DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILDREN'S CENTERS

DBCC NEWS

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, Inc.
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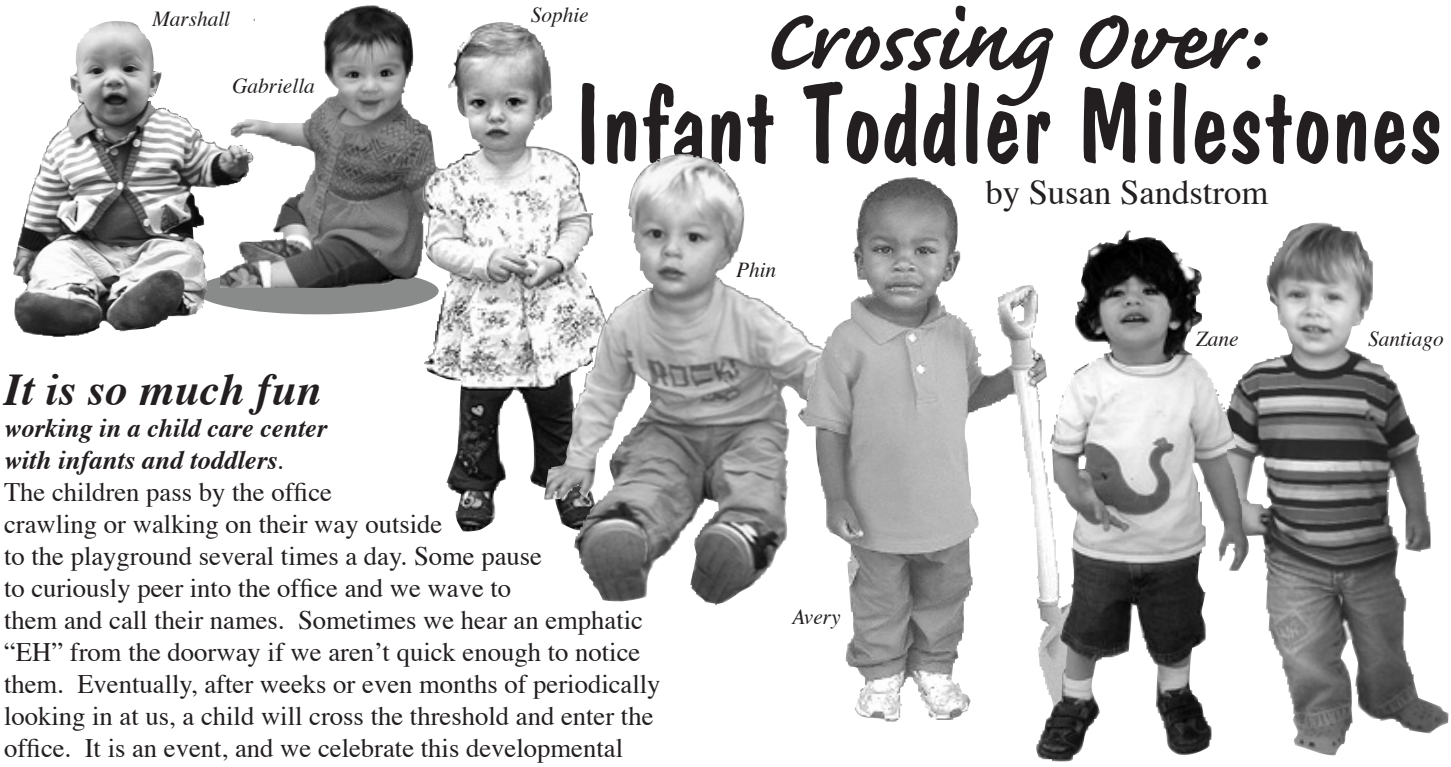
University Center, 237 Arch Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-1526 • 410-659-0515

November 2008



Crossing Over: Infant Toddler Milestones

by Susan Sandstrom

It is so much fun

working in a child care center with infants and toddlers.

The children pass by the office crawling or walking on their way outside to the playground several times a day. Some pause to curiously peer into the office and we wave to them and call their names. Sometimes we hear an emphatic "EH" from the doorway if we aren't quick enough to notice them. Eventually, after weeks or even months of periodically looking in at us, a child will cross the threshold and enter the office. It is an event, and we celebrate this developmental milestone with cheers and applause! Once in the office, the next milestone is finding the tank of fish. Often "fish" is the first word we hear - "fsssss, fsssss" - followed closely by - "bubbles." The next milestone is discovering the guitar leaning against the wall. It is knocked down repeatedly as they try to strum it and before too long the tuning screws are found and then the guitar is forever out of tune. These are the little growth steps that we notice from our vantage point in the office that are specific to our Center.

