As a university laboratory preschool, the CFDRC is at a great advantage. Interfacing with the early childhood education department has provided countless opportunities for children, university students, faculty, and teachers. Collaboration with faculty is so vital as the science fair demonstrates. Each semester, as part of their core requirements for early childhood teacher preparation, students, under the guidance of Dr. Sudha Swaminathan, plan science experiences for young children. The process begins with Dr. Swaminathan sharing our investigation with her students. Next, her students devise lesson plans pertaining to our investigation, share the plans with the preschool teachers, meet to discuss and modify plans, and finally, execute the science fair. Students conduct the initiation, scaffold, observe, document, and reflect over their lessons. Children benefit greatly as the centers reinforce concepts they are exploring in their classrooms.

This semester, the students created opportunities for inquiry on the topic of BALLS. Children rotated throughout numerous pre-planned centers in small groups while pre-service teachers engaged in scaffolding and assessing children’s experiences. This was followed by a reflection session with their professor.
At the CFDRC, our Toddler class participates in the Investigations Curriculum by investigating Balls. Read an excerpt from The Toddler Room’s weekly newsletter to families. Here, the teachers describe the experiences of their 18 month -2 1/2 year olds as they investigate balls and their properties.

Teachers: Amie Therialut, Carrie Woodward, Julie Garceau

Last week the children completed the construction of their bowling alley, and enjoyed using it throughout the week. They decided that tree blocks would work best for pins, as they easily fell over when a ball was rolled into them. Other options that they tested out included books and cars. They realized that a ball would simply roll over books and make the cars “roll away.” For the snack bar, they made their own menu which consisted of cheeseburgers, salad, pizza, strawberries, and grapes. They have enjoyed ordering and preparing food. They also decided that they would have to wash their bowling balls (which included a spiky red ball, and a bouncy blue ball), with either a washing machine or wipes, so both of these items have been added to the bowling alley as well. In addition to their bowling alley, the children used their sense of touch in order to determine which items inside of a pillow case were balls and which items were not. They were not able to look inside of the cases while feeling for the balls. This was somewhat challenging for them, as they have learned throughout the course of this investigation that various balls can feel very different from one another.

This week the children will be able to examine the insides of balls. They will observe them with the use of magnifying glasses, as well as their own senses, and have the opportunity to record their observations. Later in the week, they will use this new knowledge to see if they can make a ball of their own, given specific materials.
Dr. Sudha Swaminathan is a professor of early childhood education. Her main focus is on math, science, and technology. Each semester, her students in the education program conduct a science fair at our child and family development resource center. Additionally, she has helped the staff at the center develop the digital portfolios which we use at parent-teacher conferences. This week, Dr. Swaminathan spoke with me about the role of technology and preschoolers.

What are some of the advantages of using technology in the preschool classroom?

Dr. Swaminathan defines educational technology as any digital or electronic tool which also serves as a learning/teaching tool. A few examples she offers includes a camera, ipad, computer, and even a tape recorder. The purpose, what is it used for, is what makes it educational. For example, a digital camera can be used to view photos of an activity children took part in earlier. The reflection and conversation surrounding the photograph are the purpose and therefore make it educational.

Are there any disadvantages and if so, what?

Dr. Swaminathan briefly addresses this by saying that there are disadvantages associated with overuse and misuse. She suggests always using good judgment as families and educators. Technology cannot and should not replace interaction with adults and other teachers.

Do you have any advice for families looking to use technology with their children? What constitutes ‘good quality’ technology?

Dr. Swaminathan advises that families scrutinize technology. They must sample it first and make sure it is safe and meets the qualifications of being ‘good’ technology described above. She suggests adults sit with children as they use technology and engage in conversation about it together.
Childhood obesity is a serious medical condition that affects children and adolescents. It occurs when a child is well above the normal weight for his or her age and height. Childhood obesity is particularly troubling because the extra pounds often start children on the path to health problems that were once considered only adult illnesses, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Childhood obesity can also lead to poor self-esteem and depression.

One of the best strategies to reduce childhood obesity is to improve the diet and exercise habits of your entire family. Treating and preventing childhood obesity helps protect the health of your child now and in the future.

Not all children carrying extra pounds are overweight or obese. Some children have larger than average body frames. And children normally carry different amounts of body fat at the various stages of development. So you might not know just by looking at your child if his or her weight is a health concern.

