

TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

October 9, 2009

General Notices:

Calendar:

Next week, School is closed on Monday Oct 12 2009 (Columbus Day).

Strollers:

Please make sure that they are folded, and out of the way. Often, we use common areas for movement activities with the children, and we cannot do so safely when the strollers are in the way. Thank you!

About Volunteering:

Here at the TriBeCa Community School we put a strong emphasis on parental involvement, as it has a direct relationship to building success in the classroom. Anchored in reputable research, children whose parents are active in the life of the school perform higher on many tests, and regard school as a positive experience. Parents' involvement is fundamental in building a sense of a community within our school. The partnership between parents and teachers is a necessity, which cannot exist without your active conscience participation. "School-aged children in both two-parent and single-parent families are more likely to get mostly A's, to enjoy school, and to participate in extracurricular activities and are less likely to have ever repeated a grade and to have ever been suspended or expelled if their fathers or mothers have

high as opposed to low levels of involvement in their schools" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/fathers/Find1.asp#parental>)

The alliance between parents and educators proves to be beneficial for children, parents and teachers: parents may provide educators with information about their children's experiences at home, and teachers are better able to tailor instruction to fit children's interests. Although we appreciate having your caretakers help with some daily tasks at the school, it is you, the parent, who is most needed. It is more about the participation of the parent, which is essential in building that partnership that is in turn reflected at the children.

In the past, parents told us that in order to make a commitment to volunteer regularly, they add the volunteer time to their schedule- as if it was a business commitment or doctor's visit.

If you have not done so yet, please return the volunteer form (already sent to you) to your child's teacher. Thank you!

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):

Tuesday: ECCO Farms Pears

Wednesday: Spelt Flour Raspberry Thumbprints

Thursday: Greenmarket Apples

Friday: Autumn Harvest Veggies with White Bean Dip

Room 1

The children's morning transition into Room 1 continues to be more and more tranquil. Thank you to all our parents and caregivers who have helped us with this time.

Exciting connections are beginning to form. Students have become more comfortable with their teachers and peers. They have demonstrated this through the remembering and use of names throughout the day. They have also begun seeking out each other during daily transitions, meetings, and work time.

Explorations continue with natural materials. Water play in the bathroom sinks continues to be a place of interest: the children experience cause and effect as they combine different objects within the water. The children also experience pressure, temperature, weight, and dexterity through these valuable experiences in water.

As the children displayed curiosity around the natural materials within our classroom: such as rocks and shells, we introduced more natural materials to look at as a group. In order to also draw the children's attention to the seasonal changes around them, this provocation included leaves of various shapes and sizes, pine cones, twigs, nuts, and seeds. The children used different senses to explore these outdoor

materials. This work was done in small groups, and much care was taken in introducing the tools and materials. Magnifying glasses were also introduced to the children, in order to help them take a closer look at the details of these materials.

Pretend and dramatic play has flourished in the play kitchen where children have continued to work with play dough and corresponding eating/baking utensils, promoting fine motor skills. In smaller groups, the children explored a cookbook where they recognized familiar foods and cooked dishes. Children kept these dishes in mind when using the play dough to make "cookies," "pizza," and "cake." We celebrated J.T. and I.R.'s birthday this week. This was a opportunity to use these cooking experiences in dramatic play to create a real Yogurt Fruit Cake. Several children helped to cut up fruit, measure and add ingredients, and stir. Through this experience the children had the opportunity to observe the transformation of these dry ingredients into wet and then solid. They also were able to experience coming together as a community to celebrate a special experience of two classmates.

Music and movement has continued to grow with the interests of our children. We've explored the sounds of drums

and shakers- assembled from everyday objects or recycled materials, danced with open materials and scarves, and sung along to popular classic rock and roll favorites. The children have

expressed themselves using various body parts and movements. They have also begun seeking out peers to dance with.

Room 2

Class Pet

We introduced the classroom pet this week. We took the children out of the room in small groups and exposed them to the animal without telling them what it was. We did this because we wanted to get a better understanding of what individual children believed it to be, rather than the whole group. Next, we will pair the children with someone in the class who has an opposing idea of what the animal is and let them discuss the conflicting ideas. Our goal is for the children to reach a consensus about what our classroom pet is on their own.

Water Color

This week we added sunflowers as a provocation in the art area. We advised

the students to look at the sunflowers as they are painting. This led to an amazing transformation in the children's work. They grew more aware of the marks that the paintbrush was making. They drew stem like curves and used the yellow and green watercolor to represent flower and stem. We encouraged the students to continue working by adding the details that are noticeable on the sunflower.

Dance and Movement

This week the children familiarized themselves with certain songs that we have played. They have requested

songs and demonstrated to their classmates ways to move their bodies.

