

# TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

## October 30, 2009

### General Notices

#### 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):

**Monday:** Same but Different: Grapes & Raisins

**Tuesday:** Pineapple

**Wednesday:** Happy Herbert's Organic Spelt Flour Pretzels

**Thursday:** Jennifer's Greenmarket Selection

**Friday:** Sunbutter and Jelly Finger Sandwiches on Spelt Bread

Nutrition Tip: Sunbutter is made from sunflower seeds. These brainy seeds are high in selenium, magnesium and manganese. These are minerals that support brain function and concentration. For younger children brainy seeds like sunflower and pumpkin seeds are best assimilated into the body in the form of a puree or butter. When giving children these healthy seeds as a snack it is important to tell them to chew the seeds well so they are easily digested and assimilated into the body.

### Room 1

#### REFLECTION OF THE PARENST WORKSHOP:

Thank you thank you thank you. Sharing the work of your children with you has been a really rich experience.

The parents' workshop has been for us an "elastic space", in which we have had the opportunity to build both formal and informal relations:

The presentation of our work is a professional moment, in which we offer you our research and complex interpretations about the unique threads that are taking place in the class. It is also an opportunity to provide a better understanding of our methodology and our philosophy.

We were taken aback by the amount of knowledge that you as parents have acquired by our philosophy, and presented in the form of questions and comments. This segment was not only about the individual experience of your child, but also about the core of what we do. One of these questions was to determine the meaning of the documentation. Our answer encompassed the "dance" between the freedom of the child to experience challenging situation but also a safe environment.

The work stations that we presented to you provided you with the opportunity to truly experience what your child does at school: to experiment with the space and materials.

During the small group work, we noticed that you worked in different areas, leaving messages to the children in more than one workstation. We also observed that this informal and more relaxed moment offered a wonderful opportunity for social interaction, and truly connecting to each other and to us, the teachers.

To socialize, and build new relationships is part of our community life, so we hope you enjoyed it. Sharing your experience about transition, and about your perception of the school experience with other parents can be a great resource!

We also want to thank you for all the traces, messages, provocations and inspirations that you left for the children. Over the past week (and will also do on Monday & Tuesday of next week) the children observed your work, adding details, exploring the new environment that you build cooperatively for them. We also presented them with the photos

and videos of you working, so that they could observe your working progress, and understand that you were here because you care about their work.

Observing the parents working in the school setting has helped the children to feel the connection between school and home, teachers and parents. Here, we would like to present to you our experience with the workshop.

We were overjoyed with the number of parents present Tuesday evening. Such an exciting turnout tells us that you- the parents of Room 1- hold a strong interest in collaboration and partnership with both the teachers and children within the class. Attentiveness during the slide presentation was impressive, as was the thought put into the questions asked. Everyone was incredibly open and willing to attempt the provocations set within the classroom- relating to the work of their own children. It was a fabulous night, thank you so much for the experience.

## Room 2

### Classroom Events

This week, we celebrated OP's 3rd Birthday. His mom and dad joined us in class and baked a blueberry cake with a small group of children. We thank them for spending time in the classroom.

### Dramatic Play

Due to the birthday party, the theme of birthdays arose in the children's dramatic play. The students made candles and cakes out of the open-ended materials as well as drew pictures of birthday parties. When asked what it means to have a birthday AG

proclaimed cake and pizza. The birthday boy had a similar idea, saying that we celebrate birthdays to have cake.

### Mini Atelier

This week, we asked the children to decorate their workboxes. We waited to have them engage in this task in order to give them time to build a sense of pride in their work and the concept of a private space. After completing a painting, many children have been eager to independently place their work in their workboxes.

### Class Pet

We continued to talk about the shell of the creature this week and asked the children to explain why they thought it had a shell. OW told us that it had a shell for when it needed to "take a break." When we probed further about what it meant to take a break, OW mentioned television and KJA related it to his own experience: going to his bed for a break. The group also started using ink drawing pens to express their ideas.

VR's most recent drawing was a "snail map." We look forward to using this

drawing as a discussion starter next week.

