Ways to Become Involved -

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

There are many ways for family members to become involved at the Fishback Center. We welcome all levels of involvement and many different ways to become involved.

We welcome families to participate in the program as much as desired. All offers of involvement are welcome! How may you become involved? This article highlights a few ways to be involved. However, it is not intended to be all-inclusive; if you have additional ideas for involvement, please let us know.

Communicating with teachers about how your child’s day is going is most welcomed. Knowing the events that have occurred in your child’s life each day helps us understand some of the ways children react to the daily events at school. Keeping two-way communication open, either face-to-face or electronically enriches all of our understanding of what is occurring in the children’s days.

Each classroom is equipped with an observation booth. Family members are encouraged to observe their child in the classroom as often as possible. We feel that

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Director’s News

Reflections on Being a Mentor Teacher

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

This fall semester, I have had the opportunity to return to the classroom as a Mentor Teacher in the Toddler Classroom. I have been out of the classroom for 19 years in an administrative role for 19 years, either working here at SDSU or at Central Michigan University as the director of the laboratory school. I would like to take a moment to reflect on my experiences this semester.

Being back, working with children, teacher candidates, and families, has been very inspiring and has renewed my passion for my work in early childhood education. I have thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the children on a daily basis and being able to see their individual growth, and relationship growth. I have also thoroughly enjoyed visiting with family members and talking with them about their children and about child development. Changes in children are so exciting!

I have also been energized by the time that I have had working with the Toddler teacher candidates this semester. Being part of their individual daily growth as professionals has been so rewarding. Watching and guiding their teaching decisions, being part of their discoveries and learning, and watching them build relationships with children and family members is truly part of my days this fall semester that I will miss next spring.

I am grateful for the time that I have been able to spend with children, parents, and teacher candidates. I have always spent time in the observation booths, yet next spring, you will see me there more often!

Finally, being in the classroom has helped me see aspects of the Mentor Teacher role in a new light and the insights I have discovered will make me a better administrator in the future.
observation booths provide family members with a unique opportunity to see their children interacting with others outside of the family. Please plan to observe at least once per semester.

We love to have family members visit the classrooms. Teachers often ask family members to help with classroom activities, such as face painting, sharing a talent during group time, or discussing a topic or occupation. Because we have such tremendous student support in our classrooms, we do not ask for family involvement on a daily basis, but you are always welcome to join us. If you have an idea of something you would like to share with your child’s class, please talk with your child’s teacher know about your idea.

“The Fishback Center teachers welcome all levels of involvement and many different ways to become involved. We welcome family members to participate in the program as much as desired.”

Teachers often plan walking field trips and at times driving fields. On walking field trips, teachers may ask for family members to come along to hold children’s hands and to walk with the children. On field trips that need transportation, teachers often ask family members to drop off and pick up their children at the field trip site. On riding field trips, we need parents to help us by staying with the class during the field trip. As adults, we find the field trips just as educational for us as they are for the children.

Because of heavy use of the children’s books from our resource library, we are always in need of quality, gently used, or new children’s books to add to our collection. You may bring in book donations at any time. If you desire, you can make a note inside the front cover of donated books.

As teachers plan for the curriculum, they may have requests regarding preparation that may be completed at home or at school. Home helpers may help complete curriculum projects or provide collected items to bring into a classroom, like recyclable objects to be used in classroom activities and projects. Look for home helper requests in the weekly classroom newsletters.

We are always looking for ways to expand the snack menu to include recipes of foods you typically eat at home, recipes that are family traditions or from your family culture. We are seeking recipes that are moderate to easy in complexity and that could be eaten in snack portions. If you have a recipe that you would like to share within the preschool labs, please contact Deb Schaefer, our cook.

We are collecting used ink cartridges and old cell phones as a fundraiser for the lab school. We have collection stations around campus and invite family members to help us. We turn in the recycled ink cartridges and cell phones to the Funding Factory. Then we are able to exchange points for goods or to receive money. This fall we have raised $430.00 in three shipments of recycled products. If you have any printer ink cartridges or old cell phones that you would like to donate, we would be happy to recycle them for you.

We also collect Hy-Vee receipts as a preschool fundraiser. When we have $150,000 of totaled receipts, we are able to deposit them at the Hy-Vee office. In exchange for $150,000 in receipts, HyVee gives the Fishback Center $1,000. We use this money for children’s tuition scholarships. Each year, the center provides at least 2 scholarships per preschool classroom, if needed and the funds offset this scholarship program. Please keep your receipts and turn them in to us to assist with the scholarship program.

