

Hello Families,

Perhaps you have been wondering why we do the things we do in our class? We would like to tell you a bit about our philosophy of teaching and how that has translated into creative learning in our classroom. The following quote is a good start:

*“...growing out of our understanding of the child, we are asked to create an environment in which children may find and make significant, meaningful connections to their own lives and that will also elicit and release potential and imagination...”* (Harriett Cuffaro, *Experimenting with the World: John Dewey and the Early Childhood Classroom* p.70)

The educational philosophies of John Dewey shaped Ms. Warren's teaching philosophy very early on. The ability to learn from experience is one of the fundamental concepts of Dewey's philosophy. Dewey felt that the child and environment were equally important and that experience comes to be through the interaction of individuals with their environment. While much about our students is unknown to us as teachers, we can influence children's experiences through the social and physical classroom environment. We structure our classroom in a way that promotes respect, open-mindedness, and a strong sense of community. The materials in our classroom are developmentally appropriate and support active exploration, individual expression and communication, and learning in a meaningful context. We believe that it is our job to offer experiences to your children and suggest links between their personal and larger world through discussion and exploration. In more recent years, Ms. Warren has delved deeper into the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, which encompasses many of the same thoughts. The Reggio Emilia approach values authentic play and art and the shared inquiry of children and adults. The teacher's role is to listen and observe and guide your children; we document their thoughts and questions, and offer experiences that might spark their interest and continue or deepen an exploration. Loose parts also figure largely in Reggio-inspired environments. We offer experiences through provocations and invitations. If you are interested in learning about this philosophy in more detail, Susan Stacey's book *Inquiry-based Early Learning Environments: Creating, Supporting, and Collaborating*, is an excellent resource.

So what does that mean for your child? We listen, listen, listen! We change up the materials in our class to prompt new and creative play. For example, we put a big bin of snow at our Wonder Centre, added wizards and fairies and dragons, and treasures from Hemlock Ravine. Your children set about making a snow world, building castles and enacting fierce battles. The story-telling was rich and joyful. This is called a provocation, setting out materials to spark interest and allowing your children to respond (or not).



An invitation is more direct, and may come in the form of a question for your child to consider or explore, often using open-ended materials. Before Christmas, we set out an invitation based on the book *Snowballs* (remember from the last letter?). Your children were asked, “Can you make a snow person (or animal)?” and we provided an array of materials. You saw the results at the Holiday

Concert. But one child was entranced by one of the materials, and went in a completely different direction than we expected. Evan loved the yarn that some children had used for hair. But he started to tie knots, and to attach the yarn to the Word Wall, table, chairs, bookshelves, and garbage cans. Ms. Warren sat closely by, and he explained "I am tying knots!". Other children gathered around, and Maddie and Avery suggested that they make a zipline. And so the exploration began. Much to their dismay, our caretaker would sweep through their creations everyday, and so began our reconfiguration of our House Corner to make a protected spot for your children to continue their play.

Before Christmas, Ms. Warren read your class *Iggy Peck, Architect*, and we opened the new Building Centre, named by your children. Look at the materials given as a provocation, and what your children are building together. Our website blog has even more pictures and tells the story in more detail! Your children are creating, problem-solving, and story-telling. Has your child told you that they want to be an architect? We have a few in the class! Our explorations continue with our new Tower Centre, and our architecture books. We are excited to see where it will lead.



We are happy to announce that we would like to continue our visits to Hemlock Ravine. Your children were joyful in their play in January, sliding down hills, digging for subnivean tunnels, discovering animal hollows, and hanging apple birdfeeders for their forest friends. We are planning to return on Wednesday morning. **Please ensure that your child is dressed in a warm coat, snow pants, boots, mittens, and hats!** Most of your children are also bringing extra socks in their backpacks; our hallway gets wet from snowy boots, and often socks are damp before your children reach their shoes in the classroom. Also, an extra pair of warm, dry mittens to keep in their backpack is always welcome when they go out for their second lunchtime recess play.

-Dates to remember:

-Monday February 17<sup>th</sup> is **Family Day**. There is no school that day.

-Thursday February 19<sup>th</sup> is our **School Trip Day** to hear the Stadacona Band.

We appreciate your time to read through this note, and your support with the items above. We look forward to building a partnership with you and learn with your child in the coming year. Stay tuned for more news about our classroom and program next week.

Thank you, Ms.Warren and Mrs.Klyne