



Baby Gator Tales

Director's Message

Baby Gator's playgrounds are going natural! Natural playgrounds consist of trees, grass, shrubs, vegetables and flowers. The space is filled with hills, pathways, open areas, dirt, sand, and water that create sounds, smells, and texture in which to play. Vegetation naturally cools and softens play areas while providing opportunities for children to observe, care for, and appreciate nature.

Research has found that children who play regularly in natural environments demonstrate more advanced motor and cognitive skills. A setting rich in colors and sounds enhances the development of sensory skills; learning to cross a log bridge requires concentration, problem-solving, and creativity as well as balance and coordination.

Experiences in the natural world have been positively linked with the development of imagination and a sense of wonder, both important motivators for lifelong learning. The Lake Alice and

Newell playgrounds will have fewer hard surfaces and more sand, grass, and mulch. Plastic play structures will be replaced with bamboo tunnels, log stepping stones, a shallow rippling brook and raised garden beds.

Working with landscape architects, our plans are still evolving. Please mark the date for our *Dig into the Playground* event on February 14. Enjoy an evening of fine food and wine and live and silent auctions, view the proposed playgrounds and support this project.

Next summer you just might want to join water day and put your toes in a cool brook too!



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

November 2012
 Volume 3, Issue 2

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Lesson Plan Themes

December
 The World of Music



January
 Ice, Ice Baby

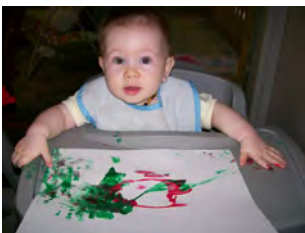


February
 All You Need Is Love



Lake Alice –Tiny Gators

Fall is officially here and we are very excited about all of the fun activities we have planned. We are looking forward



to spending time with our families during the Thanksgiving Feast and Holiday program and sharing with you how our costume parade and dessert potluck went. All of these gatherings will provide our families with an

opportunity to get to know each other and enjoy the growing and changes our babies will experience in the next couple of months.

Looking back on the last three months, we have had so much fun! During the month of July our lesson topic was "Passport Around the World". Our friends enjoyed finger painting the American and Mexican flags and enjoyed listening to multicultural music while playing with dancing scarves. Towards the end of the month, we got to explore the sound of the African drums! Our babies loved patting on the drums to hear the different sounds.

In August, we learned about "Amazing Animals". We enjoyed crushing tissue paper to create our lion manes and listening to the neat sound it made. To celebrate our fa-



vorite team, we used cold green paint on the babies' feet to make gator footprints! We also loved opening the doors to see what animals were behind our peek-a-boo board.

September is the month we focused on "All About me". We had fun looking at ourselves in the mirror and pointing out our body parts. We also learned how to use our hands for sign language. We really focused on the signs for "please", "thank you", "eat" and "more". It is so exciting to see how quickly the babies pick up on this language. For anyone who is interested, we have a baby sign language video you can check out from our classroom; just ask one of us.

We would like to welcome all our new babies. It has been great getting to know these babies and to see how they have grown during the last 3 months. We have gone from rolling to crawling, sitting to standing and even have an "early" walker. We are so proud of our class!

Thank you for your continued support and donations to our classroom!

Tiny Gators teachers-
Robin, Drew, Linda and Ethel



Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Tiger Lilies



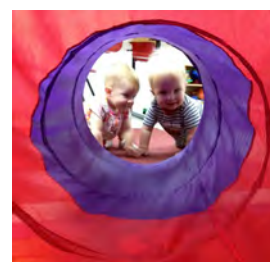
In July, we took a trip around the world! We explored different types of music from Celtic to African music. We also took a trip down reading rainbow and read some stories from different locations like

Cinderella, and Hansel and Gretel. The little "Picassos" in us also came out, from painting with potatoes, to drawing with pudding. Our senses were jammed pack with loads of fun sensory activities.

We roared through August, from animals in the safari to Old McDonalds Farm. We played with different textures that animals would have like silky, slimy, rough, and fluffy. We also played different types of animals noises to open are ears to the animals around us. One of our favorite

stories we read during this month was "Rainbow Fish."

September rolled around and the theme was "All About me." We learned about our senses and our body. We got to smell different types of spices, feel different textures, look at all different body parts, and a whole lot more. This



was a month that the children loved a whole lot.

Lastly, the Tiger Lilies just want to say a big thank you to all the help from our parents.

Tiger Lilies teacher-
Alyssa



Lake Alice—Little Gators 1: Orange Blossoms & Sunflowers



Hello to everyone. It sure was a busy summer. I do believe we have all new faces in each class - so welcome to all our

new friends and their families. We hope you have had a chance to meet our new team teacher, Miss Debbie. She is wonderful!

