

TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

October 23, 2009

Room 1

Community

We want to thank AG and EH for helping us to celebrate the birthdays of your children. This experience helps us to build a connection between home and school. In addition, allowing the children to celebrate significant moments in their lives with their peers at school, promotes a sense of community.

We want to remind you: in order to promote a sense of community within our classroom, during morning drop off time we invite parents and family members to use this part of the day to converse with the teachers. We would love to have a time to get to know families and important happenings in each household.

Collaborative Small-Group Work

Meaningful collaborative work continues in with room 1 and room 5. Several children from room 5 have begun seeking out peers from room 1. It is valuable to recognize the connection to not only to each other, but also the significant role the classroom plays. Connections are developing through connections to place: One child welcomed another by taking a hand and showing the different areas of his classroom. He begins by showing her documentation, which tells the story of his classroom. He then brings her to the reading area and explains to how to work in this space. Through extensive relationships established with provocations/materials within the

classroom, the children are enabled to develop more authentic relationships with each other.

Movement

During small group investigations, the children continue to research the concepts of balance, equilibrium and speed. The children challenge their bodies through the provocation of obstacle courses. The children have begun building individualized courses through the movement of blocks and other various materials set out to provoke this experience. The children challenged their range of jumping using varied surfaces and increased lengths of distance and height. We observed the children's ability to problem solve: several found alternative way to use the same object. Relationships and expectations have been challenged around the objects they worked with. For example: the chair can be a surface for jumping, or a tunnel you have to go through.

The experience helped to promote understanding more about themselves: how to control their body, this includes their limits and their potentiality. In addition to this, the children also learn many social skills during this experience: during the obstacle course the children need to respect the time it takes others to complete the course, and the body of the others. In addition, this experience promoted collaboration

in the movements of the heavy blocks necessary to build this obstacle course.

Reminder

Please bring your family binders. During difficult transitions, we often sit and revise these books in order to help the child feel comfortable in our space. In addition these are our connection between home and school, and will help

more complex relationships to develop.

Also: please keep in mind that we are working with mediums which may get on clothing. This means, dress your children in clothing that are easy to take on and off; and remember to check your cubby and make sure your child has a sufficient amount of clothing

Room 2

Class Pet

The group has been debating the species of the animal for three weeks. We decided that while there was no resolution among the group, we should move the investigation forward. We asked them to take a closer look at the parts of the snail. The most prominent feature was the shell. V.R. drew the 'swirl of the snail,' and K.J.A. verbally labeled it as 'its home.'

Paint

We continue to work with water color in the mini atelier. This week we made a few changes to the setting. We felt that the children weren't really able attend to the provocation next to the easel and paint at the same time, so we removed the easel and are now working at a table. Doing this allowed us to place an inspirational provocation front and center. It also allowed for more interaction between the children. As the provocation, we presented a bouquet of fiery colored fall leaves. B.C. seemed to be very inspired by this and painted red and yellow 'suns' every day this week. Some children used the provocation

more directly, like H.H. who proclaimed that he had painted his 'very own leaf.'

Dramatic Play

We placed flashlights and hung sheer fabric in the storage closet so to set the ambience for our ghost exploration. H.H explained that the lights would frighten the ghost away and A.G said the ghost was playing with toys in the closed but then changed his mind and decided that the ghost had left. When asked who they thought placed the flashlight in the closet they were convinced that one of their teachers had but were not so sure about the fabric. "look what he ghost did exclaimed" A.G.

Tree Investigation

This week the group discussed the feelings of the tree. N.M disagreed that the tree would cry if it fell over but then changed his mind as his group members discussed other feelings that the tree may have. In the end of the discussion they all agreed that the tree is happy when it stands up and cry's when it is knocked over. When asked if the tree could be angry, H.H replied: "the tree is angry when you bam it."

