



Caterpillar News

October Review 2015

Dear Parents,

Busy, busy, busy. The children are growing and learning and changing at such an astounding rate! We have been having so much fun in the Caterpillar room watching them develop mentally, physically and socially. They are incredible.

The children have been together long enough now that they know each other pretty well and are beginning to form relationships. Some 'friendships' have begun to form, and you will often see the same pairs interacting throughout the day. Some of the children who are beginning to talk enjoy repeating the names of the other children over and over, kind of like a mantra. And many of the children enjoy coming to us and pointing to each child to 'ask' us what their name is.

Routines have been established. At the beginning of the year, when it was time to brush teeth or diaper or wash hands, you had to go get each child and take them to the bathroom. Now, all we have to do is call out, "so-and-so, time to brush your teeth" and they will come over on their own and 'report for duty'. They also know now what circle is (morning circle), what the Turnzimmer is, what 'time to eat' means, and what naptime means, so when you mention any one of them, the children head in the right direction (or the opposite direction ☺), knowing what is coming.

The children are also starting to learn the concept of clean up. Most of the children are in the Ausräumen (clear the shelves) stage right now. They are interested in taking the orderly cleaned up toys and carrying them somewhere or putting them on the floor to play with, or even just sweeping them off the shelves in one broad stroke and grinning when they crash to the floor. This is actually a developmental stage they go through, and very important for them to be able to 'practice'. It has been our role to periodically throughout the day put everything back on the shelves so they can do it again. From the beginning however, we also ask the children to help us clean up. We always sing a simple clean up song when we want to indicate to the children that it is time for everyone to help out with the clean up. Then, for some of them, it works to give them an object (a book or car) and ask them to put it away, and they can. With other children, we give them an object and ask them to take it to Ai or Judith (each teacher usually cleans up one area of the classroom), and they do. Yay! We also teach them how to clean up by sitting with them in the book corner, for example, giving a child a book that is on the floor and saying "put it away, please" and then show them to put it on the shelf. Then, of course, once it is on the shelf we clap and say 'yay' and get really excited. By the 3rd or 4th book they figure out what we mean, and they get excited, too, and then through repeated practice they figure out what we mean when we ask them to put things away. Do you remember when clean up was a game for you, and not a chore?

The Eingewöhnungen are now almost complete. Everyone has already napped at the center, and almost everyone is there a full day now. Considering it is only the end of October, this is truly impressive. Thank you to all the parents for your patience and support during the Eingewöhnung period. NEVER have we had such a peaceful and stress-less beginning to a new school year!

What have we been up to?

Theme – Fall

Arts and Crafts:

- We offered the children paint brushes for the first time. Children learn through all of their senses, which is why we have focused solely on finger painting up until now. However, using tools is also a skill to learn, and throughout the year we will offer the children to opportunity to paint not only with paintbrushes, but also with long paintbrushes, short paintbrushes, foam brushes, cars, and all sorts of other items.
- We finger-painted on kite shaped paper and the kites are now displayed hanging from our ceiling.
- We experimented with shaving cream. We put a blob of shaving cream on the table in front of each child and let them explore with it. Shaving cream is a wonderful material as it has the silkiest texture. Even the children who at first found the foam just too weird to touch allowed us to massage their fingers and then their hands with the shaving cream, thereby being gently exposed to this new material. This is an activity we will continue to do throughout the year, and often becomes a favorite of the children.
- We have been letting the children explore with crayons and colored pencils. Did you know that coloring and painting are all pre-writing skills, and therefore very important?
- We save every piece of artwork each child creates, and you will get them all at the end of the year, as well as some periodically throughout the year in your cubbies. If you want some before then, maybe for Christmas presents for family members, please just let us know.

Nature and Environment:

- The caterpillar in the garden has become quite popular this month. Some of the children will crawl through, and sometimes play peek-a-boo through the holes on the sides. Whenever we go in from the garden we have to double check and make sure we haven't left anyone just whiling away their time in the caterpillar.
- There is a lot of foot traffic through our courtyard, and the children get to see lots of people, bikes, and sometimes even cars go in and out. When we are lucky, someone is walking his or her dog right beside our garden.
- We have gotten our Bobby Cars out for the children a few times this month. Those always cause a lot of excitement and the children are working on their driving skills. Driving backwards is much easier than driving forwards when you are a new Bobby Car driver, and we will often have to help turn the cars around after a child has backed up into the gate or the wall 😊.
- The sandbox is extremely popular when we are in the garden, and most of the children tend to hang out in there.
- Peek-a-boo using the shutters on the windows of the little garden house has also become quite popular. Often one child will stand inside the house at the window while another stands outside, and they will open and close the shutters, laughing when they see each other.

