

# The Seed Day Care Center

**February 2010**

*Sunshine Room*

## Newsletter

### **What's been happening**

February was an eventful month. We began by receiving the visit of Ms. Paulina, a teacher from Heliantus Preschool in Warsaw, Poland. She observed our classes and also shared her knowledge with us. First, she read a Polish story to the children. Then, the children made masks related to the story. The third part of the activity was to dramatize the story.

Ms. Paulina brought some gifts for the Sunshine Roomers. Among the presents was a map of the world that the children in Heliantus had made especially for us. The map has a string that stretches from Poland to the United States, reflecting the friendship of the children at The Seed with the children from Heliantus. Since it was February, The Seed children made valentines for Paulina to take back with her to our friends in Poland.

Groundhog Day was the occasion for all kinds of activities related to weather and shadows.

We celebrated 100 days of school by baking 100 cookies, reading books about celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> day in school, and counting, counting, counting.

Valentine's Day was a great opportunity for writing letters. We learned how to format a letter, how to address envelopes, and played post office with mailboxes and mailbags.

We celebrated Chinese New Year in many ways. We read Chinese stories, we read books about how Chinese New Year is celebrated in our country, and learned about the Chinese zodiac. Most children in the Sunshine Room were born in the Year of the Monkey. Mr. Lin, Christopher's dad, came to talk to the children about Chinese culture and Chinese New Year. Christopher's mom made a yummy rice cake for snack. Thank you, Mr. Lin and Ms. Gao, for sharing your culture with us! Gung Hay Fat Choy!

## **Language Arts**

### Kindergarten

The kindergartners have been reading more and more books. They have even started teaching the Pre-Ks to read at independent reading time—this is very inspiring! They have worked a lot on beginning and ending blends in creating words. They have also created a new and improved list of their sight words and a list of rhyming words.

The children have also been reading poems that relate to the February holidays. These poems include “Ten sets of Ten” for the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school, “Ten Valentines” for Valentines Day and, most recently, “Chinese Dragon” for Chinese New Year.

### Pre-K

The Spotted Kittens have finished the consonants and moved on to vowels. We saved these for last since, in Zoo-phonics parlance, vowels are the “hardest workers” and have more than one sound. In our first activity, the children traced their hands on paper and cut these out. Then they wrote a vowel on each finger. We now use these hand cutouts to help remember the vowels. Our next activity was reading rhyming books with the different short vowel sounds. We continued with coloring worksheets, which use pictures that include the different sounds that the letters make. The children have been great with coming up with words using the vowels sounds.

## **Science**

We began the month by learning about groundhogs and other animals that hibernate. The children answered many questions such as: What is hibernation? What do animals need to do before they hibernate? Which animals hibernate? We also discussed what it means when a groundhog sees its shadow, and each group took a survey: Will the groundhog see its shadow? There were mixed results!

We then began talking about animals that don’t hibernate, but live in very wintry places—Antarctica and the Arctic. Each of the Sunshine Room groups made a list of which animals live in each habitat and focused on a particular group of animals in each place. We spoke mainly about Emperor Penguins (the children watched **March of the Penguins** during movie time to reinforce their learning) and polar bears. It was amazing how much the children already knew about each animal and during a discussion post-movie, they all shared facts they learned from it. The kindergartners spoke about Antarctica and the Arctic as habitats, discussing where animals find food, water, shelter and space. The Spotted Kittens listened to various stories about the animals in these habitats.

All the children learned that polar bears live on chunks of ice in the Arctic. They all learned that polar bears weigh a *lot* (770-1,500 pounds, to be exact!). So how do polar bears stay afloat on the ocean? As an extension activity, and to help answer this question, the children spent the latter part of the month utilizing the water table to test various classroom objects to see if they would sink or float. Part of this activity involved making predictions beforehand and seeing if their predictions were borne out in practice.

## **Handwriting**

Throughout the month of February, the children continued to learn more lowercase letters: this month it was l, k, y, j, p, r and n. The children also took a break from learning

individual letters to practice putting together the letters they'd already learned to form short words, such as jet, yet, cook, cats, dogs, log, like, love, dug, and wag. They used the *Handwriting Without Tears* chalkboards to help them practice proper sizing of their letters. The kindergartners continued to review their uppercase letters in their workbooks.

## **Math**

Groundhog Day gave us the opportunity to practice the steps of data collection. First, the children took an opinion survey of their classmates and teachers, asking whether or not the groundhog would see its shadow on February 2. After completing the survey, each child constructed a graph to show the results of the data they had collected.

The celebration of 100 days was a great way to practice counting to 100. Each child was invited to bring in 100 objects to school. And they did! Contributions varied from shiny stones, to legos, to letters, and many more interesting objects. We counted these objects by ones and by tens. We learned to skip-count by tens, fives and twos. We did this by using number mats and actually jumping on the numbers.

