

# TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

## October 2, 2009

### General Notices:

#### Transitioning

For the children who are still transitioning: Please be aware that we will let you know when your child's schedule would be extended. Our goal is to have the child comfortably situated in the school and classroom, and gradually increase the time he/ she attends. For example, we may invite your child to arrive at 11AM (or 3PM), and depending on the level of comfort, we will gradually increase the time by (probably) ½ hr intervals.

**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 the Week of 10/4/09, the menu is:

**Monday:** Rainbow of Veggies with Humus

**Tuesday:** Bananas

**Wednesday:** Chocolate Banana Baby Cakes with Quinoa Flour

**Thursday:** Greenmarket Apples

**Friday:** Whole Wheat Pretzels

### Room 1

For many children the process of developing a connection with the new space, teachers, and routines is still developing. Recognizing each child as an individual, throughout the week we revised our schedule. This process was done to respect the different needs of the each child. We want to thank you all for your willingness and your collaboration!

There are several practices that families can do at home to ease the transition from home to school. Practicing new routines such as walking to school independently, having the children clean up after themselves at home, and lastly promoting autonomous eating habits:

eating and drinking at home with real glass cups and plates, and serving themselves. These practices help the child to be more familiar with new routines we practice at school: this continuity creates a higher comfort level. It is also essential to be aware that although separating from family is incredibly challenging, it is also one of the most important steps in the path of independency.

This past week has been full of new discovery and exploration. The children are beginning to deeply interact with the materials in our classroom. Complex interactions are beginning to develop with their peers. Relationships continue

to be built in the course of sharing the space and tools with peers.

In our mini-atelier, the children continue intricate work with the clay. Through the introduction of tools, the children have begun to interact with the clay using different perspective. Much time was devoted to understanding these tools and how they work. They utilized their connection to water in order to better understand the tools. Water was combined with the various tools in order to modify the structure, shape, and medium of the clay. We also noticed that several of the children that were indifferent or unresponsive to the clay have begun to take an interest in the clay through the mediation of the tools. The children also discovered that clay is not only a solid material, but also a liquid element, that can leave traces on the body and on surfaces.

During our session we have added a multifaceted music and movement

experience. We began with a free movement time, letting the children use their body independently without any instruction, inspired just by the music. We then began to add some stretching and yoga moment, on order to help them to focus on the different sensations. This process also introduces the different part of the body, and the infinite expressive possibilities that our physique has to offer.

The next natural progression was to offer open-ended fabrics. The use of fabrics allow the children to observe the consequences of their movements in space. Through the time, these fabrics help the children to focus on concepts like orientation, direction and intensity. The body is our most important and precious “instrument”: is our boundary and our connection with the reality. Having the opportunity to experiment with gestures and movements helps the children to develop self-consciousness, and to be aware of their personal limits and resources.

## Room 2

### Dramatic Play

The children began discussing the presence of a ghost in our loft space. We are interested in getting a better understanding of what ghosts mean to them. V.R. drew two ghosts that he described as scary. N.F. reported on Wednesday that the ghost was at another school, playing, but would come to our school on Friday.

### Paint

Last week, we introduced watercolor paint and the use of an easel. They explored mixing color and altering the intensity of the color by adding water. The easel was set up in such a way that

two children would need to negotiate their own space and collaborate (or not) on their work. We observed some children testing their boundaries by painting on another child’s paper. Some were receptive to the addition while others protested. In situations of protest, we are working with the children to advocate for themselves and their own space and conversely, ask for permission to collaborate.

### Dance and Movement

This week we looked at how children would respond to music, both contemporary and traditional children’s songs. As a class, we collaborated to

find ways to stretch and move our bodies and respect each other's space.

In addition, we created an obstacle course in the parents waiting area that the children could navigate through. There, our students are working on taking turns (waiting for the child in front of them to move on), on their gross motor skills by hopping, walking on a balance beam, and throwing bean bags.

### **Reflection**

We placed a three-sided mirror in our loft space because we wanted to investigate the children's understanding of reflection and to observe the ways in which they interact with reflection. This

week we saw children dancing on the mirror while observing their footwork, laying side by side and look at each others' reflection, as well as noticing the reflection of the adults as they pass by the loft.