As a way to provide additional security, we are looking for volunteers to sit at the front desk and be our greeter to visitors by welcoming them into the school, helping direct people to the correct locations, and keep a list of visitors. If interested in helping greet people, please let your child’s teacher.

We always welcome donated children’s clothing that your child may not need anymore. We have accidents, spills, messy art activities, etc. that require the use of extra clothing - including pants, shirts, socks, and underwear. Since it is SD and the weather is unpredictable, we also welcome extra hats, gloves, boots, snow pants, coats, and scarves.

Finally, the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) has at least one representative from each school class. It serves in a family advisory capacity rather than a governing board for the center. It functions as a reviewer of the Parent Handbook, a provider of formal feedback, and a developer ideas and projects for improvement. There are times when parent committees are forms to work on specific projects led by the PAC. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please discuss your interest with your Parent Advisory Council representative or your child’s teacher.
**Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Members:**

Kate Hieberger, Toddler Lab,  
Katherine.Hieberger@sdstate.edu
Amanda Mitchell, 3 & 4 AM Lab,  
Amandamitchell@mac.com
Ting Ting He, 3 & 4 AM Lab,  
TingtingHe@msn.com
Laura Martin/Craig Martin, 3 & 4 AM Lab,  
Laura.northdakota@gmail.com,  
martin.craig@gmail.com
Jennifer Lacher-Starace, 4 & 5 AM Lab,  
691-6199,  
Jennifer.lacher-starace@sdstate.edu
Becky Degen, 4 & 5 AM Lab, 691-4338  
Becky.Degen@daktronics.com
Willie Harmon & Flora Harmon, 3 & 4 PM Lab  
Willie.Harmon@sdstate.edu  
Flora.Harmon@sdstate.edu
Jessica Anderson, 3 & 4 PM Lab  
jekoelln@yahoo.com
Toni Wainman, 4 & 5 PM Lab, 695-1891  
contacttoni@gmail.com
Kevin Sackreiter/Heidi Tomek Sackreiter, 4 & 5 PM Lab,  
Kevin.Sackreiter@sdstate.edu and  
Heidi.Sackreiter@nsu.edu
Jessica Huyck, 4 & 5 PM Lab, jessicahuyck@swiftel.net
Kate Heiberger, Kindergarten Lab,  
Katherine.Hieberger@sdstate.edu

**Calendar of Events**

**Nov. 6th & 7th – Lifetouch Picture Retakes for SDSU Preschool**

**Place** – Gathering Space  
**Time** – Wednesday and Thursday, During the Day  
If you would like your child’s picture re-taken, please let your mentor teacher know your request and pictures will be retaken on Wednesday and Thursday.

**Nov. 11th – Veteran’s Day Holiday – No School**

**Nov. 14th – Priscilla Eitel Concert**

**Place** – Lincoln Musical Hall  
**Time** – 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM  
Priscilla Eitel, who was a member of the first preschool class of the SDSU Lab School, will be performing in concert for the children and families of the Fishback Center. She is an accomplished harpist. Please join us for the wonderful concert!

**Nov. 17th – Fishback Center Supporting the Lady Jacks.**

**Place** – Frost Arena -  
**Time** – 2:00 PM  
Families will gather at the entrance of the Frost Arena Gym to cheer on the Lady Jacks as they enter onto the floor. They will be playing Northern Iowa. Look for more information and vouchers for tickets through your child’s Mentor Teacher.

**Nov. 18-26 – SDSU Preschool Parent-Teacher Conferences**

**Place** – Throughout the Center -  
**Time** – Please sign up for Conference Times with your Teacher Candidate

**Nov. 27 – 29th – Thanksgiving Holiday Break – No School**

**Dec. 3rd – Celebration of Learning Reception – 5 – 7 PM**

**Dec. 5th – Last Day of SDSU Preschool Fall Semester**

**Dec. 18 – Last Day of SDSU Kindergarten Fall Semester**

**Parent Advisory Council News:**

**By Jennifer Lacher-Starace**

In keeping with the Center’s declaration (see page 1) that this is the year of outreach, the Parent Advisory Council has been thinking outwardly about the status of education in the larger Brookings community.

In particular, we are excited and curious about plans to build a new elementary school in Brookings, and at our first meeting of the year, we were glad to hear from Kay Cutler that the SDSU Early Childhood Education program is working with the Brookings School District as partners in the design for the students and teachers who would be served by this new facility.

