

Early Learning Center

Where Families Connect to Learn, Grow and Play!

Contact us at: www.bellevuecollege.edu/childcare 425-564-2240

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January 2016

Dear ELC Families,

One of the ways we can honor **MLK Jr Day** in early childhood is to teach our children about **empathy**. On that note, please join me in extending a **special welcome to families new to the ELC**.

While the majority of new students enroll in September, the nature of being at a college is that every quarter families leave, and families join us as well. **It can be hard to feel at home at first when it seems like everyone else knows each other, the routine and the campus!**

We ask new families to bring in their family photos for each child's personal display in the classroom, so that it can feel a little more like home to them. **Children are both comforted by and proud of images of their family** (including, of course friends and pets!) Teachers also use these special pages to find interest areas for library books or other curriculum choices, and especially to encourage language and budding friendships.

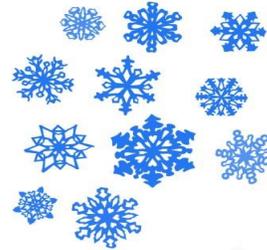
If you are a continuing family, please consider taking a moment to welcome a new child or family. You will be helping to build community at our school, and also teaching an important value to your child through your example. **See more ideas on building empathy on the back page of the newsletter.**

On the pages in between, please read about how teachers are all initiating **new curriculum in January**. They selected an area of focus based on the feedback from our Early Achievers coach, who has been offering suggestions to each classroom in preparation for our **next Early Achievers center rating**. You can read more about that inside too!

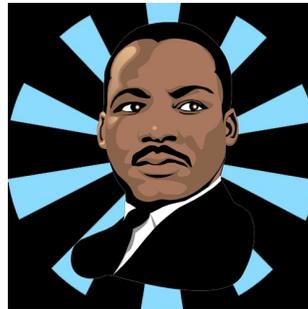
As your family starts the New Year, with all the new routines and new opportunities ahead, please let us know if there are new ways we can understand and support you as a family.

Warmly,

Kelly
Director, ELC



1/4/16
First Day of
Winter Quarter



1/18/2016
Martin Luther King
Jr Day

NO BC Classes
ELC CLOSED

Do you know someone who would be a great Early Childhood teacher?

The Early Learning Center is looking creative, compassionate people with a passion for children!

In addition to joining an experienced team and serving great families, as state employees, ELC staff are eligible for a wide range of benefits, including reduced college tuition.

Learn more here:

<http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/jobs/>



Early Learning Center Progress with Early Achievers

The Next Chapter in Quality Improvement at the Early Learning Center

The Early Learning Center completed the Early Achievers ratings process in 2013, as a part of the pilot of Washington state quality rating system for early learning programs, and earned the distinction of reaching a Quality Level of Excellence in child care.

Getting a rating isn't the end of the journey for the Early Learning Center. The next step of the process continues over three years. The initial rating made the ELC eligible for additional free training and workshops. Early Achievers provides a coach for all rated sites, to help us reach an even higher level of quality. The Early Learning Center has also received financial support to buy staff training, educational materials and other things to improve our program.

Our Program will next be reviewed and rated in the Fall of 2016. We will be asking for your feedback and participation as parents to help us prepare for the review, and also for parents who would volunteer to be interviewed by the team from UW who will be rating us.

What to learn more? Go to: <http://del.wa.gov/care/qris/>

Emergency Preparedness—Staying Informed!

It is important that the ELC has current information on how to contact every family in case of an emergency. As a safety review each quarter, please make sure we know your latest phone numbers and e-mail addresses, and review the names and contact numbers you have listed as people with Permission to Pick up.

If you received this newsletter by e-mail, you have a current e-mail address in the ProCare system. This is what is used for information that only pertains to the ELC.

In order to receive Campus-wide "alerts", we ask you also to sign up for the RAVE system, which can send you e-mails, and, if you elect, text messages at:

www.bellevuecollege.edu/alerts/

The most common use of Rave Alert will be to communicate when the college is closed due to inclement weather.

The ELC will close or open based on the campus wide decisions and announcements that are made.

Sign Up For Campus Alerts

RAVE
MOBILE SAFETY

Get Instant:

- > Emergency Information & Updates
- > Campus Closure Alerts
- > Class Cancellations

via Text Message!

Don't be the last to know!

What's new in the Infant and T1 Rooms?



Infant Room: Teachers Lisa Ann, Mahboobeh and Diane

Welcome and welcome back!

We are looking forward to learning and growing together in 2016! This month we will be focusing on our budding language and science skills. Songs and music are a wonderful way to foster language development. Therefore this month we will be introducing a few **new songs and sounds** to the group. What songs do you sing at home with your baby? We would love to sing these songs at school too. Hearing familiar songs and seeing family photos helps children feel secure and valued. Would you teach us your special songs?

