

News From the KS Classroom

Friday, January 13th, 2012

A belated Happy New Year to all! With all the distractions of the holidays behind us, we are back to work and seemingly much more focused than we were prior to the break. January is a time for new beginnings and we have begun to learn many new skills as a result.



Last week we focused on 2 new letters, D and G. We also learned the new "heart" word "to" and a new word family "-an". Using all the letters and sounds we have learned thus far, we were able to blend sounds and make words such as can, man, fan and pan. Blending sounds to make words is a daily activity that the children are participating and reveling in. This week we focused on the letter "O" and thus are now able to blend short "a" and short "o" CVC (consonant - vowel - consonant) words. Some are real and some are not. Those that are not are called "alien" words. Why "alien" words? It is important to be able to blend real or nonsense words so that reading larger words in chunks, in the years ahead, becomes more fluent. For example, if you are able to read "gob", you will be able to chunk the word gobble. The children are very excited to be able to blend sounds and even more excited to be reading!



In addition to the phonemic awareness and phonics skills we are working on we are working on comprehension skills and strategies to include story structure, predicting, inferring and cause & effect.

Since before Christmas, we have been reading and enjoying many books by Jan Brett. The children have enjoyed the beautiful illustrations and learning about some of the real characters (animals) and places she bases her fictitious stories on.

In math, we have been working to solve story problems using simple addition. We are focusing on the process of solving the problem vs. "What is the answer?". At the kindergarten level this entails putting on our detective hats and looking for the clues (What do we know? What are the numbers we are working with and what are we doing with them?) If the story is, "There are 2 red fish and 4 blue fish in the ocean....How many fish are there all together?" , we first figure out what we know and highlight the information. In this example, we would highlight "2 red fish", "4 blue fish" and the words "all together". Then we put on our illustrator hats and draw a picture of the fish. Finally, we solve the problem using the numbers, a "+" and "=" sign. The goal is to begin to

build a basic foundation and give them strategies from which they can build upon in the years to come. Problem solving and story problems will be part of your children's math curriculum throughout their years in school.

In addition to story problems, we work daily on basic numeracy skills, counting by 1's and 10's, calendar skills, patterning, sorting, shapes and positional words.

In preparation for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day this coming Monday, we learned about this very important and influential man, his life and his dream for a better world. We wrote about and illustrated our dreams for the world. Look for them on the hall bulletin board early next week.

We are reviewing our classroom rules and procedures, daily, as this appears to be an area that needs reinforcement and frequent check-ins. In Health class the children listened to a wonderful story about kindness called "Did You Fill Someone's Bucket Today?". The children have been very excited about verbalizing the kind things they are doing and saying to each other....referring to the words and actions as "bucket fillers" and things that fill someone else's bucket. This has prompted me to put a picture of a bucket up on our wall and each time someone's "bucket is filled", we will add a sticker to the picture. As the bucket gets filled, we will celebrate kindness and work to team build and self reflect on how kind words and actions affect others in a positive way.



We began a program called "Handwriting Without Tears" last week and the kids are loving it. Each lesson is designed to help the children develop their writing skills through multi-sensory, play-based instruction. Activities with hands-on materials - wood pieces, letter cards & play-dough, and slate chalkboards - address different senses to teach correct formation, spacing, sequencing and other writing skills. Children

move, touch, feel and manipulate real objects as they learn the habits and skills essential for writing. Other multi-sensory lessons use voices, letter stories, door tracing, imaginary writing and mystery letters to teach letter formation and placement on lines. Letters are taught in a sequence that makes sense developmentally; in groups of similar formation.

Reminders:

Please remember to check the snack schedule. We have had a few people miss their snack days recently and our extra supplies have been depleted as a result.

Gym is on Wednesday and Friday. Sneakers are required in order to participate.

Library is on Thursday. Children need to return their books from the previous week to exchange for another.

Have a great weekend! No School on Monday in observation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Denise, Barb and Sandy