### Ghost Investigation

We continue to dig deeper into the children's understanding of the concept of ghosts. First they discussed how the ghost moves. VR, AG, and WS agreed that the ghost "zooms" quickly. In the following meeting, OP suggested the ghosts have tails but his group mates did not agree. Perhaps due to the fact that his idea was not supported, OP offered additional information about how ghosts differ from people stating that they make a "boop" sound.

## Room 3

In the atelier this week, students have continued to mix paint. The set-up has included small squeeze bottles, mixing dishes, and brushes for stirring. Earlier in the week, students worked with all of the primary colors-squeezing small amounts of paint, and then mixing- to observe the diversity of colors they were creating alongside their classmates. As they worked, there was always at least one prominent image from our outside excursions to inspire their mixing and dialogue. Later in the week, in an effort to increase students' focus on color hues and subtleties as they mixed, we reduced the paint to two colors each day: red, blue, or yellow; each with white. A tray full of hues in each of the three colors beautifully adorned our art table, separately and together at different times during the week. Finally, students had an opportunity to paint from the eclectic palette of colors they made themselves.

In the pirate ship, a core group of contributors has worked to vision,

explain, and then build a treasure map.

This group is using open-ended materials to discuss their ideas-then build them- on the light table.

Photographs and video help to preserve what they build each day, so they can revisit and revise their original ideas.

In the writing area, children have been working with parts of nature they have collected from outside. They are carefully tracing the outlines and tips of delicate fall leaves. We've noticed big progress in the area from last month, when holding a pencil for drawing was a more complex task for children. Now, students are sharing and using colored pencils with relative ease as they work.

To further our discussion on feelings, a new book we have read this week is "*David Goes to School*." There are limited words in this short text, but children have many things to say about the very varied and telling faces the characters in the book display. Their descriptions of how the different

characters might feel and why, deepen with each reading.

In the building area, life-size, urban building projections onto the wall by the platform where the children build have inspired them to build high towers with the different blocks sizes and types. Impressive designs by serious builders have increased appreciation for peer

work, and preservation of these buildings-as well as collaboration- in the area is increasing.

We look forward to Parents Workshop next week, where we will be able to share, discuss, and observe (on film) many of these classroom moments and happenings with you.

## **Room 4**

### **Room 1 and Room 5**

The parent workshops were both presented this week in rooms 1 and 5. As inspirational elements, the parents created works in clay, which were placed in both classrooms. As the children were exposed to their parent's pieces, their interest in both rooms has gained interest. Children continue to work with the clay; the open-ended materials as well as the water. The children's interest remains in surface texture, imprinting, carving, and joining pieces of clay together.

### **Room 3**

After our mixing exploration was solidified, we decided to limit the colors they were mixing this week. Two colors were used at a time so they can really experience and begin to understand the breath of variations within mixing color. We started them out with only mixing their own colors from white and blue, then white and red, white and yellow. Saving their own variation of each tint,

next week they will begin painting with their own colors.

### **Room 6**

Room 6 has continued working on their clay investigations relating their journal concepts in clay. The focus has been to construct figure and animal characters by using their building techniques. Attaching pieces effectively takes time and patience, creating the children to work slower and pay more attention to detail. Once they understand and successfully build three dimensionally having their sculptures grow upward, we will begin to focus on details and texture. Our exploration in wire has continued, we began translating our wire problem solving within the context of creating letters. The children used their skills in bending, shapes and twisting wire to create letters of the alphabet. Before they learn to understand wire as a sculptural space they will need to be able to work and manipulate it effectively.

## **Room 5**

Thank you all for your attendance at our

parent event, it was enjoyable to spend

time with you all and share some of our documentation with you. The children responded so positively to all your work and it will be on display in our classroom as inspiration.

We have been working hard to capture and analyze all of the meaningful experiences in our classroom. Our documentation is a process. We are constantly observing and revisiting children's work to draw and extend on the experiences they have been a part of. Our documentation is our essential tool for planning, and we review everyday to create questions for further investigation. Documentation also serves as a tool for connections between home and school, and is a window for parents to see what is happening in the classroom. Everything done in the classroom has a purpose, and when we display student work or photographs we are showing the children that we value their work and opinions. Displayed work is a source of inspiration for children as well as a way to demonstrate different strategies used. We look forward to sharing more documentation with you in the months to come!

