

TCM NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2009

Dear Parents,

September and October 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 Sally Foster fundraiser, assisting the teachers in the classrooms with projects, organizing the Westford Toy Shop fundraiser this Friday, the 6th, preparations for the Open House on Nov. 7th for prospective families and the **Freight Train** Committee for the Concord Museum's Trees Exhibit. So many parents have 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 in October! Special thanks to Maria and Themis Parados for the many hours you donated to make the Sally Foster fundraiser such a huge success. Several parents have also begun working on long range projects for their committees - way too many to list here. Thank you to those families who also made a donation in lieu of the wrapping paper fundraiser.

On Oct. 22nd 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. This coming Tuesday and Wednesday, 11/10 & 11/11, there is no school due to staff professional development days. The staff will have meetings and trainings such as CPR. Other workshops, through Tuft's, are scheduled for the staff at night throughout the school year. The staff appreciates TCM in supporting our staff development which is mandated by licensing and accreditation. The children ultimately benefit through the trainings that we do.

Given the current concerns regarding the H1N1 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 cases 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 be aware of the possibility so that they can think about alternative back-up plans if needed.

Wishing you all a Healthy and Happy Thanksgiving later this month!

Donna & Staff

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 6th - Westford Toy Shop - 9 to 8pm

November 7th - Open House 9 - 11 am; Please spread the word to friends, "Come visit TCM!" Prospective parents and children welcome!

November 10th & 11th - NO SCHOOL - Staff Professional Days

November 16th - Look for information about the Original Works Fundraiser and order some special gifts with your child's painting printed on it. Great idea for Grandparents!

November 26th and 27th - Thanksgiving Holiday - No School

Coming Soon! Look for a special letter from the TCM Parent Board!

December 1st and 2nd - First visits and special preschool program this year from Drumlin Farm on Nocturnal Animals thanks to your fundraising efforts !

As you may know, we are so pleased to have Shannon Lavery back this year on a regular monthly schedule to do Yoga with the children which is also supported through fundraising proceeds.

December 5th - 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. Look for the flier so you can sign up! If you would like to volunteer to assist teachers on this day, please contact Colleen Callen, 978-263-8694 or email her at: ccarney02@yahoo.com. Children who have attended in previous years have all loved it because it was so much fun! Special activities are planned.

December 17th and 18th - Last Days of Fall Session

January 4th & 5th - School resumes

February 6th - Open House from 9-11am for prospective families and for current toddler families transitioning to preschool in Fall 2010. Tell your neighbors and friends about it. CHILDREN ARE WELCOME, too!

February 28th - 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 Phyllis Bewick at pbewick@comcast.net.

PARENT REMINDERS

- **Drop-In** openings are available especially in the 12:30 - 3:30 time frame if you would like to have extra time especially as the holiday season is approaching. In the preschool there are also some AM openings depending on the day(s). Please call to set up some extra time! Extended day hours are \$10 per hour.
- If your child is scheduled to come to TCM on Wed. November 25th, please let us know if your child will not be attending that day due to holiday travel plans. This will allow us to plan our staffing needs ahead of time for that day.
- 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, 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. We will need many volunteers to rake the leaves in the play yards in the days ahead!
- 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 Preschoolers, please keep all **outer wear together and out in the lobby area** so when all 18 or so children are getting dressed for outside play they can find all of their items in one place. **The 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

In September and October, 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. The new red wagon is also a big hit as even the smallest toddler can pull it with ease! Digging with a variety of shovels and playing in the toddler house as well as using the boat swings have been lots of fun while learning about sharing, taking turns and using words to communicate your needs.

Favorite Books...To Market To Market, Old MacDonald, Baby Beluga, The Wheels on the Bus, Barn Yard Dance, That's Not My Robot, Everyday Babies, Crocodile Beat

Songs...

Wheels on the Bus, This Old Man, 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

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. 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 will be making instruments out of recycled materials and containers!

IT Reminders:

- Thank you for remembering to wash your child's hands when entering the room. The children are really good about "making bubbles" before snack and lunchtime, too!
- If you have any small containers that would make good shakers we could use them for our musical instrument project!

Thanks,
Lillian, Kate and Donna

PRESCHOOL NEWS

It was great to reconnect with old friends and to meet new friends at school. The children spent the first few weeks of preschool becoming familiar with various classroom routines and getting to know each other.

During September we found out many things about each other through art activities, discussions, surveys, singing songs, name games and talking about our families.

The children have enjoyed exploring a variety of art materials such as glue and recyclables, painting with different brushes and tools, cutting paper, using colored tape and even painting with mini toilet plungers! (Amazing that a household tool can create interesting art work.)

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 in developing our curriculum for the year. Through the themes that emerge the children

will participate 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.

The science area has been a very busy place. The children have been very intrigued by the GIGANTIC sunflower head that Linda brought in from her garden. We weighed it, and then measured it using a variety of objects. Each of the children made a print using a smaller sunflower and then added petals and stems a la Van Gogh!

Linda and Chris' circle time group has focused on getting to know each other, making new friends, body awareness, the senses, and identifying emotions. At the same time they are developing listening skills, language, the ability to follow directions, turn taking, sharing, and most importantly.....having fun together! The children have enjoyed a variety of activities including songs, stories, creative movement and finger plays. One of our favorite songs for this time of year is..... *"Way Up High in the Apple Tree"*

Way up high in the apple tree.
Two little apples smiled at me.
I shook that tree as hard as I could.
Down came the apples and.....
Mmmmmmmmm.....were they good!

Other songs are the name song, *"Old Shoes, New Shoes"*, (child's name) is wearing (describe) shoes.

"Three Little Leaves So Bright and Gay", were dancing around a tree one day, the wind came blowing through the town (Blow),one little leaf came tumbling down!

Activities they have enjoyed are: Making their own faces with collage materials, seasonal collages, nature windows, writing and snipping/scissors activities, masks, etc.

Favorite book about the change of seasons was *"Birdhouse for Rent"* by Harriet Ziefert. Cooking projects included apple crisp, applesauce and the favorite was **Apple Pizza!** **1 can Crescent Rolls, chopped apples, ½ stick butter, melted, 1 tsp. cinnamon, ¼ cup sugar. Press rolls into jelly roll pan. Spread chopped apples on dough. Drizzle melted butter over apples. Mix cinnamon and sugar together and sprinkle on top. Bake at 400* for 20 min. Yummy!**

During November, all of the preschoolers will continue to use their senses to explore the world around them, become familiar with safety rules, explore fall, night time and things that go "bump in the night," the changes around us and how animals and people adapt at this time of year.

The Pre-K group got off to a great start in September. They have participated in a variety of activities that have helped them realize that as individuals they have a lot in common with their peers. Who is in your family? Where do you live? What color is your house? Why are you special? What is a friend? What do you worry about? The children really enjoyed our neighborhood project, family houses and making paper bag houses and street signs. As we participate in more activities like this the Pre-K children are becoming more of a "community of learners."

In October the Pre-K children attended a performance of "Aesop's Fables" at the Chelmsford Fine Arts Center. They will be attending 5 performances throughout the year. On the days before and after each performance we will work on special projects related to

each performance theme. We are very excited about this opportunity! We are very fortunate that Middlesex School is providing a mini-bus with Paul Torres as the bus driver. Of course, the bus ride is always one of the highlights!

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 "Teal 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.