



THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER



Nature Center Preschool News

February 2014

February is a time for giving extra thought for those that we love and care about. We are talking about the importance of friendship, cooperation and teamwork this month. The classes are creating a friendship paper chain as we talk about kind ways that we show caring towards each other. On each link of the chain we write a kind act that was observed and share our observations with all children at circle time. Our efforts culminate with a friendship fruit salad put together by the children in each class, a delicious visual on the benefits of teamwork!

Upcoming Open Houses!

- Feb 26: 4-6pm
- Mar 2: 12-2pm
- Mar 15: 10-Noon

Nature Center Preschool Open Enrollment for Fall 2014 has started! If you have not received a registration please ask your Teachers or Preschool Director, Diane, for a copy!

February Vacation week is Feb 17th-21st. We will be exploring the theme of "Wildlife Wonders" and answering some questions that we have heard from Preschoolers over the years.

<http://southshorenaturalsciencecenter.org/preschool/vacation-week-programs/>

Did you know?



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Family Advisory Council News!

The next two meetings for the FAC are:

- Feb 11th 6:30-7:30
- March 27th 6:30-7:30

Dates in February

Feb 2 Groundhog Day

Feb 11 FAC meeting

Feb 13/14 Valentine Parties

Feb 16 Owl Festival

Feb 17 Eyes on Owls

Feb vacation week 17-21

Feb 22 Winter Discovery Day

Feb 24 School resumes

Feb 26 Open House 4-6pm



Nature Notes

Great Horned owls start nesting in January, raising their families in the dead of winter. The female will incubate the eggs while her mate brings her food. Within a month, up to five eggs will hatch and the owlets will be closely guarded by their parents. Six weeks after hatching, the owlets will leave the nest and walk around. In another three weeks, the young owls will already have learned to fly. The parents will continue to feed and care for their offspring for several months, often as late as October. It is wise to stay away from young owls and their nests as Great Horned Owls are not afraid to attack if they feel their family is threatened. - See more at: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/indiana/journeywithnature/the-great-horned-owl.xml#sthash.1cMcG2U8.dpuf>

February areas of Learning!

- Science: Groundhog Day, Plant propagation, animal tracks in the snow, worms
- Gross motor: Trail walks, field play in the snow, dressing for outdoors
- Fine Motor: Making valentines, scissor skills
- Language: Sequencing, left to right flow of print; Literature selections— *The Day it Rained Hearts*, *Making Friends* by Fred Rogers, *Frederick* by Leo Lionni, *Gregory's Shadow*
- Social/Emotional: Friendship, cooperation, teamwork, kindness
- Math: patterns
- Music: "The Chubby Little Snowman"



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The Worksheet Dilemma: Benefits of Play-Based Curricula

By Sue Grossman, Ph.D.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article/view.aspx?ArticleID=134>

Developmentally Appropriate Activities

There are many active, and far more interesting, ways for children to begin understanding words and numbers than via worksheets (Mason, 1986). A classroom with a developmentally appropriate curriculum is a print-rich environment. The walls are covered with signs naming objects, stories children have dictated, lists of words they have generated, pictures they have painted and labeled, and charts of classroom jobs (such as feeding the pet and passing out napkins for snack).

At the small motor activities table there may be sandpaper letters to feel and puzzles to complete. Creative activities may include squirting shaving cream onto the table and having children make designs and write their names. And always there are many books to explore, examine, wonder about, listen to, and love as they are read aloud. In these ways, children learn that reading and writing are useful skills, not simply tedious activities adults invent to make school boring. It takes a lot of experience with words and print for children to understand why it is good to be able to read.

Demonstrating Progress

If we cannot demonstrate children's progress with worksheets, how do we provide evidence of learning? Here are several ways:

Portfolios – A portfolio is a collection of a child's work. Portfolios can include the following:

Work Samples: Keep samples of each child's drawings and writing, including invented spelling. Photographs of creations of clay, wood, and other materials can also be included. Children should have a say in what is included in their own portfolio. Date each piece so that progress throughout the school year can be noted.

Observations—We keep observational records of what children do in the class. There are many efficient methods of recording children's behavior. Audio and video tape can capture them in action. Occasional anecdotal notes also help.

Checklists-- Record children's skill development on checklists. Progress in beginning letter recognition, name writing, and self-help skills, for example, can be listed and checked off as children master them.

Appropriate worksheets-- For example, children experimenting with objects to discover if they sink or float can record their observations on paper divided into a float column and a sink column. This shows that they are doing actual scientific experimentation and recording the data.

Family Newsletters-- Teachers send home periodic family newsletters which explain the activities children are doing at school and the teacher's goals and objectives. When families understand the value of developmentally appropriate activities they will feel confident that their children are learning and growing, not "just playing."

Center Labels--Signs in the classroom describing what children learn in the various learning centers help adults understand the value of children's work in that area. In the block corner, for example, children learn about weight, length, balance, volume, and shape, as well as problem solving, social role playing, and cooperation. At the art center children learn to express themselves on paper and with other media, to solve problems, and to communicate with others.

Photographs: Photographs of daily activities in the classroom can be displayed around the room and in hallways. They provide graphic evidence to families, administrators, and other teachers of children working and learning in a rich, exciting atmosphere.



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