

The Wintonbury Peeper



Wintonbury Early Childhood Magnet School

Volume 3, Issue 4

Emergent Curriculum in the Pre-K Classroom

At the Wintonbury Early Childhood Magnet School pre-school teachers use a variety of methods when it comes to teaching young children. They assess each preschool aged child using the Creative Curriculum©. This theoretical framework provides 48 goals and objectives aligned to state and national standards. They are comprehensive, addressing the *whole* child from social/emotional competence to motor skills to pre-academic skills in literacy, science and mathematics. While the Creative Curriculum© provides a skills-based assessment, teachers use children's inquiries, interests and passions to provide the content of learning in the classroom. We refer to this as *emergent curriculum*, which often results in long term studies on a topic. Studies typically don't constitute the entire preschool curriculum but are weaved throughout and complement our child-centered approach to teaching and learning.

Research tells us that "preschool programs based on child-initiated learning activities contribute to

children's short- and long-term academic and social development, while preschool programs based on teacher-directed lessons obtain a short-term advantage in children's academic development by sacrificing a long-term contribution to their social and emotional development. On this basis, research supports the use by preschool programs of a curriculum approach based on child-initiated learning activities rather than one based on teacher-directed lessons. (Schweinhart, 1997, p.2) Studies may be as short as a week or as long as a couple of months, addressing topics that reflect children's lives.

One way a topic of study can emerge is to explore children's theories on a given subject. Many children bring prior knowledge to the classroom – sometimes it is accurate, sometimes it reflects their own thinking about a topic. For instance, in teacher Amy White's classroom children began to discuss the idea of bones while playing on the playground. A child stated "I have bones"; another child added that "animals

have bones." The following day at morning meeting the conversation continued. The teacher noticed that there were some gaps in the children's understanding of bones. One child posed the idea that "bones stick together", many theories of how this happens ensued . . . "bones stick together by skin", others thought "bones stick together by blood", another child commented that she knew that worms did not have bones because she squished a worm once and only brown stuff came out.

The teacher decided that there was enough interest and enough to learn about to sustain an initial

Important Dates

January 4	2nd Cup of Coffee after drop off
January 10	PTO Meeting 6:00 p.m.
January 21	MLK Day No School

investigation of bones. The first step was to create a graphic organizer or "web" to collect children's thoughts, ideas and questions about bones. Ms. White also utilized common planning time to solicit ideas for planning from a colleague who had previously executed a successful bone study. She also capitalized (con't on p.4 BONES)



Jill Kenyon shows children a skeletal chart. Behind her is the web of children's ideas and questions about bones.

The Auerfarm

The month of January will bring the conclusion of the hibernation lesson and a follow up lesson on winter foods. Children will explore the idea that for animals who do not hibernate their diets in the wild and in the barn change during the winter months.

Preschool and kindergarten students will read [A Stranger in the Woods](#) by Carl Sams II and Jean Stoick. At the art center they

will use animal track stamps to learn what animal makes which track. Children will make pinecone bird feeders to hang throughout the farm grounds. As they tour the farm, children will be encouraged to look for real animal tracks.

Next month Wintonbury students will focus on Alpacas!



Children in Room 306 are thrilled to be under the parachute in physical education class.

Let's Talk!

Join us for an interactive workshop to promote vocabulary and early literacy skills.

Read a book with your child and learn techniques to expand and extend their language and learning!

Hosted by Irene Garneau and Anne Lally



Who? Parent and child (optimally 1 parent for 1 child)

Where? At the Blue Hills Fire House #1, 1021 Blue Hills Avenue, Bloomfield, CT

When? Thursday, January 17 at 6:00 p.m.

Come for a light dinner, a tour of the fire house and bring home a free book!

Limited space!!! You must register with [Irene Garneau](#) by January 14, 2013

Nurse's News

Winter is here. Please be sure to send hats, mittens and boots for the cold weather. When snow finally arrives, please be sure to send in snow pants as well. It's also a good idea to include a **complete change of clothes** for those unexpected encounters with mud puddles.

I am including a clarification of the Tylenol policy as it pertains to Pre-K (3-year and 4-year-olds): We

Alea Anderson

must have a written medical authorization from their MD for the administration of Tylenol. Kindergarten students do not need MD authorization, only parental permission (included on the back of the emergency card). The school provides liquid and chewable forms of the medication. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me, Alea Anderson, at 860-769-5510.



Many thanks to WECMS families for a successful food drive!!

Developmental theorist, Lev Vygotsky, tells us that young children “stand a head taller” when engaged in pretend play. Creating and following rules for specific roles in dramatic play promotes self-regulation and executive function. These skills help students to attend to tasks, remember to follow rules and be “ready to learn”.

