



SCHOOL FOR FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS & FRIENDS

Director's Report

January 2011

MORE FROM MY RECOMMENDED READING

– Ellen Galinsky's book Mind in the Making:

Skill 3: Communicating

- Children typically learn things we view as more cognitive or intellectual, like language, through the filter of feelings.
- Researchers found that kindergartners with poor skills in *focused attention and self control* – among other learning related skills – also had poorer skills in literacy and math.
- Researchers found that having good focus and self control skills predicted the children's literacy, vocabulary, and math skills in the spring of their preschool year. They also found that those children who improved their focus and self control skills made the greatest gains. Children with strong self control and attention skills in the fall of kindergarten had higher reading, vocabulary, and math scores in the spring.
- The jury is out on the best time for teaching reading – whether it is at five or six or seven years old.
- All children benefit from learning the sounds of letters.
- Suggestion: Read, read, and read some more with your child. Books provide a forum for a focused conversation. Learning is powerfully enhanced when children and parents are paying attention to the same thing.
- Suggestion: Play with word sounds. Help children begin to blend word sounds to make words. They can also play with taking away sounds. For example, "If Fred's name didn't have an *F* in it, what would it be?" "Red!"

Skill 4: Making Connections

- There is growing evidence that learning of the arts – whether it be music, dance, drama, painting – has a positive impact on cognitive life. There are at least two pathways by which learning of the arts affects cognitive life. The first is through an increase in focused attention. The second is through an increase in motivation.
- Suggestion: Play more board games – including games where children spin a spinner or throw the dice and move a playing piece forward or backward.

Skill 5: Critical Thinking

- Suggestion: When dealing with parenting dilemmas, use a problem-solving process that draws on critical thinking skills. If you want to start to characterize more precisely what's meant by executive function, think in terms of the sequential steps that people must undertake in order to solve any problem in a goal-directed fashion.

Skill 6: Taking on Challenges

- If we dwell on what the child *can't* do – the child's inadequacies – those inadequacies will likely proliferate.
- Every day is a new day in parenthood: every day we can make a difference, despite what has happened in the past.
- Styles that are not helpful: Parents who are *alarmist*. These parents see danger everywhere. The example is of a child building a block tower. The parent might say things like "The tower is going to fall" or "You are going to hurt yourself." Parents who are *intrusive*. You could call this overprotective – these parents interfere with what their children are doing. They don't let their children explore.

Mindset matters: Children who "wilt" in the face of stress or a challenge see their abilities – their intelligence – as an unchangeable trait; they have a *fixed mindset*. Whereas the students who continue to pursue a challenge see their abilities as something that they can develop: they have a *growth mindset*.

STAFF NEWS

- On December 14, Sabina Zeffler observed at E.L. Haynes Public Charter School.
- Welcome new teacher's aide in the Green room – Thomas Russell. He has plenty of experience working with young children in summer camps and is currently a law student at Howard University.

TEACHER SALARIES

At this time of year, we look at teacher salaries as part of our budgeting process. As you know, teachers in community based organizations like our own are certainly not as well paid as those in public institutions. But, given that, in a recent survey, we found our salaries are competitive – this year lead teachers' salaries start at \$33,800 and assistant teachers' salaries start at \$27,600.

QUAKER HOUSE JANUARY 2011 NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year, dear QH-families,

Preschool children are always making connections, building concepts, and turning events into stories. We set things out on the tables and can observe how the children notice differences, sort, classify and group- beads, the counting bears, crayons, blocks, leaves, etc. This seems to be also true when it comes to themselves and the people around them. The Quaker House children spend lots of time and energy comparing themselves to one another. As they strive to figure out who they are, we can observe that they begin to notice differences. Some of this curiosity also seems to be triggered by inquiries amongst each other. They will for example stand next to each other to see who is the tallest, compare their hair to that of a friend, and try to figure out the details. This is the time when most children begin to ask more specific questions about their identity. With increasing verbal skills they are now more able to share observations and conclusions they have already made about themselves and others over time. There are many questions the children wonder about during the day: about parents and siblings, where and how their friends live, about hair and skin color, or what is “normal” for boys or girls? Who’s who and who am I? Who do I belong to and who belongs to me?

Louise Derman-Sparks, writes in her article “Children and Diversity”, how children learn about issues surrounding racial and gender awareness at different stages of their development:

Learning about Gender Identity:

Threes and Fours think they know which gender they are and start playing with gender roles, but are not yet completely sure what makes them girls or boys, or if they will remain the same gender as they grow up.

Fives (and many Fours) are clearer about their gender identity. However, they try to keep stereotypical “rules”: The girl is the nurse; the boy, the doctor.

Learning about Racial Identity:

Threes and Fours wonder how they got their skin color and hair and eye characteristics, and if these characteristics will remain constant. They also begin to develop strong feelings, positive and negative, about their physical appearances

Fours and Fives become increasingly aware of differences that reflect people’s ethnic and racial identities. Some children may react to these with differences with discomfort and hurtful behavior. Others may become aware of our society’s names for different groups and wonder where they fit in. “

Throughout the school year we incorporate amongst other things, Louise Derman-Sparks goals from her “Anti-Bias Education”, into the activities we offer for the QH kids and most importantly in our daily interactions and during conflict resolution with each other in the classroom...

1. *Goal:* Nurture each child’s construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-identity
2. *Goal:* Promote each child’s comfortable empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds
3. *Goal:* Foster each child’s critical thinking about bias
4. *Goal:* Cultivate each child’s ability to stand up for her/himself and for others in the face of bias.

