

Classroom Notes October 2020

October 2, 2020

The first month of the school year goes by in a blur. From start to finish of this month the difference is staggering. A group of twenty-one children and two adults who have managed to become a well-oiled machine! The children know how to get themselves ready when entering school, where to put their belongings, wash up, and greet and/or get to know their classmates. Transitions from place to place have become so much easier now that the children have had time to get in the groove. Our outdoor lunch is fun and full of fresh air. We have been getting to the woods playground one day a week too. Watching the children's imaginations and cooperation while playing always makes my heart happy. I give a special thanks to Ms. Irwin and Mrs. Burling for the fun adventures they provide on the playground each day.

Practical life was highlighted in last week's letter. Yesterday I had the pleasure of seeing two children sweep and refresh the cubbie/snack area. The napping children are learning to put sheets on their nap mats and get themselves cozy for an afternoon rest period. Ms. Irwin has been taking the bedding home to be washed. If your child naps or you are looking for ways to contribute community service hours, laundry is always a great way to help out. We have mats to wash and bedding to wash weekly. Please contact me if you are willing to do either of these jobs. Also, I will send a link for a sign up genius for flower donations each Monday. Ms. Irwin and Owen have kept us in flowers so far. Thank you to both of them. The small vases of flowers are charming and the children feel so accomplished when they design an arrangement. We all get such pleasure from the colorful bouquets.

This week I will highlight sensorial lessons. Pictures will follow. Dr. Montessori created the sensorial materials as a way to enhance children's sense perceptions. Typically the prepared environment in the classroom provides lessons to address the visual sense: color tablets, geometry cabinet (plane shapes), and many building lessons addressing dimension. The sound cylinders and the bells provide opportunity to discern loud and soft and the musical scale from middle c to high c. Taste and smell lessons are temporarily on hold since we are on high alert for germs. The sense of touch includes materials depicting rough and smooth, differing fabrics, and the mystery bag of objects that the children feel undercover to try to determine what they are feeling. It is not unusual to see children wearing a blindfold when working with well-known materials they have built multiple times. Once they have internalized a material so well, they have the opportunity to build it using only their sense of touch!

Life is certainly busy in the classroom. We miss having parents visit to observe and hope to be able to invite you soon. In the meantime, I will attempt to give you snippets of the classroom atmosphere and am always happy to talk with you regarding your child's experience in the class.

PLEASE NOTE:

PICTURE DAY IS **MONDAY OCTOBER 5TH** FOR OUR PRIMARY CLASSES.

October 3, 2020

I have had some wonderful conversations with some of you about your children. A common thread I am hearing is one of routines and sleep. I know that in this modern-day world it is tricky to have the perfect routines for our little ones. So, as I always do and say in my own life, I encourage you to think about your family scenario and then adapt it to what might work for you. So here goes. I have compiled a list of suggestions regarding sleep. With parent work schedules being what they are, I know the times may not work out easily for some of you and it would be challenging to eat supper, bathe, and get to bed by seven if you have a late pick-up from daycare. Please remember these are suggestions, and are meant mostly to point out the sleep requirement of 11 - 13 hours a night.

Preschooler sleep: what you need to know

Children aged 3-5 years need **around 11-13 hours of sleep a night**. Some might also have a day nap of about an hour.

Sleep is important for your preschooler's health, growth and development. When children sleep well, they're more settled and happier during the day. Getting the right amount of sleep also strengthens your child's immune system and reduces the risk of infection and illness.

Bedtime routine

Sleep can sometimes come more slowly for preschoolers because they're busy thinking about the day even after they go to bed. A positive bedtime routine can help with this, especially if you follow the routine consistently, both during the week and on weekends. A bedtime routine for preschoolers might look something like this:

- **6.30 pm:** brush teeth, go to the toilet, put on pajamas.
- **6.45 pm:** quiet time – read a book, tell a story, sing a song, have a cuddle.
- **7 pm:** get into bed and kiss goodnight.

Most preschoolers are ready for bed around 7 pm, especially if they've had a big day at preschool. But some can demand more and more bedtime stories as a delaying tactic. You might want to establish a two or three book rule for bedtime, with the promise to read more during the day.

