Me and My Community!

Welcome families and friends to the first edition of the Kindernews!

EXPLORING OUR CLASSROOM

Our 2014 school year began with getting acquainted with our classroom, the routine, the other friends and teachers. The children all know our morning routine of checking for notes in backpacks, hand washing and answering the Question of the Day. We became familiar with the classroom routines of freezing when the lights go out, coming to the teacher when the bell rings, walking in a line, pushing in our chairs, etc. The children learn our “necklace or chair system”, which monitors the amount of spaces at a center. We spent time in each classroom center and learned how to appropriately use the materials there. The children were given time to explore the materials freely. We learned where the materials live so that we can all share in the responsibility for cleaning up our space. During lunch and snack, we are responsible for cleaning up our table space and taking care of the trash. The children are being introduced to time management. Giving a two minute warning and providing a mailbox for them to keep unfinished work allows them to keep track of their progress.

Our 2014-2015 Kindergarten Class!

Jane exploring the math manipulatives.

Asya and Rory exploring the nature collection.

Julia exploring the sand table.
We have spent an enjoyable September getting to know the children. Our first project was having the children draw their self portraits. Self portraits are a great way for the children to express various aspects of themselves and their identities beyond the surface of their physical appearance. Self portraits can teach students to draw beyond just what they think they see but to draw what is really there.

All students were given a mirror to observe their facial features and look for small details. For this portrait, we concentrated on form and shape. The children used black sharpie markers to draw the outline of their head and bodies. They added facial features and detail to their clothing.

During the month, we also shared, drew and recorded some of their favorite things. All of the information was gathered and put into a computer program to generate a word cloud or “Wordle” for each child.

The children created a display space in the hallway to hang their work. Painting their names in large bubble letters allowed the children to personalize the space. Their self portraits, names and Wordles are displayed for the school to enjoy.

Our September journals have been dedicated to the children. Each day, they were given a drawing task to help us get to know them. They have drawn themselves, their families, their homes, their pets, along with their favorite toy, flower, animal, etc. We used sight words or inventive spelling, (i.e., spelling the word as it sounds,) to label the drawings. The children are challenged to use color, detail and backgrounds for their journal entries.
ALL ABOUT ME, CONTINUED...
The children worked with black markers and watercolor to draw representations of the house that they would like to live in.

The houses were combined to create our Kindergarten Neighborhood that is displayed in the block center.

KINDERGARTEN STUDENT TEACHER
We have wonderful help in the classroom this semester.
Ms. Young is our student teacher from the University of Pittsburgh.
Ms. Young works with us Monday and Tuesday mornings and all day on Wednesdays. She is creating lessons, leading group time and working with all the children in small groups.

Ms. Young leading a group time.

KINDERGARTEN WORKSTUDY
Arielle, a junior Psychology major, is enjoying her second year working with the kindergarten. Arielle is a great help in our classroom. She leads small group activities, reads with the children, accompanies the class on our Friday mornings in the park plus does any office work that needs to be done. Arielle is vital in helping to keep the kindergarten running smoothly.

Arielle works with us on Thursday and Fridays.

KINDERGARTEN INTERN
Dr. Carver teaches a Practicum in Child Development class. The students are placed in the classrooms for 6 hours of field observations and then meet for a weekly discussion. This semester the kindergarten is fortunate to have an intern placed with us. Lisa will be working with the children while observing theories discussed with Dr. Carver. We appreciate her help and the children love the extra attention!

Lisa working with a group.
ALL ABOUT EACH OTHER

After we had practiced drawing ourselves, we moved on to drawing our friend’s portrait. The children used the easel and drew their model—focusing on detail. When the portrait was complete, the model and artist switched places. It was interesting to hear the conversations taking place. The children really concentrated on their works, taking particular care to draw their models in the correct clothing and always with a smiling face!

The children continued to get to know each other through the month. To help with the process, we created Kindergarten Bingo and Kindergarten Memory Match. Both games give added practice in helping the children to identify the friends by their names and faces.

We used the children’s pictures to create our ABAB patterns. We also practice each others’ names by showing their pictures as we line up from the rug.

A group playing Kindergarten Bingo.

We added letter recognition and writing by providing the children with face and name cards. The children used letter tiles to match the name on the card. They moved on to using a dry erase marker to practice their letter writing skills by copying the friend’s name.

Wee spelling friend’s names. Julia practices her writing. 

Ruby drawing Rory.

Sally by Lynn

Cecilia by Natalie

Lynn drawing Sally.

Natalie drawing Cecilia.
We continued to get to know each other by graphing our eye and hair color, as well as how many letters are in our name. We graphed our taste in apples, whether we prefer yellow, green or red. We added caramel dip and cinnamon sugar to find out which we prefer on our apple.

Graphing is an important math tool. It can be a simple way to introduce broader concepts of greater than/less than, or most and least. Being introduced to graphs at an early age can help children to understand huge mathematical concepts such as sorting, organizing, counting, comparing, and analyzing.

Along with exploring the Math center, the math concepts covered during the month of September are counting, number recognition, number recall and patterning.

We practice recognizing, recalling and writing our numbers by completing the missing numerals on the monthly calendars.

We also introduced the concept of patterning. The children began with a simple ABABAB pattern. The children decorated a frame in an AB pattern using colored squares. Using photos of their friends, they created an AB pattern. The children are finding, building and reading a variety of patterns everywhere!

We enjoy playing a patterning challenge game where the group has to guess the pattern that I make using several children, such as long sleeves, short sleeves, long sleeves, short sleeves. This is a great way to build their patterning skills and to hone their observation skills as well.

Math Concepts

Sally and Nika dipping their apples.

Andres graphing his eye color.

Elena and Felicity exploring.

Sasha tasting apples and recording her preference.

Rhiannon graphing how many letters in her name.

Lola patterning a picture frame.

Rhiannon patterning.
We took advantage of the beautiful September weather to begin our Science curriculum in nearby Schenley Park. We spent the first two weeks working on our observation skills. Observation is the cornerstone of the inquiry process. It begins an investigation and continues throughout it. When making observations, the children are learning to gather evidence, organize their ideas, and propose explanations about the world around them. We challenged the children to use their five senses to make detailed observations. Their vocabulary was enriched as they used descriptive words to share their findings.

We focused on trees for two weeks. the children chose a tree to observe and then drew the tree.

Next we introduced the concept of living vs. nonliving with the children. In class, we discussed the attributes of living things. The children sorted a variety of items into the category of living or nonliving. We then headed back outside. the children were given a small perimeter of ground and asked to observe what was within the boundary. They discussed the items and labelled them living or nonliving. Each group collected a few items to bring inside and share with the class. As a group we discussed whether the item was living or nonliving. The children moved to their journals to draw an item from each category.