Year after year we see children go through the same stages but at different times and in different ways and it is interesting to see the many variations. As far as our "office" milestone is concerned, some children will soldier crawl (on their belly) into the office, some will scoot on their bottoms, some on their hands and knees and some wait until they can toddle in. But, eventually, they all come in. It is a sign to us that they have the emotional confidence to go off on an adventure - to separate from their teacher for a short while and take a risk. It also shows us they have the motor ability to reach a destination and are responsive to the encouragement from the office. It is all on their time, never rushed because we know there is no reason to rush - they all come in eventually.

Developmental milestones are little steps of accomplishment for every child and once a new skill has been reached, it needs to be practiced over and over until it is mastered. The job of the teacher is to encourage and promote development and to keep each child safe. The interesting thing is that DBCC

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e or not to e

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(Cont'd. from page 1)

teachers are instructed to NOT teach these skills; rather they set up an environment that is safe, has enough space for children to explore, and then give the baby enough time to practice. Skill development happens at different rates, times, sequences and in different ways and it is up to the child to choose what works best for him/her. It is presumptuous to assume to know how a child will develop and can be harmful if a child is pushed to reach milestones before s/he is ready. Some of these skills need to be sequenced by the child and if learned out of sequence can be very problematic.

For example, a little baby flat on her back needs to learn to shift her weight over to her side, use her elbow or forearm to stop her momentum and then use her other hand to push herself up to sit. This of course doesn't happen all at once and a baby may practice the weight shift for weeks before moving to the next stage. All this practice builds muscle and coordination that she will need to help her sit up. If she is always placed in a sitting position by an adult (instead of trying to get in the position on her own) she might not develop those important muscles and the coordination she needs to keep her from falling over backwards or moving to a crawling position. Eventually, of course, she would develop them but it will take longer and may affect other developmental skills. Also, this may be the sequence for this particular baby while another baby may come up with his own sitting sequence. That is why we try not to teach these skills. The skills are too often specific for each child.

As adults we are always eager for our babies to roll over or sit up or walk but it is so important to respect the child enough to let him/her develop at his/her own tempo. It is a gift of time we need to grant each child. Unfortunately, as the child gets older things change. Regardless of where a child is developmentally, many schools start to get "standardized" by age 3 or 4. A child whose steady but unique development is noted and celebrated for several years has to suddenly disregard his/her own internal motivations, skill sequencing and needs and become one of many, all working on the same skills - regardless of whether or not it is appropriate. DBCC is unique with its philosophy of recognizing that children work at different rates and on different skills and knowing that children will reach those important milestones in their own time. Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, noted pediatrician, talks about babies having a sense of whether or not they are successful by the time they are nine months old. Control over his/her development helps a child feel successful. It is these important beginnings that form the very core for a positive foundation of self-esteem that a child needs for higher-level thinking and problem solving. So, if you have an infant or a toddler, please don't hurry your child's development along. Slow down and marvel at your baby - right where she is - and notice all the little details that are necessary for your baby to progress to the next developmental stage.

Love is Not Enough

In the preface to his book, *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* (The Gottman Institute), Dr. John Gottman observes...

"Much of today's popular advice to parents ignores emotion. Instead it relies on child-rearing theories that address children's misbehavior, but disregards the feelings that underlie that misbehavior. The ultimate goal of raising children should not be simply to have an obedient and compliant child. Most parents hope for much more for their children. They want their children to be moral and responsible people who contribute to society, who have the strength to make their own choices in life, who enjoy accomplishments of their own talents, who enjoy life and the pleasures it can offer, who have good relationships with friends and successful marriages, and who themselves become good parents.

"In my research I discovered that love by itself wasn't enough. We found that concerned, warm, and involved parents often had attitudes toward their emotions and their children's emotions that got in the way of talking to their children when the child was sad or afraid or angry. The secret to being an emotionally intelligent parent lay in how parents interacted with their children when emotions ran hot."

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Meley by Meley Cullors, age 2

LEGACY

Not long ago, I spent the day with a group of women my age, grandmas all. One of our number had convened a meeting to facilitate a consideration of what we were going to leave to our grandchildren.

We were not considering a tangible legacy, such as money or objects. Rather, we talked about the values and experiences that were important to us, that we wanted to be sure the children understood. It was a free-ranging discussion, as each woman shared the life experiences and lessons that had shaped her world-view, the family history and traditions that had become important, and the ideas that formed a personal philosophy. For me, it was a day that provoked meaningful thought. It occurred to me it was only at our stage of life as older adults that such conversations could take place. After all, how many young parents could take a day for such rich thought and communication, without the concerns of family, work, and the myriad interruptions that make up those days?

