field notes

the newsletter of the GeoKids Community

SUMMER 2010

Notes From Heather Morado, Executive Director

It is always surprising and somewhat sad when another year draws to a close. Looking back on this past year I am impressed by how successful and simply full it has been.

As you all know GeoKids has grown, taking on a second GSA childcare center – Little Aviators – in Hawthorne, California. I am excited about the opportunities that this will afford for continued staff development and for sharing the GeoKids approach.

On a less happy note, Robin Jurs will be leaving GeoKids. For financial reasons we have been forced to streamline our administrative staff. On behalf of the GeoKids community, I would like to thank her for all of her wonderful work. She will be missed.

I also want to thank everyone for their help this past year. I am continually humbled by the dedication of the GeoKids community. We have accomplished more than we could have expected: three more staff went to Italy to learn about the Reggio-Emilia method; we built a chicken coop; and garden days continue to grow the GeoKids community closer. As a staff we have set a goal to make learning more visible. We have done this through the wonderful documentation that is filling the center. Please take a look and keep your eyes open for more – our environment is a great teacher.

Thanks again and best wishes for the new year!

GeoKids

New Horizons at Little Aviators
Robin Jurs

As many of you know, I spent a month at our new site, Little Aviators, located in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) building in Hawthorne, CA. I felt fortunate to have this opportunity as it presented a chance to open new doors and meet new people. New doors and new people inevitably translate into new learning and I am always in search of new learning. I am confident that all GeoKids and Little Aviators staff will benefit from the new horizons that having a second site will bring. Becoming part of a larger organization, serving a more diverse population and sharing the wonderful work of the GeoKids community will bring opportunities for growth to all involved.

A little history: over the course of one weekend, several GeoKids staff, some Little Aviators' parents, and Jennifer Kroon, the Western Regional GSA childcare coordinator, deep cleaned and stocked the beautiful site that is Little Aviators. From Friday afternoon when the children left school until Monday morning when they returned with their families, their school was transformed. The children entered an environment replete with new materials to explore and new teachers to learn with. One teacher, Karla, remained from the previous center staff. She was a very welcome and soothing sight for the children as she represented familiarity in the midst of so much that was new.

The following days were filled with delight as the children rediscovered themselves and each other in this new environment. They engaged with the materials and with one other in rich ways, asking many questions and finding many answers on their own as they experimented with the new light table and the magna tiles, among other things.

Equally important for the children was finding the familiar to share with their new teachers. Bugs in the yard have held the children's fascination over the past months and they presented their specimens to us with pride and wonder. They searched in the bushes, on the paths, under rubber mats, and elsewhere for their favorites – ladybugs, worms, rollie pollies and even pincher bugs (earwigs). Bees, often sighted on the beautiful ice plant that adorns the yard, foster curiosity in the children about what they are doing. Spiders are mysterious and run fast. The new teachers, often called just "teacher" for the first week or two, ooo'd and aww'd over the children's discoveries. Through bugs we connected. Through bugs we learned about each other. We listened to and wrote down their words about bugs. We discovered one another through bugs.

Right out of the gate, there were many opportunities to support the children's social skills as they navigated these first few weeks with adults who held new expectations for them in

relation to one another. Instead of shouting "I'm sorry" and disappearing, the children stopped long enough to speak with each other (with a teacher's guidance) about what the offending problem was and how we could take some time to solve the problems together before play resumed and they were off and running again.

The potential for growth between the two sites is enormous. Seasoned staff and new staff have much to share. Families rich in diversity have much to share. Weaving children's and families' lives together in a beautiful tapestry can only foster new experience and new learning. As a result, we have a great deal to look forward to.

