

## TCM NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2010

Dear Parents,

The fall months were very busy as the school year got off to a fabulous start getting to know new families and children. Our newsletters share some of the previous months curriculum highlights, remind you of important dates to remember, and present what curriculum themes have emerged from our observations and interactions with your children. We want to first thank you for all your help with Maintenance Day, the Meadow Farms fundraiser, the Mabel's Labels fundraiser, assisting the teachers in the classroom when needed, donations of materials and books, participation in board meetings and subcommittees and preparations for the Open House on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> for prospective families. All of these activities were successful because so many parents put in so many hours to organize, publicize and prepare for all of these special events. The children and the school all benefit from your hard work. Over \$2000 was raised thus far! Special thanks to Maria and Themis Parados for the many hours donated to make the Meadow Farms fundraiser such a huge success. Your orders will be here this week! Thank you to Jaimee and Tim Healy for hosting a parent party and for working on current and future fundraisers. Several parents have also begun working on long range projects for their committees - way too many to list here. Plans are underway for the annual Winter Carnival and Ice Skating Party at Middlesex School for Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> from 1 - 4 pm. There will be activities and fun for all ages in the gym as well as a silent auction in the Lobby area between the gym and ice skating rink. Please contact Adrienne Principe at [Adrienne.principe@gmail.com](mailto:Adrienne.principe@gmail.com) if you can donate items for the silent auction. Ideas from past years include tickets to Patriots, Bruins, Celtics, Red Sox games, theater tickets to shows for children or adults or for family events, gift certificates to restaurants, museums, stores, weekend getaways or vacation destinations, lessons or services of any kind, themed gift baskets, etc. We hope to see you there along with some alum families.

Have you seen our facebook page yet? Go to [www.facebook.com/pages/Concord-MA/The-Childrens-Meetinghouse](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Concord-MA/The-Childrens-Meetinghouse). This is a great way to market the wonderful programs we offer. Jesse St. Laurent will be posting updates and photos of classroom projects (without names or children in the pictures). Please check it out. The more you "like" us the better we look!

On Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> we enjoyed getting to share special anecdotes and observations with most of you on Parent Conference Day. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's development at anytime throughout the year please let us know as we are here to be a resource for you. On 11/11 & 11/12, the staff participated in their professional development days. The staff had meetings and trainings such as First Aid and CPR. Psychologist, Debbie Weinstock-Savoy, provided us with a workshop on Encouraging Empathy in Young Children. By focusing on helping children identify their feelings and those of their peers they can learn how to manage their feelings so they can express them appropriately. There is a developmental, a cognitive and an experiential component that affects this area of emotional development. In the classroom setting we facilitate this through our curriculum everyday. We provide the classroom structure, teach about feelings, set limits, model empathic behavior, and identify what "friendly behavior" is towards others. Our values of respecting others are talked about with phrases such as, "We care about ourselves, we care about each other and we care about our stuff and the world around us." The staff

appreciates TCM in supporting our staff development which is mandated by licensing. Other workshops, through Tuft's, are scheduled for the staff at night throughout the school year. The children ultimately benefit through the trainings that we do.

Given the current concerns regarding illnesses in our school and surrounding communities and how it can spread quickly and dangerously with children 0 - 6 years old, we want to encourage you to be vigilant in regards to hand washing and keeping yourself and your children home if you have any fever over 100 along with flu like symptoms. Often with really young children it is only through close observation of their behavior that you/we may suspect that they are not feeling well. We are mandated by the state to be checking and having conversations with families everyday. One of our concerns is that if the staff should become ill and/or a high number of flu or other contagious diseases develop that TCM may need to close for several days. If this should be necessary we will contact parents as soon as possible so that you may make other plans for your child (ren). We just want parents to always be aware of the possibility so that they can think about alternative back-up plans if needed.

Wishing you all a Healthy and Happy Holiday Season!

Donna & Staff

### **SPECIAL ACTIVITIES WE WILL REMEMBER THIS FALL**

**YOGA Bimonthly** - Beginning in October, Shannon Lavery, TCM alum parent, is back this year to do yoga on a regular schedule. The children have enjoyed learning new exercises and poses this year.

**November 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>** - First visits and special preschool program from Drumlin Farm's Audubon Ark Program on Nocturnal Animals and Tracking. Guest visits from a mouse family and a box turtle were found to be quite interesting. Yoga and Audubon Programs enhance the curriculum and are available because of your fundraising efforts! Thanks for your support!

