

On Campus Child Care: A Feasibility Study

by

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Abstract

Child care is a major concern of the eighties. At least fifty percent of all mothers are employed, meaning an increasing demand for child care on both the local and national levels. Bryan/College Station is no different. Many of those demanding child care are students, faculty and staff at Texas A&M. Considering these facts, it seemed logical to investigate the feasibility of a child care center at Texas A&M.

First of all, need was established through the use of survey research. Two types of surveys were attempted: a telephone survey and distribution of written questionnaires. The response rate was highest on the questionnaires, and it is from these that the data are taken. According to the survey, there was an overwhelming desire for on^xcampus child care center. Therefore, investigation into the possibility of building such a center was necessary.

Establishment of a site on which to build the center was first. Following this, building codes and regulations as prescribed by the Department of Human Resources were explored. Finally, a building which would meet and exceed these requirements was found. Costs of constructing such a building were also explored.

Additional expenses for provisioning the center were investigated. Included in those are costs for toys, curriculum supplies, furniture, and storage areas for the children. Play-ground areas were also of importance. Their use in the program was established and their costs taken into consideration.

Next, staffing qualifications and curriculum were developed. Characteristics of effective programs were delved into, and a quality program modeled on those was established. Lastly, consideration was given to several key questions concerning the center. Of significance were reasons to establish the center as well as possible problems that might occur with regard to the center. Finally, a conclusion was drawn based on all of the research and data which were gathered. It seems reasonable to conclude that in light of the desire for the center and the ability for a quality program to be implemented, it is feasible for Texas A&M to have a child care center.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Kathleen Eaves, who is one of the most helpful, patient, and persevering individuals I have ever known. Her constant advice, aid and encouragement cannot go unmentioned. For the friendship, the honesty, and the belief in me, I thank her.

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INTRODUCTION

With the dramatic rise in dual career families and working single mothers, America has truly been plunged into the age of child care. Presently, over one half of women with young children work outside the home. Almost twenty million mothers with children under age 18 were in the labor force in March of 1984.¹ One in seven families is headed by a single parent, usually the mother. In addition, many couples choose to begin families when they are in their thirties at which point both parents have established careers which they do not want to leave.²

The Bryan/College Station community is no different. As of 1984, seventy-six percent of the respondents in a Working Parent and Employer Survey conducted by graduate students at Texas A&M University had children under the age of five years old. In eighty-one percent of the households, both parents were employed.³

The demand for child care at both the local and national levels is a very real one. Quality child care is available only to a small fraction of families who need it.⁴ "Social pressures and demands for day care facilities and other programs for fostering the development of [children] who need group care outside the home are very likely to increase during the next few years."⁵

These increasing needs, coupled with the fact that forty percent of all two year and four year colleges offer child care on their campuses, provoked investigation into the following:⁶

Is there a need for child care at Texas A&M University?

Is it feasible for Texas A&M to have a child care center?

What would be the estimated costs?

What requirements would have to be met to support such a center?

METHOD: SURVEY RESEARCH

To determine the answer to the first question, two surveys were taken to establish need. The first was a random telephone survey with a sample population of ninety: thirty students, thirty staff members, and thirty faculty members. Of these ninety, fifteen were responsive, yielding an insufficient number from which to make generalizations. An alternate method of survey was then chosen. Written questionnaires were distributed to parents at a University function attended by children of faculty, students, and staff (See Appendix I). This population consisted of fifty percent faculty, twenty-

four percent staff, and twenty-six percent students. Of the ninety questionnaires distributed, forty-two were returned, yielding a response rate of 46.6%.

Overall, 95% of respondents believed that Texas A&M should have an on-campus child care center, including 91% of those not using or needing child care facilities. When asked to rank on a scale of one to five the importance of Texas A&M's having on-campus child care facilities, 71% answered four or five, indicating very important. Thus, one could conclude that a child care center at A&M would be welcomed by faculty, staff and students. Indeed, 76% of the parents indicated that they would use the child care center if one were made available.

