

# TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

## January 8, 2010

### General Notices

#### **PARENTS WORKSHOPS ARE HERE!**

We invite you to see the work that the children have been doing.

If you did not RSVP yet, please do so to your child's teacher:

**All workshops are held here at the school 7:00PM-8:30PM (no children).**

**RM1:** Monday, Feb 1, 2010

**RM2:** Monday, Feb 1, 2010

**RM3:** Wednesday, Jan 27, 2010

**RM5:** Wednesday, Jan 27, 2010

**RM6:** Wednesday, Jan 13, 2010

#### **Next week's snack:**

Tricia Williams (chefanator@mac.com), a certified holistic nutritionist and chef (also a parent in our school!) plans and prepares our snack. For next week, the menu is (snack may change without notice):

**Monday:** Happy Herbert's Organic Whole Grain Pretzels

**Tuesday:** Red and green grapes

**Wednesday:** Clementines

**Thursday:** Winter veggie crudite & green goddess dip

**Friday:** Oatmeal fruit bar

## **Room 1**

#### **Welcome back!**

Dear parents, we hope you and your family had a great time during the holiday break! If you want to share any holiday photos or stories, please feel free to contact us. In the spirit of our community school, we would welcome you to class during the morning's circle meeting to share these memories or adventures.

#### **Climbing Area**

After the break, we revisited our documentation. Based on the interests of the children, we modified the layout of some work areas and added some new provocations.

The children had been observed engaging in physical activities such as climbing and jumping. An interest in the "incline area" of room2 was also noted. We decided to add some wood planks to our building area- some flat and some raised as ramps. The children not only used their bodies upon the wood but also various classroom materials such

as cars, trucks and balls. The redesigned area provoked a great deal of physical activity and “construction,” allowing the children to consider concepts of equilibrium, inclination, velocity, gravity and force.

### **Light and Reflection**

Since the beginning of the year we have offered the children an opportunity to explore light, colors and reflection, via various provocations placed upon the light table. We decided to scaffold the students’ work by introducing an overhead projector, which would allow them to interact with projected shadows and light.

Embracing the role of a teacher as a researcher we begin to investigate light. We ask ourselves:

Does light change the way that the children view the materials? How does the abstract concept of transparency find it’s place in the color spectrum? Do shadows play a part in color transformations? How do we feel light or color? How does it effect our environmental or social interactions? How does light interact with color/ density? How can light be manipulated/moved/ changed? How do the children perceive their shadow?

How do they approach understanding this phenomenon? Why are we so attracted to the exploration of light? How to we approach a deeper understanding versus aesthetic attraction?

The children begin to take notice of the light, colors, and shadows being projected onto the wall. The first relationship was built with the top mirror of the projector. The children notice when they move this, the image moves up and down.

### **Dramatic Play**

In the dramatic play area, we have added some dress-up clothes, accessories and work uniforms to help the children role-play.

The new “box of costumes” catches the interest of many children and has brought new life to the dramatic play area. If you have any old costumes or dresses that you can donate to our “wardrobe”, please bring them to class!

### **Reminder**

Please: since we go outside, remember to leave a warm coat, hat, **scarf, gloves or mittens** and shoes for your child!

## **Room 2**

We’ve had quite a few birthdays since we last wrote. BC, MM and NM all turned 3 years old. MM’s parents joined the class and read two of her favorite stories to the children and baked a cinnamon cake with a small group. BC’s mom shared photos of him, beginning with one of him in her belly, following with some baby pictures and then a photo from his school celebration last year. The students were fascinated with

the photos and wanted to hold them and take a closer look. She also baked banana bread with the children. NM’s mom will join us next week to celebrate his birthday.

### **Snails in The Classroom**

This week a child was observing a snail and (we think) out of curiosity, push down on the snail with her hand, smashing its shell. After discussing the

severity of the situation with the child, we brought it up to the whole group. We spoke about the fact that the shell can not be mended with tape (as suggested by the child) and that we are not sure if the it's shell will heal. W.S said that the snail is sad and crying because of its injury.

