

CLIF NOTES

PUBLICATION FOR A PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES OF THE CLIFTON SCHOOL

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Reggio Corner

The Reggio Inspired classrooms at the Clifton School go far beyond mere physical space. Viewed as “The Third Teacher,” the Clifton School classroom environment impacts everything from the way time is structured to the roles children are expected to play to how children feel, think, and behave.

The social climate of collaborative learning and the meaningful relationships formed between children and adults serve as active ingredients in educating the whole child. By educating the whole child, teachers and families work together to foster children’s healthy human development.

An important aspect of healthy human development is **social-emotional competence**. As scientists, teachers engage in the ongoing process of analyzing the classroom environment to ensure the rights of children and to build positive relationships that support social-emotional learning. This process involves some of the following key concepts of social-emotional competence for young children:

Taken from: *Research Into Practice: Volume 3*.
<http://earlychildhood.educ.ubc.ca>

“Emotional knowledge and emotional regulation”: The ability to recognize emotions in one self and others and to postpone reaction to emotions while channeling feelings into socially acceptable behaviors. In the early stages of social emotional development, infants and toddlers experience emotions and react to them on an affective level. As language and other cognitive skills emerges, such as attention maintenance, and reasoning, children are better able to respond to emotional arousal by using their new cognitive skills to think ahead and create alternative plans for action. By age four preschool children begin to understand that others have internal worlds where they keep thoughts and feelings, and that certain events/actions are reasons for certain emotional responses. This major developmental

stage allows for **perspective-taking** – the ability “to be in someone else’s shoes” which leads to the ability to **empathize**.

Relationship management: The ways children approach each other often depends on the social knowledge they have acquired about social norms (e.g. how to express emotions effectively or how to respond to challenging situations in a problem-solving manner).

Social responsibility: Knowing about emotions is not enough. The goal of social emotional learning is for children to be internally motivated to act compassionately; and to develop a system of ethical values. These values should help guide their behavior and stem from the concern for the welfare of others.”

Research indicates that the ability of young children to manage their emotions and behaviors as well as form friendships is an important prerequisite for school readiness and later academic success.

The foundation for universal practices begins with nurturing and responsive caregiving that supports children in developing a positive sense of self and in engaging in meaningful relationships with others. Here are some ways we can work together to help children thrive and strengthen social – emotional competence!

- Establish positive, supportive climates where children feel safe to express emotions, take risks, and seek help.
- Model empathy (Be emotionally responsive)
- Make expectations clear. Let children know that you expect them to be considerate to others.
- Allow freedom within limits. (Establish a few simple yet specific basic rules (e.g. “Hurting others is not allowed”).

- Guide children’s behavior by providing reasons (“I can not let you do this because it is not safe”).
- Teach emotional literacy. (Help children identify words to express their emotions) Ask: “What makes you feel angry”? “How can you tell when you are angry, sad, scared”?

Developing trusting, responsive, relationships with caregivers both in and out of the home is critical to children’s social-emotional development. Experiencing meaningful relationships with their peers, parents and other adults provide children with an internal working model of social-emotional competence which fosters their healthy human development. The Clifton School learning environments are designed, both physically and socially, to optimize opportunities for the healthy human development of the children in our classrooms.

Learning Highlights

Clifton

MATH FOR ALL AGES

Math exploration begins in the Infant Rooms, as our babies notice colors, shapes and sizes. Through trial and error, one year olds find all the balls that will fit in the plastic container. We see the beginning of seriation in our Virginia Creeper Room, as the babies begin to fit the plastic cups inside each other.



The older Lily friends demonstrate their skills in stacking and nesting bowls and cups of various sizes.



The Holly friends identify shapes in books, lace a variety of shapes and use cookie cutters to cut out favorite shapes from clay. Interest in size and measurement is evident in our Elm Room. After reading the book, "How Do You Measure Length and Distance," several Elm friends used measuring tape to find out how long their blocks were.



Other children measured the tables, cars and even themselves. After Kiara created her "K for Kiara" by arranging buttons on the overhead projector, she compared her height to that of her "Big K".



Sanjay connected the colored unifix cubes to create a train. He used one-to-one correspondence to count "40 train cars long".



