



from the director:

Nonotuck is licensed, as are all Massachusetts early care and education programs in private centers and schools and family child care homes, by the **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)**. EEC licenses nearly 12,000 early education and care and out-of-school-time programs statewide. EEC has a broad based mission and also provides financial assistance and funds information and referral and other family services as well as professional development opportunities for teachers and family child care providers (collectively referred to as educators by EEC). The EEC regulations cover the physical space, staff qualifications, staff:child ratios, and to an increasing extent the curriculum in early education and care programs. The following is from the EEC website:

*In 2005, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to establish one agency – the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) – to oversee early education and care and after-school services for families...EEC was created within the context of increasingly accepted evidence from childhood brain development research showing long-term impact of high-quality early education and its potential return on investment. We know that access to early education and care is crucial, and we know that the quality of that care matters – a lot. EEC has been balancing these two priorities since its inception.*

The mission of EEC states “The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care provides the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.” In this context, EEC has recently substantially rewritten the regulations and expect them to be promulgated (signed into law and go into effect) in early January. The new regulations include a new focus on curriculum and interactions between educators and children and will require the development of new policies and procedures in many areas. In most cases this will mean writing policies which address our current practices but the new regulations will also require us to institute new procedures - most notably, **we will be required to offer tooth brushing each day**. We are currently exploring the best way to begin this practice and will let you know more when the new regulations go into effect.

In addition to licensing requirements, our practice at Nonotuck is also guided by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** accreditation standards. Since 1985, NAEYC's national, voluntary accreditation system has set professional standards for early childhood education programs, and helped families identify high-quality programs for their young children.

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The NAEYC accreditation is supported by EEC who consulted the program standards in developing the new licensing requirements. EEC also administers the **Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)** pilot program which promotes school readiness and positive outcomes for children and furthers the long-term creation of a universally accessible, high-quality early education program by providing grant funding directly to pre-school programs meeting specific quality guidelines. NAEYC accreditation is one of those "specific quality guidelines". EEC is also currently developing a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS gives higher ratings (and usually a financial incentive) to programs that meet advanced levels of quality. It is probable that one of the QRIS indicators of quality will be NAEYC accreditation. Nonotuck has completed the first three steps of the accreditation process and is waiting to get confirmation that we have been accepted as a candidate for NAEYC accreditation and to schedule the visit from an NAEYC assessor who will "observe our program in action and review the evidence collected in self assessment."

While change and meeting some of the expectations can be challenging, it is great to know that Massachusetts is a state that really values quality education and care for young children.

Until Next Time;

Margery Heyl

## Nonotuck Holiday Checklist:

- ✓ Shop at the Nonotuck Holiday Marketplace for great gifts — all \$10 and under!
- ✓ Join parents, grandparents and friends with a gift to the Nonotuck Annual Appeal and help raise \$5,000 to support our school!
- ✓ Log on to [onecause.com](http://onecause.com) for all of your holiday shopping needs!
- ✓ Spread the word about the Nonotuck Winter Family Concert Series:  
Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem 1/9 • Primate Fiasco 2/27 • The Nields 3/27



## polliwogs

The Polliwog Room has just reached full capacity as we welcome our latest 15 month old, **Luke**...brother to Chameleon alum **Gabby**! Luke joins seven other Pollie friends under 2 years old and two others who just turned 2, with our next birthday not until spring. Our Pollies are young, basically pre-verbal with some emerging language, and new to group child care. Young toddlers are naturally egocentric; learning to share toys and teacher attention, take turns, wait, and function in a social group. Even more importantly, as relationships are paramount in early childhood, they are learning to trust other adults to care for them. Understanding that, our goal throughout the fall is first to build a strong rapport with each child and a trusting connection with each parent. Approaching children at eye-level, being available to them, allowing each child their own time frame to warm up each day and over time, and being mindful of the pace and transitions during the day all help our young children feel comfortable with their new caregivers and expectations. We build a sense of community within our classroom to

help children feel safe and cared for in the group as well as to help them feel empathy by caring for others. We provide opportunities to explore with confidence. We encourage beginning independence. We model friendly social interactions while supervising closely. We begin the year with Pollies learning how to work and play in their stimulating room surroundings and activities, explore and interact with interesting materials, and get more involved with their fascinating peers! (cont.)



