



The Children's Center at Caltech



May 2009

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Upcoming Activities

May 9: *Evening Under The Stars*

Earn Parent Hours

May 11: Parent Education Meeting: Raising Healthy Eaters

CCC Closed

May 22 – Staff Development Day

May 25 – Memorial Day Holiday

From the Office

“Worth repeating,” says the editor...

Mark your calendars now and send your reservation for the 7th Annual *Evening Under the Stars* on May 9th in Dabney Gardens. This event is not only a fundraiser but also a “fun” raiser. In addition to a wonderful meal you can socialize with other parents and teachers in a relaxed atmosphere at the Dabney gardens. Our



goal this year is to raise funds to replace furniture in the classrooms. In an effort to keep tuition down, we do not budget for anything but the essentials. Ninety percent of our budget, your dollars, goes to paying our Staff. The human resources, our gifted and well-trained teachers, have proven to be the strongest indicator of quality care. We know that the environment can play an important role too. Having beautiful spaces to play and learn in sends a message to children that they are important members of the community. We are hoping to replace all the cubbies and as many shelves and tables as we can. I know from the teachers that their rooms, including how they look, are very important to them. So you can help support the center, the teachers, and improve the quality of the CCC all while enjoying a glass of wine with friends and colleagues under the stars.

-Susan



Science Lab

Life is abundant and spring is a representation of that life and growth. Spring is definitely in the air in the Outdoor Science Lab; the warm and fruitful season has provided us with an abundance of insect and other invertebrate life! We have all enjoyed the bountiful harvest as we begin collecting pill bugs (isopods), snails, and ladybugs. We are also in the process of observing the life cycle of the



painted lady butterfly and the cabbage moth. The children have set up vivariums for a snail and pill bug enclosure. For the past two weeks the children have taken a vested interest in the snail collection. They really enjoy watching the wave of muscles in the snail’s foot as it slides across the plastic enclosure. The children have also discovered that the slime that the snails secrete helps the snail to move over any surface, with ease. So interested in the snail’s slime that we actually used the snail’s slime as an art project! Here are just a few comments about the snail trail art:

- Sarah (Koala): “The trail is wet and slimy.”
- Ian (Raccoon): “I’m going to follow the slime so I can catch them and eat them up!”
- Colum (Koala): “The snail is getting away; I can follow the trail!”
- Maddie (Beaver): “The trail is slimy.”
- Phoebe (Koala): “The trail is wet and dry.”
- Hanning (Koala): “Snails make dot marks with slime.”
- Amy (Raccoon): “Slime makes it move good.”
- Pascale (Koala): “I see slimy sparkles!”

Kheng Ly-Hoang and Gia Johnson, Science Curriculum Coordinators



Bunny Hopping

Hello Everyone!

Thank you parents who have donated to the "Beach Day Basket." We appreciate your participation, as this gift basket will be auctioned off at the Evening Under the Stars. This year we will be raising funds for new furniture for our classroom! The teachers are also very excited about this since it will be a great benefit to the children's learning environment. Hope to see you all on May 9th!



During the Week of the Young Child the teachers decided to celebrate by having "Bunny Beach Day." The children all came in with their swimsuits, sandals and hats as we embraced the heat wave and enjoyed water and sand play. We transformed the room with umbrellas, beach balls, plastic floaties, beach mats, towels and hats as we pretended to play at the beach. It was an enjoyable day for all. Pictures soon!

This month we welcome three new children. They are all siblings of children at the CCC. We extend a warm welcome to

Cosimo Graber, Gael Ortiz and Andrew Brower. We also wish Omri Sprinzak the best as he moves to the Dolphin Room. We now have a new room parent: Elena Mantovan (Cosimo's Mom). Thank you Elena!

Parents, we would also like to ask for your help on a future date, Friday, June 12. All of the Bunny Room teachers, along with Susan, will be attending a RIE Conference (Resources for Infant Educators) over the weekend. We hope to bring back good information that will benefit the room. **We will be closing the Bunny Room at 12 noon on June 12.** We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Bunny Reminders:

- Please keep extra clothing in your child's cubby. Check for soiled items at the end of the day.
- Take home nap blankets for washing over the weekend.
- Check your parent mailboxes regularly for important information. The mailboxes are in a file box outside the front door.