In July we explored our world using the "Passport Around the World" theme. We "visited" the United State, France, and Hawaii. The children decorated flags from various countries and listened to different types of music.



What fun!

In August, we focused on amazing animals. We learned about the life cycle of a bullfrog then about giant squids - how big they get and what they like to eat, and also looked at pictures of stingrays and other amazing animals. It was quite interesting.



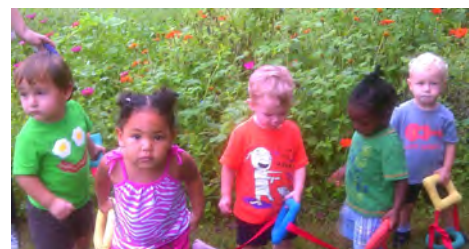
Water days continued through the summer months and ended in September when we turned our attention to learning "All About Me". The children discovered unique things about themselves and their friends.

We continually teach your children about their world through play, reading, music and art. To help your children learn their shapes and colors we select a shape and color each month and use those in multiple lessons and activities throughout the month.



We are looking forward to a great year with your children.

Orange Blossoms and Sunflowers teachers- Kristie, Ashley, Lisa and Debbie



"What nourishes the imagination? Probably more than anything else, loving adults who encourage the imaginative play of children's own making."

Fred Rogers

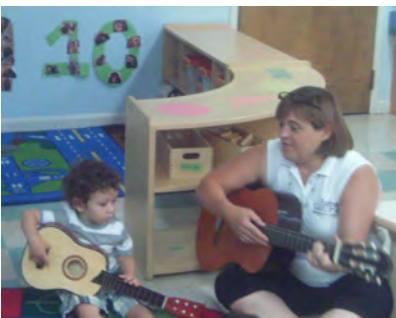
Lake Alice—Little Gators 2: Magnolias & Dandelions

Hello All,

During the month of July, we took a trip around the world in play. We packed our suitcases to prepare for our trip on an airplane. We built pyramids with boxes in Egypt, and then we went to China and practiced using chopsticks. We went to Australia and pretended to be kangaroos.



The month of August was all about animals. We explored the animals around Baby Gator—fish, turtles, squirrels, and alligators—oh my! We enjoyed many walks around campus. Children also enjoyed arts and crafts creating the animals' habitats, such as caves and nests. We pretended to be squirrels gathering nuts for the winter.



In September, we were busy bees—planted a garden, went on a field trip to the Natural History Museum, experi-

enced the butterfly life cycle first-hand, and explored live worms in dirt. We also introduced the fall season by going on a walk to find fall leaves around campus. We did not find any leaves so we created our own and made a great big leaf pile to jump in.



October was our "ooey goeey" month! We participated in major sensory activities—painted with feet, mummy wraps (toilet paper fun), explored sticky foods and the inside of pumpkins,

and ooblaque (cornstarch and water science experiment of liquids and solids).

Thanks for all your support!

Magnolias & Dandelions teachers—
Kim, Symoine and Amber



Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Grasshoppers

During the month of June the Grasshoppers enjoyed water, water everywhere, where they explored all kinds of water play activities throughout the month.

The month of July was a very fascinating time for the G-Hops because we “traveled” around the world with “passports”. We learned about countries such as the USA, Korea, China, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Haiti. WOW! What fun.



During the month of August the G-Hops talked about and explored the many different “Amazing Animals” around the world and we ended with a field trip to Lake Alice to see the alligators, turtles and other animals.



In the month of September we learned about and explored our five senses by doing activities that involved us using the sense of touch, smell, taste, sight, and sound.

We also enjoy our music time with Ms. Anne where we get to sing and play along with her and show off our musical talent.

The Grasshoppers teachers-
Febi, Sherrie and Lisa



From Hedda Sharapan -

Child Development Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at the Fred Rogers Company

Halloween reminds us how much dress-up play means to children. It is important to help children know what's real and what's pretend. Children can easily get so “lost” in their pretending that they lose sight of reality. Of course that's a problem if they're doing things that aren't safe, like pretending to be a superhero and jumping off a high place. But don't forget that getting “lost” in their pretending also has great benefits because it can give them the opportunity to explore some of their feelings, develop empathy and build self-regulation. There are many reasons for teachers and parents to applaud, appreciate and encourage dress-up play. Children often feel powerless, so no wonder they like to put on symbols of power, like a superhero cape, a mommy's purse or a daddy's shoes. Through pretending, children are literally “walking in someone else's shoes”. Dress-up play gives them a chance to see what it feels like to be somebody else...to feel somebody else's feelings and needs...to think of situations from other people's perspectives. When we give children the opportunity to put on different kinds of costumes, simple or elaborate, we give them wonderful opportunities to develop some important social-emotional skills.

Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Bumblebees

The Bumble Bees are on the move, doing their business of learning, exploring, and experimenting. At the beginning of Fall they discussed things they like to do with their families and places they enjoyed visiting. They learned about community helpers, and already they have chosen what they would like to be when they become grown-ups.

Over the Summer, they had a whopping water experimenting fun time. They experimented with sinking, floating, absorbing, and mixing as they dashed, splashed, and washed their way through elements of anything watery. Their watery experience was taken to another level when they visited the UF Museum of Natural History to observe and learn more facts about one of our valuable resources - "water."



Harvest Time for the Bumble Bees included learning about the planting of different vegetables and fruits, and the foods that are made from these plants. They had hands-on experience picking kernels off corncobs, and measured how many cups of kernels they collected.

Another hot topic for the Bumble Bees was the sky and above. They blasted off to explore the moon,

stars, planets and sun. They even created their own alien outfits and their night sky universe.



Harvest Festival and Halloween Celebration were the grand finale of our Harvest Time experience. The Bumble Bees were so happy and excited to participate in games, face painting, prizes, and many other special treats. Later, they prepared for their Halloween celebration by creating their own masks, dress-up in costumes and pretend to "Boo" each other as they walked around the classroom collecting treats during dramatic play period.



Bumblebees teachers-
Dorothy and Donna



Lake Alice—Growing Gators: Dragonflies

The Dragonflies would like to welcome Ms. Jackie to our classroom! She will be a great new addition and we're all excited she is here.

During the month of September we really got to know ourselves by learning how to identify and express our emotions, brushing up on our personal hygiene (taking care of our teeth!), understanding body awareness, and dreaming about our endless future career options. The Dragonflies took a field trip to the South West Rec Center to help us understand how to have fun



Future "Astronauts"! Blast Off!

while exercising! We had a blast! We also visited Library West, one of the libraries at the University of Florida. The children learned what it takes to be a librarian. At the end, children got to check out their very own library book and eat fun snacks given to us by the library! We got a special visit from Isa's mom, who painted the children's faces (whatever they wanted - penguins, zebras, panda bears, and guitars)! Greyson's dad also came to visit us and he got to stay the whole day! The children enjoyed listening to him play the guitar and even learning about static electricity.

October has been all about space (for National Space Week), vegetables, trees and seasons, pumpkins, and spooky creatures (cats, jack-o-lanterns, mummies, ghosts, and witches). The children made astronaut helmets and pretended to blast off ... to Florida! We also dissected, carved, and painted pumpkins. The children had a great time at our Fall Festival, the field trip to Publix (to buy pumpkins), and trick-or-treating at the College of Education!



"Thank you to all of the subs for your hard work. The children love playing with you and the teachers appreciate your help."

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"Mouth" painting

Thank you Dragonfly parents for all of your time and donations. The children and teachers really appreciate it. We could not do what we do without you!

Dragonflies teachers-
Katie & Jackie



Upcoming Events/Closings

- ◆ December 9 at 3:00pm—Winter Multicultural Music Program at Stetson Auditorium (HSC Building)
- ◆ December 24—all Baby Gator centers close at noon
- ◆ December 25—Baby Gator at Newell Drive will be closed
- ◆ December 25 through January 1—Baby Gator at Lake Alice and Baby Gator at PK Yonge will be closed
- ◆ December 31—Baby Gator at Newel Drive will close at noon
- ◆ January 1—Baby Gator at Newell Drive will be closed

Lake Alice—Future Gators: Fireflies

Hola and Bonjour from the Fireflies! We are busy as usual with preparing for Kindergarten, traveling on Field Trips, and celebrating the wonder of being a Future Gator!



Gator Walk

In July we traveled around the world exploring food and culture from other countries. We learned all about the different continents and what it would be like to live in a foreign land. Of course we celebrated the 4th of July with a Red, White, and Blue party and lots of National Spirit.

In August we took our first class field trip to the Reitz Union Bowling Alley! The children had some high scores and loads of fun. We also participated in the Future Gator Olympics with events like the long jump, gymnastics



Olympics 2012

and the 40 yard dash. The Beef Teaching Unit was a treat for the eyes, but not for the nose as we met some very stinky pigs! Towards the end of the month, we had a great time heading to the Santa Fe Zoo to see some Amazing Animals. August began our Friday "Gator Walks", where we take on-campus walks with intense Orange and Blue Spirit.



U.S.A.

If you happen to see us out and about, make sure to give us a Gator Chomp!