GeoKids 14th Annual Fundraising Gala
Kim Perkins

I don't know if it is my GeoKids pride speaking, but I think this year's event was a huge success in so many ways. We had more donations and more attendees than last year with the same amount of effort, and the room specific artwork and projects were the best I've seen. I know our teachers put in a lot of time and effort, and it really showed. The new families came out en masse and were probably the most generous first-timers ever. The night started off with the silent auction where people fought it out for what they wanted. I won some and lost some, but am very happy with my take (I will be sipping my 1995 Silver Oaks Cab in the very near future). The cake auction followed the silent auction with some very lively competition for one of the 13 delicious donated desserts (thank you cake donors!). We made $1400 on that alone, more than ever before! The night ended with the live auction, fueled by the excitement of the night (or was it the drinks?). There were so many wonderful things to bid on that tugged at our heartstrings. It caused many people to throw financial caution to the wind, especially those of us with children heading off to kindergarten. The last chance for a GeoKids keepsake is so hard to resist. I left the night, my 5th and final (?) Gala, with a smile and a tear as our family like many others heads off to a new adventure. I will truly miss the way the GeoKids community comes together in support of this great school. Your generosity means so much! We don't have the final numbers as I write this, but I am confident that we exceeded our goal. A heartfelt thank you to all who made this year's Gala a great success

A Glimpse of Emergent Curriculum

Linnea Hilton

Opals

Emergent curriculum is tricky. We believe deeply in developing our curriculum based on children's interests and choices. That doesn't mean that we let children have free rein, because as we all know, not all ideas are good ideas (e.g. flooding the classroom to make a life size aquarium). It means that we must take our roles as observer and facilitator very seriously. By doing so we are able to discover and enrich those interests in children that are ripe with opportunities to learn. Even when you are watching closely it is difficult to know which interest to delve into more deeply and that's what makes developing emergent curriculum tricky. In this respect teachers become experimenters.

In order to get better at this the Opal Teachers have broken the children into three small groups: the Maple Group, the Magnolia Group and the Pistache Group. (The groups are all named after the trees in our preschool yard.) Our goal in this is to allow children to form a cohort, so that they can get used to working with the same children. Within these groups the teachers have tried to identify what is most interesting to that particular group and help pursue those ideas with more depth and meaning. In one group the children have been exploring their interest in storytelling and acting, another group has been exploring mixing and cooking and another has been exploring map reading and making.

I have been working closely with the children who have been exploring maps. Several of the Maple children used maps in their games, some drew maps of stories they have read, or their neighborhoods, and they took delight in using the large map located here on the Survey Campus outside Building Three. Based on these observations made by all of the Opal teachers we thought it would be a good idea to give them more opportunities to explore maps. We provided them with a black and white blueprint-type-map of the preschool yard. I explored the space the map represented with the children. We played point and seek games using the map that helped the children become oriented with the map of the yard.

The children noticed that there were no colors on the map and that usually maps have colors. This led to spending time in the yard noticing the environment. They paid attention to the shapes and colors of the different spaces in the yard. Some children took this task very seriously and made sure each part of the map matched what they saw, others were more interested in just making sure all the map had color and still others were just interested in making marks. We encouraged the children to focus on representing what they saw, but ultimately they were free to do it in their own way.

While the children were adding color to the map they noticed that some things were not represented on it. Together the children talked about what was missing. Some drew missing items directly onto their maps such as the red line for the bikes. Because maps are small I offered them paper so that they could draw pictures of the items they believed were important and should be on the map. This allowed them more freedom to represent what they saw. We made a list of those items that included bikes, hoses, blocks, signs and George,

the rabbit. The children are now contemplating making one large map of the yard that could include all their drawings of all the important things as well as color. They are currently discussing scale and what should be included and this may very well be the next stage of their exploration. The gamble is always that children will lose interest in pursuing this idea further, so discovering ways to keep them engaged is part of the challenge.

Whether or not they go on to make a larger map it is a joy to see how the children working with maps are noticing and connecting to the world around them. As they use the maps they are internalizing concepts of spatial relations and figurative representation. In drawing different items around the yard they are learning and developing their skills at representational drawing. In discussing plans together they are learning to listen and to share their ideas. They are learning to compromise and negotiate. In short, they are learning about working closely with other people and all the challenges and joys that can bring. As we teachers help them pursue their own ideas and interests they are learning how their own questions and thinking can generate knowledge.