After much consideration, we decided that we would track the health of our injured snail with the class to promote a sense of empathy for animals and to promote a sense of responsibility for our class pets. We made a separate cage into a "Snail Hospital" and asked the children what the snail might need to get better. HH suggested medicine and JO and AG agreed. VR suggested that a toy might help it feel better. OP thought a kayak might be a better idea.

### **Snail Investigation Group**

After the children were exposed to many opportunities to draw and discuss the parts of the snail, we decided with Monique that the children were ready to express their ideas about the snail through a new medium. This week Monique introduced clay and gave the children a chance to work with it and gain experience in using it. Eventually, we will ask them to make snail models out of the clay. KJA's was ready to create a snail while others made pizza and turtles. KJA's sculpture looked very

much like a snail, and he pointed out where his snails eyes and mouth were.

### **Storytelling**

We have introduced Story Dictation in the classroom and the children have developed a great interest in both telling their own stories and listening to the stories of their classmates. Both teachers wrote about Storytelling in the newsletter following our trip to the NAEYC Conference. To re-read our thoughts and why it's relevant to preschool literacy education, please refer to the newsletter dated 12/04/09. Since both the teachers and students are really enjoying the stories that are being told, we decided we would like to share a new story every week with you. Here is one from NF:

*"Now, after L\*, a ghost comes. He bites J\*. J\* runs away and the ghost runs away. And the ghost gets him. The bad mouse comes. And then the bad mouse bites him too. HH comes and then HH saves J\*. And L\* almost saves him."*

L\* is NF's babysitter and J\* is her brother. HH is another student in our class. After hearing his own name, HH becomes very interested in the story and stops his activity to ask *"And then what does the ghost do?"*

## **Room 3**

There is an immense amount of literature on the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education. Julianne Wurm, Reggio researcher, educator, and author, had a wonderful introductory workshop at NAEYC that many of us had the privilege to attend. After having

a more personable conversation with her post-session, I purchased her book: Working in the Reggio Way, and began reading it over our holiday vacation.

One topic she writes about that relates to our behavior towards children-in and

outside of school- is “wait time.” Most of us consider wait time the act of giving children ample time to digest, process, and respond to a particular inquiry or circumstance. Julianne Wurm explains that her conception of wait time was waiting “ a few seconds beyond my comfort zone before calling on students.” After spending time in Reggio Emilia, Italy, though, Julianne Wurm speaks of re-evaluating her ideas on this topic. In Italy, she observed questions posed to children that did not necessitate immediate responses. She compares an inquiry to a “seed” needing time to “germinate” in the mind of a child. In Italy, her and her colleagues would sometimes return to a question days, weeks, or even months later, waiting to see how children’s ideas developed, based on inquiries presented as provocations or possibilities; not absolute questions with answers.

We can use this information as we interact with children every day. Many times, it isn’t necessary for children to have an absolute answer immediately. Instead, we can check back, asking for any new thoughts, and slowly seeing original-or even blank thoughts- develop into something more. The process of generating, rethinking, and revising

ideas shows a heightened level of cognition and introspection. She speaks of children approaching material “in their own time,” continuously interacting with other children and their environment to understand their own thoughts more deeply. In one instance, she gives the example of using clay, and students’ varying readiness to work with it. While only a handful of students in a classroom approached the clay when it was introduced, in the weeks that followed, other classmates became comfortable exploring it. Ultimately, the experience the children had- over a long period of time-added a level of depth. If the clay had been removed earlier, some of the students would not have worked with it all. Additionally, the experience would have been incomplete for those who explored it earlier, not having had the opportunity to return to it again.

To read more on Reggio Emilia through the experience of Julianne Wurm, you can pick up a copy of her book **Working in the Reggio Way**. She also has a website [www.juliannewurm.com](http://www.juliannewurm.com) , which includes much of this same information, as well as a regular blog.

## **Room 4: Atelier**

### **RM1**

Getting started after the break was an easy transition. After having the light table on the floor for a good period of time, we decided to move the painting area into the mini atelier and share the space with the clay set up. Adding

larger brushes and paper, we allowed for a more physical experience creating the possibility of more gesture. The children were very engaged with painting on the wall near the light table and painting their large box, so we decided to set up a painting area on the

wall in their mini atelier. Looking at the clay through a new light, we took away the clay table and set up the clay materials on the light table.

