Center’s Declaration of Intent

Wellbeing is the focus for the year.

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

Each year the Fishback Center teaching team develops a Declaration of Intent for the center. It helps us focus our work for the year.

This year’s Declaration of Intent is ‘We declare this year to be a year of promoting wellbeing of children, families, and ‘gli insegnanti’ (the group of adults in the center)’.

The word, wellbeing, can incorporate many different aspects into its definition. We have studied wellbeing from a Pistoia-inspired perspective as Donatella Giovannini, the Pedagogista for the 3-5 year old schools in Pistoia, Italy, has written extensively about the concept of wellbeing in the book, Bambini.

When Laura Gloege, Amy Ballou, and I were in Pistoia in 2012, Donatella spoke on the concept of wellbeing. I would like to share some of what she shared with us about the concept of wellbeing. Donatella said, "Without a basis of wellbeing, there’s...

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Director’s News

Fall Update

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

This year, time has moved very fast. Perhaps it’s just a sign of getting older, but it seems that time is not a constant – it keeps moving faster. Here is an update on the new members of the teaching team and projects or center work for the fall.

This fall, we have four new teachers joining the center. Jesse Foss and Kayla Bartkoski are the center’s Kindergarten Teacher and Associate Teacher in the Kindergarten. Dan Stluka is the center’s 4 & 5 Morning Preschool Teacher, and Amy Ballou is the center’s 3 & 4 Afternoon Preschool Teacher. Please say hi, and introduce yourself to them!

We continue to work in the center’s online NAEYC Accreditation portfolios. It is a long, long process that has been helped greatly by Jennifer Beller, our new secretary in the area. Jen is present in the center in the afternoons and soon will be at the front desk (we are working on installing a computer for her to use while at the front desk). We also now have two work studies, Molly Forst and Ashley Blomendaal, who will be working in the center in the mornings. Please help me in welcoming them to the center too!

In the last three years, the University has been moving towards a Decentralized Budget Plan. This July, the university began its implementation. As it begins, the Fishback Center and ECE Area are forming a planning committee to work with how the Decentralized Budget Plan will be affecting the Fishback Center. I have asked the Parent Advisory Council Members to select two members to sit on the planning committee. If there are others who are interested in being part of this planning committee, please let me know.

Have a great beginning to winter and happy holidays!
no real possibility for the growth, for development – this applies to children, families, and teachers alike. And we are talking about wellbeing in all senses, so wellbeing in terms of relationships and of health, but also cognitive wellbeing. Wellbeing will create a situation in which it is possible for children to open their minds because they have this foundation of wellbeing in relationships, in groups, and in the environment that they find themselves. It means for the children, it meets to be recognized, that their needs, their physical requirements are recognized and are met. So it means that we are listening to the children's bodies."

Then she began talking about not only wellbeing for the children, but everyone in the center and pointed out how relationships with children are interconnected to relationships with adults in the center. She said, "But wellbeing also means getting on well with the other people. So that means getting on well with the other children and the adults. Wellbeing is also important with the adults because if there is not a good collaborative relationship with the adults then this will in some way influence the relationships with the children."

Next she noted the relationship between ideas of wellbeing and responsibility. She said, "So, wellbeing in our approach is linked to care, to looking after the children. What does it mean to "look after" somebody? Looking after someone in the past was typically connected to, perhaps, to physical needs, to cleaning needs of the children – to keeping them clean. Whereas, in its deepest sense, looking after means paying attention and listening to one's emotional life, to respecting them, to taking of your relationship. It's a responsibility that we all have to each other. So, care is always linked to responsibility. We can only open ourselves to life if someone is taking care of us."

In relation to the responsibility, she noted what that responsibility looks like. She said, "So, taking care of somebody else, in terms of putting your own needs aside and listening to and respecting somebody else is the real basis of wellbeing."

Then she expanded the idea of wellbeing from relationships with others to our relationship with the environment and our responsibility with the environment. She stated, "We are not just talking about taking care of other people, but also taking care of our surrounding environment. Within this care, there is reflection and thought. So, it's important that we are creating an environment where everyone is feeling accepted and that they are taken care of for who they are."

Practicing wellbeing creates an inclusive environment and that everyone who enters this space holds responsibility for creating it has depth. We have a shared responsibility to each other through caring for the environment and including everyone here.

Finally, she brought her definition to focus on teachers by saying, "So taking care means – taking care of your environment, taking for your documentation and how you put it up, how you greet your colleagues, how you speak to the families. It’s all about different aspects of caring. ...Wellbeing should not be some blanket word that we use, but it should be used knowing that it’s about the responsibility, about the relationships, and about the caring for other people."

Of course, our reflections here about wellbeing are in the context of a community and are subjective. So, the wellbeing and care for one person connects to the wellbeing and care for another."

So, this is the definition of wellbeing that the center teaching team would like to offer you and is the one that we are working from in order to focus activities to form our center into an inclusive, welcoming place for all to grow and learn.

Parent Advisory Council – Teacher Appreciation Events

The Parent Advisory Council planned two Teacher Appreciation Events for the teachers. They planned a meal for the Kindergarten teachers during parent-teacher conferences and an appreciation breakfast for all the teachers (Preschool, Kindergarten, and Out of School Time) for Nov. 14th. THANK YOU to all the parents whose donations make this event possible each semester! If you didn't get to participate this fall, another event is planned for April 2015.
Parent Advisory Council Members:

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Please feel free to contact any member of the Parent Advisory Council to discuss an issue, or advocate for an idea.

