

TriBeCa Community School Newsletter

December 18, 2009

Room 1

Parent Conferences

It was a wonderful experience talking to our families one-on-one and sharing the students' experiences within our school. We feel that each family in turn, shared precious information and helped us to create a more complete and detailed image of their child. We are grateful for your enthusiasm, support and interest in your child's endeavors here in the classroom. We are sorry that our time together was limited, but please, if you have any further questions or comments feel free to e-mail us. We are excited to keep communication open between our class and your home.

Meeting Room 2

In the last 2 weeks we have started to cooperate intensively with room 2- the neighboring classroom. We strongly believe that the cooperation and collaboration that develop from a mixed-age group creates a powerful educational experience. Older children increase their sense of responsibility while the youngest, have the opportunity to observe and engage in more complex games, relationships and verbal exchanges.

During our work time, the children of room 1 and 2 have been given the opportunity to leave their own class and explore Room 2.

In the new environment, the children were able to engage with different materials and provocations and start

building connections with other children and children. It has also been an important step towards independence and has helped our children to increase their self-confidence.

Close friendships have begun to blossom between children of different classes. Many children have increased their verbal skills and their ability to resolve conflicts using their words. They have learned more complex ways to share the materials and the space. For example, M. and W. from RM2, explained to A. how they can take turns using the spray bottle, saying "Let's count 'til 5, then you have to give it back to me." A. replied, "Ok! 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7. Here it is". The children of Room 2 are able to build really complex dramatic play scenarios, and their presence in our classroom enhances the ability and interest of our children in sustained dramatic play.

Music with room 2

In order to reinforce the connection between the two rooms, over the past few days, we modified our routine and we had our song and movement time all together. Music is a great connector, an experience that helped the children to build a stronger relationship. Our children shared familiar songs with Room 2, demonstrating the movements and the gesture for them. To our surprise, our children were more engaged and focused than usual.

Reminder

Please, since we are still going outside, remember to leave a warm coat, hat, scarf, **gloves or mittens** and shoes for your child!

We want to wish to all of you Happy Holidays, a joyful New Year and a great holiday break!

Room 2

OW turned 3 this week. BC's 3rd birthday is next week and NM will turn 3 over the break. Happy Birthday!

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Thank you to all our parents for attending the parent teacher conferences. It was great to share some of your child's experiences in school and learn a little bit more about them in the home context. We realize that fifteen minutes of conversation is often not enough and encourage you to send us an email or arrange another time to meet if you have any questions or concerns you were not able to address during the conference.

One thing that we mentioned to some parents is that we invite parents and caregivers to spend some time in our class before we begin our morning meeting at 9:15. Whether you are reading a story or supervising a construction of Legos, those few minutes you share with your child can brighten their day and create the atmosphere of a shared community between their school and home life.

Music

Since Thanksgiving weekend, Rooms 1 and 2 have had a couple of opportunities to combine classes due to low attendance numbers. The children in Room 1 worked in our space and Laurie (a teacher in Room 1) led our dance and movement activity on a couple of occasions. Our students seemed very excited to participated in

new songs and learn new movements.

Snails

The students are beginning to care for and handle the snails on their own. The students often engage in watching the snails and continue express theories about what the snails do. NM and WS have noticed that spraying the snails with water makes them retract back into their shells and hypothesized that the water puts them to sleep. It seems that many of our students have arrived at the theory that when the snail is inside the shell, it is sleeping.

Another topic of interest has been how and what the snails eat. One student made the connection between the snails and their personal experience, saying that the snail will eat the carrot in its cage, it will get stuck in its teeth and his mom will have to use dental floss.

Tree Investigation

On Thursday, we went out to see the tree for the last time this year. The children observed that there were less leaves (but still a few!) than the last time we visited. They have been able to watch the tree change from full and green, to a mix of yellow and red, and finally, to barren and brown. We took photographs of the children visiting the tree and Monique will use these photos as inspiration for the color mixing investigation they began last week.

Holiday Break

Lana and I would like to wish all of our families a happy winter break! We invite you to share your family's experiences with the class, either by adding photos

to family albums or sharing stories and pictures at morning meeting when we return to school.

Room 3

Thank you to all Room 3 families for attending Parent-Teacher conferences at our school. Parent and teacher collaboration is important for each child's optimal development, and we were so glad to have had the opportunity to communicate our respective observations and practices with one another. Thank you for taking time out of your schedules to join us at the school so that together, we can ensure a positive experience for your child this year.

Children in Room 3 have really enjoyed working with both clay and our homemade play dough.

During work time, the clay table is replete with children rolling, ripping, pressing, and fusing small pieces of clay from its original slab. They comment on how the clay feels, the color it leaves on their hands, and what they are inspired by as they work. An interesting feature we've noted through our observation is that children who work in the building area regularly have been rolling pieces of clay, and then stacking them, building upwards. This is similar to what they do with the blocks and open-ended materials as they build.

Children in Room 3 have also enjoyed rolling, kneading, squashing and stretching our homemade play dough.

We do this as a whole class, and listen carefully as children tell narratives to one another about the shapes and designs they are creating. When the play dough becomes dry, children are excited to make more, sharing in the experience of measuring and counting parts of ingredients.