Jasmin Alvarez - Lead Teacher



Dolphin Splash

Transition time is here. We welcome Dhruv to our classroom, and soon we will welcome Omri to the Dolphin classroom. Vikki is transitioning to the Penguins to meet up with Peter and Ludovico. The Dolphins would like to thank Usha, who was our room parent when Peter was in our class.

Thank you Usha, for arranging the fun activities for the Dolphin families. I'd like to thank and welcome Debi (Dean's mom) for taking on the job of room parent. Thank you to all of the Dolphin families that participated in our Teddy Bear picnic as we celebrated Week of The Young Child. We had so much fun playing at the park and having a picnic style lunch. Charlotte even brought a snack for her teddy bear to eat.



Thank you parents for putting flowers on our table. The flowers were a lovely addition to our classroom. Our next Home-to-School Connection activity is to share a *water activity* that you enjoy doing with your child. We can include your ideas on our web site. This month's activity idea comes from Olivia and Emily: Olivia states that Emily enjoys playing with measuring cups in her water table at home.

Thank you for all of your donations to our basket for our annual fundraiser. It is looking pretty full.

Dolphin Reminders: Bring appropriate clothing as the seasons change. Always keep an extra change of clothes in your child's cubby. Include a swimsuit for warm days!

Retha Jones - Lead Teacher



Penguin Parade

April has been full of fun because we celebrated a whole week of children. During the week of the young child we got to wear our favorite hat, cap, or hood. All the Penguin children enjoyed it very much.



We have had some changes as well. We are happy to welcome Ludovico and Peter as our most recent additions to the Penguin room. But as we welcome new Penguins, we must say goodbye to others, like Adityan who is now a Koala, and William who is in the transitional stage. Thomas will be taking a leave of absence from the center but he says, "I'll be back soon." Please feel free to visit us Thomas. We will all miss you. We would also like to welcome Vikki from the Dolphins. We hope that you will enjoy your time as a Penguin. Welcome new families and we hope that your time as a Penguin will be memorable.

Penguin Reminders

***Please close the back gate behind you as you exist or enter.**

***Please sign-in AND out.**

***Make sure your child has a hat for our walks on campus.**

Martha Cisneros – Penguin Teacher



Koala Korner

Hello Everyone,

The Koala classroom has experienced few transitions in April. We would like to extend a warm welcome to two new children and families, Adityan Swaminathan and William Boyd, who have transitioned from Penguins. We look forward to our journey together. The staff would also like to say good-bye to Ava and Ian who have transitioned over to the Raccoon room. Good luck and we will see you in the yard.

The classroom also welcomes Darryl Hampton as a new Koala teacher and sadly says good-bye to Raffy. We wish her a safe journey to the Philippines.

With the central concentration of *scales and structure*, the children have been introduced to constructing geometrical shaped structures. They are learning about the cylinder shape and have transformed clay into cylinder-shaped towers. Please feel free to view the display in the classroom. We will be building more structures with cylinders and other shapes.

Donations of recycled materials are welcome for our buildings.

Our campus walks full of investigation, observation, documentation, planning and exploration, used to connect building experience with our surroundings. This has enriched Koala children's experience of building a collaborative wooden house model. We plan to build a boat in the future, as they have shown great interest in this area. After conducting a survey and observing different roofs on campus, the children decided to build a triangle-shaped roof for the wooden house. They have become great builders and thinkers.

In addition to building with and discussing various kinds of materials, Koalas will be making bricks using clay. They have spent a lot of time exploring clay tools and have been practicing to cut, roll, prick, squeeze and transform clay.



Koalas are excited to observe snails, pill bugs, and ants in the lab. They invest time observing the snails' behaviors – crawling and sleeping – and are excited to observe their curling movements. Their conversations about snails have been recorded on the board above the sink in the lab. These exciting creatures

have added to the curriculum, and children are building tiny enclosed homes inside the classroom for them. In doing this building, the children have developed a keen sense of scale – making the houses just the right size for their occupants.

As the weather became warmer, we explored cooking with lemons and made lemonade to quench our thirst. Children challenged themselves by squeezing lemons on the manual juicer. The experienced strengthened their muscles and offered a new taste.