The Maple group is just one aspect of this in the Opal classroom. The Magnolia and Pistache groups are having similar experiences based around their interests. As a team we are continually looking at what is working and what isn't, striving to strike the perfect balance between child-initiated, emergent curriculum and teacher driven curriculum. We look to the children and each other to give growth to ideas and discoveries as we develop curriculum together.

Teaching Children to Think Critically
Marna Cathleen

Azurites

As the school year comes to an end and we get ready to transition most of our children from GeoKids to Kindergarten I would like to share a small piece of what we have been exploring in the Azurite room. We have been guiding the children so as to enhance their critical thinking skills through the exploration of maps, calendars, Lego building and representational drawing.

All of these are ways of representing and critically thinking about the child's world. I define critical thinking as the ability to view things from different perspectives, as well as the ability question knowledge and one's own understanding. Using the emergent curriculum approach to support children's thinking skills has not been easy but it has been one that we have been committed to.

Maps

While exploring maps I have been excited by the way it makes the children think for themselves and question the world around them.

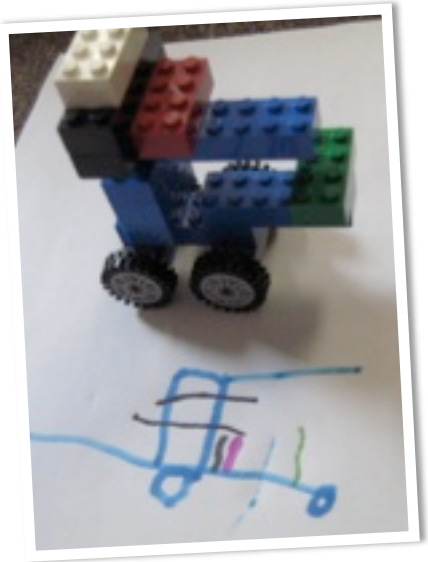
We have experimented with a lot of different ways to develop their understanding of maps, including: taking the children on walks around campus to study the roads; giving the children cameras to take pictures of roads; constructing road maps with tape and paper; drawing maps that represented how each child drives to GeoKids; and looking up each child's home on Google maps. We then compared driving routes for each child from their house to GeoKids. Afterwards the children drew their own road maps representing their drive to GeoKids. A parent who works at the USGS also came in and gave a talk about and demonstration of map making.

Calendars

I consider the calendar to be a type of map that represents time and events. This is a very abstract concept that takes children a long time to understand. We have used the calendar in many ways. For example, we use the calendar daily at our classroom meetings to keep track of classroom events, birthdays and vacations. They have participated in creating our classroom calendars. Each child also has his or her own calendar.

We are currently using the calendar to track summer vacation schedules, when children are leaving GeoKids and to mark when we will be transitioning to Kindergarten.

Lego Building:
While building with Legos the children have practiced a few things: Building something and then representing it through drawing. Or the opposite, representing what they want to build first through drawing and then building it. After doing this for many months I have compiled a book filled with these drawings and structures. We now use the Lego book to reconstruct things that they have made before. We have structures and drawing that span about a year and they find a lot of joy in re-visiting what they made in the past and creating it again.



These three examples touch on what we have been exploring the past year in the Azurite room. The work we have been doing goes much deeper and it is hard to put this into words. It has been challenging for the teachers to make sense of all of these abstract ideas. We have worked hard to find and enhance the learning opportunities within each area of interest. We have done this by continually questioning ourselves as teachers and then questioning the children.

At the outset, I defined critical thinking as the ability to view things from different perspective, as well as the ability question knowledge and one's own understanding. As I return to this definition and review the work we have done in the Azurite room I feel that we have accomplished the task of promoting critical thinking. At the same time I see that the learning is always in process and has no final end.

However, the school year is coming to an end and we would like to invite everyone to come down to the Azurite room and check out the work we are doing now that is the accumulation of much discussion, exploration and questioning.

