



## Director's Report

### Why Play Matters in our Quaker Preschool

Thirty years ago when our preschool was founded here in the Dupont Circle neighborhood by a group of parents and early childhood educators, these visionaries stated a simple mission – “to provide a loving, caring, and supportive educational environment for children.” Also at that time they stated a belief that children learn through play. Now that the educational landscape has changed quite a bit, in the intervening years, is the original mission still relevant? We think so.

It's not necessary to cite the research on the effectiveness of play-based education and its consonance with what we understand about child development and education – brain research that has been well publicized in the intervening 30 years has corroborated earlier theories and understandings. But perhaps play-based education in 2011 looks a bit different from how it looked in 1981, when I was a teacher in the classroom.

The more recent focus on standards has caused us to be more specific about what we mean by learning through play. What does play-based mean in the context of a school? In one word – teachers, and their role in the process.

First of all, we look at how the teachers provision the classroom – with materials and equipment that engage the children and help them develop their skills, taking them beyond what they already know, giving them opportunities to re-create the world they live in, and thus increasing their understanding.

What are the other roles of teachers?

- 1) A teacher is an observer. He/she observes and listens to a child to see where that child is developmentally. What support does the child need? How can the teacher foster growth beyond the current skill base?
- 2) At the children's level, the teacher can ask questions of the children that will direct their attention and cause them to think, extending their knowledge.
- 3) This extension through language helps the children articulate what they are learning. As Rosemary Burton states in “It's time to stop defending play,” “An early childhood teacher helps children recognize the concepts that emerge as they grapple with the environment, make hypotheses, recognize



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School is closed  
on Monday October, 10  
for the Columbus Day  
Holiday

### WELCOME

The Green Room welcomed a  
new student in October –  
Grace Harscheid & her parents  
Kristie & Bob.

### THANKS

to parents who have helped  
organize our library -  
Alice Dei-Sheldon,  
Jasmine Harris  
& Jesse Hamilton.

### UPCOMING EVENT

Fall Family Social  
(Pot Luck)  
Thursday, October  
20  
6pm - 8pm

similarities and differences, and solve problems.”

4) Teachers are there to help resolve those conflicts in a way that leads to the child having a better outcome the next time there is a conflict – and there will be. This social knowledge is so important for the children to acquire in order to be successful in school and life. It is also an early predictor of later success in school. Plus it is part of our mission as a Quaker school.

5) Does direct instruction play any role? Yes, of course. Teachers are obliged by state standards (and the District of Columbia’s standards are excellent) to introduce and “teach” content.

Finally, we are a school with historical roots, and we nourish our living program in new ways now – ways that honor the founders’ vision and take it well into the 21st century.

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## Quaker House Newsletter

We have successfully made it through the first month of school and time is moving right along! It has been such a wonderful start for Quaker House, and the kids are enjoying the classroom. We began the school year with exploring the different areas of the classroom (block area, playhouse, quiet area, art area, science area, and manipulative area). We addressed safety inside and outside by discussing and practicing our classroom routines and procedures. We look forward to going on trips and walks outside of school particularly to the Friends Meeting House of Washington and to our local parks. We are currently focusing on getting to know our friends and being better acquainted with our helping buddies. It has been so enjoyable for all the Quaker House Teachers to get to know your children and build relationships with them. As such we are beginning to understand their different learning styles. The term learning style refers to how children — and adults — investigate the world, learn concepts, incorporate what they learn, and, finally, use what they've figured out. Here are various learning styles that you may have noticed in your child, your child's playmates . . . and yourself!

### **1. Simultaneous/sequential: diving in or thinking things through**

A simultaneous learner likes to plunge right into a project. Her basic attitude is: Let's see what happens if I do this! Or if I do that! This kind of learner may be more inclined to take risks than a sequential learner. A sequential learner, by contrast, likes to sort materials and methodically think through what he wants to accomplish before getting started.

**Here's what you can do:** Encourage a simultaneous learner to express his actions in language. For example, when he is about to embark on a project, help him use terms such as first, then, next, and last or finally. Challenge your sequential learner. Pose questions to bring out his creativity: "What are four different things we could make from these materials?" or "Let's invent three different endings for the story we just read."

### **2. Connecting/compartmentalizing: relating or separating**

The child who learns by making connections gazes alertly at the world and sees patterns everywhere. If one day he sees, say, two red blocks and one blue block in his preschool classroom and the next day a similarly colored pattern on a peanut butter label, he'll link the two in his mind. By contrast, a

child who compartmentalizes tends to separate patterns. For example, if he's painting, he'll copy a pattern that he sees (red circle, blue splash, green lines) but probably won't connect this pattern to another similar one in his environment.

