

Oak Lane Child Care Center February 2012 Newsletter



Director's Corner

Last month I wrote about literacy learning in a social constructivist classroom within the context of broader learning implications. I would like to continue in this vein and consider the image of the child and the idea of learning.

A noted Reggio Emilia/constructivist educator, Carla Rinaldi, who has thought a great deal about the image of the child, has said, "every society, every culture makes its own interpretation of the child". The image of the child that we choose here at Oak Lane contributes to the definition of our pedagogical philosophy's identity. This definition determines the educational strategies that we use with our children. The choice that we make requires us to have great awareness because it determines the way we interact with the children as well as our expectations. It also determines the idea we have about learning and about school.

Every educational setting must choose their image of the child, and this means accepting great responsibility. Anyone working in a school with children must have conscious awareness of their image of the child, which also means their image of humanity. Through all the years of reflection and analysis of our work at Oak Lane, we have been supported by various child development theories.

As defined by psychologists, learning is the modification of behavior as the result of experience. The major contributors to early childhood education theory and practice each had his or her own conception of the process of

acquiring knowledge. The philosophers such as Comenius, Locke and Rousseau were most concerned the “what” of experience, while the practitioners such as Pestalozzi, Frobel, Steiner and Maria Montessori were primarily concerned with the “how” of experience -- with the process of learning itself. The theorists and researchers such as Freud, Piaget and Erikson were preoccupied with the “why” of experience and learning.

Brought together, these ideas afford a comprehensive picture of the many different modes of learning young children employ in learning about themselves and their world. We have tried to give priority in our thinking to children's construction of knowledge and the interpretation of it within their lives as human beings.

First of all, we think of the children as being competent in relating to the world because children are equipped from birth (and some people believe even before birth) with the means to create their own knowledge and their own awareness. The child on her own seeks to give meaning to the world around her. From birth, the child has a great capacity for sensitivity, feeling and emotion.

As neuroscience research from the 1990's has shown us, the child also has a brain that is extremely malleable. The young child's brain development is based on his life experiences. These studies also show that children recognize others through their own actions and through their movement in relation to others. Children in recognizing their own movements in others are able to recognize the meaning of the same actions in other people. This helps them to understand the meaning of these gestures. These studies help us to reflect on how children develop individualized social skills. The first six or eight years of life are the richest, most productive years for creating possibilities for a child's future. If children's brain development depends on how they encounter multiple experiences during the first six years of life, we have a great cultural and ethical responsibility as educators.

Our image of the child orients what we see and how we see it. It also orients our choice of documentation, as you can see through the various displays throughout the center of the children's work. We believe that children have a great capacity to create metaphors and a great ability to transform the reality they encounter into something different.

Children have a great desire to be with others. This leads them to create relationships in very intelligent and refined ways. Children are also persistent in the kind of intelligence they bring to relationships and in their ability to elaborate theories. Do we believe that children are competent in the elaboration of their thoughts, points of view and ideas? If we do, it will motivate us to offer challenging proposals to children. Do we believe that there are certain things that children cannot deal with, certain issues that children are not capable of discussing? We have found that children are very determined whenever we give them a difficult goal to achieve.

We seek to create relationships and connections between children and their context, and support children's ability to reflect their "community". We believe that the center must know its children. Our idea of the child is closely tied to our idea of learning and knowledge. We know that we must continue to think very carefully about this topic because the context and the environments that we prepare each day for our children, the situations and materials we present to them must be chosen while keeping in mind the relationship between our image of the child, and our idea of learning and knowledge.

What is the significance of a group of children who meet and get to know each other, and build knowledge and experience together in a toddler classroom or a preschool setting? There is great value in being part of a group within the process of learning and building knowledge - value for the single individual and for the group as a whole. What strategies do the teachers and the children use within these classrooms to build this collective dimension? Our goal is to try each day to dialogue with the individuality that each child and each parent bring into the center while, at the same time, supporting the evolution of these individual contributions into a group experience.

What does it mean to be a community that dialogues together, that grows together? What does it mean to learn together? A group always has a very dynamic identity made up of the individual stories of the people in the group. All of us at Oak Lane continually seek to understand the meaning of becoming a learning group, a group in which you exchange ideas and theories, a group whose thoughts connect to relationships between those in the group. We are also continually trying to understand the value of our day-to-day living together in the toddler and preschool classrooms. How is our daily routine part

of our learning? We have found that learning takes place during every single moment here, not just during long-term projects. This is a very important point that the staff and I would like you to understand. It means a great deal to us.

I hope that the month of February is a sweet one for you. It is a special one for my family.... Lots of birthdays and lots of fun!

