

CLIF NOTES

PUBLICATION FOR A PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES OF THE CLIFTON SCHOOL

VOL 18, No.3

APRIL, 2013

Reggio Corner

Children's creative expression through art plays an important role in early childhood programs and is significant to children's daily experiences at The Clifton School. Art fosters sensory perception, provides the opportunity to represent and symbolize experiences, offers children a chance to experiment, build and explore. Art also strengthens young children's ability to reason and make decisions as well as helps children make sense of the world around them. Children typically have natural tendencies to create. Art is one medium through which children can satisfy this need to create and express themselves while having loads of fun.

Howard Gardiner, a well-known education theorist, writes that "Artistic learning grows from children doing things: not just imitating but actually creating, whether it be drawing, painting, or sculpting on their own." While many educators support this theory, providing ample opportunities for children to experiment spontaneously and creatively has to purposeful and consistent keeping the child's overall development in mind.

Here at The Clifton School, we see teachers exploiting children's creative expressions from the infant village to the preschool village. Teachers guide children's art experiences to ensure the process is always more important than the product. "Process" means allowing children to explore art materials with freedom without the pressure to copy a model. Process is about experimenting with paints, color mixing and exploring with textures. Process allows children the freedom to investigate and appreciate the feeling of creating regardless of the outcome-product.

Most of us can remember the first time we discovered the magic of colors mixing, the sticky feeling of glue, and the feeling of power as you molded clay, not to mention the sense of accomplishment seeing your own beautiful picture proudly displayed on the refrigerator! Even if you did not have these experiences in your own childhood, you can create them for your child. Create an environment in your home that fosters creativity. Junk can become jewels for so save buttons, old greeting cards, ribbons, wrapping paper, paper tubes, fabric, etc. for collages. Collect items from nature, such as pinecones, pebbles, leaves, and twigs for building and sculpting. Inspire your child in the artistic process by asking open-ended questions. Focus your comments on the experience, (The process). Remember to avoid questions such as, "What are you making?" but instead you might say "I like the red color in your picture." The goal is to make children feel comfortable, confident, and competent.

Research Information Taken from the Extension Alliance for Early Childhood

Parent Reminders

Please be mindful and watchful of children and parents in the parking by driving slowly.

As the weather begins to warm, please remember to make sure your child has sunscreen and a water bottle available for outdoor times.

Learning Highlights

Clifton

A LOVE FOR LITERACY

Last month's learning highlights focused on the Language and Literacy training our teachers received

on Staff Development Day. This month we would like to share what our children have been doing relative to the very important acquisition of language and literacy skills. Books and Babies go together well. Our Infants have been exploring books since June and now there is less mouthing and manipulating and more meaningful engagement with books. The favorite books in the Primrose Room are **Head To Toe** by Eric Carle and **Brown Bear** by Bill Martin. Both are wonderful toddler books that feature animals and encourage animal identification, animal sounds and recognition of body parts and colors. While reading **Head To Toe**, Veronica saw the gorilla and said, "gorr-o." Several toddlers clapped their hands when they saw the seal clapping. Akash made the sounds of the frog in **Brown Bear**, used the sign for frog, and when asked the color of the frog, responded "green." The Mulberry friends love **NO, DAVID!** Is it any surprise that their favorite book features the word, NO? They are approaching two—the age of NO! They feel very powerful when they loudly command, "No, David!" When children enjoy having books read to them and are excited about what they are hearing and learning, they are motivated to learn to read and later to read to learn. Our goal at The Clifton School is to introduce children to the power and pleasure of literacy. A love for reading begins when a caregiver or parent holds a child close and reads many books!

The Clifton School was invited by Volunteer Emory to participate with them in World Read Aloud Day on March 8th. Our Hickory Class took the shuttle to the DUC where Emory students read two books—**Madeline** and **Berenstein Bears**...favorites of the college students when they were preschoolers and of our students, as well.

We look forward to further collaborations between the students and our children.



