



Child Learning Center

# Child Learning Center Annual Report

July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

**Thank you** to the following organizations for their generous support of our program this year.

Rose Community Foundation	\$25,000
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	\$25,000
Scottish Rite Foundation	\$23,000 + 4000 matching grant
Community Trust Boulder County	\$ 3,000



## The 2011-2012 CLC Team

- Anne Hyde-Smith - Program Director, Preschool Classroom Teacher, PAL Coordinator
- Amy Thrasher - Speech-Language Clinical Faculty, Toddler Classroom Teacher
- Susan M. Moore - Director of Clinical Education and Services, CLC Executive Director, Speech-Language Clinical Faculty
- Jennifer Wilger - Family Resource Consultant, Preschool and Toddler Groups
- Rosemary McKnight - Family Resource Consultant, Pathways to Assessment of Learning
- Camilla Pratt - Occupational Therapist
- Kate Christensen - Speech-Language Clinical Faculty, El Grupo
- Barb Roscoe - Outreach Coordinator
- Gail Ramsberger - Chairperson, Dept of SLHS

## Story of Friendship Includes Video Modeling

By Amy Thrasher

Story of Friendship is an inclusive peer interaction and social communication intervention group for young children on the autism spectrum at the Speech, Language, Hearing Center at CU Boulder. Each of four children with autism, preschool to second grade, brings a typical peer buddy. Each buddy pair is supported in group routines and play interactions by a graduate clinician in speech-language pathology under the supervision of Amy Thrasher, MA, CCC-SLP.

An underlying premise of the Story of Friendship intervention is the use of routine and novelty. Routines provide the child with the ability to predict what will happen, provide clear expectations for each person's role in an interaction, and allow the child to produce a response with decreased anxiety. Routines decrease the "cognitive load" for children, allowing them to focus on the social interaction. By using routines and focusing attention, we can begin to introduce novelty into the routine in fun way while still maintaining the child's sense of security. In each of the eight sessions of a Story of Friendship group, one story is told and reenacted. The story, in itself, is a routine. The predictable sequence of events, or "story schema," is comforting to children. With each repeated reading, children or adults can add a bit of novelty to this routine. Stories with strong story schema can also provide a model of a play schema, or play routine, for children. For example, this spring we read *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood, a story with a cumulative structure of nappers lying on top of one another until a flea tickles them, waking them all.



We added another component to our intervention approach this spring by using video modeling. We captured the basic play schema of the story in a video, using stacking blocks to represent the characters and knocking the blocks down as if to wake the nappers. Video modeling has been proposed as an intervention approach that may be "uniquely suited" to the learning profiles of children with ASD. Videos present information in a visual format, can draw attention to relevant information, and can be created in a way that reduces linguistic demands. While watching the video, the social demands for learning are reduced as well. We focused on teaching the play schema through storybook reading, story enactment and video modeling in the large group story circle. Many children with ASD have difficulties engaging in play schemas that are recognizable or meaningful to their peers. By providing them with a common play schema, we provided children with ASD access to social interaction with their peers. In an 8 minute "buddy time," the graduate clinician supported the buddy pair to take turns in the play schema using the same or similar materials as those presented in the video models. Individual children required different levels of support or different methods of cuing to engage in turn-taking in the buddy time play schema, such as picture cues. All children engaged in turn-taking in the routine of play schema, and some were able to accept novelty that the clinician or the typical peer introduced.

In celebration of Autism Awareness Month, we held a family night in early April to share our intervention approach, celebrate children's progress, and support families to extend the approach at home. One family reported that their child was now playing the story schema at home by piling all of his stuffed animals on his blanket at naptime! We provided the storybook to the family and coached them to join him in his play. The family later reported that although previously he insisted on reading books that were primarily ABC, counting, or labeling books, this was the first storybook that he allowed them to read with him.

Overall, each individual child in the group made progress toward their individual objectives of turn-taking and joint attention with peers. All of the children, those with ASD and typical peers alike, formed a group with greater and greater participation and sense of belonging as we progressed through sessions.

## Child Learning Center forms Partnership with Wilderness Early Learning Center

The Child Learning Center (CLC) Outreach Program is excited to announce a partnership with the Wilderness Early Learning Center, a collaborative project bringing multiple early childhood services together in a newly acquired two-story, 18,031 square foot building in north Boulder.

The Center will be the new home for three Boulder County Head Start classrooms and five Acorn School classrooms providing early care and education to over 140 children and families. Partner services will be housed on the second floor, bringing together high quality educational resources along with medical, social-emotional, language and literacy, parent education and support, and other “wrap around” services provided by various partners in the project.

The CLC Outreach Program intends to provide ongoing parent education and support programs, teacher consultation and specific teacher support through such programs as *El Grupo de Familias*; language & literacy workshops; classroom teacher consultation; speech, language, and hearing screenings; and other services for children and families connected with Boulder County Head Start, Acorn School, and other children and families in the community. This project will allow CLC Outreach to provide high quality programs to the community, including bilingual services and supports, while creating a rich resource for field placements and research opportunities for our graduate students. The doors will open on August 20, 2012. We are looking forward to being an integral partner with this innovative initiative in early childcare and education. Learn more about the Wilderness Early Learning Center at [www.wildernesslearning.org](http://www.wildernesslearning.org).



## CLC Mission Statement

The Child Learning Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder is an integral part of the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences and the Speech, Language, and Hearing Center. Our mission is to:

- Provide a nurturing, high-quality, developmentally appropriate educational program for young children which includes children with communication, cognitive, social, and/or motor needs and their same-age peers in a classroom together.
- Foster an environment where families are supported and valued as the primary decision makers for their child's education.
- Create an early childhood practicum experience for graduate and undergraduate students in speech-language pathology, early childhood special education, and other professionals in training, as we believe that excellence in education preparation is only accomplished through exposure to exemplary practices.
- Serve as a valuable resource for research, observation, and community outreach.

## **Outreach Program Supports Language and Literacy Development in Community Preschools**

Laura Lawrence, classroom teacher, and Maria Garza, classroom teaching assistant, participated in the CLC Outreach Program which provided early language and literacy coaching to two Boulder Head Start Classrooms and one Wild Plum Head Start Program during the past year. Laura and Maria implemented a number of strategies to enhance children's language and emergent literacy development. They intentionally stimulated language



development by engaging in natural, extended conversations that actively involved children and facilitated the mutual exchange of ideas, opinions, and feelings; interactive storybook reading; and efforts to build vocabulary throughout the day. They encouraged emergent literacy development through a variety of reading and writing experiences. Book reading activities were an integral part of children's daily classroom

experience and occurred in a variety of settings and groupings. Books pertinent to current curriculum and children's interests were available across classroom interest areas and specific activity areas. The teachers inspired motivation for writing; awareness of the varied purposes of writing; and opportunities to write by providing materials, examples of writing, and support for children's writing. Children became more engaged in authentic uses of writing that were integral to their daily personal and classroom experiences.



### **What We Have Accomplished This Year**

Program	Number Served	Students Participating
Toddler Group	10 children and families	10
Preschool	25 children and families	23
Story of Friendship	24 children and families	15
Space	24 children and families	12
Camp/Perspectives		
El Grupo	19 children in 12 families	8
Pathways to Assessment of Learning	8 families	8
Preschool Screenings	245 (4 preschools + 9News Healthfair)	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>355 children and families</b>	<b>88</b>
Outreach	41 early childhood professionals	

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