September was filled with loving and learning All About Us! We embraced our unique and individual qualities, as well as identifying with what makes us similar. In keeping with that theme, we celebrated "National Firefly Day" with a Black

and Yellow party for our classroom. We went Trick-Or-Treating at the Reitz Union in October and are celebrating The First Thanksgiving in November.



National Firefly Day

Fireflies teachers-
Jennifer & Alex

Lake Alice—Future Gators: Ladybugs

Greetings Ladybug Families,

Three months have gone by so quickly and this is probably because we have been very busy growing our brains.

We are enjoying preparing for kindergarten. We are working very hard on letter sounds and blends to make words. Your child may be practicing addition and subtraction problems with you, which they are mastering with ease. When you make education fun, the learning comes easily.



Resting during nature walk

We have enjoyed wonderful field trips and an array of special visitors. Ms. Katey is working on keeping our drop box filled with fun photos.

We are getting ready for our wonderful holiday program so please mark your calendar as soon as the date is set. Ms. Cyndi and Ms. Katey are looking forward to the rest of the year with great activities.

Ladybugs teachers-
Katey & Cyndi



Gator Walk and visiting with Jeremy Foley!

Friendships Matter

September 21, 2012

"The strength of your friendships is as critical for your health as the lifestyle choices you make," writes Elizabeth Svoboda in "[Lessons for Living](#)" in **Psychology Today** (September 2012). Her insight has implications — both for adults, as well as the children we care for.

Svoboda contends "We've all heard the usual advice for living longer: exercise more, quit smoking, limit junk food. But nurturing your relationships plays an important role as well. Researchers speculate that the stress associated with low social support sets off a cascade of damaging reactions within the body, including cardiovascular dysfunction and weakened immune resistance. Supportive friendships may do as much to promote your physical well being as a top-notch diet and workout regime. 'The higher the quantity and quality of your relationships, the longer you live,' says Bert Uchino, a psychologist at the University of Utah.

Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge

Baby Gator at P.K. Yonge is having a wonderful Fall. It's great to be a Baby Gator Dreamer and Explorer at the new location on the campus of P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School. We are thrilled to be on this beautiful campus. Our classrooms are thriving, full of fresh new faces and different experiences. We take walks collecting Fall leaves and enjoy rolling down the hill in the field.

We went "Back to Basics" in September and discovered all the diverse countries we were from such as Venezuela, Brazil, Turkey, China, and Russia. This has taught us new ways to communicate in foreign languages, such as Spanish, Portuguese and Turkish. We started October with a visit from the Sphinx Virtuosi, a conductor-less ensemble comprised of string instruments. The children were fascinated and enjoyed singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star with a cello, viola, and violin. It was beautiful.

In the Dreamer classroom we are transitioning just like the seasons we're learning about. We've shined throughout the summer exploring the campus that surrounds us. As the leaves fall and Autumn arrives we're changing as well, to search for even more adventurous ways to flourish in the season by identifying leaves, harvesting fruits and vegetables, and absorbing what each other knows.

During the month of September the Explorers learned all about our new friends. We learned where our families moved from and what schools we attended before coming to Baby Gator. We've been working hard on the alphabet, numbers, science and having lots of fun along the way.

We can hardly wait for the Fall Festival and Thanksgiving Feast here at Baby Gator's newest center.

Dreamers and Explorers teachers-
Ashley, Jorge, Bivy and Wendy



"Children's curiosity always needs to be encouraged and supported. More important than what we say is letting our children know that we welcome their asking us about anything they don't understand. Just applauding and listening to a child's questions can be all the encouragement he or she needs."

Fred Rogers

Newell Drive—Tiny Gators



Wow! The children have grown so much; almost all of them are walking or standing on their own. They are so busy using their new motor skills.

Our class is enjoying the fall weather by going on lots of stroller walks. We are also doing fun activities like making thanksgiving placemats and having pumpkin sensory play. We had a great fall festival for the children. They surely enjoyed riding in the hay wagons at the event.

We look forward to having some of you come play with your children and their friends. Know that you are always welcome, and thank you for sharing your children with us.

Tiny Gators teachers,
Rachel, Rene, Tonge, Tammy and Patti



Newell Drive—LG 1's: Rainbow Fish

The past few months have been very exciting for the Rainbow Fish class. As the children turn two,



our curriculum has changed to properly meet our children's needs. In our class, we have been using scissors and tweezers to improve our fine motor skills. We have been working on letter and number recognition. Face Painting has become one of their favorite activities. The children are constantly asking to be made into puppies, kitties and even pirates.



During the month of October we have been focusing on fall theme activities such as harvesting, pumpkin carving, apple orchards



and Halloween. The children have really enjoyed making pumpkin pie and edible mud dirt. When covering the topic of Halloween, the children got a chance to become mummies and created their own bats, ghosts, and skeletons.