Please feel free to have your child bring in an item of special significance to share with the class during Morning Circle. While we don't have time to share more than one or two personal items each day, we have found that children in Room 3 feel really good contributing to the meeting. Their classmates enjoy learning about the personal meaning attached to what they share. Before your child brings something in, ask him or her why the item is special. Ask other open-ended questions that allow him or her the opportunity to offer a further explanation. Classmates will have the opportunity to touch and study most objects, as well as ask your child questions, so make sure he or she is prepared to respond. Then, tell him he should share these ideas with the class: school is a place they are expected to share their thoughts. Being the "expert" on a personal belonging with meaning will contribute to a positive self-image, and foster valuable peer interactions in the classroom.

Atelier: Room 4

Room 1

Room 1 has continued working with watercolors at their light table using a variety of natural colored paper. Clay and painting have been ongoing and engaging work stations for the children in Room 1 leading their relationship levels with their peers and the classroom environment. As the year progresses the children demonstrate a higher level of independence and fluidly work in both realms of their art based classroom. The children have shown longer engagements in areas and more intentionality within their processes.

Room 2

As children in Room 2 develop their color mixing investigation there has been more moments of collaboration among children. The children went outside on Thursday as a group to observe the class tree, this will be our last visit of the tree before the break, so predictions of what the tree will look like on their return was the topic of discussion.

Room 3

Room 3 painters have been working with watercolors at the light table with

transparent plastic shapes. Before the light table was integrated into the mini atelier, the children were engaged with these materials while working at this station. Color, light and transparency has been the main focus of the new watercolor medium. We found that the children were very interested in creating different surfaces and imprints in the clay as they began their exploration. The children were bringing their plastic animals into the clay. Towards the end of the week we decided to add clay tools for the first time to extend their growing interest in objects while working in the clay.

Room 6

For Room 6 in the afternoons the children have continued working with watercolors. We have moved to room 3 to work at their light table from growing interest and understanding of transparency, light and color. They have shown great interest in creating prints from their paintings. When we return from break we will continue their explorations in such concepts. The clay group has begun working with a mixed media approach, working with clay, wire and branches in their structural works

Room 5

Introduction of Glue

The children worked with glue for the first time in small groups this week, and they spent time exploring and discovering it together. The glue was presented in glass jars with small paintbrushes, and the children were provided with many different

provocations throughout the week. The class worked with using glue on transparent paper and working with glue and dried flower petals. Monique helped introduce the glue to small group as well, and she provided the children with strategies for working with glue. The teachers observed the children

making comments such as, “Wow, it’s sticky.” Some possible questions for further investigation include: How will the children interact during small groups working with glue? Will their work be collaborative as it had been with the clay? Should glue be a permanent part of the classroom’s mini-atelier?

Parent-Teacher Conferences

It was so nice to meet with all of you during our parent teacher conferences. It was lovely to get an insight on all the children’s lives at home, and to share with you some important aspects of their school life. Many of you expressed interest in creating some continuity and connectedness between home and school life. Our best advice to you is to let your children be as independent as possible at home. Let them do anything they can do. We realize sometimes this may take a little more time, but in the

end, the autonomy you are helping to create will be worth it. Also, be sure to follow through on requests and actions with your child. Consistency is key, and it will help to improve your routines at home. Thanks again to all of you for your dedication to your child’s education. Wishing you a very happy Holiday Season!

A Few Things to Keep in Mind

If you are going away this holiday season please feel free to send us postcards, pictures or share memories upon your return. This will continue to foster the community building in the classroom. Also, if you have not done so be sure to bring in wipes if your child is still using diapers. Also, another gentle reminder to bring in family albums if you have not done so! Thanks for all your cooperation.

Room 6

Block area

As a provocation in the block area (and around the entire room) we have added large cardboard boxes. These boxes provide the children with open-ended opportunities. They have become homes for kittens and dogs, walls for a fort, and hiding places from bears. They have supported large buildings and have traveled around the room as movable homes for children. The boxes have opened up many imaginative possibilities and will continue to provide opportunities for further exploration and....fun!

Game Book

We have compiled a binder of child-created games that is available to look

at on our bookshelf, above the family albums. This collection of documentation has not only allowed us to summarize our new game thread, but has provided children with an opportunity to look back on their work and expand on their ideas. For example, the “Close your Eyes Game” has extended beyond our alphabet puzzle and has moved onto upper and lower case letter cards for children to guess which letter has been taken away by a partner. RG and OS, upon re-reading our game book have expressed interest in playing this game with numbers, as well!. The opportunities for learning are endless and when they come from children’s interest, they become relevant and meaningful.

Please take the opportunity to flip through our book and check out some of the games in our room.

If there are games that your child enjoys at home, please let us know. We have realized how interested the children are in creating these rule-based games and we would love to have them share some games (board games or otherwise) they particularly enjoy!

Grocery Store

We continued to explore KA-J's theories about how many oranges you would need to fill different sized orange juice containers. There was some debate about the sizes of the orange juice containers and FS, OS, and KA-J reached the conclusion that if the container is bigger, it would need more oranges to make, and it would cost more

money. OS was curious about whether we would need to add water to the juice from the oranges. We were not able to decide how best to measure how much would fit in the different containers, but we will continue to explore these ideas.

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank all of the parents and families of Room 6 for a wonderful first half of the year. We have enjoyed working with your children and watching them grow over the past three months. The conferences allowed us to clue you in on the work that your children have been doing in the classroom, and we were so happy to have your thoughts and input as we come back in January refreshed and ready to work. Without your support and collaboration, it would be difficult to do the work that we do!
THANK YOU!