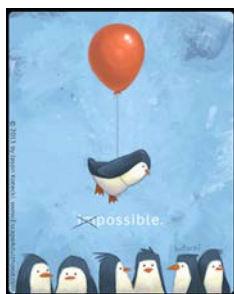
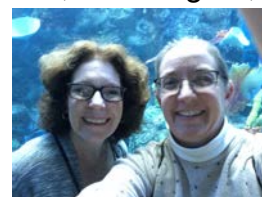


N4C Conference in Long Beach, CA

From March 23rd to 26th, Mrs. Rosenblum and I attended the annual conference of the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers with about 200 educators from campus-based early childhood programs. In our presentation, we shared diverse ways to support experienced educators' professional development by mentoring less experienced educators, collaborating with peer educators, and sharing the inspiration they gain from interacting with experts in a variety of fields related to learning. We attended presentations on a range of topics, such as the benefits of nature play, strategies for developing children's executive function skills (i.e., cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control), approaches to listening more closely to children, software for helping teachers manage the paperwork parts of their jobs so they can spend more time with children, etc. We visited two full-day programs affiliated with the Long Beach City College and one affiliated with California State University – Long Beach. We shared meals with colleagues from the states of Maine, Washington, Florida, Nevada, Massachusetts, Indiana, etc. Dialogue with such diverse educators over the course of several days provided the opportunity to more deeply reflect on our own practice and consider possibilities for enriching our work with educators, families and children. We also took the opportunity to learn outside our areas of expertise by touring the Aquarium of the Pacific. Did you know that sea otters start turning gray at age 4?



One of the most inspiring aspects of the conference for both of us was the keynote presentation by Jason Kotecki (www.escapeadulthood.com), whose mission is to help adults “break free from the life you’ve been told to live” to “create the life you were made for”, both personally and professionally. In his book ***Penguins Can't Fly + 39 Other Rules that Don't Exist***, he suggests that, “Following the rules is an excellent way to fit in and avoid being questioned, laughed at, or scorned. But it's not a particularly effective way of living an amazing story.” See my Director's Corner for some examples. In ***The Escape Plan: A 40-day Plan to Annihilate the Adulthood in Your Life***, he suggests practical, perspective-shifting exercises to help adults focus more of their energy on what matters most. For example, the “Spin Cycle” task is to “take a routine you do every day and put a childlike spin on it” (e.g., writing your shopping list in crayon, having an opposite day with backwards routines, wearing mismatched socks, eating dessert first, etc.) – just to remember that all of our routines are invented and could have been constructed a different way. The “Memory Maker” task is to “create a memory with someone you care about that will mean a lot ten years from now” – as a way of breaking stride and more intentionally choosing how to spend our time. The goal, he says, is to build a portfolio of an awesome life. The question of what to include in the portfolio resonates with me this spring as I help my parents sort generations of documents, photos, and mementos from relatives back to 1870. What most interests my generation are items that help us understand who each ancestor was as a person, because both the distinctive traits and the similarities across generations help us better understand how we each became who we are. For example, I learned that my grandfather, who I never knew, had the same work ethic and sense of humor as my father, which was passed to me, and that my grandfather's mother was a revered and somewhat rebellious educator. Learning my history inspires me to share my unique narrative with my granddaughter.

