

# TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

## April 16, 2010

### General Notices

#### Snack for next week:

**Monday:** pretzels

**Tuesday:** clementine

**Wednesday:** dried fruits

**Thursday:** cheddar cheese and crackers

**Friday:** dried fruits selection

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#### **FOOD MATTERS NYC**

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#### TriBeCa Family Festival



Please see flyer at the end of this newsletter. Our school will have a booth along with other preschools of the area.

**The School's Tent is located at the BMCC courtyard.**

### Room 1

#### Welcome back!

Dear parents, welcome back! We hope you had a great spring break, and we want to thank all families that decided to share their photos and their adventures out and about in the city. It is always a great opportunity for the children to share their experience with their peers.

A special congratulations to Q.P.'s family for the arrival of Q's new baby sister!

#### Parents workshop and Green Area

Thank you so much for attending our Parents' Workshop this past Wednesday; your work has been really appreciated by the children, and it has already led to a lot of deep work in many areas of the class.

On Thursday Morning, we presented the children with the herb garden that you set up for them. We chose plants with a variety of textures, smells, tastes and colors, allowing the children to have a multi-sensory experience. The children noticed the different shapes of the leaves and the different shades of green. They smelled the herbs and distinguished among their different scents. We are learning the importance of respecting plants: the children are touching the plants, patting them and gently brushing the leaves. Touching the leaves they noticed that some are soft, some are thick, others are smooth.

After the first sensorial exploration of the herb garden, we asked the children what they think the plants may need:

H.D. "Carrots"  
F.H. "Apples"  
A. B. "Apples and salads"  
M.J. "Noo, they don't have mouth"  
H.D. "Yes they do"

Observing the plant, H.D. and Q.P. found a small hole in one leaf.

H.D. "It's here"  
(teacher) "Is it the mouth?"  
"No, here is chewed"  
"Who chewed it?"  
"The dirt".

This simple conversation contains many possible threads for investigations: The children's hypotheses demonstrate how they are applying previous knowledge perhaps from their experience with the snails, to the plants. Further, this conversation testifies to the children's

anthropomorphizing phase: Do the children perceive the difference between a plants and a living creature like our snails? We will keep inquiring with the children in our new "green area".

### **Outside**

We keep exploring our neighborhood, especially the subway station. Today we walked to the main entrance, we looked closely at the maps on the walls and we got a map from the "subway man" in the booth. We noticed the trails, and we observed how in order to get inside, the people have to swipe a ticket. We were also able to observe the inside of the subway train, and the children noticed that before the doors close, a sound is heard. Observing with all their senses, the children are able to continuously make new discoveries!

## **Room 2**

Thank you for all the parents who attended our third and final Parents' Workshop for this year. We know it is not easy to set aside time and we genuinely appreciate the great turnout for all three of our workshops.

Before the break, NF (our youngest student) turned 3! Thank you to NF's parents for coming in to read stories, bake a cake and celebrate with us.

Additional thanks go to the parents of the snail group for helping us celebrate the end of the investigation. The children presented the work they had completed throughout the investigation and the entire class enjoyed the wonderful treats the parents had prepared!

### **Music**

This week we began our music investigation. We started off by passing around a large coffee can and chopsticks

and asked the children to drum as we sang hello to them in the morning. The children instinctively drummed on both the tin and lid side of the can. HH identified the lid top as the "quiet side" of the drum. We decided to start with only one drum to work on the students turn taking skills, to identify the sound in isolation, as well as work on a one to one correspondence of sound- often we ask that the students listen for the "drummer" to begin, and then drum on their laps in unison.

Some of the students took the can during work time and continued to explore the two sides of the can. ND and DB would play a rhythm on one side, flip the can over and repeat the rhythm on the other side. OW drummed out a sound related to his favorite pastime: "Let's go Mets! Let's go Mets," he shouted, as he beat on the can with his hand.

## Snails

Although the snail group is no longer meeting, the snails remain an integral part of our classroom. Recently, the teachers had come to the conclusion that the students would not all come to accept the idea that the snail in the snail hospital had died. Based on responses such as “ the snail is dead AND alive,” we concluded that the students did not view death as a permanent state. Based on our observations that the snail didn’t eat, move or come out of its shell, we asked the group what we should do with it. HH suggested that we should flush it down the toilet, AG though we should throw it in the trash but MM decided that that was “not nice.” After a few days, one student suggested that we should bring it to the class tree. This idea seems to get the consensus of the entire class and so we then took the snail to the tree for a proper burial. When we arrived,

OP noticed a discarded burger bun and suggested that we should place the snail on it, in case it got hungry.

## Clay

As we mentioned on Monday’s Parents’ Workshop, the children were introduced to clay this week. For the children who were not part of the small group snail investigation, clay is a new material to work with. Surprisingly, they are more timid than we expected. WS and ND asked to paint instead. Eventually, they joined BC at the table, making “blueberry cake,” and “a slide.” We observed many children exploring ways to apply more pressure to the clay in order to flat it. DB pressed her stomach on to the clay while ND learned that if he pressed his palms into the clay and then stood up, it would make his piece even thinner.

## Room 3

One influential thread in our class this year has been building. This week’s newsletter contains prominent pieces from a related article on how block play in preschool can increase children’s future mathematical performance in school. To read the full article, please follow the link at the end of RM3’s segment here.

“Playing with blocks is a central activity in play preschools. Thus, this study attempts to establish a correlation between the levels of young children's block play and their performance in mathematics in later school levels.

Playing with blocks has historically been a central play activity and is found in play-oriented preschools. Playing with blocks, as a form of construction play, requires the young child to build spatially with large

numbers of pieces of unit blocks of wood to produce representations of objects, or products. These products, at the higher levels of block building, can be labeled as imaginary structures representing real objects. Construction play with blocks offers the preschool child the opportunity to classify, measure, order, count, use fractions, and become aware of depth, width, length, symmetry, shape, and space thus, one can make a direct relationship with the skills acquired in block play as being foundational for the later cognitive structures needed for number and math skills and learning. The question is whether preschool age children who have intensive play experiences in play-based preschools and who can perform at high levels of block building, also show high levels of mathematical achievement later in formal school settings. Analyses indicated that

there was a significant relationship between preschool block performance and the number of higher mathematics courses taken. Similarly, there was a significant relationship between preschool block play and the number of honors courses taken. The relationship between the participants' high school mathematics grades also yielded a significant relationship. In summary, the researchers' hypotheses

were supported to the extent that children's play with blocks reliably predicted mathematical achievement at the 7th-grade and high school levels”.

For the complete article:

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Block%20Play%20Performance%20Among%20Preschoolers%20As%20a%20Predictor%20of%20Later...-a080711096>

## **Room 4: Atelier**

### **Room 2**

After returning from vacation, we decided to introduce clay into the classroom. The children will be working with the atelierista in a small group, and the material will be open to the rest of the class during the week. We will observe to see how the children will interact with the new material. The tree group will also be meeting this week to discuss observations of our class trees changes.

### **Room 3**

During the Parents' Workshop, parents were asked to leave painting pieces in the atelier for their children. As the children return to working with tempera paints in a small group in the atelier, the parents' pieces left for the children anchors the bond between the school and family. Also, as it becomes warmer outside, we will be

bringing the easels out onto the deck, where the children will be exposed to the sounds and sights of the city. The children have also continued working with wire, wire tools and open-ended materials in their mini atelier. They have been discovering new ways of attaching and connecting the three dimensional materials within the wire. During the Parents' Workshop, participants created a wire mobile for the children of

RM3, and we are hopeful that this gesture left by the parent will be greatly appreciated by the children.

### **Room 5**

The students continued working with tempera paints using all the primary colors and white. Searching for a new provocation, we brainstormed adding an observational object to their atelier: By bringing cherry blossoms and daisies into their atelier, we will encourage the children to mix the tempera paints to match the colors of the natural provocations.

### **Room 6**

The students continued working in small groups on their self-portraits. As the groups cycle they will all have weeks of practice before they work on their final portraits. Morning and afternoon painting groups have begun paint-mixing experimentations. As the children hypothesize on what colors to create, their collaboration and engagement with each other has heightened. This collaboration demonstrates that the children work as a team in their communicative thread of painting. By Friday, the children will use squeeze bottles, empowering the students to experience the visual mixing of the paint in their jars.

# Room 5

## Redesigning the Environment

The light area was redone for the children, and now the space offers a completely blacked out workspace. Since the children are now using flashlights in the classroom, the change to a completely dark space was necessary. Black fabric covers the area and black flaps serve as the passageway in and out. The florescent light table sits in the middle of the space, as well as new wall and hanging string lights, which offer a softer light source. The floor is covered with reflective silver paper and the walls are lined with mirrors. As the children get familiar with the space and discover how to operate the new lights, the teachers look forward to documenting the process and adjusting the environment according to the children's cues.

