



Chapel Hill Cooperative Preschool

January 2012 Newsletter

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THE PRESCHOOL PRESS

Our School Family

Our school family is the vehicle we use to teach children their job description -teaching ways to be helpful and contributing to a climate of caring.

For the past 6 months at our weekly staff meetings we have been reading and discussing the book "Conscious Discipline" by Becky Bailey. Dr. Bailey stresses the importance of building a culture of caring, valuing interdependence, sharing, kindness and helpfulness. Our goal is to work to create a climate that is positive, helping each person (child, parents, teachers) feel self-worth, dignity and importance, while simultaneously generating a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.

To help build our school family we have incorporated a number of specific structures into our program:

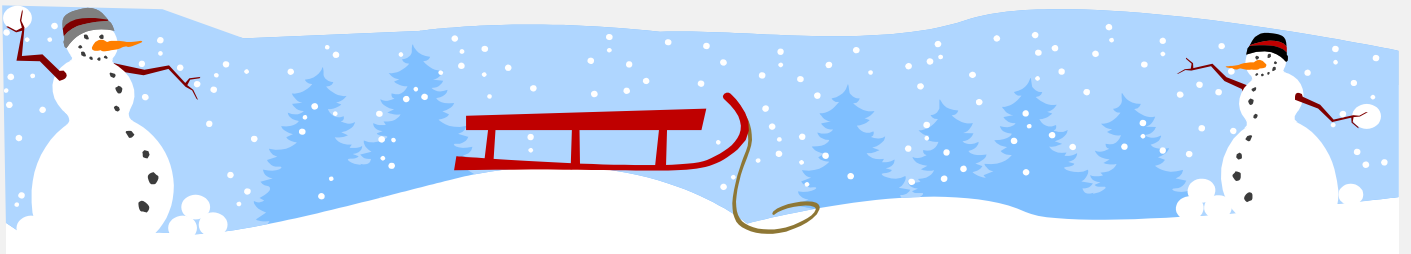
- Our Friends and Families Bulletin Board
- School routines, schedules, and behavior guidelines
- Meaningful classroom jobs
- Rituals that have connection as their goal etc.....

We can help children discover the value of connection by helping them discover their unique strengths and the benefit of sharing those strengths with others. When we notice children's efforts and accomplishments (rather than making judgments) we offer validation and support for connecting with others. Our interconnectedness does not erase our individuality, it accentuates it. Each person contributes to the whole. Programs based on the Power of Unity teach children to focus on giving. Giving of yourself is valued as children learn to offer their unique talents for the benefit and enjoyment of others.

We work each day to build classrooms so children choose to connect with each other with trust and respect instead of through excluding others and creating common enemies (you are not my friend, we don't like the girls). We can help children discover the value of connection by helping them discover their unique strengths and the benefit of sharing those strengths with others. When we notice children's efforts and accomplishments, we offer validation and support for connecting with others.

As in any family, our School Family is always a work in progress!

Susan Schenck

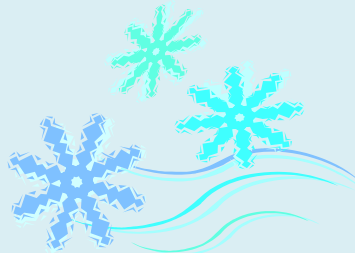


Katherine's Gathering

Our most recent topic of study in the blue room was bears. We learned about what bears eat (porridge, honey, etc.) and learned about what it means to hibernate. We also read a favorite bear book of mine called Beady Bear by Don Freeman. It is about a teddy bear that decides he wants to live in a cave like a real bear. He takes several items to the cave with him to make it more comfortable (e.g. a pillow, blanket, flashlight, etc.). Right when he realizes that it is a bit lonely in the cave, his owner finds him and takes him back home. We acted out the story, complete with large tents to represent the caves and flashlights!

One day we read the book The Three Bears. Kathy helped me prepare some grits to be the porridge stand-in. I showed the kids three different sized stuffed bears. I told the kids that the bears had made the porridge, but it was too hot so they were planning to go on a walk. While the stuffed bears "walked" outside, I read the book. After the story, I showed the group three bowls-big, medium, and small. I told them that we were all baby bears, so we were going to eat from the small bowls. I distributed the porridge, which was too hot for us to eat so we went on a walk around the school. When we got back to the classroom, Goldilocks (a small doll) was eating the porridge! All the kids tried the porridge, most of them eating several bowls. After a few minutes, the stuffed bears came back to the blue room to find us eating their porridge. It was a super fun activity that the kids seemed to enjoy!

