

# The Calvin Hilltop



Calvin Hill Day Care and Kitty Lustman-Findling Kindergarten

Early Spring 2009

## 1.15.2009 - Accreditation Day

The highly anticipated day arrived on a snowy morning in January. After two years of hard work to accomplish the documentation and institute new procedures and improvements, the on-site assessment for National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation finally happened.

It was a full day. The assessor observed in the kindergarten and pre-school classes. Carla Horwitz, Calvin Hill Director said, the assessor "was very thorough and also reviewed the classroom portfolios for these classrooms and the three file box program portfolio."

Many of the policies and procedures in the Parent Handbook were revised or created in response to the re-accreditation process. This process is a national standard which Calvin Hill has maintained since 1987, the beginning of accreditation. In the past few years, the process was "reinvented" and made more rigorous, intense and time consuming. It now involves participation by teachers and parents as well. FYI: parents should expect to be part of an evaluation process this year (spring) which will include a survey and a chance for comments. Carla

also said, "We're proud of all the hard work and grateful for the parent support." NAEYC will contact Calvin Hill in about two months with the results.

## Celebrating MLK Jr. Day

Each year the teachers may share an age appropriate book about the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. or have a discussion about the story behind the Monday holiday. This year, the pre-school class plan 'shifted' on them when a student shared that Martin Luther King had been shot. Included in this newsletter (see page 2) is a note that Linda sent out to pre-school parents detailing their conversation. The letter is not only a helpful guide in how to discuss King's role in our nation's past, but an example of how responsive and age-appropriate the teachers at Calvin Hill truly are.

The Newsletter team includes parents from each floor who generously collect stories and pictures from the teachers and students. They are Laura Eakin Erlacher, Merav Givoni-Hrushovski, Cathy Pamelard, Kate Ott, and Brian Hill. Layout and design by Dan Cogan-Drew.



# Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear Parents,

I wanted to let you know about a discussion we had in meeting today about Martin Luther King Jr. We intended to mention the day briefly as explanation for the day off and then to follow up a bit on Tuesday and see what kind of info kids already had. However, as is often the case with young children, the plan changed as many of them started sharing what they knew, including that he had been shot.

We launched into a longer discussion in response to their questions and comments, and also read a story we have. Here are some of the key words and concepts that were discussed:

He lived a long time ago when John and Linda were kids

He believed that there were laws and rules that were not fair; that people with dark skin and people with light skin couldn't go to same schools, restaurants, parks, etc.

That he talked to people and got people to work together to change those rules.

That he believed in using words and love, not fists and fighting to change things.

The book described how Rosa Parks was a brave woman to refuse to sit at the back of the bus.

We did our best to deflect the attention from the part about him being shot and to reassure kids that we were safe. When they asked about the man who shot him, we said he was someone without a lot of love in his heart.

We tried to emphasize that the important part is what a special man he was and what he believed in, and that is why we celebrate his birthday every year. I think we may have accomplished this, as when Zayd's mom came to pick up he said,

"He was a very brave man who helped to change the world."

We just wanted you to be aware as there will probably be many questions as well as some worry.

As always, if we can help in any way, let us know.

Best,

Linda, for the preschool team.



## Watching with the World: Inauguration 2009

Like many of us, the kids at Calvin Hill watched the historic Inauguration of Barack Obama. The Kindergarten and the pre-school floor joined together to watch as Obama was sworn in (yes, a TV was at Calvin Hill – it might be the first, and probably the last time).

The three's class discussed the events and talked about Barack Obama, but did not watch the Inauguration. As one child said to his parent at pick-up, "Barack Obama was in the book corner today." Well, at least his picture was.

To commemorate the occasion, the pre-school and kindergarteners made pictures and dictated words which teachers bound in a book. The children also had some thoughts on the experience of watching the Inauguration. There is a small sample of the thoughts captured here, but President Obama will receive the full list.

Teacher: Does anyone know why this day is special?

Leo: Barack Obama is electric!

Sahana: He is going to talk to a lot of people to be smart.

Daniel: I feel fantastic because Barack is going to be President.

Madeliene: I'm going to watch the parade. I feel a little love – I'm in love with Barack Obama. I like when he's the President.

