Our “Healthy Me” unit focused on explorations of the five senses. We also examined the different ways we take care of our bodies and minds. Take a look at how our unit unfolded!

Focusing on the senses in our unit helped us to understand that our senses are what we use to explore and experience the world. We see with our eyes, smell with our nose, hear with our ears, taste with our tongue, touch with our fingers (and feel with the nerves under our skin).

For our explorations about hearing, we used just our ears to distinguish between different sounds, keeping our eyes covered and guessing what we heard. We used the listening lotto game to practice listening carefully. We also used a tuning fork to feel and hear vibrations. When we stuck a vibrating tuning fork in the water, we saw the sound waves. The vibrations made the water move and jump. We learned that tiny bones in our ears vibrate with sound waves. Our brains then get the message and figure out the sounds we hear.

To explore touch, we first felt and described all kinds of different objects. Quartz was hard and a little sharp, feathers were light and soft. Pine cones were bumpy and prickly. We looked at the hair on our arms and discussed how hair helps us to feel when something is touching us because it moves. We also learned about nerves in our skin and how they send messages to our brain about pressure and temperature.

To begin learning about taste, first we learned about the tongue. We tasted shavings of unsweetened chocolate and arugula to taste something bitter, sweetened milk chocolate to taste something sweet, potato chips to taste something salty, and a slice of lemon to taste something sour. Friends also compared flavors. We couldn’t tell the difference between salt and sugar with our eyes, but it was easy when we used our tongues. We did comparisons investigating which was more sour, a lemon or an orange, a gala apple or a granny smith apple. We learned that different taste buds detect different flavors and tried tasting some foods with small sections of our tongues. After learning that smell affects how well we can taste things, we tried holding our noses while tasting food to see if the flavors changed.

Our noses had an interesting time distinguishing between the smell of onion, coffee, perfume and vinegar. Balloons with each scent were hung around the Red Room and we used our noses to identify the smells of peppermint, cinnamon, and vanilla as well. We learned that our noses can distinguish between lots of smells (10,000), but other animals like dogs can smell even more different scents.

For sight, we started with a memory tray. We used our eyes to look at the six items on the tray and when the teacher took away one of the objects while we hid our eyes, we took turns trying to guess which object went missing. We explored a model of the eye and discussed tools people use help their eyes when they don’t work or don’t work as well.
Taking Care of Our Bodies

With a combination of books (including *Me and My Body*, *I Keep Myself Safe* by Cathy Torrisi, *I Learn with My Senses* by Christopher Raymond, *My Wonderful Body* by Donna Marie Pitino, *Let’s Eat* by Donna Merritt, *I Keep Myself Healthy* by Brenda Dominello) and free-choice activities, we explored how to keep ourselves healthy. We practiced stretches and movement exercises from gym at the beginning of our circle times, did relays in gym class, and created our own exercise area in the dramatic play area of the Red Room (Tomer’s Gym) to explore exercise and our bodies. We even made gym membership cards. To learn about healthy eating, we categorized food during snack time and examined thinly sliced fruits and vegetables at the light table with microscopes. We also used a real juicer in our dramatic play area juice bar and tasted juice made of carrots and apples. We talked about sleeping and learned that our bodies need sleep to be healthy and grow. We also took care of babies in the dramatic play area. We washed them, fed them, played with them, and put them to sleep because those are all things that keep us healthy. We read stories including *Feel Better Ernest* and *Don’t You Feel Well Sam?* to explore how to take care of ourselves when we aren’t feeling well. Some of the older threes participated in an activity to test child-proof caps. They tried their best to get the tops off those containers, but no luck, which means the designers did well!
Discovery Area

The Discovery Area was full of sensory and hands on activities so we could learn more about the body and use our senses to explore the world.

We used tubes and turkey basters in the water table to examine how the circulatory system works. Friends also made bones using toilet paper as the bone, play dough as the marrow and a sponge as the spongy layer.

On the tables, we played with finger paint, red clay, and string dipped into paint. We used feathers and toothbrushes as paintbrushes. We created sculptures with Model Magic and built homes for animals with small stone blocks. On the light table, we examined thin slices of vegetables, and examined x-rays. We poured bells, dried peas and beans into different containers.

In the sand table, we did scavenger hunts for different objects and then played with vehicles and ramps. In the water table, we felt different temperatures of water, poured water through tubes and over plastic waves, and washed chairs. We also played with Insta-snow which feels like real snow, but doesn’t melt.

Playground & Gym

On the playground, we were able to ride bikes before all the snow fell. When things were snow covered, we played in the sandbox, used brooms and shovels to move and play with the snow, went down the slides (a new experience in snow pants), and ran around. We also refilled bird feeders and played in the castle.

In gym, we ran relays and started learning soccer skills, including dribbling and stopping the ball.

Red and Blue Rooms

The Red and Blue Rooms had lots of new activities available for the Healthy Me unit. We built with wooden blocks, foam blocks and new rainbow blocks. We read books about being healthy and about different colors we see. We used nets to go fishing for striped fish. We also played with playdough and dolls, painted with watercolors, and used beads to create the letters in our first names. We even played with a marble run that made music and created a band with different instruments.

Tomer’s Gym opened for a couple weeks with areas of stationary bikes, Tinker Toy weights to lift, and places to step and stretch. We learned about eating healthy food and made both real and imaginary juices to drink at the juice bar next door to the gym. We also practiced using our muscles to throw bean bags through snow man hoops and balanced on beams we built in the block area.
Sensory Table exploration

Tubes and plastic wave sculpture at the water table

Painting with feathers

Exploring vegetables at the light table

Building together

Washing off the clay

Doing puzzles

Playing at the train table

Working with Ms. Jin
Thanks to our many visitors!!

This month we were lucky enough to have lots of amazing visitors join us. Ms. Son, Ms. Jin, and Ms. Lee joined the Red and Blue Rooms as practicum students from Seoul for two weeks, we had a great introduction to next month’s building unit with a visit from the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Society. Afternoon friends also welcomed new classmates, celebrated birthdays, and enjoyed leaning about MLK from the Mortar Board Society.

Duksung University Students from Seoul, South Korea

Ms. Son, Ms. Jin and Ms. Lee were fantastic additions to our classes. Each of them shared traditional Korean stories and led activities during Free Choice and Discovery Time. The children conversed with them and worked with them throughout the two weeks. Thank you so much!

Pittsburgh History and Landmark Society

We had educators come from the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Society for a special circle and activities. They used the comparison of buildings to bodies to discuss taking care of buildings. Children had a chance to see pictures of the city of Pittsburgh when it was a baby, a teenager and an adult. They identified the parts of a building using a large floor puzzle and made a building using their bodies.

Afternoon Special Updates and Events

Two new friends joined the afternoon class. We welcomed Elena and Jacey this semester! The afternoon friends also participated in a special Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration presented by the the Mortar Board Society. Annette and Grace celebrated their birthdays at school with special books their families brought to share.