

Good News Gazette

November-December 2018

Expectations

This article was originally posted in our 2014 Good News Gazette... busy families may enjoy a reminder to slow down and set realistic goals.

The busy season is upon us! Regardless of our holiday traditions, most of us will be spending the next few weeks planning, shopping, cooking, traveling, hosting, cleaning, celebrating, and...feeling exhausted by unrealistic expectations.

The ubiquitous lists on social media add to the frenzy: 10 best recipes for cooking with your toddler and 12 ways to raise a giving child, not to mention the pressure to create new and innovative ways that the Elf can spy on the family all through December.

What else can we do?

One of my favorite aspects of our curriculum is the Plan-Do-Review sequence. As an adult, it is helpful for me to be more intentional about my scheduling. This includes a reflection back, to how things went last time. The keys are adjusting my expectations to fit what I've learned from my past experience, and being realistic and honest (with myself mostly) as I plan for next time.

What do we want for our children and our families? We use this question as an opening activity for many of our staff and parent trainings. It's a good way to start the conversation – identifying our values. What is important to your family this holiday season?



No one's list can tell you how to make the season bright. After all, cooking with a toddler might be great fun for some of you, but it probably wouldn't end well for me (or the toddler).

My recipe for a relaxing holiday with a toddler might include thinking inside the box. That's right, a real box. Taking time away from the shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. can be a good way to spread a little cheer.

All of us at Gretchen's House wish you the best this Holiday season, and we look forward to sharing new memories with you in the New Year!

~Heidi McFadden



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Important Notes

Contracts for 2019

All currently enrolled infant/toddler and preschool families received a new child care contract for 2019 in November. These contracts reflect rates and days the centers will be closed for January-December, 2019.

Contracts for 2019 are due to the office by Friday, November 30th. If you have questions about your schedule or fees, see your center director as soon as possible.

Please note that January billing statements will go out before we close on December 21st. Payments are due when centers reopen on January 2, 2019. Late fees will be assessed for payments made after January 10th.

Winter Break

All Gretchen's House Centers will be **closed December 24- January 1.** We will reopen again on Wednesday, January 2, 2019. If your family will be gone before or after the break, please let us know in advance. Many teachers request time off during the holidays. Substitutes are in short supply at this time of year, so it helps us to know if attendance will be low.

No Public School Days

The Chelsea and Ann Arbor Public Schools will be closed 12/4/18-1/4/19. School resumes on Monday, 1/7/19. Our winter holiday coincides with some of these dates, but our school age programs will offer full day care for kindergarten and school age children on January 2nd-4th. Sign-up sheets are posted in the Older Preschool and School-age rooms.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Centers Closed

Please take note that all Gretchen's House Centers will be closed on Monday, January 21, 2019. Our teachers will receive training and have time to work on classroom projects that can't be done while children are present. We appreciate parent support of our staff training time.

Center Winter Holiday Celebrations

- 12/12 Chelsea's Cookie Decorating Party at both North and South
- 12/12 Traver's Winter Celebration
- 12/13 Oak Valley Winter Wonderland
- 12/18 Farm (Dhu Varren)
- 12/19 Pond (Dhu Varren)
- 12/20 Railroad (Dhu Varren)
- 12/20 Mt. Pleasant Family Holiday Party
- 12/20 Mt. Vernon Winter Party

“Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.”
— John F. Kennedy



Neighborhood News

Stadium has been providing monthly opportunities for center-family engagement activities. Please check your classroom for the schedule of upcoming events.

Stadium will be sponsoring a 2nd grade Detroit classroom to help make their holidays a little brighter. Please keep an eye out for more information later in the month!

Traver added new child sized rakes to each of the playgrounds. The children have really enjoyed raking and composting the leaves from the outdoor spaces! Our Cottage Preschool classroom has been growing avocado trees from avocado pits! The pits have sprouted and they are looking forward to planting them in the spring. Traver is looking forward to collecting toy donations for Mott Children’s Hospital this December.

Mt. Pleasant participated in a turkey drive through Washtenaw Community Action Network. Parents and staff donated enough food to provide a full thanksgiving meal to two families in the Washtenaw area. Thank you to the parents and staff for your participation.

