



SCHOOL FOR FRIENDS

Director's Report

REGGIO EMILIA

Our teacher study group has been looking at how to use ideas from the Reggio Emilia schools in SsF. Brenda Fyfe, in an article on the subject, addresses the implications of Slowing Down to Listen. she reminds us that "experience must be connected with reflection." Teachers sometimes try to "wow" the kids with exciting activities so that each day the children experience something new. Fyfe suggests that these are "nothing more than fast-action, fast paced, superficial experience." We need to build in the time for reflection. I find this ties in nicely with our Quaker concept of "simplicity," taking the time to shed the busyness of life in order to appreciate the small things.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Please take time to read Sabina's Quaker House newsletter about the information we gleaned from kindergarten teachers.

STAFF NEWS

- On February 23 Elsy Blanco & April Johnson attended a fullday workshop on Reggio Emilia education at St. John's Preschool - "A Day in the Life of St. John's."
- Sabina Zeffler and I attended a panel presentation by kindergarten teachers from public, independent, and charter schools on what kindergarten teachers are expecting these days. The panel was sponsored by the DC Directors Exchange.



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Thanks

- Belatedly to the parents who volunteered in the classroom during the days when our teachers attended the NAEYC conference in November – Sarah Bryer, Barbara Kotschwar, Cynthia Ronzio, Joe Thompson, & Joanne Espanol.
- To Liam Hamilton's family for going to Ikea and picking up the new shelving for the Blue Room.
- To all the parents who worked on our clean-up day on February 5 – Stefanie Cruz, Julia Elliott, Richard Hawkins, Jennifer Phills, Lance Potter (chair), Jim Shepherd, Michael Wolosin, & Jon Youngdahl.

Quaker House Newsletter

Kindergarten readiness:

If your child will be transitioning this or next year to a Kindergarten classroom and the larger environment of a private or public elementary school, you may be wondering if they are ready and how to help them get ready for this big step.

Lots of experts agree, "Children learn best through meaningful interactions with real materials and caring adults and their peers, not through the drilling of isolated skill. " That said, the strong focus on the social-emotional development has given way to the increasingly academic instruction and expectations starting in Pre K and carrying over into Kindergarten and elementary school. Using the Creative Curriculum and DC Learning Standards for Pre K as a framework and following the interests of the children, the QH-teachers are always striving to keep the balance between being a play-based program but at the same providing age appropriate academically challenges, to help children grow in all areas and finally make a smooth transition from the pre-k classroom to Kindergarten.

But what exactly is expected of children when they finally enter Kindergarten? With that in mind Jim Clay and the Directors Exchange invited Kindergarten teachers from public, charter, and private schools to join a panel at the St Columba's Nursery school to help shed more light on this question. Although all four schools had different philosophies and approaches to learning, interestingly enough all the Kindergarten teachers seemed to agree on their expectations for the children entering their Kindergarten classes.

These Kindergarten teachers found that children with solid social/emotional skills, who are able to function well in a group and cooperate, take turns/share, as well as resolve simple conflicts independently because they are able to express and advocate for themselves, had a easier time to perform well academically.

Being able to solve conflicts seemed to make a huge difference for the children especially on the playground, as there is far less adult presence and involvement at these times in Elementary schools.

They all agreed that Independence, meaning that children are able to take responsibility for their materials, personal needs and belongings, is a very important skill to practice and acquire with increasing maturity in order to function well in a Kindergarten classroom. This kind of independence helps children know how to for example wait their turn in a classroom with more children, sit for longer periods of time and participate in the many transitions during the school day.

None of the teachers present expected children to recall different subject matter in detail, but welcomed children who are generally curious, ready to learn, willing to take chances, flexible thinkers and willing to be actively part of teacher directed activities and follow directions.

All four of the teachers made it very clear, that they do not expect children entering Kindergarten to know how to read and write already, except their names. On the contrary all four of them stressed that the different approaches they use in teaching reading and writing in Kindergarten are essential in creating good and flexible readers as opposed to inflexible ones that use only one approach when decoding a text. Lots of exposure to a large variety of books, including non-fiction, the letters in the alphabet, basic sounds, simple word/rhyme play are a good foundation to be able to follow the instructions in Kindergarten more easily.

The same is true for math where a basic sense of numbers and perhaps recognizing some of the numerals is sufficient to enter Kindergarten, according to their experience.

Last but not least they recommended for pre schools and parents alike to foster good fine motor skills and a sufficient pencil grip.

On the very practical level they suggested that parents and Kindergarteners-to-be start to get on the school schedule a week ahead of the new school year. This will ensure that your child is well rested - children may need more sleep than they normally do in the first weeks, and make the transition smoother.

Play dates with old and new friends on the weekends and as much time as possible for free and unstructured play may also create a good counter balance to the new experience of a very structured and mostly instructional day as a Kindergartener.