Infants spend a lot of time using their senses to grow and explore. We have spent a lot of time using: sight, sound and touch to explore and master our world. This month we plan to include some opportunities to utilize our sense of smell as well. We will be using some **scent bottles** so the babies can use their sense of smell to further our exploration and understanding of the world.

T1 Room: Teachers Bonnie, Brian and Diane

We have been making some additions to the T-1 environment to meet the skills and interests emerging in our group of children. We have some **new dress up vests and hats**, some for different occupations such as Doctor and Fire Fighter, to support their budding self help skills, as well as to encourage creative play and language. We are also providing many **baskets of manipulatives** for children to have free access to—made possible because we found some nice, durable baskets that won't break if the children attempt climbing in or on top of them! We plan to develop a **new science window** in the classroom as well. We welcome family contributions in any of these areas!



What's new in the Toddler Rooms?

T2 Room: Teachers Liliana, Rita and Khazal

What's new for T2 for the new year? We have decided to put together a **new small aquarium**, start off with **one fish** and go from there!

We will also be adding **new living insects** in containers to the nature and science area. Have you met the stick bugs yet? ***Our hope is that the children will experience and enjoy caring for and protecting something small.***



T3 Room: Teachers Annie, Parisa and Khazal

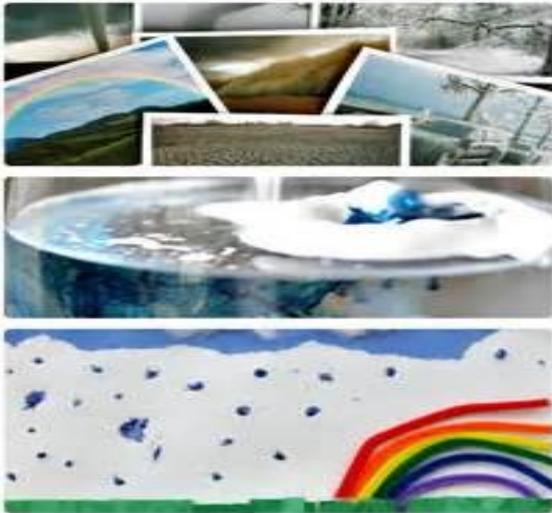
Making a tasty vegetable soup is a new experience that the children will have in our classroom this upcoming New Year. The major ingredients of the soup are carrots, green beans, and potatoes. The children will help to wash the vegetables, then cut them using plastic knives and put them in the pot. ***In addition to the sensory and science experience, as we cook children will have the social practice of taking turns, working together and sharing.***

T6 Room: Teachers Donna, Jackey and Wendy

Next month in T6, we are planning to expand on our current science area focus of "bringing the outdoors indoors." To the present offerings of pine cones, fir cones, rocks, small branches from various trees, and a bird nest etc., we are emboldened try **a new approach by adding an Aero Garden**, allowing us to grow various herbs and vegetables right in our own room! The children will be able to watch them grow, as well as harvest them when ready, allowing us the opportunity to sample them at lunch time etc. ***This experiment will encourage curiosity, patience and sharing.***



What's new in the Preschool and PreK Rooms?



P3 and P4 Pod Room: Teachers Chisaki, Marlize, Page, Karen and Margarita

P3 and P4 will be partnering together in January, having an open door for learning and experimenting in each others rooms while we focus on our changing weather. As children learn about wind, rain and snow, they will begin to put science into action by exploring their own natural surroundings. As they play they will observe, question, predict, plan and conduct experiments. We may create weather stations, weather calendars, and rain gauges. We will build a science vocabulary board together too!

A few examples of experiments we will be working on is making fog in a bottle, creating rain in a jar, learning what makes ice melt, wind power observations and exploring weather on campus during a combined pod field trip. Families are welcome to come along!

P1 Room: Teachers Mala, Iryna and Ghousia

New Year is a time for new beginnings and plans. In January we would like to initiate a new "Sharing Day" where each child will have an opportunity to bring one special object from home to share.

Look for our schedule to come out, and please bring something only on their assigned day! We will create a special ritual to encourage children in sharing skills, and in expressing generosity and curiosity. **We ask parents to be involved in this activity along with their children by spending time at home deciding what would be to a special object (not necessarily a toy –perhaps a special photo? Shell? Book?) to bring to the classroom.** Rehearse with your child how they might describe it to their friends. Why it is special to them? Is there a story about it?



P2 Room: Teachers Linda, Lindsay and Ghousia

Last month we noticed that our children enjoyed making paper airplanes and paper kites that they could soar around with. As we come back together in January, we will be trying out more of this **Functional Art**. Our goal is to encourage **new interest in creative art and using art skills in other learning areas of the classroom**. What props or costumes could we make for the dramatic play area? How could we use our art to represent or act out the books we are reading? Can we use our art to create signage or enhance our buildings in the block area?

