Hello families,

Let me first begin by expressing my sincerest gratitude for accepting me with open arms during my transition into increased leadership here at NCCC. I am definitely learning as I go, so I appreciate your support as well as the support of our incredible teaching teams. I have tried to spend a little time in each classroom as frequently as possible in order to get to know every child and team. Another task I have taken on is to join a committee that plans our Joint Staff Training which is slated to occur on Monday, March 3rd. We will be exploring the theme of Reflection in Practice during our all-day professional development. After an all group breakfast and keynote address by Judy Darling, LMSW, IMH-E @(Ill) (an expert in the field of Reflective Practice) we will be dividing up into breakout sessions focused on topics ranging from reflective inquiry frameworks to an professional panel discussion. We are grateful for your aid in helping make this training possible! Look for some documentation of our findings and discussions in the weeks following the training.

(continues)
Please let me know if you have any questions related to this event or any other ideas you may have!

And on a final note, I have chatted with Julia and all is well with the Koumbassa family! As the temperatures get a bit warmer, we are hoping for a visit from mom and baby Binty.

Warmly,
Kelly

PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

You are invited to join the North Campus Children’s Center Parent Involvement Committee. This is an opportunity to volunteer, take on a leadership role and provide input about our program. Primarily, the group will provide a parent perspective on providing a quality program, and the interest of families. The Parent Committee helps plan family events, teacher appreciation activities and fundraisers. It’s helpful to have representatives from every classroom so we can hear the voices of parents from all ages within our program. The committee meets on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 20 at 5:45 PM.
**More Than Baby Talk**

Early language and communication skills are crucial for children’s success in school and beyond. Language and communication skills include the ability to understand others (i.e., receptive language) and express oneself (i.e., expressive language) using words, gestures, or facial expressions. Children who develop strong language and communication skills are more likely to arrive at school ready to learn. They also are less likely to have difficulties learning to read and are more likely to have higher levels of achievement in school. During the first years of life, children’s brains are developing rapidly and laying the foundation for learning. The interactions that children have with adults influence how children develop and learn. As a result, early childhood educators have a prime opportunity to provide children with interactions that can support children’s growth and development, particularly their language and communication skills.

*UNC Child Development*

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**Do you have yours?**

We are finding that more and more parents are without an access card. **For purposes of security** we request that both parents obtain an access card. In the event that you arrive at the front door without an access card and there would be a person at the desk who is unfamiliar with the families, you would be asked to stop by the front desk and verify who you are and who you are going to pick up or, you could be denied access to the center.

If you do not have a card, please stop by the front desk. You will receive the necessary form and instructions regarding where you will need to go.
Parent Teacher Conferences

We are holding our spring parent teacher conferences beginning in April. This will again give you an opportunity to meet with your child’s lead teacher separate from your normal drop off and pick up times. Teachers will continue their discussion with you regarding your child’s growth and development and share with you any new insights and developments.

Additional information will be forthcoming.
Kid Friendly Baked Fish Sticks

Ingredients
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
1 pound firm-flesh white fish, such as cod, sliced into sticks about 1 inch by 3 inches
1/2 cup whole grain pastry flour (or white whole wheat flour)
1 teaspoon granulated garlic
2 slices whole grain bread (or sub 1 cup whole grain breadcrumbs)
1 teaspoon dried Italian herbs
1 large egg
Olive oil, in a spray bottle or mister (or nonstick vegetable spray)

Directions
Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Salt and pepper the fish sticks. Place the flour on a rimmed plate and season with the garlic, mixing with a fork, and set aside.

Place the bread and herbs in a food processor and pulse until uniform, but not too small. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer the breadcrumbs to a shallow baking dish or rimmed plate and set aside.

Whisk the egg and 1 tablespoon water in a medium bowl. Dredge a piece of fish in the flour, gently shake off excess, and then dip the fish in the egg mixture, then the breadcrumbs, gently pressing into the crumbs. Repeat with the remaining pieces of fish.

Place a metal cooling rack on top of a baking sheet, and mist with olive oil. Place the fish sticks on the rack and bake until the fish is cooked through, about 12 minutes. (For even browning, you can turn the fish over halfway through cooking time and spray the second side with olive oil.)