Nevertheless, it also seems a pity that the pressure of daily life prevents parents often from taking opportunities to be focused and mindful of considering what it is they want their children to gain from spending a couple of dozen years in the near constant contact with parents in their childhood home. Our best lessons are learned as young children, usually without any explicit teaching. As children observe how we choose to spend our time and money, what gives us pleasure and what else gives us concern, they absorb concepts about what is important in our lives--our personal philosophy or worldview.

It is a somewhat daunting notion to realize that parenting in the first seven years provides the crucial environment that basically forms children's character and direction for life.

During this time, children rely on the unfolding of basic developmental capacities, shaped by their particular temperament and intuition, all enhanced by the force of imitation. Young children mimic everything in their environment uncritically, including the sounds of speech and the gestures of people, as well as the habits, attitudes, and values of those around them.

The urge to imitate their parents is powerfully motivated by the strong emotional attachment that develops during the first year of life. Children not only want to be with and please their parents; they also want to be as much like them as they can. An interesting exercise is for parents to record all their activities on a workday, and on a weekend day, and then consider what messages a young child derives from observing that activity.

For example, the child who sees a parent go happily to work learns that meaningful employment can bring pleasure. And watching parents cooperate on sharing household tasks helps children understand both responsibility and cooperation.

When family activity time is a weekend priority, children come to understand the importance of family; when choices involve exercise, the environment, or others in the community, children learn the meaning of those values in their parent's lives. As you go through your list, hopefully you will discover that your daily activities are indeed showing your little ones what it is you value. Or, conversely, this might give you pause to think about what you might want to eliminate from your unspoken legacy.
(c) Growing Child 2008 Grandma Says

Sometimes we're so concerned about giving our children what we never had growing up, we neglect to give them what we did have growing up. *Dr. James C. Dobson*

Ask Aliceanna...

Dear Aliceanna,

How do I talk to my child about his day at school? He says very little. I love the teacher write-ups but I want to hear my little guy tell me about his day. Any suggestions?

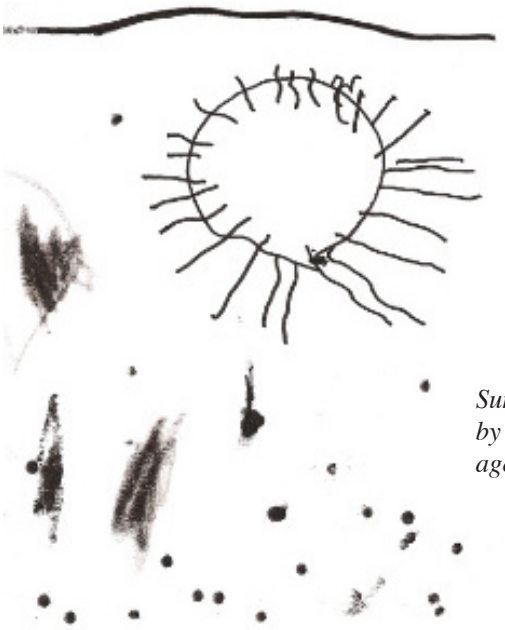
Signed, Mommy

Dear Mommy,

You don't say how old your child is but regardless, it can be frustrating to be met with silence or one word answers. The trick is to ask leading questions. "Who was riding bikes today?" Long pause. Wait, wait, wait. If no answer is forthcoming - "Did Sara ride a bike today?" Children need a whole lot more time to respond to questions than adults. It is really hard but important to keep this in mind when talking to a child. The pause often feels interminable but it is important to take the time to wait. Part of the disconnect between children and adults is this "child time" issue. Adults are quick to jump in and take up the dead air.

You're probably never going to get as much information as you wish but the trick is to find the topic that gets them talking. Looking at the class write up is great for getting clues for questions. "Look at your purple hands? How did that happen?"

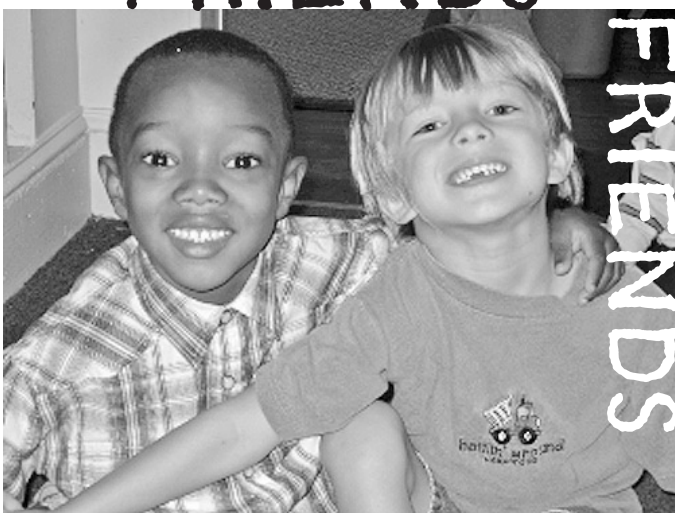
(Aliceanna loves to hear from you. You can email her a question by putting Aliceanna in the subject line.)
uc@dbcc.org



Sunny Day
by Eli Texter,
age 4

Katala and Roshin

FRIENDS



Dominic and Josh

☺ IT'S A GIRL! ☺ IT'S A BOY!