Dhu Varren families had a wonderful time at our all center Family Potluck at Independence Lake. The weather was perfect and the six tables filled with a variety of foods was delicious!

Dhu Varren preschool classrooms have enjoyed their fall field trips to Irwin’s Orchard and Three Cedars Farm. The apples and pumpkins have been plentiful, and the donuts and cider were a wonderful treat!

Dhu Varren families enjoyed a quick treat of cider and donuts for our Fall Harvest on November 1st and were able to connect with teachers and other families at pick up.

Oak Valley children enjoyed their annual Harvest Fest Day on October 24th. Teachers planned special fall-themed events, including scarecrow stuffing, apple tasting and a pumpkin toss.

Oak Valley Preschools visited local apple orchards and pumpkin patches this fall. The children enjoyed picking both apples and pumpkins. Their baked creations, including baked apples, apple slices, apple cake and applesauce have made the center smell wonderful!

WISD is excited to welcome Magic Joe for an evening of fun. Please join us Thursday November 29 at 6:00 pm. We will begin with pizza and fruit, then be entertained by Magic Joe at 6:30.

WISD will once again “Sponsor a Family” this holiday season. Look for more information to be available soon.

Mt. Vernon’s preschool classrooms have been enjoying the fall bounty that our gardens have produced, as well as the fruits of our labor from the fruits and vegetables we were able to pick on our fall field trips! Tomatoes, herbs, apples, raspberries, and pumpkins, oh my! The children have been using their produce in various cooking projects: making gluten free raspberry bars, and banana bread, which the children ate at snack time. At the fall potluck, families enjoyed our apple crisp and homemade bread with tomato dipping sauce.

Mt. Vernon downstairs preschool has been taking frequent walks to Eberwhite Woods to observe all of the changes going on during fall. From collecting colorful leaves and acorns to watching the very busy squirrels, there is always something new to find there!



These staff members are celebrating Gretchen’s House anniversaries this November & December!

	Years
Heike Hampel	22
Kathleen Lovernick	21
Christiana McKiddie	15
Kelly Lessard	12
Danielle Wiener	11
Crystal Park	11
Linda Alvira	6
Jordan Scavone	5
Nicole Glenn	3
Abby Boerema	2
Rachel Kriebel	2
Bridget Stanecki	2
Joseph Enos	2
Courtney Rouse	1
Ajneet Sandhanwalia	1
Raquel Lopez	1
Bulkees Nazrin	
Banu Abdullah	1
Carson Cekola	1



Language, Literacy and Communication



We even take our writing outside.



We have very print rich environments. Which is an essential part of early literacy learning.



Sharing some time reading next to a buddy can be a relaxing time.



Part of our routine is called plan-do-review. With this wheel I can show my teacher what I plan to do and where. We also have large pictures of our classroom areas. These make it easy to communicate where I will work.



We have Song Books in all our classrooms. This makes it easy for me to choose the song I want to sing. It shows both pictures and words.



We make books available and accessible for all of our children. This supports their development of book knowledge.



When my teacher joins me and makes the marks the way I do, I feel encouraged that my marks mean something and are important.



We provide children with a variety of writing and drawing materials that can be used through-out the room.





Food from Home



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.

Due to the serious nature of food allergies for many of the children in our programs, we have established a strict “no sharing food from home” policy. (Please read the Birthday policy in this newsletter). In some of our programs (Scamp, school-age, WISD), children bring their lunches from home; however, we ask parents not to send peanut butter or other nut products in these lunches. Teachers will not allow children to share lunches brought from home.

A light breakfast is available for those who arrive early, from 7:15 to 7:45 a.m. Our morning snack (a heartier option) is then served around 9:00. *Please note that exact times may vary between centers. Your child’s teacher will share the classroom schedule with you.*

If you’ve had a crazy morning and your child did not get to eat at home, but you’re missing our morning meal opportunities, please let one of the teachers know. They will be happy to get something for your child.