The children were fascinated by all the possibilities the abacus offers and started adding and subtracting on their own.

The kindergartners learned the difference between even and odd numbers after reading the story *Even Steven and Odd Todd*, and using counters to distinguish between the two.

Finally, the children learned the ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.).

## **Drama**

The children used the groundhog shadow puppets they made in art for doing shadow theatre. First, the teacher told a groundhog story, and later every child had a chance to make up their own story with shadow puppets. Thank you to the Armstrong family who donated the puppet shadow theatre!

The children played post office and learned all the steps from mailing a letter until it reaches its destination. They wrote a letter to one of their friends, addressed the envelope (with return address and all), took turns selling and buying stamps at the pretend post office, and then delivered the letter.

During the week of celebration of Chinese New Year, the children dramatized a Chinese folktale. First they read *The Most Beautiful Thing in the World*, then they picked roles, and using some props they put on the play. They enjoyed it so much that they did it several times, each time changing roles.

## **Art**

What a busy time for art in the Sunshine Room. The month of February brought many holiday celebrations, including Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day and Chinese New Year.

The children made Ground hog puppets for our shadow puppet theater using oil pastels, Popsicle sticks and construction paper.

For Valentine's Day, they made their very own valentine blot paintings. Using a pre-cut heart, they painted one side with a variety of valentine colors (pinks, reds and purples). Then they folded the heart in half. How amazed they were to realize they had painted the clean side of their heart simply by folding it! They finished their valentines by adding red glitter and bright tissue paper for additional decoration.

For Chinese New Year, the children created red stained glass lanterns using copier transparencies, red tissue paper, gold glitter and red party streamers.

February was also a very important month because the Sunshine Roomers celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> day of school! To help celebrate this important day, everyone helped make a three-layer “cake” sculpture using tempera paint and cardboard boxes! We even included 100 candles on the cake itself.

Our biggest project for February was our 3-dimensional shape sculptures. Using recycled cardboard boxes and paper towel tubes, the children created one-of-a-kind sculptures. They began this project by learning about different 3-D shapes with Ms. Diane. The shapes they handled included rectangular prisms, spheres, cylinders, pyramids, cones and cubes. Once students understood the shapes, they were given the opportunity to make all these shapes into something else. Students chose five or six shapes to make into a sculpture, using masking tape and glue to combine them in unique ways. Once their sculptures had dried, then came the fun part—painting them, using a variety of brightly-colored tempera paints. After the paint dried, decorating their sculpture was the next step. The sculptors used a variety of objects to embellish their works of art, including sea shells, marker caps, glitter, sea glass, metal rings, jewels, straws, stones, marbles, bouncy balls, feathers, buttons, ribbon, yarn, felt and Styrofoam.

The children even carried this project over into their writer’s workshop activity by writing about their sculptures! Our sculpture project thus incorporated math, the arts and writing! WOW!

Yet another art activity this month was creating marbled paper with shaving cream and watercolor paints. Marbled paper made from shaving cream? Absolutely! Students began by spraying a large pile of shaving cream onto an art mat. Using a selection of watercolors, the artists dripped various colors onto the shaving cream pile. Once their colors were added, they used their pointer finger to swish and swirl their shaving cream. They watched in fascination as their colors blended together and small drops became long, swirly lines. They then took a white piece of paper and placed it on top of their shaving cream and slowly pressed down with one hand. They then peeled off their paper and wiped the excess shaving cream off. TaDa! The swirls magically appeared onto their paper and made marbled paper! This turned out to be a favorite project.

Yet another fun art activity: Creating a painting inspired by the book, *Mouse Paint*. This book tells the story of three white mice that learn about colors—i.e., when you mix primary colors (red, yellow and blue), you make secondary colors (purple, orange and green). The children created mouse paintings by using two fingers to represent mice feet. They were amazed that by mixing colors together they could create new ones.

Our busy artists also created a project we call “Yarn Weaves”. In this activity, they learned about the different types of lines (diagonal, vertical and horizontal) and how these lines can make a picture. They wove different-colored pieces of yarn around a black piece of cardstock that had slits cut into the sides to keep the yarn in place. Once all the slits were used, the design was complete.

We also made collage robots this month. Using a variety of different-colored shapes and sizes, the children created their very own robots. This activity gave the children the chance to review the different parts of the body.

After hearing about the sad events in Haiti, the Sunshine Room students decided to spread some cheer to the children of Haiti by making beautiful hand-painted flowers and spin art.

Thank you again to all the parents who have donated materials for art. We appreciate all that you give us! Also, special thanks to Isabel's mom, Mrs. Armstrong. Your wonderful ideas for Chinese New Year were much appreciated!