

The Sunshine Room Newsletter

January 2011

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What's been happening?

Back from the holiday recess, the children found some surprises in the classroom: new headsets to use with the computers, journals to use during writers' workshop. They were thrilled to pick out and write in their very own journal. . . One day, when a teacher asked them to do their writing on a separate piece of paper, they all protested, "But we have to write in our journals!"

Along with these special items came more work and responsibility. Now the kindergartners have Author's Chair after sports time. Each day, one child takes a turn to share what they wrote and drew in their journals. Then the other children ask the author questions (and the teachers are entertained by listening to the exchanges!).

Each day, the children are assigned to different classroom jobs, to promote taking responsibility and keeping the classroom neat.

Thank you very much to Ms. Guarini, Matthew's mom, who came to do science experiments with the children involving balloons. Everyone had a great time and a great learning experience.



Language Arts



Welcome to 2011! We have started the new year with some review. The children went over Zoophonics, vowel sounds, beginning sounds, rhymes and sight words to refresh their memories after the long break. The kindergartners worked on the digraphs ch, sh, th, ph and wh. We also began working on blends and integrating music into the program to help us remember common beginning blends. The kindergartners have picked up on beginning blends very well. They have started identifying beginning blends and digraphs in words we read in our books and have been applying them to their writing during Writer's Workshop. They will also begin playing some games to help them retain blends in a fun way.

The Jellyfish have been reviewing letter sounds and upper- and lower-case letters. They have even begun to do Mystery Box again, which they are very excited about. They practice the Zoophonics characters, play games to remember letter sounds and identify words beginning or ending with those letter sounds.

All the groups have been watching movies about, and using music and movement to help them remember, the literacy concepts that they learn. We continue to practice comprehension, connecting literature to other subjects and to our own lives.

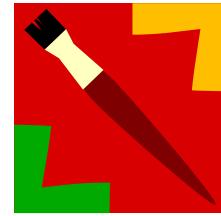
Announcements

**The Seed will be
CLOSED
Monday,
February 21
President's Day**



**Jacqueline
Alex
Sarah**

ART



Integrating science, literature, writing and art, we focused on animals in winter. After learning about hibernation and torpor in science class, and reading fictional literature on the subject, each child chose an animal that sleeps in winter, and created it using various materials. All the children collaborated in painting and constructing the background. Finally, the children wrote a caption with a scientific fact about their animal.

Quilts help us keep warm in winter, and different cultures have their own kinds of quilts, weavings, or handcrafted blankets. Learning about quilts was an opportunity to become familiar with diverse cultures through literature, art and even math. The designs many times follow patterns and are symmetrical. The children created their own quilts out of paper scraps, adding detail with glitter glue or markers. What a beautiful result!

To further aid the children in understanding concepts they studied in math class, they all contributed to creating three pretend pizzas out of various materials. They made a whole pizza, another cut in half, and another cut in fourths. The pizzas look yummy and are on display in the.

The children spent a snow day very appropriately creating the winter bulletin board entitled "Slide into Winter!" featuring penguins sledding down a hill. Doing this project was certainly a test of the children's fine motor skills!

For the last part of the month we celebrated Chinese New Year, making our very own lanterns. We also had the opportunity to once again create our very own marble paper and engage in some free painting.

As usual, the children engaged in different sensory activities every day, using play dough, gak, artificial snow, and pastel drawing. And once a week the children practice their cutting skills.

Handwriting

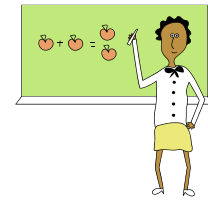


The Sunshine Roomers have kicked off 2011 by learning how to properly write and size their lowercase letters. They have moved on from using small slates to larger ones with double lines printed on them, which helps them size their letters between and/or above and below the lines.