**Two PreK Field Trips to the theater in October and November were great fun!**

### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

**THIS SATURDAY December 4<sup>th</sup>** - Holiday Babysitting at TCM for children 9-2pm.

**SAVE THE DATE! GO SHOPPING and WE WILL WATCH THE KIDS!** This event is for currently enrolled children and their siblings. Children who have attended in previous years have all loved it because it was so much fun! Special activities are planned. **SIGNUP TODAY!**

**December 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>** - Last Days of Fall Session

**January 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>** - School resumes

**January 5<sup>th</sup>** - Date to return the Vacation Week Form (See December 1<sup>st</sup> Letter)

**February 5<sup>th</sup> - Open House from 9-11am** for prospective families and for current toddler families transitioning to preschool in Fall 2011. Tell your neighbors and friends about it. CHILDREN ARE WELCOME, too! Applications for Current TCM Families will go out soon!

**February 13<sup>th</sup> - TCM Annual Skating Party and Winter Carnival at Middlesex School - 1:00-4:00 pm.** Along with ice skating there will be activities and fun for all ages in the gym as well as a Raffle/Silent Auction in the Lobby. **HEAD'S UP! If you have any items that**

could be donated such as Tickets to the Celtics, Patriots, Bruins, Red Sox, special shows for children or adults, restaurant gift certificates, weekend getaways or a vacation destination, lessons of any kind, theater tickets, theme baskets, etc. your consideration would be appreciated. Contact Adrienne.Principe@gmail.com.

### PARENT REMINDERS

- **Drop-In** openings or extended days are available especially in the 12:30 - 3:30 or later time frame if you would like to have extra time especially as the holiday season is approaching. In the preschool there are only a couple of AM openings depending on the day(s) in Dec. and early in Jan. Please email us to request some extra time. Extended day hours are \$10 per hour. A morning session is \$55.00.
- For the safety of your children please make sure that they are seat belted properly in their car seats and do not leave children in the car unattended or leave your car running in the parking lot. If you have special circumstances such as a health issue or small infants, please call us when you arrive so we can help you or have another parent help you. Parents need to be aware of our "school rules" that we value for teaching kids about being safe and respectful of our school toys and property. One of the most important rules is, "Only grown-ups open doors". Please do not let your child open our TCM doors or playground gates upon arriving or leaving the school property. Please make sure that all caregivers adhere to these rules as well. It is very important to hold your child's hand when walking in the parking lot and on the ramp. We reinforce the rules with the children during the day and at circle time. The children are so quick and little that someone backing out or driving in might not see them. Also climbing on the metal railing is dangerous and is not ok. Work with us, so together, we can not only keep the children as safe as possible, but we can also teach them about safety rules.
- We would appreciate it if you would call us and leave a voice mail at 371-0678, or call the toddler room at 371-1920 or the preschool at 371-0394 when your child is going to be out, especially if they are sick. This helps us to plan for staff and notify parents if something is going around.
- Have you had a change of address or email address, job, home, work/cell phone # or a change in your work schedule? If so, please let us know. It is important for us to be able to get in touch with parents if there is an emergency or if your child is sick. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO RETURN ANY FORMS THAT WERE REQUESTED FOR YOUR CHILD'S FILE. THESE ARE REQUIRED BY STATE REGULATIONS.**
- Please don't forget to sign and document your committee hours and your Maintenance Day hours in the **Parent Volunteer Notebook** in the lobby. There are still many special projects/jobs that need attention and completion before the cold weather comes. Some are posted on the white board. Special thanks to the Mills Family for the leaf blowing as it was a huge job! The beautiful fall weather is coming to an end so please send in a complete set of winter clothes with your child: hat, mittens, coat (boots and snow pants when necessary). Please remember to keep your child's hat and mittens in the sleeves of their coats. For Prek kids in Janet's group, please keep all **outer wear together and out in the lobby area** and in one place. See the note later in this newsletter for the 3 and 4 year olds in Linda and

Chris' group. **All backpacks stay in the classroom. PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING!** We store lost and found items in a separate basket in the lobby.

- If you are a new family you might not be aware that we have limited "TCM Wear" available. We have winter fleece hats for children, fleece vests for all ages, and hooded sweatshirts with zippers also for children. Email us if you are interested in something specific.

### INFANT/TODDLER NEWS

Since September, the children have enjoyed the outdoors, walks around Middlesex School and running through the leaves on our playground. Observing nature such as the changing color of the leaves is certainly a part of our science curriculum. Watching the birds and the chipmunks out the window at the bird feeder is quite amazing. Favorite activities on the playground include riding toys on the bike path, playing in the gazebo and "painting it" with water with all kinds of brushes, playing with balls and playing basketball and taking the dolls for carriage rides. Digging with a variety of shovels, making sounds on the sound fence with the spoons, playing in the toddler house and using the boat swings have been lots of fun while learning about sharing, taking turns and using words to communicate your needs.

Favorite Books...Fidgety Fish, Baby Beluga, The Wheels on the Bus, Barn Yard Dance, That's Not My Robot, Digger Man, Little Owl Lost, Go Away Big Green Monster

Songs...