On their walk, the children wanted to examine a small tree near by. This led to a conversation about the trees differences. N. M said that that the

smaller tree cannot fall down and cannot cry. H.H and M.M did not agree. They said that even the smaller tree would cry. Making this distinction maybe a way for N.M to assert his opinion back into the group. It seems as if he is still thinking about his initial hesitation to agree with his classmates about the feelings of the tree.

Pumpkin in the Room

We left a giant pumpkin in the middle of the table in the dramatic play area. The

children were immediately interested and A.G., W.S. and V.R. took forks and knives and began cut into the pumpkin. Initially, it was difficult for them to answer 'why' they wanted to to cut it, but O.P. commented that it had 'dirty potatoes inside.' That sparked an entire discussion about what the children thought was inside. We will continue to investigate their theories about the inside of a pumpkin.

Room 3

It's been an eventful week in Room 3.

In the atelier, students have progressed from working with small, shared glasses of color (in tandem with photographs of the community, to spark inspiration) to mixing their own colors, also inspired by photographs Room 3 students have taken during local outdoor walks. Discussions about colors and how they are made as a result of mixing are slowly increasing. Children are beginning to share what they observe and how they arrived at these conclusions. After giving all students the opportunity to mix and make their own paint colors, we are enthused that they will use them to paint, next week. We are interested to learn how these small changes may engender painting similarities or differences, relative to how we have observed them work until now.

One small group discussion thread in the classroom this week included "feelings." After observing several meaningful conversations between classmates, we determined a classroom

exploration of "feelings" would be worthwhile. Our goal is to give the students the opportunity to explore the sentiments they share, such as "I feel sad." We've have observed children in Room 3 become increasingly more verbal in their interactions with other students, particularly through playtime and literature. We think it's important for them to be assertive in their thinking, but also compassionate and contemplative about the ideas expressed by others. In these small groups, students are encouraged to talk about why they feel as they do, and their classmate's reactions to their ideas. So far, the dialogue between students has spurred a dynamic exchange, which we hope will contribute value to their daily interactions.

During work time, a select group of children has also been working with Monique, the school art teacher, in the atelier to make self-portraits. Monique is working with the children so that they create self-portraits, slowly, over time. Children are learning about the drawing

process, thoughtfully considering the small details in their faces. They are using mirrors for these close observations, even before they begin to put paper with pencil. Additionally, they've been enjoying the drawing warm-ups, which also help them to learn to hold pencils correctly as they work, making each session a valuable writing experience. As students work, they will continuously revisit and revise their

previous sketches-- a fundamental part of any work process.

The wonderful weather this week has given us the opportunity to enjoy a few additional classroom walks outside, and finally, our most popular song has been the alphabet, which students are singing along to, as we look at the posted letters.

Room 4: Atelier

Room 2

This week in room 2, we have continued with our tree investigation. The children have started talking about the trees feelings along with their continued interest in its physicality and structure. A new provocation we will introduce will be bringing in some tree bark to their mini atelier. This week they have continued to paint the leaf set up in their atelier and have started drawings of their class pet. The children were asked to observe and notice details they see and were introduced to drawing pens.

Room 3

After a significant amount of time exploring paint, the children in room 3 have spent the week mixing colors of their own. Primary colors and white have been given to them in squeeze bottles. Collaboratively, they have been given small brushes and wide paint jars to allow them to mix and see the process of the colors mixing. Next week, they will begin working with the colors they have been mixing. Continued work on self-portraiture has been done in their writing area with the

addition of mirrors for observational studies of their faces.

Room 5

In room 5, the children have continued working with clay in their mini atelier. Natural materials have been added to their table. They have been incorporating the natural materials, such as twigs, rocks, and wire into the surfaces of their clay. Both morning and afternoon groups have been visiting the atelier to continue their small group work with watercolor paints. Working from the lazy Susan has helped in their focus and speed within mark making. They have begun to overlap colors and paint at a slower speed allowing them to work on one piece for longer periods of time.

Room 6

Room 6 has continued working on their clay investigations. This week we have asked the children working in small groups to start from their journal entry ideas. The children have been asked to share their work with the rest of the group and discuss their concepts linked to their journals.