BUILDING SITE

With the current trend in expansion at Texas A&M, finding a site at which to build the center is the first priority. Presently, there are no plans for construction at Candy Hill, the section of land located near Married Student Housing at the corner of College Road and University.⁷ This site would prove to be well-chosen for several reasons. First, it is located near two of the most frequently used buildings on campus, Blocker and

Zachary.⁸ Secondly, this site is near to those who would make heavy use of the center: married students. Thirdly, this site is located near a large parking area, Lot 50. Lastly, Candy Hill is located very near to the main campus, unlike sites that have been investigated before. This accessibility from the main campus would prove beneficial to both students and those who use the center.

SPECIFICATIONS

A child care program of any kind is dependent upon its ability to satisfy the families utilizing it.⁹ To enable satisfaction at all levels, a facility which is well-structured, well-maintained and is tailored to meet the needs of those whom it serves, is a necessity. The Texas Department of Human Resources has published Minimum Standards: A Guide for Day Care Centers, which documents all requirements and regulations for child care centers. Of pertinent interest are the following specifications:

- 1) There must be at least thirty square feet of indoor space for each child in the center.
- 2) The center must have an outdoor play space of at least eighty square feet for each child using the area at a

time.

3) The center must have one flush toilet for every seventeen children.

4) The center must have one sink for every seventeen children.

5) All centers providing infant care must have a lavatory in the infant area and in all other areas where staff changes diapers.

6) A center must have at least two exits to the outside located in distant parts of the building.

7) All outdoor play areas must be accessible by a safe route and enclosed by a building or fence at least four feet high and with at least two exits.

8) The center must not allow children to use climbing equipment or swings in concrete or swings with concrete in the fall zone.

9) A center must have a phone, mats for children to nap, a storage area for children's belongings and comfortable seating for children.¹⁰

A center must meet these building requirements and may then petition for a Provisional License, at a cost of \$35.00.¹¹ A center then has one year to acquire full licensing at which time even more specifications must be met. Many of those regard actual care given to the child, child/staff ratios and nutritional requirements. The full operating license is available for the fee of

\$35.00 plus \$1.00 per child licensed.

EXPENDITURES

In light of these requirements, and the limitations which they impose, a floor plan of high quality is deemed necessary. Candy Hill Child Care Center (See Appendix II) meets the above specifications. It is well within Minimum Standards, providing for at most 200 children. Initially, however it would provide for 125. The building is designed to be approximately 10,000 square feet. An outdoor playground for older children would also be provided. It could conceivably be built for as little as \$30.00 per square foot. However, Tim Donothan, an architect for the A&M Systems, urged that it be constructed "of durable long lasting materials of high quality in order to minimize maintenance and repairs."¹² For these types of materials, there was an estimated cost of \$65-70.00 per square foot, rather than the previously mentioned \$30.00 per foot.

The next logical step in establishing the child care center is provisioning it. Toys, while providing fun, also provide stimulation and learning experiences. Through play, children figure out how to work and solve problems.¹³

According to the National Association for the Education (NAEYC), they also develop their senses and learn to talk and share ideas. Toys should be chosen so that they contribute to different areas of the child's development. These areas include the following:¹⁴

What are some good toys and play materials for young children?
All ages are approximate. Most suggestions for younger children are also appropriate for older children.

