

# CLIF NOTES

PUBLICATION FOR A PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES OF THE CLIFTON SCHOOL

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## Reggio Corner

### **Making Connections to Build Positive Social Interactions**

Throughout a typical day at the Clifton School, preschool children have countless opportunities to engage through play and interact with peers. These interactions serve a variety of important roles for preschoolers during the course of the day. As they watch, imitate, model, and interact with one another, preschoolers are learning to share, solve problems, and collaborate. They are also building foundations for healthy relationships that help promote positive social and emotional development. However, these skills won't all come naturally, and unfortunately, some children will face challenges accomplishing skill sets that demonstrate the ability to interact with peers.

Therefore, it becomes necessary for teachers to facilitate experiences that help teach children skills to positively interact with their peers and caregivers. During activities such as morning meetings, small groups and especially outside play times, you can find teachers modeling and children practicing skills to facilitate building healthy relationships, empathy toward others and also develop self-confidence and resiliency.

Additionally, through careful observations, our teachers systematically embed planned social activities throughout the day such as opportunities for classroom helpers and highlighting teacher and children's good deeds that provide increased occasions for children to learn positive social behaviors.

By teaching children appropriate social skills, and creating opportunities for children to practice these skills, teachers and families can improve children's social behaviors, potentially for a

lifetime. With a full repertoire of social skills, young children will have the ability to make social choices that strengthen their interpersonal relationships and facilitate success in preschool and beyond.

*Adapted from research by the National Association of School Psychologists and Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*

## Parent Reminders

### Clairmont and Clifton

Please be mindful to close the infant gate because our infants are more mobile. With the changing season, please remember to bring weather appropriate clothing.

## Learning Highlights

### Clairmont

#### **Infant Village**

The babies in our Infant Village are growing and becoming more and more independent. The older children are standing up and moving around, and many are walking independently; a few of the littlest ones are beginning to roll completely over. Due to these new movements, many of the classroom environments have been adjusted. However, the village's common thread of sensory experiences continues to be the main interest for all classrooms.

Music is a favorite sensory experience in this village. The classrooms all come together a couple of times a month in the piazza to sing, move, and play instruments. Teachers come prepared with songs in mind, and the babies watch, smile, coo, and sing. They will also play music with their own instruments. We have quite a few babies with great rhythm! Because of this interest in music, we now have a music teacher for the infant classrooms, Ms.

Lynnette. Ms. Lynnette comes each Friday and spends about 20 minutes in each classroom. She brings instruments for the children to play, scarves for them to manipulate and explore, and new songs to sing.



In our oldest classroom, Primrose, the children are showing their independence. They are beginning to walk, climb, and even eat at the table. While outside, Ms. Betty takes the children over to the ramp and walks up and down the ramp with them one at a time. Inside the classroom, the children are absorbed in sensory experiences. The class has explored many different materials like cornstarch, noodles, construction paper, lentils, rice, and paint. The teachers observe the children's individual reactions to these materials and then deepen the experience. Recently, the children began exploring oatmeal. The teachers have offered oatmeal to them in many different ways: wet, dry, cooked, covered in glue, and mashed into play dough. As Maya and Camilo explored cooked oatmeal, they reached in and put handfuls into their mouths. Avi did not seem to want to touch the oatmeal. After he reached in and put just a bit into his mouth, he dug right in and kept going! It is great to see how the children are able to use one material for so many different sensory experiences.



The Fern classroom is becoming more and more mobile as well. The children are enhancing their motor skills and are beginning to move around on two feet. As their motor skills improve, so do their self-help skills. The other changes include the introduction of sippy cups and eating finger foods. Their sensory exploration is well under way. They have explored varying materials with textures. The children were exploring flour, and the teachers noticed the children's reactions. Many of the children squeezed it in their hands and tried to taste it. Blake would grab the flour out of the bowl and then put it onto the floor. Elliot used the flour to rub all over himself. The teachers have also been exploring the new location of the light table. The teachers moved the light table and added flashlights to increase interest. By moving the flashlights into the crib area, this highlighted the way the flashlight works, because the area was now darker. The children each had an opportunity to hold and maneuver the light. The flashlights now seem to be a popular item in the class.



The babies in the Virginia Creeper classroom are now sitting up and becoming more mobile. As a result, the Virginia Creeper teachers revamped their classroom environment. Noah is crawling around and pulling up on the shelves. The children have worked with many different materials and textures as

well. The teachers introduced a new material and then expanded upon it by incorporating a new element. The children explored water one day, and the following day bubbles were added. When paint was introduced, the children had the opportunity to explore paint with many different variations. They explored paint with hands, lentils, paper, sand, and flour. In fact, the children were not interested in the flour until paint was added. Another sensory experience in the form of shredded paper was introduced to the children. Later, water was added to the paper. They observed the children grasping the paper, squeezing the water out of it, and balling it up into a fist. Addison moved the paper all over the floor while babbling with her friend Liam.