In the Dramatic Play Area children take on different roles and recreate real-life experiences. They use props and make-believe to deepen their understanding about the world they live in.

The ability to pretend is very important to your child’s development. Children who know how to make believe develop a good vocabulary, which is important for reading. They learn to cooperate with others and solve problems, and are able to think abstractly—all important skills for success in school. When children pretend, they have to recall experiences and re-create them. To do this, they need to picture their experiences in their minds. For example, to play the role of a doctor, children have to remember what tools a doctor uses, how a doctor examines a patient, and what a doctor says.

Being able to **visualize** an experience or characters from a story is a critical skill for reading comprehension in later years.

At home you can encourage the same kind of pretend play by simply playing with your child and providing some simple props. A sheet and a large empty box creates a house, a hide out, a pirate ship, a doghouse, a castle or a train. The best part about dramatic play is that it only requires your imagination.



Join us for a 2nd Cup of Coffee

Wintonbury Lobby after drop off
Friday, January 4th

Hosted by Principal Jenna Tenore
and Wintonbury Staff

Mixed-aged grouping at its best in Room 302, where an older student assists his younger peer in using the computer center.

Kindergarten Happenings -from the Reading Lady

Carolyn Woodman

A great way to encourage conversation and oral language is to go outside for a walk. The outdoors is a great place to observe, predict and investigate. Try noticing the trees and have your child describe the different parts. Talk about their size, shape and color. Look for footprints in the snow and watch for any animals scurrying by. Choose to walk during the morning, afternoon and evening and notice

the different shadows and sounds. Set up a rain or snow gauge by using a clear plastic cup or wide mouth bottle. Predict how much snow or rain will fall and after the storm check it. Was there more or less than predicted?

Magazine suggestions that are appropriate for children 3-6 years old:

National Geographic for Kids: Appealing photos of animals in their habitats. Each issue features 2 or

3 animals. \$25/year

Your Big Backyard: Focuses on animals and nature. \$19.95/year

Chirp Magazine: Contains stories, activities, puzzles and games to do with your child. \$34.95/year

Click: A theme based subscription for a 9 month period. \$33.95/9 months

Ladybug: Contains stories, poems and songs for children 3-6. \$33.95

Bones con't from page 1

on an in-house resource by inviting Jill Kenyon, our district physical therapist to talk to the class about bones and to share her expertise on the subject. Mrs. Kenyon shared a set of synthetic bones and x-rays for children to explore. They measured, compared and discussed the different attributes of the bones. Children tried to match the bones to their own body parts. They estimated how many bones might be in a hand or a foot. They also guessed at how many bones in a human body. Mrs. Kenyon answered their questions and provided factual information. They learned that bones “stick” together by ligaments. The bone investigation continued outside the classroom through collaborative planning between Ms. White and the staff at the Auerfarm. While at the farm

children touched live animals and felt for bones under their fur. A bird skeleton was also available for observation and then borrowed by the class for further investigation at school. In addition, families were invited to share any knowledge they had about bones.

Learning about the bones of animals and humans provided factual information for children. It helped to dispel myths around bones such as scary skeletons and those seen on pirate flags. They learned that bones help you stand up straight and move your body. Throughout the study children practiced valuable skills such as predicting, estimating, and counting. Hands on experiences allowed children to engage with the topic through a meaningful and developmentally appropriate approach. Children also gained rich

vocabulary such as skeleton, muscle, ligament, tendon, calcium, x-ray, skull, and human to list a few.

Ms. White expressed her appreciation of emergent curriculum by saying “you are studying a topic that children are genuinely interested in. We are learning much of it together, there were many things I didn’t know about bones.” By collaborating with children you can help them think through the steps of a problem, use multiple strategies and develop a positive attitude towards problem solving. (Dombro, 2011) Ms. White summed it up well when she commented, “Through studies children are able to practice the process, they are learning how to learn.”



Left, children discuss the properties of bones.



Right, a student from 101 holds an antler he and his father brought from home to share with the class.

Acts of Kindness

At Wintonbury, no good deed goes unreciprocated! Preschool teacher Mary Munson, her husband and daughter recently made a new addition to their family. The Munsons opened their hearts and home to a four year old son. When Mrs. Munson shared her news, Laura Rodenbusch, a parent in Room 202, tapped into her online mothers’ group called Moms and More. She put out a request for clothes and toys to get the Munsons off to a well supplied start! The response was

overwhelming! In just three days she was able to collect three wagons full of items. Mrs. Rodenbusch said, “It was such a special moment for us to share the generosity of others with someone who was so incredibly deserving. I’m very thankful for the kindness and compassion the members of the Moms and More Club showed to Mrs. Munson, and we are very thankful to have two such kind and compassionate teachers for our son and his classmates.” Congratulations to the Munsons!



Mrs. Munson with donations from Moms and More.