As the weather cools we have been taking advantage of it by going on campus walks. The children love seeing different locations on campus. They were really excited to see all the blue trees around our beautiful campus.

We had a great time at the fall harvest festival. Our parents have been very helpful in volunteering their time and energy to make this wonderful event possible. The Rainbow Fish children and teachers thank you!



Rainbow Fish teachers-
Ari and Latanya

NEWELL DRIVE-LG2—BEAVERS & OTTERS

The LG2 classroom at Newell Drive has been very busy these last few months.

The Beaver classroom has been working on potty training with great success! The Beaver classroom has also gone for a ride on the city bus to the museum and the Bat House; of course the children's favorite part is the bus ride. One of the many science experiments that the Beavers did was to make a volcano explode. They first created the volcano with home-made concrete, painting it to look realistic and carrying it to the field where to the children it became REAL!



The Beavers invited the Otters to experience the excitement of the eruption. The Beavers explore on a daily basis in their normal routine. They recently had the opportunity to become helminthologists (worm studiers)! The bravery of all the children in the suite was tested when we invited the lizard man to show all sorts of creepy crawly items including lizards, snakes and a tarantula! Kylie, a Santa Fe College Practicum student has been a very familiar face in the Beaver classroom this semester and the children have really enjoyed having her as a teacher.



The Otter classroom also has taken fieldtrips on the city bus, the Santa Fe Zoo, the Natural History Museum with the discovery zone and butterfly park along with the physics building lobby display. This exhibit is open to all and is a GREAT science at work interactive display! The children also go on adventure walks as part of their curriculum. A walk through the woods may lead to dinosaurs, hidden letters or even owls on Spook Hill.

In the summer months the children enjoyed the fire truck coming for water day and cooling us all off with their water hoses. For the entire summer and into the fall we travelled the globe. Using our passports and our monkey tour guide, Jeffery, we managed to visit all seven continents learning about culture, food, architecture, history and animals. In Italy we painted the Sistine chapel. In India we mailed Elephants, and in Alaska a moose came to school and vandalized our classroom. (Now every time the children find a mess in the room they say "The Moose Did It!") All of these activities come from a literary extension.



During the month of animals one week was devoted to dinosaurs where the children became paleontologists, wearing little white gloves to touch the bones that they discovered in the ancient ruins after gently brushing away the sand. Once all of the bones were found they assisted in putting together the bones to make a dinosaur.

Some of the other activities that the Otter classroom has been diligently working on are name recognition, letter sounds, one to one correspondence and parts of speech. The children are excited about learning and look forward to the Morning Message. The morning message now includes basic use of punctuation. The children have learned where to start reading a sentence, where to end a sentence, that a comma means to pause then continue, and that there are voice inflections associated with exclamation points and questions marks. Their energy and desire to learn is motivating and exiting.

Beavers and Otters teachers-
Caitlin, Angela, Rayne and Lee



NEWELL DRIVE-LG2—Manatees

Hello from the Manatee class!

Since we all moved from LG1 to LG2 in June, we have been keeping busy with our new big kid activities, like brushing our teeth, pottying all by ourselves, and running the Morning Mile. We have also been spending a lot of time with the Tigers class in *Growing Gators*, learning from their great examples, and bringing a little extra 2-year-old silliness to their lives.



Some of our favorite activities in our new class have been:

*our week of pets which included visits from Ms. Nina's dog Lucy, Ms. Nika's cat, Ms. Caitlin's rat, Ms. Angie's hamster, Bonnie the Bunny and the "Reptile Guy," who brought exotic animals which excited the kids much more than some of the teachers.



*our world travels, packed with sushi rolling, borscht brewing, character tracing, pyramid building, and general America appreciating.



*our lessons on dinosaurs, which concluded with a trip to the Florida Museum of Natural History to "Cruise the Fossil Freeway."

*our recent explorations of all things fall including leaf hunts, pumpkin pie, creepy crawlies and a visit to the Bat House.

Also with fall comes football season, and we continue to foster our children's love for the Gators with trips to campus and the stadium, on which we practice our Gator cheers and proudly sport our colors.



But don't take our word for it. Here's what the kids have to say about their favorite part of being a Manatee:



- Aiden, Sofia and Samantha- "The City Bus"
- Sebastian- "Flamingos and Peacocks"
- Emma- "Sebastian and Sofia"
- Oscar- "Tractors, Fire truck, The Bat House"
- Kendall- "Playing with Sofia"

Ellie- "Going to the tippy top (of the Stadium) and seeing the Gators with Lucy (her sister in the Tigers class)"

Go Gators!