Total Time: 30 min
Prep: 15 min
Cook: 15 min
Yield: 4 servings
Level: Easy

Do you have a favorite Kid-Friendly recipe? We would love for you to share it with us!

Bring in a copy and give it to Dee at the front desk.
Parking

This is an extremely important reminder to everyone who uses the center parking spaces to drop off and pick up your children. Once again it is becoming extremely dangerous as cars line up, as children run to their cars, as people become impatient, and as people drive too fast. Remember the following:

You may park in any of the spaces in front of the building for a maximum of 30 minutes. During the busiest times of day it is appreciated if you could rotate through these spaces quickly.

You may park in any of the parallel parking spaces further up the road just past the center.

You may park on the other side of the fence on McIntyre Road and enter through the gate to the center entrance.

You may park in either Yellow Lot for free after 5:00 p.m.

You may not line up in your cars waiting to be able to pull into a space in front of the center as it is vacated. The road must be kept open in case emergency vehicles need access. When cars need to pull around those waiting in line, especially if feeling impatient, accidents can happen as cars are driving in the opposite direction.

You may not park on either side of the road itself. All of the same reasons are listed above.

We have witnessed too many close calls and ask that all help in making sure that we keep all of our children safe.

Thank you for your cooperation.

NO SCHOOL

Teacher Training days

- Monday, March 3
- Monday, May 5
“Water First for Thirst!”

Posted by Pamela Bryant, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on November 26, 2013

Earlier this year, the First Lady joined the Partnership for a Healthier America to launch a new effort to encourage people to drink more water. Drink Up is a nationwide effort to inspire Americans to drink more water. And the City of Columbus is taking the First Lady’s message to heart.

People are saying – and drinking – water first for thirst in Columbus, Ohio. In fact, Water First for Thirst! is more than just a message, it is a movement. A movement to make water the easy, appealing and first choice for children and families.

The message began in 2004 as part of a larger project to promote healthy weight in young children – Healthy Children, Health Weights (HCHW). HCHW is a childhood obesity prevention program at Columbus Public Health that promotes a healthy weight in children starting with the youngest age group—birth to 5 years old. Now Water First For Thirst! offers tools to help communities change their message, change what they serve and make a commitment through policy to support those changes.

The message is spreading. For nearly 10 years now, Water First for Thirst! has been promoted locally at child care centers and community based organizations. Posters are seen throughout the school system, in churches, on vending machines around the city, and other venues. This year, the Growing Healthy Kids Columbus Coalition (a local collaborative of over 50 organizations) adopted “Water First for Thirst!” as its 2013 campaign message and has had great success in getting the word out. A 30-second TV spot featuring Health Commissioner Dr. Teresa Long ran on WBNS 10TV and web ads have been running with 10 TV’s Commit to be Fit. The Ohio State University Extension is also using Water First for Thirst! in education for teens across the State, and the Ohio Hospital Association is gearing up to promote Water First for Thirst! to hospital employees as part of their statewide worksite wellness campaign.

Changes are happening to make water the easy choice. Columbus City Schools (the largest school system in the state) updated its vending contracts to allow only water to be sold in beverage vending machines that are accessible to over 50,000 students. Columbus Children’s Parade committed to serving only water at their annual event, involving more than 400 children. The City of Columbus has made changes to vending options and its recreations centers. Other organizations making changes include Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus Urban League, and YMCA.

You can become a Water First for Thirst! partner by learning why water is important, how to change your message, and how to make water the easy choice. Link to web, print and social media tools, sample polices and vending language at http://publichealth.columbus.gov/water-first-tools.aspx.

For more tips and to learn more about how you can help kids get a healthy start to life, visit the Let's Move! Child Care Website.
Water First For Thirst!

Healthier drinks for healthier kids.

**WATER:**
- When your child says, “I’m thirsty,” offer water before any other drink.
- Be a role model...drink water in front of children.
- Have water available at meals and snacks.

**MILK:** Make sure you’ve got the right milk.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk for children 2 years and older.
- Choose whole milk for children ages 12-24 months old.
- Breast milk is best for the first 12 months of life.