Math and Experiments:

- Even though the children are too young to be naming and identifying colors, we still talk about colors with them on a regular basis. For example, when we are painting, we name the colors of the paints we give the children. Or, we ask them to choose between two colors, which they do by pointing. Another example is when we are cleaning up. If we are cleaning up the balls, we will name the color of the ball each child brings to put in the ball bucket. This early exposure will over time help the children learn to identify the colors on their own.
- A couple of the children have been conducting experiments to see just how many times in a row they can drop all the stacking cups on the floor making a crashing sound before it

makes the teachers crazy. Another fun experiment they enjoy is seeing how many times they can bang a toy against the radiator next to the bathroom before it bothers us. Lucky us!

Movement and Sport:

- More of the children have learned how to use the slide on the new Podesten in the classroom. It takes some good gross motor and fine motor coordination to figure out how to get your body through the hole at the top, how to maneuver across the rope netting, and then how to get sat down to slide. The children who haven't figured it out yet crawl up it until they can't stay balanced anymore and then slide back down on their bellies, or go up the stairs and then transfer to the slide from the stairs instead of going through the hole and across the netting. Pretty smart. Half the work, but all the fun!
- In the Turnzimmer, we have a number of round wooden hoops available for the children to explore with. They are so simple, yet they are so popular. The children experiment with them, try to push the, drop them, carry them. Such a simple tool can hold the interest of a child for so long.
- We have borrowed the small wood bench from the Butterflies for the children to experiment with. It is a bit higher than our wooden bench in the reading area of the classroom, so it takes a bit of work and coordination for the children to climb up on to. But all gross motor challenges are of interest to children at any stage of development, whether they use the bench to pull up onto, to walk along, or to climb up onto.
- Some of the children have discovered the wonder of pushing chairs around the eating area. We allow our children to explore and experiment freely, and for whatever reason, pushing chairs around has always been a popular past time for children, as it is with this group.

Circle Time / Language:

- More and more of the children are participating during circle time. At the beginning of a new school year, the children always see it as a 'let us teachers sing and entertain you activity,' but slowly they are starting to wiggle their fingers as we sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or to form frogs with their fingers as we sing "Mmm mmm macht der kleine Frosch". A couple of them are even starting to try to sing along. They may know the sounds that begin a certain line, and will chime in with that sound if we just wait a beat.
- Singing often comes before speech, and we will often hear the children singing the songs they have learned from us at morning circle throughout the day as they play. Even children who can't say a single word yet are able to "sing" songs. They don't really use the words, but you can still identify the tune to what they are humming/babbling.
- Before each meal, we sing a short song to get everyone centered and to indicate that the meal is about to start. The children hear this song at least three times a day, so they have really gotten good at responding to it. They may be wiggling and making noise at the tables as we are getting bibs on everyone and getting organized, but the minute we start singing that song it is so quiet you could hear a pin drop, and the children are grinning in anticipation of the meal.

Music with Nici:

- Nici has a song that she sings about a cat and mouse. The cat wears a bell that warns the mouse when she is around. One day, while the cat is napping, the mouse steals the bell (who knows why, maybe because the mouse is dumb). Anyways...Nici uses a stuffed cat and mouse to act out the song as she sings it. The first time she sang this song, the children were so fascinated, and watched with big eyes. The next time she was there and sang this song, the children were so thrilled, and even those who had been falling asleep to Nici's singing perked back up to watch the cat and mouse 😊.

- Nici brought in some fall leaves and handed them out to the children. While she sang a song about a rain and windstorm, they could wave their leaves around to represent them falling from the trees and blowing around in the wind. Some of the children preferred to rip up their leaves, but that was also ok!
- Nici continues to sing “Flieg buntes Tuch” with the children, and they are really getting into it. Even before she starts singing it, when she hands out the colored scarves a number of them will put them over their heads, as that is what they are meant to do during part of the song.

Hopefully some of you will be able to join us for our first Elterncafe of the school year, on Tuesday, November 3, beginning at 19:30. It will be a good opportunity to get to know some of the other parents better.

Also, don't forget that our first family celebration, the Laternenfest, is coming up on Tuesday, November 17, beginning at 17:00. We will be turning our Turnzimmer into a magical, relaxing environment for the event and look forward to seeing you all there.

Your Caterpillar Team,

Tina, Ai, Judith and Mary