Soggy shoes, muddy pants, damp sleeves: when parents pick up their Moonstone child each evening they also pick up a laundry load of wet, dirty clothes. Water is an integral part of our daily lives. We wash, work, drink, decorate, play, and relax with water. No wonder it is a source of fascination and experimentation for our Moonstone children. Water is provided at meals, used for hygiene, and has been intentionally provided in sensory tables, spray bottles, and for sensory and artistic experimentation in the classroom. As a class, we have ventured into the larger community, hunting for puddles, visiting the fountains and duck pond and Burgess Park, and investigating the fountain on the USGS campus. *Hot, cold, on, off, wash, bubbles, rain, drip, splash, drink, spill, puddle, deep, muddy, squirt*, and *spray* are words that have been added to our classroom vocabulary as we have interacted with water together.

Some of our most interesting observations of the children, and their interactions with water, have occurred outside, in the toddler play yard. The spontaneous, child-initiated, water encounters have allowed the Moonstone teachers to truly see what the children are questioning and learning about the properties of water. We marvel at the curiosity and creativity of the children during each wet and watery encounter.

Adam is a regular visitor to the small puddles in the grass, created by the sprinklers. Adam is regularly observed finding different objects: woodchips, flowers, leaves, and blades of grass, to float in the water. He often pushes the objects under the water to watch them rise back up to the top of the water.

For Sonja, Amelia, and Asher, water is a sensory experience. They have immersed their hands and feet into the water, feeling the cold water and mucky mud between their fingers and toes.

Harlee prefers exploring the small pools of water that collect on the climber slides. Drops of water splashed on her face, arms, and clothes, as she patted and quickly slid her hands back and forth through the puddles. With each interaction, children not only examine the look, touch, taste, sound, and smell of water but also their own bodily sensations during the experience.

Ben P., Ben F., and Luca often become very involved in their water investigations together. Larger puddles, created by rain, allow these children to explore and compare the opacity of mud puddles versus puddles created in pans, buckets, and sensory tables. On more than one occasion, Ben P. used a single pebble to make such

comparisons. He tossed the rock into a clear puddle caught in a pan, then scooped it up, tossing it into the mud puddle. "Where did it go," he would ask confidently, while searching the muddy water with his hands, until he retrieved that pebble to toss in the clear water. After careful observation, Luca and Ben F. found pebbles and woodchips of their own to join in the game. Interactions such as this also provide the children opportunities to experiment with depth and compare differences between floating and sinking objects.

All of the Moonstone children have been observed experimenting with water movement; splashing, swishing, stomping, squirting, pouring, and spraying water. With each wet, watery

encounter, the Moonstone children are taking the plunge into scientific inquiry and discovery. They are constructing new knowledge and reinforcing their prior understanding about water, and themselves. They are making connections between their indoor and outdoor experiences, with their peers, and with the phenomenon of nature. New vocabulary emerges from each encounter. Through play, the Moonstone children have explored complex scientific concepts such as the properties of water, gravity, condensation, and evaporation. Each child-initiated, teacher-supported, water exploration is approached with a joyful intentionality as children seek to satisfy their inherent curiosity about the world around them.

Digging into Dinosaurs: Unearthing Children's Curiosity

Monique Pryor

Onyx

Over the past months, the Onxy Room children have been exploring dinosaurs. It has allowed them to build upon their basic existing knowledge and branch out into other areas based on their discoveries. We guided and supported the children by observing their conversations during playtime and by asking them questions to understand their thinking and level of knowledge. This helped in setting their course of discovery and in identifying appropriate materials and resources that could stimulate and enhance curiosity.

The exploration of dinosaurs emerged with the play of miniature ones in the classroom and with larger ones outside in the playground. This interest heightened when a poster of various dinosaurs was introduced into the environment. The children quickly noted which dinosaurs were their favorite and how "B-I-G" theirs were compared to their peers. "It's really, really B-I-G!" "No! No! It's big." Some used their fingers and hands as a way of expressing size. We took this as an opportunity to dig deeper to understand their definition of size, which progressed into projecting dinosaurs onto the wall to enhance their understanding of scale and height. "Oooo, ik,ik." "Look, look! It big." "It bigger than me."

