While NLF has been busy planting its seed for its Capital Campaign, two NLF teachers recently bore the fruits of their labor! Congratulations to Mika-sensei and her husband on the birth of their son Kai-to, and to Makiko-sensei and her husband on the birth of their daughter Ellenor, both born during the month of June! Both moms are doing well and enjoying their time with their newborns and we look forward to having them return to NLF during the fall! At the same time, Megumi-sensei’s son will become an NLF preschooler at the Sutter Site, and Maya-sensei’s daughter will be a 1st grader at our After School Program. We are so excited to see this wonderful progression of NLF staff becoming parents in our programs!

NLF’s preschools’ group time curriculum has been undergoing a change over the past year, and the article written by our site manager, Naomi Miura, will give you an idea of the direction in which it is heading. We hope you enjoy reading about this new approach which promotes the development of critical thinking skills.

In addition, this newsletter introduces the naming opportunities and donor recognition wall for our new building addition. Special thanks to Tony Kaz Naganuma of NDD Creative for working with us on this second campaign. NDD Creative did all the signage and designed the donor wall in our 1830 Sutter building, and we are fortunate to have them involved in this new project.

Also enclosed is our Save the Date postcard for our first 5K Run and Walk-a-thon set for October 13th in Golden Gate Park. Please join us and help spread the word to our alumni and former staff, who we look forward to meeting up with at this event for our Plant A Seed Campaign! Many thanks go to Dave Yonemoto, a former Board member and parent of NLF alums, for chairing this Run/Walk; and to alumnus Quillan Rusky for helping to organize it!

We truly appreciate your continued support and look forward to seeing you at our 5K Run/Walk!
Capital Campaign Update (continue)

With your help, the campaign will build a permanent home for both of our preschool programs in the heart of Japan-town and more importantly, will help us continue to nurture the future leaders of our community to grow to their full potential. Here are some ways to participate in the campaign:

Big Steps for Little Friends. Please join us for our first 5K Run and Walk-A-Thon, “Big Steps for Little Friends,” on Sunday, October 13th at Golden Gate Park! All proceeds from this event will go towards the Plant A Seed Campaign. The run/walk and post-run/walk activities will be held at the Polo Fields and nearby Lindley Meadow. Participants will receive refreshments and a goodie bag, in addition to being entered into a drawing for prizes, including an iPad mini. Please mark your calendar - event details will be forthcoming through NLF’s office and website.

Plant A Seed Campaign Donor Wall. We have commissioned NDD Creative to design the PASC Donor Wall, to be installed prominently in the main lobby of the new building, to acknowledge substantial contributions to our campaign. There are six levels of donations starting at $5,000, each recognized with a tree of significance in the Japanese culture, such as cherry (sakura) and pine (matsu). Please see the insert for the renderings and specific donor level details.

Naming Opportunities. In addition to the satisfaction that comes from changing the lives of children and their families, donors may choose to name spaces or the building after themselves, in memory of loved ones. Naming opportunities are recognized with permanent plaques and a listing on the donor wall. You may also choose to get a group together to name designated spaces. Naming opportunities start with gifts of $25,000; more details can be found in the enclosed insert.

On behalf of the children, their families, our staff and Board, we thank you for your continued support and generosity. For more information about NLF or contributing to the capital campaign, visit NLF’s website at www.nlfchildcare.org or call (415) 922-8898. We will have an update on the Plant A Seed Campaign at our 38th anniversary/annual Sushi Social on Friday, November 22nd. We hope to have more fundraising success stories to report in the second half of 2013!

What is the In-depth Study Approach? by Naomi Miura

It has been over a year since our preschools changed from our weekly curriculum themes to an in-depth approach of studying a topic based on the children’s interest. The topic can last a month or longer with the main goal to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills. We are very proud of our Master Teachers, Sean Ellsworth from the Bush site and Misa Okayama from the Sutter site who both were presenters of their projects at annual Preschool For All (PFA) forums for preschool teachers and administrators.

