



Our Classroom News

February 2010

The Mitten Song

“Thumbs in the thumb-place, fingers all together!

This is the song we sing in mitten-weather.

When it is cold it doesn't matter whether

Mittens are wool, or made of finest leather-This is the song we sing in mitten-weather”

Thumbs in the thumb-place, fingers all together!” Marie Louise Allen

Dear Parents,

What fun we have had with mittens this month! We told, retold, and acted out the story of the Three Little Kittens and The Mitten by Jan Brett. We cut out mitten shapes and matched many mittens in our mitten collection Mrs. Lundgren shared with our class and even helped us practice putting them on. We are getting quite capable, “Look, I did it!

“That's not a mitten that's a glove or that is too small, that won't fit you, it stretched!” These were some remarks overheard during our small group time. Mrs. Smiley shared with me when her small group was observing our meal worms last Wednesday that many children said, “Look's, it's making a “c,” it's making a “j,” that's like a hook!” I learned from many of you at our conferences what are your child's favorite things about school. Several children mentioned small group time as well as blocks, dress up, playground time, music in the basement, playing with their friends, etc. It's a good thing for us to take time to reflect and assess each child's experience at preschool. It helps me to do that formally, and I hope you learned from our documentation of their progress. When we take that time, we realize anew where their strengths are, and areas of significant growth across all areas of the curriculum can be celebrated. We can also consider together a goal or area we need to focus on that may challenge a child or concern us as educators and parents - coming up with ideas or plans to further progress in that area. We work together to scaffold and support the learning of your child at St. Matthew's. Thank you for taking the time to confer together. I am always happy to dialogue as a teaching team. We truly are a team. At school, we provide them with experiences and an environment that is unique in its peer group setting. At home, you are your child's first teacher and expert on your child in the home environment.

I thought I would share some insight into that part of our daily routine called **small group** as well as some helpful hints for working with your child at home. Our small group time lasts from 5-10 minutes and is a teacher directed activity. Mrs. Smiley has a group of 10 children and I have a group of 10 children. Each week in my lesson plan I include and prepare activities that support the key developmental indicators: the building blocks of thinking and reasoning at each stage of development. The High Scope curriculum identifies 58 KDI's organized under 5 content areas. These include: Language, literacy, and communication, Social and emotional development, Physical development, health and well being, Arts and Sciences(math, number, space, classifying, time), Social studies and The Arts (drawing, dramatic art and music). So, our activities vary daily and give us time to be intentional about teaching in a small group setting. Active learning takes place across every aspect of our routine, but during Small Group time, we intentionally present experiences appropriate to children's learning at this age..

Many of you asked, “Is there something I should be doing at home to help my child get ready for kindergarten.” Just remember that children learn through play: by actively doing, through their senses, by

imitation, by trial and error, making mistakes, success, by communicating, by repetition, by interacting in a supportive environment, when they are ready and when their basic needs are met. It is obvious that you are all doing a wonderful job of parenting. But I will share a tip or two in the area of trial and error from a hand out that Mary Catherine shared with teachers.

As parents you give wise guidance, direction, freedom to try and logical consequences. If your child is new to a task, but eager to try, let your child do as much as he/she can. Talk as you help. Language is a tool for learning and reinforces what is experienced. The next time you try, your child will begin where he/she ended before, a little better thanks to the experience of having “succeeded” at the task before. This time he/she will do as much as it is possible; you will again do what is necessary. Each time your child begins again, he/she will be more capable. You are the master teacher, he/she the apprentice. Adults and more experienced peers can both play this part for a young child.

I have seen this on our playground when one child who is the “expert” is attempting to teach another child. Kaitlyn is our expert on teaching children how to get themselves up on the swing and pumping, Other children are our “expert” climbers, or ball throwers, or mushroom finders or upside down bar hangers. A little struggling is a good thing. Too much can be discouraging, but if your child is a match for the task (Legos, blocks, drawing, zipping their coat, putting on their own mittens) leave room for persistence and perseverance to develop. This will stand your child in good stead. If asked to help, do so on the margins. Help your child think out loud with you, “Hmmm, have you tried...?” “I wonder if ...?” “Show me how you were doing it?” Helping a little is OK, but taking over teaches, “I can’t” We call this scaffolding and have a whole book devoted to it called Small-Group Times to Scaffold Early Learning. High Scope Early Childhood Curriculum.

Remember all this advice if you are helping your child attempt to write their name on their Valentine’s card. We will exchange Valentines as a class on the 12th. We have 20 children in our class. Leave the envelope blank and if your child would like to leave their mark or “write” their name on the back of the envelope that is fine. We will be making “strawberry tarts” for an extra snack that day to go along with our nursery rhyme about the Queen of Hearts Who ate some tarts all on a winter’s day. So please **don’t send** in any candy or extra treats. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation. Reilly’s mom will be our pair of helping hands that day as we distribute our valentine’s and thank you to Maddie’s mom for cutting out the mitten shapes for us to paint at our easel.

Our library is up and running. Remember to return checked out books each Wednesday in the tote. We will be practicing our manners as we further study Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Mrs. Wallace class is inviting us to a “pizza party” with her class on the 19th. We will enjoy seeing our dad as play “mentors” on **dad’s night** or “main man” night as one parent suggested which is the **22nd Monday night from 7-8 p.m.**

Our parent participation music and movement day is February 8th at 11:00. Please know that if you are unavailable for this day and time, Mrs. Lundgren always welcomes visitors on our regular music days. This month they are the 8th and 22nd. Both at 11:00 a.m. Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

Our play dough provider is Mrs. Vydareny

Volunteers and important dates:

- 1 T shirt day
- 5 Mrs. Magnell volunteer
- 8 Parent participation day for music/movement
Kindergarten symposium @ 7pm
- 10 Fire Drill
- 12- Mrs. Pachecano volunteer-
Valentine’s day- send in 20 valentines/envelopes blank on outside
- 15 President’s day- no school
- 22- In house registration begins
Music/movement
Dad’s night @ 7 pm
- 24 Mrs. Mason volunteer