

The Sunshine Room Newsletter

January
2012



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What's Been Happening

When the children came back from the holiday week off, they found that the teachers expected more and better work from them. And they were ready for the challenge! Each child received a special journal for Writers' Workshop, in which they have been enthusiastically writing every day. We also instituted the activity we call Author's Chair: the children take turns being the author of the day, reading their journal to the class. When finished, they take questions from the audience. How special they feel!

This month, also, Ms. Yichong Yu, Alyssa's mom, came to show the children how to write Chinese characters in honor of Chinese New Year. The children truly enjoyed this activity that engaged their imagination and introduced them to the Chinese culture. They also enjoyed some yummy Chinese treats!

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Language Arts

How fast the year is flying! Hey, did you see **fl** in that sentence? Your Sunshine Roomer could tell you what that's called: a blend! Throughout the month we have learned all about blends (such as **fl**) and, even more challenging, digraphs (**th, sh, ch, wh**).

This month, we read *The Storm*, *Underground*, *Mouse*, *If You Meet a Dragon*, and *Who Lives in this Hole?* We also read the poems "Chinese Dragon" and "Snowball." Throughout the stories and poems, the digraphs listed above were identified, as well as the blends **cl, cr, gl, gr, dr, br, sn,** and **squ**.

To understand digraphs and blends better, we listened to many songs found on the Zoo-phonics CD. Each digraph had its own song, and the blends had their own tune called "Blends Rap" during which we got to dance, as well as echo the many blends there are in our language. In fact, without prompting, some Sunshine Roomers identified blends in text that they heard in the song, but not focused on in class! And to learn even *more* about digraphs, we watched a short, entertaining video about them. The children keep asking to watch more – little do they know there are more to come!

We have also learned a *lot* more sight words and are continuously reviewing the word wall and playing sight word games to help us out even more. Our new sight words for the month of January were **come, here, did, that, what, out, up, under, if, of, his, end, happy, new, this, who,** and **an**. It is amazing how many words we can read independently now!

Kindergartners are also trying their hands at matching sight words to aptly sized boxes (a big aid in determining "tall" and "low" lowercase letters, which you'll read about on page 4) as well as a sight word search. Their ever-developing reading skills are amazing the teachers every day, and we sincerely hope they are showing off their new abilities to their families at home!

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Art



Did the Sunshine Roomers get in some practice over the vacation? They came back to school with greatly improved cutting, pasting, painting, and drawing skills! We know because we put them to the test with an extremely complicated cutting project, but each child was up to the challenge and achieved beautiful results. We began by drawing and cutting simple geometric shapes, incorporating math skills into the art curriculum. The children greatly enjoyed “going to the paper shop” to choose a warm or cool colored piece of paper to work with for each shape. Next, the kids learned how to fold their paper to cut out hollow squares, circles, and even hearts! They were all impressed by what they could do. Finally, we used their favorite shapes to create one-string mobiles, which are now hanging merrily from our clothesline.

Later in the month, we spent plenty of time celebrating Chinese New, making dragon puppets, firecrackers and Chinese lanterns. The children showed just how great they are at being “patient artists,” as this project took five whole days to complete and was very involved!

Some of our other January projects included another seasonal tree painting, where the students learned to create a gradation of colors for their skies, a Martin Luther King Day people paper chain, showing that friends can come in all colors, and illustrations for fairy tales, which reinforced the children’s knowledge of story sequence that they learned in language arts.

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Happy Birthday!

Jacqueline
Charlotte
Alex S.
Jack
Jazmine



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Drama



During January we honored the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. by engaging in dramatization that promotes tolerance and counters discrimination. We read the books *I Am Tolerant* and *Can I Play Too?* Then the children paired up to come up with a short scenario related to accepting everyone as they are. Another time we read *The Skin I am In* and dramatized one of the situations in the book where an ice cream vendor gives more ice cream to one child and less to another. The children loved performing the part where they speak up against discrimination.

In celebration of Chinese New Year, we dramatized two dragon stories: *Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like* and *The Paper Dragon*. The children dressed up and used props to act out the stories. The children could pick any part to perform, regardless of the gender of the characters in the original story. Reading and dramatizing folk stories helps children understand cultures in a genuine way. We rounded up Chinese New Year with a Power Point presentation, and the book *Lion Dance*.