### **Reminders**

If you have not done so already, please bring in your family albums.

Please remember to bring in another set of clothing if wet clothes are sent home with your child.

We are also in need of plastic grocery bags. If you have any extra at home, we would appreciate the donation.

## **Room 3**

Room 3 has had another week of school marked by considerable progress and growth.

All children in Room 3 have shown great courage this week, as each is now attending school independently. Congratulations to all Room 3 children and parents for taking this very important step.

Room 3 children are still very involved with paint. Previously, only a core group of students painted daily; however, there is now a larger group of vested constituents taking to paper and brushes. Children are not only cleaning up their work spaces independently- including washing their tools and hands- they are also rolling up their own sleeves before they begin, getting their own paper and water, and placing their work on shelves, where it may dry until the morning. They often have discussions about their painting styles

and designs in Morning Meeting, and proudly place their art in their workboxes.

Interactions during painting- taking turns sharing colors on the lazy susan and also at the sink- are just a couple of classroom nuances helping to build a true sense of community. Teachers have taken note of a number of happenings in the classroom, where students are building a community of peers and friends. At the snack table, children are increasingly more apt to pass the water pitcher to a classmate, or undertake brief conversation as they eat. In dramatic play, Room 3 children are making and serving one another food as they tell stories, pretending to be parents, grandparents, and characters from books and movies. They're building pirate ships and jungles, and sharing ideas as they create vivid scenarios with the open-ended materials they choose to help tell

their stories. Children have invented telescopes to see from the pirate ship (the loft), where they look for approaching sharks and treasure.

Also during class, we have seen a remarkable number of children comfort or befriend other classmates who they have grown to know through their pretend play and story creation. It is really special to see how they are becoming more responsible for one another, addressing feelings and experiences outside of their own.

In Room 3, we are also spending time

## **Room 4- Atelier**

This week in the Atelier, Room 6 came in small groups to further their clay exploration. After the curiosity about using tools grew it was time to introduce how artists use clay tools to assist their process of creating. As the children were dealing with different surfaces and textures by patting, squeezing, molding, rolling and pulling the clay, we had a discussion about the concept of texture and how it applies to clay. During the beginning of the week in small groups some of the children constructed large sculptures. It was just the right time to introduce how artists attach and assemble pieces together by using slip. The new material was introduced and we practiced by joining blocks of clay together. They will be reintroduced to their works from last week and have the chance to keep working with them or start a new piece for further progression. Wire and Clay has also been available in their classrooms. Wire has been another area of interest for the children, in small groups we have begun to talk about how to use this material. The students have begun to bend and attach

each day with simple movement exercises, taking time to move and dance using different parts of our bodies. Children have really enjoyed dancing to different music genres, and also, using instruments to play along. Teachers have also seen a pronounced interest in literature with animals, which we have tried to reinforce and explore. We welcome your participation and ideas towards these efforts, or anything else you can suggest, as we look to explore these interests as the school year unfolds.

pieces together. We have also introduced images of wire sculptures by Alexander Calder along with images of him working in his studio.

In Room 1 there has been collaborative and parallel play in the clay explorative area. We decided to add clay tools and bring in a table so they could start working together in small groups, while still giving the option of working in the clay on the floor. Mid week we added small cups of water to continue the relationship they noticed last week among the water and the clay. At the table children were exploring with all the tools, creating marks and holes in the clay, they also began dipping or cleaning the tools in the water. They are beginning to feel more comfortable working and exploring in the clay; possibly further exploration could lead to more collaboration between children.

In Room 2 we decided to shift into watercolor painting using an easel. An inspirational image by Pat Steir was added to their mini atelier, directly above their painting easel. The image

exemplifies the fluidity of the paint and vertical marks within just one color. The children are beginning to understand the steps involved in the process of painting and how to use the tools.

Room 3 has been under a long painting investigation within tempera paints. There has been a noticeable

progression in fine motor skills, collaboration among working in a group, learning various steps involved in the painting process, and among the focus and speed in which they have been working.

## Room 5

### Toilet Learning vs. Toilet Training

The children in Room 5 have shown a great interest in using the toilets at school and have begun to build a connection between school and home. Here is a quote of what one of the children in class said: "At home in the bathroom I pee. At school I pee here (points to the toilet) – with X in the morning she took me".

Furthermore some of the children have been encouraging each other to go to the restroom in small groups. While going together they have been exploring different techniques, such as sitting on and standing up by the toilets, (with) or without their clothes on. The children have also been cooperating and building connections in the restroom while handing out diapers to each other, turning the water on and off and last but not least helping each other flushing the toilets.

We encourage toilet learning vs. toilet training. Toilet training is something adults do for a child and often involves a time pressure on a child to go to the toilet and finish up within a certain time frame. Furthermore, toilet training is often taught by a reward system. Toilet learning starts with the child recognizing that they are ready to be involved and

take an active part in his own learning process. It is important to teach a child

to listen to his body, to talk to others clearly about his needs, and to master the skills of pulling his own clothes down and up. Generally, to create a positive atmosphere that fosters the child's self esteem.

Therefore we continue to encourage you to send the children to school in "wash and wear" clothes that the children can pull down and up by themselves. We are looking forward to more learning experiences in the restroom.

### Sensory Table

The children have been engaged at the sensory table this week, and have noticed the new addition of sand. After carefully observing the children's behaviors in the water last week, we decided to support the thread of pouring and transferring of materials, and change the water to sand in our table. The children have been using this new material for pouring and dumping, and have also found new ways to manipulate the medium. Children have been packing the sand into containers and using sticks and spoons to scoop. We have also noticed children using our classroom cars and trucks in the sensory table, creating roads around the table's edge. These materials have also served as transportation, as the children have been filling the holes of the cars with sand and moving the sand to different areas of the table (IE: from the

ledge to the middle). This fosters a strong connection to the truck books the children are drawn to in our reading and building areas. We will continue to observe the children's rich play in this area and we are excited to see what happens next.

Questions for further investigation include: How will the children respond to new materials in the table? How will the children problem solve to transport materials when new tools are added or removed?

### Light & Shadow

During the first few weeks of school the children explored colored materials and

watercolor paint on the light table. The teachers have recently covered the light table with yellow vinyl and offered the children multiple colored cut out shapes to manipulate. We've observed the children sticking the vinyl pieces onto the light table and onto each other, which created new shapes and colors.

In the coming weeks, we plan to foster the children's interests by providing new materials in the light area to spark more exploration with color such as colored light bulbs and glow sticks. Some possible questions for further investigation: What are the children's understanding of light and color? How do the materials in the light area affect the relationships that are starting to form?

## Room 6

### Grocery Store

Our grocery store is expanding. This week we added pretend money (bills and coins). The children have already begun using the money to purchase items in the store. Adding money sparked ideas about what else the children could use to pay for items. OS said, "I think it's ok if you pay with flowers" after observing LS, JL, and HL exchanging flowers for food.

In the last couple of days, we have introduced a real working cash register to the area. The children have been intrigued by this addition and are exploring how it works. Upon discovering a coin in the register, FS said, "I wanted a coin so the coin magically appeared for me in the money register!" We will continue to pursue and explore all evolving theories about where money comes from.

### Mathematical Concepts

In many of the areas in Room 6, children have opportunities to engage in mathematical thinking both individually and as a group. Each morning, for example, we add a color-coded (by day of the week) construction paper link to a chain representing the days we have been at school as a whole group. We count the links as a group.

Setting up snack has been a wonderful opportunity to practice basic math skills, as well. One-to-one correspondence is used as the children set one plate and one glass for each chair at the table. We will continue to incorporate many of these number-sense skills in all areas of our classroom.

### Mini-Atelier

This week we have been expanding our explorations of clay and wire. After our initial explorations last week, Monique has assisted us in introducing the concept of slip into the children's work with clay. Carefully using this technique, children are able to attach pieces together.

Our work with wire is ongoing in our mini-atelier. The children have opportunities to continue working on sculptures they have created as well as create new pieces.

### **Phonemic Awareness**

We have begun a focused study of the sounds that we experience and make with our bodies as well as objects. We are beginning to collectively focus on sounds in words, words that rhyme and differences and similarities among sounds.

### **Reminders**

Please bring your family binders to school. If you need a binder or any materials, please let us know. We need to have them in as soon as possible, as we have begun sharing them this week.