

Good News Gazette

September-October 2018

Ages and Stages

At your center's curriculum night this fall, you may have heard about the ASQ-3, which is the screening tool we use for new children and those who are moving to a new room.

ASQ stands for Ages and Stages Questionnaire. This screening tool is designed to assess whether children are displaying typical development for their age. The ASQ-3 targets children from age 1 month to 5 ½ years.

Why do we need to screen children?

Developmental checklists and assessment resources are helpful when teachers or parents have questions about a child's behavior or development. We have identified the ASQ-3 as our "official" tool, so that we have a consistent approach in all of our programs.

Several years ago, the Michigan Dept. of Education instituted a Tiered Quality Improvement Rating System (TQIRS), which established quality ratings for all licensed family day care homes and center-based early childhood programs in the state. Using a research-based screening tool is a requirement for this system. The National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) also requires an initial screening when children are enrolled, as part of their accreditation criteria.

Note – if you are drowning in acronyms, you are not alone. We apologize and try to avoid using them!

How does the screening take place?

One of the reasons we chose this screening is that parents, not teachers, complete the questionnaires on their own children. In studies where parents and trained examiners completed the screening tool on the same child, there was 93% inter-rater reliability in the results. Parents know their children!

You will receive information from your child's teacher on how to complete the questionnaire. There is an on-line version, but we also have hard copies available, so you can break up the task if you wish.

Who will see these scores? Only teachers and parents have access to an individual child's ASQ information. Once parents complete the survey, teachers will receive the information and arrange time to touch base with you. Many of you have completed a similar survey for your pediatrician; this will be a familiar format.

What if my child has a delay? We expect all children to have "surges and delays" across the full spectrum of their development. For example, fine motor or language development



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NAEYC Accredited

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Important Notes

Reminders

Please label everything your child brings to the center, including clothing, blankets, and backpacks. Permanent "Sharpie" brand markers work very well. This is a good time to inventory your child's extra clothes supply: some items may have become too small or need to be replaced for the cooler weather.

Our Ann Arbor centers' hours are 7:15-5:45. In Chelsea, the programs run from 6:30-6:00. If your schedule changes from the times listed on your contract, please notify us ahead of time so that we can provide adequate staffing. We have a late fee of \$1 per minute for pick-up after the center's closing time. For children with a half-day contract (amPS), the late fee applies to your end-time as stated on your contract. If you have an emergency and will be delayed, please call so that we can make plans and reassure your child. Thanks for your cooperation!

We are in the process of changing our enrollment/financial software. You should have received information on signing up for the new program, Day Care Works. This transition will take place over the next few months, so please watch for more information. In the meantime, tuition payments are still due on the first day of each month. Late fees will be assessed for all payments received after the 10th of the month, unless prior arrangements are made with the center Director.

Fall Potlucks

Our center potlucks are a great opportunity to meet other parents, get to know the teachers better, and sample some great food! Watch for reminders at your center, but you can mark your calendars with the dates below:

Mt. Vernon 9/20

Mt. Pleasant 9/24

Stadium 9/24

WISD 10/25

Traver 9/20

Oak Valley 9/20

Dhu Varren 9/27 at Independence Lake

Chelsea 10/23 (potluck and family pumpkin carving event)

School Photos

Mt. Vernon 9/17

Mt. Pleasant 10/12

Stadium I/T 9/12; PS 9/13

WISD 10/9

Traver 9/18

Oak Valley 9/17 and 9/18

Dhu Varren 9/17 and 9/18

Curriculum Night

Some of our centers hosted Curriculum Night during the first week of September; others have scheduled a later date. This is a great opportunity to see the room and hear about our program without children present. In addition, teachers will have more information on the HighScope approach, and what that looks like in our program. Check your classroom parent board for your center's Curriculum Night date.

Upcoming Curriculum Nights:

Mt. Vernon 10/23

Dhu Varren Preschool rooms 9/12

Chelsea Preschool 10/9



Neighborhood News

Mt. Vernon's September has gotten off to a musical start! Rosalie Koenig, grandma and retired music teacher, is visiting the Preschool classrooms on Tuesdays to lead us in music and movement group time. Also, Lori Fithian from Drummunity visited the center and led the children in a drum circle. Children enjoyed the opportunity to drum on big drums, chant and sing together.

Mt. Vernon preschool classrooms will soon get out and about in the community to experience fall activities by visiting Wassem's Orchard to pick apples at the end of September and to Slow Farms in October.

WISD is excited to welcome back the students of Honey Creek and High Point Schools. We look forward to another great year with our building neighbors!

Oak Valley's fall Family Event will be slightly different than the usual potluck. On September 20th, we will have a hot dog cart! Families will sign up ahead of time with the number of meals they would like to purchase. Each meal will include a hot dog, drink, chips and a cookie. Check with your child's teacher for more information!