See you 'round the center.
Ronnie



Calendar

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

Toddler hood is a wonderful and very busy time for a young child. They are continuously exploring, learning to speak, to play and to do things for themselves. The children are developing their independence and a sense of who they are in relation to others. As we were getting ready for nap the other day one child told me "I can do it myself", as I handed her a toothbrush. And shortly after that I went to cover another child and he told me "No! I do it."

One morning as we were getting the children's snow suits on to go outside, it was obvious, in just this instance, how much they have to learn from zipping zippers to putting on their boots. This is a terrific opportunity for the children, depending on their age and abilities, to develop their self help skills. For some it is simply pushing their hand into their mitten. For others, it might be taking off their shoes, sliding on their snow pants and putting on their boots before they do 'flip flop over the top' with their jacket. With every attempt that is made, it is important to be positive and encouraging as the children work to master these skills.

At this stage in their development the children are in what psychologist Erik Erikson calls the autonomous stage. This is the stage where they are moving away from dependence on their parents and caregivers and going toward to independence, self-control, courage and will (we are all familiar with the word "NO!"). The children in the class are encouraged to do as much for themselves as they can. We want to allow the children to work towards accomplishing a task where they will have success and therefore feel good about themselves. (Also keeping in mind their safety and the safety of the other children.)

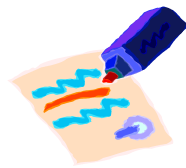
The children on a daily basis are expected to feed themselves with their spork, clear their plate and wash their hands. We are all there to support them and praise them, regardless of the trail of corn behind them as they scrap their plate into the garbage pail. The children lift their head in pride as they put their dish in Frank's bucket and walk into the bathroom to wash their hands. It is a

great accomplishment and the success enables them to feel that they are capable of trying new things.

It is wonderful to see and hear a child as they put their snow boots on for the first time. Their eyes light up as their foot slides in and they look up at you and say "Look! I did it!" Allowing them the time and opportunity to learn and master self help skills will allow the children to develop confidence and a positive sense of self. Time is one of the many things that Oak Lane has to offer. Time to try new things; to fail and then succeed!

It was nice meeting with you for parent/teacher conferences. It is a good way to start off the new year.

Misses Maura, Nancy, Corinne, and Lauren



Miss Leslie's Class

Looking back at the children's languages ability when they first arrived into the Chestnut classroom and comparing the children now, their use of language has blossomed.

The children are developing their language skills every day when they talk to their peers or to adults. Quite often they like to imitate their teachers. They enjoy pointing to things and naming them. The children have interesting conversations at group and playtime. We always encourage the children's use of words rather than grunts, so they can continue to expand their communication skills.

The children and I like to listen to Ms. Lady speak Spanish and we respond in Spanish. The children are becoming familiar with learning to speak Spanish. The children enjoy being exposed to another language, including it's songs, stories and games.

I sat at the table next to a child who was drawing. After a short while she began to sing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. At first she began to sing the song in

English and she quickly changed the lyrics into Spanish. When she finished, Miss Lady who was across the room at the time said “she sang the entire song of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in Spanish”. I was stunned. The children are learning the language so rapidly, as they should. Preschool years are a prime time for the children to learn languages. It’s so pleasing to hear them say the Spanish words that he or she just learned. Ms. Lady is doing a terrific job with the children. She creates simple games and activities that will give the children many bilingual experiences. Usually after snack time Ms. Lady gathers all the children over to the couch in the classroom and that’s when all the excitement begins. Ms. Lady reads story books and sings to the children in Spanish. They especially enjoy the singing. I noticed that their voices go up and down in the right places when they are familiar with the words.

“What’s That?” is another game that the children enjoy. We point to an object or a picture of an object and ask What’s That? If the child can name the object, he/she gets colored stickers or colored tape. The children find great enjoyment in this activity. They like to pretend the tape is a Band-Aid and tape it on their fingers.

Another activity that shows us that the children are increasing their language development in the area of colors is when Ms. Lady names the color in Spanish for example, “rojo” {red}. We see if the children can point to any red object or go over to get it. The children are very focused when they are playing the game. They are proud to find the things around the classroom. You can also hear the children describing the colors of their shoes, shirts, books, etc in Spanish to themselves or each other.

Language acquisition is a very important piece of early childhood development. Children learn to form their own sentences for conversation. They learn a lot of Spanish words to help them expand and build their own vocabulary skills, such as, colors, numbers and food names while interacting with other children during play. For example, during a floor game a teacher asked a child to jump on the red shaped design on the floor. He was not sure what that color was. A child helped him to find the color when she said, “jump on the red {rojo} see like my shoes.”

The children not only speak some Spanish words at school but at home as well. We are very pleased to hear you tell us all the wonderful words and phrases that your child shares with you when they are home.

