Brentwood StrongStart

January 2013 Newsletter

Dear Parents, Grandparents & Caregivers,

Happy New Year everyone! I wish you all a fresh new leaf, a glorious 2013!

It is anything goes on our craft and sensory/play dough tables! It means there is no particular craft activity to engage with for the day, as we used to do. In addition to the traditional materials like scissors, crayons, felt pens, paper, glue and paints, open ended materials like sticks, shaped woods/papers/foams; twigs, carton tubes, seeds, pieces of cloths, beads, ribbons, glitters, goose feathers, etc. are provided. Please help your child choose the open ended materials he/she would like to use, either to make creative craft or engage in dough play. The open ended materials, in addition to the traditional play dough cutters, will enrich your child’s dough play. These open ended materials are placed in a rack between the craft and sensory or play dough tables.

Have fun ‘playing’ and feel free to laugh! Laughter or having fun increases white blood cell activity and changes the chemical balance of the blood. This is believed to boost the body’s production of chemicals needed for alertness ad memory. Laughter reduces stress, and low stress enhances the brain’s receptivity to learning (Start Smart, Pam Schiller).

Let us support our children in their open ended creative activity by allowing them to create their own, use materials prudently and avoid waste. In addition, let us refrain from making sample or model for our children to copy. Trust your child’s imagination and creativity. Your child’s mind is “more enriched” than you think!

Further, I would like to encourage families’ involvement in their children’s science learning in our classroom, at home and in the community. Let us help our children recognize science everywhere and in doing so, we motivate them to explore, develop curiosity, observation, measurement and asking questions.

As you know, every week, a particular science fun play is provided for you and your child to explore and have fun with. Being the start of a new year, let us explore the symbol of birth, a new beginning….. EGGS! A bird’s egg is rather like a spaceship. Inside, there is a living thing, a chick, which has to survive in the hostile environment outside its mother’s body. The shell of its “space capsule” provides protection, and inside is all the food and water that the living inhabitant requires. Observe the stages of development of a chick, from an egg until the right stage of development, when the chick breaks open the shell and struggles free into the outside world.

Other fun science plays scheduled for January are:

a. “See inside a shell!” With sandpaper, you and your child can scrape holes in shells and see how they are built.

b. “Popcorn dance!” It is a delightful way to observe chemical reactions between vinegar and baking soda. Observe how bubbles of carbon dioxide produced by this reaction caused the popcorn kernels to dance.

c. “Raisins can dance too!” After pouring in a clear carbonated pop drink into a big glass, let your child mix in about 10 pieces of raisin. Over the next minutes, your child will observe the movements of the raisins in the glass. They sank at first but after a few minutes, the raisins started rising and moving on the carbonation. Watch for more fun science play on our science table!

Your child’s science experience should not only be in school but should continue at home and in the community. Let me share the resource sheet, “Science at Home” a part of it is written below:

**Physical Science:**

Key Concepts: Physical attributes like size, weight, shape, color, temperature, states of matter (solid, liquid, gas); measurement, position (under, above, below, beside, near, far);

push/pull; sound; vibration; light and shadows; heat production; natural forces such as gravity and magnetism (repel/attract).

Family Activities:

* Go on a shape scavenger hunt to find and name as many shapes as you can.
* Tale a walk and discuss all the sounds you hear. Compare and contrast natural and man-made sources of sound. Together, match sounds with the animals that produced them.
* Make rain by boiling water in a teakettle and holding a pot containing ice above the steam produced.
* Shake whipping cream in a closed jar. Observe and discuss the change in the state of matter as liquid cream becomes butter.
* Explore the properties of toys in the bathtub. Investigate which objects sink and which float.
* Construct an inclined plane using a board and a stack of books. Time and compare the various speeds of a ball or toy car rolling down the incline when you change the slope of the plane.
* Use a simple magnet to classify common household items as magnetic (attracts) and not magnetic (repels)

**Life Science:**

Key Concepts: Basic needs of animals (air, water, food) and plants (air, water, nutrients, light) life cycle (birth, aging, death); inherited traits; behavior of animals; causes of environmental changes and effects on plants and animals.

Family Activities:

Involve your child in take care of houseplants and pets. Keep track of the plant and animal growth and document development with drawings, photographs and notes. Relate these changes to those of other plants or animals in nature.

Take a walk and identify all the animal tracks you see. Read Animal Tracks and Traces and try to match those you observed.

Sort photos of animals based on physical attributes such as color, size or type of covering. Discuss how animal’s features help them survive in nature.

Observe the physical properties of 5 or more types of seeds. Soak hard seeds in water for a few hours to loosen the skin. Cut open all the seeds and describe what the insides look like.

Research your child favorite animal in books and on web sites. Determine its life cycle, diet and behavior.

**Earth and Space Science**

Key concepts: earth materials, fossils, sun, moon, stars, clouds, location, movement; changes in Earth surface (erosion, weather); light and shadows; weather and related vocabulary (snowy, rainy, sunny); seasons; Earth resources and the natural environment.

Family Activities:

Start a collection of rocks from your travels near and far. Examine and sort the rocks by properties such as color, texture, weight and density.

Observe shadows at different times of the day. Compare and contrast their length and determine scientific explanations for these differences.

Draw and write observations about the current season. Discuss: What season is it?; when does the sun set?; when does the sun rise?; when do flowers bloom?

Observe the night sky. Locate and identify constellations or keep a pictorial log of the phases of the moon, stars on black paper and connect the stars. Or draw the moon apparent changes in shape each night during one month.

Encourage appropriate resource use at home and in the community. Determine which materials can be recycled or reused and how to conserve water and energy, for example, by taking shorter showers, turning off the water while brushing teeth, and turning off lights when leaving a room.

Science is everywhere…… Let our little ones be excited about it, have fun and learn. According to brain researchers, enriched environment grow brains with higher numbers of dendritic connections and early enriched experiences contribute to brain structure and capacities.

Cheers to a science awareness year!

Adelina Gotera

Facilitator