Your child's doctor can help you figure out if your child's weight could pose health problems. Because BMI doesn't consider things like being muscular or having a larger than average body frame and because growth patterns vary greatly among children, your doctor also factors your child's growth and development into consideration. This helps determine whether your child's weight is a health concern.

If you're worried that your child is putting on too much weight, talk to his or her health care provider. He or she will consider your child's individual history of growth and development, your family's weight-for-height history, and where your child lands on the growth charts. This can help determine if your child's weight is in an unhealthy range.

Whether your child is at risk of becoming overweight or currently at a healthy weight, you can take proactive measures to get or keep things on the right track. Schedule yearly well-child visits.

- Take your child to the doctor for well-child check-ups at least once a year. During this visit, the doctor measures your child's height and weight and can predict weight related problems.
- Set a good example. Make sure you eat healthy foods and exercise regularly to maintain your weight. Then, invite your child to join you.
- Avoid food-related power struggles with your child. You might unintentionally lay the groundwork for such battles by providing or withholding certain foods — sweets, for instance — as rewards or punishments. As a general rule, don't use food as a reward or punishment.
- Look for Nutritional tips in the Newsletters to follow. Before you know it we will have fresh local produce to feast on to reap the healthy benefits.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, CDC, CtDPH

Resources

ECSU Video
The Importance of Outdoor Play: http://www.easternct.edu/cece/resources.html

Children’s Nature Network
http://www.childrenandnature.org/

National Initiative for Children’s Health
http://www.nichq.org/resources/resources_for_parents.html
Early this month, Teacher Cynthia DeJesus and Director Niloufar Rezai, presented a session at the Keefe Bruyette Symposium on Math and Science at St. Joseph’s College. The experience provides a wonderful opportunity to share our curriculum with other educators in the field. We found that the people in our session were fascinated with the work done at the CFDRC; many expressed an interest in visiting the Center and learn from us. This is another step towards becoming the model program.

This was Niloufar’s third visit to the Symposium and Cynthia’s second. Teacher Claudia Ahern and Patty Gardner have presented along with Dr. Swaminathan in the past as well. It is an honor to be asked to come back year after year.

Topics we have presented:

- Bees
  What is a bee? What do they do? What are the different types? Why are they important to us? How do they fit into nature? What do they need to live? All about honey. All about hives. Roles of members of the bee family, and so on

- Water
  What is water? What is liquid, solid, gas? Changing states of water. Water cycle. Pollution and water. Where does water come from and how?

- Wings
  Animals with versus without wings. How do wings work? What makes things with wings able to fly? Gravity, motion, Types of habitats for winged versus non-winged animals. Types of shelter and food for winged versus non-winged animals.

- Rain Forest
  The different layers (strata) of the Rain Forest and the animals living in those layers (from below ground to the top layer above trees). Where are the rain forests? Why are they called rain forests?

- Going Green
  Environments and ways to preserve them. What does it mean to Go Green? How can we help? Community gardening. What is soil? Compost? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: What is this REALLY and how can we do these things?

- Other: Please write your idea here

What do YOU want children to Investigate?

As we begin to think about our next investigation to begin in June, we ask that you give us feedback and ideas about possible topics of interest for us to consider at staff meetings. Please use the form below to answer a few questions which will inform us on the topic. We select topics that are unique, different, stretch children’s thinking and their curiosity as well as foster their math, science, and literacy skills. We look for rich topics which are going to provide rich experience as opposed to surface learning. Please fill out below portion and return to Niloufar as soon as you can:

- Bees
  What is a bee? What do they do? What are the different types? Why are they important to us? How do they fit into nature? What do they need to live? All about honey. All about hives. Roles of members of the bee family, and so on

- Rain Forest
  The different layers (strata) of the Rain Forest and the animals living in those layers (from below ground to the top layer above trees). Where are the rain forests? Why are they called rain forests?

- Going Green
  Environments and ways to preserve them. What does it mean to Go Green? How can we help? Community gardening. What is soil? Compost? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: What is this REALLY and how can we do these things?