Sabina

Rainbow Room Newsletter



Rainbow Room Families

February was a fantastic month. The children explored shapes and learned about important African American heroes such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Wilma Rudolph. Now that March has arrived, it is time for new beginnings. The weather and season are changing which allows us to spend more time outdoors exploring various places in our community. The Rainbow Room will be spending much of March learning about the vital institutions and jobs in the vicinity of School for Friends and why they are important, for example, the post office and fire department. Knowing what is available in one's community helps children to better navigate and utilize their surroundings. Learning about the specific jobs of the people who are employed at these neighborhood staples will help the children understand and appreciate the work that is done. By examining the school community themselves, the Rainbows will gain more meaningful, hands on, experiences.

We, the Rainbow Room teachers, hope to trigger a series of inquiries and considerations from the children during our activities. Whether by exploring the materials or making discoveries during a field trip, the children are given ample opportunity to create their own meaning from their environment. The Rainbow Room teachers make sure that the children are engaged in activities that cross all content areas to ensure a fuller, multifaceted understanding of the content. The theme webs are posted outside of the classroom so that parents can view the activities planned and which content areas are addressed. We are looking forward to a stimulating and enjoyable Spring!

Rainbow Room Teachers

Green Room Newsletter



The month of February was filled with fun exciting, new activities for the Green Room. We continued to learn about more famous Afro America persons each Monday. They were Aretha Franklin, Garrett Morgan, Mae Jemison and George Washington Carver.

For the first two weeks in March, we will review the following themes: Shapes, Numbers, Colors, and Letters.

The children will have the opportunity to learn more about each one throughout the upcoming weeks. We will start off with **shapes**. One of the activities we did was a guessing game. In this game the children had to pull a **shape** from the guessing bag and tell what **shape** it was. Some children needed help learning the names of each **shape**. Children who learn about **shapes** are building skills that will help them with reading, writing, and math.



Learning about **shapes** also can help children understand other signs and symbols. One way children learn about **shapes** is by playing with them and having discussions about them.

The children will be exposed to the uses and symbols of **numbers** and **letters**. When you introduce numbers and letters to children, using textures and physical sensations adds another dimension to the experience. You can make numbers and letters become a part of your daily routine. For example, you and your child can count the numbers of steps to the bathroom. At the end say, "It took us six steps to get to the bathroom". Letting the children count their steps is a way to support their way of moving deliberately. Do you remember learning the card game, "Go Fish" ? Playing card games helps children learn about comparing numbers, counting, and matching. Children begin to understand concepts of print when they are surrounded by a print –rich environment. Also, activities built around their names are meaningful and fun and promote knowledge of the alphabet in a personal way.

Colors: Teaching children all the **colors** at once can become overwhelming. Working with one color, two or three days, will help the child to understand better that particular color before becoming distracted by another **color**. Focusing on one **color** for a period of time will help when the child is learning to differentiate **colors** when they are mixed together.



Blue Room Newsletter

What Happened in February

Our class is very lucky that we have so much diversity. We are able to learn more about each other in many special ways. In February we learned about Chinese New Year. The children enjoyed opening their envelopes, which had goodies inside for the New Year. This is the year of the rabbit. We hope it brings good luck and positivity. The



children enjoyed the "Music" theme in February. Thanks to all the parents for bringing in recyclable materials so that the children could make their own instruments. Also thanks to Mark for visiting the class and playing the guitar for us. We also had our "Friendship" theme last month. We made friendship bracelets, which the children liked very much. We noticed that the children are developing many good friendships in the class. We also observed that the children are engaging in higher levels of social play. Therefore, our "Friendship" theme promoted social development.



Last month we began our "Color" Theme. There is a range of abilities in the classroom and colors are no different. For instance, there are some children who know all their colors and some who know a few. We noticed that no matter the range the children greatly enjoyed this theme. They had an opportunity to mix the primary colors (red, yellow, blue) to make secondary colors (orange, green, purple, etc). Cognitively speaking, the children are grasping the concept of sorting, in this case colors, objects with similar traits. Therefore, the three objectives were that the children would learn a few colors (if not all), begin to demonstrate knowledge of how secondary colors are made, and to demonstrate knowledge of sorting.

What's to come?

We have observed that the children like to play with stuffed animals during constructive play time. Also the children like to read books with animal characters, which is toddler appropriate. Therefore, we will rotate more books in the classroom that have animal characters with relatable story plots. Young children are more likely to grasp the understanding of the story if it is relatable to their everyday life. Therefore, these types of books will greatly contribute to their language development. Nonetheless, our theme will initially focus on wild



animals (lions, tigers, snakes, etc); then we will turn our focus to birds such as owls, toucans, and parrots. We will focus on activities that promote fine motor skills, gross motor skills and social skills. Next, we will begin to talk about "Spring" and what changes take place during this time.

Please remember

- To sign up for Family Week
- Sign up to bring snack if you would like to
- Check change of clothes cubby and restock as appropriate
- Mira's birthday is March 14th