

Classroom 2 Newsletter

March/April 2011

What a wonderful time of year! Besides the freshness of spring it's an exciting time within the classroom. The children have been normalized for some time and are settled in their work choices. There is a lot of concentrated learning and we have bonded as a community. We are also now able to enjoy some large movement activities on our playground. Thank you, Mr. Groundhog, for not seeing your shadow!

Since our last newsletter we have celebrated many special Holidays. We sang a song about Groundhog Day, learned about presidents Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, made valentines for each other, tasted some King Cake while learning about Mardi Gras traditions and listened to some Saint Patrick Day stories.

Thank you for the thoughts, kind words, cards, donations, and expressions of sympathy in support for Kerry and Maria in the deaths of their loved ones.

In Our Classroom

Science

We have been experimenting with simple machines. We have been turning gears and extending our knowledge of them by using an eggbeater to make soap bubbles. We moved an inclined plane to various heights to see what effect it has on the movement of a toy car. We have been adjusting the strings on a pulley to different positions to see how it affects movement, and adjusted the fulcrum of a lever to different positions while lifting a weight. As a follow-up we used a balance scale to compare weights of similar objects.

Math

In Math we have been learning about time. The younger children have been putting the numbers 1-12 on the clock and the older students have been learning how to tell time to the hour and half hour. We are now beginning to learn about measurement. As an introduction to nonstandard units of measurement we are

using blocks to measure the length of straws. The older children are learning to use a ruler to measure by inches. We are also experimenting with volume using beans and measuring cups.

Probability is another concept we have explored. In large group we used tally marks to see how many times a yellow or black rock was picked out of a bag that had nine yellow rocks and one black rock. Then we had a lesson on flipping a penny to see how many times heads or tails would show up.

Geography

One of our favorite choices is the mapping boards. We invite a friend to do this choice with us. We take turns placing wooden objects (trees, cars, houses) on a board and have our partner copy us. We are now ready to extend this lesson to using symbols instead of objects and will soon be making our own maps.

We have also been learning about Asia and Africa. Mrs. Trotter treated us to a lesson about African drumming and told us about the Mbira, an African finger piano. We learned that all of the materials used to make it were recycled and we have been making our own music with it.

A friend named Sandra from Germany is traveling the world. She is sending postcards to the children and we are tracking her progress on a world map.

Language

The children continue to work on letter sounds with objects, pictures, and sandpaper letters. We are also practicing forming words with spelling boxes and the moveable alphabet. Some of the children are reading word families and word lists and others are reading short books. The older children are writing stories and are also continuing their study of grammar learning about adjectives and verbs.

Each week the third year students are given a small group handwriting lesson. They are developing an awareness of where to begin the letter and how to place it on the line. We are also learning to leave spaces between words and have started learning how to write uppercase letters. Handwriting would be an excellent activity to practice at home this summer for those who are moving on to elementary level.

Sensorial and Art

The children are becoming more creative with the sensorial materials. They are combining more than one type and making comparisons between them. For example, they might line up the pink tower next to the brown stairs, There is also a great interest in learning the names of the geometric solids and playing "guess which shape is missing" games. We have also studied the artists Vincent Van Gogh and Norman Rockwell.

Practical Life

Food choices have won the popularity contest. The children have prepared their own cereal with milk, squeezed oranges to make juice, and are now peeling and slicing their own hard boiled eggs. Window washing has also been a popular activity along with drawing on a tray with shaving cream.

Music and Movement with Mrs. Franzini

It is always a treat when Mrs. Franzini comes to our room. We learn about music in such fun ways. We have used drums to tell the story of the Gingerbread Man. We have explored Spanish instruments while learning the song Mi Querpo. One of our favorite songs is Black Snake, Where Are You Hiding? We will soon be singing This Pretty Planet, another all time favorite. Thanks so much, Mrs. Franzini, for taking the time to sing and move with us!

Mrs. Pepper and Mr. Bran

We have been very fortunate to have our interns Mr. Bran in the morning class and Mrs. Pepper in the afternoon. Besides the children loving having lessons with them they have enhanced our choices in the classroom.

Mr. Bran has been working on a gardening theme and has taught the children about "the three sisters". They learned that corn, beans, and squash all grow together well and benefit each other. The corn grows tall providing a structure for the beans to grow on. The beans create nitrogen in the soil, feeding the corn. The squash shades the soil suppressing the weeds and conserving moisture. The children have been sorting the different seeds. They also have a new insect

matching choice with pictures of beneficial and harmful insects posted around the room. Another choice is a mapping activity of Mr. Bran's farm which introduces the idea of using maps for planting.

Mrs. Pepper will be presenting a unit on Central America in April. The children have already enjoyed the guacamole-making and coffee-smelling choices that she has made.

Morning Class Dismissal

We wanted to thank all of you for your prompt pickup of your children. It has been a big help in giving us the time we need to prepare the classroom for the afternoon children, create new lessons and choices, and also to have time to confer and collaborate.

We would like to give a friendly reminder about parking lot procedures. If you are in the car line, please return to your car as soon as your child is dismissed. This will keep the line moving. You may always park in the parking lot if you would like to spend time chatting with other parents or have some school errands to do.

We also ask that as you return to your car, please use the sidewalks instead of cutting across the road. This will help keep all of the children safe and emphasize the importance of not walking in the street

Important Dates

April 1-8 **No School** Professional Development and Spring Break

April 22 **Earth Day** You are invited to bring your child to an open house from **9:30 to 11:00**. During this time you may also view the lower elementary Earth Day/science projects. Then please join us for the Providence School picnic.

May 6 **No school** This will be visitation day for those students completing their third year.

Have a safe and fun Spring Break!