Sensory materials	Active play equipment	Construction materials	Manipulative toys	Dolls and dramatic play	Books and recordings	Art materials
Water and sand trays Rice, shavings Measuring trough Wood matching games Blocks, wood, block Triangle drum Friction matching games, leaf toys	1. One timber 2. Same as swing 3. One stool Wagon, cart or wheelbarrow Large rubber balls Large children's balls 1. One 3-wheeled steerable vehicle with pedals	1. Flat blocks and accessories 2. Small people, simple wood cars and trucks 3. One toy train set with large pieces Wood train and track set Hammer (1) or steel shank (1) with wood-working nails, nailing block	Wooden puzzles with 4-20 large pieces Pegboards Rag dolls or puppets for string Sorting cards Matching toys Picture blocks, picture dominoes	Washable dolls with a few clothes 1. Doll bed 2. Child-sized table and chairs 3. One pup, one hat 4. One cup, one hat, one shirt Hand puppets Wigging kit	1. One picture books stories and poems about things 2. Large sheets of paper, paper 3. Records or tapes of lullabies, music, folk music, or children's songs	Wide tip watercolor markers Large sheets of paper, paper Finger or tempera paint Blue tempera colors White glue
Water trays measuring tape, egg for water Sand trays, wooden toys, rollers Hydroplane, maracas, tambourine Frisbee, clay	1. Large 3-wheeled riding vehicle 2. Roller coaster 3. Sliding structure Rope or tree swing Plastic hats and bath Various sized rubber balls Balance board Planks, boards, old tires Rolling ring, ring toss Leaf tags and target	More wood blocks, shapes and accessories Fiber blocks Kluge's model with one Construction set with smaller parts Woodworking bench, saw, sandpaper, nails	Puzzles (getboard, small, large, for string) Parquetry blocks Small objects to sort Matches Matching glass Simple board or board games Flannel board with picture letters Sturdy letters and numbers	Dolls and accessories Doll carriage Child-sized table and chairs More dress-up clothes Rag doll, washboard, bath Kippit, doll house or other settings with accessories Finger or stick puppets	Simple picture books More dramatic picture and story books Sturdy record or tape player Recordings of under majority of music Rock and recording sets	Finger markers Markers Chalk Paint Paste paper with dispenser Collage materials
Water trays, leaf, wooden picture, maracas Hard hats, containers, utensils Harpicoma, paper, marker, recorder Cards for marking with clay	None Rolling games, race, obstacle, shuffleboard, simple fire Roller coaster Rope or tree swing Plastic hats and bath Various sized rubber balls Balance board Planks, boards, old tires Rolling ring, ring toss Leaf tags and target	More wood blocks, shapes and accessories Pegs for model, forms Fiber blocks Block and ball construction Wooden model, measure, accessories	More complex puzzles Dominoes More difficult board and card games Yarn tag, marbles, marbles, marbles Magnifying glasses Attribute blocks	Leaf taggers, play maracas, accessories or puppets for other Dramatic play settings, puppets Construction dolls or puppets Finger puppets	Books on letters Books with pictures Picture stories Children's songs Books on puppets Books	Water colors Smaller paper, supplies, ruler Paint Fiberboard Markers, paint Markers, markers Simple camera film

The toys should be easily accessible and arranged according to their purpose. Use of learning centers proves most effective. Art centers, block centers, reading centers, and home centers are all examples of these.¹⁵

Basic equipment such as cribs, high chairs, tables, storage shelves, and cabinets should last at least ten years or more.¹⁶ Constructive Playthings and Beckly-Cardy are two companies who specialize in center supplies. Allowing a base price of \$12.00 a toy for infants, toddlers and two's and an allowance of twelve

toys per day per child, a ceiling for toy expenditures can easily be found. For this center, which will serve fifteen infants, eighteen toddlers, and twenty-eight two year olds, the following figures were discovered: \$2160 for infants, \$2592 for toddlers and \$4032 for two year olds. For three and four year olds, the average price for toys is \$18.00. At an average of ten toys per day each, the three year olds would have a price ceiling of \$5040, while the fours' would be \$6480. Of course, these figures include records, puzzles and books, also.

In order to properly equip a room as is required by Minimum Standards, it is necessary to buy child-sized materials such as tables, chairs, and shelves. The net cost of these for all rooms except the infant room is approximately \$3340 per room. The infants' rooms would cost about \$2000 each to equip. Total provisional fees for the classrooms would be \$22,000 for toys and supplies and \$36,000 for furniture and classroom supplies.

PLAY AREAS

An accessible, protected outdoor play area should be part of every early childhood program.¹⁷ It should encourage climbing, carrying, digging and building. It should offer different kinds of surfaces for different

kindss of play. As this center is planned, it has two playgrounds--one on the courtyard area and one outside of the building beside the four year old's room. The courtyard playground will be geared toward the toddler and two year old class, while the outside playground will be for the older children. Several play stations will be situated throughout each playground in order to encourage imaginative play as well as active play for development of gross motor skills and stimulation. It is necessary to understand both the parts of a play space and how these parts function as a whole, since it is the total setting which children perceive and to which they will respond.¹⁷ The ways in which potential units and play units function in a given space will depend very much on how they are organized. The criteria for good organization are a clear path and adequate empty spaces.¹⁸

STAFFING

"In no other profession are the attitudes and feelings of staff more central to the success of a program than in child day care."¹⁹ Proper staffing is important to the success of the program. Because of the constant demands placed upon the caregiver/teacher, it is vital that enough positions be maintained. These include that of the

