At the Children’s Center, many student aides, interns and parents are surprised when we explain that we don’t have expectations of young children to “share” their toys or even their space. Many see “sharing” as an important lesson that should be learned early on in life and practiced as a life skill. But the idea of sharing is very difficult for toddlers to understand, particularly as they are still learning the idea of ownership, hence why some children (and adults) believe that everything is “Mine!” Children’s center staff use daily opportunities to teach the concept of ownership, e.g. “Here’s your cubby,” “This is your chair and that’s hers, and this is mine,” “Tell him you’re using that.” As children learn the idea of ownership, encourage children’s intrinsic acts of sharing, e.g. “I liked the way you gave her your toy”, “I see that you two are sitting together”, “Thank you for being patient and waiting your turn”.

Activity – Using meal and snack times is a great opportunity for learning “yours”, “mine” and “ours”. Show your child how you set the table or have them help set out plates for everyone. Indicate which ones belong to whom and then show them what belongs to everybody at the table (table, serving dishes, etc.) Share snacks such as crackers or pieces of fruit indicating “One for you, one for daddy, one for mommy, etc.”

Click on the images below to take you to these book reads about sharing: