

TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

April 23, 2010

General Notices

TriBeCa Family Festival
May 1, 2010: AM10-6PM



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

We welcome back our teacher R.P. who will be between Room 1 and Room 2 on Tuesdays and Thursdays!

Dirt!

As a continuation of our nature exploration- and inspired by the herbs you potted at the Parent's Workshop, Room 1 has been studying dirt! Although the classroom plants and new herbs are always available for the children to observe daily, we decided to breakdown the structure of a potted plant with the aid of a sensory bin in the mini atelier. Filled deep with soil, the bin also contains a few hand shovels, hoes, flower pots, and stones. The children share the small space, take turns using the (intentionally) limited tools, and work carefully to make sure the soil stays inside

the bin. We have explored the texture and feel of the cool dirt and stones with our hands as the natural smell of the soil finds its way to our noses. The weight and flow of the material is made apparent when used with the garden tools. The same tools also help us develop hand eye coordination that we will need later on down the road in our exploration- when we begin to do some planting of our own!

Paper and Scissors

During small group time, some of the children became interested in the tactile properties of paper. They have been manipulating different kinds of paper that are visually very similar (all white) but have different textures. Some paper is very fragile, light and transparent, while other

pieces are thick and rough. The children have noticed the differences between the different elements:

F.H. had blown on the paper and observed how it would bend saying, "Soft. It's soft". H.D. had been working with a harder textured piece. While trying to rip it with her hands, she had noted, "Mine is hard. And strong." The children have begun to select different kinds of paper to test their durability.

Recently, we introduced scissors as a tool to manipulate with the paper.

Scissor-use requires hand eye coordination, spatial perception and orientation. While many children already know how to hold and use the scissors, others are still exploring the new tool. We noticed a lot of peer teaching: When A.P. was having trouble with a thick piece of paper, she said, "I need help". J.T. responded with "Let me see". He took the piece A.P. was using, observed it and then selected a section to cut, saying:

"Here, you do like this". He then handed A.P. the small piece that he made.

A.P.: "Again. Do it again"

J.T. performed the cutting again while A.P. moved next to him to observe more closely. H.D. knows how to hold the scissors and noticed that L.H. was using the tool with two hands. She touched him gently saying, "No L. not like that. Look at me". The two children then began working next to each other.

F.H. grasped the scissors, and, to help himself coordinate his hand movements, began singing "Open, shut them, open, shut them"- matching his movements to the song lyrics.

Reminder

Spring is here! We go outside whenever the weather permits. Please remember to leave a jacket for your child while the temperatures are still cool. Also, please remember to check and replenish your child's extra clothing supply.

Room 2

Baby Investigation

This week the students continued to talk about how the babies get in Tummies. H.H and A.G listed the foods that get babies in the belly but N.F and M.M did not agree. This led H.H to alter his theory. He concluded that only boys get babies in their bellies when they eat. When asked how his baby sister got into his mom's stomach, he could not verbalize his understanding of this contradiction to his theory.

Block Area

The teachers placed a projection of the NYC subway map in the block area because we have seen the students take an interest in building roads and tunnels. The projection seems to have inspired the students to build systems of ramps and

roads. They use blocks and small tracks to build throughout the block area. The students have grown accustomed to planning prior to building their structures. A.G and K.A argued over whether they should build a road or a bridge and then decided to build both. A.G walked over to the projection and changed it back to the subway map so that to use it as a model in their building.

Outdoor Explorations

We've been very lucky to have weather that allowed us to go outside everyday. We thought this would be the perfect time to share some of our experiences.

As a class, we often walk to CaVaLa Park, which is located across the street from TriBeCa Cinemas. The children have been

drawing with chalk, running on the grass, and creating their own versions of tag. Up until this week, the 113ft long fountain had been empty. On Tuesday, we happened to be at the park when the park maintenance crew was filling and then turning on the fountain. The children patiently watched each tier of the fountain fill with water and then spill over into the next tier. JO examined his reflection in the water and then blew air toward it, laughing as the water rippled and his image was distorted. EL splashed her hands in the water while DB took small handfuls of water and dripped it on to her hair. AG, OP and OW placed a plastic cup in the water and watched it float downstream. The majority of the class joined them in observation and the journey of the cup floating downstream was repeated again and again. The following day, WS brought an origami boat to school. At the time of writing the newsletter, we have not yet visited the park,

but will have done so by the end of the day Friday. This might be a good topic to discuss with your child when they share their school day experience with you.

