During the Rain Forest and Growing thematic unit, the friends explored: What and where are Rain Forests? Who and what lives in Rain Forests? How does a Rain Forest Work? Why is the Rain Forest Important? What do children/people/animals/plants need to grow? What have the children learned since they were born and what have they learned to do this year in the Green Room?

Jaguars, Snakes, Monkeys, Macaws, Butterflies, Toucans, Spiders, Sloths. These are just some of the creatures that live in the rain forest.

Welcome to the Green Room’s Rain Forest, the last theme for the year. We began the theme discussing where in the world there are Rain Forests. Next we learned the four layers of life in the rain forest. The first layer, the darkest part of the forest, is the forest floor. Here the air is still and moist, and ferns, moss, and dead leaves cover the ground. Some animals you will find are poison arrow frogs, capybaras, and giant armadillos. The next layer is the understory where you find snakes, butterflies, and egrets. The canopy is the top of the forest and is where the sloths, monkeys, bats, toucans, and macaws live. The emergent layer is the very top of the forest where you can find monkeys and birds of prey.

How much rain does the Rain Forest get in a year?
The friends lined up rulers to count eighty inches, which represents the average amount of rainfall in one year. We found out the rainfall is much higher than we are tall!
Rain Forest Tree
In our room, we have created and decorated a rain forest tree as part of the dramatic play center. We made paper leaves by tracing, cutting and adding color with markers, along with vines made from attaching paper chains. We also practiced our scissor skills by cutting spiral snakes to hang on our tree. We painted a variety of rain forest animals to add to the dramatic play center and made a variety of flowers and bromeliad plants. Drawing animals from Carnegie Museum’s lending boxes; learning about and making paper birds were also ways to enhance the theme.

Plant a seed and watch it grow
During the fall the children planted tulip bulbs in our outdoor garden boxes and watched how they grew into beautiful flowers. Inside we sorted a variety of seeds, planted seeds in newspaper cups, watered the seeds until they were mature enough to be replanted in a larger container. We also played games called “Orchard,” “The Hungry Caterpillar,” “Ants” and “Hiss.” All of these experiences increased environmental awareness about the beauty and value of nature.

Habitats
In the Rain Forest the children learned about the habitats and camouflage for the large variety of animals that live there. We also discussed the habitats of familiar animals we see in our neighborhoods and, of course the different styles of homes where people live. The children created habitats using blocks and figures, and they put together puzzles illustrating habitats.
**Eggs, Caterpillars, Butterflies, and Chicks Growing**

Next, we incorporated our butterfly theme into the Rain Forest unit. The children observed the metamorphosis from caterpillar, to chrysalis, to ten hatched butterflies. We fed the butterflies sugar water and brightly colored red flowers. Nathan Morehouse from the University of Pittsburgh Biology Department came to our school with his collection of butterflies and a slide presentation. The children had questions and comments about what they saw and learned. Everyone’s favorites were the funny looking caterpillars and beautiful colors! During the same time, the Green Room friends were able to see chicken eggs in the Kindergarten’s incubator. When the eggs hatched, we visited the chicks and watched how they grew while they ate and drank water in the Kindergarten’s coop. We also learned about birds with a visit from the National Aviary.

**Foods of the Rain Forest**

In the kitchen we celebrated our summer friend’s birthdays with a Rain Forest smoothie with bananas and chocolate from the Rain Forest. We also made a tasty rain forest fruit salad with vanilla flavored yogurt, and smelled a variety of foods and spices associated with the Rain Forest. Ms. Bayer collected foods and spices of the Rain Forest for the children to smell and guess what they could be.
More Green Room Activities

Special Thank Yous
Jennifer Mroz (Jacob’s mother), Bethany and Thomas Jenkins, (Tiernan’s parents), Lisa and Ken Spiegel (Clara’s parents), Matt Park (Maddie’s dad) and Stacy (John’s friend) for reading and joining us for birthday celebrations, and Rubab O’Connor (Shahrzad’s mother) for reading and presenting the Green Room with a horse puzzle.

Thank you to our chaperones Beth Lott (Isaac’s mom), Xiaolei Ding (Jacey’s mom), Beth Nury (Will’s mom), Gregg Nestor (Melynda’s dad), Lingwen Wang (Jing Cheng’s mom) and Kohei and Mayumi (Yu’s mom and dad) who accompanied us to the Carnegie Library’s Breman Town Musicians puppet show.

It Is Time to Say Goodbye
To our wonderful families: thank you for sharing your bright and beautiful children with us. It is a privilege to be in partnership with you to teach and help them to grow. Read the following comments made by the children about what they are proud of learning since they have grown!

Best wishes for a safe, relaxing, and fun filled summer.

Warmly,
Estelle Solomon, Krissy Opferman, Jean Bird, and Jillian Mangan
We asked the children what they could do now that they could not do since they were born or at the beginning of the school year, and here are their delightful answers!

Mrs. Bird’s Friends
Grace: I couldn’t swim.
Roland: I can do a cartwheel.
Mack: Ride a tricycle.
Alex: Play with race cars and blocks.
Giovanni: Puzzles and toys.
Yu: Write words and draw pictures.
Asher: Climb a tree. Ride a two-wheeler bike.
Noah: Do big big puzzles.
Kouta: Count to 100.
John Make a monkey puppet.
Neve: I can run, jump, kick a ball, play basketball, color pictures, and run.

Mrs. Opferman’s Friends
Kayla: Play the Orchid Game.
Pax: Write my name very good.
Perry: Do puzzles.
Tiernan: I can talk.
Younghoon: Speak and write in English.
Melynda: I can ride a tricycle.
Madeleine: I can say alphabet letters.
Clara: Go to school.
Kiana: When I was a baby I could not eat candy.
Jingcheng: Sing Happy Birthday in English.
Miss Mangan’s Friends

Annette: I can use tools at woodworking and swim.

Thomas: Count by 10’s to 100.

Elena: Learned a lot of new games.

Sasha: Put on my shoes and skate.

Anna: Write my name.

Abigail: I’m a big sister now.

Will: Read.

Liam: Put on my shoes.

Ali: I couldn’t draw well.

Lili: Draw pictures for the chicks.

Mrs. Solomon’s Friends

Maya: I can write my name and use wood tools now.

Mintaek: I can count to 29.

Lynn: I can draw beautiful pictures.

Jacey: I can count to 100.

Noah: I can use a hammer.

Aaron: I can read words.

Benjamin: I can count a pattern.

Isaac: I can listen now.

Shahrzad I can play games and cook.

Paul: I can count to 101.

Zen: I can jump four feet distance.