Wolf: I know why Barack Obama won – he is such a great man. What makes him a great man is because he feels happy when people voted for him.



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Eliza: He is going to the White House and who will work with him?

Teacher: The Vice President, Joe Biden, will work with him. Barack Obama wants all of us to work with him, too. Why did people vote for him? What makes him special?



Arnon: Because he was so powerful, that's why we voted for him. He can fix things without doing violence.

Teacher: Like someone we talked about on Friday.

Noelia: Martin Luther King.

The bound book has been postmarked to President Barak Obama with a copy of the Calvin Hill calendar. The children are hoping for a reply, but realize a new president is rather busy.



## Threes Room Update: I'm Going on a Trip, in my Favorite Rocket Ship

The Three's class is packed and ready to travel. Dramatic play has been transformed into a travel theme complete with luggage, tickets, gloves, eye masks, keys, and maps. The travelers have taken trains, boats, planes, and buses (made out of block chairs) to some very interesting places.



As the plane departs, one crew sets down in a forest of wood sculptures and soft puffy mountains. The puffy mountains appear to be a homemade concoction of shaving cream and glue. The giants in this end of town have been finger painting landscapes of white caps. Just over the horizon, small patches of ice can be seen containing multiple colors, beads, pompons,

and feathers – a very unique urban landscape experiment that must be sweeping New Haven (or at least the entry way of the three's class).



Next stop – scientists seen observing growing season as ice sculptures melt.



The boat sails by two amaryllis bulbs surrounded by watercolor representations of some of the first blooms. Hopefully with enough light and warmth, the avocado pits, saved after making guacamole, will sprout. But, there is little time to sit around watching. The train is leaving.

Woo, woo, all aboard. The reading buddies are on their way. John Climie's 4th grade class from the Foote School arrived on Wednesday, February 4. They have a weekly pass to ride in and read individual stories to three's class children. The class was a bit shy at first to meet these people from a new land. Soon enough they 'buddied' with their big-kid friends and are excited for return trips.



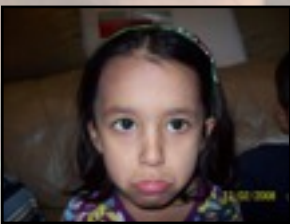


## Pre-School Update:

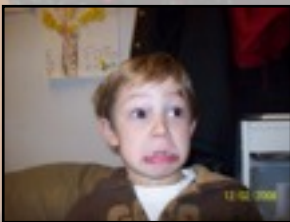
### What do Rorschach, Pythagoras, and Jacques Cousteau have in common?

They would all feel very comfortable on the pre-school floor. Biology, psychology and mathematics are the subjects of the day. There are no lab fees and you don't have to buy the books or \$200 graphing calculators! (That comes in a couple of years.)

Jacque Cousteau would be pleased to discuss the real whale vertebra with the colorful green and gray paintings above it. The Preschoolers are having fun playing part-time marine biologists as they learn about whales and other sea life. As part of their sea study, children painted and are creating a realistic sea, land and sky mural. They can also be heard singing about the ocean including one tune about a baby beluga . . . "Swim so high and swim so free . . ."

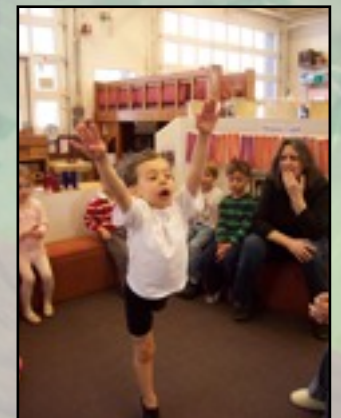


No doubt Freud would have an interpretation of "Baby Beluga"! But the children are having more fun making Rorschach-like ink blots. They are experimenting with paint on one side of the page and folding it over to press another picture. The symmetry lesson is an added bonus. Akin to Rorschach, the children can also tell you how they feel and what facial expression communicates that feeling. The Preschoolers' happy, disappointed, scared, sad and surprised faces can be seen looking out from one side of the classroom. To create the photos, the Preschoolers were asked to show a specific emotion on their face and the resulting photos are quite convincing. The pictures have also been used to develop a feeling book that is in the classroom library. At any other time throughout the day, it's a classroom full of smiles, laughter, and happiness.