Welcome to our newest Chestnut Rocco Simpson and his family. The children showed him so much love and immediately they showed him all the toys to play with😊

Just a few notes:

Now that the weather is colder, please check your child's clothing bin for seasonal clothing. When the weather permits we will be outside. Please provide snow suits, boots, hats, and gloves for your child every day.

Have a Happy Month!

Miss Leslie and Miss Lady😊



Upstairs Preschool



One day I was putting the moon sand in the sensory table and noticed that there was not enough for all the children. I got more, but I only found blue and green. Brandon noticed that I had more moon sand in different colors. His reaction was "Let's mix it and see what happens". Brandon and Adam started to pour blue moon sand into the beige moon sand and realized that the blue moon sand was the more predominant color.

During the rest of the week the children continued talking about mixing colors. Some experimented at the easel. Brandon said "If you mix blue and red you make purple". Kaya agreed and said "Red and yellow make orange".

As the discovery of colors continued to develop, we thought it would be important for the children to learn about primary colors. Looking at books and charts we learned that blue, yellow and red are called primary colors because they are colors that cannot be made by mixing. After mixing two primary colors they made a secondary color. As part of this activity the children were given a pallet with the primary colors, a brush and paper. Each child was given the opportunity to mix primary colors and make a chart of secondary colors. Other mixing projects ensued. The primary colors were again given to each child. There was a finger painting project, a project using different materials such as

toothbrushes, marbles and bumpy balls. Another project consisted of glue that was dyed the primary colors and red, yellow and blue tissue paper was applied. Secondary colors were again formed from the original primary colors. Each project gave the children a further understanding of how colors can form other colors. Even our specialists and a recent field trip added to the study of colors. Mad Science brought in a color wheel for the children to take home. As the wheel was spun a rainbow of colors was observed. On the bus as we were going to the theatre the children were more observant of the colors of things, "the river is gray", "the trees are brown", "why isn't the sky blue". Knowledge of colors is becoming a part of their understanding, not just something to be taken for granted.

Taking the topic of colors across the hall we put a scientific spin on it when we asked the Mixed Nuts where primary colors came from if you couldn't make them by mixing. Some of the responses included "the rainbow", "paint", "yellow and blue", "from food", and "food that has juice". We asked the children if we were to use food to make colors what fruits or vegetables would we need to use. They suggested carrots, broccoli, lettuce, corn and green beans. We decided to use some of their suggestions but also others that we knew would work. We chose beets as our first dye for painting. We looked at three beets and their stems and talked about the color of the outside, the leaves and the stems. The children then cut off the stem to see the red color oozing out. After the children cut up the beets we put them in the microwave. It took a while but at the end of the day we had beautiful red dye from the beets and pink from the stems.

The second day we dissected a purple cabbage and used the microwave again. It took the whole day for the dye to be evident. The smell was also a curiosity factor! The next day we boiled onion skins and carrots. The skin gave us a tan/orange color but we didn't get any color from the carrots at all! Our last color was green. We chopped up and cooled the broccoli in an attempt to get a light green dye but once again we got no color from the vegetable.

While experimenting with food and colors we explained that heat helps release the colors from the vegetables much the same way it makes us perspire or make clothes release color when they are washed in hot water.. Next week we will use the dyes to paint. Will they mix the same way? Only experimentation

will see what new colors can be created.

A couple of weeks ago when the temperature dropped significantly, the children noticed that some ice had formed on the sandbox cover outside. "Ice!" some of the children yelled. When Alex S. was heading in for lunch he asked if he could bring in the ice he had collected in a bucket.

After lunch Stacey asked the children to make predictions about what may happen to the ice and when it might melt; "100 days", "tomorrow", and "15 days" were some of the responses. Alex S. and Zachary thought to use the timers to see if the ice would melt by the time the timer ran out. The children checked the ice and observed that the ice was still solid.

The next day the children wanted to check the ice bucket to see what had happened overnight. We asked the children to make predictions as to whether the ice would still be ice or if it had melted. A graph was created to show the children's predictions. Then we showed the children the bucket. The ice had melted! There were many answers as to why the ice turned into water, for example, "it just did", "we brought it inside", "it's hot in here so it just melted" and "the sun comes through the window".

The children asked if the bucket could be placed outside to see if the water would freeze once again, and they made predictions about the ice. The children gained a lot of knowledge as to why and how a solid becomes a liquid and vice versa during this experiment. They developed the hypothesis, did the experiment and reviewed their findings. This is knowledge they made themselves and will keep.

The winter has been very mild so far but our luck is bound to run out soon. Snowsuits should be brought in on Monday and stay for the week. Please make sure your child has extra pants, socks and underwear. Even with snowsuits clothes still get wet and we try to get out at least once a day sometimes twice.

Misses Marty, Rosa, Stacey, Betty and Heather