In the coming weeks, we are going to learn about winter weather accessories and Chinese New Year. My mother-in-law is going to come in to show the kids what it looks like to knit. We also hope to do a lot of activities to celebrate the Chinese holiday.



Dionne's Non-Nappers

Winter Wonderland!

You can feel the chill in the air! Winter is finally here! In Non-Napper's we have been exploring the topic of winter. We have been reading books about winter activities and winter animals. We read "The Mitten" and decorated paper mittens and talked about our favorite winter animals. We have been reading bear stories and have been learning about hibernation and other winter animals that live in arctic places and their life cycles. Bundle up its cold outside.

Dionne's Non-Nappers

Gracen, Freya, Susanna, Tessa, Nathan, Izzie, Alice, Ladionna, Harrison



Laura's Gathering

Hello CHCP Families!

I hope everyone had a great winter break. During the month of January, we said goodbye to Dominik. His family is temporarily moving to Prague and are happy he will be back at CHCP his summer.

Katherine and I started off the month by making it all about Bears and Winter Animals in the Blue Room. My gathering read fun books like The Bear Snores On, We're Going on a Bear Hunt, and It's Sleep Time. We also did a fun button activity based on the classic book, Corduroy. We had a "hibernation day" where the children dressed in their pajamas and we hibernated in caves (tents) like bears! When we woke up, it was Spring and we explored our new surroundings.

We will also be doing an upcoming unit on Mittens and Winter Clothing!

I look forward to having a great new year at the preschool. Happy New Year to everyone!

Laura



Jane's Gathering

Before the break we enjoyed learning about winter holidays in America and around the world. We learned a bit about Hanukkah with Dylan D. and his mom, Kelly, made a Kwanzaa gifts of bead necklaces and made cinnamon/applesauce ornaments for winter solstice. Everyone had lots of fun during our winter festival and gathering party and we even had a visit from Sinterklaas (a Netherlands tradition) who left treats for us in our shoes!

We got back into the swing of things by learning all about bears. We estimated, counted, sorted and graphed gummy bears. Other activities included an animal insulation experiment in which we insulated our bodies like polar bears to see how warm we could stay in cold water and we created our own books similar to Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? A highlight of the week was our hibernation party. We wore our pajamas to school and cuddled with our stuffed bears while we read stories!

We're looking forward to our unit about art and are excited about trying lots of different artistic techniques during the upcoming weeks. We'll be collecting the works of art that the children create to put together an amazing art show. Stay tuned for forthcoming details!



Silva's Gathering

Hello Pre-school Friends and Families,

I am delighted to be part of the Chapel Hill Cooperative Pre-School! I am enjoying getting to know everyone, being part of such a wonderful staff, and having the privilege to work with your children.

The big 5 milestone is upon us! So far we have made birthday crowns for Maddox, Miles, and Sophie. The rest of our birthdays are nicely spread out with Nathan's birthday coming up in February, Tessa's in March, Freya's in April, Nicky's in May, mine in June and Kingston turns 5 in July.

Our gathering begins with greeting one another and then sounding out and writing letters each day. As we sign in, we start with our own names and then aspire to write new words. We learn from one another and are inspired by one another's ideas about what to write, such as names of family members and pets. We have even learned about "?" and "!".

We are busy developing our gathering routine around our new job chart. Line leader and line caboose have the important job of keeping pace, walking safely, and staying together with the group. We take turns being in charge of the calendar. We will use it for tracking our birthdays, talking about days of the week (and singing our Days of the Week song), months, and seasons.

One of the jobs that I am very excited about is "Question of the Day". The children in my gathering are so naturally curious and this supports and encourages their curiosity to grow even more. Some of the questions so far include "How many letters are in the alphabet?", "How many is a couple?", and "What is a topic?". One question begets another, such as Sophie's question to Tessa (who broke her collarbone), "How do you put on a new shirt?" and then Miles' question, "How many bones are in our body?" Suddenly we have a greater interest in bones, and are talking about clavicles and phalanges.

Nathan brought us many fantastic books about bones to continue our topic of study. Books from home are always welcome! Future questions may include "What is the funny bone?", "What is the difference between an insect and a spider?", and "Why does the moon shine?"



Our gathering time provides many opportunities for the children to express themselves, work cooperatively, and take turns.

In addition to the structure our job chart provides, our gathering will focus on the school wide theme of art. We will be looking at various pieces of art and describing them; we will be learning the important skill of "describing" as we increase our vocabulary.