“Children need to be comfortable with physical, cultural and family differences in order to be able to get along with other children in their classroom, on the playground and when moving out into the larger world and experience new groups and cultures for example in a larger school environment. Being able to openly discuss differences with caring adults helps children gain comfort and develop the respectful language they need to successfully interact with others wherever they go.” (“Families All Matter”, by Meg Thomas)

Thank you for all your support-
The QH-teachers

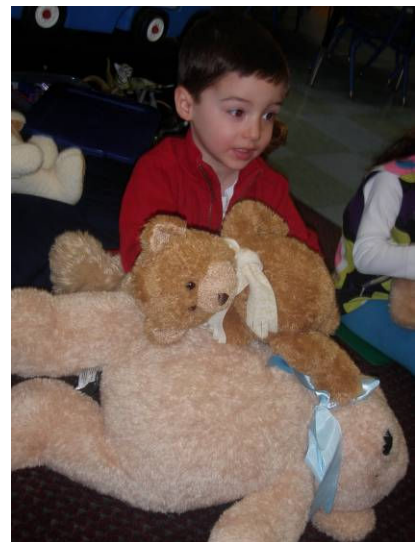
Rainbow Room January 2011 Newsletter

Rainbow Room Families,

Welcome to 2011! This year will bring exciting explorations of new concepts. The Rainbows ended 2010 learning about the five senses and holiday celebrations. The children also said goodbye to MayLing and welcomed Makai as their new lead teacher. We have begun this year gaining understanding of the concept of hibernation. The children have learned that many different animals hibernate in unique ways. During the first week back at school, we studied bears, how they hibernate and why, and what they eat. The Rainbows especially enjoyed going on a bear hunt with their own teddy bears. Each week we will be focusing on a different animal and will be moving on to frogs, toads and ladybugs. As the year continues, the Rainbow Room teachers will be attentive to the interests of the children in order to tailor the curriculum based on what is meaningful to the kids.

Parental involvement is vital to a positive and meaningful school experience for children. Family of the Week will continue in this New Year. Look out for a new sign up sheet outside of the classroom door. Also, please sign up for a week to contribute nutritious and delicious fruits and vegetables for snack time, if you can. Before throwing out anything at home, please take a look to see if it can be used in the classroom, either for an art activity, as manipulatives, or in the dramatic play area. Useful household materials include: paper towel tubes, egg cartons, wine corks, bottle tops, etc. Any contribution is valued. Please check your child's extra clothes cubby and bring in extra underwear, socks, shirts, pants, etc.

Happy New Year,
Rainbow Room Teachers



Green Room January Newsletter 2011

Last month in the Green Room we were very busy learning about Holidays and Native America. We made Potato Latkes, went on a Hanukkah Scavenger Hunt, learned the Dreidel Song, made Hanukkah Cookies, and made Christmas Cookies for Marisal (the nice lady who cleans our class.) Later we did a week study of Native Americans. The children had lots of fun exploring this theme. First we made some masks of different animals and danced several times to the song 'Animal Action'. Cynthia brought in great things to share with us such as books and recipes. We made flat breads, and ate them with jam. Everyone enjoyed eating the bread and jam.



This month our themes are "Winter", "Babies," "Martin Luther King". For the theme "Winter", we will talk about what kind of cloths to wear during the cold season, and the food we eat during the winter. For the theme "Babies", we will discuss how to feed, clothe, and give babies baths. We will taste a variety of baby food. To honor Martin Luther King we will be having a week of special activities such as 'a peace walk' around the school, make a marble cake, and decorate a diversity canvas together.

We would like to say good-bye to our friend Shanel James. She has been wonderful teacher. We will miss you. We also like to welcome our new teacher's aide Thomas Russell. The Green Room also welcomes our new afternoon student Rayan Sigvaldason and his family.

Upcoming events!

Family of the Week!

Matteo Jan 10-14

Caoimhe Jan 17-21

Nicholas Jan 24-28

Birthdays

Nicholas 1/4

Danneke 1/6

Blue Room Newsletter: January 2011

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome, to the New Year of 2011!!!
We hope all of our Blue Room families enjoyed their holiday break.



We would like to start by saying thank you to all of you for your support and help during the first semester of the school year. The Blue Room friends developed great friendships and had a wonderful first experience of school.

We all had a wonderful time in the month of December. Our theme in December was Winter Holidays. We learned about all the holidays that our children celebrate with their families throughout the winter season. The activities included reading books about holidays, singing songs, eating latkes, baking edible ornaments, decorating a Christmas tree and Menorah, and playing dreidel games. The Blue Room children ended the school year with a holiday party.

Our themes in January will include Bears and Winter Season. For our Bear theme we will learn about different kinds of bears and their environments (polar bear, panda bear, brown bear, black bear...). For our Winter Season theme, we will learn how to dress properly for the cold weather. Our activities will include making a snowman and snowflakes, decorating hats and mittens, and having many cooking activities.



Friendly reminder

The school year is flying by so quickly! Just a reminder that the weather is getting colder, so please make sure your child is dressed up appropriately and all clothing items are marked with their name. Mittens, hats, and scarves are notorious for getting lost if they are not labeled. Please also review Sff weather policy so we can address any questions you might have before a bad weather event occurs. We will make another chart for the Family of the Week (from January to May) for all of you who did not have your family week. Please, do not forget to sign up for snack if you can. The snack chart is on the classroom door. Thank you.



Up Coming Dates and Events:
January 17th Sff closed for MLK Day

