Welcome to a new school year. The ACC Children’s Lab School community consists of our teachers, support staff, faculty, child development students, children, parents and other family members, and the College.

We look forward to an exciting year of learning together. We know that we can learn more about your child from you and we hope you can learn more about children and their development from us.

There are many ways to be involved in the center and WE NEED YOU! Attend a Parent Association meeting, participate in a fundraiser, go on a field trip or share a special skill or talent with your child’s class.

The most important way to be involved is to communicate daily with your child’s teacher. Knowing what is happening in your child’s life helps us support growth and development, plan curriculum, and respond to his or her needs.

Have there been any changes in your family? Has your child’s routine changed? Does your child have new skills or interests? Has your child developed a new fear or habit you are concerned about? Have there been changes in your child’s mood? Information shared between teachers and parents is the backbone to building a partnership that will benefit your child.

OPEN HOUSE

Wednesday, September 19

4:45-5:45 p.m. Sunbeams & Moons
5:15-6:15 p.m. Stars & Planet Earth

▸ Visit and learn more about your child’s classroom
▸ Learn about the Parent Association
▸ Older siblings who are not enrolled will join Evening Care—Please let us know in advance so we can plan for staffing

Important Dates:

🎉 Wednesday, 9/19 (see schedule below)—Come and enjoy activities with your children at Open House and see what a typical day looks like.

🎉 Watch for more information this month about our FUNdraiser Appeal where parents will be asked to make a one time donation toward annual fundraising efforts in lieu of our past raffle and other fundraising events throughout the year.

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Interested in contributing or seeing a particular topic in our newsletter? See Dawn.
Parking can be tricky at the beginning of the semester, certain times of the day or during special events at the center. There are five parking spots designated for parents to park while dropping off or picking up next to the center. We are trying to make sure that these are kept open, but be patient during these first few weeks of the semester. Following are some reminders about parking, security and safety:

- When you bring or pick-up your child each day, please use the parking spaces marked with blue signs “Child Care Pick-up/ Drop off” in the parking lot north of the building. The drop-off and pick-up spots are located next to the building so that children will not have to cross the parking lot. Using these spaces helps ensure the safety of your child as well as prevents you from being ticketed by ACC Police.
- Staff, faculty and student parents should find other parking if they plan to remain on campus after dropping off their children.
- Please leave staff parking spaces open for our staff who arrive later in the morning.
- DO NOT use the handicap parking spaces for even for a few minutes as these spaces are reserved and used frequently by students, staff and faculty with disabilities.
- Parking is not allowed in the front of the building along the curb because this is a fire lane. ACC Police will ticket in this area.
- If you arrive at the center and find the front entrance locked, push the “doorbell” on the right wall of the foyer. A phone in the classroom allows the staff to see and talk with you and unlock the door so that you can enter. The doors may occasionally be locked during the day when there is no one assigned to the front desk and after 5:45 p.m. for security reasons.
- For safety reasons, children need to be accompanied by an adult at all times. Please walk with your child from the car into the building and all the way to the classroom at arrival. If you have more than one child to drop off, please do not allow one child to go to their classroom alone while you drop the other child off. At pick up time, your child needs to stay with you while you gather belongings, picking up siblings, or visiting with other parents. Make sure that you communicate with the teacher as you drop off or pick up each day. They may have important information to share with you.
- It is never OK to leave children in the car unsupervised, even for a moment, to run inside for a forgotten item.
- Texas law now requires that children under 8 years of age or less than 4 feet 9 inches in height be transported in a car safety seat. It is important to us that your child is safe in our care, as well as on their way to and from the center. You are welcome to leave your child’s car seat in the front foyer if someone different is picking up. We also have two car seats available for check out at the front desk in emergencies. If you borrow our car seat, please return it promptly so that it is available to others.

**REMINDER:**

You (or your designated person) are responsible for your child(ren) until you hand them off to a classroom teacher at arrival, and again, once staff releases them to you at departure.
The Parent Association was formed by a group of parents interested in becoming partners with the Lab School staff and teachers to provide mutual support, communication, and fund-raising in order to maximize resources for the children served by the school.

The Association meets monthly. Child care and refreshments are provided. Reminders about the meeting are posted and sent out by e-mail prior to the meeting.

The purpose of the Parent Association includes:

1. Choose, organize and implement fundraising projects to benefit the program.
2. Provide opportunities for parent education and support by assisting with the planning of parenting workshops.
3. Act as an avenue for communication between staff and parents by providing an opportunity to discuss questions, compliments and concerns as well as share ideas.

Some projects sponsored by the Parent Association over the past few years include planting the four beautiful trees next to the parking lot by Building 5000, helping to make the front area more family friendly, staff and volunteer appreciation events and gifts, extra funds for staff attending conferences, and parenting workshops and support groups. The Parent Association also sponsors a fall fundraiser.

Officers:
Chairs—Erin Romero and Mison Zuniga
Secretary—Cathy Doggett
Treasurer—Rick Taylor
Room Representatives:
Molli Newcomb (Sunbeams)
Bee Changwatchai (Moons)
Gloria Perez and Kalie Nasworthy (Stars)
Mirosalva Zuniga (Planet Earth)

PA reps will be present at the Open House on Wednesday, September 19 to tell you about activities and answer any questions. The first PA meeting of the year will be Wednesday, October 17, 5:30-6:30. Please sign up at the front desk to help us plan for child care and food if you would like to attend.

Staff Kudos

During the Week of the Young Child last year, Tina Gamez was awarded the Sallie Beth Moore award for outstanding teacher of the year by the Austin Association for the Education of Young Children. Tina has been working in the field since she was 17 years old when she started as an HECE student during her senior year in high school. She started taking child development courses in spring 1995 and graduated in August 2001 with her associate degree. She started as an assistant teacher in March 2001 and after serving as an interim lead teacher for a year decided she might as well apply for the position. She has worked in our infant-toddler loop for over 12 years.

Shannon Saldana, Gloria Perez and Becky Oli-varez received their associate degrees from ACC and have recently begun a completer course at Stephen F. Austin University to earn their bachelor degrees. They will be taking 9 hours this semester in addition to working full-time! These three women embody the spirit of our program’s vision of “developing and learning to their full potential.”
NO NUTS ALLOWED

Because nut allergies are of a greater concern than most food allergies, and because our classrooms are sometimes used by multiple groups of children, we decided to become a nut-free environment two years ago. Prevention is the key to managing nut allergies when known, as well as for first time occurrences.

“Nuts” include peanuts, as well as tree nuts: almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, filberts, hazelnuts, hickory nuts, Macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts.

Common products containing nuts include nut oils, nut butters, nut pastes and extracts, almond milk, grain breads, cookies, energy bars, cereals and granola, and trail mixes. Soy butter is the substitute we use for nut butters, and the children (and staff) seem unaware of any difference. It even comes in smooth and crunchy! It can be purchased at some HEB’s, Central Market, Sun Harvest and Whole Foods. If you send soy butter in your child’s lunch, please mark it as “soy”. Thanks for your help and cooperation.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are special days for children and hold special meaning for families. They are a time to recognize an important milestone and focus on the concept of “growing up”. Families have special ways of celebrating birthdays and the teachers also have special ways of honoring the child that recognize and value birthdays in the classroom. After gathering input from families and staff, we developed a policy that tries to balance respect for family tradition and diversity of our family population, with keeping things sane in the classroom. Families may provide one birthday food treat in individual serving sizes to share during afternoon snack. Please ask your child’s teacher for a Birthday Celebration Form to complete prior to that special day. The form also includes some nutritious, but delicious treat ideas!

