



DISCOVER,  
LEARN,  
SHINE.  
Watch Us Grow

## Elizabeth's Early Learning Center

A nurturing community where any child can discover, learn and shine.

Spring 2015



### *The Great Outdoors A Natural Classroom*

Happy Spring! Everyone was so happy when the snow melted, the sun came out, and spring arrived. At EELC, we are busy turning our playground into an outdoor classroom.

### Items Needed for Our Outdoor Classroom (Donations are Appreciated)

- Large Planters
- Collections of seashells, rocks, pine cones, fossils, etc.
- Butterfly Bushes
- Round slices of tree trunks to use as blocks
- Sections of tree trunks to use as stools
- Bird feeders
- Wind Chimes
- Windsocks
- Large, yard-size pinwheels
- Outdoor musical instruments

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Children are natural explorers. They use all of their senses to explore the world around them. Exploring nature is one form of active learning that does not require children to sit quietly at a desk. The fresh air is good for them and the wide-open space gives children an opportunity to run and climb which promotes good health and helps prevent childhood obesity.

While on the playground, children are provided with binoculars and magnifying glasses to get a closer look as they explore. They learn about living things by planting seeds, preparing the garden beds, watching the trees during the changes of seasons, and feeding the birds. They study weather by learning to use a thermometer and rain gauge, by studying wind directions with windsocks and pinwheels, and by listening to the music made by the wind chimes. Language and problem solving skills improve as children wonder and explore, ask questions, search for patterns and relationships, and share ideas.

Literacy and the arts have a place on the playground, too. Children love to read books under the shade of a tree. Through journaling, they can describe what they experience outdoors. They can paint at the easels, spray liquid watercolors, and color with chalk on the sidewalk.

With an outdoor classroom, learning is interesting, challenging, healthy, and **FUN!!!!!!**



## Getting Ready for Kindergarten



### *What does EELC do to prepare children for kindergarten?*

We work on kindergarten readiness all day, every day, starting with our infants.

#### **Important Statistics to Know**

- Young children's brains develop 700 synapses – neural connections that transmit information – every second. It is important to provide stimulating experiences, from infancy on, in order to develop the actual architecture of the brain.
- By age three, a child's brain has reached more than 85 percent of its adult weight.
- Children not kindergarten-ready are half as likely to read well by third grade.
- Children not reading proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.

#### **The Creative Curriculum,**

implemented in all classrooms at EELC, contains 38 objectives. Each objective includes appropriate skills on a continuum from infancy through kindergarten. For example:

#### **Objective 15**

*Demonstrating Phonological Awareness*  
Infants and toddlers sing rhyming songs and listen to sounds and rhythms that are the same and different. Preschoolers generate groups of words that rhyme and isolate and identify beginning sounds of words.

#### **Objective 19**

*Demonstrating Emergent Writing Skills*  
Infants and toddlers scribble and make marks

on paper with crayons, paint, and chalk. Preschoolers write their names, copy words, and begin to sound out and write the letters they hear in words.

Each year, Pre-K students throughout the state of Virginia are administered the **Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening**. The range of scores associated with early reading success in kindergarten are between 53 and 87. The average score for EELC students in 2014 was 96. We are proud of the accomplishments of our students and know that this success is possible with the collaboration between parents and teachers from infancy all the way through Pre-K.

"I sat at the little kindergarten tabletop. . . and played... with the cube, the sphere, and the triangle-these were smooth wood blocks. . . All are in my fingers to this day.

*Frank Lloyd Wright*

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has collaborated with KaBOOM, Inc. to identify 10 accredited early childhood education sites to receive an Imagination Playground. We are pleased to announce that Elizabeth's Early Learning Center was chosen as one of those sites and has received an Imagination Playground, valued at \$13,200.00.

The Imagination Playground includes a variety of blue foam blocks that are appropriate for all ages. They are formed with unique, abstract shapes so that children can use their imaginations constructing infinite configurations. Imagination Playground encourages

### *Imagination Playground*

students to exercise problem-solving skills and complex thinking. Playing with blocks involves many math, science, and engineering skills that can have a real impact in the classroom, including classification, size relationships, shapes, counting, height, width, area, fractions, ordinal and cardinal numbers, and spatial relationships.

Imagination Playground is also designed to encourage instant sharing and collaboration. The blocks are deliberately oversized, so students will be more likely to help each other with them. The social challenges and valuable lessons of cooperation and group activity are built right into the experience.

Thank you to NAEYC and KaBOOM, Inc. for providing the children of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center with such an exciting opportunity.



## The Elizabeth Forsyth Scholarship Fund

We are proud to announce that Amy Edge, our Assistant Director, and Harmony Hutson, an EELC teacher, are recipients of the Elizabeth M. Forsyth Scholarship at Lynchburg College. Ms. Forsyth, the founder of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center, established this scholarship in 2000 to provide tuition assistance for staff members of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center or graduate students majoring in Early Childhood Special Education. We are forever grateful to Elizabeth Forsyth for her legacy of commitment to excellence in education for young children. Amy and Harmony will, in turn, share their knowledge and expertise in the field of early childhood education for years to come.

## EELC Architects

During National Architecture Week, Gary Harvey, Megan Gregores and Dusty Easley, from Architectural Partners, visited EELC to teach us about architecture. They told us about what an

architect does, showed us some designs they are currently working on, and taught us about Frank Lloyd Wright. We also learned that Gary Harvey designed the most important building in the world. He was the original architect of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center and he currently serves on our Board of Directors. Following the discussion, they joined us in constructing some amazing buildings with our new Imagination Playground.



### Thank you to our Donors (November 1, 2014-April 15, 2015)

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### *Spotlight on Harmony Hutson*

Harmony Hutson has been a teacher at Elizabeth's Early Learning Center since August, 2012. She is a lead teacher in Yellow House, one of our classes for three-year-olds. She has a bachelor's degree from Randolph College in Biology and a master's degree from Lynchburg College in Science Education. She has received her Child Development Associate Credential and is currently enrolled in the master's degree program at Lynchburg College in Early Childhood Special Education.

We are pleased to announce that Harmony will be taking on an additional role at EELC as our Science and Nature Specialist. She will be providing support for classroom teachers and developing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) activities for our indoor and outdoor classrooms.

Harmony's love of nature and science stems back to her early years playing with her mother who taught her about nature while playing outdoors. She constructed fairy houses, castles, mud pies, and dress-

up clothes with dirt, water, flowers, sticks, grape vines, leaves and blocks. Her mother understood the value of imagination and play and would say, "Childhood only happens once."

According to Harmony:

*There was no teacher or school experience after (the preschool years) that could rival the experiential learning that I did at home with my mom. I learned to love nature, to experiment, to make choices, and to draw conclusions in the most exuberant and hands-on way possible.*

*During my years at Lynchburg College, I studied education and took more science classes. Human Development was a life-altering course; I learned how the brain cognitively functioned differently at different ages. I realized there was an explanation for why I found preschoolers so delightful. I could easily apply everything I had learned in graduate school about inquiry learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning to these eager learners. With*

*pleasure, I could share my enthusiasm for building with blocks, creating projects to answer questions, generating play-plans, and discovering nature through personal experience.*

*Through all these kinds of play, I get to use both of my degrees. The children are learning science, math, and engineering, and are learning to notice and love weather, plants, wet dirt, rocks, what makes shadows, and more. I can be an intentional teacher that draws from both formal education, and from my earliest memories of being a child, to create meaningful learning opportunities for my current students. Now my goals include helping Elizabeth's Early Learning Center develop a STEM program for the children, changing our current playground into a stimulating outdoor classroom, and obtaining a second master's degree with a focus on early childhood learning.*

EELC is so fortunate to have Harmony share her expertise and her passion with the students and teachers.