



Classroom I Newsletter

February 2011

We are finally getting a welcomed break from the harsh winter weather. For the first time in weeks we have been able to go to the playground and enjoy some spring-like sunshine! While we were held hostage to snow and freezing temperatures the children were able to take advantage of our extra-long work cycles and engage in some brain challenging work choices!

The Latest

Upon our return from winter break, **Mrs. Spencer** discussed reptiles with the children. She began by discussing the four characteristics of reptiles:

- Dry, scaly skin
- Vertebrates
- Cold-blooded
- Hatch from eggs



She then talked more specifically about different kinds of reptiles – snakes, lizards, turtles alligators, and crocodiles. Children this age always seem to be fascinated

with reptiles, and this group was certainly no exception! Our science shelf featured a variety of library books full of reptile photographs that were quite popular with the class. In addition, we borrowed some snake skin from Candy, a corn snake that resides in Classroom V. We discussed how Candy, a constrictor, squeezes her prey and swallows it whole.

The children learned that most snakes are harmless and even helpful, but a few are poisonous. The big difference between the two is in their mouths – harmless snakes have rows of short, pointed teeth that help them catch and hold on to their food. Poisonous snakes have long, hollow teeth called fangs. They bite! Poison then runs through the fangs to subdue their prey. Mrs. Spencer emphasized to the children that should they ever encounter a snake, the best thing to do is to leave it alone as it can be difficult to distinguish between harmless and poisonous snakes at a quick glance!

A few of the children commented that they don't like snakes and we discussed the fact that harmless snakes, such as Candy, are helpful to us. They keep the rodent population at bay which helps to protect our homes and crops. Mrs. Spencer reiterated that snakes should be left alone as each one has its place in nature.

Our lessons on reptiles were capped off by a visit to our classroom from Ms. Zachritz and Candy! The children got to see firsthand that Candy does indeed have dry, scaly skin and is a vertebrate. They even got to see her open her mouth! Ms. Zachritz also brought along a turtle and a gecko, and her visit was a perfect finale that generated lots of excitement in our classroom! A big thanks from all of us to Ms. Zachritz!



Mrs. Kessinger received a bag of Nigerian artifacts from the Okpebholo family. This bag inspired her to do her unit, “All About Nigeria!”

She taught us that Nigeria is about the size of California, Nevada, and Arizona combined. Nigeria’s capital is Abuja but the biggest city is Lagos, which is located on the Gulf of Guinea. Abuja, much like Washington D.C., is it’s own Federal Capital territory. The Gulf of Guinea is very important for the importing and exporting of the many goods of Nigeria. We learned that Nigeria supplies 8% of the United States oil demands and Nigeria is the 5th largest exporter of oil to the United States. Other exports include cocoa, palm oil, yams, cassava, sorghum, millet, corn, rice, cotton, tin, columbite, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, and zinc.

The class compared the United States to Nigeria and learned that in large cities Nigerians typically speak English, but in the smaller towns many Nigerians speak a native African language. The average person in Nigeria has a life expectancy of about 47 years. The life expectancy in the United States is currently at 78 years. Women of Nigeria typically have 4 or 5 children and an American woman typically has 2 or 3. Nigerian currency is the Niara. Lastly, in comparison to the United States, Nigeria only has 36 states.

Inside the bag there was a wonderful assortment of Nigerian artifacts for Mrs. Kessinger to share with the class. There were several different amounts of Niara, some beautiful Nigerian fabric, a drum, a mortar and pestle, and a photo book made by Shannon Okpebholo’s Uncle who has visited Nigeria. The pictures in Mr. Okpebholo’s book were vibrant and diverse. The entire class, including the teachers, really enjoyed looking at pictures of the many different ways people live in Nigeria.

To top off the week, Idia Okpebholo, Shannon's aunt, came to give a lesson about Nigeria to the entire class. She taught the children that Nigerian people use fabric wraps for many different uses. Ms. Okpebholo showed them how to use fabric to wrap a baby and carry it on their backs or wrap fabric around the tops of their heads to help balance heavy objects. She also showed how children in Nigeria greet their elders by bowing. Ms. Okpebholo explained that she has a very large and loving family and some of them have moved to the United States and some of them live in Nigeria. She spoke about the different houses they have in Nigeria. She even taught the class some words in an African language. We learned so much during our week and had such a wonderful time talking, "All About Nigeria!"

Mrs. Dugan has continued giving lessons on her homeland of the United Kingdom. She had a piece of pottery specially made to show the children that the United Kingdom is an island surrounded by water. Her lesson included labels of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom and its surrounding bodies of water. Throughout March, Mrs. Dugan will give lessons about the Patron Saints of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. She will also introduce the national flags and symbols of each nation. She will discuss Ireland and its culture and, of course, its Patron Saint Patrick!





Every day we are learning about the world around us through our senses. **Mrs. Young** discussed the five senses (sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch) in detail with the children. Many interactive activities were on the shelves that were specific to each sense. For sight, we each looked into a mirror and studied the uniqueness of our own eye color. We then colored a pair of paper eyes the color that was closest to our own. We made a graph of “our eyes” and learned that more friends in classroom one have blue eyes than any other color.

For the sense of hearing, Mrs. Young recorded some familiar household sounds for the children to identify. They were to listen to a sound and match it to the corresponding picture. Their favorite was the sound of a flushing toilet. This solicited lots of giggles!

The tasting activity was the most popular choice of all! The children had the opportunity to taste the difference between sweet, salty, sour and bitter. They served themselves a small sample of food that represented each flavor. The children were most surprised to discover that not all chocolate is delicious! Although unsweetened chocolate looks delicious it’s very bitter in taste! We saw some very funny faces when the children learned that “looks can be deceiving.”

As part of our continuing lessons in peace, Mrs. Young recently introduced the children to the concept of a “love light.” This lesson was adopted from the wonderful book, “Honoring the Light of the Child” by Sonnie McFarland. The idea is to show the children that they are special and unique. It is to help them understand that they each have lights of love within them. In our classroom, the children are learning what makes our love lights shine bright. Our love brightens when we feel peace and

happiness or when we help to make others happy. Our light may dim when we feel hurt, sad or scared. Within the next couple of weeks you may see your child come home with a yellow felt circle pinned to their shirt. This is a symbol of their love light. Please talk to your child about how their love light feels at different times. Together we can help the children grow their light from a place of grace and peace within themselves.

Reminders and Requests

Please remember that if you want your child to have something warm for lunch you must send it in a thermos. The metal Thermos brand is best for keeping food warm. (See Thermos SK3000MB4, or B3000PK002, or B3000BL002 at Amazon.com).

Dates to Remember

March 11th- International Night from 5-7

March 25th- No School- American Montessori Society Conference

April 1st- No School-Professional Development Day for staff

April 4th-8th- No School-Spring Break

April 16th-Providence R.O.C.K.S

April 22-Earth Day- Early Dismissal

Thanks To You

Thank you to the many families that donated extra clothing to our classroom.

Thanks to Mrs. Snider for always buying us Practical Life goodies.

Thanks to Mrs. Torabi for writing music for our table harp.

Thanks to Ms. Zacharitz for always having exactly what we need and for sharing her knowledge about reptiles.

Thanks to the children in Classroom VII for taking out our garbage and recycling everyday!

Thank you to the Okpebholo family for sharing their Nigerian culture and traditions with our classroom. An extra special thank you to Idia, Shannon's aunt, for coming to our school to speak to the children.

Thank you for reading our classroom news!

Joan, Christie, Diane and Bernie

"We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself; this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori

