



Baby Gator Tales

Director's Message

Baby Gator's mission is to support children and families, not only in our centers, but also in the community. Two years ago, we created the Guiding and Teaching Our Remarkable (G.A.T.O.R) Children Conference in partnership with the Harn Museum of Art.

On April 2, 2011 we hosted the 2nd Annual G.A.T.O.R. Children Conference. This is a conference for parents of young children, addressing the topics that parents need most. This year's presenters included a dentist discussing the care of

baby teeth, a pediatrician talking about healthy eating for infants and toddlers, librarians discussing choosing books and sharing stories with preschoolers, a nurse discussing



prevention of early childhood injuries, an interventionist discussing the early signs of autism, an art educator sharing ideas on how to get children interested in art and an

acupuncture physician discussing the value of infant massage and homeopathic care for young children.

Parents and presenters met in small groups in and among the Harn's art collections. Information tables in the Harn's lobby offered information on local services for families including local pediatricians, children's books for purchase, bike safety, and how to grow your own garden. Plans are already in place for the 3rd annual conference in the spring of 2012. We'll send out the date soon, so mark your calendars!

Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center at the University of Florida

Volume 2, Issue 2

Inside this issue:

Village Drive	2-5
Upcoming Events	6
Going Green	6
Newell Drive	7-9
PHIT Kids	10
American Sign Language	11
PHIT for Success	11
New Teachers/Staff	12
Food for Thought	13
Reading & Learning	14

Lesson Plan Themes

April

Watch us Grow:
 Celebrating the Start of Spring



May

Marvelous Month of Movement:
 Exploring Movement and the Body



June

Water Water Everywhere:
 Exploring All Things Water



Village Drive—Tiny Gators

During the winter months we enjoyed experimenting with hot and cold sensory activities and building caves out of blankets and pillows. We had a great turn out at our Valentine's Day ice cream social and want to thank all the parents for bringing in the yummy toppings!



The babies had fun painting pretty yellow flowers to decorate our room. It is so much fun watching each of them change and grow like the flowers.

We celebrate all of their "firsts" here - sitting up, rolling, crawling, first teeth and even standing for a few seconds independently. We are so proud of them all!

During the month of March we celebrated Early Literacy. Our children especially loved The Caterpillar Spring book, Puppy Touch and Feel and Welcome Spring story.



Even though at this age the children don't understand all of the words, their first experience is listening to the language. We encourage our parents to read, sing and talk to your children daily.

We look forward to the fun filled months to come and to getting our feet wet during water days!

Just a few friendly reminders:

- ◆ Please remember to wash your hands when entering the TG classroom
- ◆ Don't forget your socks or booties while visiting
- ◆ Label all items with your child's first and last name
- ◆ Keep an eye out for our TG wish list

Village Drive—Caterpillars

First, Miss Kristie and Miss Lisa would like to take a moment to welcome our wonderful new team teacher Miss Valerie to the Caterpillar Class.

We have been very busy in the classroom the past 3 months. In January, we explored all things cold or frozen. Miss Lisa brought in a shaved ice machine and we made our own colorful shaved ice.



Playing in the soil!

We had so much fun touching and tasting the cold and colorful treat.



In February, the class enjoyed working together on growing our cucumber plants and playing in the soil.

The children weren't too sure of the texture of the soil at first but, as you can see, after they got involved, they loved it!

In the month of March we celebrated literacy with an entire week centered around the story of Johnny Appleseed. One day we made apple turnovers for our whole class. The children really enjoyed this hands-on activity and the turnovers were very delicious.

Village Drive—Butterflies

In January the Butterflies engaged in various activities around theme of "Ice Ice Baby". They tried foods of different temperatures - Hot Chocolate, Tea, and Soup. They saw different types of ice and used their imagination acting out the animals that hibernate in winter.

We paid tribute to Black History month, honoring such heroes as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King. We



celebrated Valentine's Day with a Valentine's party. The children did arts and crafts and showed their love to their classmates and parents. In February, as winter came to a close, the Butterflies learned about animals that migrate, alligators, and groundhogs and had fun acting out these animals.



In March the Butterflies dedicated a week to Dr. Seuss for his birthday by wearing funny socks, silly hats, and clothes worn inside-out or backwards. We celebrated St. Patrick's day and learned about things that are green.

Our final theme was "Spring Is Here". The children loved learning about the different aspects of spring. They planted seeds, flowers in a new garden, and learned about birds and bugs. We also talked about recycling—and our special guest, Ms. Christine, demonstrated to the children how to compost and how it benefits the soil.



Village Drive—Grasshoppers

In January, we explored "All Things Cold", the season of winter, different kinds of weather events, and Arctic Animals.



In February, we used the theme "All You Need is Love" to talk about friendships and doing kind things. We also celebrated Valentine's Day with a Grasshopper Valentine's Luau. We invited the parents and office staff to come in and join us with this awesome celebration. We enjoyed hula dancing, surfing and our famous Tiki bar where we served up smoothies and healthy snacks. It was very nice.



In March, the Grasshoppers enjoyed "Marching through Literacy" by celebrating Dr. Suess Birthday. We dressed up in our silly socks, silly hats, and even had a backwards/mismatch day and pajama day. We also read lots of books by Dr. Suess.



In April, our Grasshoppers are learning about Spring by studying 'all things new', bugs, the Earth, April showers and May flowers. We went on a field trip to explore new things such as new foliage, insects, reptiles and flowers. We also had special visitors called entomologists who brought some bugs for the children to observe. We have had some busy and exciting months and are looking forward to fun summertime activities.

Village Drive—Growing Gators

Growing Gators have been learning and growing with oodles of fun! We've learned team work with baton races, we've learned about our bones and body parts



and the things that help us grow. We've also discovered the things that grow around us — animals, trees that give us oxygen and the plants that give us our fruits and vegetables. We experimented

with watermelon seeds & lima beans. Dragonflies and Bumblebees are always learning and growing so tune in next time to see what's new!

Books to Read with your Children

Selected from the National Education Association
Teacher's Top 100 Books for Children

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss

I Love You Forever by Robert N. Munsch

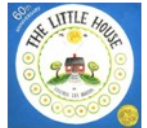
Because of Winn Dixie by Kate DiCamillo

Oh! The Places You Will Go by Dr. Seuss

The Little House by Virginia Lee Burton

The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak



Family Field Day



MAKE THE RIGHT
CALL...

JOIN US FOR THE BABY
GATOR

Family Field Day

SATURDAY, MAY 14TH

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
AT FLAVET FIELD

COME OUT FOR A MORNING OF FUN
ACTIVITIES AND GAMES!

Village Drive—Future Gators



The Royal Ball



Riding on the loading dock
at the Post Office



Dr. Larkin teaching about manatees

Hello, hello from the Future Gators classroom! Our soon-to-be Kindergartners have been very busy this semester! January was filled with studies of all things cold. Some projects focused on how to make ice melt, and differences between cold and hot temperatures.

February had two big contenders of fun: our Royal Ball and a trip to the Post Office. The Royal Ball was a sight to behold. Our students (and parents) dressed to the nines, the dance floor was packed, and the food was fit for a King! Our exclusive tour of the Post Office included opening the "stamp safe" and riding the loading dock!

March was our author study, where we picked new authors to focus on each week. Lois Ehlert, Dr. Seuss, Rosemary Wells, and Tomie dePaulo were the authors of choice.

The Week of The Young Child was April 11-15 and each day had a fun activity, including a walking scavenger hunt and a visit from Dr. Larkin who taught us all about manatees!



We went on a field trip to the Carillon and heard the bells being played from Century Tower. Not only that, but a private organ concert was given by Dr. Ellis. What a special treat!