The annual fundraiser, Evening Under the Stars, is approaching. As we get closer to the event, our chocolate theme basket is coming together with generous donation from families. The children also enjoy having their pictures on the stars earned for donations. Thanks to those families who have volunteered to help for the event. Hope to see you there. Thanks to those families who attended and assisted with afternoon snack for the Week of the Young Child.

Koala Reminders:

Please bring swimsuits and extra clothes for water play. There will be an upcoming Parent Education Workshop on May 11th 2009. Topic: Raising Healthy Eaters. It will help you prepare nutritional foods for children. For more information, visit Koalas website on read the flyer in the classroom. CCC will be closed for a staff retreat on May 22nd, 2009.

Filmeena Amjad- Lead Teacher



Raccoon Roundup

Hi Everyone,

What amazing support we have received from you all for our fundraising basket. The camping theme basket was a hit! We got almost everything on our camping list. The class has two things up for auction on fundraising night. Sara has been working very hard on a collaborative painting with the children. It turned out beautifully. The painting is an impression of our garden. The other item up for auction is a Raccoon shadow photo album. Dacia has taken it upon herself to capture all the Raccoons and their shadows. This book is truly priceless. Thank you all and we hope to enjoy the night with you on May 9th.



The children are concluding their investigation of light and reflection. The Raccoons created their own puppets to create stories. They casted the puppet shadows on the overhead projector light and were very imaginative. They also tried casting shadows with their hands. Some created dolphins, bats, birds, ducks and dogs. We discussed and experimented with two or more geometric shadows overlapping each other to create a new shape on the ground.

Going onto campus to discover

shadows was a success. As we walked, we noticed so many reflections. Children were excited to find their reflections on water, windows, cars, and buildings. We also discussed what qualities make something a reflective material.

Our friends also used food coloring to experiment with color. Children used a tally mark system to keep track of the amount of drops (color) placed in a jar of water. The children then arranged the colored jars from lightest to darkest.

We do not mention her enough, but we would like to thank Dayita our music teacher. She is truly a treasure to have in our childcare program. The children just love the joy and enthusiasm she brings to music. We have learned so many songs and movements. The most popular song with the children is *One hundred Thousand Friends and The Workshop*.

Raccoon Reminders:

- Be a rest sitter every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 1:30 – 3:00.
- You can sign up to purchase Cannon ink/paper and receive 2 parent hours.
- Check parent mailboxes and children's artwork to take home.

Veronica Gama - Lead Teacher



Beaver Tales

Thank you to all the families who participated in our "Week of the Young Child" picnic. For those of

you wondering what this is, the Week of the Young Child is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world's largest early childhood education association, with nearly 100,000 thousand members, and a network of over 300 local, state, and regional Affiliates. The purpose of the Week of the Young Child is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize early childhood programs and services that meet those needs. NAEYC first established the Week of the Young Child in 1971, recognizing the early childhood years (birth through 8 years) lay the foundation for the children's success in school and later life. The Week of the Young Child is a time to plan how we—as citizens of a community, state, and of nation—will better meet the needs of all young children and their families.



The Beavers have continued to explore gardening as our main concentration in our curriculum. We have several different opportunities to observe growth that include our outdoor garden

and garden boxes, terrarium, light bank, green house, and fast plants. Growth, transplanting, pruning, and harvesting are key concepts that we continue to use as we garden. The children have maintained the garden by pulling weeds and watering regularly.

The children were able to make two kinds of bread this month with herbs from our garden. First, we made rosemary cheese bread followed by thyme, parsley, cheese bread. Incorporating measurement and familiar math concepts were part of the cooking process. Beaver families and children were able to enjoy this tasty treat for our "Week of the Young Child" picnic. Recipes were filed in parent mailboxes.

WHAT ARE FAST PLANTS?

Last month we introduced fast plants to the children (located in the light bank). Fast Plants are a type of crucifer (a large group of plants that includes mustard, radish, cabbage, and more) that have been bred and selected to have a uniform, short flowering time (14 days) and grow well under in a small indoor space, with little soil, under artificial lights. The entire life cycle for Fast Plants is extremely short,



and under ideal growing conditions of continuous light, water, and nutrition, plants will produce harvestable seeds approximately 40 days after planting. Learners of all ages can explore a wide variety of questions with Fast Plants and learn by engaging in genuine scientific inquiry. Learners find the excitement of growing a real, living plant is irresistible. Fast Plants change visibly every single day, right in front of your eyes. In two short weeks, the tiny seeds will sprout, grow, and bloom. In just over a month, learners can plant seeds, tend plants, pollinate flowers, and harvest new seeds. Visit www.fastplants.org for further information.