As part of our sound exploration and phonemic awareness curriculum, the class went on a “listening walk.” As it relates to phonemic awareness, calling attention to environmental sounds and discussing the differences will develop their abilities to later make distinctions in linguistic sound, a necessary skill for reading and writing. We walked leisurely through the neighborhood, stopping to discuss sounds that the children heard. Trucks sounds were abundant. We listened the wobbly wheels of a delivery cart, subways rumbling below the sidewalk and watched a helicopter fly by. MM and AG realized that even jumping had a sound.

Room 3

Thank you to all the parents who attended our third and final Parent’s Workshop. We have seen such a tremendous growth in Room 3 students.

“Creativity seems to emerge from multiple experiences, coupled with a well-supported development of personal resources, including a sense of freedom to venture beyond the known”- Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach

The children in Room 3 have been working with wire in the classroom, and we have noticed a change in the way they have been exploring the media. When it was first introduced, the children were working quietly sitting at the table bending and twisting the wire. As they became more familiar with the wire they began to use it in other areas of the classroom while they

were naming and sharing their work with

their teachers and classmates.

Child 1 said: “Look, I made a banana and now I squashed it”.

Child 2 said: “I have to connect the two chairs with the wire”.

After the parents workshop, we hung the 3 mobiles the parents made during our parent workshop above the wire table in the mini atelier in the classroom. We were curious to see how the children would respond to the provocation.

While sharing the parents’ work with the children, some of them were looking at the mobiles and were expressing an interest in

working wire combined with other open-ended materials.

Child 1 said: "Look, buttons and wire – it's twirling together".

After we noticed that the children were engaged in other areas of the classroom, we decided to set up a provocation with wire and added buttons, in order to draw attention back to the wire table. We have been observing the children's interest in working with the media again, and have noticed that they have been working collaboratively and have been focused on exploring the media in various ways. Among other things the children have been stringing the buttons on the wire.

We have also observed a change in the way the children value their work with the wire. In the beginning when the children were exploring the wire they put it back in the wire basket when they were finished working with the media. This week, the

children expressed that they wanted to display their work on the shelf in the mini atelier. Furthermore, the children added personal quotes of their ideas, thought and feelings as they were exploring the media.

Child 1 said: "Look... I made a flower".

Child 2 said: "Look, I made necklace with buttons and a bracelet."

Child 3 said: "I made a dump truck".

Child 4 said: "I used a lot of buttons."

We look forward to sharing more wire experiences with you in the future.

If you are interested in gaining more knowledge about children exploring wire as an open ended material we recommend you to read "The Reggio Approach to Early Childhood Education: Bringing Learning to Life." By Louise Boyd Cadwell. (Chapter 3)

Room 4: Atelier

Room 1

Room 1 students have continued working with tempera paints in their mini atelier. The watercolor work on the floor has been changed to a sensory bin for the children to explore soil relating to their recent plant investigation. Soon the children will be challenged to start working from representation utilizing the plants as inspiration. The children will work first with drawing materials to begin their observational exploration.

Room 2

Clay was introduced in small organic shapes in their atelier. The children's social interactions and elements of discovery were explored. Watching one another work with clay allowed an open dialogue of experimentation. Next week, the children will be presented with the clay in more a

geometric format to see if they are more inclined to build relating the children to their

work within the block area. The tree group was able to notice big changes in their class tree. The children will work in the classroom with green leaves and flowers from the tree in beginning their work from observation.

Room 3

The children have been very engaged with working with the wire and new open-ended materials such as glass beads and materials without holes. The children have been beading their wire along with wrapping the other materials. Next week, they will begin to arrange and connect their work together for installing their work in the classroom. They have been actively using the wire cutters and helping one another

problem solve their stringing and beading skills.

Room 5

Introducing an arrangement of flowers in their mini atelier, the children were challenged to mix colors to get to the color of their flowers. We selected shades and pink daisies along with orange and gave the children primary colors and white so that

the children figure out how to mix the colors . Many children successfully solved the problem! As they continue working from observation, we will change the provocations allowing their color understanding to expand.

Room 5

Work in the Mini-Atelier

The children continued working with pastels and paint in the mini-atelier this week. The pastels were offered as a provocation all throughout our work time, and the paint was explored in small groups with Monique. Fresh flowers were added to space for inspiration, and the children observed the different colors while they worked. The children were delighted with the addition of nature on the table and comments include, "Wow, pretty flowers. I like the pink one", and "Look here I'm drawing the green part, it the skinny part over there." Some of the class had an opportunity to select flowers from Jin Market in the neighborhood, and came back with pink, purple and orange flowers. The teachers wonder how the children's work with the non-primary shades will differ from the past colors of red, yellow and blue. Current work is either drying on the shelves or in your child's workbox, so please look it over with your child and discuss their process of their creations.