We will also be reading books about art and artists; some of the books I have selected are:

ART by Patrick McDonnell

I Am an Artist by Pat Lowery Collins

Matthew's Dream by Leo Lionni

Van Gogh and the Sunflowers by

Laurence Anholt

Art and Max by David Wiesner

The Art Lesson by Tomie dePaola

I am an Artist by Pat Lowery Collins

Still-Life Stew by Helena Clare Pittman

Morris the Artist by Lore Segal

For a little sneak peek:

Art is a lot of fun to look at...actually about a boy named Art whose art lands on the refrigerator and along the way he shows us his curly (-est!) cues, zig-zags, splotches, and blotches.

Art and Max is about two painting lizards that....well, you really have to see it for yourself!

Matthew's Dream is about how a visit to an art museum inspires a young mouse to become a painter.

Morris the Artist is about Morris and how he brings a birthday present to Benjamin's birthday party, but does not want to let go of it. Finally opened, the present turns out to be something marvelous for everyone - Paints!

We have talked about Vincent Van Gogh, and have described the painting, "Starry Night".

We have also been referring to Van Gogh's self-portrait in anticipation of making our own self-portraits. In addition we will look at the shapes of Kadinsky and the splatter paint of Jackson Pollock (do we dare aspire? :) We plan to also learn about still-life paintings.

It will be wonderful to see all the creative and varied projects and activities of the different groups and gatherings, which we will display for our art show coming up soon in February!

Jeanine's Gathering

Welcome back. I hope everyone had a wonderful, relaxing winter break. We said goodbye to two children in my gathering; Dharma and Lukas. Dharma is starting kindergarten and Lukas is on a 6 month visit to Prague. We wish them both the best!

Since it is a new year we have started exploring a new topic in gathering. One morning a few weeks ago a child shared with me that he wanted to be an architect when he grows up. This led to a discussion about all the different occupations that the children in my gathering are interested in. As a group we came up with a large list including paleontologist, cowboy, race car driver, astronaut, biologist and mom. We will spend a week exploring each one. Next week we will be astronauts; completing gravity experiments, drawing pictures from space and creating graphs & charts to document our findings. Throughout our study my gathering will be doing art, math, literacy, movement and science activities. Each child will be creating a book When I Grow Up to display what they learn and what they find the most interesting. In the next few months I have several field trips planned to extend the children's learning and exploration outside of the classroom.

It is hard to believe that my gathering will be moving on to the next phase of their life in the fall, kindergarten! Throughout the day they will have ample opportunity to participate in kindergarten readiness activities.

Jeanine



In the Kitchen with Kathy

Welcome back from the winter break, I hope all of you were able to spend some time with your families.

In February I will begin working on our garden. Once a week I will meet with the gathering in Purple room to start our seedlings that will be planted in our garden in the spring. I am going to need couple of parents to help me with the garden, on things like weeding and preparing the soil so if you are interested please email me at morindavis@gmail.com, and we can talk about this more. FYI you will get participation hours for this!

In the kitchen I have been making soup once a week, I feel, the children enjoy it. There is one soup I think everyone loves which is Tomato Basil Soup along served with grilled cheese sandwiches, and cantaloupe. This recipe is very easy and quick to make.



Tomato Basil Soup

Serves 15

3 Boxes of Trader Joe's Creamy Tomato Soup

1 Bunch of Organic Basil

1 Jar of Organic Marinara Sauce

1 28 ounce Can of Organic Diced Tomatoes

½ Cup of Butter

In a large pot pour the 3 boxes of Tomato Soup & Butter turn on a low to medium heat. Wash the basil & pull off all the leaves & place them into a blender, pour the marinara sauce & diced tomatoes in the blender too. Mix well; this may take two times depending on the blender size. Pour this liquid into the Tomato Soup on the stove, Stir well. When it is hot it's ready to enjoy!

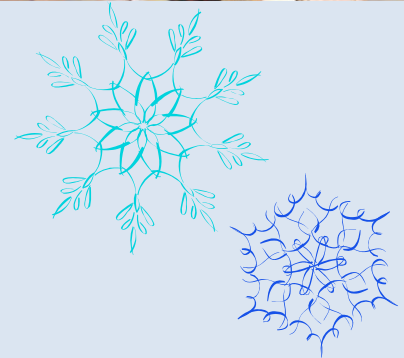
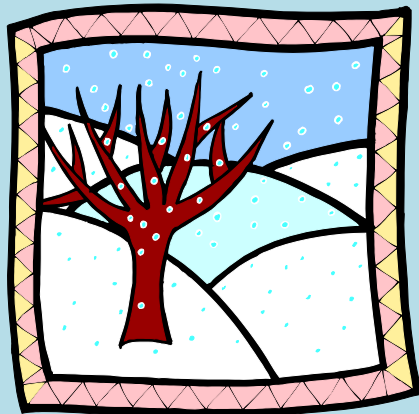
Stefanie's Gathering

In the month of December our gathering spent some time learning about Winter holidays, and we were lucky enough to have some of our families come in and share special holiday traditions! Jane's mom Sarah came in and read a book about the holiday of Hanukkah, showed us how to light the candles on a menorah, and brought us a tasty Hanukkah treat, sufganiyot, which is basically a delicious jelly doughnut! Enrique, Maya's dad, came to talk with us about the Kwanzaa holiday. He wore a dashiki, which is a traditional garment worn in parts of Africa and often worn during Kwanzaa celebrations, and he also read a Kwanzaa book and brought materials for us to make a picture of a kinara, which is a candle holder used during the celebration of Kwanzaa.