*Wheels on the Bus, Old MacDonald, Bingo, Baby Beluga, The Itsy, Bitsy Spider, Sticky Bubblegum, Row, Row, Row Your Boat, The Ants Go Marching...Head Shoulders, Knees and Toes and the Fire Truck Song*

Looking Ahead...

In addition to our goal of always including seasonal activities we will offer some new sensory experiences, and art activities based on the children's interests. In September we explored Fire Fighters and we put out the small fire station doll house, fire fighter hats and coats and even pop-up shapes to climb in that can be a car or a house, etc. We also added some real life fire safety practice with the introduction of our monthly fire drills. In October the barns came down from the attic with lots of tractors, farm animals and little people. Painting with vehicles and shaving cream was a new experience. The children have enjoyed experimenting with a variety of painting and various types of brushes or other objects to paint with such as leaves, tree roots found outside and acorns. Our sticky paper collages have included using feathers, colored tissue paper and items found outside from nature. We will continue to encourage everyone to try new sensory experiences in the weeks and months ahead. The musical instruments and dancing with ribbons were also fun for all! We are looking forward to using some of our favorite books, starting with "Go Away Big Green Monster", for curriculum plans. Individual and group art activities will accompany the reading of the books as well as dress ups and role playing.

#### **IT Reminders:**

- As the weather is getting much colder please bring all the outdoor gear as we would like to go outside as often as possible. Please label hats, coats, boots, snowpants, mittens. So many winter items look the same and the toddlers don't

often recognize what is theirs as it is probably all new to them. It may also be time to add new warmer "change of clothes" for the backpacks. Often pants and socks get wet whether it is from going outside or just playing at the sensory/water table.


- Thank you for remembering to wash your child's hands when entering the room. The children are really good about "making bubbles" after toileting, before snack and lunchtime, too !


Thanks,  
Donna, Linda and Kate

### PRESCHOOL NEWS

The preschool children have settled in to the daily routines and happenings of the new preschool year. Old friends and new friends have been playing, learning, sharing and having fun together. The children have found out many things about each other through art activities, discussions, surveys, singing songs, name games and talking about their families. We had a special opportunity to observe caterpillars and watch them turn in to butterflies. It was amazing how quickly they changed from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. The children were very excited to set the butterflies free. Amazingly, a few days later two of "our" butterflies were seen flying around the butterfly bushes in our backyard! October has been such a gift....beautiful weather, colorful fall leaves and exuberant children! They have been exploring the changes that fall brings through art, cooking, literature, games, nature observations, graphing and discussions.

This has also been a time for teachers to observe and listen to what the children are doing and saying to get a sense for their interests, concerns and skills which will help us continue to develop our curriculum for the year. Through the themes that emerge, the children have participated in age-appropriate activities that will strengthen their skills (as stated in Mass. Frameworks and NAEYC standards) and encourage children to have fun with learning.

 Linda and Chris' circle time group has focused on getting to know each other, making new friends, body awareness through a variety of songs, movement activities and finger plays. They are developing listening skills, language, the ability to follow directions and take turns and they are having fun together in a social group situation. They enjoyed a variety of activities related to Eric Carle's book, **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** which was connected to our observations of our real caterpillars.

Recently, we have been studying owls. A favorite song has been "Five Little Owls."  The children have enjoyed acting out this song at circle time.

"Five little owls, are you keeping score?  
One flew away and then there were 4.  
4 little owls, happy as can be,  
One flew away and then there were 3.  
3 little owls, hoo, hoo, hoo,

One flew away and then there were 2.  
2 little owls are having lots of fun,  
One flew away and then there was 1,  
One little owl, we are almost done,  
He flew away and now there are none."

Linda and Chris' group enjoyed the visitors from the Audubon Ark at Drumlin Farm. The Audubon teachers brought a mouse family. The children heard a story and were able to set up the mouse habitat and observe how the mother and father took care of the baby

mice. 

Several of the children asked us to share the recipe for **Applesauce Breakfast Cake** which was a snack favorite! Here's the recipe for the topping and the cake...Yummy!

**Combine the topping ingredients and set aside -  $\frac{1}{4}$  Cup packed brown sugar, 1T. butter or margarine,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. cinnamon**

**In a large bowl, combine 1 cup flour,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking powder and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking soda.**

**In a small mixing bowl, beat 1 egg, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup applesauce,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup oil and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. vanilla, stir till mixed.**

**Add applesauce mixture to flour mixture, stir till mixed. Pour into greased 8x8 pan. Sprinkle topping over batter. Bake at 350\* for 20 minutes.**

- ❄️ All of the preschool children are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the first snowstorm. In preparation for that event, we wanted to take an opportunity to remind you of our winter routine for storing everyone's winter gear when they are at TCM.