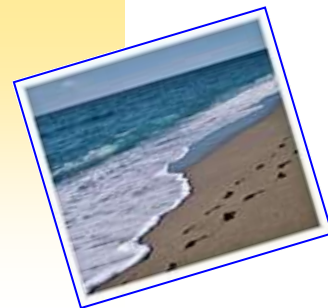
We are keeping physically fit by engaging in the "Morning Mile" program, where we run for 15 minutes around a track on our playground. The children are turning into Future Gator Track Stars! We look forward to the summer and Water Days!



"Morning Mile"

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

~ Dr. Seuss



Upcoming Events/Closings at Village Drive

- ◆ Future Gators Graduation—Monday May 2, 2011
- ◆ Baby Gator Yard Sale—Saturday May 7, 2011
- ◆ Closed for Memorial Day—Monday May 30, 2011



Upcoming Events/Closings at Newell Drive

- ◆ Future Gators Graduation—Monday May 2, 2011
- ◆ Closed for Memorial Day—Monday May 30, 2011



In honor of the American Heart Association's campaign, Friday, February 4th was National Wear Red Day! Thanks to all who participated to support women, honor our hearts, and raise awareness about heart disease.



GOING GREEN

by Nika Lorenz



The "Going Green" program at Baby Gator is working perfectly. The children really enjoy helping keep our Earth clean. Now that it is spring a lot of the classrooms have utilized the planters on the playground. The children work hard to maintain the gardens by watering the plants, putting leaves in the soil to help



the plants grow and making sure that friends are not pulling up the plants. The children are really taking pride in their gardens.



Words of wisdom ...

As we watch the news and see the tragedies in the world, we need to help children make some sense of it.

Fred Rogers has some words of wisdom:

"When I was a boy and would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers'. You will always find people who are helping. To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world."



Newell Drive—Little Gators 1—Rainbow Fish

In LG1 we have had lots of changes in the Rainbowfish classroom. There is no longer a climbing structure and our room is now made for 2 year olds! The kids are doing great with the new set up and we have incorporated a new schedule and potty training (also known as just sitting on the potty, for now) into our schedule. We have had lots of birthday this month and next, soon we will all be 2!



In March we had a silly week in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday and the kids did a great job participating.

We also took a fieldtrip over to the Diamond Village Park where the kids had a blast exploring the playground.

In April we have been talking up how things grow. The children loved seeing pictures of themselves as babies. They couldn't even believe it was them!



From Susan Linn and the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

The much acclaimed Nintendo 3DS promises endless hours of screen-time pleasure. It provides 3D gaming with no bothersome glasses. Reviews glowingly describe a three dimensional experience that is more real and more compelling than ever before. According to the New York Times "Just about every child in America who likes video games is going to want a 3DS" and that the hand-held charmer is perfect for school bus rides. What it doesn't say is that children are going to be bombarded with marketing for the device, which comes at the hefty price of \$249.99 and health warnings for children under seven.

The last thing kids need is technology that makes screen time more enticing than it already is. Children already spend an alarming amount of time with screens—more than 32 hours a week for preschoolers which means less active play, less creative play, less face-to-face interaction, less time with nature, and more exposure to all forms of advertising. Excessive video time is linked to childhood obesity, poor school performance, attention issues, and sleep disturbances.



Resist being sucked into the "my child needs the latest gadget in order to be happy" rut. Marketing campaigns convince children that screens are essential to their happiness, so it is harder for parents to say no to the latest media fad. The American Academy of Pediatrics has long recommended no screen time for children under two and no more than two hours per day for older kids. More recently, the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, the Centers for Disease Control and other public health organizations recommended limits both at home and in child care settings. Screen time for children is a major public health and social problem that is only just now beginning to be recognized. And kids aren't going to set limits themselves. Reducing screen time can't be a national law, but it can, and should, become a national value.

Newell Drive—Little Gators 2

In January the LG2 classroom at Newell Drive explored Ice and everything cold. Some of our February activities included dressing like the presidents for Presidents' Day and expressing love for our friends using our feet to mix colors and paint.