**Here's what you can do:** Help your connector refine her focus. Having that ability will enable your child to gain control of her wide-ranging thought processes. Take her into the kitchen and encourage her to identify things that cut, things that clean, and things that cook or cool. Entice your compartmentalizer to notice all the fascinating patterns and links in his environment. Open-ended questions using the words how and why, rather than what and when, will help.

### **3. Inventing/reproducing: making things up or using what's there**

The inventor enjoys using his imagination. His classmate, the child who learns by accruing facts, enjoys reproducing what she hears or copying something she sees. She gets less pleasure from making things up in her head.

**Here's what you can do:** Help your inventor learn to categorize. Suggest that he make collections of leaves, soup-can labels, pictures from magazines or original drawings of things that are hot, cold, slimy, or scratchy. You can have him help you put away laundry; if he absorbs information (socks go on your feet, two socks of the same color go together, and so on), he's learning to sort, an important pre-math skill. For your just-the-facts child, offer open-ended questions and opportunities. Rather than asking, "What are the colors in the rainbow?" you might say, "Where do you think the first rainbow might have come from?" Let her imagination soar!

*("Understanding Learning Styles" Excerpts taken from article written by Priscilla Vail)*

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## **Rainbow Room Newsletter**



Fall is here and many changes are happening in the Rainbow Room. The children have acclimated to their new classroom, classmates, and routines. During the day, our friends show how much they have grown in the last month by packing up snack and lunch without many reminders, covering coughs with their elbows, going down the fire pole on the playground, and using their words more. The Rainbows have spent the last month discovering the classroom, practicing good hygiene, and working on

being good friends. Now the Rainbows are learning about our class pets, the hermit crabs.

Our friends have demonstrated their observation skills not only in the classroom, but outdoors as well. They are noticing the changes in the weather and trees. We hope to take a nature walk soon so the children can explore the natural world around them. "Nature helps children develop powers of observation and creativity and instills a



sense of peace and being at one with the world." ---William Crain

**Parent Reminders:**

- Now that the weather has changed and it's no longer summer, please bring weather appropriate clothing such as jackets and sweaters.
- Please sign your child in and out everyday on the classroom door. -School for Friends celebrates Halloween at the end of the month where the children come dressed in their costumes and go trick or treating in the building

Thank you for all the fruits and vegetables you have been providing for snack!

Thank you, Rainbow Room Teachers

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## Green Room Newsletter



We have come to the end of the first month of the school year. It has been a challenging and exciting time in the Green Room. Our Green Room friends are transitioning nicely in their new surroundings and are learning to interact well with their peers and teachers.

The Green Room spent the first two weeks exploring the classroom and doing activities in the different areas. In the third week we focused on learning about each other we did the theme called; "Me Bag". In this theme we learned about the things that make each child special, such as what he or she likes to eat, his or her favorite books and toys. For the fourth and current week our focus theme is Hispanic Culture Celebration. National Hispanic Month is September 15 to October 15. The Green Room has been enjoying all of the different special activities we have been doing for Hispanic Culture Celebration. We thank our Hispanic families, friends and teachers for their contributions.

On Tuesday, October 11 we will start new topics to study for the Fall/Autumn. We will focus on this theme for two weeks and already have exciting activities planned for the Green Room.

**Special Activity:**

Friday, October 14: Fall Walk

**Birthdays**

Abigail Smith – 10/14

Grace Harscheid – 10/27

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## Blue Room Newsletter

Wow, the first month of school has already passed by! It is hard to believe that we are now into



October. The Blue Room had a great first month at school. We have all enjoyed getting to know you and your children and we look forward to the rest of the school year. The children have become familiar with each other and are making friends with everyone in the room, as well as other classrooms.



In September, the children were introduced to different areas of the Blue Room in order to familiarize them with it and also let us know what specific interests each child has. Lilo comes every Tuesday morning and he is a favorite of everyone. He brings various instruments every week and allows the children to play them, which they all love! Whenever they hear him coming, they get very excited and start to clean up to get ready for him.



Also, we learned about each child and their families during our themes, "All About Me" and "My Family". We have now started our family of the week and it is great to have visitors in the room. All of the children love having their families come visit and participate circle time, meals, activities etc. We will post the list that says when you are scheduled for family of the week right outside the door on the board.



In October we are starting two new themes, "Leaves and Trees" and "Fall Foods". We will also do a Halloween theme for the week prior to Halloween. Most of the activities for that week involve pumpkins and we are also going to do our first cooking activity! We have a lot of fun activities planned for this month

which include; leaves, acorns, pinecones, apples, squash, pumpkins and other fall things. We are very excited!

\*Just a reminder to check your child's cubby to make sure that they have weather appropriate clothes to change into if needed. Please be sure to label the items as well.

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