



the discovery center



March 2023

DIRECTOR'S CORNER —

As we acknowledge the three year anniversary since the beginning of the pandemic, we can not help but pause and reflect on all that has happened. Who could have ever imagined the impact, disruption and isolation the COVID crisis would create? While we continue to navigate the ever changing climate of the virus's aftermath on our lives, we are also very grateful for the amazing staff and families that make up our Discovery Center family. We have appreciated the support and dedication of our program owners, George Miller and Deb Webster. We are still in awe that the majority of our professional teaching and administrative staff remain intact. They too have been unwavering in their efforts to create a safe and welcoming program that could pick up the pieces with ease and expertise, never missing a beat! Families have returned to the program and many new families have also joined us. It almost seems "normal" these days. There is absolutely nothing in the world that

can replace the sounds of children playing, laughing and learning. For many of us, this has been our daily "therapy". As we continue to return to life beyond the pandemic, we are especially grateful for your kind words, patience, and most importantly, your trust and support. Simply put, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We continue to dedicate ourselves to making The Discovery Center an amazing place for young children and their families.

Warmly, Debbie



Activities That Build Skills Needed For Handwriting

Many preschool and kindergarten children need to build strength in their hands and develop fine motor coordination in order to master letter writing skills later on. You can help your children reinforce fine motor control by providing them with these activities:

- *Provide play dough and clay for children to manipulate. Use cooking cutters, rolling pins, potato mashers, or garlic presses with the play dough. This helps to strengthen hand muscles and coordination.
- *Involve children in measuring and mixing the ingredients in a favorite family recipe or try making your own play dough: 2 cups flour, one cup salt, two tablespoons of salad oil, and one cup water. Let them squeeze the mixture with their hands until it's blended.
- *Allow children to manipulate desk tools such as hole punchers, staplers, blunt-end scissors, stamp pads/stampers, paper clips, etc.
- *Have your children help you with household tasks: folding clothes and napkins, dusting furniture, drying silverware, pouring their own milk or juice, mixing foods, kneading dough.
- *Provide tools for writing. Make available pencils, crayons, markers and paper for exploration. Draw to music with markers, colored chalk, etc. Select songs that have varying tempos.
- *Other household tools and utensils for developing finger and hand strength and coordination include pump and spray bottles and turkey basters, flour sifters, kitchen tongs and tweezers of various sizes, clothespins, squeeze bottles, sponges to wring and squeeze, and wooden hammers to use with golf tees to pound into Styrofoam blocks.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FUN!

Delight your children on St. Patrick's Day with a surprise visit from some mischievous leprechauns. Before your children wake up on March 17th, leave some playful clues as evidence of a visit from these mythical characters. Try these ideas or create some mischief of your own:

- *Squeeze a few drops of green food coloring in the toilet
- *Sprinkle a little green glitter over counters or near the door
- *Leave a trail of chocolate gold foil coins or Andes mints
- *Leave behind a small old buckle, a tiny shoe, or glove
- *Use a baby shoe dipped in flour to make footprints
- *Make a mess in a cupboard, a shelf, or a closet
- *Wake the children up with Celtic music!



Getting Children to Clean Up

How do early childhood teachers do it anyway? Are they issued magic wands or what? You've seen it happen. The classroom can be a total mess after a busy morning of play, and somehow they get the kids to clean it up. While I can't tell you where to buy a magic wand for home use, I can let you in on some of the trade secrets:

1-In the classroom, teachers label storage space. Containers, shelves, cupboards, you name it, teachers have probably stuck a picture or words on it. Why? Because cleaning up is easier for kids when they can see where to put their playthings. A toy truck gets parked in front of a picture of a toy truck. Wooden beads go in a tub marked with a string of beads. What's more, there's an added bonus academically. When kids put real objects next to pictures, they're doing more than being neat. They are practicing the early reading and math skill of matching. *At home have your child help you draw or cut out pictures to label the shelves, boxes, and drawers where she keeps her belongings.*

2-Teachers suggest categories. Being told to "clean up" is overwhelming to young children. Teachers simplify the task by helping kids concentrate on putting away one group of items at a time. "Let's put all the crayons away first, and then all the scissors." While children are busily searching for the crayons among scraps of paper and scissors, they're strengthening another thinking skill—the ability to classify and create groupings. Putting together a group of items involves some complicated thought processes, including reasoning, discrimination, and analyzing. *At home, suggest that your child first pick up all his toy cars. Then see if he can think up another category. Socks? Books?*

3-Teachers help kids remember the steps of cleaning up. Kids are learning that it's wise to do things in certain order. That's why teachers take time to go over the steps of various tasks frequently. "The bucket goes under the water table first, then you pull out the plug and let the water drain out." When someone helps children figure out a logical order in which to do things, they're supporting skills in prediction and in understanding cause and effect. *At home, you can help your child think of the steps to a task. "Put the placemats on the table, and then get the dishes out."*

It takes time to help kids learn about cleaning up. It means breaking down tasks that have become second nature to us as adults. Although it takes time, chances are that the long-term results will be worth it! Better, in fact, than if you'd simply waived that magic wand!

Summer Camp at The Discovery Center:

Summer Explorers Camp (SEC) in the Orange Room will run from June 19-August 31. This is a half day morning/early afternoon program that serves children ages 2 yr 9 mo through 5 years of age. Separate enrollment is required. Brochures and enrollment registration will be available in later March/Early April. Enrollment is done on a first come, first served basis.

Adventure Summer Program (ASP) in the Yellow Room is from June 19-August 31. This program is for "graduates" of a Young 5's or Kindergarten program. Separate enrollment is also required. Brochures and enrollment registration will be available in later March/Early April. Enrollment is done on a first come, first served basis.

Let us know if you need a brochure for either or both of these programs. Our full day classrooms continue all summer long; no separate enrollment needed.