DIRECTOR’S DESK
Hello CDL families! We are well into our spring semester with our practicum students and I must say we have had a great first round of lead teaching from the first group! I am really looking forward to the next round.

I would like to again send a warm welcome to our newest Child Development Supervisor, Krysten Jones! Krysten will ‘officially’ start her duties as supervisor on March 16. A staffing change that will be approaching us in West during March will be with Christina, our Assistant Teacher. Christina is hired as ‘extra help’ at the university, and will be reaching her maximum amount of hours (per HR) that she is able to work before the end of March. The ITT West classroom still has Leigha, serving as an Assistant Teacher, and Tena, serving as a teacher’s aid; both working about 20-25 hours per week.

On February 7, we had a Parent Advisory Board meeting. Minutes were emailed out, but in case you did not get a chance to review these, a highlight from the meeting was discussing an intense emergency preparedness training the CDL staff went through in December - ALICE training. Some points from the meeting:

- ALICE = Alert; Lockdown; Inform; Counter; Evacuate
- Should there be an active shooter in the building – the ALICE training helped the CDL staff have better tools and information in how to react in an emergency situation.
- The staff completed 6 different scenarios/simulations in the CDL. These simulation experiences were very helpful and provided a lot of learning.

Safety of the children and adults in the CDL is a primary concern, and the staff continue to have ongoing discussion at staff meetings, Child Development Faculty Meetings, and continued dialogue with the NIU police and emergency response planners.

Our Kindergarten Readiness workshop is scheduled for Monday, March 6 at 3:45-4:45 in Gabel Hall 146. This workshop is open not only to our kindergarten-bound families, but to any family who would like to attend! We are excited for Kristi and Jamie to be leading this discussion topic, and I’m sure you will walk out with good information.

As a reminder, Spring Break is approaching us the week of March 13-17. Enrollment is complete for this week. If you are traveling (or just relaxing and staying at home), I hope everyone has a great week!

Best of luck in the remainder of your semester!

Lisa Schmidt
Co-Director for Operations
Greetings Preschool Families,

We first want to thank our two lead teachers, Erin and Jasmine, for all of their hard work and for a fun four weeks! We are very excited to have Jackelene start her lead teaching experience and look forward to seeing what she has in store for our classroom.

We have been very active outside this past month. We have had few beautiful weather days and have spent some time outside. While we have been outside, the children have taken an interest in using several shovels and digging in our garden area. While digging in the dirt, the children have found several worms. We observed what they look like and how they move.

This month has been very busy with many activities throughout our days. We have been invited again this spring to “Storytime” at the literacy center here in Gabel. These students are taking a literacy class and are practicing their skills with the children. They typically take turns reading to the group and then read individually or in small groups. They will put on puppet shows later in the semester. We have had several stories read to us. These stories include Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Corduroy, and several others.

We have also had nursing students visit our classroom. While they were here, they helped us sort foods into different categories and talked about which foods we can eat on a daily basis and which foods we should not.

We also have several new toys that have been added to our classroom. One thing the children had an interest in was our new ramps. We tried several items to see how they would move down the ramp. Since our playground has been muddy due to the weather, we have gone on several walks, both indoor and outdoor, and have used the trampoline and as part of our gross motor play.

We also want to welcome our new classmate Bilsi, who is transitioning from ITT West. We are excited to have him in Preschool!

As a reminder, with the weather changing so much, please make sure that your child has jackets, mittens and/or gloves, snow pants, boots, hats, etc. Also, please make sure your child’s items are labeled. Thank you!

Lastly, congratulations to Maddy and her family on the birth on her new baby sister Joselyn Marie Guzzaldo born 02/27/17.

Sincerely,

Kat, Kristi, Jamie, and Sam
Happy March ITT East Families!

We have been having so much fun in our classroom, especially on campus walks. Recently, the weather has been really nice out and we have taken advantage of this opportunity by exploring new places to play on campus. On several walks we have stopped at the MLK Commons to have a dance party as well as visiting new grassy areas to play with the parachute and balls to enhance their gross motor skills. Along with that, on cold days we have stopped by our famous ramp (between Gable and Graham Hall) to get our “wiggles” out along with providing various gross motor activities in our classroom, such as the rainbow mat, tunnels, climber and textured balls. We also want to welcome our new friend Marquise and his family to our classroom!