- Other: Please write your idea here

Please cut and return to Niloufar.
PTO Calendar of Events

April date TBD
March Fitness/Nutrition Workshop lead by Claudia and Dr. Roberts: 1 hour, childcare to be provided, yogurt parfaits to be donated by PTO, sign up required

Wednesday, March 21
PTO Meeting 5:30-6:30

April Date TBD
Family Pot-Luck (nut-free) to be discussed at next meeting

We discussed doing cards and coffee in March but we could move it to correspond to national dates.

Please consider donating your time to support the PTO. Your time makes it possible to host special events at the Center for children, families, and staff.

Kelly, Your PTO President

PTO Story/Pizza Night

In February, the PTO sponsored a story and pizza night at the CFDRC. Teachers participated by retelling and acting out a familiar story. Children and families participated in this interactive experience as they shouted out onomatopoeias at appropriate parts. Later, children and families visited different activity stations set up by classroom teams. The stations were related to our ball investigation! A great evening!

Teachers acting out a story for children and families
Visiting BALL stations.

Advisory Committee

The CFDRC extends an invitation to CFDRC family members who would like to become a member of the Family Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide advice and counsel to the Director on operating policies and procedures as they relate to the Child and Family Development Resource Center.

The community acts as a channel for information and feedback between the CFDRC administration and families. This is not a formal decision-making body and does not have oversight or responsibility for the CFDRC budget.

The committee will meet on the first Friday of every month, beginning on April 6, 2012 from 9:00-10:00am at the Child and Family Development Resource Center.

I encourage you to join this committee. If you have questions or would like to join this committee please talk to Niloufar in person, 465-5270, or rezain@easternct.edu
Also, Please feel free to make Suggestions to the Director in the locked box located at the front of the Center by the Administration Desk.
**2012 Holiday Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holiday</th>
<th>Observed On</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Year’s Day</td>
<td>Monday, January 2, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</td>
<td>Monday, January 16, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln’s Birthday</td>
<td>Friday, February 17, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington’s Birthday</td>
<td>Monday, February 20, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Friday, April 6, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Day</td>
<td>Monday, May 28, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence Day</td>
<td>Wednesday, July 4, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Closed for Staff Professional Development</td>
<td>August 27-31, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>Monday, September 3, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Day</td>
<td>Monday, October 8, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Weekend</td>
<td>Thursday &amp; Friday November 22 &amp; 23 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Holiday</td>
<td>Tuesday, December 25, 2012</td>
<td>Child Center CLOSED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We close at 12:30 for Staff Development the last Friday of each month*

**Weather-Related Closings**

As we head into the winter season, the Center would like to remind you about our closing policy due to inclement weather. In the event of a closing, the Center follows the Eastern Connecticut State University closing schedule. The ECSU weather hotline is 860-465-4444 or 1-800-578-1449. Please call this number for any information related to winter weather closings. You can also find this information by tuning in to WCYT FM 97.7, WDRC AM 1360.

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**Kids’ Fun Run**

**Saturday April 14, 2012  Mansfield Hollow State Park**

Time: 9:30 fun run
Children’s Fun Run at 9:30 AM For Ages 5 And Under (FREE!)

The **Kids Fun Run** is a free event aimed at getting children outdoors, moving, and having fun!!! The CFDRC has been invited by Norma Vivar and The Office of Sustainability to participate by running a small loop she and her team will set up just for the **CFDRC children!** After the run, there will be other activities as well as a FREE picnic for the family. Please consider joining us for the event. Registration (free) is required. Teachers have placed registrations in your mailboxes. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to ask.
Please note all children must be in their classrooms ready to begin the day at 9:00 a.m. daily. Please refer to the Family Handbook for detailed guidelines as it will be enforced.

No Cook Play Dough

Recipe

Ingredients

2 cups flour
3 tbsp cream of tartar
1/2 cup salt
4 tbsp oil
1/2 cup boiling water
food coloring

Method

Mix dry ingredients together. Mix oil, food coloring and boiling water in a separate container. Stir liquid mixture until cool enough to knead. Knead until smooth. If play-dough is too dry, add more water, a little at a time. If play-dough is too crumbly, knead in a small amount of oil. Store in an airtight container.

In Next Month’s Issue >>>

- Spring Conference at CFDRC: Ready, Set, Go!
- Interview with Dr. Trawick-Smith
- Value of Play
- Kindergarten Transition

Topics of interest? Please let us know.