*Kihoe giving Olive a high five at the table*

*Reed and Xavier holding hands during Ring Around the Rosie*



polliwogs,  
continued

Interesting natural materials brought into our classroom provide plenty to investigate with all the senses. Though there is no denying “taste” to a toddler, we are learning that only food goes in the mouth! Pollies pulled field corn off the stalk, shucked it and then shelled the kernels into the sensory table for digging and pouring. We compared this to popcorn



*Olive and Amelia scooping out the insides of a couple of pumpkins in the sensory table*

kernels and were amazed to watch them POP! filling very large garbage bags...that were not at all heavy!! We decorated pots of playdough with various dried seed pods. Wagons filled with gourds provided large motor challenges. Fall leaves floated in and out of activities and around the room. A very large pumpkin became a ‘chair’ for reading pleasure, while smaller versions were decorated, admired, and later carved! The vibrant fall colors infiltrated much of our artwork, displayed to bring the feel of our valley outdoors into our

room. We shook colored sand onto sticky contact paper, painted with large brushes, used bright silky paint sticks at the easel, and decouped pumpkins with paint and tissue paper using fall reds, oranges, yellows, and browns.

An everlasting supply of fresh playdough colors get pinched, poked, rolled, squeezed, and cut with cookie cutters. Halloween became special with all wearing orange, faces painted with whiskers, and making Jack-O-Lantern quesadillas and the placemats to eat them on. Tantalizing cooking projects created aromatic smells from cornbread and apple pizza, delicious tastes of cranberry sauce, interesting sounds from our juicer, transformations to witness from apples to applesauce, and all for the hands-on touching and eating! These worked together with our late fall focus on healthy foods culminating in our Friendship Fruit Salad and Potluck Lunch! We’re especially enjoying each other’s company during our eating and snacking times where good company and good food always mix well! Our toddlers sit at length at the table to focus on eating, listening intently, and watching each other closely. They’re gaining competence in feeding themselves and signing for “more please” and sometimes “thank you”. Mealtimes are busy times but calm and pleasant. Learning is everywhere at every moment. From the moment Polliwogs enter their classroom we welcome them in, embrace their individuality, provide opportunities and challenges, and give them time to explore, grow, and develop. Good things are in store for the year to come!

Wikipedia defines 'Emergent Curriculum' as "a way of planning curriculum based on the student's interest and passions as well as the teacher's". Often, at the beginning of the school year, we teachers will toss out an idea for a curriculum theme to see if the children run with it. Since we are lucky enough to live in a climate where the change from summer to fall is quite dramatic, we teachers decided to take some inspiration from the **spectacular colors** that we noticed outside our windows and all around our neighborhood. We collected leaves from outside and looked at the different sizes, shapes and colors. Then we cut out maple and oak leaf shapes and used paint and unusual brushes to make our paper leaves look like the ones we found outside.



It became apparent that this year's Frog group is particularly excited about **painting**, so we used fall colors to create several murals. We wanted to bring the season into many different areas of learning, not just art. We added silk leaves, gourds, small dolls and a small tree to our manipulatives area. We also took advantage of our fall parent work day by enlisting a parent volunteer to spruce up our book corner with the addition of some inexpensive and super practical **rain gutter bookshelves**. We added a number of fall themed books, both fiction and non-fiction. The new display, combined with some additional cozy seating, seemed to really encourage the children to curl up with a good fall book!

While the children enjoyed exploring all of the Fall themed activities, after a while we noticed that the kids were throwing out some curriculum ideas of their own; every time we turned around, we found that the Frogs had lined up all of the chairs from the lunch table in the middle of the classroom. Sometimes the chairs were a train, sometimes a bus, sometimes a train. Since we can take a hint, we started to plan out some activities that expanded on the idea of **travel** and **transportation**.



Of course, sometimes outside influences have a hand in directing curriculum as well. Unfortunately,

over the past few weeks one of the biggest overarching themes in the Frog room has been illness! The **Flu** tore through our group pretty quickly, leaving us with a few weeks of super small classes, and sniffle-y kids. We put some of our more elaborate transportation themed projects on the back burner while everyone recuperated, and took advantage of the smaller class size to scaffold social interactions between children.