☺ Kayla Robeson is a big sister! **Kenneth Ronald Robeson** was born on August 17, 2008 and weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. Congratulations to Taria (University Center Administrative Assistant), Kevron and Kayla!

☺ Alumni Jason Scroggins is a big brother! **Kimora Maria Pollard** was born on September 3, 2008 and weighed 5 lbs. 9.9 oz. Congratulations to teacher Shannell, Andre and Jason!

☺ Teacher Nadine Scayles is a mom! **Gabrielle Mariah Gordon** born on August 10, 2008 and weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. Congratulations to Nadine and Brian!

☺ Caden is a big brother! **Ruby Kai Lee Choi** was born on September 26, 2008 and weighed 7 lbs. 6 oz. Congratulations to April, Ron and Caden!

CHILDSPEAK

• **Ann Bethell** was inviting her friends to her house for a sleepover. **Casey Brown**, age 4 said, "Sure, I will come but you need to give me directions."
• The teacher asked **Michael Gallagher**, age 1, "Where's daddy?"Michael walked to the family photo wall and pointed to his photo.
• **Jeremiah Henderson-Burton**, age 4, asked his teacher, "Can we get a rabbit?"
"No, M's Evelyn is allergic to rabbits."
"Can we get a hamster?"
No, M's Evelyn is allergic to hamsters. She's allergic to animals with fur."
Jeremiah thought for a moment and then said, "Well, is she allergic to zebras?"
• **Lucie Goldberg**, age 22 months, goes to school at "DBABC."
• **Phineas Schanbacher**, age 20 months, was pushed in the chest by one of his classmates.
He calmly put his own hand on his chest and said clearly to the child, "Nice."
• **Kayla Robeson**, age 4, was getting dressed. She put on a skirt and shook her hips so her skirt would dance. Disappointed she told her mother, "This one's broke."
• **Allison Thorne**, age 4: "I miss my mommy . . . but really, I mean I miss my toys."
• At breakfast, **Zoe Cheng**, age 1, said, "April's eating a muffin!"
• Naptime was over and **Gwyneth Gleeson**, age 1, saw Saleigha on her cot and said, "Get up, Saleigha!"
• One of the substitutes was changing the children after nap. It was **Daniel Seagull**'s turn and he was instructed to take his pants and pull-ups off.
"Why?" said Daniel.
"So I can put on the new pull-up."
"No, there's enough space to do it," said Daniel.
"Please Daniel," begged the teacher.
"My teachers don't do it that way," continued Daniel.
Daniel cooperated and afterwards he pointed out that pull-ups now have Velcro.
"Oh, I haven't done this in a while," explained the substitute.
Daniel was forgiving and said, "It's okay. I understand."

• **Kwabe Osei**, age 4, asked his teacher, "Where are my shoes?"
The teacher said, "They ran away!"
Kwabe exclaimed, "They can't run. They're not human beings!"
• **Joshua Schuler**, age 4 was playing with a friend. His teacher asked him, "How come you're not playing with your other girlfriend?"
Josh said, "Because I'm tired of her."
• **Theodore Gammon**, age 2, was carrying his toy elephant outdoors. He turned around to put his elephant back in his cubby. "I was confused," he told the teacher.
• **Casey Brown**, age 4, was being very quiet.
"What's the matter?" asked the teacher.
"I am soooooooo frustrated because I am tired!"
• **Chandler Wood**, age 2, was talking on a pretend cell phone. She turned to the teacher sitting across from her and firmly, yet politely said, "I need you to be quiet." After completing her call she said to the teacher, "Thank you for being quiet."

Hi Ho! I'm Going to Tanzania!

I'm going to Tanzania!
I'm going to Tanzania!

I'm going to see hens and baby dolls
In the henhouse for the hens.

I'm going to Tanzania!
I'm going to Tanzania!

I'm going to make milkshakes
With bananas and strawberries
With my grandmother.

I'm going home!
I'm going to Tanzania!
I'm going to Tanzania!

By Janusz Kumpuni, age 4
Janusz moved to Tanzania this past summer.

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DBCC is grateful to all our FY 2007-2008 supporters! Your generosity enables us to continue the important work we do . . . advocating, facilitating and providing the highest quality child care and early education for young children and their families living and working in the Baltimore metropolitan area. (We have combined Annual Giving and United Way.)

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. . . THANKS!

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State of the World's Children, UNICEF

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