Program Director, the Principal Caregiver or Assistant Director, the Caregivers or Teachers, Substitute Personnel, Health Professionals, and Custodial Staff.²⁰

The Program Director is responsible for the daily operations of the center. She/he oversees all staff and maintains the quality of the program. The Principal Caregiver serves as Assistant Director and acts as Supervisor to the teachers and caregivers. She/he aids in the development of curriculum and staff training. The Caregivers and Teachers are responsible for the children themselves. They develop lessons according to the curriculum and supervise the children at all times. Substitute Personnel play a vital role in any child care program. Exposure to childhood illnesses is great in any type of center simply because of the constant contact which the caregiver has with the children. Personnel who can substitute during absences can prove invaluable to the success of the program. Health Professionals aid in detecting minor and major illnesses. Detection of early childhood diseases can be most important. Since Texas A&M currently employs a custodial staff for all campus buildings, Custodial Personnel can be obtained through the University's program.

Minimum Standards has several qualifications regarding child care staff members.²¹ Staff members must be

informed and aware of:

- 1) requirements in Minimum Standards and licensing laws
- 2) child care policies, discipline guidelines, and the release of children from the center
- 3) ways to recognize child abuse, neglect and sexual molestation as well as the responsibility in reporting these
- 4) procedures to follow in emergencies
- 5) training requirements: Staff: 15 clock hours
Director: 20 clock hours

Training is an absolutely essential ingredient in helping adults learn to understand and respond sensitively to the developmental needs of [children.]²² The most effective training program takes into account all facets of the caregiver's position. Skill in relating to parents as well as children is essential. A program which encourages learning on the teacher's part as well as the child's proves most useful. One that includes planned workshops, lectures, readings and discussions foster an attitude of growth and learning.²³ Regularly scheduled staff meetings are important, also. It is at this time that staff members may share useful information about the center, the development of the children as well as their concerns for the future.

CURRICULUM

The staff plays the all-important role of developing the curriculum into lessons for every day use. In planning the curriculum for a center, it is important to remember that the "preschool years are considered to be the most crucial in setting the direction and rate of many aspects of development."²⁴ A curriculum must have some philosophical basis or rationale for its content and organization. Examination of the five approaches for developing a curriculum will aid in finding this "philosophical basis."

The first approach to curriculum development is the Basic Skills Approach. This emphasizes the teaching of key or fundamental skills and knowledge. The second approach is the Psychological Constructs Approach. This develops particular traits or processes believed to be important to child development, i. e., self-concept, creativity. The next approach is the Preacademic Approach. This prepares children for the academic content of an elementary school. The fourth approach is the Remedial Approach. This approach focuses on the child's deficits or weaknesses and seeks to improve them. The final approach is the Developmental Tasks Approach.

This stresses the goals, objectives and experiences from all basic developmental domains.²⁵

Besides being established upon a sound philosophical base, a good early childhood program should have these characteristics. It should provide rich and varied learning experiences. It should, secondly, be staffed by caring, informed and trained adults. Lastly, it should provide a physical environment which is safe as well as attractive and which promotes learning and healthy development.²⁶ Close examination of this curriculum (See Appendix III) shows that it is a successful blend of all of the approaches to curriculum development. This curriculum, coupled with the above recommendations for staffing and training, prove that this child care center will indeed meet these requirements.

IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of a child care center at Texas A&M is not one to be entered into lightly. Several key questions become apparent as the investigation into its establishment continues. Of major concern is the question of liability insurance. Child care facilities in the State of Texas are classified as "day nurseries and fall under Owners, Landlords and Tenants' Liability

Insurance."²⁷ However, because Texas A&M is a state institution, it is funded by state money. Therefore, according to the State Appropriations Bill, it is prohibited from purchasing any type of liability insurance.²⁸ The state-funded child care center at Texas Women's University carries no insurance. They urge parents to purchase their own insurance to cover the cost of injuries, an option which has served them well. A second area of concern has been over that of the University competing with pre-existing businesses. Currently there is a need for child care in the Bryan/College Station communities as is shown by the long waiting lists at area child-care centers. There also is a precedent for school-based child care centers to prevail in court. A recent ruling decreed that "school[s] [have] broad based powers which included offering day care services to the community."²⁹