While closely examining the projected image, the children became intrigued by the dinosaur's physical and facial characteristics (e.g. teeth, eyes, nose, nails, feet, skin, etc.). In comparing these features to their own, they uttered "My teeth not like that." "Look! I have five toes." "He three." "My oot small." Their foot observations led us to the USGS Campus library to look at a cast footprint of a Tyrannosaurs rex.

While leaving the library, one of the children noticed a purple stamped footprint at the main entrance. The children quickly ran to a print and stood on it. This took us on an investigation to find more prints.

Based on the childrens' conversations about dinosaurs, we checked books out from the library for them to explore. As the children looked through them, it generated questions about what they were seeing. One of the books allowed the children to see half of the dinosaur's outside skin and its skeleton formation. This

allowed the children to be introduced to their own skeleton formation. They were asked if they had bones in their own body. Some said, "No! I don't have bones." Another said, " I do! I do!" We used these different opinions as an opportunity to discover if they did have bones in their own bodies. By encouraging them to examine various parts of their own physical formation such as their neck, head, knees and ankles, to some of the children's surprise, they found "Bones! Bones! I have Bones!"

Another book showed archeologists excavating several dig sites. One of the kids said, "I wanna dig for bones." After a lengthy discussion about where we might dig for bones, the sand box was converted into a dig site. Chicken bones were buried throughout the sand box along with excavating tools such as shovels, scoopers, shifters, brushes, trays and magnifying glasses. When the children ran out to the yard and saw the materials waiting for them, they immediately began to dig. They were asked what they were looking for and they said, "Bones! Were digging for bones." The children were excited to find bones. "Look! Look! I got one." "I got one." "Yea, Yea! I got one." We gathered all the bones they had collected and took them inside for a closer look. They began to associate the bones with their own bodies. "This is my leg bone." "No. No. This is my arm bone." "My oot bone." "No. It's the neck bone." As the dialogue continued, some began to look through the library books. One of the children found a skeletal image of a dinosaur and began to reconstruct the shape using the bones. The children each took a turn placing the bones on the dinosaur according to their interpretation of which size would fit best.

The excavation part of this project still continues to resonate with the children. After several weeks, they are still digging for bones and the sand box looks like it has been attacked by gophers as there are holes everywhere. One parent asked, "What happened to the sand box?"

Digging into dinosaurs has taken the children on a journey of exploration and discovery through their emerging interests. These stages of discovery have helped to set a foundation for learning to be facilitated. During this process, the children have been exposed to how to learn, how to ask questions, and how to be curious. Additionally, the children enhanced their communication skills by expressing their thoughts and ideas, gained more awareness about their own body and the human anatomy, and increased their analytical and cognitive abilities. And, through the skill of inquiry, the children became more comfortable with knowing that their voices and interactions have meaning and that someone will come alongside them to guide and support their curiosity. Where and how learning will take place next, will be determined by the children, one of whom recently said, "Are there still more bones in the sandbox?" One of the teachers responded, "I don't know. Let's go dig!"

The Emergence of Our Bird Habitat

Lyn Rupprecht

On your way into GeoKids look up towards the flat roof area on top of our building and you will see something interesting happening. What you see is our bird habitat that has been constructed gradually over the last year.

Our group's interest in birds began back when most of them were infants in room one, and has developed into a regular component of our curriculum and the children's explorations. The idea for a habitat was first suggested as a way to continue building on this interest when the group moved to the upstairs classroom; we wanted to find some way of bringing the birds up there with us. When presented with the question "How can we attract the birds to our classroom?" the children came up with some remarkable theories involving spoons, playdough, watermelon, choppers, seeds, cheeseburgers, a jumpy house, and getting a chicken to build them a nest. Believe it or not we have attempted to test out most of these ideas, although Heather would not give us the funding for a jumpy house on the roof (sorry Sam). In the process of testing these ideas the children have expanded their knowledge and I have grown as a teacher, learning to let go of my preconceived ideas about what I think we should be doing and to integrate more of the children's ideas into our curriculum.

