

TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

January 21, 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

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: Dried Fruits

Tuesday: Clementines

Wednesday: Farmstead Cheddar and Whole Grain Crackers

Thursday: Winter Veggie Sticks & Ranch Dressing (contains dairy)

Friday: Banana Bread (spelt, yogurt, date, maple crystals, eggs, cinnamon)

Room 1

Music and Sound

Spectacular discoveries have been made during Room 1's Music and Movement Time throughout the past few months. We had made the transition from exploring the timbre and sound qualities from various percussion instruments to experiencing pitch and note sounds made from xylophones and steel drums.

Movement Time

During Movement Time, we have begun to blend the arts of song and dance

together. Gestures that correspond to some of the songs we sing in class during Song Time have become larger and much more locomotive. This has led to the development of a more defined Creative Movement Circle Time. Here, we have explored the movement possibilities of our bodies that correspond to ideas, thoughts and feelings provoked by the music and songs we hear during Movement Time. A few songs we have been moving to include: "The Unicorn Song" by the Irish Rovers, "A Bicycle Built for Two" by Nat

King Cole, "When the Saints Go Marching In" by Fats Domino, "Rockin' Robin" by The Jackson Five and "We Are the Dinosaurs" by Laurie Berkner.

Goodbye Circle

We continue our explorations in song and music during our closing meeting circle, where both the teachers and children have introduced finger plays to the group. Because many of these songs are familiar, several children have begun to feel comfortable making song suggestions or introducing a personal favorite song to the class. We welcome any nursery rhymes or finger play songs

that the children sing at home, if anyone would like to share a family favorite with the class!

Light, Reflection, and Shadows

Several new provocations of plastics were added to the overhead projector to portray the vivid colors, reflections, and transparencies. The children perceive the way the light moves through the plastic using various techniques and alternative perspectives. Several of the children cover their eyes with colorful transparent items. As they do so, their world is portrayed in various colors.

Room 2

ND turned three over the weekend. Last Friday, his parents joined us to bake a cake and spend time in the classroom. Thank you so much for taking the time to join us. Additionally, we would like to congratulate AG and his family on the birth of a new baby boy. AG shared photos of the new baby with the class, which stimulated lots of discussion among the children. The children gave AG ideas about what he might be able to teach his brother. They included painting, playing with playdough and with balls.

Due to the fact that this has been a short week, we thought we would share with you an article that we read in The January issue of the Journal of National Association for the Education of Young Children titled *Ramps and Pathways; Developmentally Appropriate, Intellectually Rigorous, and Fun Physical Science*. by Betty Zan and Rosemary Geiken. The article explains the value of an incline investigation much like the one in our classroom and

gives suggestions for how it should be guided. The article describes some of our thoughts behind the investigation and we hope it will give you insight into the process of the investigation and its purpose. We have picked out a few key points and would like to share them with you through a few excerpts from the article.

One important aspect of the incline investigation or any investigation for that matter is that it is a long-term process:

"The National Science education standards stress that "building scientific understanding takes time on a daily basis and over the long term." An effective learning environment provides ample time for children to engage with the materials. Children need time to revisit ideas, reflect on what they have done, and revisit their thinking. When we speak of time we mean time both during a day and time across days, weeks months- even years. In the laboratory school where we developed

the ramps and pathways activities, the materials were available in the block center every day and in every classroom, preschool through grade 2. Some children worked with ramps for five years and never grew tired of them or ran out of idea.”

The article also discusses the importance of providing children with activities that are not only academically valuable but also enjoyable:

“According to Benchmarks for science literacy (AAAS 1993), children should be actively involved in exploring phenomena that interests them. The importance of interest in young children’s learning cannot be overstated. Unlike adults who can often force themselves to pay attention, most young children lack the self-regulation when they are not interested in something. However, young children do not necessarily have short attention spans. They are highly capable of devoting long periods of attention to something that

captures and engages their interest and purpose. We see this repeatedly when children engage in activities that support experimentation as ramps and pathways does.”