WISD Hot Lunch is available again for the school year. Lunch costs \$3.10 per day, and menus for the month are available. To order hot lunch, just let your child's teacher know the day it's needed. To create a lunch account or add money to your existing account, checks can be written payable to High Point School. Please ask your child's teacher if you have any questions.

At **Mt. Pleasant**, Work Days gave teachers the opportunity to rearrange the room and bring out new materials. The children have enjoyed exploring the new layout of the rooms and the new materials.

Oak Valley will welcome returning visitors from Japan at the end of September. They have visited on two previous occasions, to learn more about our learning environments and our implementation of the HighScope curriculum. They are in the planning stages of opening a HighScope preschool in Japan in the coming year, and our friendship has helped during their planning process. We are pleased to partner with other organizations to promote quality programs for young children and families.



These staff members are celebrating Gretchen's House anniversaries this September & October!

	Years
Rosemary Rittinger	3
Emily Hendricks	3
Carol Kozminski	3
Kyara Payne	3
Mallory Anderson	3
Adam Lucca	2
Kailah Hardy	2
Alexandra Schenk	2
Kathryn Gray	2
Tracey Buchanan	2
Alannah Saxton	2
Joanna Depa	1
Sherry Hafner	1
Alexandria Anderson	1
Barbara Beeson	1
Danielle Estrada	1
Alison Tansel	1
Allison Tomecek	1
Erica Cross	1
Kendra Carlson	1
Mallory Downer	1
Elizabeth Music	1

Staff News

Oak Valley staff participated in team building activities during the recent Work Days, which focused on communication. In one exercise, teachers were paired with a staff member they don't typically work with. While one person looked at a drawing and gave directions of what to draw (without sharing what the object was), the other person listened to the directions and made the drawing. In the second exercise, teaching teams worked together. They were given spaghetti, masking tape, a marshmallow and a yard of yarn. Their goal was to build the tallest tower, that had a marshmallow on top and could stand for five

seconds. This was much more difficult than one might think, so we used the HighScope approach of Plan-Do-Review as our guide.

Oak Valley teacher, **Amy Kasvin**, is participating in a walking fundraiser for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Amy's nephew, Walt, was diagnosed with aveolar rhabdomyosarcoma (RMS). He is receiving treatment at St. Jude. St. Jude sees more than 7,800 children a year. 75% of St. Jude's cost is covered by public contributions. Parents never see a bill. Donations may be made in the lobby at Oak Valley, or online at <http://walkrun.stjude.org/waltswingmen>. Thank you – together we can make a difference!





Social Studies



We explored the back of an ambulance at The Hands-on Museum. We often see ambulances in our community, it's interesting to see inside.



Ecology is focused on by helping children to understand the importance of taking care of their environment. We do this by having appropriate sized tools for them to use, and providing activities for them to participate in.



We enjoy having visitors at the center. This day we welcomed "Magic Joe" to the center.





Diversity is celebrated by helping children understand that people have diverse characteristics, interests and abilities, while practicing different roles, playing games, or working together on a goal.





Work Days Training



Parking Lot Safety

As you well know, our parking lots can get very crowded at drop-off and pick-up times. To keep everyone safe, we ask that you please:

Do not leave your unattended car running, ever.

Never leave children alone in the car.

Drive slowly, even if you are running late!

Hold hands of small children and stay within arms reach of older ones.

Park your car in a way that allows other drivers to enter their cars and exit the parking lot safely, even if you will just be away from your vehicle momentarily.

Gretchen's House closes each year for the three days prior to Labor Day, for staff training and development. We also use the time to pull things apart in the centers and get ready for the start of our fall program. This is the only time each year that the teachers are in their classrooms *without children*, and the days are fully packed with meetings and room overhauls.

This year our staff training was focused on our child assessment tool, the Child Observation Record (COR Advantage). You should have received an email about the changing software. We are very excited about this, as the new platform will allow us to more easily share daily observations with families. The new program is equipped to send notifications to families through email and through text.

We are asking families to let us know how they would like to receive information. If you have not responded to this email request,

please take a moment to do so right away. If you didn't receive the email, please speak with your Lead Teacher or center Director. Thanks for helping us with this new communication process!

In addition to our group training, we also take time to acknowledge staff longevity and attendance; we know that consistency and continuity of care directly affect the quality of our programs. We are pleased that 42% of our Ann Arbor and Chelsea staff were recognized for 5 years (or more) of service with Gretchen's House.

At the center level, staff participated in center-based trainings, specifically geared to their program's needs. It was a very busy three days!

Thanks to all of our parents who support quality in our programs through professional development. Your child care dollars are put to good use during these three days, and we work hard to make the most of that time.