The little garden habitat we have built is the culmination of much discussion, observation, and experimentation. Once the spoons, watermelon, and playdough had been tested we observed that the birds preferred the seeds. The next question we posed concerned habitat: where do the birds live? Where do they go when they fly away? After looking at books and taking observational walks through the campus we were closer to a firm hypothesis. Our next move was to visit Coyote Point Museum where there is a large walk through aviary; this experience confirmed the children's theory that most birds live in trees and bird houses. There was much discussion and some wonderful suggestions about how we could get a tree outside our window.

The compromise we eventually reached was flowers and shrubs in containers. This project has been a huge success both for the children and the birds. We have little songbirds visiting the garden every minute of the day; the larger doves and towhees like to forage for fallen seeds in amongst the flowers. We have also built two birdhouses, one has been painted and the other left plain. The children have different theories about which house the birds will prefer, and they are eagerly awaiting the results.

Our hope is that the little habitat we have built will remain an exciting opportunity for observation and enrichment for many years to come. After the current Meteorite children have transitioned to new rooms, the birds will continue to visit their garden, providing songs, color and joy.

Some Fond Farewells

This year a number of families who have been with GeoKids for many years are moving on as their oldest children "graduate" and head to kindergarten. As a way of saying thanks, goodbye, and marking these significant events, we asked these families to reflect on their time at GeoKids.

Jeriann & David Hirsch

We were on the GeoKids Wait list for over four years so there hasn't been one day of our time here that we took for granted. There is a poster in the teacher workroom upstairs that has on it the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child" and a painting with all different hands raising a baby into the air. To me, that is what GeoKids is all about. My little boy has been cherished and guided in this village of amazing staff as well as co-oping parents and I am so very, very grateful. GeoKids has shaped us as parents and it has changed and influenced me as a 2nd grade teacher, too. I love how childhood is cherished and valued at GeoKids. I love how DIRTY the kids are after playing hard in the sandbox or exploring with markers and paints. I love how unselfconscious about their bodies the kids are and how they feel totally comfortable running around in their underwear. At home the other day, Brady 'painted' his toenails and fingernails with markers and I confidently sent him to GeoKids knowing that no one would tease him here. (Actually, none of the children at GeoKids would have given that behavior a second thought!) Our family has been truly blessed by GeoKids.

Jeff & Susan Patrick

After being part of the GeoKids community for nine (!) years, it is a bittersweet transition for us as our youngest heads to kindergarten. We have been blessed to be a part of this extraordinary group of caregivers and parents, from whom we have learned so much. When we recall the most heartwarming and tragic events for our family and community over nearly a decade, GeoKids has been a rallying, safe, and celebratory force in each of them for children and parents alike.

Some of our dearest friends are those we have met at GeoKids, and the early childhood experiences and friends our daughters encountered here are still vital and cherished today. As we think back over all the co-ops, discussions, play and adventures over the years, it's clear that the support, respect, autonomy, and confidence the teachers gave our kids has carried over into elementary and middle school and has shaped who they will ultimately become. Thank you, GeoKids, for doing such important work when it matters most. We will miss you!

Todd & Lisa Wagner

We started at GeoKids in October of 2001 and our second child will graduate this August 2010. Our 9 years at GeoKids have really shaped our parenting styles and even helped us choose elementary schools for our children. Our son Cameron was 4 months old when he started at GeoKids and he did not sleep more than 30 minutes at a time (day or night), although he desperately needed more sleep. Heather was one of his teachers in room 1 and we think she will confirm the lengths that we all went to trying to help this very extreme baby (who had a wonderful giggle, but could also cry louder than anyone) try to be more comfortable in our world. We were extremely sleep-deprived new parents and we relied on the GeoKids' teachers to help us navigate the world of raising a child. Our first "date" post child was a GeoKids room meeting. As the GeoKids' teachers had assured us, Cameron indeed turned out to be a very happy toddler and preschooler (though he didn't sleep through the night until age 4) and we eventually risked having another child, Jessica, who joined GeoKids in 2005 when she was 8 months old. Jessica, of course, was different from Cameron. She could nap for 3 hours at GeoKids, but fell off the growth curve charts when she was 6 months old. Again the GeoKids' teachers worked with us as we struggled to find a balance between a daycare center's schedule and our daughter's miniscule appetite and food range. Now Jessica is graduating from GeoKids and although she is still very petite (tracking very consistently at the 3rd percentile in weight), with the assistance of GeoKids' teachers she has developed her personality and voice into a social force to be reckoned with.