The children have found a great interest in the various hats, bug specimens and our new giant foam blocks! We have noticed the children devising ramps, making houses and knocking down towers with our new blocks! The teachers in the room are, in turn, facilitating this role play through extending and enhancing their play experiences through intentionality in emergent curriculum development, supported by their observations of the children’s interactions, interest and cues.

Thank you to our first round of lead teachers Cayla and Demone. We had so much fun making our Family Leaf pages, the children were able to enhance their creativity and imagination, fine motor, and social/emotional developments during this fun Parent Community Involvement. Thank you to ALL the families who participated in decorating their Family Leaf. Demone and Cayla will be incorporating this fun book in our classroom soon.

We also would like to welcome our second lead teachers Megan and Alexandra. They will be teaching for the next four weeks. We are really excited to see their inventive and exciting activities. Please stop by to join us during our activities!

Please make sure that your child still has plenty of warm clothing for outside play; including snow pants, boots, waterproof gloves and hats. Only if the temperature is below 15 degrees with the wind chill, or if it is raining, will we stay inside. There are no other weather-related restrictions for the children to be outside at this time of year.

Thank you!
Sincerely,

Clariisa, Christy P., Natala Lee & Elena
Hello ITT West Families,

We would like to thank our first two lead teachers, Emily and Shannon, for all of their hard work and engaging activities over these past four weeks. We are excited to have our next two lead teachers, Magaly and Amanda, start their lead teaching and we can’t wait to see what they have planned.

Throughout the month of February, the children were very engaged with art activities and sensory play. We expanded their interest by incorporating tinfoil, bubble wrap, and Mr. Bubbles and sand into our play. Below, you can see Clara and Ingrid engaging in bubble wrap and paper towel tube painting. They’re using their fine motor skills to control their hand movements while painting.

Due to the weather we have had this past month, we’ve gone on multiple walks because of our playground being too wet and muddy. Our walks have consisted of going to the huskie hill, the Holmes Student Center, and walking by construction sites. The hills have not been as wet as our playground, so we use our gross motor skills chasing each other up and down the hill. We see many huskie buses on our walks and we begin to sing ‘The Wheels on the Bus.’ When singing this song, we ask each child what they do on the bus to add some personalization to a popular song in our classroom.

Lastly, we would like to wish Bilsí the best of luck in Preschool! We have enjoyed our time with him in ITT West, and know that he will have just as much fun in Preschool!

Sincerely,

Krysten, Ecila, Christina, Leigha, Tena
Play with Free Stuff: No Batteries Required!

By Toni Sturdivant, NAEYC Blogs for Families

You can’t walk down the toy aisle without seeing numerous toys that light up, do tricks, or play music. It seems like these digital-age toys are the latest and greatest for children; however, this may not actually be the case. The problem with toys like this is that they may be good at what they do, but that’s all they can do!

For instance, a toy cell phone with buttons that produce responses can be a fun way for your child to pretend to talk on his own phone, but its function is so specialized that it limits your child’s ability to imagine other uses. By contrast, a rectangular piece of cardboard from an old box can be a cell phone, a remote control, a toy boat or car, a doll’s bed—even a shopping list. A piece of recycled cardboard is an open-ended material. Open-ended materials have an infinite number of uses, limited only by your child’s imagination. By giving your child recycled, open-ended materials to play with, not only are you fostering her creativity and problem-solving skills, but you are saving money, as well.

Here are some easy-to-find items that can be used as toys:

**Toilet paper and paper towel rolls** - From binoculars to towers to bowling pins, there are many things that can be created with these cardboard cylinders.

**Boxes** - Everyone jokes that babies like the box more than the toy that comes in it. Why not make the box the toy! Children can play inside boxes, create forts with them, use them for cribs for their baby dolls, and much more.

**Egg cartons** - Children like to collect things. An egg carton serves as the perfect place to sort a collection of pebbles by size or buttons by color. It can be a swimming pool for a small doll or a roof for a house built of blocks. The possibilities are endless.

**Plastic bottles** - They’re musical instruments. They’re cylindrical blocks, baseball bats, treasure holders, and other things we can’t begin to predict.

There are many, many items you dispose of every day that could be perfect toys for your young child. The next time you’re in the toy aisle and are tempted by the flashing lights and talking teddy bears, think about checking your recycling bin and introducing an item with the potential to be whatever your child imagines.

Toni Sturdivant, MA, is a professional learning specialist for the City of San Antonio’s Pre-K 4 SA initiative. She is also the mother of two imaginative girls, both under 4.

This Blog can be seen at: http://families.naeyc.org/blog/play-free-stuff-open-ended-materials