The last question that has arisen is a concern for the reasons for establishing on campus child care facilities. Just what will be the advantages? According to a report from the Select Committee on Children, adequate child care on campus can aid in retaining students and improving attendance. It can also function as a recruiting tool. In addition, it is helpful in upgrading the child development areas by providing a setting for training as

well as one for the researcher.³⁰ Solid evidence also confirms that young children who participate in a well-planned and organized learning program benefit from it throughout their lives.³¹ Indeed, in a Perry Preschool Study, it was determined that those in early childhood programs had greater scholastic success, were not as likely to be involved in juvenile crimes, and had better prospects for jobs as adults.³² Lastly, in terms of benefits to the employees of Texas A&M, studies have shown that there is a correlation between industry-sponsored child care and several employee behaviors. In a 1978 survey of 305 employer-sponsored child care centers, 72% felt it lowered absenteeism, 65% noted an improved employee attitude towards the company and 55% achieved a lower turnover rate.³³

CONCLUSION

The basic responsibility for the education of young children belongs in the hands of those with experience, expertise, and commitment.³⁴

A basic desire for on campus child care has been expressed, by both those who need child care facilities and those who do not. Texas A&M, as a major institution in the state, lacks one thing that many minor colleges

have: on campus child care. The need is there; the method apparent. Texas A&M has the ability to build and maintain a high quality child care center which is a leader in early childhood programs. In light of these facts, it is reasonable to conclude that a child care center at Texas A&M is indeed feasible.

APPENDIX I

SURVEY RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

males 30%
females 70%

faculty 50%
staff 24%
students 26%

In your opinion, should Texas A&M have an on campus child care center?

Yes 95% No 5%

If A&M were to offer child care facilities in the form of an on campus child care center, would you use it?

Yes 76% No 12% Maybe 12%

On a scale of 1 to 5 (five as most important), how important is it to you for A&M to offer on campus child care?

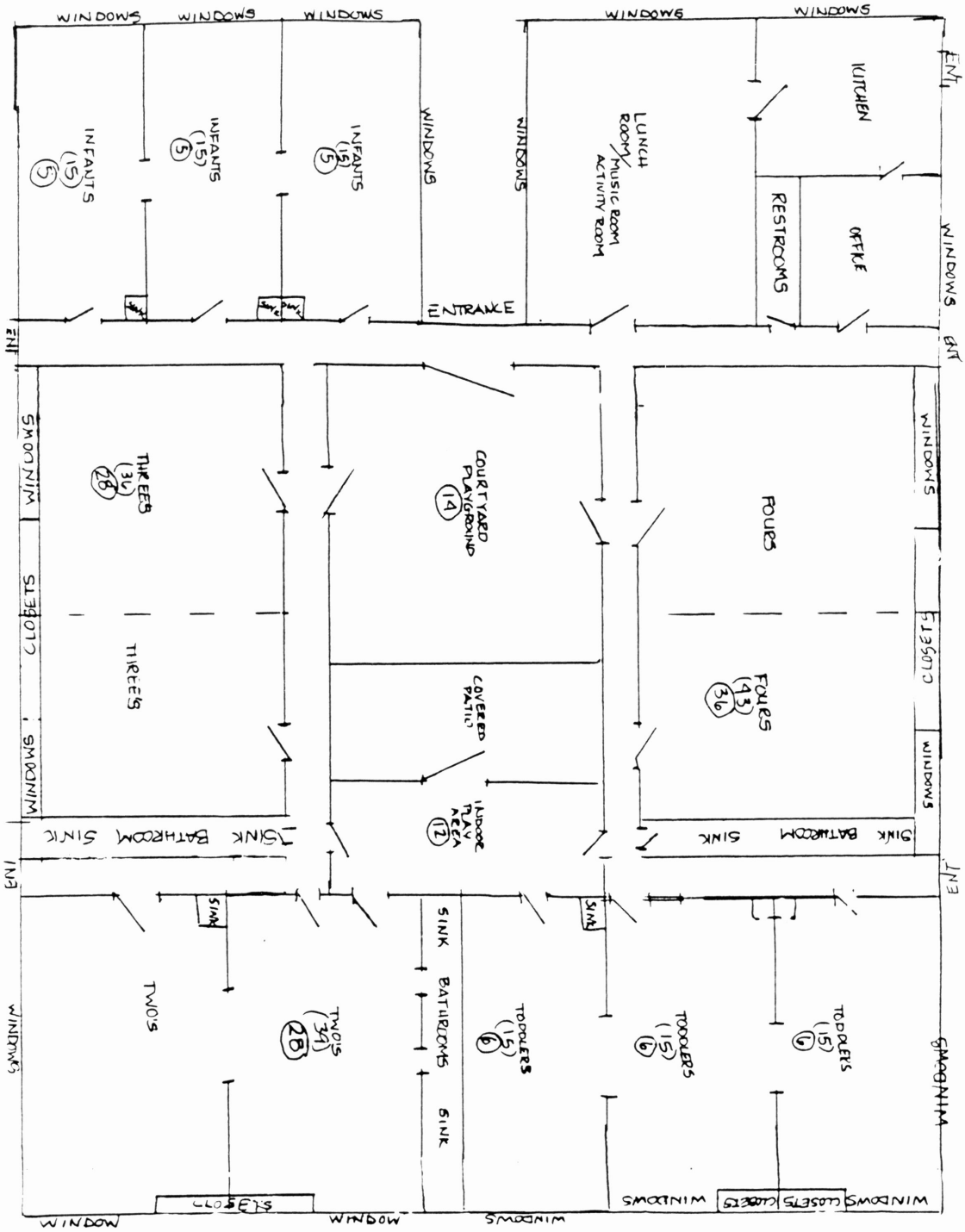
5 most important 59%
4 very important 12%
3 important 14%
2 somewhat important 3%
1 not important 12%