Math



After a quick review of numbers 1 to 10, we plunged into the world of solid shapes. The children had such a great time using a plank to find out if the sphere, cube, cylinder and cone can roll, slide or stack, that they asked to continue the activity during playtime. Seeing this, the teacher decided to extend the subject for one more class and had them make their own solid shapes with paper, decorated with funny faces.

Fractions was the next subject, one that is easily learned using food as an example. After reading *Eating Fractions* and learning the meaning of the terms half, thirds and fourths, the children used a toy cake and pizza to divide into parts. They also used fraction circles to make a whole circle. For the next class, the teacher wrapped up the concept using images of food cut in different portions. The children protested: "This is making us hungry!"

Then we began what is, perhaps, the most difficult math concept of the curriculum: numbers 11 to 20. Children need to learn that the number one is always in front in the teen numbers and why. We did a big number line on the floor where the children could jump to find the different numbers. We used the 10 frame to help children visualize 10 as a benchmark number. They also learned that they don't need to count the numbers in the 10 frame, since they already know how many there are. After a lot of experiences, the children will be developmentally ready to see sets of ten as representing a single group that can then be counted (as in 10, 20, 30) and itself grouped (as in 10 tens making 100). All in time to celebrate 100 days in school!

Upcoming Events

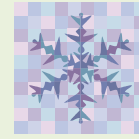
February 8th: The 100th Day of School

(Children will be asked to bring in 100 objects—stay tuned for instructions!)

Valentine's Day: There will be a card exchange. If you wish to provide a treat, may we suggest a non-food item such as a sticker or pencil? Thanks! ♥

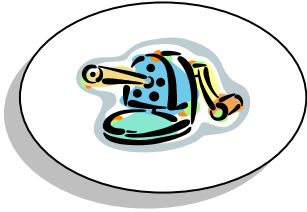
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Handwriting



The most challenging letters of the alphabet are finally being learned: the lowercase letters! The children have moved on from the small slates to larger ones complete with two lines to help children see the difference between “tall” and “low” lowercase letters as well as the letters we simply say “fit.” During each lesson, Ms. Randi writes both the upper and lowercase versions of a letter so that the children can see similarities and/or differences between the two.

So far, we have learned to write **c, o, s, v, w** (all of which are written identically to their uppercase versions, only smaller), **t, a, d, g, u, i,** and **e**. Our trusty friend Magic C returned to help us with **c, o, s, a, d,** and **g** as well.

The teachers are encouraging the children to use their new letters during Writer’s Workshop as practice. They are putting in so much effort!

Science

The Sunshine Roomers welcomed the New Year with a review of healthy habits. Throughout the first week back, we explored why it is important to exercise, wash, and get enough sleep. As a wrap-up for our unit on the human body, we read *Oh the Things You Can Do That Are Good For You* and brainstormed ways to keep our bodies healthy at home and school. All the kindergarteners put the finishing touches on their life-size human bodies and were finally able to take them home!

From the human body, we moved on to our current unit, seasons and the weather. The Sunshine Roomers began by learning that the Earth’s orbit around the sun causes each season. We simulated Earth’s orbit by sitting in a circle, with one child in the center holding a flashlight to represent the sun. We marked our location on a globe with an X and moved Earth around the sun see how the amount of light we receive changes throughout the seasons. Together, the children brainstormed how we can tell what season it is, and sorted four different trees into the appropriate season based on what could be observed about each one. To further our understanding, we read *What Are Seasons?*.

Our next lesson began our study of weather. The children started by learning that temperature, wind, and water make weather. The first topic we explored in-depth was temperature. The children learned that when we use the words hot and cold, we are describing temperature. We read excerpts from the books *Why is it Hot?* and *Why is it Cold?* to better understand how the sun affects temperature. The kindergarteners then donned their lab coats and learned how to measure temperature by placing a thermometer in two different containers of water. The kindergarteners also started working on weather dictionaries, which will contain words and corresponding pictures for the weather concepts we learned about in each class. The Pre-K’s began working on weather journals, which will have a drawing of what the weather looks like each day we have science class.

From temperature, we moved on to wind. We learned that wind is moving air, and though we can’t see wind, we can feel its effects. We read about some examples of extreme wind weather, focusing specifically on tornados. The children made a tornado out of two soda bottles, water, food coloring and glitter. The Sunshine Roomers had the chance to spin the bottles and observe the water mimicking the funnel cloud of a tornado. To supplement the lesson, during movie time the children watched *Stormchasers*.

Next month we will continue our exploration of weather, including lessons on hibernation, clouds and different types of precipitation.