Block Area

The interest of one of our students in the car wash led the students to construct the car wash model in the block center. Monique assisted J.O in transforming his drawings of a car wash into a three-dimensional model. Other students contributed to the process. N.M added a button and said: "You have to push the button and the car goes inside"

Tree Investigation

In order to get our students to notice the changing seasons and be inspired by the colors of fall, we decided that we would take a small group of students to a near by tree. On our first two outings, students noted it's' texture and size and H. H began to tell us his theory about the changing leaves: "The leaves are changing because of the sun!" We will continue to investigate into his theory and encourage the other students to develop their own.

Reminders

We are helping our students become more autonomous. We encourage them to dress on their own and assist them only when necessary. To promote their independence, please dress your child in items they can easily put on and take off such as Velcro shoes and pants with an elastic waist (no zippers, no buttons). This will promote their self-efficacy until they can

develop the fine motor skills to zip, button, and tie independently.

Room 3

Congratulations to J.N. and her family on their new baby!

Room 3 has had a week full of new experiences and creative ideas. In the atelier, students have added yellow paint to their daily colors. We've closely observed the students use paint, and have noticed not only their developed proficiencies with the materials, but also their painting techniques and habits. Students are using much more defined and purposeful strokes, in more focused areas on their papers. Some have discovered dabbing; while others are using parts of the brushes, such as the bristle rim, to create texture in different ways. In addition to adding yellow to the paint table, we have also worked with different shaped papers, in an effort to observe the children and their use of space as they paint. As we move

forward, we will introduce other elements and objects of color to enhance their experience with new paints. We're really impressed with the vast variety of designs and colors we have seen this week, as well as the increased number of children who are now eager to explore painting with their classmates.

Another aspect of development that has materialized in the class this week is the pirate ship. The Room 3 pirate ship first surfaced during pretend play, when 2 students were looking out from the loft and spotted sharks approaching their

ship (the loft itself). A few other students joined the boat, and the idea stuck! We listen closely as students discuss treasure routes, make telescopes, and look out over the sea for approaching animals. We have contributed to their ideas by leaving treasure maps, jewels, and other small tokens- specifically suggested by the students -to spark their play further. We are also beginning to look at children's pirate books a few times a week for class read- alouds, so that children unfamiliar with the ideas their classmates are suggesting have a better understanding. The pirate ship has fostered so many interactions between the children, from burying today's treasure to discussing their plans for tomorrow's exploration. New relationships have been made through this unifying pretend play that all children are becoming involved with.

During our music and movement experiences, Room 3 children are learning simple songs that help them to learn different body parts and action words. Most children can sing "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes", and participate in "jumping", "hopping", "marching" and "swaying" when we listen to music.

We're very excited for the changing season and the many colors and views outside. Children in Room 3 will begin to explore outside, in supervised and select small groups of about four children. We're hoping to use much of the information and details they share in classroom explorations as we move

forward.

Room 4- Atelier

This week Room 6 was introduced to the process of slip and scoring while working with clay. We had a reflection meeting on the procedure and purpose of using slip in their clay works. The children were asked to explain the process to several of the children who were out last week. Towards the end of the week we evaluated their sculptural work from the beginning of the year and discussed how they could work back into their pieces to make them stronger using the tools and materials we have investigated with the addition of water, slip, scoring and attaching clay. A full exploration of using wire cutters was introduced and put into play. Using a variety of wire cutters the children explored in their mini atelier and in the atelier how to use the new material in their wire pieces. We also reviewed many ways of working with our hands to

attach pieces together and create specific shapes with them.

Room 5 started working with chalk pastels and black paper was introduced in their mini atelier. During the afternoon the children have started visiting the atelier in small groups. They began to collaborate on a larger drawing with pastels on black paper. As their communication skills begin to expand the afternoons are a productive time to

further their collaboration and independence in the atelier.

In Room 3 during the beginning of the week we added a yellow as an additional color in their mini atelier. They have been slowing down and taking their time with their own works and communicating more with sharing their materials while working. At the end of the week we will be going outside and taking pictures of what we see paying close attention to the colors of the environment. We will bring these images in for inspiration among their mini atelier as they begin to mix their own colors.

In Room 2 we began a tree investigation by bringing a small group outside to start observing a tree. We will be going outside every week to continue studying its transformation. As the children start recognizing the changes in the colors, we can bring images in and they can use them for inspiration in their mini atelier within the material of watercolors.

In Room 1, we have changed the setting and presentation of the clay. We also have asked children from Room 2 to come and work in the clay area with Room 1 children, to see what they can learn from one another. At the end of the week, we will incorporate rocks in the area to see what the additional open-ended material will bring to the process of working with the clay.