Beginning last spring, Sue Brokmeier (SDSU kindergarten teacher), Andy Stremmel (department head), and Kay Cutler (Center director) have been involved in conversations about the new K-3 school to include a laboratory-experience for teacher candidates. No decisions have been made. This fall Dr. Stremmel and Dean Thorngren visited Maplewood Richmond Heights School District in St. Louis, along with two administrators and a school board member from the Brookings School District. The Maplewood Richmond Heights School serves as a partner primary elementary setting for faculty and teacher candidates at Webster University and are also using Reggio-inspired practices/inquiry based-learning.

What might this mean for Brookings and for SDSU? It seems that only time will tell, having an open communication system and ongoing dialogue can only benefit everyone involved. Incorporation inquiry-based learning at other levels of learning may look differently and ongoing discussions about what might facilitate future inquiry-based learning experiences in the new school environment have been part of the design process.

It is an exciting time of growth and change for our children. We know how important the early years of school are, and as parents at the Fishback Center, we support the inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning that our children experience every day. Might our faculty and our teacher candidates be partnered with K-3 mentor teachers in the community who also support this approach? It seems like a “win-win” situation to us!

The real first step is the special bond issue vote to be held on Tuesday, Nov. 12. Assuming that passes, we hope that the school district will continue to work with SDSU to promote quality education for our children. We look forward to ongoing dialogue, and as a Parent Advisory Council, we will actively seek opportunities to involve families at the Fishback Center in this conversation.
Scholastic Book Fair – Benefits of Reading

Feb. 3rd to Feb. 7th, 2014
At the beginning of February, the Fishback Center for Early Childhood Education will host a Scholastic Book Fair. It will be set up in the Gathering Space for the week. There will be books geared toward children ages 1–6 years, and some for adults, such as cookbooks. The sales from the books will benefit the center’s library.

Team Member Corner – Who is Flora Harmon?

Flora Harmon is the SDSU Preschool the Mentor Teacher for the 4 & 5 Afternoon Lab, she was born and raised in the wonderful city of Houston, TX! Growing up in Houston was a great experience, it is a very large diverse city (the 4th largest city in the US) and because of that she was able to meet many people and learn about a lot of cultures. She is the youngest of four children and (as my mom would say) the most adventurous! After Flora graduated high school in Houston, she attended the University of Texas at Arlington. After a year at UT she transferred and completed my undergraduate education at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, TX where she received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work. Flora decided to continue her education and attended the University of Chicago, where she received a Master’s degree in Social Service Administration with a specialization in Schools. In Chicago, she embraced and learned how much she love education and working with students. Also in Chicago, she met her wonderful husband CJ (aka “Willie”). They have two beautiful children Will (age 3) and Olivia (age 1). She loves working with children and believes that all children are gifts to be cherished, nurtured, and encouraged to be the best person they can be. She also believes that every child has wonderful talents to offer to the world and that with the right support and guidance they can be inspired to use those talents for the good of their community and environment. For hobbies, she enjoys running and cycling and she also enjoy the arts (music, art, theatre, and fashion). Flora continuously embraces her creative side and hopes that is what she can encourage my students do this year, which is to appreciate academics and embrace creativity.

Priscilla Eitel, Harpist and Member of the First Preschool Class, will Hold Concerts in the Peterson Recital Hall

Nov. 14th, 2014 at 9:00 am & at 1:00 pm

Priscilla Eitel contacted Kay Cutler and Laura Gloege last year when she was part of a creative writing class. She told us that she had been part of the first class of preschoolers in the spring of 1929 and wanted to write an article about her memories, as well as the laboratory school’s history and its current impact on the Early Childhood Education majors. Over the course of the 2012 summer and last year, Priscilla researched land grant universities’ role in establishing laboratory schools, as well as exploring all that SDSU had in its archive regarding the SDSU laboratory school. She recalled her memories and shared her pictures of the 1929 May Day celebrations in which she was the junior May Day Queen presiding over the event with SDSU’s May Day Queen.

Priscilla studied music and became a faculty member in music at two universities – teaching harp at the University of Michigan and at the University of Montana. She was married to Butler for 62 years. He was a member of the Army and was the conductor of the Air Force Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. She has three grown children, Sylda, Beth, and David. In their retirement, she and Butler moved back to Brookings. Her children are living in different parts of the US.

This week on Thursday, Nov. 14th at 9:00 am and at 1:00 pm in the Peterson Recital Hall of the Lincoln Music Hall, she will give concerts for the children and family members. Please come and join in the festivities!