**JUICE:** Juice is not a must — even 100% juice has natural sugars and can fill kids up.
Recommendations for 100% juice:
- 4 oz (1/2 cup) or less per day for children 6 months to 3 years.
- 6 oz (3/4 cup) or less per day for children 3 years and older.

Make Water Fun
- Add sliced citrus fruits or berries for flavor
- Put in fresh mint or basil to jazz things up
- Have children decorate their own water cup
Bedtime Tips to Build Good Sleep Habits

It should be no surprise that children with good sleep habits tend to be easier to parent, care for, and teach. In fact, when children in our child care reveal behavior or learning problems, teachers are always sure to ask parents about their child’s sleep habits. More often than not, it turns out the child is trying to function at full throttle with too little sleep. Running low on “zzzzz” is hard enough for grown-ups (as any parent knows all too well). But it’s even harder on kids. Childhood is prime growing time. Physical growth and development (including vital brain processing networks) never occurs faster at any stage of life. It’s a peak learning time, too. Childhood is not the time for kids to be feeling bushed all the time. Adequate sleep nourishes kids so their immune system is stronger, which in turn keeps kids healthier. Learning skills, such as paying attention, listening for details, short-term memory recall, and ability to follow simple instructions develop more easily, too. And there’s no doubt that kids are less cranky and whiny when they have emotional resources replenished through sleep. Even power struggles lessen as children gradually learn to comply with basic social rules. So, it behooves all of us to help kids acquire good sleep habits. Those habits, like all others, are best learned from loving, attentive parents. Naps and bedtime provide teachable moments each and every day. Nap and bedtime rituals and routines should be maintained in every home. Specifics of the routines will and, in fact, should vary from family to family. The rituals should be personal to reflect the uniqueness of the family relationships. Lullabies are a bedtime standard; which one doesn’t matter. Song choice can be a defining element for bonding among family members. They become fertile fodder for warm and even wacky childhood memories. For example, four-year-old Katie’s bedtime features a bath, story, and then singing “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” and the “Mickey Mouse Club Song.” Katie has requested the same two songs every single night for the past 18 months! (Yes, parenting requires supreme patience for endless repetition!) Katie’s mom and dad (known before parenthood as Leonard and Mary) not only sing the same tunes over and over, but they’ve found a way to keep interested. Their duet is sung in 1940s swing-style fashion a la the Andrews Sisters. Who would imagine the odd situations parenting would put you in? Quirky or not, Katie’s bedtime routine works for her family. Katie is drowsy within 15 minutes of hitting the sheets. She’s asleep by 8:30 p.m. at the latest, which allows her to get the 11 hours of daily sleep her growing body needs. To help you create a good bedtime routine for your kids, I’ve listed some basic guidelines below. Please feel free to follow Leonard and Mary’s lead. And add your own personal flare when the spirit moves you.

Determine how much daily sleep your individual child needs. Our library column “Good sleep and bedtime habits nourish kids” will help you determine your child’s needs. Observing your child’s behavior will also give you clues.

- Create a specific routine to follow every bedtime. Naptime routines are usually shorter than bedtime routines.
- Follow your child’s lead in creating bedtime routines. Some children like a bedtime story or a back rub, others don’t. Respond to your child’s natural cues rather than forcing something. The goal is for children to identify their personal sleep cues.
- Clearly communicate and consistently follow the sleep routines you establish. Exceptions to routines should be rare and few, even when you travel.
Establish a specific sequence to bedtime routines so children can learn what to expect. Repeated routines help children recognize environmental cues that signal bedtime. A reasonable routine would be: brushing teeth, then a warm bath, followed by pajama time, story, and then lullaby. A prayer or moment of gratitude can be included, too. Some families create special games, like making wishes on stars or children putting dolls to bed as part of bedtime preparation.

Establish simple, respectful consequences to enforce if a child doesn’t cooperate with the bedtime routine. For instance, if a child won’t put on pajamas willingly, perhaps that night’s story will be missed.

Limit children’s intake of sugar and caffeine, especially in the hours before bedtime. Beverages, like sodas or chocolate milk, aren’t for bedtime.

At least 30 minutes prior to bedtime start a wind down to the evening. Avoid exuberant active play or loud energizing television shows or videos. Action-adventure programs delay sleep rather than foster it. Violent programs can contribute to nightmares or interrupted nighttime sleep.

