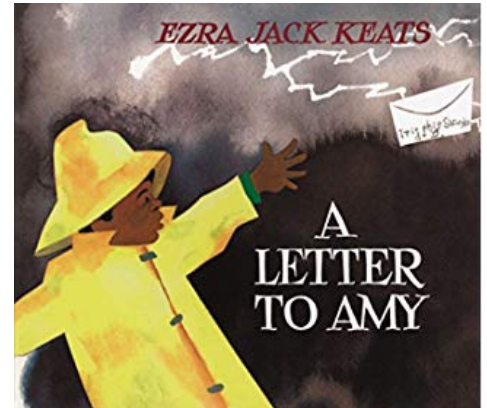


Hello Families,

Happy New Year! It's been such a long time since we touched base with you about the learning we have been doing. We feel like the next couple of letters will be us going back in time to tell you more details about the amazing things that you may have heard from your child. We are sure that your child told you about the transformation of our Writing Centre before Christmas. Did they talk about the book that prompted the change? We read *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats; it's Ms. Warren's favourite book of his, along with *The Snowy Day*. In this book, Peter's birthday is coming. He wants to extend a special invitation to his friend, Amy, because she is a girl (as a side note, this is also a perfect topic for our class, as we have conversations about birthday invitations, and girl and boy friendships...). Peter writes her a letter and mails it. We talked about letters and stamps and how to write a proper letter to someone. Then our Post Office was revealed! Your children were overjoyed to see that everyone had their own mailbox! A letter template was posted above the boxes for your child to use as a reference for the word "To" and "From". Special paper and stickers were made available to your children to make letter writing paper. Envelopes and stamp books from the real post office were laid out for your child to use. The Post Office was, and still is, a place of mad creation! Children are writing thank you notes to each other, birthday congratulations, and special messages of friendship. We see your children going to the Word Wall for names, and using print



around the room in their letters. Check out our website for more pictures of your writers. It is so important for your children to see that print carries a message and that their words matter to themselves and those around them. This is a wonderful way for your children to choose to express themselves.



Another book inspired your children before Christmas. Did you see some strange and wonderful creatures coming home before the break? We read *Jillian Jiggs and the Great Big Snow* by Phoebe Gilman. In this book, Jillian goes out to play in the snow, and progressively loses her hat, scarf and mitts. We are sure that many of you can relate! In the book, Jillian and her friends go out to play, and at one point make a Martian landscape complete with snow aliens. After the book, we set out loose parts and plasticine for your children to explore the new medium. They were pleased to find out how soft the plasticine became as they worked at it between their fingers, and how their creations could be left out without risk of drying. But what do we mean by *loose parts*? You may have heard your children talk about loose parts before; we actually have a whole loose parts bookshelf in our kitchen area in the classroom. In the words of Susan Stacey:

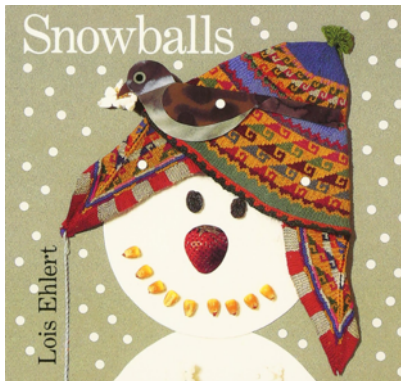
"The term loose parts... refers to all the wonderful bits and pieces that we might use in our lives... including natural materials, pieces of machinery, containers, and fasteners of all types... The most important aspect of loose parts is that they provide for all types of play at any level; they act as a catalyst for children's big ideas..." (Inquiry-based Learning in the Early Years 2019)

Loose parts figure largely in our classroom learning. Instead of proper wooden play food, your children imagine slices of wood to be cookies or cakes or even a cellphone or walkie-talkie. Corks and elastics become spaghetti and meatballs. Gems become treasured jewels or cherries on top of cupcakes. The possibilities are endless. We are amazed at the creativity and flexibility that your children display in work and play using these open-ended materials. At the Jillian Jiggs centre, we saw aliens and snow people, and then children started to teach each other how to make mice and rabbits, and even the life cycle of a caterpillar! You can imagine the rich conversations that occurred as they worked. Again, take a look at our website for some peeks at your children and their creations.



There are innumerable natural loose parts in the world around us! In our last visit to Hemlock Ravine, we read the book *Snowballs* at our meeting area in the woods. Your children had already been busy collecting treasures along the way to our spot, and Ms. Klyne brought some large wood slices. We invited children to make their own snow people and animals if they wished. Some children took us up on our offer; take a look at what they made! At the end, we spotted Jane sitting in front of a line of wooden slices, hitting them with a stick and listening to the different sounds each one made. Maybe this will be the start of a new investigation? We are always keeping our eyes and ears open for new interests that your children might express.

Next week we will tell you about how a related loose part invitation prompted an entirely new Centre



and exploration in December that is still going strong in January! In the meantime, we are happy to announce that we would like to continue our visits to Hemlock Ravine this winter. **Please ensure that your child is dressed in a warm coat, snow pants, boots, mittens, and hats!** This goes for Hemlock Ravine days, and really everyday! We are so happy to see how warmly dressed our class is this year, thank you. Many 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:

-Thursday January 23rd is **PJs for Australia Day**. The grade six classes are raising money to help koalas impacted by the fires in Australia and they invite all students to wear PJs that day and bring in a \$2.00 donation

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