Dear Parents,

First and foremost, a heart-felt thank you from all the staff to all of you for the very generous holiday bonuses. Your cards and contributions were very, very much appreciated. Thanks again to the parents who coordinated the effort!

As a result of a session I attended at the NAEYC Annual Conference, we are going to shake up our menu a bit. I went to a presentation by a group from North Carolina called Rainbow in My Tummy. One of the big differences between preschool programs involved with Rainbow and BioKids is that they are much larger with FULL TIME FOOD STAFF! BioKids Staff and I have been doing some brainstorming and plan to introduce some new items over the next few weeks. We'd like you to let us know what your children have to say about the changes.

We're going to try a few baked egg dishes for lunch - French toast (bread, eggs, milk and yogurt) as well as hash browns with milk, eggs, spinach, peas and just a touch of cheese. We'll most likely start by offering these for afternoon snack and see how they turn out as well as gauge the ease with which we can prepare them.

We're also going to substitute frozen grilled chicken for chicken nuggets. I think the children will like the French toast, but may take some time getting used to the healthier chicken. We'll see... they may still insist on catsup for dipping!

We'll substitute some of the cheese we have at snack with raisins, shredded carrots and sliced cucumber.

Additionally, this year we'd like to eliminate baked and sweet birthday treats. That means if your child would like to share a special treat on a birthday you are welcome to bring in:

-- fresh berries (something the children love but due to cost not typically on our shopping list, especially when they are not in-season)
-- pineapple, melon, or another kind of fruit (something from a tree in your yard or that

BioKids will be closed Monday, January 20 for Human Rights Day as well as Monday, February 17, President’s Day.
Robin’s Nest continued...

your child helps select from the Farmer's Market might seem special)

-- packaged cheese such as colby-jack sticks (we generally just have string or American cheese)

-- pitted dates (easier to chew than some other dried fruits) or individual raisin boxes

-- 100% juice popsicles

As always, food brought in for special occasions needs to be in store packaging and large fruits need to be brought in whole (we'll do the cutting). And, of course, you are still welcome to bring in a gift of a new or gently used book for our library!

thanks,
Robin

Labeling clothing

If your child has some new gear, please remember to label it; this includes “new” hand-me-downs because, really, we don’t know those cousins and neighbors are whose names are in coats and hats.
Upcoming Celebrations

February is a busy month at BioKids. At the beginning of February we will celebrate Chinese New Year, ushering in the **Year of the Horse**. We observe **Chinese New Year** with a variety of art projects and books as well as providing the children with chopsticks during lunch. Mardi Gras is in early March... and, of course, there is Valentine’s Day.

**Valentine’s Day** is special for many children. The teachers in the Preschool Room have planned some related activities: decorating heart cookies, making valentines to take home, and exchanging cards with classmates. Children will exchange cards on Friday, February 14. Please have your child bring in valentines labeled only with “from...your child’s name.” The cards should not be addressed to individual children; do not fill out or include a “To” section. This makes distribution much easier and assures that no one is forgotten. Cards can be home-made or commercially produced, but if you have a treat attached to your card, the edible item must be commercially wrapped.

Please bring in the following number of cards:

- **Heather’s group** - please bring in 8 cards
- **Manon’s group** - please bring in 14 cards

Preschool Room staff are rejoicing that Valentine’s Day falls on a Friday this year; the children get so worked up over... what, cards... it’s hard to say. Anyway, the staff wishes you a fun-filled long post-Valentine’s Day weekend!

**Congratulations to Manon** who recently renewed her Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential! To accomplish this, she participated in (and completed homework related to) 50 hours of Early Childhood Education training.
Most childcare and preschool programs have a good deal of staff turnover, sometimes making daily life for students and their families a little rocky. I know we are on the right track at BioKids when I look at the longevity of full-time, as well as part-time, staff members. Not only have Heather and Manon been here since 2000 and 2001 respectively, Nanda has been here for over 7 years! Kiera and Shawnny are in their 3rd year, and both Amy and Courtney have been here for over a year. It is generally unheard of to have a part-time teaching staff with such staying power. I think there are several reasons why teachers stay at BioKids, not least of all, is that they truly enjoy the community of families and the support they receive from BioKids parents. Parents are appreciative and respectful, participate in Teacher Appreciation Week and Holiday Bonus giving, keep ill children at home, as well as respond timely to the “your child is sick” phone calls. You do our laundry, grocery shopping, wash our cups and toys, provide us with fresh playdough and sometimes even clean our room on the weekends. Parents, thank you for doing your part to help retain our wonderful staff!