At the Bush Site, the three pre-K groups worked on a “micro cosmos” project this past spring. The goal was to explore the worlds of insects and plants found in our back garden. The project began by having the children observe live crickets with magnifying glasses, talk about their observations, and draw them. The pre-K teachers modeled how to do a scientific experiment by asking a question, brainstorming, setting it up, and observing the results. The pre-K groups took turns presenting the details of their different experiments to the other group so each group could learn from their classmates’ work.

The groups next moved on to studying roly polys for four weeks. They compared them with crickets, made observational drawings of them, and discussed the differences. They were read a book about where roly polys like to live, observed outside habitats, and each child built a home for their own roly polys.

The next three weeks were spent on investigating what roly polys like to eat, what kind of habitat they prefer, and how they move. For example, one week the three groups focused on different habitat preference, experimenting with light vs. dark, dry vs. wet, and over vs. under things. They read a variety of books connected to each day’s topic so the children would be inspired to wonder. Sean sensei noticed that “Sharing their findings weekly was a very useful experience for the children, and amazingly the teachers noticed that the children started integrating the findings of other groups into their own thinking!”

Misa sensei’s group at the Sutter Site started off with a basic question of “What do you know about water?” Some of the children’s responses included: “Water comes from the rain. Water is the ocean. Eggs come from chickens and water comes from the water farm.” Then based on the children’s answers, more detailed questions were asked, e.g. “what is a water farm?” They thought the water farm has creamy water which is sweet, tasty, and white. The nice thing about asking open ended questions to the children is that there are no right or wrong answers, which encourages them to think and wonder.

When Misa sensei asked “where does
What is the In-depth Study Approach? (continue)

The in-depth study allows children to be more observant to details, ask questions to foster curiosity and creativity, and promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills because as a group, they investigate their questions and actually go through the process to learn more new things along the way. NLF’s After School Program staff has also decided to bring this curriculum approach to its program this coming school year.

Sean sensei perfectly sums up our in-depth study -- “I think that many important, useful, and fun ways to use in-depth projects are being discovered at NLF. We have seen the benefits of collaboration and presentation, the diversity of utilizing different teacher’s strengths, the inspiration of creative activity, the fun of exploring the theme throughout the day, and the power of questions to help children develop their thinking.”

The children were observing the hose outside they noticed “I can hear water in the pipe. It’s making a noise like SHHHH.” When a teacher starts to get the children to begin thinking of a topic, it opens so many doors. On a normal day, not one child ever noticed you can hear water in the pipes.

Misa sensei then invited an “expert” to come talk to the children about the topic in-depth. Taisei who is a contractor, former parent and our life saver in fixing things that break at the preschools, came in to talk about what he knows about water, pipes, sinks, etc. He even took the group down to the basement to see the actual water pipes and drew a diagram showing where water actually comes from. The last step was experimenting with water. Watching how water traveled through tubes, the children used team work and problem solving skills to see how they could move water from one location to another. It is amazing to see how one simple question can lead to so much more when talking about a subject in-depth.

Sutter preschoolers experimenting with how water travels through the pipes.

Bush preschoolers explaining to the other groups about their experiment and the results.

Ways to Support NLF

General Program Support: Your contribution will go toward keeping our service fees affordable for our predominately low to moderate income families. There are many ways for you to support the work of NLF (check NLF’s website for other ideas).

* Designate your contributions through the United Way, and Combined Charities Federal Campaign, to go directly to NLF. NLF’s code number is 3251.
* Escrip is an easy way to have a portion of your shopping go directly to NLF. Just go to Escrip.com and follow the directions to register.

* Donate Your Car to NLF by calling 877-411-3662 for free pick-up. Please mention NLF as the recipient of your donation.
* Online Donation: You can give online through our website at www.nlfchildcare.org
* Remember NLF in your will or estate planning.
* NLF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Thanks to Preschool For All, the preschoolers were able to take a chartered bus to Tilden Park. They had fun feeding the farm animals and going on a nature walk.

The after school children strutted their stuff when they performed “Shirley Holmes and the Case of the Stolen Colors” created by Maya sensei and choreographed by Nagata Dance.

Sutter preschoolers expressed movement through their version of mame-maki in the forest “Setsubun” at our annual theatre performance in February.