

# Oak Lane Child Care Center January 2012 Newsletter



## Director's Corner

Happy New Year! It is quite amazing to me that we have arrived to 2012. The holiday season seemed to pass by in a blinding flash. We finished the first half of our nominal school year and we know this. You might ask, "How do you know this?" We know this by the behavior and interests of the children.

The winter seems to be the time when a child's intellectual growth appears to be most obvious. Sometimes I think that it just seems that way because of the shorter amount of time that the children have to spend outside and, accordingly, we get to work more closely with them. Whatever the case may be, this is the time when the children really begin to display leaps in many developmental areas.

Our youngest children are settled and their natural curiosity is beginning to peak. Our young 3's are no longer the young threes. They have established their "society" in their classroom with rules and routines. They are interested in everything that is presented to them. Our upstairs classes are immersed in the development of literacy skills. Having described this, please do not misinterpret the descriptions. All of the children are immersed in literacy skill development; it just looks different at each age and stage of development.

A question that I used to enjoy asking my class was. "Why do we want to become literate?" Is it to know the other and to be known? Is it to create a small window into our own thinking and make known who we really are? Relationship has a tremendous role in literacy.

If you had the opportunity to see the children's map display at the top of the stairwell you noticed this. The children drew their map interpretations of "How I get to school." In many of the drawings and in the written descriptions you saw that besides the directions there is acknowledgement of either friends

or family or sometimes both in the same drawing.

As the climate in education for literacy fluctuates between battling philosophies and the changing requirements of No Child Left Behind, some important pieces of the process of learning to read and write are in danger of being overlooked. In social constructivist classrooms such as the ones at Oak Lane, where children are in dialogue with their own ideas and those of others through symbolic representation, the missing pieces are already in place.

Simply put, reading and writing are decoding and encoding thoughts, understanding the thoughts of others and making one's own thoughts visible so that others can understand. When children are accessing their ideas and making them visible, exploring their own thinking through symbolic representation and communicating ideas that are important to them so that others can understand them, they are not only discovering the pleasure of making their ideas visible and the power of narrative, they are also experiencing on a deep level what readers and writers do.

After the children finished their maps they extended the learning by creating a "neighborhood." It is a remarkable display of their thoughts by symbolic representations - drawings and dictated descriptions.

In the downstairs classrooms you will see many drawings by the children with a narrative written by the teachers to enhance the symbolic representation that the child has produced. In the older classrooms you can see posted literally all around the classroom the written symbolic representations by the children of the drawings they made.

A medium becomes a language when a child expresses an idea or represents a mental image of something using that medium. Drawing becomes a language when children tell a story through it or draw to help themselves explain something to their teacher or a friend. Until then, a pen is only a pen. Anything can be a medium for representation. It becomes a language when it is used to communicate, to express or to further understanding. And so, there are myriad languages and myriad ways in which languages can be used.

That children can represent their most profound ideas through multiple languages can be a wonderful doorway into literacy. Children who are beginning to explore print may not have the proficiency with text they would need to represent their thinking through independent writing. But they can communicate, express and figure things out through representation in other languages.

An important element in the success of children's endeavors in making symbolic representation is the necessity of providing all the children - whatever

their age the appropriate tools to use. At Oak Lane we made a conscious decision to offer the children in every class writing/drawing materials that adults would use. We offer these materials to all the children because we want them to know that we value the work that they do. Children are keen observers. They know what we are using and if we are asking them to draw/write, they are entitled to use the implements that we use.

I know that some of my colleagues think that such a practice is not age appropriate but many other educators who share the same educational philosophy as I have agree with me and, indeed, when one sees joy on the children's faces as they choose their writing/drawing implements, you know that it is right and good.

The children of Oak Lane know that the materials, and textual and human support for reading and writing are always available to them. They learn to trust that the adults will help them realize their intent and they feel free to seek out what they need in order for this to happen.