**\*Linda and Chris' group should bring a large bag (such as a reusable grocery bag) which should contain their boots, snowpants, jacket, hat, and mittens. Please bring it into the classroom. We will store the bags on the shelf near the bathroom. We will need you to take their bag home and bring it back each time your child comes to TCM during the winter season. We have found it to be less stressful to have the younger children get dressed in the classroom. If you have any questions, please ask Linda or Chris.**

**\*The pre-k children should leave all of their gear (boots, snowpants, jackets, mittens, etc.) in their hallway cubbie. They should bring their backpack and lunch box into the classroom. Also, please remember to label your child's winter gear. They are practicing their self-help skills and need to be able to identify which clothing belongs to them as many of them share hallway cubbies with others.**

The pre-k group continues to work on becoming a community of learners. They are learning to be better listeners at circle time, to be patient when others are speaking and to share their ideas in appropriate ways.

They have been enthusiastic about sharing news each week for our pre-k newspaper. They not only verbally share their news but also illustrate their news as well. By the end of the year, they will each take a copy of our newspaper home with them.

The pre-k children have attended two theater performances, "Swimmy and Other Stories" and "How the Elephant Got His Trunk and Other Tales." They enjoyed both very much. On the days before and after each performance we may work on special projects related to each performance theme.


After we saw "Swimmy," the children made their own puppets and performed their own version of "Swimmy" for our younger preschool friends. The reviews were very positive!!! In the pre-k, each year, we perform our own versions of various favorite stories, videotape them and put them on a DVD for the pre-k children at the end of the year.

The pre-k children have finished making their storytelling journals and are beginning to tell their stories. Some of the children tell a story about a magazine picture. Other children draw their own pictures and tell a story. The children who are 5 yrs. old are asked to write certain words on their own. These words are then put on their "I Can Read!" list.

- 🐾 Is it a fox? A raccoon? How about a bear? The pre-k children had so much fun at our tracking workshop. Debbie, from Drumlin Farm, showed the children a variety of ways to know what types of animals have passed through our yard. She taught us where to look for tracks and gave us little charts help us decide which animal made the track. She also taught us to look for "dirty dishes" left behind by some of the animals.

Over the next few weeks we will be setting our own "tables" in our yard to see if we can entice our animal neighbors to leave their tracks or their "dirty dishes" behind for us.

Happy Tracking, Pre-K!! 🐾

Run, Run as fast as you can.....!  The gingerbread man has returned! He will be sharing stories and delicious gingerbread with us while we try to figure out how to catch him!!!!

Stay Warm.....

Linda, Chris and Janet

## Seasonal Reminders and Requests

**Safety Practices** - Each month we will be having safety practices with the children. This is our policy in keeping with EEC and NAEYC regulations. We had our first practices in October. We have a short discussion first and then we pretend that the fire alarm has sounded. **PLEASE.....IF YOU TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT THIS, CALL IT A SAFETY PRACTICE AND NOT A FIRE DRILL. THANKS!**

With winter gear please try to encourage mittens vs. gloves as most children don't have the skills yet to put on their own gloves and it is frustrating for all! Most of the children are doing a great job of trying to dress themselves and put on their own coats. Ask your child to show you the "Flip Trick". Even some of the toddlers can do it too! In regards to toileting - if your child is learning, it would be an easier process for the children if their clothes were "toileting friendly". (i.e. pants with elastic waists, no belts, no onesies, etc.)

**Wish List** - There is a copy of the "Birthday Book and Classroom Wish List" in the front of the White Book of parent committees in the lobby. It has been a tradition over the years in the preschool that the birthday boy or girl has given a gift to the school when they have a birthday. We will add a few items in addition to books such as birdseed, stickers, iTunes gift card or CD's of children's music and outside toys such as shovels, pails, wheelbarrows and rakes.

Thanks for all your help,  
Chris, Linda and Janet

*P.S. As mentioned in the parent handbook and as part of our school philosophy, we do not celebrate holidays as part of our daily curriculum because we feel that so much emphasis is already placed on holidays outside of our preschool environment. In planning our curriculum we know that there are so many wonderful topics of interest and concern to young children that if we focus on holidays we have little time to develop other areas in the curriculum. We certainly appreciate all seasonal topics and we welcome any parents to share with us any of their stories and experiences regarding their family traditions and celebrations.*

### **Policy regarding school cancellations due to stormy weather.**

**Please listen to the radio or TV stations for Concord Public School closings. You may also call the office number at 978-371-0678 for info regarding school cancellation. The Parent Board and the Director may decide to cancel a session, open later, or close early due to weather conditions or predictions even when the public schools remain open. In this case all parents will be contacted by phone. Transportation safety is of utmost concern for all staff and families when making these decisions. Thank you for your understanding !**