Manatee's teachers-
Angie and Nina



NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gators—Lions

Since the last newsletter we have welcomed in a new Lion class for the 2012-2013 classroom year! Big hugs and warm welcomes to Connor, Zoe, Misha, Juliette, Aidyn, Ciaran, Kaden, Rylan, and Olivia! We have already enjoyed so many adventures together as the new Lions class!



Summertime brought us Water Day fun and a 4th of July celebration. The local Firefighters came out for a Water Day visit at the end of the summer and the kids had a blast running through the waterfall created by the fire hose. For the 4th of July, we took a walk outside Baby Gator with our American flags and sang patriotic songs. In August, we were treated to a visit from Sophia's grandmother, Tutu. She taught us all about Hawaii! We learned some Hawaiian words and played various Hawaiian instruments. We had so much fun, we hope she comes back to visit again soon!



Now that autumn is upon us, we have been exploring the changes that fall brings, such as colorful leaves and harvesting crops. We have enjoyed painting with apples, making leaf rubbings, tasting baked pumpkin



seeds, and carving jack o' lanterns for the Fall Festival. We are enjoying the nice cool weather outside



We thank you for joining us for the Fall Festival on the last day of October. It was sure sweet and spooky fun!

Lions teacher-
Braden



A Recipe from the Baby Gator International Cookbook

Butternut Squash Mashed Potatoes—Philip Calvert

- 3 pounds russet potatoes
- 2 pounds butternut squash
- 1/4 pound butter
- 2 cups heavy cream

Ground nutmeg, salt and white pepper to taste

This is a winter favorite, goes great with roasted chicken or turkey. Peel and cube potatoes and squash. Cook in water until done but do not over-cook. Drain well, return to pan or bowl and add butter. Add cream while mashing with a hand masher. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper, mix thoroughly. To serve, put mixture into a shallow baking dish, spray top with cooking spray, bake or broil until top is golden brown.



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!



NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gators—Bears

During these past months we have had a positive feedback from parents and administrations regarding our activities. During the month of July we Travel around the World we visited United States - Hawaii, Japan, Africa and



Spain. We had a special speaker, a grandmother of one of our students, who brought in her ukulele and other Hawaiian instruments. "Tutu" (Mrs. Marilyn) as her granddaughter calls her was a teacher in Hawaii. Thank You Tutu.

We also learned that in Japan there is a Hinamatsuri Day. "The day of the Dolls" commemorates ancestors. Hinamatsuri Day is a celebration day for girls in Japan. It takes place on March 3rd every year and Japanese families make wishes for the good health, growth, and happiness for their girls. For this reason, it is also known as Girls' Day. Children brought in their dolls to display them in our classroom.



Summer was so much fun. We had a blast, every Friday we were able to get super wet, get muddy, and gooey, you name it we did it.

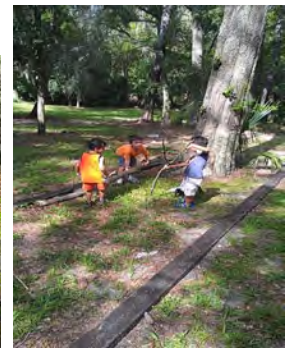
In August we took a walk looking for ant hills. We learned that ants work together to make their colonies big and strong. This was an important event in our new Bears and Lions class because it was one of our first walks for our new big boys and girls. Our lesson was based on animal habitat, therefore why not take a bin full of animals and walk to the play ground at Diamond Village and make habitats for our animals.



Every day is a day of learning and fun.

Happy Fall from the Bears class.

Bears teacher-
Sonia



"I sustain myself with the love of family."
Maya Angelou

NEWELL DRIVE - Growing Gators—Tigers



Hello from the Tiger class,

July's theme was Countries around the World. During this month we invited our parents to come and teach us about their cultural background. We had several parents come talk to us about, China, America, India and Japan. It was so much fun getting to learn about all the different cultures in our classroom. We also created our own passport and wrote the names of each country we visited and drew a picture of something we would see there. To conclude our multicultural month we went to the Harn Art Museum and had a multicultural potluck. Along with our themed lessons in July, every Friday we had fun in the sun for Water day.



In August we learned about "Amazing Animals" which included ocean, jungle, dinosaurs, extinct vs. endangered animals, and desert animals. We explored these various habitats and

the differences between them. We went on a field trip to the Natural History Museum where we got to see fossils of dinosaurs and extinct animals. We also had a visit from the Fire Truck for water day. The fire truck came and sprayed us while we ran around the playground. It was a lot of fun!



