

Dear Parents,

October 29, 2017

We had a beautiful fall with your beautiful children. They are really settled in now. There are hardly any tears at drop off, they are forming friendships and learning to be patient and respectful with one another. They know what's expected of them and they are thriving in our predictable, consistent environment. They love our structured times as much as playtime. These children really love Circle and story. I love catching glimpses of their faces while they participate and listen. Most children are saying the words with me and anticipating what comes next. They love our Circle games too and they are having fun while working on impulse control, memory, following rules, listening and imagination.

I enjoy seeing the evolution in their play in such a short time. In September the room wasn't very messy at clean-up time. Now they are really getting into everything and finding new ways to use the toys. They love the loft and still need reminders that all are welcome up there. They love to sit at the top of the ladder and be loft sentries. The ladder is also a busy place because they love to jump off onto the futon. They know my rules for safely jumping and sometimes need help remembering which rung they can jump from and that the futon is clear before jumping off. We've had pirates, campers, kitties and firefighters in our room. They continue to love the hammock and they are more patient about waiting for a turn now.\* (see below for our approach to conflict and communication. If you ever have a question or concern about how we approach conflict, please don't ever hesitate to ask us.)

They all love to make bread and paint. We wet-felted pumpkins this month and we used them in the last two stories (*The Old Women and the Field Mice* and *Mousie's Winter House*). Everyone will take one home next week. We just started working on lanterns and everyone will take theirs home after our Lantern Walk. We introduced yellow to painting this month so they paint with red and yellow now. After Thanksgiving we'll paint with blue.

On Tuesday (Halloween) we are invited to visit DeChantal Apartments. We're going to dress everyone in capes and crowns and walk over. If you feel like joining us, we're leaving the school around 9:20am.

We've been doing a pumpkin circle these last few weeks and after Halloween we'll start our Lantern Circle. Our Circle after that will be about animals preparing to hibernate for the winter. Our next story will be *Mother Earth and the Lantern* and after that, *Autumn Bear*. If you are interested in seeing some of the words to our Circles, I can share them with you. Just let me know and I'll be happy to.

We had a wonderful Michaelmas festival. Thank you for coming. These events are so important for building community and sharing these special times with the children. I hope that you'll be able to attend our Lantern Walk on November 15th at 4:45pm.

Thank Julia Goren and Adrien Vlach for the wheelbarrow. It's in high demand and getting a lot of use and love.

**Reminders and notes:**

- Parent-teacher conferences are coming up in November - watch for sign-up sheets.
- Connie Helms: Helping our Children in a Fast-paced World, Monday, Nov. 6th, 6pm
- Lantern Walk - Wednesday, November 15th, 4:45pm.

\*In addition to fostering creativity and imagination, addressing conflict is also our focus during playtime. Although an oversimplification of conflict, there are essentially two categories: when someone doesn't like what the other person is doing and when the other person doesn't listen when someone says stop. Therefore, more often than not, our work is to help them learn to tell each other (instead of pushing, grabbing or hitting) when they don't like something and to listen when someone says No or Stop!

Here are some ways that we approach conflict/conflict resolution:

At the first sign of conflict we watch, then move in closer if they aren't resolving it on their own. If our presence doesn't dispel the conflict, we then "report" to the children, in simple language, what we see happening. This alone can be very affirming and calming when they see that their caregiver understands their plight.

In the case of a more heated conflict, we listen carefully (and repeat it back to them) as each child describes what happened. When children feel that they are sincerely heard they seem better able to come up with their own resolution, let go of the conflict and move on.

Next, we coach the children on how they can speak to one another effectively and get the results they want. For example, we tell them to say "no" or "stop" or "I didn't like it when you..." or "can I have a turn when you're done?" We have them try it the right way (or do a do-over). They will repeat our words and most times have excellent results.

Conflicts that arise when someone says "stop!" but their friend doesn't listen can usually be resolved by going beside the child and simply saying "I heard Johnny say Stop!" or "did you hear Betty say stop?" A gentle hand on their arm can be helpful.

When someone looks like they aren't having fun in an interaction, I will say "Susie, do you like that?" If the answer is no, then I will either tell them to say so or I will tell the other child that Susie doesn't like that. Then I stand by to make sure the message was received.

Other conflicts arise when children struggle with entering play so we try and find creative ways to help them become involved. For example, two children this week built a house from play stands and a third child, very attracted to their structure, came along and "barged in." The two builders were on the defense so I suggested that the third child was a visitor and should knock on their door, perhaps bring them some pie. They all responded favorably and it diffused the conflict and gave them an idea of how to enter play peacefully and respectfully.

Sharifa Oppenheimer, in an article entitled, "Creating Your 'Family Culture'" has these recommendations for conflict resolution: "1) Use the same tone of voice you use for 'here's the towel.' Simple, informative, clear. 2) Rarely is there a situation in which there is a true 'victim' and 'aggressor'. There are two sides to every child's disagreement, and you need to know both. 3) Keep it simple. A few words used skillfully are far more effective than the best lecture on justice and equality."

As Ronald G. Morrish, author of *Secrets of Discipline: 12 keys for raising responsible children*, wrote, "A few years from now, our children will be in charge of our country and our communities...They will be responsible for looking after the environment, preventing wars, and educating a new generation of children. [We also want them to look after themselves!] How well our children do in the years to come will, to a great extent, be determined by how well we raise them now."