Room 5

Changes to the Environment

The teachers have recently changed the classroom environment based on our observations of the children working in the space. Since we often dance, sing and play instruments, the meeting area was expanded to include a stage, scarves and shelves for musical exploration. We hope this new space will promote gross motor movement, dramatic play, and interest in creating music together as a group.

The reading area moved next to the dramatic play space and it now contains a large wooden shelf that holds the children's Family Books. The children are now selecting their friends' Family Books and learning about their lives at home. We also altered the building area by bringing down the ceiling and covering the work space with blue vinyl. Since the changes, the teachers have observed the children's work in this area to be more intentional and collaborative.

Room 5 is also continuing to offer new materials in the sensory table while we continue investigating pouring and dumping. A big thanks to Lili's Family for donating the corn packing peanuts that are currently available with the shredded paper in the sensory table. If any families have materials that could benefit our work in this area, please talk to a teacher about bringing them in!

Building

The teachers have been interested in observing children's strategies in the building area. We wanted to get more children engaged in this area so we set up different provocations. Over the weekend, teachers hung materials over the table to lower the ceiling. We observed the children in our classroom

working with room 6 children in their private block area, so we decided to make our space more intimate. The addition of a rug, mirrors, a colored platform and large hollow blocks has worked to engage the children in the block area. We have observed children stacking wooden blocks and natural wood pieces as well as using sticks and rocks to add to their structures. A child worked stacking the blocks horizontally he said "this is New York, New York, New York". Rich car/truck play has also continued in this area, with children becoming more vocal about where their cars/trucks are "going".

Dramatic Play

We noticed that the children in Room 5 have been engaged in the dramatic play area. They have especially been interested in making food for each other and the doll. Furthermore the children have been placing the doll at the high chair at the table and putting her in the bed covering her up with a blanket.

Therefore we decided to use the doll to support the ongoing toilet learning experiences in class. We used our small group time to teach the children about hygiene and care for them selves. Among other things we used the doll to demonstrate how to take off a diaper, wipe yourself from the front and then backwards in order, to prevent infections and putting on a diaper after using the toilet. During "work time", we observed that the children brought a wet wipe and began to wipe the doll.

We decided to add wet wipes, diapers and a diaper bin as a provocation for further exploration in the dramatic play area. The children responded to the

new provocation by collaborating and taking turns with taking off the diapers, cleaning the doll, asking each other for help putting the diapers on the doll and throwing the diapers to the bin afterwards. Here are some of the quotes of the children's conversations:

"Here is a diaper. It's wet. The diaper, because the baby peed in it. I'm putting it in the bin - it's yucky. The baby peed in it! That's where it goes".

Child 1: "Diaper off – all clean. More diaper".

Child 2: " Can we do this together? Clean the diaper?".

Child 1: "More diaper".

Child 2: "Look put the diaper on. I can do it. Can I do the other one?". She is crying the baby. The front and then the back. I'm changing the diaper".

Some of the questions we will continue to investigate in class are: "What kind of impact does children's literature about toilet learning have on children and in what ways do they support children's toilet learning experiences?"

Room 6

Congratulations to J.N. and her family on their new baby!

Grocery Store

This week the children have been determining the prices for the various

items in our grocery store. Prices have been based on a range of characteristics, such as how big the box is, how many words are on the box, and what kind of food is inside. We will continue this exploration.

N.M. from Room 2 stopped by to share his thoughts about how to use credit cards in the grocery store. He explained to L.S. and H.R., "I need to pay you with this card" as he swiped it along the cash register."

Mathematical Concepts

We've been using "Minute Math" (Part of the Everyday Math Program) which is a series of short activities designed to strengthen mathematical concepts--we are currently focusing on number sense. These are used during transitions and during small group time. These activities include multi-sensory ways of expressing numbers. For example, counting with fingers, jumping or hopping a certain number of times, or verbally counting physical objects.

The children have begun exploring pattern blocks. They have been sorting by color and shape, as well as creating interesting two and three dimensional patterns individually and cooperatively.

Blocks

Our block area has been bustling with construction. Children have been working in groups of two and three in creating structures that involve patterns and experimenting with height and balance. Another interest in the block area has been the creation of ramps using different materials.

During our cleanup routine, room 6 children have been sorting the blocks as they put them on the shelves. Each shelf is now labeled with a paper cutout silhouette of each block shape. M.C.H. said, "O.S., this block is on the wrong shelf because it doesn't match the picture."

Phonemic Awareness

We are continuing to incorporate focused exercises in phonemic awareness into read alouds as well as small group work. Kristen began reading Ten Dots to a small group, which evolved into a rhyming words brainstorm.

Celebrations

Over the past week we celebrated birthdays for J.L., H.L, A.B., and O.B. October has been a very busy birthday month!

Reminders

We are still missing a few family books. Please bring them in as soon as possible. The children enjoy sharing them with one another and with the teachers.