September's theme was "All About Me". We participated in a variety of activities that allowed us to explore who we are as individuals and how we can work together as a Tiger Family. We learned a lot about helping others and how that makes us feel. We took the Manatee class on a walk up to Century Tower and to see the giant dancing statues. While on the walk each Tiger held a Manatee's hand and kept them safe. We also learned about the importance of families and friends. We talked about what it means to be a good friend and participated in numerous activities that reinforced being a respectful and helpful friend. Also in September we learned about our 5 senses. Every day for a week we learned about a different sense. We loved getting to explore our sense of



taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight.

In October we learned about the four seasons. We compared the similarities and differences between the seasons. We also learned about how to live a healthy lifestyle. We discussed MyPlate, the importance of oral health and how to keep our



heart healthy. While learning about keeping our heart healthy, we took a walk

to the stadium with the Manatee class. After our field trip to the stadium we went to Publix to learn about healthy eating. Along with fire safety month, we invited the fire department to come teach us about fire safety.

We have had an awesome past few months and we can't wait to see what fun activities Ms. Nika and Ms. Cheryl have planned for us in the future!



Tigers teachers-
Nika and Cheryl

American Sign Language

by Keri Stacey



"Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand." ~Chinese Proverb

The American Sign Language program proudly reports a significant increase in the use and understanding of ASL in our Baby Gator classrooms! As part of our improvements to the ASL program here at Baby Gator our older



children have been focusing on learning signs in more generalized themes including colors, animals and manners during

the past few months. Streamlining and creating a more efficient curriculum has already showed great promise for the new and exciting changes to come! Our Tiny Gators are beginning their sign language journey with simple signs for everyday use, don't worry, parents - you can use these too ;-)

As always, the ASL lesson plans include books, games and music to make learning a fun and interactive experience. If you would like to receive copies of the weekly lesson plans for your child, please send me a request at thekeribear@ufl.edu. Please include in your email your name, your child's name and the name of the class that they are in.



For parents who may like some more information on some of the benefits of using ASL with children, or for parents who may want to learn some signs to use with your child at home, I have an great reference in my parent

resource library titled, "Sign with Your Baby: How to communicate with infants before they can speak" by Dr. Joseph Garcia. The kit includes a DVD, a quick reference guide and a book. Many parents have borrowed it in the past, and all have found the material to be well organized and informative.



I can also suggest the following links to parents who are interested in learning signs at home:

Online resources:

- <http://www.aslpro.com/>
- <http://www.lifeprint.com/>
- <http://aslbrowser.commtechlab.msu.edu/browser.htm>
- <http://www.signingsavvy.com/>

As the winter holidays approach, the music program and sign language program have been working together to prepare this year's annual Baby Gator Multicultural Performance which will be presented in December. The children are learning a lot of new signs for the holidays and are having fun as sign and song come together. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to send me an email at thekeribear@ufl.edu



Happy signing!
Keri



by Nika Lorenz

These past few months have been a whirlwind of fun for the PHIT Kids program. The children are thoroughly enjoying all the different physical and nutritional activities.



In July the children learned the importance of street safety, practiced their balance and explored various games played with different sized balls. For street safety, the children were taught the meaning of different street signs and learned how to be safe when walking by the road. We practiced what we learned with a campus walk. The children had a great time practicing their balance and playing some new games with the balance beam and balancing stones. The younger children got the opportunity to explore different textured balls.

In August the children participated in parachute play. They loved playing the different parachute games, especially loved running under the parachute. Along with all the physical activities the children started the lessons on different food groups. We discussed the importance of each food group to our health. We played fun games that expanded the children's knowledge of healthy eating and healthy living.



In September, the focus of PHIT Kids was the different food groups. We broke down the grain, fruit and vegetable groups. When learning about the grain group the children sorted different types of grains, explored bread with their 5 senses and learned how wheat is made into bread. They then explored the fruit and vegetable group by playing fun sorting games while singing "Old McDonald Had a Farm" - the farmer raised fruits and vegetables instead of animals. Besides learning healthy eating habits, the kids got to test their coordination with an obstacle course and the beginning of the morning mile. The morning mile has become a huge hit. It is amazing to see their progress every day. I absolutely love going into the classrooms and seeing how much they have run the previous week.

Along with fun classroom activities, this September was our 4th semi-annual field day. Over 98 families joined us this year! There were many exciting events that the children participated in. These events included; an obstacle course, face painting, goal kick, target toss, sack races, 40 yard dash, etc. We are planning on having another fantastic field day in March. Hope to see you all out there!