## **RM2**

Diving back into Room 2's painting exploration, the students were eager to get back to their atelier. Following the student's interest in color mixing, we decided to change the projected image in their atelier. We had been alternating images of the children outside with the class tree to a landscape painting example by Chaim Soutine. The color, gesture and subject of the image is closely linked to the content and experiences of the children from before the break.

## **RM3**

After a day of returning to school, we decided to add a new provocation to the watercolor painting area. Room 3

painters have been working with watercolors at the light table with transparent plastic shapes. Before the light table was integrated into the mini atelier, the children were engaged with these materials while working at this station. Color, light and transparency has been the main focus of the new watercolor medium. Right before the break a student from Room 3 mentioned the way the colors were dancing on her paper. Taking sensitive observations from the children led me to create a transparent ribbon like mobile for above their light table. Each piece symbolic to a mark or gesture connects to the children works in abstraction with watercolor. They have also begun

working with a variety of sized brushes and paper.

## **RM5**

The clay group has begun working with a mixed media approach, working with clay, wire and branches in their structural works. The students gained interest in light, color and transparency while working with the projector has encouraged us to reintroduce the watercolors at the light table. Above the light table, the projection of specific shapes and lines has been added. The children's interest in dinosaurs and other animals from the classroom as they are painting has initiated us to incorporate them directly onto the projections as forms of silhouettes. As the painting has become a space more utilized, we decided to add an image for inspiration. A carefully selected work by Arthur Dove, titled, *Pond in Sunlight*, was added to their projection. The image displays broad mark making, gesture and color abstraction.

## **RM6**

The clay group has continued working on work from before the break. Independently, the students have concentrated on ideas of holes, caves and concave shapes. In the afternoons, the children have continued working on the light table in Room 3, they have begun talking about the light and transparency of the paper and how its effects their paintings. The wire group has started constructing with branches and wood, challenging their technical skills of wrapping and manipulating three-dimensional mixed media material.

# Room 5

## Welcome Back!

Dear Parents and children, welcome back to TriBeCa Community School. We are so excited to begin a brand new year with you and your children. In the previous newsletter, we wrote that some of the children in class have shown interest in helping the mailman who delivers mail to the school. The mailman usually drops off the mail at the entrance to the school and the children take turns bringing the mail to Zvia and Ayala in the office. One of the children gave the mail to Ayala and said: "Here, mail".

At TCS we promote building community between school and the children's lives outside the school. Loris Malaguzzi says, "I understand myself through my interactions with people and objects around me and the way I am reflected in the eyes of other people".

In the previous newsletter, we encouraged you to please send postcards etc. if /when you go on vacation. One of the children mailed 3 postcards to the school from Florida and we decided to set up a provocation for the children by displaying the postcards on the wall in the class hung on a string with clothes pins. This allows the children to independently take the postcards off the wall and look at them. During our morning meeting the child shared the postcards with her friends in class. The children took turns looking at the pictures. The child's mother volunteered to stay during our morning meeting and she read the postcards out loud to the children and together they shared their experience with us. We asked the children how they thought the

postcards got to the school? The child that mailed the postcard said: "We walked".

Here are some of the questions; we would like to ask the children in class in order to gather more theories about the concept of mailing and receiving mail:

What is mail?  
What kind of mail do we get at the school? Home?  
What is a mailman?  
What does a mailman do?  
How does mail get from one place to another?

## Sensory Table

As many of you have noticed, we have changed the material in the sensory table once again. This week, our provocation was to fill the table with potting soil. This changed stemmed from questioning whether or not the children would work with the soil in a different way than they did with the sand. Children have shown interest in soil during a few occasions when plants have been knocked over and soil has been left on the ground. Thus far, we have seen the children exploring the texture of the material, and experimenting with the tools provided. The children have been crushing the packed balls of soil, filling the shovels and scraping with the small rakes. Some children have been particularly interested in the texture and have rubbed the soil on their hands and faces. We look forward to seeing where this investigation will lead us, and continue to observe the children's questions and theories regarding this material.

## **Overview of Our Philosophy**

There were a few questions regarding curriculum decisions and educating in a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool during our December conferences. We've included the following information about the essentials of our philosophy taken from a packet available at The Hundred Languages of Children traveling exhibit.