If you have art skills or project ideas to share we would love to hear them!



How Can I Teach my Toddler Empathy?

This is a question many parents have! Parents also sometimes wonder why teachers at the Early Learning Center do not force sharing or insist on apologies. Instead teachers address conflict using strategies based on the stage of development the child is in, with the goal of building children's empathy.

ZERO TO THREE, a national, nonprofit organization that provides parents, professionals and policymakers the knowledge and know-how to nurture early development offers the following guidelines and suggestions to parents:

Empathy is the ability to imagine how someone else is feeling in a particular situation and respond with care. This is a very complex skill to develop. Being able to empathize with another person means that a child:

- Understands that he is a separate individual, his own person;
- Understands that others can have different thoughts and feelings than he has;
- Recognizes the common feelings that most people experience—happiness, surprise, anger, disappointment, sadness, etc.;
- Is able to look at a particular situation (such as watching a peer saying good-bye to a parent at child care) and imagine how he—and therefore his friend—might feel in this moment; and
- Can imagine what response might be appropriate or comforting in that particular situation—such as offering his friend a favorite toy or teddy bear to comfort her.

Understanding and showing empathy is the result of many social-emotional skills that are developing in the first years of life.

Some especially important milestones include:

- **Establishing a secure, strong, loving relationship with you.** Feeling accepted and understood by you helps your child learn how to accept and understand others as he grows.
- **Beginning to use social referencing**, at about 6 months old. This is when a baby will look to a parent or other loved one to gauge his or her reaction to a person or situation. For example, a 7-month-old looks carefully at her father as he greets a visitor to their home to see if this new person is good and safe. The parent's response to the visitor influences how the baby responds. (This is why parents are encouraged to be upbeat and reassuring—not anxiously hover—when saying good-bye to children at child care. It sends the message that “this is a good place” and “you will be okay.”) Social referencing, or being sensitive to a parent's reaction in new situations, helps the babies understand the world and the people around them.
- **Developing a theory of mind.** This is when a toddler (between 18 and 24 months old) first realizes that, just as he has his own thoughts, feelings and goals, others have their own thoughts and ideas, which may be different from his.
- **Recognizing one's self in a mirror.** This occurs between 18 and 24 months and signals that a child has a firm understanding of himself as a separate person.

What Can You Do: Nurturing Empathy in Your Toddler

- **Empathize with your child.** *Are you feeling scared of that dog? He is a nice dog but he is barking really loud. That can be scary. I will hold you until he walks by.*
- **Talk about others' feelings.** *Kayla is feeling sad because you took her toy car. Please give Kayla back her car and then you choose another one to play with.*
- **Suggest how children can show empathy.** *Let's get Jason some ice for his boo-boo.*
- **Read stories about feelings.**
- **Be a role model.** When you have strong, respectful relationships and interact with others in a kind and caring way, your child learns from your example.
- **Use “I” messages.** This type of communication models the importance of self-awareness: *I don't like it when you hit me. It hurts.*
- **Validate your child's difficult emotions.** Sometimes when our child is sad, angry, or disappointed, we rush to try and fix it right away, to make the feelings go away because we want to protect him from any pain. However, these feelings are part of life and ones that children need to learn to cope with. In fact, labeling and validating difficult feelings actually helps children learn to handle them: *You are really mad that I turned off the TV. I understand. You love watching your animal show. It's okay to feel mad. When you are done being mad you can choose to help me make a yummy lunch or play in the kitchen while mommy makes our sandwiches.* This type of approach also helps children learn to empathize with others who are experiencing difficult feelings.
- **Use pretend play.** Talk with older toddlers about feelings and empathy as you play. For example, you might have your child's stuffed hippo say that he does not want to take turns with his friend, the stuffed pony. Then ask your child: *How do you think pony feels? What should we tell this silly hippo?*
- **Think through the use of “I'm sorry.”** We often insist that our toddlers say “I'm sorry” as a way for them to take responsibility for their actions. But many toddlers don't fully understand what these words mean. While it may feel “right” for them to say “I'm sorry”, it doesn't necessarily help toddlers learn empathy. A more meaningful approach can be to help children focus on the other person's feelings: *Chandra, look at Sierra—she's very sad. She's crying. She's rubbing her arm where you pushed her. Let's see if she is okay.* This helps children make the connection between the action (shoving) and the reaction (a friend who is sad and crying).
- **Be patient. Developing empathy takes time. Your child probably won't be a perfectly empathetic being by age three.** (There are some teenagers and even adults who haven't mastered this skill completely either!) In fact, a big and very normal part of being a toddler is focusing on me, mine, and I. **Remember, empathy is a complex skill and will continue to develop across your child's life.**

Have a question about parenting or child development?

Let us know and we will share some ideas and resources each month on the back page of the each newsletter.