The environment is as carefully prepared to support children's interaction with print as it is to support all possibilities for learning. Books are available to support any play or work that the children choose. They are also available for research. The books are arranged alphabetically in baskets in the classrooms so that if a child is trying to draw a shark or wants to know more about sea creatures, s/he and the teacher will take down the basket of "s" books and together they will research sea creatures.

Literacy learning has a very strong presence in the social constructivist classroom and it is deeper, broader learning than studying letters or sounds in isolation. The children are developing the disposition and, therefore, the skills to write and read for their own purposes. They are learning that becoming literate in multiple languages allows them to make their ideas known and helps them to know the other. The children also learn that there is pleasure and power in the process. It inaugurates them as players in the world of remote communication who need letters and words to sustain relationships and to realize their representational intent.

I hope that 2012 is a year filled with joy, health and peace for all.

See you 'round the Center.

Ronnie



## From The Board

Now that it's 2012, our thoughts - or mine, anyway - have turned to the gala fundraiser we have planned for March 25. We hope you'll all come! Not only is it for a great cause, it's a really fun evening. I particularly like the chance to have adult conversations over fine food with the people you pass every morning on the stairs as you're picking up or dropping off your small people. Please put it in your calendar, book a babysitter, and round up some friends. We know you'll have a good time, and we really need your support.

Happy New Year!  
Maggie Christ, President



## Calendar

January 12, 2012 – Trip – Upstairs classes  
January 16, 2012 – Closed  
February 20, 2012 - Closed



## REQUESTS AND REMINDERS

PLEASE:

- **Do not teach or encourage your child(ren) to unlock or open our childproof gates, either inside or outside.**
- Sign in and out EVERY DAY
- No cars running unattended in the parking lot.
- No children unattended in your car in the parking lot.
- No children are allowed to roam unattended at the Center. Please keep your student and his or her siblings with you at all times.



## **Miss Maura's Class**

The past few weeks you might have noticed the pre-school teachers meeting with parents in our cubby room. They were having their annual fall conferences. In January we will have the opportunity to come together to discuss your children. We like to wait until the children have had a chance to fully transition, it does take a bit longer for the little ones, before we meet. The additional time gives us a chance to observe the children, recognize all their accomplishments and become familiar with their abilities.

Communication is an integral part of our program at Oak Lane. The very first requirement for our NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accreditation portfolio is "Teachers work in partnership with families, establishing and maintaining regular, ongoing, two-way communication." We meet this criteria by speaking with parents and caregivers at both drop off and pick up. We share stories from the day and anything unusual that you should know about.

Our busy schedules don't often allow us to have in depth conversations about the children on a daily basis. Understandably, there is a rush to get to work in the morning or at the end of the day, to get home. We love to share quick stories about your child's day but often it is difficult to have an in depth discussion with the children around.

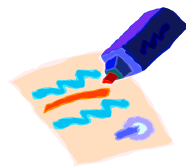
Keeping this in mind, a parent teacher conference allows us quiet time to sit down and discuss the developmental milestones your child has met and those that he or she will be moving towards. It also enables us to have an uninterrupted conversation about behaviors your child exhibits at school and those at home.

I have participated in many parent teacher conferences as both a parent and as the teacher. I am always a little nervous but within minutes, in either role, I am pleased that we have come together as advocates for a child. It is always important to keep in mind that we are meeting in the best interest of the children. Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. A conference between parent and teacher provides an avenue of meaningful

dialogue and communication that allows us to provide the very best care for your child.

We hope that your holiday vacation was fun but restful. We are looking forward to an exciting New Year. We will be joined by two new friends, Valeria Pineda, who is Danny's sister (he is a Chestnut), and Claire Choundas, whose brother Peter started Kindergarten this past September after four years at Oak Lane.

Misses Maura, Nancy, Corinne, and Lauren



## **Miss Leslie's Class**

A group of children were invited to the art studio to do a finger paint activity. The children are always looking forward to the art studio where they are given the opportunity to do big, messy projects. When a child asks to go to the art studio we take a small group of children. The children are so curious about the room that they sometimes ask for all the materials at one time. The art studio is an inviting area for the children to express them self creatively and independently.