March was literacy month and we celebrated Dr. Seuss' Birthday with a party at the library with The Cat in the Hat. Some parents joined us on this field trip. We also explored creative writing and practiced writing our names during literacy month.



What a fun time we had in April! We watched things grow and explored bugs and nature. We talked about what we want to be when we grow up and had a doctor visit our classroom, which we transformed into a doctor's office with a waiting room, check in nurse and a doctor. We learned how things grow on a farm and even milked a cow!



To help us grow healthy bodies, we went on a PHIT KIDS field trip to the UF track where the children ran/walked over TWO MILES that day - some of time with UF athletes! We also took a bus ride to see how things grow around town and we visited the Harn Museum.



The children are enjoying who they are as they grow.

Important safety information from the Department of Children and Families

Each year children drown in bathtubs, buckets, coolers, ponds, ditches, fountains, hot tubs, toilets, pet water bowls and wading pools.

Most childhood drowning deaths occur when the parent or caregiver becomes distracted by the telephone, doorbell or chores around the home. Children can drown in a matter of seconds. If a child is missing, check the water first.



- Children must always be supervised by an adult when playing in or around water.
- Never allow a young child to be responsible for a younger sibling or playmate.
- Empty buckets immediately after use and store them upside down and out of a child's reach.
- Keep toilet seats down and consider using a lock or toilet clip to prevent toddlers from opening the toilet.

Newell Drive—Growing Gators

The Growing Gators teaching team would like to start off by congratulating the graduating VPK class of 2011!. We are all proud of our children who worked very hard this year, and we wish them luck in their adventures in Kindergarten. We will miss you all, and think of you often!

There are going to be a lot of new and exciting changes happening in the Growing Gators quad in the month of May. We are sad to see Ms. Karen leave our classroom (she's moving to our Village Drive location), but



Ms. Sonia

we are very happy to announce that Ms. Sonia will be joining us as a co-teacher for the VPK "Tigers" classroom with Ms. Nika. Ms. Sonia holds a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Florida, an Associate degree in Elementary Education from Santa Fe Community College, her Child Development Associate certificate, a Teaching certificate ages birth through 4 years of age, and a VPK certificate. Ms. Sonia brings to the classroom her fluency in Spanish and her love for children, new activities, and learning.

Starting May 9th we are going to have new class rosters. All the VPK children will be in the front classroom with Ms. Nika and Ms. Sonia in the new "Tiger" classroom. All the 3 and 4-year-olds will be split up in to the back two classrooms with either Ms. Braden in the "Lions" class or with Ms. Keri in the "Bear" class. Our aim is to provide the 3 and 4-year-olds the opportunity to transition into their future VPK classroom throughout the summer. Please look at the bulletin board for the new class rosters on May 9th and a description of your child's new teacher or teachers. As the VPK children leave for Kindergarten we will start transitioning the new VPK children in to the front classroom.

The Growing Gator's teachers plan on creating lesson plans for the two days following graduation to prepare the children for the changes, so that they will be prepared for the move as well. If you have any questions or concerns about the transition please do not hesitate to see your child's teacher. We are looking forward to all of the new and exciting changes the summer has to offer.



*"Don't cry because it's over.
Smile because it happened."*

~Dr. Seuss

Advertise in Baby Gator Tales

We will soon be adding advertisement space to the Baby Gator Tales issues. If you are interested in placing an ad in this newsletter for your business, please contact Debbie Sellers at Baby Gator Newell Drive (debbiesellers@ufl.edu) or Carol Flowers at Baby Gator Village Drive (carolflowers@ufl.edu) for ad submission forms or information.

All proceeds for ads will go directly to support the children at Baby Gator.