### **Introduction to Clay Tools**

The children were introduced to clay tools this week in the room's mini-atelier and they spent time experimenting with how to use them. Wooden hammers, knives, wire scrapers and a rolling pin were presented alongside some of natural materials that have already been introduced, and the children worked daily on testing out the capabilities of each tool. On Wednesday and Thursday the children had the opportunity to examine the work that all

the parents made at the Parent Workshop. They were intrigued by the creations and were provided with new inspiration in the clay studio. Some of the quotes from this week's work with clay include:

"Can I have the hammer when you're done?"

"Look, I made a pancake!"

"You need to flatten it...I scrape."

The teachers also observed the children being attracted to the sounds the clay tools made on both the clay and the table. Many times the children would use the clay tools without the clay, creating beats and sounds that were sharp and loud. We look forward to continuing our work with the clay tools next week, but we will be presenting the clay in different way.

### **Toilet learning**

"What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing, as a consequence of their activities and our resources."

-Loris Malaguzzi.

This week, we have observed that more children have begun to show signs of readiness for toilet learning experiences. Among other things the children have begun to pay attention to what underwear they are wearing, what children are wearing diapers and underwear and how they position themselves standing or sitting when going to the restroom. Here are some quotes that the children said:  
"I'm wearing boys underwear".  
"Look underwear. My underwear is pink".  
In the dramatic play area, we noticed that one of the children picked up the doll and began to change her

diaper. Afterwards the child made a symbolic representation of a toilet and pretended that she took the doll to the toilet and held her. Here are some of the quotes of what the child said:  
“She needs a diaper, because she needs to lie down in her bed”.  
“The baby stands up when she pees. We are going to the bathroom. She is standing up, so she can make pee pee

– like this. Wipe yourself. You can sleep you don’t need a diaper. I pee standing up”.  
We have decided to add underwear and toilet paper in the dramatic play area as a provocation for further exploration. We are looking forward to sharing more toilet experiences with you.

## **Room 6**

### **Reminders**

The Room 6 Parent Workshop is this coming Wednesday (November 4<sup>th</sup>) at 7pm. We are looking forward to sharing the work of your children with you

### **Room Rearrangement**

As you may have noticed, we have rearranged the classroom. Our block area has moved where the snack area once was. This creates less of a clear path to the meeting rug, which encourages the children to walk carefully through the room. Our writing area is now larger and closer to the meeting area. We believe it will be more inviting and comfortable for children to practice writing, as we prepare for the installation of our message center.

### **Grocery Store**

The new produce section in our grocery store has sparked rich dramatic play. The children have been using the fruits and vegetables to make “salads” as well as sell them to customers.

In order to allow the children to be more independent during the clean-up routine, we have labeled the shelves with both words and pictures. This also allows the

children to take responsibility in keeping the environment organized.

The labels allow children to match text to picture and item. After a period of time, we will remove the pictures and ask the children to match the fruits, vegetables, and food boxes using the word labels only.

### **Mini-Atelier**

After our exploration of representing colored water bottles with art materials, we have introduced gourds to be closely observed and represented. Using a magnifying glass (only one—to encourage turn-taking and communication), the children began looking closely at the gourds and carefully choosing colored pencils to draw these objects.

### **Block Area Update**

We have re-opened the block area for construction this week. The space is a bit smaller to encourage focused construction. We have also been asking the children to have ideas for their building before they begin. By drawing a “plan” the children become aware of their efforts and can even articulate how

their work may have followed their plan, or differed from it.

### **Mathematical Concepts**

We are continuing to explore pattern blocks as an essential piece of our Everyday Math curriculum. We have added more complicated templates for the children to use as guidelines. Some of these templates provide only an outline of a shape, which is open-ended and allows the children to choose which

shapes may fit inside the outline. Several new songs we have begun singing with the children contain important counting concepts. Examples include “Five Green and Speckled Frogs,” “Five Little Pumpkins,” and “19 Muffins in the Muffin Shop,” among others. These songs provide children with the opportunity to count backwards and recognize lyrical patterns.