Other food guidelines:
- Did you know? Most yogurts are full of sugar. Please evaluate the yogurt you purchase for lunches for its nutritional value. We often serve plain yogurt or mix plain and vanilla together to limit the sugar content. Gogurt, Jello and pudding should not be sent to school in your child’s lunches.
- Fruit cups are also usually packed in high fructose sugar. When possible, try to choose fruit cups packed in fruit juice. Regardless, to avoid sticky messes, please open the fruit cups, drain the juice off and then pack it in a container that your child can open on their own.
- Remember that food items like wieners, carrots and grapes must be cut in half to prevent choking.

OTHER REMINDERS:
- Arrival time is 9 a.m. Children will not be accepted after 9:30 a.m. on a consistent basis.
- Remember to wash your hands and your child’s hands upon arrival.
- Flip flops are not allowed at school. Close toe shoes, like sneakers, are preferred. A sturdy sandal may be substituted for those children who are steady walkers. Water shoes must be worn for water play.
STAFF NEWS

STAFF CHANGES

😊 We said a sad good-bye to Sajeeda Makjonia and Anaelys Prieto, both of whom moved to full-time positions in another program and Travon Brooks who is graduating from UT.

😊 Melissa Ruiz, a social work student at UT will be our new afternoon aide. Doris Jones, an ACC child development student who has done plenty of lab in our program will cover afternoons in the Moons. She is also a lead teacher at First UMC Preschool downtown. Ashlee Harper returns to an afternoon position, but will be floating in the preschool classrooms.

😊 We have two new work study students, Jenni Vanhoye and Shannon Sutherland, who will assist at the front desk and occasionally work in the classroom. Leland Adams returns again this fall as our fix-it trouble shooting all around can do almost everything work study student.

😊 Stephanie Jury, a human development and family sciences student at UT, along with other hourly employees will help cover classrooms when staff are ill or on vacation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

😊 The Planet Earth team will continue to participate in the Texas School Ready project this year. Becky Olivarez, assistant teacher, will be attending the trainings and working with our new mentor Molly Butler. The project focuses predominantly on literacy. Chris Owens, lead teacher, will focus more on the math, science and social and emotional curriculum of the classroom. Chris has also enrolled in an online training this fall with the Opal School at the Portland Children’s Museum. This great teaching team will be working together to make sure that our pre-kindergarten children are ready for the big transition to kindergarten next year.

😊 Much of our time this fall will be focused on completing our renewal paperwork and portfolios and preparing for our visit for NAECY reaccreditation. We will keep you posted on our progress and the timeline for this process.

Packing Safe Lunches

More than 90 percent of sack lunches prepared at home and sent with kids to preschool were kept at unsafe temperatures, a study last year by nutritional scientists at UT Austin found. The best storage temperature is below 40 degrees Fahrenheit for cold foods and above 140 degrees for hot foods. Between 40 and 140 degrees is the "danger zone." Some tips for packing safer lunches include:

• Use an insulated lunchbox and put it into the refrigerator overnight before packing the food items in it the next morning. Freeze items like yogurt or applesauce.

• Use two or more frozen icepacks and spread them around in the lunchbox.

• Use a stainless steel thermos for hot foods. Put boiling water into the thermos. Warm food so that it is very hot (if you do this in the microwave, make sure you stir the food so that the heat is evenly distributed and there are no cold spots). Empty the water from the thermos, put the hot food in and close immediately.

• Use divided lunchboxes so that cold and hot food are kept in separate compartments.
Austin Community College Children’s Lab School is a preschool program for children, six months through five years of age, that serves as a demonstration school for the ACC Child Development Department. The Children's Lab School offers an early childhood program designed to support the growth and development of young children in a warm and creative environment. Through field work experiences in a lab setting, students observe the principles of child development and gain practical experience with young children under the supervision and guidance of qualified classroom teachers. The Children's Lab School is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (NAECP), a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Parents—Please remember never to leave your child alone in the car, “even for a moment.” Many parents do not realize that this is not only dangerous, but it is also against the law. If you have forgotten something, ask yourself if it can wait, ask another parent or staff to help or take the time to bring your child back inside with you. Thanks!