Room 5

Continuing With Clay Work

The children continued exploring and experimenting with clay as a material in the classroom mini-atelier. Since the children work with natural materials on a daily basis in all the different area of Room 5, the teachers offered sticks and pinecone pieces to the children as clay tools. We were curious to see how the children used these open-ended materials on the clay. The teachers observed the children using the sticks and pinecone pieces to scoop, mark, scrape and flatten the clay. Another provocation consisting of clay and softer natural materials such as cotton and peacock feathers was also presented to the class, but the interest in the clay was greater than working with the softer materials. The teachers noticed the children using the glass jars the cotton and feathers were held in to fill with clay. The children also began to share their work with the class at morning meeting, allowing their friends to observe how they've been working with the materials.

Music and Movement

Room 5 has demonstrated an interest in climbing and balancing in the classroom. The teachers wanted to create a safe space to foster this need and have set up different provocations to encourage climbing and the concept of equilibrium. We have worked with hollow blocks for climbing, tunnels for crawling, and a beam to work on balance. We hope to continue with this

physical activity and take a trip outside before it gets too cold. If you are interested in being a chaperone for one of our outings please contact the room 5 teachers.

Toilet Learning

The children in Room 5 have continued to be engaged in the toilet learning process. This week some of the children have begun to wear underwear to school and they have been sharing their experiences about that with us and have begun to build an even stronger connection between school and community. Here are some of the quotes that the children said:

“My mommy bought me underwear - Look”. Sit down make pee pee in the toilet. At home I make pee pee in the house. X eats milk. I make pee pee”. “Underwear pull the down – no more diaper on”.

Furthermore the children have been exploring what makes the water in the toilet swirl and the different techniques the children try when they use the toilet. Here are some of the quotes the children said:

“The boy stands to make pee pee”. I sit to make pee pee”.

“X flushes the toilet. No more pee pee. Bye pee pee”.

Please continue to send your children to school in “wash and wear clothes” and pants with elastic in the waist and shoes/boots with Velcro.

We will be looking forward to more toilet learning experiences.

Room 6

Grocery Store

We added a produce section to the grocery store with both pretend fruits

and vegetables and a selection of real gourds and small pumpkins.

Journals

We have introduced a filing system for journals and the children have been finding their names in the filing cabinet to put them away.

Many children are writing letters and letter-like symbols in the writing section of the page to tell their stories. Some children have been going back and revisiting work from a previous day and adding additional details to their narratives.

Materials and Areas Update

We have begun working with scissors. We introduced them by presenting $\frac{1}{4}$ page pieces of paper with the option of cutting along teacher made lines or using a pencil to create original lines. Using scissors is great for developing many of the fine motor skills used in writing.

We have introduced interconnecting gears initially in small groups and they are now sometimes available on our meeting rug in the morning. This manipulative allows children to focus on cause-and-effect relationships.

In an effort to focus the children's work while on the large meeting rug, we have asked them to use "work rugs." These small blue rugs with a visible trim allow the children to work independently (or collaboratively) with materials such as

puzzles, small building blocks, and magnet letters in a contained space.

The block area is currently closed and will reopen when a plan is put together to organize the area. This is part of our communal effort to respect our shared property and materials.

Color Theory

We have been introducing a several different provocations to the drawing table in our mini-atelier. We began with birds of paradise in a vase with jars of oil pastels in an effort to allow the children to observe natural colors and represent them on paper.

There was not much interest in representing the flower, so we added more interactive materials—bottles filled with colored liquid and small floating objects. We replaced the oil pastels with colored pencils to allow the children to add details from their observations. The children have been very carefully observing the contents in the bottles, shaking them to see how that changes them and then recording their observations.

Mathematical Concepts

We have introduced more complicated puzzles to the children. These jigsaw puzzles have more pieces and require attending to both the details of the picture and the shapes of the pieces. This type of thinking is relevant to our investigations of the environment that involve careful observation and recording.