Gentle reminder: As warm weather approaches, please be sure to apply sunscreen to your child in the morning and keep a change or clothes in their cubby. If you choose, please leave a swimsuit and towel for our water play days.

Veronica Dayag- Lead Teacher



Parenting Tips

(submitted by Susan - written by a friend and director of a preschool, New School West, called "Ask Roleen")

Dear Roleen,

My daughter loves to suck her thumb. Ever since we went to the dentist a few months ago, and he discussed with us the need to stop, she has been sucking her thumb even more. The pediatrician recommended a reward system to encourage her to stop (calendar with stickers),

which didn't fly. I know it offers her so much comfort. Do you have any advice?!

Many thanks,
Nervous mommy

Dear Nervous Mommy,

My first advice to you is to relax though I know that's a hard thing to do when guilt starts taking over adding yet another item on the pressure list of things to do in order to be that "perfect parent"! Whew! Thumb-sucking is something everyone has an opinion about and there are lots of so called "remedies" to solve what is proposed to be a terrible problem. You just have to google "thumb-sucking" to see that this is a pretty good market to tap. It doesn't surprise me that your daughter is sucking even more because with the initial conversation, she knows that you've already taken away something that gives her great pleasure. It's not unlike the "five minute call" which we use to prepare our children for the next step. We have come to expect the moans and groans and the endless negotiation dialogue. It is their way of saying they're not ready to stop what they're doing.

Rosemarie Van Norman who is a Certified Orofacial Myologist (an expert on thumb and finger sucking) says that thumb-sucking actually makes the brain produce endorphins, which calm the body and give the child pleasure almost like that feeling of satisfaction you get after eating a big meal. "There's an actual change in body chemistry that takes place when a child sucks his thumb." That's what your daughter is feeling and so you telling her not to feel this comfort doesn't make sense to her. It's really hard to expect a

preschooler to break a habit because, developmentally, they are still in the "immediate gratification" stage and telling them something that is meaningless to them is just that. Meaningless. That's why more than likely the sticker idea didn't work. It's something *you* proposed without considering what the child wants. Breaking a habit such as thumb-sucking is impossible if your child isn't a part of the decision to quit. Preschoolers only understand the pleasure they get from doing something, not the reason why adults don't want them to do it. They don't care what they look like so the worry of crooked teeth won't impact on them. They live minute to minute so rewards "tomorrow" might as well be "in 100 years"!

Just understanding this developmental stage is the beginning of helping your child become a part of the process of weaning herself away from her thumb-sucking. Ask her how she's feeling about what the dentist said. Support those feelings and if she doesn't express them, you can use the words for her. "It must be hard to hear the dentist tell us he thinks it's time to stop sucking your thumb. It's something you really like to do. He's worried about your teeth. That's his job." Allow some time for the idea to sink in. Validate what your child is saying and let her know it's something you are going to work on together. You don't have to make any decisions right away. You are processing the steps and exploring ways to begin to make the changes.

A few years ago I remember this conversation coming up at one of the Coffees with Roleen.

One of the moms shared that she started talking to her child's thumb as a way to start the conversation.* "You know we're talking about you. The dentist said we need to tell you to stay out of Robin's mouth. Do you think you can help?" It's not unlike what we do in the classroom when we use Persona Dolls to help the children problem solve. By using "a third person" in the dialogue, children don't feel the problem is about them and they can be a part of the process of finding a solution more readily. The pressure of being blamed or labeled is off. The child is able to take control of the situation because it is no longer about "her".

Just remember that it takes time, patience, understanding and the belief that you can do it to break a habit. Hope this helps. Good luck.

* Narrative Therapy was developed by Michael White and David Epston. Its central idea is that the person never is the problem. The person has a problem. A problem is something you have, not something you are. You don't have to change your nature. You have to fight the influence of the problem on your life.



From the Editors

Do you have some advice for all your fellow CCC parents? We're always looking for contributed articles or announcements for the newsletter. You can e-mail us at colette@asimow.com