Ad space prices are as follows:

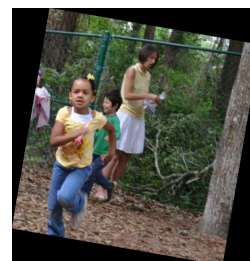
- ◆ Business Card ad: \$25.00
(business card must accompany order)
- ◆ Quarter Page ad: \$50.00
- ◆ Half Page ad: \$75.00
- ◆ Full page ad: \$150.00

Checks only—payable to the University of Florida.
Ads need to be submitted in *.txt, *.rtf, or *.html format.



by Kelly Jamison

P.H.I.T. Kids has had an exciting spring semester so far. In January we learned all about germs and how to keep our bodies healthy. We did activities on how germs spread, hand washing, covering our coughs and sneezes, and using tissues. Our little ones got to explore washing hands, tissue play, and February marked the start of National Children's Dental Health Month. We learned all about why we have teeth, how to take care of them, and visiting the dentist. A big thank you goes out to Dr. Curtis Von Gunten at Gainesville Family Dentistry for donating toothbrushes and toothpaste to all of our older Baby Gator children.



March marked the beginning of the Morning Mile program and P.H.I.T. Fieldtrip month. Our Growing Gator, Future Gator, and some of the 2 ½ year old classes (about 120 kids overall) have been partaking in the Morning Mile, a program designed to start each student's day with moderate to vigorous exercise. Each morning, during outside free choice time, there is a designated 15 minutes for the children to run a track the teachers have set up. The children have really taken off running! Since we began in March, the children have run almost 2,000 miles! It's truly amazing to see how much these kids will run.



The P.H.I.T. Fieldtrips for the month took each class to some part of the campus and got them active. Whether it was James G. Pressly Stadium at Percy Beard Track, Diamond Village Playground, Ficke Gardens, or McCarty Woods the children had a great time getting out of the classroom and off the playground for a new place to run.



The health education for April was all about safety. We started off the month talking about fire safety. We learned about hot things which are not safe to touch as well as what to do incase our clothing catch fire; STOP, DROP, ROLL! We've also talked about sun safety and ways we need to protect our skin from too much sun. April 18-22nd was National Screen Free Week, a campaign to get families and more importantly children to turn off the T.V. and find other activities to engage in. The children learned some fun activities to do instead of watching television.

In May we will be having the Baby Gator Family Field Day on Saturday the 14th from 9:00-11:00 a.m. Come join us for some good old fashion field day events! The summer months promise to be fun and exciting as they will be filled with some more P.H.I.T. fieldtrips and water related physical activities!

American Sign Language

by Karen Shea & Keri Stacey



The Sign Language Program at Baby Gator has recently presented at the North Central Florida Association for the Education of Young Children's annual Excellence in Early Childhood Education Conference and also at the at the G.A.T.O.R family Conference. It was a great opportunity for the Baby Gator sign language facilitators to get a chance work with other early childhood professionals and families in our community.

We would like to congratulate the VPK classes at both Newell and Village Drive as they graduate and move up to Kindergarten. At graduation the children performed songs using ASL, including an old time favorite, "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong.

We would like to share a fun Spring song that the children love to sing, called "Colors of the Rainbow".

Colors of the Rainbow

Sung to the tune of: 6 Little Ducks

First comes RED, then ORANGE too.

Next comes YELLOW, GREEN and BLUE.

Last comes PURPLE, now you know

All the COLORS in the RAINBOW!



PHIT for Success

Physical Healthy Interactive Training



by Kelly Jamison

The teachers and staff have had a really fun and camaraderie building spring semester. Everyone has been working hard in the classroom and out to lead healthier, happier lives!

In January we kicked off the New Year with a Team Fitness Challenge. There were six teams of four that participated by logging their minutes they worked out for an entire month. Team Blue Crush from Newell Drive (Rayne, Lizzie, Kristin, Ashley) won the challenge with 2525 minutes!

In January we also had a soup swap where everyone brought in a homemade soup to share. It was a delicious and healthy way to enjoy the cold weather.

February marked National Heart Health month. Friday, February 4th was the National Heart Associa-

tion's National Wear Red Day. Many of our teachers and staff showed support for this wonderful cause by wearing various shades of red. In February we also had Secret Valentines. We surprised our secret valentine with a special homemade card to show our love and friendship to one another.

March was National Nutrition Month and with the warmer weather already making its way here we had a Salad Swap. It was refreshing day filled with various salads such as Greek salad, spinach and couscous, and macaroni salads!

This past month we had everyone bring in a baby picture of themselves and fill out a short questionnaire so we could all play a little "Guess Who." It was a really cute way to not only get to know each other better but also see what everyone looked like when we were in preschool.



New Teachers and Staff

Sonja Castro - Newell Drive Team Teacher LG 2

Sonja joined the Baby Gator team in March of 2011, and has 14 years of child care experience. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Florida, an Associate degree in Elementary Education from Santa Fe Community College, her Child Development Associate certificate, a Teaching certificate ages birth through 4 years of age, and a VPK certificate. Some of her past experience in early childhood includes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Levy County, the Department of Education in Puerto Rico, and VPK teaching and tutoring for Alachua County Public schools.

Sonja brings to the classroom her fluency in Spanish and her love for children, new activities, and learning. Along with her constant effort to develop new and exciting learning projects for her students, she devotes much of her spare time to her two teenage girls, her inventing new recipes, and her love for cooking.



degree in Spanish from the University of Florida, an Associate degree in Elementary Education from Santa Fe Community College,

Caitlin Holmes - Newell Drive Team Teacher LG 2

Caitlin joined Baby Gator in January of 2011. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics and Portuguese from the University of Florida and holds a National CDA and FCCPC.

Caitlin has been working in early childhood education for over 3 years and brings with her the love for teaching and fun in the classroom.

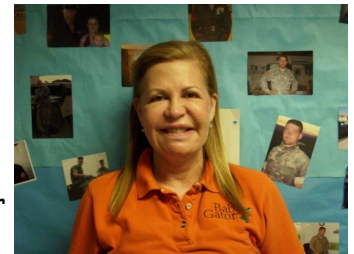
In her spare time she loves to make learning fun, sing and dance the Salsa, Bachata and Samba. She loves to learn about new cultures, enjoys speaking other languages and riding horses which she has been doing for over 17 years.



Yvonne Blechingberg - Newell Drive Team Teacher LG2

Yvonne joined the Baby Gator team in April of 2011, and has over 15 years of child care experience. She holds a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood from her home country, Caracas Venezuela, and Associate Degree in Elementary Education and is current acquiring a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education from Santa Fe Community College.

Yvonne brings to the classroom a love for music and dance and enjoys sharing new songs both in Spanish and English with her students. She devotes most of her spare time doing yoga, Zumba and playing golf with her sons and husband. Her favorite time of the year is Christmas when all the family gets together for a celebration.



Debbie Sellers - Newell Drive Office Assistant



Debbie joined Baby Gator in February of 2011. She came to us with over 13 years of experience working as an Administrator for Clay County and holds a Business Software Degree from the St. Augustine Technical School. In her spare time she likes to go camping and working on her Koi pond, a great collection of brightly colored Japanese koi fish. She also enjoys NASCAR, football, softball and volunteering with the community with different projects.

Food For Thought

Chef Steve Covolo enlightened us about the benefits of frozen vs. canned vegetables and brought the food program at Baby Gator/Village Drive to a whole new level - and for that we are truly grateful. We wish him well in his new home and career in California.

Our new cook is Ms. Shayla Penny, who has experience cooking for large groups with a variety of dietary needs and she has been doing a wonderful job.

The Food Committee meets monthly to review and improve our menus. We have added more "home-made" main dishes and are striving to offer fresh fruits and fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned for the majority of our meals. Just this week we have ordered whole wheat hot dog buns, dinner rolls, and pasta from our food supplier and they have indicated they will be carrying more whole wheat products in the future.