Jessica will be attending a public school in San Carlos. There is now a small group of GeoKids' families there, in part because the school encourages parent participation. It is wonderful knowing all the kids my son talks about, and when I drop Cameron off at school I also know the other parents. It is nice to know the other kids and the other parents, but this strong sense of community seems to be especially helpful for the kids. As we compare notes on after school care and summer camps, we have developed a common reference point. Whenever we have a camp that we like, we'll share it with each other. And, invariably one of us will say, "Well, it's not GeoKids", but it is acceptable, etc., etc. So, as we say goodbye to GeoKids, we can't imagine what our lives as parents would have been like without the amazing teachers of GeoKids. And we'll still say that the biggest downside of GeoKids is that after having experienced GeoKids (is it the dedicated teachers, the philosophy, the combination, or something else entirely?), everything else pales in comparison.

Todd & Teri Wilde

Geokids has been a very special place for our family. When our first son Dylan was "accepted"

I was so psyched because it was like a million to one chance that GeoKids would actually have a space for us! GeoKids became a learning environment for us all.

As parents we learned how to separate a little and to allow Dylan to grow and earn some independence. As a person I learned how to allow children to communicate their needs and to rely on their own skills to problem solve and resolve conflicts without the need for an adult to take over the situation and call the shots. Dylan learned how to play, be a friend and look out for himself by speaking out and expressing his needs and wants. Not bad for just 2 short years! After taking a short break...we returned to GeoKids with child #2, Josh, attending fulltime, as I returned to work after taking a few...ok maybe more than a few ... years off. His experience was totally different than Dylan's and so was ours this time around. Josh made close friends, explored his interests and earned his independence quickly. I made new ties with different teachers and starting observing the daily ins and outs from a different perspective.

As a new teacher myself, I realized how amazing GeoKids is as both a teaching and a learning environment. The staff is always looking for ways to help the children grow and learn and explore without imposing their own agendas and curriculum. It is amazing to have my children in such an environment and I will always be grateful for the time we had there. We are truly lucky to have shared this amazing place and experience with some very wonderful people and will forever remember our time at GeoKids with a big smile on our faces! Cheers to all that GeoKids is!

Charmaine & John Estes

When we entered GeoKids pre-school with our daughter, Oron, we thought we were only providing a great early education environment for her. I loved the school atmosphere, the philosophy, and the idea of a parent cooperative. What we ended up getting after six years and two kids later was much more than that.

We enrolled Cabe in the young toddlers program and finally, Jack entered the pre-school two years ago and will be our last at GeoKids. My children have learned, explored, researched, problem solved, inquired, created, shared, made friends and grown. They have been covered in paint, mud and sand. Wrote and performed in plays and dances. Designed and built a life size castle, a zoo, a volcano and a mural. And they donned safety glasses when they did woodworking, created their own furniture and sculpture.

John and I have also learned so much. As first-time parents, we learned to understand the development stages of children. The coop gave us insight into behavioral tendencies of various age groups and helped us understand our own children. As working parents, being able to co-op and witness our children develop is priceless. Heather and the teachers gave us counseling when we needed it. We truly felt the teachers knew our children and cared about them. GeoKids provided us with a strong support group and parenting skills we continue to use.

GeoKids is a community. You get to meet wonderful children and their parents, make long lasting friends and support education at its earliest stage.

We will miss the school, GeoKids, but the community stays connected. We still get together with the many families and teachers we have met over the years and hope to keep that connection to the school.