The Art studio is located in the back of the toddler Acorn classroom. In the art area there are chalkboards and easels that are wall mounted. Crayons, markers, pencils and an assortment of papers are available for the children to use as drawing materials. There are several kinds of paint such as water based, finger and tempera paints that are available for painting. In addition to the art materials described, the children can enjoy, scissors, glue, play dough, various collage materials and so much more.

When the Chestnuts arrive into the art studio they are excited and ready to experiment. The children were invited into the art studio to finger paint. They rushed over to the table. There were a variety of colored paints placed out on the table with empty trays for the children to use. Immediately a child noticed the bottles of paints and said "I want the green paint" reaching over the table for the paint and placing it onto her tray. She began to smear it all around.

Then the other children followed her, choosing their own colors of paint. They smeared it around and around, describing what they were doing. "I make a sock". "I made a snow man." "It's Green!" And "Look at my hands." After a few minutes of observing the children's finger paintings, I encouraged the children to use more of the same colors or choose different colors of paint. They enjoyed the feel of the paint and the designs they made on the table. We placed clean paper on the top of the wet picture, lifted the pressed paper carefully to reveal a print of the picture they made. At the same time two children began to play a hand game called "help me" with their finger paint by picking up their hands off of the paper. Then they dropped their hands back on the paper again and again saying "help me". The children were interacting with one another, taking turns and continued painting until it was time to clean up.

Some children did not like getting their hands messy with the paint. To make the activity more interesting and comfortable for these children, we decided to place shaving cream and sand on the table. The children enjoyed the different mediums and the effect it had on the finger paint that one child said "sticky" (giggling) when he mixed the sand and shaving together. They were excited to experiment with the shaving cream and the paint together. The children controlled the paint by using their fingertips, their whole hands and the back of their hands to produce different effects. It's a completely different kind of painting experience and we were pleased to see all the children experimenting with the finger paint, shaving cream or the sand mixed together.

Art is a form of expression and communication for children. When the children participate in the art area they are exposed to many learning opportunities. Art experiences promote language development by asking the children questions in order to encourage the children to express their thought and ideas. They learn social skills and develop eye-hand coordination which are necessary tools for the development of literacy. They also observed and recognized colors and textures of different art mediums.

Please take a look at the photo displays located inside and on the outside wall of the classroom.

Just a few notes:

I want to thank all the parents for joining me at conference time. I enjoyed learning about the children and their home life.

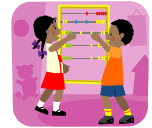
Please make sure your child has enough changes of clothing in their bins and that they are all labeled.

We hope you all had a wonderful holiday and wish you a great New Year in 2012.

Ms. Leslie and Miss Lady ☺



## Upstairs Preschool



It is January and that is the time of the year when our Mixed Nuts are at a turning point. Friendships have formed, children are talking about friends coming to their homes and parents are planning play dates. At the beginning of the year we welcomed new friends. All the children adjusted to their new environment by exploring both rooms through playing, talking to each other and by participating in planned open-ended activities where all the children were included. Eventually, we developed our classroom rules and talked about taking care of our classroom and materials. Along the way we got to know each other and gradually we are building our classroom community.

According to: **A Parent's Guide to Preschool.** "Children with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to be successful in school and in life than children who do not have these skills". We want to provide many opportunities for the children to develop self-confidence. This means helping him/her to feel good about who he/she is both individually and in relation to others. By learning self-control children are able to manage his/her feelings. As children negotiate taking turns issues may arise. We want to make sure each child is able to talk about the problem and express his/her ideas and feelings. We encourage them to calm down, use their words and speak directly to each other rather than through the teacher.

Over the past few weeks we observed and recorded some conversations and scenarios while the children were interacting with other friends. In each scenario a teacher is observing how the children are negotiating their play, how they are taking turns, expressing their feelings and cooperating as issues arise

Derek and Quinn wanted the basket of cars from the shelf. Derek: "I can't reach." (Quinn got a chair to get down the basket of cars.) Quinn: "But I can't have it when he's done." Marty: "Just ask him." Quinn: "Derek, can I have it when you're done?" (Derek gave car to Quinn) Marty: "What do you say to

Derek? Quinn: "Thank you Derek." They began to build a road with blocks.  
Derek: "I'm not ready yet." Quinn: "Okay, sorry".