**Emergent Curriculum:** An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests of children. Topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadow, dinosaurs, etc.).

Team planning is an essential component of the emergent curriculum. Teachers work together to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the materials needed, and possible parent and/or community support and involvement.

### **Long-term Investigations:**

Investigations, also emergent, are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests, which arise within the group. Considered as an adventure, investigations may last one week or could continue throughout the school year. Throughout an investigation, teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase the topic and the selection of materials needed to represent the work. Long-term investigations enhance lifelong learning.

### **Representational Development:**

Consistent with Howard Gardner's notion of schooling for multiple intelligences, the Reggio Emilia approach calls for the integration of the graphic arts as tools for cognitive, linguistic, and social development.

Presentation of concepts and hypotheses in multiple forms of representation -- print, art, construction, drama, music, puppetry, and shadow play -- are viewed as essential to children's understanding of experience. Children have 100 languages, multiple symbolic languages.

**Collaboration:** Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. Children are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of group membership and the uniqueness of self. There high emphasis on the collaboration among home/school/community to support the learning of the child.

**Teachers as Researchers:** The teacher's role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Working as co-teachers, the role of the teacher is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children. The teacher is a teacher-researcher, a resource and guide as she/he lends expertise to children (Edwards, 1993). Within such a teacher-researcher role, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom and are to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking, and children's collaboration with peers. Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.

**Documentation:** Documentation of children's work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents. Pictures of children engaged in experiences, their words as they discuss

what they are doing, feeling and thinking, and the children's interpretation of experience through the visual media are displayed as a graphic presentation of the dynamics of learning.

Documentation is used as assessment and advocacy.

**Environment:** Within the Reggio Emilia schools, great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom.

Environment is considered the "third teacher." Teachers carefully organize space for small and large group projects

and small intimate spaces for one, two or three children. Documentation of children's work, plants, and collections that children have made from former outings are displayed both at the children's and adult eye level. Common space available to all children in the school includes dramatic play areas and worktables for children from different classrooms to come together.

Source:

<http://www.youngchildrenslearning.ecsd.net/reggio%20emilia%20philosophy.htm>

## Room 6

Welcome back! We hope you had a restful holiday break. We are excited to be back in the classroom as we continue to work on many of the investigations we began before the break as well as discover what new interests emerge!

### Message Center

The children have begun working at our brand new message center! The mailboxes were hung on our wall by L.G.'s father (thank you!) and have become a wonderful addition to our classroom. The mailboxes not only serve as containers for beautiful notes that children send to each other, they have become ways of communicating important messages and sentiments. For example, L.S had asked F.S. to help her find some hearts in the classroom and he unable find any. With the help of a teacher, Finn wrote, "Sorry, L., I did not find any hearts."

The children have become interested in sending messages to children who have sent messages to them and also beginning to understand that the way to receive messages is to send them. In

fact, one child noted that he did not have a message in his mailbox, so he said, "maybe I will write one to H.L., because maybe he will write one to me." The children have been carefully decorating their notes with things they know the other person enjoys. M.R. wrote a note to J.L. and drew a picture of a cat, knowing how much J. loves cats! It is a wonderful way to socialize and build a sense of community and friendship and continue to understand one another's perspective. We are looking forward to continuing our message center in the coming weeks.

As the children carefully work on creating messages for one another, they are practicing important fine motor skills. We have provided tweezers for the children to use as they carefully glue small sequins and other items on their notes. Practicing with these tweezers and other writing materials in the message center provides children with an opportunity to strengthen their pencil grip.

### Game Book

We have updated our game book with some brand new games the children have been developing as well as documentation of the children playing other structured games. The book includes photographs of each game along with rules and how to win. If you get a chance, check it out and maybe even play one at home!

**Posted Documentation**

Please take the opportunity to look around the classroom. We have updated our wall panels with some of

our ongoing studies. New pieces include our Writing panel, our Wire panel.... More to come!

**Reminders**

Our next Parents Workshop is this coming Wednesday (January 13<sup>th</sup>) from 7 pm to 8:30 pm. Many of you have already responded to RSVP and we are just reminding you to do so before Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.