Recently we have invited two of our Baby Gator parents (who are dietitians/nutritionists) to review our menus and recipes and give us feedback on ways to further improve our food program within the USDA Child Care Food Program guidelines.

We welcome your input, also. Please contact Carol Flowers at carolflowers@ufl.edu with any questions, comments or suggestions for improving our food program.

Recipe of the Month — Creamy Asparagus Soup

A recipe from the Baby Gator International Cookbook

2 cups potatoes, peeled and diced
½ pound fresh asparagus, cut into ½ inch pieces
½ cup chopped onion
2 stalks celery, chopped
4 cups water
2 tablespoons butter
½ cup whole-wheat flour
1 ½ cups fat-free milk
Lemon zest, to taste
Cracked black pepper, to taste



In a large soup pot over high heat, combine the potatoes, asparagus, onions, celery and water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until the vegetables are tender (about 15 minutes). Stir in the butter.

In a small bowl, whisk together the flour and milk. Pour the mixture slowly into the soup pot, stirring constantly. Increase the heat to medium high and stir until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and ladle into soup bowls. Season with the lemon zest and cracked pepper.



"The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let food be your medicine."
- Hippocrates

Love Cookbooks?

Purchase a copy of the Baby Gator International Cookbook for interesting international recipes provided by Baby Gator parents, teachers and staff. The cookbooks are \$10 each and are available in the main office. They make great gifts, too!





**Baby Gator Child Development
and Research Center
at the University of Florida**

293 Village Drive
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-392-2330
Fax: 352-846-0503

1600 SW Archer Road
HD-G60-D
P.O. Box 100018
Gainesville, FL 32610
Phone: 352-273-8000
Fax: 352-273-8747

E-mail: carolflowers@ufl.edu
We're on the web at [www:babygator.ufl.edu](http://www.babygator.ufl.edu)

*All Baby Gator faculty and staff will participate in a retreat day
Thursday, May 5, 2011 from 8:00am-4:30pm
At Austin Cary Forest Lodge
The purpose of this meeting is to develop a strategic plan for
Baby Gator centers for the next 5 years.*



We will discuss Baby Gator's strengths and weaknesses, what we have accomplished, what we can accomplish next, and what we dream about accomplishing in the future.

Staff development retreats and workshops result in better quality teaching and caring relationships with the children of Baby Gator and their families.

We are most appreciative of your support during this retreat as we think, dream, and share.

Reading and Learning

Recently the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood organization (ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org) filed a Federal Trade Commission complaint against *Your Baby Can Read!*, a \$200 video series that encourages parents to put infants as young as three months in front of screens. The complaint is part of an ongoing campaign to support parents' efforts to raise healthy babies by stopping the false and deceptive marketing of "educational" baby videos.

Your Baby Can Read is advertised extensively on television and on the web. Its marketing is designed to take advantage of parents' natural inclinations to give children every possible advantage. Much of the marketing is targeted to parents of disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds for whom *Your Baby Can Read's* hefty price tag represents a

significant sacrifice. *Your Baby Can Read* urges parents to seize a "short window of opportunity" for reading that begins in infancy. However, there is no evidence that any such "window" exists.

According to literacy experts who have examined *Your Baby Can Read!*, the program does not teach actual reading; at best, it's memorization. Babies and toddlers may recognize written words but their brains aren't developed enough to actually learn to read. Nor is there evidence that babies who watch the videos are better readers later on. Promoters also claim the video watching will build self-confidence and self-esteem and set the stage for later academic success. There is no data connecting video watching and academic success.

Your Baby Can Read targets babies

as young as three months. If parents follow the viewing instructions, their baby will have watched more than 200 hours of *Your Baby Can Read* by the age of nine months. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under age two. Research has linked infant screen time to sleep disturbances and delayed language acquisition, as well as problems in later childhood such as poor school performance and childhood obesity.

Want to encourage literacy? Read to your child. As many books as you can. That's a proven pathway to reading and learning.

