



March 2022 Newsletter



Spring is Coming!

The teachers at Greenbelt Children's Center enjoy the opportunity to help the children discover the changes of each season. Just imagine what it must be like to watch the beautiful miracles of springtime through the eyes of a young child! We hope that everyone takes some time to celebrate the season of Spring with your child! Go visit the library, the zoo, or a museum, or go to a park – everyone plays! Hoping these activities will be safe to resume as Covid rates continue to drop.



March Units

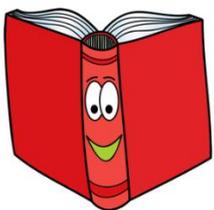
This month the children will be learning about Things That Move, Engineering, Babies, Museums, Community Helpers, and the people who work there, and more.

We hope that all families are faithfully buckling their child in the back seat of vehicles with the appropriate child seat to keep all of our little friends safe.

We believe it's important to introduce the children to the world of work through the next unit, **Community Helpers**. Parents, you are sincerely invited to participate by visiting (virtually), the classroom to talk about your occupation (or a related one). We had great virtual visits last year from parents. A suggestion for sending in "hands on" items to show the class, along with the virtual visit, makes the experiences more concrete for young children.

For example, painter: paintbrushes and rollers; accountant: adding machine with tape and office supplies; nurse/doctor: stethoscope and flashlight, etc. **If you would like to participate, please arrange a date and time with your child's teachers.**

Throughout the month, we will provide opportunities for the children to try out different roles from the world of work through dramatic play experiences. We will also turn our dramatic play centers (aka House Corners or Imagination Centers) into post offices, grocery stores, a hair salon, hospital, farmer's market, etc.



LENDING LIBRARY, Let's Hit Our Goal!

Remember to read at least **10 books per month** from the GCC Lending Library! We have been not quite consistently reaching our goal for each classroom each month. The goal requires that every child in class meets the target. We strive for this important goal because children benefit greatly when parents read to them at home. This activity helps increase vocabulary and concept/content knowledge, important for school & life!



Thirty years ago, Hart & Risley's seminal research (reported in *Meaningful Differences*) uncovered what's come to be known as the "word gap"—the startling gulf between the quality and frequency of adult-child conversations in some households versus others. (Source: Brookes Publishing Co.) As you might imagine, the children immersed in environments with richer conversational opportunities came to school better ready to learn. More recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a policy statement urging pediatricians to encourage parents to read aloud to their children (**Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice**):

"Reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development and strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development, which, in turn, builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime."

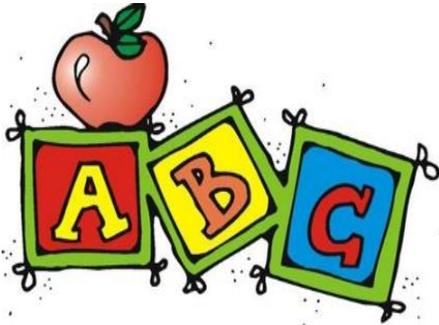
This explains why our lending library participation rates are important to us at GCC. Remember, classrooms can't earn incentives if *even ONE family does not meet the required number of ten books*. Please make sure *your family* helps meet the classroom goal each month!



March 13 marks the two-year anniversary of the closing of everything, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. It looks like the surge may be lessening and we look forward to the eventual return to normal. As mandates are being lifted, it's important to remember that our children are still very vulnerable. Reminder that our local health department has not changed mandates since our last update and is more restrictive than the state. There is no vaccine for children under five yet, to protect them. We will be keeping our policies for health and safety in place until we feel safe to lift them here at GCC. The one policy that will be relaxed: sheet and blanket for rest time may stay on children's cots for the week and sent home on Fridays for laundering.

When we reopened with 6 children in August 2020, we weren't certain our program would survive. Our capacity is 60, and approaching capacity now, with wait lists, especially for children who are 2.5 years old. Our staffing is costing more than in pre-pandemic years because classes can't be combined at early morning or end of the day, pre-pandemic. Each class must be staffed for longer hours. We are grateful to the dedicated faculty who bravely returned before vaccines were even available. We continue to offer high quality care and education to our community, when so many early childhood programs closed permanently or in danger of closing due to staffing shortages. There is a staffing crisis like never before, and it's the same for public schools. This nationwide crisis will take time and funding to solve.





ADVOCACY

The first week of March is the Public Policy Forum of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, where early educators from all fifty states as well as Puerto Rico and U.S. territories, come together for the purpose of advocating to Congress on behalf of children, families, and the early childhood profession. Mrs. Gee, director has served as Public Policy Chair on the Board of the MD Association for the Education of Young Children, attending the Conference and meeting with Congressional representatives, virtually. Additionally, she has submitted written testimony supporting four Bills that would help families pay for access to high quality early learning programs as well as funds to prevent programs from closing or to support new programs open.

Advocacy is important at County, State and National levels. Legislators need to hear from you too! If you need help with who to contact, reach out to Mrs. Gee. At this writing there is a federal effort to pass the Build Back Better Plan in Congress, which includes extending the Child Income Tax Credit, funding early learning programs so that no family is required to pay more than 7% of income for childcare and will provide for education and improve benefits and the wages to attract and retain good teachers, all worth advocating for.