Now that everyone is on the mend (knock wood!), we are back to exploring transportation, and travel. Stay tuned to see where this takes us!

-Michelle and Francine

## possums

In addition to all of the wonderful new Possum children, we have added two other living beings to the classroom this year: our **degus**, or Chilean Bush-tailed Rats. The degus are both males from the same litter as the Frog degus, Dusty and Diego, and come from the **Dakin Animal Shelter**. After much deliberation the children named our new pets **Earring** and **Snow White**.



Every morning the degus are sent off in their ball to explore the classroom. While playing, the children take great care to avoid inadvertently kicking the degus. As you might expect, this has helped to establish a calm atmosphere in the classroom.

Many of the children enjoy feeding the degus. Often, if the children are quiet enough, the degus will walk out onto a child's hand to retrieve food.

We have been doing research on how to care for degus using, among other sources, the book **Degus: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual**. This book has pictures and many children have raised concerns that we may not be feeding a proper diet to our pets. Although the book shows degus eating a wide variety of food other sources recommend a more restricted diet given that degus are naturally diabetic.

Often, upon entering the classroom, after checking in with their friends, the children may look to see what our classroom pets are doing- assuring themselves that these furry playmates continue to provide us with their company



-Hannah and Sarah

## chameleons

We have been fortunate to have a great level of parent/family support, participation, and enthusiasm for the classroom this year! This support manifests in ways large and small on a daily basis and through short term and long term projects and contributions! We of course have the year long cooperative jobs that parents do for the school/classroom that greatly enrich the Nonotuck school experience for all the Chameleons including **teaching music** and **Spanish class**, fundraising, cleaning and upkeep of the classroom (painting shelves, cleaning the rug, otherwise known as **Circle Time Central**, laundry, etc.) serving on the Board of Directors, and many other very valuable jobs! In addition, we enjoy parents' positive enthusiasm for the classroom each morning at drop off and we appreciate the robust response we've received when we've put out the call for parent assistance with projects and activities! Some great examples so far include the table full of yucky ingredients from home for our **marvelous medicine project**, our successful Halloween costume field trip to the Calvin Coolidge Nursing Home in which every single Chameleon attended with several Chameleons meeting us at the nursing home on their off day(s) from



*Afternoon teacher Ashley reads to the Chameleons*

school, and our ongoing "**Me Bag**" sharing circles in which Chameleons bring items from home to school to share, usually including a family photo album!

Our **community tree project** which involves each family decorating a leaf with family pictures and creative artistic expression is a work in progress but it is not far off schedule from past years and it is our usual expectation that it will come to its full fruition some time in the first month of the new year (the December break provides an excellent opportunity to work on the project. Have fun, be creative!) A lot of the helpful parent contributions to the classroom that I also had in mind in writing this article occur

daily in the process of parents taking a few moments to read to children in addition to their own, or to make paper airplanes with kids, or teach and help lead a game, and expressing interest in what children are working on, building, or drawing!

Another wonderful contribution has been all of the great books and dynamic games that parents/children have brought into the classroom to share! (cont.)

## chameleons, cont.

As one Chameleon bringing in fun games inspired other children/parents to bring in games, it has led to the realization of how much this group of Chameleons loves **games** and as a result teachers have looked to acquire and introduce new games! All of the small group activity around playing games has a variety of positive offshoots including building on social skills (turn taking, winning and losing gracefully, etc.) and learning (logical thinking, sequencing, math skills, language skills, etc.) and bringing children together (girls and boys, old friends and new friends, and children that may not tend to interact/play together often)! Parents have helped in keeping up the momentum by assisting Chameleons in bringing in new games consistently!

Children bringing in books that are read to the group and items that are shared and games that are played together give the opportunity for Chameleons to feel a part of the group, become empowered and excitedly share about themselves and their interests! Parents assistance in this process is greatly appreciated and speaks to their own interest in and caring contribution(s) to the healthy life of the classroom!

As always we invite and encourage parent/family involvement and participation on all levels and we have several projects in the pipeline that will involve parents coming into the classroom to lead projects and even read to the Chameleons!

Thank you-

Paul and Scott.



*Chameleon Jamie makes his own beard from tape and yarn*



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