Paper Exploration

Last week when the teachers in Room 5 were bending and tearing large sheets of white paper (for the mini atelier) during our preparation time in the morning, one of the children in the classroom approached us and said: "What are you doing? First the paper is big and now it's small". Afterwards, the child took a sheet of the large paper

and covered her body with it. She said: "It feels like a blanket. I'm going to sleep".

Another child joined and together they began to bend and tear the paper. This was the inspiration for starting a paper exploration with the children. Throughout the year the children in Room 5 and Room 1 have been building connections with each other, and since we knew that the children in Room 1 were exploring paper as an open-ended material earlier this year, we decided to start a collaboration exploring paper with the children in the two classrooms.

We set up a provocation with a large white tablecloth made of paper and during small group time we asked the children what they thought it was.

Child 1 said: "I don't know... It feels soft – just like a blanket. I have a blanket at home".

Child 2 said: "I think its tissue paper"

Child 3 said: "Paper".

Child 4 said: 'I want to share the paper with the paper".

The children picked up the large sheet of tablecloth and began to shake it. The paper cloth began to tear and the children picked up the pieces and said:

Child 1: "Look, it's broken".

Child 2: "I'm taking it off".

Child 3: "Look, I'm cooking for my friends".

The children picked up the small pieces and began to throw it up in the air and said:

Child 1: "It's high"

Child 2 said: "It's up in the air. Like a spaceship. The spaceship is going to the moon".

One of the children came up with a game where she began to cover one of the teachers with the pieces of tablecloth. The other children joined in and together they covered the teachers in with the pieces of tablecloth.

Child 1: "I'm putting paper on her".

Afterwards the children began to cover each other with the pieces of tablecloth.

We look forward to sharing more collaborative paper experiences with you in the future.

Classroom Animal

Last Friday, we introduced our classroom animals to a small group of children in the afternoon. This week, all of the children got

a chance to meet these animals. We received two tadpoles, and a small tank via mail. The children have been very interested in these creatures, and have been coming up with many theories regarding them. We asked the children what type of animals they thought our pets were, and the children have agreed that they believe these animals are fish. **Please do not** reveal the true "identity" of these animals, as we are interested to see the children's theories develop as the tadpoles evolve. This is sure to be a very insightful transformation process. So far, the children have been observing the animals, helping to feed them, and even bringing objects over to their tank for the animals to see. We hope these animals will help foster a sense of responsibility and sensitivity to living creatures. The children seem very excited about the animals, and so are we!

Room 6

Final Parent Workshop

Thank you for attending our final parent workshop this past Wednesday. We are so happy to have shown you the work your children have done in our classroom over the past few months.

On Thursday the children discovered the traces you left in the classroom and were delighted to see video footage of you hard at work creating cards, books and writing and performing original stories.

Map Making

Over the past couple of days, the children have expressed interest in drawing maps of our school, as well as the surrounding neighborhood. FS said, "we need to draw a whole map of the school so we can see where the ghosts are hiding." OB explained, "I want to show you how to get to my house...from

the school." We are interested in finding out how the children perceive the city

and how they will express this on paper and perhaps through other mediums.

Tempera Paints in our Mini Atelier

After the children had been working extensively with watercolor, we reintroduced tempera paints as the next step in our painting investigation. Monique had been working with two small groups focused on color mixing. The children in these groups have been instrumental in assisting other children who may be relatively new to color mixing. While our intention with tempera paints was to have the children get reacquainted with the medium, several children were interested in using both watercolor and tempera at the same time. HL first combined the two

paints and said, “we could use both.” MR explained, “they make different colors.” The combination of tempera and watercolor was not something we expected, but we are interested to see how the children respond to this combination in terms of mixing and mark-making and we will continue to document the process as their work evolves.

Self-Portraiture and the Smiley Faces Foundation

Since February, Monique has been working extensively with all of the Room 6 children on developing their self-portraits. They have been working in groups of three to create thoughtful, deliberate, and purposeful representations of themselves. The portraits are the result of slow and careful work over time and over the course of many focused sessions. Children use small mirrors to carefully observe their features and faithfully represent them on paper. During these sessions, Monique discusses the fine details of their work, in particular, the similarities and differences among the

portraits. As you may have seen in a recent email, the Smiley Faces Foundation is an organization with which TCS is currently involved. It is a foundation dedicated to providing funds for the Institute of Reconstructive Plastic Surgery’s Cleft Lip & Palate Clinic located at NYU Langone Medical Center. This coming week, our class will visit a photography exhibition of children who have benefited from this surgery—who have been given the gift of a smile. Since our class has been closely studying facial features of themselves and their peers, we believe this exhibition will extend their thinking and expose them to images of children whose smiles may have looked different from the ones we have been studying here at TCS. We anticipate this experience to be enriching and inspiring for the children.