Getting up after bedtime

Your preschooler might go through a stage of getting up after you've said goodnight. Try these tips:

- Avoid boisterous play as well as watching TV and using computers, phones or tablets close to bedtime (I recommend no more than thirty minutes of total screen

time a day, preferably zero use of screens during the school week). These activities can make it harder for your child to settle.

- Establish a consistent, calming bedtime routine.
- Make sure your child's room is quiet, dimly lit and neither too hot nor too cold.
- Before leaving the room, check that your child has everything she needs for sleep, like her favorite cuddly toy or blanket. Remind her to stay quietly in bed.
- If you want to establish a routine that doesn't involve going in to your child each time he calls out, try to be consistent and respond only if you think he really needs something.
- If your child gets out of bed, calmly ask her to go back to bed. Say that you're just in the other room. Repeat this firmly and quietly over and over until your child doesn't get up again.

Sometimes your child might actually need something. If your child is scared of a monster under the bed, quickly check and tell your child there are no monsters. Your child might settle after this. If your child is scared of the dark, think about using a night-light. I also find that noise machines can be a great signal that it is time for sleep.

All the best,

Carrie

October 8, 2020

I have had many, many inquiries about children's lunchboxes coming home with food in them. Believe it or not children sometimes report they don't have enough time to eat!

First of all let me assure you your children are given plenty of time to eat. We walk out of the door at 11:30 AM and the children who unpack their lunchboxes quickly are eating by 11:31. The last call for bites is 12:00 before we go to the playground.

Here are some points to ponder regarding children and eating:

One of the many graces and courtesies we practice at school is ensuring children sit down to eat for both their snack period and their lunch period. These are social times for your children as well as an opportunity to get nourishment.

Children don't tend to eat a lot at any one sitting. Most children I know love to have many small meals during a day. If you pack a lot of food in their lunchboxes I am not surprised that some things come home.

Children eat their lunch of their own volition. We offer support, encouragement, and sometimes a bit of coercion to get them to eat the "healthy" parts prior to any treats.

Children have the opportunity to eat a snack every day. The snack routine is much different at school this year since we are not offering class snacks. That means you can easily keep up with your child's morning snack and how much of it they have eaten. Ms. Irwin keeps a close eye out for your children and their well being and typically helps them set up their snack if they need some help.

With that being said, I encourage you to analyze your eating routines at home. (There is that word routine again...) I always used to encourage parents to have dinner together until one parent reminded me that not all families have schedules that accommodate that. No matter your schedule it is a great goal to share meals as a family. Breakfast is a great meal to share too. Children should be sitting down throughout meals with feet under the table and no elbows on the table. (I sound like my grandmother!) If your family is in the habit of keeping the television on or phones at the ready to text, I strongly recommend you make mealtimes totally screen free. The social components of family mealtimes at home have so many positive

implications. Family bonds strengthen, you know more about your child's life (which is important now, but really important during the teen years), and vocabularies have even been shown to increase. And by practicing table manners at home, it will definitely impact their meal times at school.

Next I will recommend that when you pick up your child from school, have a snack ready in hand. I see what your children do each day. They are super physical, running, jumping, hula hooping, building, hiking up the hill, etc. They get almost a full hour on the playground each day and on Fridays we have been playing in the woods in the afternoon. A lot of energy is expended during the day. Inside the children are also expending a lot of brain power, not to mention negotiating social scenarios all day long. It is no wonder they are hungry when you pick them up! Likely they are tired too!

So please think of the following: A good hearty breakfast including protein is so important. They need food that will stick with them. A healthful snack for them to eat during the morning work period is also key. The food is not only supposed to be something your child will want to eat, it should also fit the bill for nourishment. The same is true for your child's lunch. Make sure there is some food in there that will entice your kid to eat, but also is not empty calories. I know some kids are easier to feed than others, so experiment. I have seen a lot of success with containers with small compartments that fit many small things: a few pieces of meat, some good cheese, a few whole grain crackers, carrot sticks, watermelon, blackberries, and cucumbers are some suggestions. If you pack too much food some children can get overwhelmed. Some kids come with an over packed lunch box because they have aftercare or dance class after school and plan to save some. For some this works just fine. So, you know your child best. What will they eat? How can you up the nutritional value? Are you looking in their lunchboxes to see what they are bringing home? Are they part of lunch planning? What can you have on hand for your child to eat when you pick them up? A snack at that time of day is very important.

