

LCC-Leland

March 2010 News

Director's Notes

What a sunny welcome to March it has been. For me it has been doubly so. I had the incredible opportunity to spend eight very sunny days in Oaxaca, Mexico visiting some friends who spend part of the winter in a small fishing village on the coast. I was struck by so many, many things about the local culture and environment during my stay; the slower pace of daily life, the way that children played in large groups outside with simple toys like balls, kites, and found treasures and natural items, the importance of and reliance on extended family and community, and the intimate relationships between people and their natural resources. It was also so refreshing for me to experience a new place with all of my senses, see through fresh eyes and think with a mind full of wonder. Returning to this spring thaw, the sun shining, and to all of my dear LCC friends big and small has helped me in preserving this sunny outlook. I hope that the return of el Sol will do the same for you. I have found that taking time to see through the eyes of a child can also bring that same sense of awe and appreciation for the simple beauty of our daily lives.

During this trip I also experienced what it is like to labor over the expression of each word and what it is like to not have the language to express and idea, feeling, or question. I busted out every bit of Spanish I knew and my practice fell on very forgiving ears, but I have returned

with a greater motivation to learn the language. I'm hoping that all of you more fluent Spanish speakers will hold me to my goal of becoming more bi-lingual. I hope that we will begin to see and hear more Spanish in the early education years, including here at LCC. Let me know if you have ideas about how to see this dream come to fruition.

Parenting Awareness Month

March is parenting awareness month. This month we celebrate you, we recognize the enormous, amazing, delicious, taxing, growing job that you do each and every day. We are committed to providing any parenting supports that you want (assuming we are able to). If we are not offering a form of support that you would find valuable, please let us know.

We appreciate you!

The Messy Thaw

I can promise you that life at the Center is about to become very messy as the earth warms up. Children will get muddy, wet and slimy. We'll do our best to dry snow gear, but I know that we won't be able to keep up. My guess is that when this snow melts, it'll puddle for awhile, which means that we'll spend a lot of time trying to keep children on the edges of puddles but not in them (wish us luck!). You can help out by sending extra gear, doing frequent cubby and lost & found checks, and making sure that your child's things are labeled. We are really low on extra winter gear right now and need families to return anything they have borrowed and to send it whatever extra you have. Thanks!

Summer and Fall Registration

In March, we open registration for our summer and fall programs to you returning parents. In April, enrollment opens to the public. If you wait until April to enroll, we cannot guarantee you a priority enrollment. Our summer programs are eight week programs- June 28-August 20. We run three programs in the summer.

The school age program takes place at the public school. The school age program is for children exiting kindergarten-fourth grade. School age kids take a daylong field trip every week and spend afternoons at local beaches and parks.

The preschool program takes place here at the Center. Preschool children must be enrolled for three consecutive weeks and can select Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday through Friday, or all five days. Preschoolers stay on site most of the time, with occasional adventures to local sights. The preschool focus is social development. We build programs that offer children plenty of opportunities to play and improve social skills.

The toddler program will be reserved for families seeking full time summer care (the entire 8 weeks). Children ages 1 to preschool age are invited to enroll for full days, either 2 days, 3 days, or 5 days a week.

Enrollment for fall happens at the same time. If you have questions about the best placement for next year, talk to Molly or your child's teacher.

COR Assessments and Portfolios

Spring seems to always be a time of new developmental leaps and I swear, we can see kids growing before our very eyes - physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Though we are making note of your child's development all year, this time of year teachers will really focus on documenting their growth using the Child Observation Record (more info. below) and by gathering items with children for their "portfolios".

Assessment—What's this all about?

Authentic assessment is a strategy that directs teachers to evaluate children's growth and development based on the child's natural environment. A contrast to authentic assessment is a screening tool that provides a pass/fail checklist of skills that a child can demonstrate.

The Center has adopted an authentic assessment practice, which is guided by the Child Observation Record—a research based assessment tool developed by the High/Scope Research foundation.

In the early childhood years, education is planned to support growth across all developmental domains, thus we evaluate progress across all domains. When you see your family report, you'll learn about your child's motor skills as well as his/her social skills. What are these domains and why do they matter? The Child Observation Record (COR) is divided into 6 domains, and each domain is arranged developmentally. Typically a child progresses from the simpler tasks to the more complex.

The domains are:

Initiative

In this domain, we observe children learning to manage themselves in a complex environment. Skills and dispositions developed in this domain will afford a child comfort and skills throughout life. Examples of a child taking initiative include making and expressing choices, solving problems and engaging in complex play.

Social Relations.

Social Development is a key domain in early childhood. Young children are actively learning how to understand others and how to manage themselves in social settings.

Examples of social relations range from children relating to adults to friendships with peers, from children engaging in social problem solving to children understanding and expressing feelings.

Creative Representation

Representation is the act of demonstrating one's interpretation of events. Young children are master 'representers'. Skill development in this area will help children manage the abstract information of later life (algebra, reading writing, technical problem solving).

Creative representation can be seen throughout the early childhood classroom—in drawings, sculptures, pretend play, and building.