Our youngest classroom, Lily, is very sensory driven too. Their environment was just adjusted to accommodate sensory exploration. The light table was moved to a more accessible area so the children would have an opportunity to work with it. The teachers added a mirror to the light table along with transparent colored paddles. The teachers observed the children exploring with the paddles and their reflections. Madeline is the first Lily baby that's on the move; she is able to roll around the classroom to get to the materials that she wants. The teachers' reorganization of their classroom accommodated this new skill. Materials were moved down and new areas were created. Many babies are beginning to sit up without support. This skill continues to be explored as teachers introduce new materials to the children. Relationship building is also very important. Recently, two new children joined the classroom. Getting to know

the new children has been important for the teachers and the children.



The babies in our Infant Village are exploring their world daily. They use their senses to expand on their already existing knowledge. The teachers in this village do a wonderful job of providing meaningful experiences to continue development of these skills.

### **Clifton** **Sensory Play with Infants**

In our Infant Village, teachers have been exploring sensory activities with their children. Benefits of sensory exploration include increased development of attention and coordination. Additional benefits of engaging infants in sensory activities on a regular basis can result in infants with better social and emotional development.

In the Virginia Creeper classroom, they have been exploring different textures such as paint, shredded paper, and flour. These sensory experiences have enabled the infants to explore and experiment with not only texture, but touch and taste. As Elise, Isabela and Theo explored the shredded paper given to them by their teachers, they decided that moving the paper with their hands was not enough; a taste test was needed, so they placed some of the paper in their mouths. Meanwhile, Kira gathered a handful of the paper and waved it around watching as it fell to the ground. Teachers also introduced flour as one of the sensory exploration experiences.

Mrs. Petress and Ms. Adrian brought out flour and tools for dumping and scooping. They then placed the items inside a sensory tub. Next, flour was placed on the infant's legs, arms and even on some of their faces. The children laughed and continued to rub the flour on different parts of their bodies, continually touching the flour with their hands in order to further explore.



In the Fern classroom, which is the youngest classroom within the Infant Village, they have explored a variety of textures. Mrs. Brenda set out several provocations such as large sheets of butcher paper. The infants were placed on their stomachs and encouraged to crawl over and feel the paper. Their interest seemed to be peaked; next, the infants began to roll the paper on top of themselves. The teachers extended this experience by adding shredded paper. Joseph rolled in the shredded paper allowing it to cover his entire body. Not only did our Fern friends have an opportunity to explore with paper, but teachers also allowed infants the opportunity to explore with ice. Teachers placed ice in a black tray and allowed interested infants the chance to see, touch, and taste the ice. Despite the cold, the infants continually played with the

ice. Once the ice started to melt, infants then played in the water. Sensory exploration is a common theme among all the infant classrooms. The new textures appeared to capture the attention of the infants. Fern infants continued to reach out and touch the new interesting textures as well as taste the new textures presented to them. This was a messy experience, but it allowed Fern infants the opportunity to engage with wet and dry textures.



In the Primrose classroom, students have been exploring through taste. Teachers gave apples to each of the students and encouraged students to take a bite. All students gladly complied, and all took more than one bite. Along with taking a bite out of the apples, Primrose students examined the apples, running their hands over the shape of the apples that were given to them. Primrose teachers also introduced feathers to the light table. The light table has always been in the classroom, but teachers were curious to see the children's reactions to placing feathers on the light table. Neil reached for the feathers, touching the feathers to his face and then smiling.



In the Lily classroom, infants have been exploring with tape, paint and butcher paper. Lily teachers set up a provocation where they placed long pieces of masking tape in front of a shelf located in the classroom. Teachers encouraged the children to go over and explore. At first, some of the students appeared a little timid, but still curious. Autumn, with encouragement from her teachers, touched the sticky side of the tape and then smiled upon impact. Eli approached the shelf while standing; he made contact with the tape, grasping with both of his hands and smiling. Lily children seemed curious about this classroom addition, as it kept their attention for some time. When Lily children were given paint, several things took place. In the beginning, some children seemed unsure about what they should do with this material. Some students dove right in, while others were cautious touching one finger to the paint, but eventually smearing the paint all over their paper and bodies. When the butcher paper was introduced to the students, they approached with excitement. They rolled around in the paper alongside their classmates babbling to another. The more noise the paper made as students rolled around on it, the sounds of the students could be heard increasing in volume.





As evidenced by the happy sounds and curiosity expressed by the Infant Village friends, sensory activities bring about many positive traits. The infant teachers have done a great deal of exploration with their students through encouraging safe curiosity by helping the children experience as many textures as possible. Parents and teachers can combine all of the activities discussed at home or school. This not only helps with stimulating an infant's sensory skills, but is a great and enjoyable bonding tool for everyone involved.

## Teacher Feature

### Clairmont

#### Jajuary Scott

**Tell us about your childhood.** I was born a military brat. I traveled a lot growing up. In high school, I was in honors chorus and the debate team. I attended MLK Jr. Middle School, Fredrick Douglass High School, and graduated from Southside Comprehensive High School.