Max, Quinn, Derek, Brandon and Jason were sitting around the table and pretending to be in a spaceship. Max: "We are going on the spaceship", Quinn: "I'm going too just like George" (He is referring to Curious George.) Jason: "We are going to get ice cream", Max: "Let's count 5,4,3,2,1,0, blast offffff", Jason: "We are going to stop in the moon", Max: "We are here", Derek: "Not yet", Max: "We are going to stop at Pluto, Mars and Saturn", Quinn: "We are going to stop at Mickey" (referring to Mickey Mouse), Max: "We are going to stop at Dinosaur Planet", Jason: "We are going to cyber train", Brandon: "That's not a planet", Jason: "Yes, it is, and there are transformers", Brandon: "Transformers don't live in there", Max: "Cyber-transformer it's not a boy", Brandon: "He is nothing". All the boys got up and left.

Elizabeth and Zach were playing with the animals. Elizabeth: "One day a deer was in the forest looking for Black Beauty", Zach: "After you have that tiger can I have it?" Elizabeth: "Ok. When Derek comes he will have this baby deer." Zach: "And then you'll play with me."

Zachary was playing alone with a car he brought from home when Jason walked into the room and approached Zach. Jason: "Can I play with your car?" Zach: "No, you can't have it.", Jason: "But I want to play with it", Zach: "No, the other day I have it", Jason: "How about I used for one minute (Jason pointed to the wall clock), Zach: "Okay, fine you can have it", Jason: "Miss Rosa, when it's one minute", (paused) "Which hand is moving?", Zach: "After one minute you have to give it back." Miss Rosa put the wall clock on the table and explained to the boys how the clock works and showed the boys what each hand meant. Zach: "See the skinny hand has to pass all the numbers and then I can give it to you" (referring to the car.) Jason: "OK." Zach: "Tell me when it gets to the 11" (referring to the second hand of the clock.) Jason: "It's here", Zach: "Here." (Zach gave Jason the car and watched the clock). The boys continued sharing the car for a while, taking turns every minute as they looked at the clock. Every day the children are busy playing and interacting. At the same time they are developing skills such as using their language, taking turns, and sharing. They are not doing it alone. They all need a friend, a space, a moment or an opportunity where they have the freedom to feel important and good about themselves.

As we observe our Mixed Nuts every day and we notice that a child is playing alone or is having difficulties connecting with the rest of the group, we

have an open discussion at group meeting. We read books about making friends, sharing, and feelings to support our group discussion. We also model positive behavior in front of the children to make them aware of how one small action can hurt someone's feelings. Our goal is to enrich their social skills and provide positive experiences. We always want to show the children that their ideas and feelings are valuable and that they are active participants in their own education. We have group activities where the children are encouraged to take turns. For example, when we make play dough we are not only teaching about measurement, but teaching the children that they have to wait to have a turn to pour in an ingredient. The children like to play a game that is called "Doggie, Doggie Where Is Your Bone" in which the children have to wait their turn to be the doggie. At the beginning of the year the game was led by a teacher. At this point the children are taking charge and running the game on their own.

Another social activity enjoyed by the children is the daily lunch date. A child from each room invites a child from across the hall. They sit together at a special table for two. During the morning they play together and before lunch they set up the table with the teacher. This activity enables a child who might be shy to reach out and extend his/her comfort zone.

Please check both rooms for our house and transportation units that are on display. Starting in January we will be extending our topics by investigating community helpers and habitats.

Winter has officially arrived. We go outside twice each day, weather permitting. Please make sure your child has the proper outdoor clothing for the week. Make sure your child has at least two full sets of clothes, as they get wet even with snow-pants. If your child is not properly dressed he/she will not enjoy the outdoor experience.

Misses Marty, Rosa, Stacey, Betty and Heather