



THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER

January 2016



Nature Center Preschool News

Happy New Year and welcome back to the second half of the school year! The 2016 year is going to be an exciting one for NCP as we celebrate our 20th anniversary beginning in the Fall. It was the Fall of 1996 that Elsa Ryberg, founding Director of Nature Center Preschool, began a nature-based preschool model to share her love and passion for teaching children and families about the importance of the environment we all call home.

Enrollment for Fall 2016 is ongoing for current Nature Center Preschool families and siblings! Registration is now open to new families. Please help us spread the word about our unique program! If you need a registration please ask your Teachers or Preschool Director, Diane, for a copy!

Swim

The NCP swim playgroup program at the Emilson Branch of SSYMCA begins January 4th and goes into the spring. Swim will not be offered January 18th in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Storm closing information for Nature Center Preschool can be found at:
<http://ssymca.org/>
On the front page under "Announcements"

Did you know?

Save the Date!

Silhouette artist Carol Lebeaux is returning to SSNSC April 8 and 9. This is a great opportunity to capture your child's silhouette with this classic artform! More info will be available soon!



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Family Advisory Council News!

Thank you to all families for your outpouring of generosity in supporting the Friends of the Homeless on the South Shore Holiday Gift Drive!

Next meeting: Jan 12 6:30-7:30
(Bring your planning energy for Ladies Night Out)



Dates in January

Jan 4 New Family Registration for Fall 2016 begins

Jan 4 Classes resume

Jan 11 Registration for Feb. vacation week begins

Jan 18 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's birthday
No school

Jan 18th Winter Discovery Day (SSNSC)

Jan 24th Alligators and Crocodiles (SSNSC)

THANK YOU!

The staff of NCP would like to thank families for your kind expressions of gratitude and your generous gifts during the holiday season. It is an honor to teach your children!

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO?

Thanks to a generous Nature Center Preschool family, NCP has one pass to the South Shore Children's Museum in the Hanover Mall to lend out to families for a day! Ask at the front desk of SSNSC to find out if it is available or call ahead!



Nature Notes

Caches, Hoards and Stores

Wild animals have ways of taking care of themselves during the winter and one of the best ways for them to ensure that they have enough food is to store it in hidden places and dens.

- Wildcats and feral cats bury small prey, such as birds, covering them in loose vegetation.
- Moles cache worms in autumn and winter before the ground becomes frozen; earthworms are often found in 'knots'.
- Grey squirrels scatterhoard – nuts are buried in ones and twos in pits 2-5cm deep.
- Jays also scatterhoard acorns and beechmast, though often considerable distances from the nearest tree; squirrels scatterhoard close to trees.

January areas of Learning!

Science Properties of Ice and snow, observing changes outside, habitat tables

Literacy *The Hat, Snowflake Bentley, The Snowy Day*, using positional words, letter recognition

Math Patterns and comparisons, concept of 'half'

Social Emotional Discussing diversity, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr; peacefulness

Fine Motor practicing zippers and buttons

Environmental Literacy Making predictions based on nature experiences



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Inquiry Education

“Once you have learned how to ask questions—relevant and appropriate and substantial questions—you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know.”

The philosophy behind the quote

This quote comes from a book from 1969 by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner called *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. The foundation of this philosophy is that inquiry is a dynamic activity that leads to meaningful learning. This can be extended and applied to any situation that arises in the life of a student from preschool through adulthood and beyond. The term “life-long learner” is directly related to this inquiry-based, critical thinking model.

Competent learners will experience:

- Self-confidence in their learning ability
- Pleasure in problem solving
- A keen sense of relevance
- Reliance on their own judgment over other people's or society's
- No fear of being wrong
- No haste in answering
- Flexibility in point of view
- Respect for facts, and the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion
- No need for final answers to all questions, and comfort in not knowing an answer to difficult questions rather than settling for a simplistic answer.

The implications of offering this type of learning experience for preschoolers are that they will continue to grow into capable problem solvers and innovators throughout their school experience.

NCP approach to this type of learning

Nature Center Preschool teachers are skilled educators that go above and beyond the traditional teaching methods. From social/emotional skills to

math, literacy, science, and the arts, NCP teachers know that young children are young scientists that question and explore every aspect of their lives. Inquiry teachers have the following characteristics:

- They avoid telling students what they "ought to know".
- They talk to students mostly by questioning, and especially by asking divergent questions which lead to many alternative answers.
- They do not accept short, simple answers to questions, but rather, encourage children to extend their thinking.
- They encourage students to interact directly with one another, and avoid judging what is said in student interactions.
- They do not summarize students' discussion. Instead, teachers parrot back to children what was said verbatim.
- They do not plan the exact direction of their lessons in advance, and allow it to develop in response to students' interests.
- Their lessons pose problems to students.
- They gauge their success by change in students' inquiry behaviors (with the previously mentioned characteristics of competent learners as a goal).



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