The school wide topic of study is now "Everything Art", and our gathering will be doing some author/illustrator studies in the coming weeks. The children will be learning the features of books (the cover, spine, pages, page numbers, etc.) We will continue to discuss the concepts of author and illustrator, and further encourage the appreciation of books. Two of my favorite children's authors are Leo Lionni and Eric Carle, whose works are lovely stories full of colorful illustrations that use a variety of mediums. Recently we began with Leo Lionni. If you are not familiar with him, here is a link:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/lionni/aboutlionni.php>

We have read several of Lionni's works, including "It's Mine", "Fish Is Fish", "Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse", "Inch By Inch", "Swimmy" as well as "A Color Of His Own." The children had a chance to brainstorm about what kind of mediums you can use to make art, and made guesses at how Lionni created pictures in several of his books (collage, water color, oil pastel, etc.). We have been working on a multi-step art project of our own, layering several different mediums to create a look similar to Lionni!



Germaine's Gathering

My Gathering and I are looking forward to a great year!

We started off this year with a bang!... We began our Gathering morning routine by sharing information on how we spent our winter break. The children were eager to share a few exciting events that happened over the holiday, such as going sledding, visiting relatives, spending time with mom & dad. We then reviewed information about Winter and we talked about changes in the weather.

We discussed how animals protect themselves during the winter months, we talked about clothing that's appropriate for the weather (gloves, scarves, jackets etc). We read numerous stories related to winter, and we sang a few winter songs - "Hot Chocolate" (by Mr. John), "Let's Sing a Winter Song", "Gray Squirrel", *and much more.* Our Gathering Room Parent (Cheryl) or "MiMi", has been visiting my group on Wednesdays to do special enriching activities with the children, some of her activities include music and movement, fine motor development, story time and arts and craft.

Presently, we are transitioning from our Winter studies to a new theme, "Everything Art!". This theme is aimed at bringing out the creative side of each child through the exploration of all types of art medias and materials. The children will be able to use self-expression as they learn more about Art. Some of the concepts that will be reviewed are color identification, math concepts, sharing, taking turns, and fine and gross motor development. As we continue learning about art, we will explore the works of different artist, review the color wheel, paint, work on 3-D projects, and use a variety of collage materials.

The first few weeks in February, we will have a grand display in the Large Activity room of all of the children's art work and projects. The children are really excited about this upcoming event! So mark your calendars!



Arlene's Gathering

Hello gathering family

Welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed their time with family and friends over the winter break.

Everyone seems very happy to be back and we are all getting back into our gathering routine.

Our new Topic of Study is "All Things Art". If you have any artistic talents or interests to share, talk with me about the opportunity to come in and work with the gathering.

Our new feeling word is "Grateful".

Check out the "Feeleez" poster just outside the Yellow Room. It was one of the many wonderful gifts we received from our families.

Please remember to send hats, warm coats, and mittens with your child on these cold winter mornings. If your child does not want to wear them, just bring them in and leave in their cubby. We go out to play every day, even in very cold weather.

We started out the year talking about temperature.

We discuss:

What temp. tells us.

The instrument we use to measure temp.

How to read temp.

Our experiment: we talk about what things we think would be hot or cold and then took their temp to see if we were correct.

We also made blubber to test how animals keep warm in the winter.

Kids are welcome to bring in books about winter or arctic animals to gathering.

*** On Friday Jan 13th we will be hibernating. Kids can bring in sleeping bags or cozy blankets and soft toys, they can also come in pj.

Our next focus will be Migration. We will be discussing the places that are warm in the winter and the animals that migrate.

Updates & Reminders:

Gathering starts @9 am

If you arrive after 9am after washing hands please bring your child directly to their gathering room.

****Thanks to all the families that donated items from our 'giving tree'

****Thanks to everyone for all "goodies" it was very much appreciated :-)) and for your support in the classroom.

****Thanks to Wyatt's family for keeping our gathering very stacked up with theme and age appropriate books.

I look forward to another year of learning, fun and adventure.



A day of hibernating