



Parent March News

IN THE CLASSROOM: Anatomy of a Snowman

During February, children in the MWF a.m. & p.m. downstairs classes worked on making individual paper snow creations after reading *Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert. When children finished their snow creations, we took photos to add to their individual workbooks. Children also measured and wrote about the creations. This project was fun for the children and a wonderful way for teachers to observe developing skills.

Small-muscle Skills

- Can the child hold the pencil against the circle shape while tracing?
- Does the child use one or two hands to operate the scissors?
- Is the child aware that he/she is trying to cut on the line?

Literacy

- Does he/she recognize familiar letters as we write?
- Does the child recall the storyline of *Snowballs* and use ideas from the book in his/her work?

Early Writing

- How does the child write his/her name: from memory with pre-writing symbols or conventional print?
- Does the child hold the pencil comfortably and write with even pressure?

Early Math

- Does the child understand the concept of measuring with inches?
- Does the child recognize familiar numbers?

Problem Solving

- How does the child solve problems such as wrapping the scarf around the snowman, attaching the circles to each other, using materials to create different elements and attaching materials of various weights and dimensions?

Children in the TR downstairs class counted the letters in their names, traced and cut out that number of circles and then wrote one letter on each circle to make a name snowman. So much learning while having so much fun!



Evan Carefully traced a circle and then cut on the line to make one of his snowballs.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES & COMMUNICATION

Thanks to all the parents who attended a "Developmental Observations" Parent/Teacher conference. Teachers truly enjoy a quiet chance to share what we see in the classroom. With three months left in the year, there's lots of time for growth and change. Feel free to touch base with teachers later in the year with any new or unresolved questions.



Maggie and Abel examined the stuffed squirrel, looking at its teeth and wondering how it "got dead."

EARLY ACADEMICS: Developing Critical Thinking Skills

To help your child develop critical thinking skills, ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Open-ended questions encourage creative thought, rather than seek a right answer. Any question becomes open-ended when the phrase "do you think..." is inserted in the middle of the question. "What happened?" (a question that seems to ask for the correct answer) becomes "What do you think happened?" (a question that focuses on the child's viewpoint). "Do you think..." questions challenge children to communicate personal ideas, project what might happen, and think deeply. There are always a few children who answer, "I don't know." Don't let them off that easily; wait them out! Respond with, "Keep thinking. I am sure you can think of something." When the child does offer an idea, repeat what the child says, "So you think...? You may be right!" Learning to think creatively, about possibilities, is the basis of all science and always more important than coming up with the "right" answer.

IN THE CLASSROOM: Teaching Assertiveness

In the dramatic play area several children were “cooking dinner.” Another child approached and asked if he could play too. One of the children responded, “No, you can’t play. We’re just playing right now.” The child walked away, looking sad. Eventually he approached a teacher and told her what had happened. The teacher had observed the same group excluding this child in other situations. She reminded the boy that other children can’t decide where he plays. “Let’s ask them what they are playing, so you can decide if you want to join in too.” She walked with him to the “kitchen” and waited while he asked what they were playing. She suggested, “So how do you think you could help them?” He said, “I could be the dad.” Later, the teacher talked to the children who had sent him away. “I felt bad for Eric when you told him that he couldn’t play. Remember: Eric gets to decide what he plays.” She said this with a firm tone and good eye contact.

In any classroom children naturally experiment with power and aggression. To help children build confidence and assertiveness skills:

- Teach children that they can make their own play choices. When the boy asked *if* he could play, he was giving other children power over his choices. By asking *what* the group was playing and making suggestions, the boy acted confident and in charge of his own decisions.
- Encourage children not to give up objects or territory to *aggressive* children. Teach them to say, “I’m using this now” or “I’m coming to play too.”
- Demonstrate assertive behavior and show children how to address hurtful acts and to stand up for themselves when they are being treated unfairly. Help the child practice using a strong voice to say, “Please stop. I don’t like that.”
- Teach children to seek help when confronted by the abuse of power from other children or adults. While it’s healthy to let children work out most problems on their own, patterns of hurtful behavior or exclusion need adult intervention.
- Remind children that they can always ignore routine teasing by turning their heads or walking away. Not all confrontational behavior must be acknowledged. As one boy explained, “My mom says that I can just turn my head away from anyone who is bothering me.”
- Teach children to identify acts of aggression, bossiness or discrimination; cartoons are a great tool for this. Whether the aggressor, the target or a bystander, all children who witness exclusion or aggression are affected and can have a voice in stopping the cycle.
- After a conflict, children may benefit from replaying the scene or sharing the incident with trusted adults. Adults can help children process unsettling memories and form a plan for future incidents.
- Show children the rewards of personal achievement through standing up for themselves.

Recent studies confirm that most children experience “bullying” during their school years and that confident children are rarely the targets. Developing assertiveness and healthy friendships help protect children against aggression now and throughout life.

Important Dates

Thu., March 5	April Tuition Due
Thu., March 12	Scholastic Book Orders Due
Mon., March 23	RecSchool Open; SWCSD Closed
Tue., April 21	Slate Run Family Field Trip (Details to Follow)

Photos taken during the downstairs classes’ **SNOWBALL** project