That is when their faces aren't screwed up in concentration creating patterns even Pythagoras would envy. In collage patterning, the children have arranged squares of different colors in rows according to their own individual design. In one activity they even learned how they themselves could create a pattern by having someone sit followed by someone standing and continuing this sequence in a long row.

Movement and expression continue to move through the curriculum. The Preschool is dancing up a storm with ballet movement and dramatic play.





## Kindergarten Update: Bloom's the Word

Spring is in the air in the Kindergarten, even though the calendar tells us it is only February: so many changes, so much excitement, roots are deepening, sprouts reaching higher and taller each day.



One decidedly Springy project taking place upstairs is the planting and care of an amaryllis bulb, now 25 unifix cubes tall! Many pictures and art renditions of this beauty have been completed or are in the making and its growth has sparked endless questions and conversations about how plants begin and grow.



Greta's moms visited the Kindergarten classroom to share Sylvia's Native American heritage. The class learned to dance to Native American drumming music and to play a special hand-game Sylvia played as a child. In addition, children had the opportunity to view special shawls and blankets and the dress, moccasins and hair ties Greta wore to her first powwow.



Inspired by the bookmobile, kindergarteners have taken matters into their own hands and created a library for dramatic play. The children built shelves, computers and a book return nook. They are now making library cards for everyone in the class and date cards to slip inside the books.



Amid all this new growth, thank goodness for some old staples to weather the seasons. Rocks and crystals remain a bedrock of interest in the Kindergarten and the paintings, collages, pastels, charcoal drawings and water colors of this subject attest to the children's fascination and creativity. Building has also continued as a favorite activity; new architectural blocks in the studio have added to the excitement and made for new and evolving arrangements.

The kindergarten children have tracked the passing and number of the school days through the year. The 100th day arrived in the kindergarten with much fanfare, excitement and counting of pennies, flat marbles, quarters, and many other things. The planting, growing, learning, budding and blooming continue.



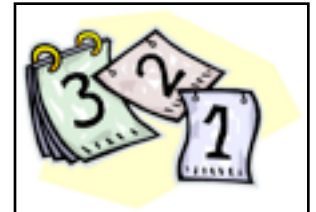
## No need for celebrities at Calvin Hill



Handy Manny and Bob the Builder were not needed at Calvin Hill for the February 1 work day. There was great attendance and participation. Parents climbed on ladders to clean high pipes which was done last about 5 years ago! A desk top was made in the pre-school and a gate repaired. Other parents contributed to heavy cleaning on all floors trying to reduce the dirt and grit of winter. Also, you may have noticed the outdoor kiosk was

moved to a safer more obvious spot.

The next Parent Clean-Up day is May 16. Make sure to wear your gardening gloves!



## Gifts that Keep on Giving

The wonderful family contributions for holiday gifts totaled \$2760. The teachers and staff members each received a gift certificate for a local restaurant, and the fellows received a VISA gift card. Each classroom also received a larger gift. The Threes room will be receiving a brand-new shed for their playground, much like the one that the Preschool received last year. The Preschool got newly upholstered benches and big armchair in warm tones for the reading area. The Kindergarten received some new architectural blocks, as well as books.

## Reminders



It's February. Kids are coming sick. Then teachers get sick. Don't forget the Health Policy. At all times, but especially during the winter months, the staff will be extremely

vigilant, in order to protect the health of all children and staff, and to do everything possible to reduce infection. We will be very conservative about not allowing children at school who:

- Have copious mucus flow from the nose, especially yellow or green.
- Have constant, persistent coughing or sneezing
- Are unable to keep up with the daily activities of the program both indoors and outdoors.

## Signing-up to serve



Our next Parent Committee meeting is Monday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m. at Calvin Hill. Everyone is encouraged to attend! We are always looking for new participants in Parent Committee activities.

Some of our upcoming activities include an April potluck, the April book drive, the May plant sale, and a possible evening seminar on [sustainable](#) living. Contact Candace Walton if you haven't yet signed-up to serve!

## Snip . . . snip . . .

Remember to keep your box tops coming, every little bit helps.