Please do not bring your child in with their breakfast from home. It is difficult for teachers to maintain a nut-free environment when children walk into the program, food in hand. In addition, children who arrive with food often want to join in the activities, spreading their food and germs throughout the room. We appreciate everyone’s cooperation! Please see your child’s teacher or the center director if you have questions.



A Handful of Beans

What could your child do with a handful of mixed dried beans and an empty egg carton? Here are a few ideas to start:

- Sort beans into an egg carton. A child might decide to sort by color, size, or some other quality.
- Make a counting game. Put one ink dot in the first section of the egg carton, two in the second, and so on.

Have your child put the same number of beans as dots in each section.

- Glue beans to the outside of a carton to make a collage.
- Create a rhythm instrument. Put beans in the carton and wrap with tape.

What else can you and your child think of to do?

from the Well-Centered Child



Birthday Policy

We know that parents have a lot of information coming their way: emails, blog updates, in addition to papers - notes home, newsletters, and children’s artwork clutter our desks at home. *“I know they said something about birthdays, but I don’t want to admit that I lost that note...”*

Below is an excerpt from our Birthdays Purple Page, with our policy:

“We’d like to explain our firm policy of **no birthday treats from home**. Many of our children and staff have food allergies and/or dietary restrictions which would exclude them from food-focused celebrations. Some food allergies are so severe, even traces of the food can be life-threatening. Monitoring all food that comes in and out of the center is a time-consuming task **and** difficult to control 100%. Also, while we believe occasional treats are fine for young kids, we do need to be careful—the number of children in our programs means we can sometimes have several birthdays in one week.

Sometimes parents ask to distribute small gifts or party favors at the center in honor of their children’s birthdays. We have allowed this in the past but have decided to discontinue it for several reasons. Monitoring toys or small gifts for age-appropriateness becomes one more task on busy teachers’ to-do lists and can become a financial burden for parents. **We will only provide celebrations that involve fun rituals and/or**

special privileges, and which focus on the child whose birthday it is.

Many families choose to mark special occasions by donating a favorite children’s book or game to the center. We graciously accept these donations as we would at any time of the year, but we will not make them a focus of the celebration.

Parents **may** use our center space after hours or on the weekend, free of charge, to host private birthday parties for their children. To reserve a space, speak with your center director well in advance. Invitations should be mailed (**not distributed in parent mailboxes**), so that children who are not invited do not feel left out. Parents must leave the center space clean, taking special care not to leave any traces of outside food.”



Purple Pages

Our Purple Pages are mini-newsletters which Gretchen’s House developed in response to frequently asked questions, parent surveys, and requests for reading materials. They summarize basic developmental issues, our approach to handing each issue in the classroom, and suggestions for families. Speak to your center staff about obtaining copies, or visit our website.



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 and start at 6:00 p.m. Sign up with Heike at 734-327-6126 or email her at heike.hampel@gretchenshouse.com. Upcoming dates:

December 11

January 9

February 5



...because learning should be fun!

Staff News

Alicia Oldham (teacher, Oak Valley) attended the MiAEYC Infant and Toddler Conference in Dearborn in November.

Mentor Teacher Program

In October, Mentor Teachers from our Ann Arbor centers participated in a half-day training on Growth Mindsets. Who are the Mentor Teachers?

Brad Guoan and **Erin Dixon** (Mt. Vernon)

Sandra Canales and **Teresa Bonner** (Mt. Pleasant)

Heidi Hochrein and **Tabby Tyler** (Stadium)

Kelly Hayes and **Stacey Marshall** (WISD)

Allison Rogers, Chelsea Hendrickson and Danielle Wiener (Traver)

Jade Teachey, Pam Preston and Paige Sienko (Oak Valley)

Marie Gaab, Molly Davis, Denise Lechanski and Karen Clark-Cantu (Dhu Varren)

When teachers identify an area in which they need support, they can visit a Mentor Teacher's classroom and talk with them afterward for ideas and resources. This fits well with our goal to get every full-time teacher into another classroom for a morning once a year, to observe and gather information.

Mentor Teachers are selected based on their strong skills and ability to mentor others. Our Mentor Teachers are either HighScope certified or former Teachers of the Year recipients. Many are both! We're so fortunate to have such talented teachers in our programs.