Extended Morning has a weekly Focus Book that expands on the Preschool theme of the month. The teachers support the stories through related activities that include experiences in each of the Developmental Domains. The story is further enhanced by weekly Cooking Projects with Mrs. Loomis, Large Motor activities with Ms. McMichael, and daily music with Mrs. Bird. A brief description of the focus book is included in each Monday's email, and a list of available activities is a part of each day's email. The newsletter for each theme recaps the books and related activities through text and photographs.

November’s books focused on different types of transportation, and we finished the month with books about Thanksgiving to discuss what it means to be grateful. We enacted different stories and songs that involved vehicles. Some of the songs we learned that enhanced our unit included: “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” and “Driving in My Car”.

- The train table is busy with vehicles riding the rails.
- The children see a stuffed animal version of “Mr. Gumpy’s Outing”.
- The friends enjoy enacting “Driving in My Car”.

Transportation and Giving Thanks
The first week's focus book in Extended Morning was “The Little Engine That Could”, retold by Watty Piper. It is the traditional tale of a train full of toys and food for children that breaks down on its way over a mountain. The toys are so sad that the shiny new engine, the huge engine, and the old tired engine will not help to pull them over the mountain. Then a kind Little Blue Engine comes along and is willing to give it a try. She chugs along slowly at first, chanting, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can." She makes it to the top of the mountain amidst cheers from the toys on the train. On the way down she chugs, "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could." The moral of the story is, of course, that even a small engine can pull a large train if it puts its mind to it. During the week, we made train cars out of shoeboxes and then connected them to take turns driving a long train around the preschool. The children also sorted toys, fruit, cars and blocks into the train cars. Friends used their fine motor skills to make train bead necklaces. They used their large motor skills to pull heavy loads of blocks in a cart. Mrs. Loomis helped the children make hot apple cider in the kitchen, and Ms. Michael led children in a Tic-Tac-Toe bean bag toss game.
In this story, a man named Mr. Gumpy has a boat and is going out for a ride one day when two children ask, “May we come with you?” Mr. Gumpy welcomes them aboard, but asks them not to “squabble”. One by one animals ask if they can join too. Mr. Gumpy welcomes each friend with a request: that the pig doesn’t “muck about”, the calf doesn’t “trample”, and so on. The outing is pleasant until the animals and children begin to cause a commotion! The trampling and squabbling and all other actions make the boat tip and everyone falls into the water! They swim to land, dry off and finish their day with tea and desserts at Mr. Gumpy’s house. In the end, Mr. Gumpy invites all his friends to “Come for a ride another day”. The children enjoyed enacting the story with large stuffed animals and a pretend boat on the green carpet. They also made their own puppets that looked like the characters from the story. Friends made boats using found materials and did a science experiment to test different objects to see if they sink or float. Ms. McMichael took children on an outing to the hallway to ride scooters.
The third week’s focus book was “The Baobab Car” by Jacqueline Held and Arnaud Lavel. In the story, the man-who-never-cleaned-his-car does not mind that the hair from his three dogs, the mud from his friends' shoes, and the sand from his beach adventures gathers in his car. One day the wind blows in grass seeds and a baobab tree seed. The seeds flourish in the doghair-mud-sand mix, and the baobab tree grows so tall that the man cuts a hole in the roof of his car and takes off his garage roof to fit the tree. The dogs love spending time in the Baobab Car - under the shaded branches, and in the top of the tree while directing traffic with a megaphone! Activities included playing the parking lot game using shape identification and matching. Children collaged pictures from magazines and loaded their car shapes with an interesting mixture of things. Friends also enjoyed making and using megaphones just like the basset hound did in the story. There was also a scavenger hunt with different colored cars posted around the preschool. Ms. McMichael led the children in chopping vegetables in preparation for making soup.
On Monday, the weather was surprisingly warm for the season so we extended our outside time. We were grateful for this time for more mud play, riding tricycles and throwing frisbees.

During lunch, the children listened to “Clifford’s Thanksgiving Visit” by Norman Bridwell. Clifford misses his dog family, so while his owners are away for Thanksgiving, he takes a trip to the city to see his mom. They are happy to see each other and have the day together! Clifford is also glad to return home to his owner, Emily Elizabeth.

On Tuesday, friends enjoyed play dough sculpting with the addition of feathers, decorating invitations for the upcoming Open Houses, adding the final ingredients to the soup and collaging turkeys with their name, goggly eyes and different colored feathers.

We look forward to seeing families on Tuesday (4’s Open House) and Thursday (3’s Open House).