Bowdoin College Children’s Center

2014- 2015 Year in Review
Our Mission

The Children’s Center at Bowdoin College exists to provide a nurturing, supportive, and creative environment for children, families, and educators.

We are focused on the

• **Classroom:** providing a warm and interactive environment that supports the daily needs of young children and intentionally creates joyful and satisfying experiences.

• **Curriculum:** using responsive, developmentally appropriate, play-based investigations that draw on philosophies of early care and education, recognizing the emergent interests and curiosity of each child.

• **Community:** building and sustaining an open, diverse and welcoming community of educators, parents and children who collaborate for the benefit of the Center and the broader community.
Our Goals

For our work with children:
Provide play-based experiences to deepen and strengthen problem solving, persistence, and tenacity; and foster frustration and disappointment management and repeated efforts.

For our staff development:
Build teams to collaborate on philosophy of care, including secure-based relationships and play-based curriculum design.

For our administrative team:
To support families and educators as they partner to nurture their young children’s growth and develop a presence in the greater Maine child care community.
For children’s care:
Educator teams focus on secure-based relationships with the children in order to establish strong foundations of trust. With this trust, children can feel free to play without adult interruption or direction.

For staff and curriculum development:
Staff meet weekly to interpret observations of individual children, design curriculum for the group and modify the environment as needed in order to extend each child’s learning.

For administrative work:
Continue to create policies, procedures, and written communication that serve as the foundation of the program.
Primary relationships between children and their families with an educator were present in each room and marked by home visits, individual conferences, check ins by phone and email, as well as daily note communication.

Children and their primaries developed secure and close relationships over the initial months in their room in order for the children to feel emotional connections.

Outside play occurred almost daily throughout the year in preschool (even for shorter periods of time in the coldest weather) and throughout the year as more temperate weather was present. Infants engaged in outdoor play in their yard both for naps and exploration while the older children found fun places on campus.

Children participated in the rhythm and care of their room, preparation of snack, and routine chores as part of their community building experiences.

Music, art, and science were found in these daily activities while story telling marked the day and songs moved them through their transitions.

Music was also offered by a “casual music educator” so that she knew the children from her work here.
Children’s learning through the year

The infants spent the year orienting themselves to interactions with educators in routine care activities and in unrestrained movement. They are a group of children who predict their schedules, move through their space, and anticipate great joy in their day.

Our young toddlers gleefully enter their world to greet the day with an explosion of words, gestures with peers, and insatiable movement. They organize their world through words, observation, and cues from their educators.

Older toddlers have discovered adventure in building a garden bed, planting peas, exploring the woods, and finding the story line in their play.
Children’s learning through the year

**Preschool** began the year in their play yard learning about each other, their educators, and their immediate world. Now they have grown to leave the Center daily for long walks, exploring the woods, listening to stories from around the world, singing songs with new words, and tending a garden that is beginning to flourish.
Many staff visited area children’s centers this year to share ideas, learn new practices, and hone their skills. This led us to deeper understandings of outdoor play, designing learning environment, and curriculum documentation.

One of our infant co-lead travelled to Budapest to visit the Pikler Institute in order to bring back more sophisticated insights into young children’s development.

One of our young toddler co-leads offered parenting support to teen mothers at Seeds for Change in Brunswick.

Our associate director was elected to the Board of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children.

Two of our staff enrolled in U. Maine Farmington Graduate School for Early Childhood Education.

Other co-leads attended conferences in the area to learn story telling, finger plays, and creating science investigations.
How our staff collaborated

• As a whole team we worked together for six months to build an initial model for continuity of care. This included our own team meetings, visits to centers, and phone conferences with practitioners as far away as University of Maryland and University of Vermont.
• Our team also continued to pursue building a “place based” curriculum model with outside play growing in relation to our inside curriculum.
• Professional Development in-house focused on creating and maintaining secure based relationships with our primary children, creating developmentally appropriate curriculum, and trans-classroom collaboration.
• Three of our team grew to new adventures; getting married and moving away, enrolling in graduate school, and moving into a hospital internship.
Administrative Work

Managed the data base, budget, and facility in order to maintain a healthy infrastructure.

Developed the web site and outreach to community wait list.

Provided on-going enrollment management, parent support, staff collaboration.

Supervised 50+ student interns, 10 student employees, and other casuals over the year.

Met monthly with the Advisory Committee to guide policy making, host the annual parent coffee, and create the spring family survey.

Met semi-weekly in the fall with the Play Yard design committee to create a major maintenance proposal renovations.

Met monthly with parents for lunchtime talks to include: Feeding and Eating Perspectives, Saying Goodnight Routines.
Goals for our next year together

**Children:**
Experience place-based curriculum that is informed by our research and space.

Enjoy calm and intimate relationships that build in each room based on continuity of care model and primary relationships.

Participate in the Bowdoin community through the year, explore music with a staff musician and experience the “arts”.

Continue to inform our care of all of the children who are with us so that they appreciate a full rich intentionally planned day with the love and joy they deserve.
Staff:
Build and assess our continuity of care structure in the infant, young toddler, and older toddler rooms. Manage documentation activities in each room to include individual portfolio management, room bulletin board communication, and parent meeting discussions. Host parent meetings in the fall and spring in addition to conferences, daily notes, and weekly emails. Present at local conferences on our work, lead discussions about curriculum, outside play, and continuity of care with local centers. Enroll in workshops, on-line courses, and continue degree programs to deepen and extend learning.

Administration:
Host the fall conference for the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children. Meet with the Advisory Committee, parents at lunch talks, and other Center discussions to continue to share our practice and philosophy with others. Develop and introduce relationships with the Bowdoin and Brunswick community. Continue to manage staffing, enrollment, facilities, and budget areas.