the table with egg cartons. Add bottle tops of various colors and sizes. Provide long-handled spoons and tongs. Invite children to fill the egg carton cups with bottle tops—creating a pattern, sorting by size or color, ordering by size, or just placing them randomly.

**5** **Retell a favorite story.** Choose a story that lends itself to retelling with some simple props. Put a thin layer of sand in the bottom of the table. It should be deep enough so that props can stand up. For example, after reading Denise Fleming's *In the Small, Small Pond*, include toy frogs, geese, dragonflies, turtles, fish, insects, and a raccoon. After reading *Good Night, Gorilla*, by Peggy Rathmann, add zoo animals, a zookeeper, keys, and berry containers or small baskets from the dollar store to use as cages.



Source: *Teaching Young Children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, October/November 2014, vol. 8, no. 1



## It's okay to get wet!

**6** **Do the dishes.** Add dishwashing soap to clean water. Provide scrubbers, sponges, and dishes to wash. Set up a dish rack nearby for drying the dishes. Have towels available for the inevitable spills.

**7** **Create a water habitat.** Use aquarium gravel or rocks and plastic plants. Include items related to the children's study on oceans (fish, sea otters, dolphins) or pond life (frogs, turtles, fish). Encourage children to tell you what other items they need for the habitat.

**8** **Squeeze and squeeze some more.** Add sponges of different shapes, sizes, and materials (sea sponges, cellulose, foam) to the water table and measuring cups. Ask questions to stretch children's thinking, such as *Which sponge can hold the most water? Why do you think that is true? How can you test your theory?* Cut an egg crate foam mattress pad to fit the bottom of the table. Add water and props. Let the fun begin!



**9** **Glorious indoor mud.** If you have dirt outdoors, bring it inside to fill the sensory table (use  $\frac{2}{3}$  dirt and  $\frac{1}{3}$  sand). If not, make your own mixture with sand and soil you purchase. Provide sticks, leaves, and other natural items. Also include tools to dig with, containers, baking pans, plastic insects and animals, and anything else the children will find of interest. Be prepared for a mess! To make cleanup easier, place an old vinyl tablecloth under the table and provide vinyl aprons or smocks.

**10** **From solid to liquid.** Depending on where you live, fill the table with snow, ice cubes, or ice water. Have the children take photos every half hour or so to document the melting. They can make a display with their photos and discuss their observations and discoveries with classmates. Offer food coloring to drip on the snow or ice to change the color of the water as the ice and snow melt.