



# Our Classroom News

“In February it will be my snowman’s anniversary, with cake for him and soup for me. Happy once, happy twice, happy chicken soup with rice.”

From Maurice Sendak, *Chicken Soup with Rice: A Book of Months*.

February 2010

Dear Parents,

Thank you for sharing your observations, comments, and home experiences during our parent conferences. You are your child’s most important teacher, and there were many “ah ha” moments for me as you shared your insights. Particularly useful were your descriptions of classroom activities that made an impact on your children (i.e.—those that they shared with you) or learning about activities your child pursues at home but does not choose to do at school. Whether home and classroom behaviors are consistent or not, you provided suggestions we can build on during the second half of the year, and we are grateful for your input.

Especially interesting to us are ideas that encourage writing or focus a child’s attention on specific tasks. As the children arrive at school, there is generally a period of free choice for play until we gather for circle time; the writing center, library, some toys or puzzles, and round table are “open.” On the drive to school or while waiting in the carpool line, you might suggest to your child that he/she make a card, start a “book,” a painting/drawing, or some other item that can be brought home that day. Alternately, you might ask your child to make something from Legos, play dough, or other material that he/she enjoys. To record what was created, ask your child to make a drawing to bring home (or ask the teacher to take a dictated description). In initiating these activities, your children are developing some of the “executive control skills” described in the hand-out we gave you during our conferences. One parent sent us a message encouraging her child write a note to a guest who would be visiting their home. This is a wonderful way to get a child to the writing center. Also, many children enjoy drawing stories in map or sequence form. For example, my son regularly chronicled the “Adventures of Lady-Dog” in our neighborhood, drawing her walks around the lake at Westridge and dictating her encounters to me. Pictorial representation of experiences is an important precursor to more abstract writing, and I urge you to encourage your children to draw (and tell) at every opportunity.

February brings Valentine’s Day and more opportunities for writing. In addition to the purchased valentine cards the children share with their friends at school on February 11, we will be making old-fashioned valentines for our parents, which will be mailed home. On Wednesday, February 10, Mrs. Gaub will help the children purchase stamps at our “post office.” Please send in 44 cents to buy a stamp; it will be interesting to see how many combinations of coins make up 44 cents, and we will graph the results.

Unlike the younger pre-school classes, we encourage our 4-day students to sign their valentines and address the envelopes to some or all of their classmates (start right away, so the job of writing the 19 cards can be spread out over the next ten days). Alternately, or in addition to names, they may glue letter links on the envelopes. Attached to this newsletter is an alphabetized list of children. Whether your child chooses to write or cut and paste the names, he/she will benefit from a productive small motor activity. For Valentine’s Day distribution, please help your child order the valentines in alphabetical or “abc” order (or according to an alphabetical class list) and bind them with a rubber band. We invite two parents to join us to help the children deliver their valentines to individual bags that we’ll

decorate in advance. Let us know if you can assist us that day. Please send no treats or goody bags.. We'll also celebrate the day by wearing the color red and will make a "red book."

A few brief notes:

- In the science center we will continue to feature mealworms. Those of you whose children were at St. Matthew's last year will remember how much we learned about insect life cycles by watching the mealworms (and later, the painted lady caterpillars) as they metamorphose into pupae and then beetles. The changes are dramatic and quite memorable.
- Please help your girls "dress for success," by limiting frilly dresses to special days (such as Valentine's Day). It is hard to participate in the active and sometimes messy play we encourage, especially on the playground. Children can learn early to dress appropriately to the occasion. Don't forget mittens and gloves while the weather is wintery!
- Dad's Night is Monday, March 1, 7 p.m.—please bring a flashlight for our playground scavenger hunt and a small snack for two.

May we all be filled with goodness, the Fruit of the Spirit for February.

Pat Victorson and Deanna York

**Important Dates:**

<b>February 1</b>	<b>Parent Participation Music Monday.</b>
<b>February 3</b>	<b>Library Day. (Ask your child <i>what</i> he/she liked best about the book.)</b>
<b>February 8</b>	<b>Kindergarten Meeting 7 - 8:30 PM Kindergarten expectations and Q &amp; A</b>
<b>February 10</b>	<b>Library Day. (Ask your child <i>who</i> the most important character was.) Postage purchase—send in 44 cents to purchase a stamp at our "post office."</b>
<b>February 11</b>	<b>Manha Syed's Birthday. Valentine Exchange. Wear something red!</b>
<b>February 15</b>	<b>Presidents Day—No School.</b>
<b>February 17</b>	<b>Library Day. (Ask your child <i>where</i> the story took place.)</b>
<b>February 22</b>	<b>Music and Movement. Matthew Mullori's Special Day. Registration for Day School Families.</b>
<b>February 25</b>	<b>Library Day. (Ask your child <i>what happened</i> first? In the middle? At the end of the story?)</b>
<b>March 1</b>	<b>School Spirit Day, wear T-shirts. Community Registration for Day School begins. Dad's Night, 7-8 p.m. Bring a flashlight &amp; a small snack for 2 to share.</b>
<b>March 2</b>	<b>Teacher Work-Day - NO SCHOOL</b>

***Some books recommended at parent conferences:***

Bailey, Becky. There's Gotta Be A Better Way: Discipline that Works.

Cloud, Henry, and Townsend, John. Boundaries with Kids.

Coloroso, Barbara. The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander.

Evans, Betsy. You Can't Come to My Birthday Party!

Conflict Resolution with Young Children

Kindlon, Dan, and Thompson, Michael. Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys.

Mogel, Wendy. The Blessing of a Skinned

Knee: Using Jewish Wisdom to Raise Self-Reliant

Children. (highly recommended)

Pollack, William. Real Boys: Rescuing Our

Sons from the Myths of Boyhood. (foreword

by Mary Pipher)

Sax, Leonard. Boys Adrift.

Sax, Leonard. Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about the Emerging Science of Sex Differences.

***Volunteers for February:***

**February 4 Debbie Burg**

**February 9 Heidi Gaub**

**February 17 Soo J. Cho**

**February 22 Joy Mullori**