Child care is very expensive for families but teacher compensation, especially in child care, remains low. Requirements for safe staff to child ratios is the largest part every program's budget. For every dollar collected, approximately 80 cents is spent on the compensation and benefits for teachers. Costs for rent, insurance, school supplies, food, office supplies, curriculum, professional fees, taxes, utilities, etc. are other expenses required to operate. Childcare has long existed on razor thin budgets. The compensation of teachers is linked to what parents can afford to pay. Support from business and government is necessary and an investment in the future of young children and the backbone of the economy

The severe staffing shortage of early childhood educators in public schools and child care programs has existed for decades but has been exacerbated, due to the pandemic. There are not teachers in the pipeline signing up to take years of education and training, only to earn less than what can be made working in retail, dog walking and other jobs. There is a saying, "Families can't afford to pay, Teachers can't afford to stay, Let's find a better way". Build Back Better may be our best hope.

This is the time to talk to your legislators at all levels about how the pandemic has affected your families' childcare needs before and during the pandemic. All of us have a voice, and for the sake of our children's outcomes for school and life, let us use them.



Looking Ahead . . . **THINK SUMMER!**

Be sure to start thinking about your summer schedules because we want your child to enjoy the special opportunities, we are planning for them at our Summer Program this year! We are busy working on our Summer Activity Calendar; we have some wonderful special events planned to take place outside, if outdoor visitors are allowed. We are also waiting to hear if the pool will be available to us this year, something we missed due to the pandemic. We want the children to be immersed in arts and crafts, nature, reading for recreation and fun, especially more time outdoors. We are also in process of having shade structures built, a huge process that requires permits and approvals by the community and the Prince George's County. Our fingers are crossed.



Summer Program begins in June and continues until public schools return to classes. A Schedule Reservation Form for your child will be sent home soon so that you will be able to reserve space before we offer spaces to the public.

NEXT Year's 2022-2023 School Year Planning is underway!

In April, parents of a child **turning five by September 1st, 2022**, must register at their neighborhood public school for kindergarten. Parents of a child **turning four by September 1st, are Prince George's County residents can go to the link at pgcps.org to make a Scribbles account to register for the public pre-kindergarten program at Greenbelt Children's Center, choosing Greenbelt Elementary school at the end.** Spaces are limited but there is funding that reduces the cost for income eligible families. It will be our 23rd year of offering public pre-k but our 32nd year of offering the private pre-k in Classroom 3. **We will begin forming our class rosters for Preschool/Pre-kindergarten soon.**

Benefits for your child include small class size, low teacher/child ratios for differentiated instruction and attention, full-day to cover your work day, a calendar with many school closing days open at GCC, research-based curriculum that is approved by the MD State Department of Education and an excellent "Five Check" MD EXCELS highest rating, NAEYC accredited early childhood program. These are particularly important things to consider as you make your choice for the fall. **We are proud of our commitment to serve our community and to offer high quality education and care for young children.**



Look for our forms scheduled to be sent home soon, which will give you the opportunity to reserve your space at GCC for summer and the 2022-2023 school year.



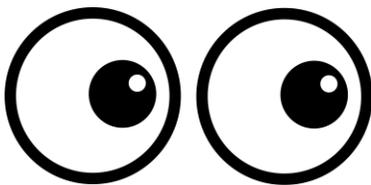
Also look for the **Summer and Fall Intention Letter and Form** that will be sent home with your child soon. It will have information about next school year's calendar and fees. Parents will need to complete the Intention Form for the upcoming summer and fall program at Greenbelt Children's Center, saving a space for your child's continued enrollment at GCC.

Intention form is due back to the office by mid-**April**. (Submit with payment of Annual Material/Enrollment Fee for 2022-23 school year to keep tuition at the 2021-22 published rate. We expect a 5% increase in fees for next school year to meet

our rising costs, especially to improve compensation for teachers and meet the minimum wage increase as well as annual increase for leasing our space from the Greenbriar Community Association.

Transition Plans

An individualized transition plan for next year will be developed for each child as soon as teachers at GCC receive the Intention Forms from parents for the coming year. Teachers help transition whatever comes next so your child will feel secure and confident about the change.



Looking Ahead...

.As we are preparing children for next year, we are very concerned that many children who are typically developing, are not exhibiting the self-help skills expected for their age. These include using utensils and cups at meal time, appropriately, putting on coats, socks and shoes and continuing to wear pull ups while being potty trained. We will be sharing more information soon about what life-skills children are usually capable of when they go to preschool, such as feeding themselves. Please support your child is raising expectations as children grow and mature.

Thank You!

Thank you for the random acts of kindness to our faculty during the month of February! Keep the kindness coming all year! Special thanks to the families of Nadia and Leila, Rm 1 & 2, for the donation of KN95 masks for children, Sanaadwe, Rm 1, for the gift of dozens of hard cover books for the Lending Library from the Center of African Studies/Howard University, Raphael, Rm 2 for the donations of Rapid Antigen Tests and N 95 masks, and Madison, Rm 2, for the donation of pull-ups to have on hand for emergencies. Thank you to the parents of four- and five-year-olds who remember that GCC needs documentation of any additional immunization vaccines that your child may receive to update the records we are required to keep. We are so encouraged to see the parents of children who have turned five, getting their child fully vaccinated for Covid 19.





Reminder:

Spring Break is Friday, April 15th and Monday April 18th for 2022.

Free Tax Help:

- GIVES (Greenbelt) 301-507-6580
- United Way MyFreeTaxes
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) IRS if income is less than \$56,00, disabled or limited or no English: irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep or call 1-800-906-9887
- MilTax for Military Families 800-342-9647 MilitaryOneSource.mil

Announcing the 2022 Week of the Young Child™!

Join NAEYC to celebrate our youngest learners during the week of April 2–8, with fun-filled, themed days. All week long we'll be featuring ideas for music, resources, and [activity ideas](#) for teachers and families that will make play meaningful and learning fun! There is so much children can learn as they enjoy music, explore food and cooking, build together, create art, and celebrate their families!