In the future months, the children will learn about the milk food group and the meat and beans food group. The children will also be introduced to MyPlate the new way of describing healthy eating, replacing MyPyramid. Some of the physical activities will

include obstacle courses, and rotating physical fitness centers (jumping jacks, races, hoppers and target toss). Please feel free to email Nika Lorenz with any questions or comments you have about PHIT kids. Nikal@ufl.edu



Music Program



by Anne Roberts

Music is in the air at Baby Gator! All classes are having a great time learning songs about autumn, Halloween, and how animals prepare for the coming winter. Some favorite songs include "Hurry, Hurry", "Gray Squirrel", "Five Little Pumpkins", and "I'm a Jack-o-lantern". It's so much fun to hear the children burst into giggles when they finish singing "Stirring My Brew" and shout "Boo!" The classes have also been enjoying activities featuring stories that rhyme, rhythm instruments, making shakers to use while singing, and creative movement while listening to music.

The Future Gators from our Lake Alice campus took a fun and educational field trip on November 14th to hear the carillon on the UF campus. Dr. Laura Ellis and her students treated us to not only a carillon concert but a pipe organ demonstration as well. LG-2, Grasshoppers, Growing Gators, Future Gators, Dreamers and Explorers are also learning songs and ASL for the upcoming Holiday Multicultural music program to be held on December 9th. The performance will take place in the Stetson Auditorium in the Medical Science Building. Musical selections will include songs about Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Ramadan, and Chinese New Year. Let's give a big "thank-you" to Ms. Keri for teaching the sign language and also to Ms. Febi from Lake Alice for volunteering to help with the program, as well. It should be a great success!

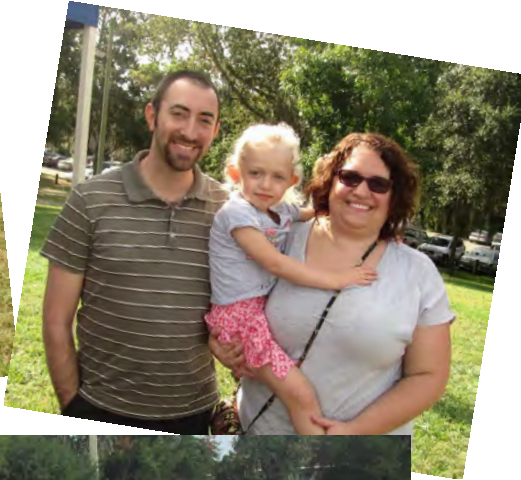


Please let me know if there are particular songs, singers, or rhyming books that your children are fond of. I love to incorporate the children's interests in music lessons so that they can carry what they learn beyond music class. The Alachua County Public Library has been a great resource for me and has a wealth of materials to share.

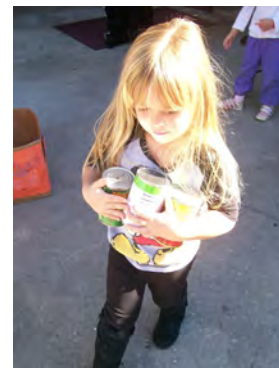
Happy singing!
Anne

Swedish Proverb
Those who wish to sing, always find a song.

Field Day—September 2012



Food Drive—October 2012



Thank you for helping us make a difference.
Between our 3 centers and the HR department we have raised over
870 pounds of goods!!
We appreciate your continued support for our community!



Fall Festival—October 2012

*Costume contest winners —The Tiny Gators teachers
Ms. Linda, Ms. Drew, Ms. Ethel, and Ms. Robin*



Digging the Love!

Save the Date

February 14 benefit for UF Baby Gator
Child Development and Research Centers



Chris Machen & Danette Good invite you to attend a fundraising event to benefit UF Baby Gator Child Development Centers, including the creation of "natural" playgrounds. Natural playgrounds encourage children to use their imaginations while simultaneously experiencing the smells, textures and wonders of the natural world.

SAVE THE DATE

- When:** Thursday, February 14, 2013
(Valentine's Day)
- Time:** 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
- Where:** [UF President's House](#)
- What:** An evening of food, drinks and live and silent auctions with UF soccer coach **Becky Burleigh** as Master of Ceremonies
- Tickets:** \$50 per person

For more information please visit: <http://www.babygator.ufl.edu/playground.htm>



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

Pamela J. Pallas, Ph.D., Director

Lake Alice center:
793 Corry Circle
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-392-2330
Fax: 352-846-0503

Newell Drive center:
1244 Newell Drive
P.O. Box 10018
Gainesville, FL 32610
Phone: 352-273-8000
Fax: 352-273-8747

P.K. Yonge center:
1080 SW 11th Street
Gainesville, FL 32601
Phone: 352-392-3042
Fax: 352-392-3043

E-mail: carolflowers@ufl.edu



Potluck lunch at Baby Gator Newell Drive

