



Our Classroom News

February 2010

Dear Parents,

I have always said when the children come back to school after the Christmas Holiday they have grown not only in height but in their readiness to continue what we started in the fall. It is especially true with this class. They came back ready and able to tackle everything Maria and I could put before them. The month of January quickly passed, and I can hardly believe it is February already. It was a pleasure to talk with all of you during conference time. I feel confident that we will be able to achieve all the goals that are in place for the children.

Our Home Center continues to be a busy place as the children take orders, bake pizza, make pasta, and then bring it to the table. We also have a community of animals that is “living” on our big blue carpet. We have a group of children that like to take the animals and create communities with them. Mrs. Ellis and I have added boxes and wood logs for the children to build homes for their animal families. This month we will give them supplies (fabric) to add grasses, water, and dirt so their animal community can grow.

We will look outside to the living animal community that surrounds our school. We will begin the month by making bird feeders to hang in the trees on the playground and in the woods near the school. The children will have the opportunity to make a bird feeder to bring home and hang up in a tree at home, as well. We will keep track of our bird feeders and replenish as needed. The children will watch from our classroom window and keep count, by using a graph, who visits the feeders on the playground. Stay tuned!

Our favorite story this month was **The Mitten**. We read several versions of this Ukrainian folktale. The stories have a wonderfully rich vocabulary. I wondered aloud about *glinty talons*; which body part could the author be describing when she wrote about rabbit’s *big kickers*? We also discovered that *badgers*, though they look like raccoons, are very different because they are shorter, wider and they like to dig with their “*diggers*.” The children had a fantastic time comparing each stories’ similarities and differences. See if your child can retell the story of **The Mitten** to you. Be sure to ask your child what happened to Mrs. Lorenz’ snow white mitten.

Last month I told you that we would begin a daily sign in. Maria and I have already seen improvements in the children’s ability to write their names. As the weeks continue I will gradually decrease the size of the paper to increase the control the children need to write. By the end of the year the children will have a “Kindergarten Sized Space” to write their name.

We added a new *Letter Chooser* job to our Large Group Time. Inside a ladybug bag I place Handwriting Without Tears wood pieces. As I shake the bag the *Letter Chooser* listens to the sound coming from inside the bag. He estimates the amount of pieces. What I am looking for here are reasonable estimates. (No estimate is wrong because it is an educated guess.) Then the child reaches in

the bag and tells his classmates what each piece is: Big Line, Little Line, Big Curve, or Little Curve. What I like about this program is that each letter is made in 3 steps or less, except for the M and W. The *Letter Chooser* then takes the wood pieces, forms the letter, names the letter, and gives the sound. We brainstorm as a group for words that begin with this sound. The children are learning individual sounds called phonemes; this connects the spoken sound with each letter. As the weeks continue we will begin writing letters on chalk boards and then into individual journals. The children are very excited about this endeavor! I will let you know when we begin writing daily on chalk boards. It will be by the end of this month.

As you know the children answer a “Question of the Day” each morning. We compare the sides of the graph. From September through December, I always pointed out which side of the graph was the “Yes Side” and which side was the “No Side.” This month I stopped showing the children I wanted to know if the children are able to read the graph words themselves. They are! I ask the children every day how they know the “Yes Side” from the “No Side” and they tell me that *y-e-s* is yes or *n-o* is no. I stress to them that they are **reading** these words. When I have these words written in another place for the children to discover they are thrilled to be reading!

Along with sight reading the children are learning simple math symbols at our graph each day. I’ve introduced the symbols for greater than $>$, less than $<$, and equal to $=$ as we compare our two amounts. Our white erase board will look something like this (under the Question of the Day) $8 > 5$. I have the words **greater than** written under the symbol. The children have a great time helping me sound out the words.

Thank you to our January volunteers: Heather Albert, Margaret Boyt, Amanda Ki, Mary Kotarski, Jocelyn Lopez, and Claudia Siegrist,

Happy Valentine’s Day!
Jeralyn Lorenz & Maria Ellis

Dates to remember:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| February 8 | Parent Participation Music & Movement
Kindergarten teacher speaks about kindergarten expectations and answers questions – 7 -8:30 PM |
| February 9 | Dad’s Night (snack will be provided bring cups for water!) |
| February 11 | Valentine Card Exchange (20 children) <u>Please have your child just sign her name</u> |
| February 15 | No School—President’s Day |
| February 22 | Music & Movement <i>In-House Registration Begins</i> |
| March 1 | Show your School Spirit! Wear Your St. Matthew’s Shirt |

Some of the books we enjoyed are below:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <u>Snowballs</u> | <i>Written & Illustrated By: Lois Ehlert</i> |
| <u>The Mitten</u> | <i>Retold & Illustrated By: Jan Brett</i> |
| <u>The Mitten</u> | <i>Retold By: Jim Aylesworth</i> |
| <u>The Mitten</u> | <i>Retold By: Alvin Tresselt Illustrated By: Yaroslava</i> |
| <u>The Three Snowbears</u> | <i>Written & Illustrated By: Jan Brett</i> |

Our Favorite Chant:

Eat-alota-eat-alota-eat-alota-pizza
Oh no don’t drop the pizza
If you drop the pizza, we won’t eatza
Oh no don’t drop the pizza