Ages and Stages

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often moves more slowly when a child is advancing in physical ways – such as cruising and walking. In the same way, children often have a burst of language after they have mastered a big physical hurdle.

The good news is that early identification provides the opportunity for adults – parents and teachers – to plan intentionally and support children in areas that need more attention. The screening will be done annually,

but if an area of concern is identified, parents and teachers will discuss the timeline for re-screening, most likely after a few months, depending on the age of the child and the specific concern.

We appreciate the partnership we have with parents and hope this tool is helpful as we work together for the children in our care. Let us know how it goes!

~Heidi McFadden



Illness Policy: Can s/he come to school today?

Our illness policy is regularly reviewed, to bring it in compliance with recommendations from the Washtenaw County Health Department and the Center for Disease Control. We are fortunate to have the counsel of Dr. Andrew Hashikawa in maintaining our health policies. Dr. Hashikawa is the American Academy of Pediatrics liaison for the UM Mott Children's Hospital. He is an emergency room pediatrician and has a special interest in providing support to child care centers and families in group care.

You will receive an Illness Policy reminder from your center Director in the next few weeks. Please review the policy now, and think about your back-up plans for the coming year – children always seem to get sick when it's least convenient, and flu season will soon be here.

We send children home when they are not able to comfortably participate in our program, or if they display symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea, unexplained rash, or high fever. Children who display these symptoms need to be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the center.

This means that if your child is sent home on Wednesday, they may not return on Thursday. They may return on Friday if they have been fever and symptom free for 24 hours. We post signs on the parent bulletin boards whenever a child in our program is diagnosed with a communicable illness, so you can be alert for any symptoms.

We ask that all families have a back-up plan in place which will allow us to quickly notify you when your child needs to go home due to illness. We expect parents or your designated emergency caregiver to pick up sick children within one hour of being called. It is difficult for a child who doesn't

feel well to be at the center, and we strive to reduce exposure to any communicable illnesses. We hope you understand that these policies benefit everyone in the long run.

But my child's doctor said s/he could return to the center! We understand that it is difficult for parents to miss work. It can be very frustrating when the center policy doesn't match the doctor's permission to return to the center. Some illnesses, such as conjunctivitis and coxsackievirus, are very contagious and difficult to contain in a group setting. Please know that we strive to provide a healthy environment for all children, and our policies are based on that goal.

If you have questions about our health policy and/or preventative measures, please ask for a copy of the Health Policies Purple Page.

Medication

If your child needs medication while in our care, please remember that we can only administer medications which are in their original pharmacy or OTC container, labeled with your child's name. We must have a signed permission slip filled out by you which includes the dosage, frequency, and any observed side effects. We do not administer medications to reduce fever.

CPR and First Aid

Sessions begin with CPR renewal, so those who do not need First Aid will be free to leave following the first half of the session. Trainings are held at our Oak Valley center. Sign up with Heike at 734-327-6126 or email her at heike.hampel@gretchenshouse.com. Upcoming dates:

September 11

October 10

November 7

Shot Clinics

We will once again offer flu shot clinics at the Oak Valley 10/16 and Dhu Varren 10/17. We have had a good turnout in previous years, and parents and staff appreciate the convenience. The flu shot clinics are open to all GH employees and spouses, and all parents of GH children (must be 16 years of age or older, so no GH kids).



...because learning should be fun!

2018 Teachers of the Year

Congratulations to Jade Teachey and Jessica Cook, who were presented the **Louise Kersey Excellence in Teaching** Award for 2018! Jade is a Lead Teacher at our Oak Valley location, and Jessica is a Lead Teacher at Traver.

This award is presented each year at our fall Work Day training. The award is named for Louise Kersey, who worked closely with Gretchen to open her first center over 35 years ago. Louise was a teacher at GH-Mt. Vernon for over 10 years, and she exhibited the qualities we now use as criteria for the award: long service and loyalty to Gretchen's, caring and concern for every child and staff member, love of nature and commitment to the future of our environment, community outreach, enthusiasm, creativity, and sense of humor.

Teachers from every Gretchen's House nominate their coworkers, and the former Teachers of the Year choose the recipient from those recommendations.

The Teacher(s) of the Year receives a decorative pitcher (Louise collected pitchers) and framed certificates for home and work, as well as a cash bonus.

Past Teachers of the Year include Kim Tiemann, Denise Lechtanski, Rosie Stratton, Kelly Lessard, Tabatha Hewitt, Danielle Grimaldo, Marie Gaab, Brad Guoan, Sandra Canales, Harmony Smargon, Stacey Marshall, Megan Haight, Erin Dixon, Kathy Lovernick, Pam Preston, Karen Clark-Cantu, Beth Renner, Laura Griswold, and Paige Sienko.