Music and Movement

In this domain, we see children coordinating motor skills and auditory information. Motor skill development is on fire in the early childhood period, as children explode with motor abilities. Motor skills will enable a child to organize his/her movements-- movements as fine as directing a pencil to form a shape, and as large as running through the gym without crashing into anyone. The ability to recognize auditory input, specifically music and to respond to sound is also progressing rapidly in the early childhood years. This skill will help children manage and prioritize the plethora of sounds she/he hears. Music and movement skill is seen as children demonstrate physical coordination. Musical skill is seen as children respond appropriately to beat and are able to follow movement directions.

Language and Literacy

This is a familiar domain to most of us. Young children acquire language at a rapid pace and quickly learn to translate oral language into a written format. Our literate culture demands that our citizens are skilled in this domain. Language development in preschool is seen as children first recognize speech and finally as children use symbol systems for recording thought (eventually the chosen symbol system will be our written language).

Math and Science is the final domain. Logic and mathematics are yet one more way to make sense out of our world. We see preschoolers engaged in intense logical and mathematical problems throughout their day. These skills will enable a child to predict spatial needs (I'll need more space to park my car), to manage numeric information (I need two more eggs to make that cake), to sequence and to begin understanding cause and effect. Science and mathematical skills are observable as children sort objects, use comparison words, count objects, and describe spatial and temporal events.

Although the domains are distinct, each of them intertwines: a child cannot learn to write if she/he cannot express a thought using a representation of some sort; a child cannot solve a complex math problem if she/he cannot take initiative, etc. Concurrently, developmental progress in one domain may be predictive of progress in another domain.

Isn't it exciting to think that your child is exercising in each of the developmental domains every day? The early childhood years are typically referred to as foundation years. A child's development in each of these domains lays the groundwork for a deep and rich life-long education. We look forward to talking to you about your child's development in each of these domains.

Carnival Thanks

Claire and Sara M. deserve mega thanks for running the Carnival show this year. It was really the smoothest I have ever seen this event run. Usually I will thank a long list of volunteers who made the carnival such a success, but instead I'm taking the opportunity to print this letter written by Enterprise columnist Eric Carlson. It appeared in the issue right after the Carnival, which I think exemplifies beautifully what we can be grateful for:

I'm not sure what got into me, but one of the stories I covered for this newspaper last week literally brought me to tears.

In fact, after I covered the story and was driving home I had to pull my car over to the side of the road when I began sobbing like a little girl.

No, I wasn't feeling "sad" as one county commissioner said she felt last week about the lawsuit the county board had just filed against the county prosecutor. And I wasn't upset about the bureaucratic delays the would-be developers of the former Leelanau County courthouse property keep running into, which I also reported on last week.

I must admit that I was pleased - but did not cry tears of joy - after learning that my 14 year-old daughter's ski team was heading to the state championships as reported in our Feb. 18 edition. Besides, I'm not allowed to cover skiing because my daughter is on the team.

Nor did I cry over the fact that my 12 year-old son did not make it onto the six-member county spelling bee team as he did

last year even though he was declared the Leland Public School spelling bee champ two weeks ago. Although the county spelling bee was Page One news last week, I didn't even break down over the fact that I wasn't allowed to be a judge at the bee and cover it as I had for nearly a decade because my son was participating in it again this year.

Believe it or not, what really did a number on me was related to the tiny news item I wrote that appeared inside Section 2 in last week's edition along with a few pictures I took at the Leelanau Children's Center (LCC) annual winter carnival.

We have a framed photograph on a hutch at home that someone from the LCC took of my wife, our two children, and me during an outing to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in the summer of 1998. At the time, our kids were toddlers and I was still on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps, albeit on "terminal leave" pending retirement after 25 years of service including three combat tours. We had just arrived in Leelanau County and were exploring preschool options for our kids who, today, are both LCC alumni.

I have always volunteered to cover the LCC's annual winter carnival if for no other reason than it's an easy way to come up with a few "cutesy" photos of local kids that people might enjoy seeing in the newspaper. Besides, the LCC is a class act in my estimation, and I have always had a warm spot in my heart for it.

The winter carnival this year was a little different from past years because it began with a free concert by LCC teacher

and musician Doug Hansen and his band, playing their repertoire of children's songs. The scene in the Performing Arts Center at the Leland school was one to behold - dozens of little kids and their parents jumping and dancing together to the music. As people walked into the room, you could see their faces light up instantly when they heard, saw, and felt what was going on.

One of the things that also struck me was how many of the people in the room I knew personally, some of them for many years now.

For a guy whose previous life took him to a new duty station every other year or so on average, to say nothing of temporary duty in at least 50 countries including a few foreign cesspools where people were actively trying to kill me, being in the same room with so many friendly, familiar people having such fun with their kids is something special.

And, unlike some places where I show up with my camera and notebook these days, pretty much everybody at the LCC concert seemed happy to see me. I even got a few hugs.

It wasn't until I had finished covering the LCC event and was driving home that I began reflecting on what I'd just experienced. I recalled that there were several times in my life when I was quite certain I would never live to see a day anything like that one. That's when I lost it.

Maybe I really do know what got into me. It was pure gratitude.