Andrew also used one-to-one correspondence to solve a math problem: "How many boys and girls are in our room?" Andrew told us that there were 8 boys in the classroom and Cooper counted 4 girls. We decided to represent the boys and girls with colored cotton balls. Andrew: "Well, if there are 8 boys and 4 girls, then it must be a high

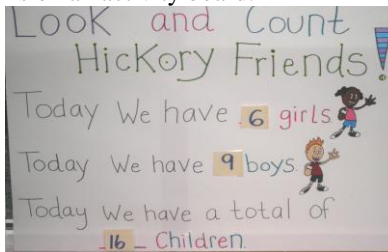
number that's larger than 8 and 4." Cooper: "Yeah, if we put the cotton balls all together on the block board, then we maybe can come up with the number that it is." Andrew used his finger to count each "cotton ball" child. Andrew: "12! It's the number 12! There are 12 friends who are here today." 8 boys + 4 girls = 12 children



Patterning is an important math skill that creates an early foundation for later success with algebra, "Look, Ms. Sheila," said Paul, "I made a pattern. See it's orange, red, yellow, then orange, red, yellow." (an ABC pattern).



In Hickory, Maren used the assorted color gems to replicate an A,B,C,D pattern, "Look, I made a pattern (pointing to each color), white, black, green, yellow, white, black, green, yellow", etc. The Hickory friends also demonstrated their skills in number recognition, by putting numerals in order from 1-20. They counted their friends and represented the number of boys and girls on an activity board.



Identifying sets and numbers was also done as an individual activity. Collette sorted the colored gems by color and placed them into number sets.



Math is everywhere....from the baby room to PreK! Our children actively engage with natural materials, found objects and math manipulatives as they learn new concepts. "Hands-on" math is meaningful and fun at The Clifton School!

Clairmont

Letters, numbers, and words seem to be the overall interest in the Toddler II village. All the classrooms have been exploring this interest as well as a few other things! This is a wonderful age to deepen this interest and expand language and literacy skills along with cognitive development.

In the Sweet Gum class the children continue to build their interest in letters. A few months ago the teachers introduced name cards to the children. Now the children are not only recognizing their names but their friends as well and completely willing to show off these skills! AJ's Mom was in the classroom holding up the name cards for the children and they were quick to call out the name being held up. This led the teachers to introduce individual letter cards to the children. They are using these letters to compose their names and friend's names. Books are also an interest in this classroom. Pete the Cat is a favorite and just recently a new version was donated to the classroom. The children have also begun independently

using their own journals. They are dictating messages to their teachers when they are writing or drawing in them.

The Maple children have also been exploring letters, books, and numbers. They are also exploring name cards. During meeting times the children and teachers sing the name song which is sung to the tune of BINGO. The children identify their name and hold their card up high when it is time! Recently a keyboard was added to the classroom. Kennedy immediately pointed out the K and said, "I see K for Kennedy." She also proceeded to find letters in her friend's names. When the children take walks to Lullwater Park or the SAC their interest in letters and books doesn't stay at school. They take books with them. They will sit down and read with each other in the sun. They identify signs. They also point out many letters they see along the way! This interest in letters is beginning to carry over into numbers as well. While reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* the children use their fingers to count out how many of each food the caterpillar eats. The children are showing awareness of numbers.



The Laurel children are exploring maps. The teachers noticed the children using the Emory Police posts in Lullwater Park as a marker for where they were on their walk. Also, a parent donated a map of Lullwater to the classroom. This sparked the interest! The teachers have incorporated maps into many areas of the classroom. They are beginning to work on creating their own maps as well. This interest led to a discussion about shapes and different

ways to draw them. Language and literacy is very much a part of this classroom as well. While on one of their walks in Lullwater Park Emile found a stick and said, "Look, the letter Y." The children have also used their bodies to create letters. They talk about the shape of the letter and how many friends it will take to create a letter. They have made letters using 2-3 friends. The children have also noticed some similarities between numbers and letters. Mina pointed out that the letter 9 looks similar to a P. To continue exploring numbers the teachers borrowed a basket of wooden numbers from the Maple class. The children helped to identify numbers and are now beginning to recognize them as well.



In the Willow class the children are beginning to recognize letters as well. Schino successfully identified each letter in their letter basket. The children are pointing out the letters that are in their name as well as helping friends to do the same. The teachers wanted to see if there was an interest in journals. To do this they placed a few notebooks in the writing area of their classroom. It didn't take long for the children to utilize these notebooks! Grant said, "My new book, Grant New Book." Soon the entire class will have their own journals. Color exploration has also been an interest in this class. The class has made beautiful collages, attempted color mixing, and even died sand different colors! The children are able to talk about the

different colors that they are using and observe new colors being made.



The learning that is taking place in the Toddler II village is apparent! The children are strengthening all areas of development through their interests. The language and literacy skills are abundant as well as foundations for math and creative expression!