Create a calming atmosphere prior to bedtime. Play quiet table games, draw together, or play with play dough.

Reduce sources of anxiety. Nervous, scared kids can’t sleep. Children’s imaginations can lead to invented or exaggerated fears. A night light casts a cozy glow. A hallway light left on to shine through a slightly opened door works, too.

Eliminate distractions. Don’t have the television or radio blaring after kids go to bed. Frequent parties and boisterous visitors interfere with kids’ sleep.

Friendly conversations and quiet music can help children relax into sleep. Many kids like the security of knowing others are still awake. They want someone awake keeping an eye out for them. After all, it’s brave for kids to go to sleep. They know that during sleep they are completely vulnerable.

Promote serenity. Avoid loud family arguments, whether between parents or parents and teens. (Not a bad tip for any time of day.)

Ward off loneliness. A doll, stuffed animal, or special blanket is an invaluable sleep aid to many children — the softer and more well loved the better. Some children become particularly attached to a specific pillow, pair of pajamas, or even bed sheets. Trust their instincts and don’t belittle their preferences. Children (like adults) vary widely in their responses to subtle differences in texture, color, and scent of materials.

www.ParentingExchange.com

About the Author — Karen Stephens is director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. For nine years she wrote a weekly parenting column in her local newspaper. Karen has authored early care and education books and is a frequent contributor to Exchange. © Karen
Important Reminders

- Be reminded at pick up time, that you must remain with your child as they exit the building. It creates a potentially dangerous situation for children who run down the hall and dash out the door unattended.

- Parking continues to be an issue. Please when you pick your child up at the end of the day do not linger in the center. There are others waiting for the parking space. Be reminded that it is ONE WAY through the parking area.

Lost and Found

The Center lost and found is located in the closet to the right just inside the front door. Please remember to check this for any lost items. It’s funny how sometimes we don’t know something is lost until we find it.
These long weeks of cold, sometimes messy and often dreary weather stretch longer when active kids are involved. Ann Arbor and its surround areas are rich with places to visit with your family.

**U of M Matthaei Botanical Gardens:** This great nature destination includes 10,000 square foot conservatory, hiking and discovery trails. —1800 N. Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mbg/

**U of M Museum of Natural History and Planetarium:** Visit the state’s largest collection of dinosaur skeletons and displays highlighting Michigan’s prehistoric past. —1109 Geddes Ave, Ann Arbor
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ummnh/visiting

**Leslie Science and Nature Center:** Explore the trails on this 50 acre site and warm up with a visit to the Raptor Center and Critter House. —1831 Traver Rd, Ann Arbor
http://www.lesliesnc.org/

**The Urban Fairy Doors:** Take your child on a hunt throughout downtown Ann Arbor to find the whimsical fairy doors.
http://urban-fairies.com/locationspages/locations.html

**Great Lake Zoological Society Discover Reptile Zoo:** Indoor zoo that features reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, birds and other exhibits. —6885 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor
http://www.glzszoo.org/

**Hands-on Museum:** Includes 250 interactive exhibits to ignite children’s imagination and investigative skills. —220 E Ann St, Ann Arbor
http://www.aahom.org

**The Scrap Box:** A place for “creative recycling”. There is an assortment of loose parts and unique materials that business/manufacturers donate. —581 State Circle, Ann Arbor
http://scrapbox.org/wordpress1/

**Ann Arbor Ice Cube:** Check out public skate times in one of the three ice rinks. —2121 Oak Valley, Ann Arbor
http://www.a2ice3.com/

**Jungle Java:** A jungle-themed indoor play center that caters to children and parents. Play areas are designed to accommodate parents who want to play along with their kids. Parents can also relax with a cup of coffee in the café while the kids play. —3900 Jackson Rd
http://www.junglejavaplay.com/

**Chelsea Tree House:** An indoor climbing are including a play structure with five slides, a toddler area, swinging bridges, and of course a huge Tree House. Indoor play area with full coffee bar featuring Zingerman’s coffee. Homemade, healthy choices. —320 North Main St, Chelsea
http://www.thechelseatreehouse.com/