Another literary highlight in the month was the celebration of the birthday of Dr. Seuss. Everyone read lots and lots of favorite Seuss books and participated in a school wide Seussville parade, complete with wacky music and silly hats. The rhyme and rhythm of Seuss books not only makes them very popular with our children, but strengthens their sensitivity to rhyming words which lays a strong foundation for phonological awareness. *“Rhyming and alliteration are significantly related to later reading success.”* (Snowling and Stackhouse, 1996). Thanks for all your wonderful books, Dr. Seuss!



After reading **“Green Eggs and Ham,”** several classes made their own versions of green eggs and ham. When asked how we could make the green eggs and ham, the children in Oak made the following suggestions: Alexander: *“We need green batter. Then we cook it, then it’s done. We need to get it from the oven.”* Grant: *“You put the eggs in batter; then you put the green stuff in next.”*

James: *“You use food coloring! Food coloring is something like green paint except it’s like soggy. It’s like green*

water.” The Chestnut friends used droppers to add their food color, identified numerals to know how many eggs to crack and strengthened their small motor skills beating their eggs.



The day the Chestnut class made green eggs and ham, William said, *“I want to make a sign for “Green Eggs and Ham Day....how do you spell green eggs and ham?”* After writing it on his paper, William used tape to attach it to the front of his shirt, exclaiming, *“Look at my Green Eggs and Ham sign.”*



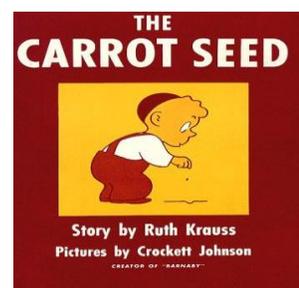
Children seek to be part of a social group and to communicate with the important people in their lives, first orally and later in print. Roen and Pierce may not yet use sophisticated communication strategies, but they eagerly share urgent thoughts, ideas, preferences, needs and feelings...all while on a “car” ride together.



Children involved in free play situations, of their own choosing, demonstrate more advanced use of language. Our children also benefit from more playful experiences which occur in our morning meeting and language groups. After hearing a book about fruits, the Redbud friends get hands on exploration of a variety of real fruits.



Often our planned small group activities relate to a story or concept presented in the Language Group. After reading the Carrot Seed, a small group planted their own seeds.



During their small group time, storytelling cards were introduced to a few Chestnut friends in the book area. Storytelling cards are picture cards without words that encourage children to use their imagination to tell a story with one card or build a story line with several cards. Some elaborate storytelling was the result.



To ensure that learning letters is meaningful to children, we first focus on their own name. The Maple friends went on a Name Scavenger Hunt, proudly standing by their own name when found (sometimes with the help of a friend).



The first letter of their name is very important to the Maple friends, who traced around their letter with their fingers and then with finger paint.

Andrew used 2 fingers to paint his letter which made the lines thicker.



Beans and glue were available for this small group experience in Maple. The children outlined the first letter of their name with glue and then carefully place the beans in the shape of their special letter.



During a Cypress Language Group, the children identified some of the sight words they can read. They demonstrated several of the following literacy objectives: "Understands that letters are grouped together to form words and knows that words are separated by spaces in print; tracks words from left to right and top to bottom with prompting and support; recognizes that print represents spoken word."



Learning Center time offers many more opportunities for hands on exploration of literacy skills. Chloe proudly demonstrates her use of new

colorful transparent construction pieces to create her own name.



While working with clay, William decides to roll it flat and then uses alphabet stamps to make imprints in the clay. He identifies each of the letters. The Birch friends have been exploring upper and lower case letters of the alphabet. Sammy tells his teachers "I'm going to look for letters that are the same, but one is small and the other one is big. Andrew assists in the matching of upper and lower case letters.



The conversations children have during child selected activities, the books they look at and those that the teachers read to them individually and at group time, and the drawing and writing tools they explore in messaging centers prepare them to become successful readers and writers.

Clairmont

Recently we were able to see the Infant Village showing off their skills. The Clifton School Auction just wrapped up earlier this month and the infant village didn't fail to represent some amazing artistic abilities! Even though the auction is over the infant village is staying busy.