Teacher Feature

Clairmont Site



Queen Jones

Tell us about your childhood:

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, the sixth of seven children. I remember my parents hosting many holiday gatherings. During these gatherings, my mother would prepare the food and joyfully serve the family. We lived on the same block for fourteen years, so I had many friends that I enjoyed socializing with them. I played well with the siblings that are closer to my age. If we did not have anyone else to play with, we played well with each other.

As a child, what was your favorite thing to play with? As a child, I had a body-less doll head that had a head full of hair, that I enjoyed combing and styling. As I got older, I enjoyed playing with my jacks, bat and ball,

jump rope, hula-hoop, riding my bike with my friends and board games. These things were enjoyable to me because I had an opportunity to play outside with my friends.

How did you come to find The Clifton School and how long have you worked here? I attended DeKalb Technical College studying for an Associate degree in Early Childhood Development and Education. Mr. Randy Taylor, our music teacher was my instructor/advisor during the time I attended school, referred the Clifton School to me. I performed my practicum hours and internship right here in the Maple Class with two wonderful teachers. The Clifton School hired me as a part-time teacher when I finished school in June of 2011. As of June 2012, I gratefully received a full-time position.

Please tell about your experience working at The Clifton School: My experience at the Clifton School has been and is great. I have built new and good relationships with some of my peers, parents, and students. I have learned and will continue to learn a great deal more about the Reggio Emilia curriculum/theory from my peers and the research I have done on my own. I have come to learn there are many knowledgeable people that surround me.

What are your hobbies? I truly enjoy baking, reading, and bowling.

What are your goals? My goals are many. I will share a couple: One of my short-term goals is; to learn to speak French for the month long vacation I will take to Paris, France. (Taking lessons now.)

One of my long-term goals is to start school for a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree. This degree will help me with my future goals.

Tell us something no one knows about you: Not many know that I regularly serve in the homeless communities.

Clifton



Emily Loukaka

Tell us about Emily... (family, travels, etc.): Speaking about oneself can be so revealing. I am a native of Georgia, the youngest of four children, and an aunt to 11 lovely children. All my life I have been connected to Emory University because my mother taught at the school for over 35 years. This is interesting to me because now I am working at The Clifton School which serves Emory University families; it feels like this job was in the cards all along.

Another thing about me is that I love food, especially eating foods from different countries. I have had the pleasure of always having school friends from all around the world, so this has made trying new and exciting foods a great way of connecting with friends as well as exposing myself to different cultures.

As many of you know I will be getting married soon so that will be the new chapter in my life. Wish me luck!

Tell us about your journey to The Clifton School... I have been a classroom teacher in the past, so I know how rewarding and challenging the job can be. My entire career has centered on working with children, their families, the community, school systems and educators as well as administrators at all levels. I started my training and technical assistance career with Quality Care for Children. Later, I really wanted to help teachers further their education, so I accepted a position with Care Solution as a program manager with the scholarships and incentive program. Later I moved to doing research and training with Quality Assist and eventually United Way. What all of these experiences lead me to was wanting to work with one program. In working with one program, I felt that I would have the opportunity to work with

children, families, teachers, and the community on making positive changes, what I call taking education to the next level. This does not entail working with one person, but everyone within The Clifton School Community. It does take a village.

What do you enjoy most about Clifton? I enjoy the fact that child exploration is open and encouraged by teachers and administrators.

What are your values in education? The values that I hold in education are that teachers and administrators should work collaboratively with children, parents, and the community to help make positive change in a child's education.

How do you feel about being apart of a Reggio inspired school? This is such a great experience. I feel honored and I am excited to work with teachers, parents, and children on continuing the great work, but also challenging ourselves to take things to the next level.

What gives you the greatest rewards in your work? When a child makes progress rather than be big or small just knowing and being a part of helping a child learn something is rewarding.

Do you have words of wisdom for new teachers/families? Keep an open mind, ask questions, share your ideas, challenge yourself, and always do your research.

What do you enjoy when away from Clifton? I enjoy running, hiking, and playing soccer. Most of all I enjoy spending time with my family and friends.

What would we be surprised to know about Emily? I am an amateur photographer, say cheese.

Word of wisdom to live by... Learning is a journey and that journey never ends.



Important Dates

Feb 13 – PTA Meeting – Clairmont
12:00

Feb 18 – School Closed – Teacher Work
Day

Mar 2 – The Clifton School Auction

April 1- PTA Meeting – Clifton 12:00

May 27 – School Closed – Memorial
Day

May 28-31 – Closed for Move-up Week