First, the children were introduced to some lowercase letters that are smaller versions of their uppercase partners: c, o and s. They felt successful at writing these letters, since they really already knew how! Over the course of the month, the children also learned how to write v, w, t, a, d, g, u, i and e. They are beginning to understand that most lowercase letters look very different from their uppercase partners. To aid in this understanding, each class begins with each child holding one hand tall and flat and the other hand wrapped in a fist, to see the difference in height between upper and lowercase letters.

We have also begun incorporating warm-ups into the class routine. The warm-ups are designed to challenge and develop the children's fine motor skills. One example is touching each finger to its opposing thumb and back again. It is a challenge to try and do it quickly!

Math

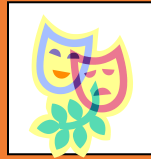


Upon returning from the winter break, the children dove right in to learning the characteristics of the solid figures (3D), focusing on the cube, cylinder, sphere and cone. The teacher passed around examples of these objects and the children came to observe which objects have curves, sides and corners, and which can roll, stack and/or slide. The same was learned about 2D, or plane shapes: square, rectangle, triangle and circle. For each of these two lessons, the children got to go on a shape hunt around the classroom. We were surprised to discover especially how many cubes and cylinders are found in our every day manipulatives – especially our blocks! We also learned that, even if a shape is turned at different angles, it doesn't change what shape it really is! The children played with magnetic shapes on magnetic boards to help reinforce the concept. The kindergartners completed a small take-home book in which they need to identify all of these shapes.

The three weeks spent learning about shapes prepared the children for new concepts taught at the end of the month: symmetry and fractions. We learned what it means if objects are symmetrical by pairing up and creating "mirror images" of each other's designs by once again utilizing the magnetic shapes and boards. We learned that an object is symmetrical if it is divided down the middle, or cut in half, and the two pieces match one another. The children also colored their own mandalas to demonstrate their understanding of symmetry. Some examples can be found decorating our classroom! This lesson also served as an introduction to fractions, during which the children listened to a reading of the book *Eating Fractions* and playing with pretend pizza and cake, during which the fractions whole, halves and fourths were focused on.

We will spend the first *half* (a fraction ☺) of February finishing up fractions before returning to numbers and counting!

Drama



This month was dedicated to honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. by learning to accept, respect and celebrate differences. The children were introduced to social justice by learning to stand up for what is right and speaking out against injustice.

After reading the book *The Skin I Am In*, we discussed how everyone should be treated equally regardless of their exterior appearance. We dramatized a situation in which an ice cream vendor gives a bigger ice cream cone to a boy just because he is a boy, even when the girl paid the same money. Children observing the situation told the ice cream vendor that she did not do the right thing and why. Then we reversed it so that the girl would get more ice cream. The children really enjoyed doing this sketch, especially because they had a chance to speak up for what was right.

Another day we dramatized the story of Alexander Graham Bell interacting with his mother, who was deaf, and inventing a machine to help the deaf hear. This helped the children learn that we all have different abilities; we need to respect each other as we are, and we can help each other in our challenges.

Science



The children are very excited about our new science topic... Hibernation! We have been applying this subject in all areas from art to literacy to play time. With all of the snow days we've had thus far, it has been difficult to have science class as often as we would like. However, the children have really taken an interest in and gained understanding about hibernation.

The children have each created their own hibernating (or torpid) animals for the bulletin board in art. They have learned that not all animals that sleep in winter actually hibernate. Some are torpid, meaning they only sleep for part of the winter and may wake up to eat now and then.

In literacy, the children have made connections between hibernation and some books we have read. We also created a wall of words relating to hibernation.

The children have had fun learning the game "Sleeping Bear" created by Ms. Kristin, in which one child pretends to be a hibernating bear while other children are scavenging animals trying to take the bear's food. They have enjoyed playing in the snow and digging their own dens to hibernate in as well. Some children even found signs of hibernating animals outside. They found a hole in a tree where they believe an animal could be sleeping for the winter!

Using Brainpop (a great educational website) the children have also participated in activities and watched movies to help reinforce the concept of hibernation.