Parent Advisory Council members write the Parent Advisory News column. If you have a topic to suggest, please contact your Parent Advisory Council Representative.

Calendar of Events

Nov. 14th – Teacher Appreciation Breakfast
Thank you to the Parent Advisory Council for planning this event and thank you to families who helped contribute. It was much appreciated.

Nov. 17th – 3 & 4 AM Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov. 18th – 3 & 4 PM Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov. 19th – 4 & 5 AM Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov. 20th – 4 & 5 PM Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov. 24th – Toddler Parent Teacher Conferences
Place – Throughout the Center & Throughout the Day
Schedule Specific Times with Your Child’s Teacher

Dec. 2nd – Celebration of Learning Reception
Place – Throughout the Center
Time – 5 to 7 PM
Celebration of Learning Reception – visit the children’s exhibits throughout the center to see what & how the children have been learning this semester.

Dec. 4th – Last Day of Preschool for Fall Semester
Dec. 17th – Last Day of Kindergarten for Fall Semester
Jan. 12th – First Day of Kindergarten, Spring Semester

Parent Advisory Council News: November is National Adoption Month

Heidi Sackreiter, Ed. D.

One can become a parent in many different ways. Everyone has stories about how their family was created or how it changed. And that is part of the fantastic uniqueness that parents, caregivers, and teachers should encourage young children to understand and celebrate. November is National Adoption Month. Because my husband and I adopted our two children, this month is certainly important to us. While we reflect on our adoption journey often, especially during our children’s birthday months and when we recognize the anniversary of their finalizations (when they legally became members of our family), this month provides us and other families the opportunity to share our experiences.

Over the past six years, we have witnessed various opinions about our family. Most of these have been positive and supportive. On occasion, though, there have been times when questions or comments have been tossed at us to which we do not readily feel comfortable replying, especially to complete strangers. And now that our children are older and more aware of people’s comments, we as parents and professional educators believe it is necessary to address these questions in a manner that helps others to better understand adoption.

One of the most common questions asked to us (especially since the addition of our youngest child) is “Are they brother and sister?” or “Are they really brother and sister?”. Our son and daughter are brother and sister. They share a home, experiences, love, and parents, and behave like any siblings might. What is meant, of course, by this question, is if they are biologically related. But for our children to have to wonder whether or not they are a real family just because they might not fit the family design that most people think of troubles us. No child should have to doubt if he or she is part of a genuine family.

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Looking Ahead – Center Security Updates Proposal

Kay Cutler, Ph. D.

This fall, Dan Stluka and I wrote a grant proposal for security updates through the Lowe’s Toolbox for Education. Last year the Parent Advisory Council, the members of the University’s Emergency Management Team had a series of meetings to develop and refine a security proposal for the center. The total amount of renovations and upgrades proposed was $87,511.44. The amount already raised from Parent Advisory Council fundraising and family donations is $3,000. So, the proposal requested $84,511.44. The needed renovation and equipment included:

1. reducing sight-lines by adding window coverings and entrance one-way vinyl
2. securing entry into the center area by adding an entry wall (back entrance), upgrading cameras and a card entry system
3. increasing communication by adding an intercom, a panic button system, and flexible phone system, and
4. increasing secure space by adding secure doors between classrooms and observation booths.

I am not sure when we will hear back from Lowe’s regarding the funding status of this grant proposal. The local Lowe’s store manager, Keith Dentlinger, is very supportive of this proposal, as is Gary Thomas, the Hillcrest Elementary School Principal.

I will let everyone know about the proposal when I hear from Lowe’s. Until then, keep your fingers crossed and support Lowe’s!

Parent Advisory Council News – November is National Adoption Month –

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Another thing many wonder about is our children’s birthmothers. We usually keep this information private when talking with those outside of our family. We realize that some people are curious about why a woman chooses to place her baby with someone else. The reasons why birthparents choose adoption are varied; while there are some stereotypes about birthmothers, no one should assume the reasons why.

What should be understood is that these women (and sometimes men) made a huge decision, one that is hard to comprehend because it is so complex and emotional. But they chose something different for their baby that they felt would be the best path. These women did not “give up” a child for adoption…they chose adoption. They placed a child with a family (often times a family they were able to personally select). They entrusted others to be parents to their baby when for whatever reason, they felt ill-prepared to do so. We do not view this as “giving up” on something but rather an amazing, selfless decision.

While some comments seem nosy at first, we realize that these things are said because some people know very little about adoption and how adoptions work. This is also an important lesson for those who will work with children in the future. In my K-8 social studies methods course, I have a similar discussion with the pre-service teachers when talking about adoption-friendly language while studying a unit on cultural diversity and acceptance. It is an eye-opening conversation, and it is my hope that these new teachers feel more prepared to talk about adoption, should they need to in the future.

Adoption has been a tremendous experience for us. Our babies did not grow in my tummy and they do not have my husband’s physical features, but they are absolutely and forever ours. Like any child, they are precious gifts, and their entrance into our family has taught us so much about life, love, and the diversity that we should all appreciate.