The Lily classroom created beautiful tissue paper art for the auction. Their project stemmed from the

children's interest in the tissue box in their classroom. The teachers observed the children always wanting to pull tissues from the tissue box and shred the tissues into small pieces. They incorporated this interest onto canvas. The teachers first provided the children with pre colored tissue paper. The children began to shred it by tearing it with their hands, biting it, stepping on it, and crawling over it. The older children in the class spread glue all over the canvas. Ben was the first to spread the glue using his hands. This prompted the other children to get in on the action! The children were also in charge of placing the tissue paper onto the canvas. Some children placed tissue paper on the canvas one piece at a time while others tried to dump the entire basket onto the canvas. The second canvas that was created was a little bit more involved. They began this canvas by painting it. All the children were given an opportunity to paint the canvas. This time the tissue paper that was used was not pre colored. The children painted this tissue paper. They used water colors, dot paint, and acrylic paint. Again they began to shred the paper and then placed it strategically onto the canvas. Not only were the children expressing their artistic skills but they put their motor skills to work as well. Now the Lily class is continuing this sensory exploration by exploring fabric. They plan to make a fabric collage and even cover a lamp shade in fabric that they have been working with.



The Fern room's auction projects represented some of the different cultures that are in their classroom. This all arose from a culture study that has been an ongoing process in the Fern room. Many parents have come in to share about their culture and traditions throughout the year. One of the auction projects that was done in the Fern room was a tribute to the Mid-

Autumn Festival. A parent came in to share this holiday with the class. They brought in moon cakes, lanterns, and introduced Chinese words. The class created a moon project in honor of this holiday. The children worked on painting the background and painting the moon. It was all glued down and placed into a shadow box. The next project that was done was in honor of Diwali. A parent came in to the class to share about this important holiday in Indian culture. Rangoli (different patterns on the ground), traditional clothing, and information was shared with the class about this celebration. To honor this the children made their own rangoli. They did this by dying rice in the classroom using kool aid. The children had to shake the bag all around to change the color of the rice. The teachers placed glue onto a canvas in the pattern of a flower. Then Lev seemed to take over when it came time to glue the rice down! All the children were very involved in these projects especially dying the rice a different color. Because this interest seems to still be here the teachers have decided that even though the auction is over art projects can still be created using many of the same processes. The next plan is to dye noodles different colors and create with them!



The children in the Primrose class created a beautiful tribute to a former child in their class. The child's name is Momo, which means Peach in Japanese. This inspired them to create a peach on a canvas. The children began this project by painting the canvas. All

the children had an opportunity to paint and they took different approaches as well. Sebastian used his legs to spread the paint all over the canvas while Camden used her hands. The children also colored sand by painting it. They made the sand a peach color and then glued it down onto the canvas. This was a process that took time and effort which showed in the beautiful creation! Because the children showed such an interest in exploring through touch the teachers have continued to expand on this for the children. Many different experiences have been offered for the children to explore touch. They have experienced with cornstarch, flour, water, lentils, paint, leaves and much more. Because of this interest the plan is to continue this exploration!



The Virginia Creeper class has been creating beautiful art all year long. They wanted to represent this in their auction project. The children have been exposed to many different materials to create with. Paint was one of the most popular items. Asher expressed his interest in paint by pointing to it and saying, "Ooooo." His teachers gave him different color paints so that he could mix the colors together to form new ones. The children have also used paint with other materials as well. Paint was used on fabric and Matias used mainly his hands to spread the paint all over the fabric. Natural materials like sand, leaves, and twigs have also been used to create with. At one point cornstarch was mixed into the paint to provide a richer texture. Eight beautiful pieces of artwork were placed in a frame to put into the auction. While sensory experiences are continually explored in this classroom the teachers have noticed the children language skills expanding as well. In order to strengthen and expand on this skill the teachers are providing the children with different opportunities to use language. Books are being read and

the children not only repeat certain words but also act out the different pages. The projector has been brought into the classroom for the children to explore their names and name tags have been made as well. This interest will surely be around for a while!



The infant village really has some talent! All the auction projects were beautiful and we are excited to see many of the creations to come. Even though the end of the year is getting closer these children are still showing their desire to learn and the teachers are doing a great job of keeping the children happy, loved, and engaged throughout the day!