Those responding who did not use or need child care:

28%

Those 28% who were in favor of campus-based child care:

91%



LANTRY HILL CHILD CARE CENTER

APPENDIX III

SAMPLE CURRICULUM FOUR YEAR OLD CLASS

September: red, yellow, blue, circle, 1, 2, B, D, F, C

Week I Center routines and rules

Week II and III Self Concept

Knows full name, age, appearance, height, phone number, address, own picture. can describe self in relation to other objects.

Week IV Taste

October: black, orange, purple, green, rectangle, 2, 3, H, J, K, G

Week I Hearing

understands concept of sound, difference between sounds, can imitate sounds, can identify sounds

Week II Touch

can discriminate between different textures and identify objects by the way they feel

Week III Smell

Week IV Sight

November: blue, yellow, orange, blue, brown, triangle, 3, 4, L, M, N, P

Week I and II Fall

Week III Pilgrims and Indians

Week IV Thanksgiving

December: red, green, purple, blue, gold, silver, circle, 4, 5, R, S, T, V

Week I Family and family relationships

Week II Christmas

Week III Other Cultures

Week IV Winter

January: blues, square, 5, 6, W, Z, B, D,

Week I Winter

Week II Birds

Week III Mammals

Week IV Reptiles and Dinosaurs

February: red, pink, white, square, heart, 6, 7, F, H, J, C,

Week I Problem solving--Spatial relationships

Week II Problem Solving--Sequencing, Valentine's Day

Week III Problem Solving--Same/Different

Week IV Problem Solving-- Size and Weight

March: pastels, diamond, triangle, 7, 8, K, L, M, G
Week I Weather
Week II Weather
Week III Spring
Week IV Spring

April: greens, yellow, black, white, oval, rectangle, 8,
9, N, P, R, S
Week I Seeds
Week II Plants
Week III Flowers
Week IV Insects and Spiders

May: warm and cool colors, diamond, 9, 10, T, V, W, Z
Week I Dairy Products
Week II Meat
Week III Fruits and Vegetables
Week IV Breads and Cereals

June: orange and yellow
Week I Air Vehicles
Week II Space Vehicles
Week III Land Vehicles
Week IV Water Vehicles

July: red, white, blue
Week I United States
Week II Other countries
Week III Self concept review
Week IV Summer

August: orange, red yellow, white
Week I and II Careers
Week III and IV Community Helpers

Adapted in part from First Presbyterian Child Care
Center, Bryan, Texas

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