The author also touch upon the fact that inquiry is a cooperative process:

“ In an reassessment of current science instruction, Metz (1995, 117) Stresses “the development of scientific knowledge is in many aspects a social activity.” scientists don’t work alone; they relay on frequent communication with other researchers. Experimenting and making errors are vital to the process of scientific inquiry. They require an environment in which children are free to collaborate and take risks.

We have seen teachers use many strategies that foster communication between young learners during ramps and pathways activities. They encourage children to work in groups and to help each other by sharing ideas.”

Room 3

Room 3 students are truly enjoying signing in and singing out. It has been such a delight to see students recognize their peers’ names without assistance from their teachers. We have begun to follow the “***Fee, Fie, Phonemic Awareness***” activities. In Fee, Fie, Phonemic Awareness there are “over 20 hours of active small-group instructional experiences explicitly aimed at drawing three-, four-, and five-year-old children’s attention to the sounds in words they are beginning to hear and explore.” One such activity is phoneme matching...

”SAM, SALLY, SALAD! All of these words have the /s/ sound at the beginning.” We have begun this activity during singing in, and will continue to do daily. Other activities are singing songs such as “Old McDonald Had a Farm.” Having children make the sounds of the animals is one way to help them develop phonological awareness, a necessary skill for successful reading. As most of you all know, we are providing many opportunities for Room 3 students to dictate us stories. It’s amazing to hear what the students

invent. When children see adults write, examine text in the books they read, or when they are read to, they are learning to recognize their letters.

We also have noticed during work time Room 3 students will go over to the wall where we have our alphabet strip and point out the letters to one another.

Block Area

We have recently added larger blocks to the block area. They have become roads and bridges for cars, or even a foundation for a tall building. When Room 3 students work in the block area they take their time, collaborate with one another and love to keep their buildings up to work on the next day.

Mini-Atelier

In our Atelier Room 3 students are really

becoming mini Picassos. Within the next week we are going to let Room 3 students begin to paint on easels, since they have been painting sitting.

Clay

Room 3 students have really enjoyed working at the clay table. Some wonderful conversations have started out in the clay area. They are sharing the tools with one another, and have also wanted to save what they made. We have heard such things like “a space ship” “a tall tower” or a “cave for the lion.”

We look forward to seeing you next Wednesday 7PM at our Parents’ Workshop (no children, please).

Room 4: Atelier

Room 1

This week Room 1 has continued their painting exploration in the mini atelier. Independently the children are deciding to paint. Their main focus is on mark making, gesture and color. They have been experimenting with overlapping colors and drips. Many of the students have started working with the direction of Room 2 children while exploring in the new material of tempera paints.

Room 2

During the beginning of the week Room 2 children shared their mini atelier with Room 1 students. Children began explaining their own process of color mixing to students of Room 1. Van Gogh’s image last week was very engaging for the students, we choose to stay with his painterly expression and added the painting “The Sower” to this

week’s projection. Room 2 students have been working fluidly within paint mixing created a variety of new tones and shades.

Room 3

The students in Room 3 have been painting since the beginning of the year while working at the light table. Their recent mobile provocation stimulated by one of the student’s ideas makes more sense for the students to be standing and working allowing more freedom of movement and body engagement. Easels will be added to their mini atelier early next week.

Room 5

Room 5 students have experienced working in the light using both large and small brushes. The variance in mark size has been apparent, but not the

variety of the mark itself. During the beginning of the week we added small branches along with brushes for a different experience in texture of material and type of stroke. Working collaboratively on a large paper the students experienced in the new material. The combination of marks and speed reminded me of the work of Julie Mehretu. Her drawing “Stadia” was added to their light projection near their painting station. The idea came from the children’s connection with the type of marks that were being made utilizing the

branches and brushes collaboratively on the light table.

Room 6

In Room 6 our core portrait group has continued exploring working with mirrors in studying their faces. As the children work on details on their face they are encouraged to examine each others work and practice returning back to the mirrors while drawing their features for reference. Both morning and afternoon children have also continued to explore watercolors in small groups.