**As a child, what was your favorite thing to play with?**

My favorite things to play with as a child were baby dolls. I've always loved

babies, and I am the only girl out of three children.

**How did you come to find The Clifton School, and how long have you worked here?**

I found The Clifton School in search of new opportunities to advance in the field of ECE. I replied to an ad placed online. I have worked here now for two months.

**Please tell us about your experience working at The Clifton School.**

My experience working with The Clifton School has been pleasant. I have experienced meeting new people, learning new ideas, and building new relationships with children, parents, and staff.

**What are your hobbies?**

My hobbies are reading, working out, singing, cooking, and doing volunteer work.

**Tell us about your family.**

My family is from the British Virgin Islands by way of Brooklyn, New York. My mother and father are both veterans and have served in the US Navy and the Air Force. I have three beautiful children: Sydni (10), Elijah (5), and Sage (3).

**What are your goals?**

My goals are to continue my educational journey to become a Master Educator in education and nursing. I hope to have several private practices in pediatric nursing as well as open schools for underprivileged youth in inner city areas.

**Tell us something no one knows about you.**

I was born in North Dakota on the US Air Force military base hospital.

**If you have any advice for new teachers or co-workers or additional comments please let us know.**

Everyone is a teacher in their own right. Knowledge should be spread to all people near and far. It is my belief that

everyone can learn, but we must first open ourselves to being taught. Always remember the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Always give love!



### Clifton

#### Linda Blakely

**Tell us about Linda... (family, travels, etc.)**

I was born and raised in New York, New York. I relocated to Atlanta, GA in 1994 with my son to explore bigger and better opportunities. In November of 2007, I was inspired by a child with special needs to go back to school. I graduated from Kaplan University, the School of Arts and Science with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a focus in Child Development. Upon attaining a Bachelor's degree, I continued my educational goals by pursuing a Master's of Science in Psychology with a completion date of January 21, 2014.

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

I was blessed with an opportunity to explore the field of early childhood as an educator a couple of years ago while attending school. As I continued to pursue my educational goals in child development, I explored other career opportunities with different educational programs, which allowed me to utilize this knowledge to prepare other children

with the powerful understanding of education.

### **What do you enjoy most about Clifton?**

Children are like sponges. Their brains can absorb a wealth of knowledge and information through teaching, while exploring their world. One of my most important jobs as an educator is to be a positive influence (role model) for the children at The Clifton School. It gives me great pleasure to know that while their parents are away, they are receiving the utmost care while in an educational environment at The Clifton School.

### **What are your values in education?**

The principles and standards of education stem from supporting the development of happy, caring and productive human beings. Supporting and educating families, while providing a stimulating learning and social atmosphere based on developmentally appropriate practices is essential for children.

### **How do you feel about being a part of a Reggio inspired school?**

Being a part of a Reggio inspired school is like making learning visible. It is a great and rewarding experience to be able to observe and document the daily life of the children. Clifton's Reggio inspired program gives me the opportunity to help make learning visible through the use of documentation methods and cameras to track the children's thoughts and ideas as they play together or work with materials.

### **What gives you the greatest rewards in your work?**

One of the greatest rewards of working at The Clifton School is being able to wear many hats. As an experienced teacher, I am always prepared to be flexible. As a new teacher, I always remember that my job description may change on a daily basis. Viewing my role as a teacher is very similar to being a guide. A guide leads others down new paths and will walk beside someone on a journey, not in front.

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

Words of wisdom often come with experience. Listen to parents and listen to what they don't say. They may not articulate their concerns very well because fears and insecurities cloud their words/thinking. But whenever a parent is sharing something, look for the underlying concern or question. Look for the unspoken. Read between the lines. But don't assume, revert to asking questions again, if needed.

### **What do you enjoy when away from Clifton?**

During my free time, while away from Clifton, I enjoy the outdoors when the weather permits: bicycle riding, walking, shopping, and outdoor events, just to name a few. I also enjoy church services, spending time with family and quiet moments alone at home.

### **What would we be surprised to know about you?**

Everyone would be surprised to know that before leaving New York City and relocating to Atlanta, I ran the New York City Marathon. I started on the Staten Island Verrazano Bridge waiting for the cannon to go off. I ran through five boroughs and finished in Manhattan, Central Park with a time of four hours and thirty minutes. What an accomplishment! I surprised myself.

### **Words of wisdom to live by...**

The first step in the acquisition of wisdom is silence, the second listening, the third memory, the fourth practice, the fifth teaching others.



### **Important Dates**

November 28 and 29, 2013- Closed for Thanksgiving

December 17, 2013-Clifton Symposium

December 18, 2013-Clairmont Symposium

December 24 and 25, 2013- Closed for Winter Holiday

January 1, 2014- Closed for New Year's Day

January 20, 2014- Closed for Martin Luther King Day

February 17, 2014- Closed for Spring Workshop

May 26-May 30, 2014- Closed for Move up Week