## Glue Exploration Continued

In room 5 we have been continuing our glue exploration. We decided to add watercolor to the glue to see how the children would respond to the media.

The children immediately noticed the change and said:

Child 1: "Sticky... Glue".

Child 2: "It's cookies. I drew a food... A cupcake. It feels awesome it smells like a cupcake".

Child 3: Play dough".

While working with glue and paint on paper, we have noticed a progress in the way the children use the media. In the beginning we noticed that most of the children According to Lowenfeld's 4 stages of scribble 2-4 years used "Disordered – uncontrolled markings", where the children start to master control over motor activity and made wavy motions with their hands. We observed that the children have begun using "Longitudinal – controlled repetitions of motions" which demonstrates visually

awareness, and enjoyment of kinesthetic movement. Furthermore, some of the children use circular movements, which demonstrate a further exploration of control of muscles in hand, wrist and arm. This supports the ability to do more complex forms. One of the children made circular movements with her brush and glue on the paper. While she was working, she said: Child: "I'm making a pizza... Round and round".

We look forward to sharing more glue experiences with you in the future. near future invite room 2 to offer their knowledge and experience about the "snails" with the children of room 1.

## Sensory Table and Spring Planting

Last week, a small sensory bin with rice was presented in the classroom. After observing the children's great interest in this material, the teachers decided to fill the sensory table with this material. We have observed the children pouring, filling, dumping and creating dramatic play scenarios in this area of the classroom. Often, the children "play cooking" with the rice, creating cupcakes, and other food items in the containers provided.

In order to continue with the interest the children have in the dirt, we have decided to begin planting with the children. We saw a lot of connections when the children were working in the sensory table with the soil. Often, they spoke about gardening, and spent a lot of time digging in the soil. This week we planted grass seed with a small group. The children were not told what was going to grow in the soil. We hope that we can explore theories about what the plant is, and truly experience the transformation process. We encourage you to talk to your children about the growing process, but please **do not** tell them *what* is growing in the classroom, as this might hinder their creative ideas. Thanks!

# Room 6

## Concepts about Print

We have been continuing our book making investigation. Many children have been working on original stories, both works of fiction and non-fiction, in the form of books. The children have been drawing pictures and we are writing down the accompanying text. The books have become increasingly more complex and developed as the concept becomes more familiar. During story acting, children have the option of having one of their books performed as an alternative to using a text only story. To help create an atmosphere of mutual respect and celebration of one another's accomplishments, we are having the children share their original books with one another.

We are continuing our work with the moveable alphabet and word rings. Children are identifying personally significant words and are practicing

producing and recognizing them through a variety of modalities.

## Dramatic Play Area

After observing that some children were interested in acting out restaurant scenarios, we have added delivery menus from neighborhood restaurants to our dramatic play area. We have found that many children have been using the menus in their scenarios with waiters presenting the menus, customers carefully looking over them and waiters writing down their selections on clipboards. We will continue brainstorm with the children about the best way to help the dramatic play area evolve to better suit their preferred dramatic play.

## Gross Motor

We have been continuing to use our small, round cones as steppingstones for physical activities before morning meeting and also at work time. We have recently reintroduced balance beams as a way of adding structure and deliberate movements, as well as a focus on balance and agility to our physical activities.

## Frogs

We arrived at school on Monday morning to discover that our frogs passed away over the weekend. We speculate that one frog passed, making the water unlivable resulting in the death of the second frog. We discussed this with the children who shared personal experiences and observations from caring for and then losing pets. The children discussed whether the frogs were sleeping or dead, and eventually, decided that they were dead since they did not respond to our repeated taps on the tank. In a heartfelt act on Wednesday, we farewell the frogs, and flushed the frogs down the toilet. We then met on the rug, shared our memories of their lives, and concluded by singing Five Green and Speckled Frogs at the request of several of the children. LG wrote on a newspaper a message that said, "Frogs may be dead or sleeping" and explained to the class that it was an important news item and people need to know what was happening to the classroom frogs.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**2010  
Tribeca Family Festival  
STREET FAIR**

**Saturday, May 1st  
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM**

On Greenwich Street north of  
Chambers Street

For more information, please visit our website at  
[www.tribecafilm.com/festival](http://www.tribecafilm.com/festival)