Room 5

Writing Center

In room 5, we have continued to explore the children’s interest in early literacy and writing. Some of the children in class have begun to ask us if they can write their names by themselves on their work. We have slowly introduced sandpaper letters for the children, allowing them to begin to recognize the letters in their names, the sounds, and the sensorial feeling of tracing the letters. After using the letters, the children draw the letters in salt trays and in the end some of the children have begun to write the letters on paper.

During our small group time, we have slowly begun to introduce phonetic songs and games for the children that have shown an interest in that area. Here are some of the quotes that the children said:

“A is for apple – I like apples” and “M is for monkey – like in my name”.

We have made a small writing center in class – a place where connections and relationships can grow through communication and exchange.

A couple of days ago, we received another postcard. A father of one of the children in class went on a trip to Aspen and wrote a postcard and mailed it directly to the school. During meeting time, we showed the postcard to the children in class. Here are some of responses the children had to the postcard:

“Snow” and “I also went skiing”.

The postcards are situated in class – hung on a string with clothespins, so the children can take them down and look at them. We noticed that some of the children showed interest in the written text on the postcards. A child brought the postcard to one of the teachers in class and asked her to read the text on the postcard.

Dear parents, children, other family members, friends and caretakers we continue to encourage you to send mail to the school when/if you go on vacation or “just because”...

We look forward to sharing our writing experiences with you!

More on Early Literacy

The teachers in room 5 believe it is important to present literacy in all areas of the classroom. As stated in the article *Books in the sandbox? Markers in the Blocks?: Expanding the Child's World of Literacy* by University of Vermont professor Jeanne Goldhaber, "Dramatic play areas equipped with literacy materials such as writing implements, books and pamphlets can improve both the quantity and quality of children's literacy behaviors (Neuman & Roskos, 1990, 1991, 1992). Research also

indicates that when given the opportunity, children use literacy props in much the same way as they use oral language: to get what they need from others, to regulate and/or control others, to inform or communicate, to interact and to identify and express who they are (Schrader, 1989). These findings are significant, for they suggest that teachers can use literacy props to influence both the amount and quality of children's literacy behavior."

To read more of this article, visit <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5002278071>

Room 6

Light and Shadow

We have noticed that several of the children had been experimenting with salt on the light projector. To support this exploration, we introduced a tray with sand and paintbrushes to be used with the light table. For inspiration, we showed the children video footage of the artist Kseniya Simonova, a Ukrainian artist who uses her fingers to create stunning paintings on a large light box in sync with music.

Sensory Table

We now have moon sand in our sensory table. It is a sand-like material that congeals and mimics the texture of play dough and when gathered together and breaks apart like sand when manipulated between the fingertips. This new material will provide valuable tactile input, which can have a calming effect on the body.

Mini Atelier

As an alternative to paint brushes, we have decided with Monique to introduce twigs and sticks to the watercolor table. As several of the children have been experimenting with splatter technique with watercolor, decided to see what they would do with these materials. We have found that while there was some initial hesitation to use them, they were soon approached in the same way that paintbrushes were.

Block Structures

The afternoon group has taken on the roles of caretakers of the front block area. The project began on Thursday when two main goals were accomplished. The first was designating a spot on the shelves for each type of block and organizing them in each place. The children carefully considered the benefits of placing each block in different locations, considering shape, size and whether or not certain blocks

would need to be accessed more than others. The second accomplished goal was tracing each type of block onto cardstock to create models of each type of block. Having each designated space clearly labeled with a visual symbol will allow for autonomous organization of this area for all who work in it. When children take control of an area and organize it, they take a tremendous amount of pride in its appearance and will work harder to keep it organized.

Gross Motor

We have introduced body socks to our meeting area rug during work time

because we have noticed that the children enjoy wrapping themselves up materials. Body socks are lycra bags that close with Velcro and allow children to move around inside them. They provide a unique movement, proprioceptive, tactile and deep pressure experience. The experience of being inside one is both organizing and calming. Another benefit of working with them is the opportunity to experiment with unique shapes the body can make with in body sock. Will eventually expand this work to be part of our light and shadow work with the projector and seeing what bodies in body socks look like projected on the wall.