For those of us at school we promise to keep supporting, encouraging, and coercing in order for your children to eat their lunch, but please remember the old adage that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink!

Carrie

October 11, 2020

The primary class is full of the most fascinating materials to cover these big, big topics!

Each fall we begin with a study of the planets. Children of this age love the Solar System. One of the materials is a tray with a to-scale model of the Sun, the nine planets, Earth's moon, and the asteroid belt. After reading books about the subject the children are shown each of the planets and can construct the solar system on work mats or a table the planets are numbered from their position away from the sun so the children are able to check their work. Every year the returning students pass on what they know to new students. My guess is many families talk a lot about the solar system at home - the children's knowledge is uncanny.



We learn the names of the planets and then begin our study of the Earth, our home planet. There are two materials in particular in the environment to learn about Earth and the seven continents. These are the painted globe and the world puzzle map. The painted globe shows each continent on a blue ocean background. The continents are color coded and match the world map. The lesson is shown with a sphere of clay and talks about how cartographers came up with the idea to split the sphere in the middle so we can see the western and eastern hemispheres at the same time, hence the flat map. Conversations about the equator and the poles, the names of the oceans, and the language of the continents are all part of the ongoing lessons. If you have ever seen our birthday celebration, there is a sun that has months of the year fit like puzzle pieces around it.



birth month and a little song is sung as they circle the sun and stop at their month. They do this for each year of their life. It is a charming and very informative way to celebrate their special day.

Once we introduce the continents we begin our study of North America.



We just finished a children's book titled Before Columbus. It talks about the big-animal hunters who crossed the Bering Strait from Eurasia into North America over a land and ice bridge, Beringia.

To emphasize and show Land and Water forms there is a material to introduce some formations with models. Land and water form models include lake, island/ isthmus, strait/ archipelago, system of lakes/ peninsula, gulf/ and cape, bay. What child doesn't like water? As the children are pouring Ms. Irwin and I attempt to swoop in and describe the model they are pouring. "A strait is a body of water with land on either side that connects two larger bodies of water." As the children get older they have this strong sensorial impression of the natural land forms from pouring the models when they were small.



Our geography studies will now bring us to America. Along with the USA puzzle map we will learn about the indigenous people as well as the many explorers through children-friendly stories of their voyages.

When you see large stacks of drawing papers in your non-napping children's backpacks it is because each day after lunch the children draw while I read or have some sort of demonstration (reading a chapter book, studies of history, geography, civics, studies of other countries, etc.). It is one of my most favored times of the day and the children love it!

I am hopeful my glimpses into the classroom are helpful to you. I can't wait until I can once again invite you to visit! In the meantime, feel free to contact me if you would like to.

Carrie

October 17, 2020

Parents love to know about reading most of all. After all, reading is one of the most amazing accomplishments for our children. I often get the question, "When will my child start learning to read?" The answer is, they already have. The moment your child set foot in class they began working in small groups with language cards. Language cards are plentiful in class and change with interests, focuses, and seasons. We started this school year with a high interest in insects (they are SO fun to learn about, look for, and talk about). The focus then turned to apples, their parts and their life cycle, and with the change of the season will come pumpkins. The children's vocabularies are continually expanding with conversations being plentiful at school. Children are also read fiction and nonfiction, which contributes to expanding knowledge and vocabularies.



Sound games, also done in small groups, assist your child to learn phonemic awareness: how a word begins, how a word ends, what sound is in the middle, what sound comes next? The objects pictured are the means by which the children learn about sounds. Can you imagine how much they love playing sound games? Can you find the n n n nest? Or the d d d duck?



With the use of sandpaper letters, which will be featured in a future edition on writing skills, the children learn what the letters look like and their sound name.



Once children know many letter sounds, the movable alphabet is introduced. The movable alphabet is a large box containing compartments with many of each letter sound. With guidance the children combine the skills of phonemic awareness and recognition of letters to construct words. You'll notice the spelling is phonemic in nature. There are many lessons that follow to assist with spelling rules. (It's a chameleon!)

It is often through the movable alphabet that children discover they can read what they have written! The lessons go on at that point to actual reading lessons. There are multitudes of lessons to address early reading, and later the functions of words. Stay tuned for more and have a great weekend.

Carrie