Teacher Feature

Clairmont



Sharika Kemp

Tell us about your childhood: I was born and raised in Atlanta, GA. I am the oldest of four siblings; two brothers and a sister. My extracurricular activities included cheerleading for a small football team in my community, helping out at East Lake Elementary school with Hands on Atlanta and participating in the

Cool Girls, Inc. program to learn and develop life skills.

As a child, what was your favorite thing to play with? As a child my favorite things to play with were a mirror and crayons.

The mirror attached to my dresser was considered my chalk board and the crayons were my writing tools to use on my board to pretend like I was a teacher. Little did I know the inspiration to teach children would start just from having control of the chalk.

How did you come to find The Clifton School and how long have you been here?

I came across a job list ad in the newspaper and applied for a sub/part-time teacher's position. After a few months, I obtained to a full-time teacher position and have continued to strive for improvement and excellence in my teaching abilities. I have been with the Clifton family for 2 ½ years now.

Please tell about your experience working at The Clifton School:

My experience at the Clifton School has been great. I have learned so many positive and right ways to teach children. I have learned more about myself and my philosophy of teaching. I have learned what "being professional" is and what it should look like. It is so evident in the Clifton School and I am so happy to be a part of that professionalism.

What are your hobbies? In my spare time my hobbies include cooking, reading, sewing, traveling, shopping, decorating and spending time with my family and friends.

Tell us about your family: I have a small family which consists of my mom, dad, two

brothers, a sister, a few close cousins, my husband, my son; Amari who I've been blessed to have after losing my first son 2 ½ years ago.

What are your goals? My goals include finishing up my Associates degree at Ashford University in a few months. I plan to continue working with children. I have a great deal of interest to work with children of special needs.

Tell us something no one knows about you: I am taking steps to starting my own business as a wedding event decorator. It's a hobby of mine.

Advice for new teachers or co-workers: Learn as much as you can. Ask questions if something is unclear or if you don't understand. Be hands on as much as possible. Put forth the effort and you should reap the benefits of your efforts.

Clifton



Susan Callair

Tell us about Susan... (family, travels, etc.)

I am the youngest of six siblings from Easton, Pennsylvania. Every other year the family selected a different state to host the reunions. I was also engaged to a professional boxer which allowed me to see the country.

Tell us about your journey to The Clifton School...

While working at a large cardiology practice, I wanted to do something more meaningful in my work. I always enjoyed children, so I began to pursue a career in ECE. I left the firm to concentrate on my studies as a teacher. While completing work on my Associates' degree in Early Childhood education, an instructor informed me about Clifton. She said it was one of the best places to work in Atlanta. I was hired at Clifton in 1999. I left in 2002 to follow a passion to work closely with special needs children. I worked at Easter Seals for 10 years as a teacher and became a foster and adoptive parent. Now I am back at Clifton and it is nice to be home.

What do you enjoy most about Clifton?

What I enjoy most is the family environment of caring and concern for each child, family and employee.

What are your values in education and how do they fit with Clifton?

I value education for young children. This is where teachers begin to nurture and support a child's desire to figure out how the world works and how they fit. Being a part of a Reggio- Inspired program means sometimes I am the teacher and sometimes I am the student. As we provide learning experiences for children, we learn as well.

What gives you the greatest rewards in your work?

The greatest reward in working with children is seeing the sense of accomplishment they have when they discover something new.

Do you have words of wisdom for new teachers/families?

Do what you love and work on mastering it. Have faith that things will work out for the best.

What do you enjoy when away from Clifton?

I enjoy going to movies, dinner, and local parks. I also love shopping with my daughter.

What would we be surprised to know about Susan?

You would be surprised to know that as a foster parent, I have helped to raise

over 55 children. I adopted my only child Zykia, who is 12.

Word of wisdom to live by...

Be honest and faithful and kind to family and friends and it will come back to you.

!



Important Dates

Mar 2 – The Clifton School Auction

April 1- PTA Meeting – Clifton 12:00

May 2&3- Clifton Pictures

May 14&15- Clairmont Pictures.

May 27 – School Closed – Memorial Day

May 28-31 – Closed for Move-up Week