

EARTH RANGER NEWSLETTER

February 28, 2008

Dear Parents,

The Earth Rangers are off and running with our new unit of study: art in nature. We began the unit with the first element of art – line. We asked the children what they already knew about line. The children were excited to yell out all the different aspects of line they knew – “lines are straight”; “lines can be curvy”; “and wavy”; “and zig-zag”; “lines can be circles”; “and squares”; “triangles, too!”. We discussed not only the direction lines may travel, but how their composition can change. Some lines are thick, thin, short, long, etc. We talked about similarities and differences in lines around us.

We have spent a lot of time exploring lines. We are working with only black and white lines at this point and the children have painted with a variety of paint brushes to make black lines of different widths at the art table. We’ve provided strips of white paper to be used on black paper to create line design as well as strips of black paper on a white background and spent time comparing and contrasting the art. We’ve used a variety of different scissors to create many different shaped lines.

One art project which proved to be quite interesting was one in which each child was given two pieces of black paper. The paper on the left was used as a background for a design made with pieces of white yarn and the paper on the right was provided for the child to re-create his/her yarn art with white chalk. This was an exercise that proved challenging but intriguing to the children. Creating an art piece with yarn and then trying to copy and re-create the same pattern with a writing medium is not nearly as easy as it may sound! Everyone did a great job and had fun in the process. Another challenging art activity this week was a weaving project in which children cut slits into a black piece of paper and then worked hard to weave white strips of paper over and under the slits to create a woven design. The Earth Rangers also spent a great deal of time exploring the lines that create letters this week. They were excited to realize every letter in the alphabet can be made with two shapes (the “c” shape and a straight line). As I’m sure you’ve noticed, your child is now writing or tracing his/her name on a new sign-in card every morning.

A new cycle of the Person of the Day began today and this cycle brings exciting new responsibilities. The POD is still choosing a word card and finding the corresponding word on The News and circling it. The POD is now also adding his/her name to The News not just once, but twice! Lastly, the new line added to The News reads “_____ shares a rhyme.” The rhyme might be a silly sentence or simply a few rhyming words but it gives the children more practice with rhyming which is a fun and important pre-literacy skill.

The other elements of art we will explore throughout the unit include color, shape, form, space, texture and value (lights and darks). Rocky the Raccoon delivered a special note and gift to the Earth Rangers this week – the children were thrilled to see a note covered in raccoon footprints and a large “Wonder Box” in which we found a collection of differently shaped black lines which we took with us on our hike and used to help us search for corresponding shapes in nature. The children loved spotting the different

natural items with lines similar to the ones found in the Wonder Box – rocks, three trunks, tree branches, plant stalks, deer footprints, leaves, and blades of grass all represented examples of the different shaped lines. The children found another note from Rocky the Raccoon after returning to the classroom congratulating them on finding art in nature and told them their reward could be found in the Wonder Box. Each child found a personalized wood cookie badge which we attached to the children's green bag with a piece of natural hemp. Please leave this badge on your child's bag as Rocky is not done with rewarding the children for finding art in nature – he's only just begun!

Today the children heard from Rocky for the second time and learned about value (light and dark) in art through the use of shadows. We discussed how shadows are made, what components are necessary for shadows, how shadows can change with time of day and position of light, and how everything that has "matter" has a shadow. Rocky's note directed the children to use the personalized "shadow catchers" in the Wonder Box on our hike. Children caught the shadows of all sorts of natural items – they even chased their teachers to catch their teachers' shadows! We measured each child's shadow on the blacktop with chalk in the beginning of the day and planned to revisit the measured shadows before dismissal, but unfortunately the sun was hiding behind clouds. We will try again tomorrow in order to compare the size of our shadow at 10am versus 12pm and see if it the same or different. Upon returning to the classroom, Rocky surprised the children with a sun charm to add to their Earth Ranger badges as a reward for finding shadows in nature. Molly caught each child's shadow during Learning Centers as she traced their silhouettes. The children had a chance to add colorful details to their silhouettes and they are now hanging in the Earth Ranger art gallery.

We are looking forward to our field trip to the National Gallery of Art on Friday, March 14. Our tour is titled ***Weather in Art*** and the following is the program description: *Whether cloudy or clear, snowy or sunny, exploring weather in art at the National Gallery requires students to use all their senses.* Thank you to all of our parent volunteers: Gideon Lachman, Trish Nudelman, Emily Mazzella, Holly Gross, Stephanie Craver, and Ilaya Hopkins. We'd love one more parent volunteer if possible. Molly will be at a conference for summer camp staff on Thursday and Friday, March 13 and 14, and unfortunately will not be joining us for our field trip. If anyone else is available to help out on the field trip, that would be fantastic.

We are in desperate need of play dough in our classroom. If anyone is willing to make a batch or two, we would be most appreciative. We would also love a few boxes of soft tissues for our runny noses. Also, PLEASE send your child to school with warm winter weather gear. Little hands, heads and necks get cold easily and your children need mittens, hats and scarves when the weather is so cold. We will always go outside, so please bundle your little one up on chilly mornings! Thanks in advance for your help.

Ask me this: What is the Wonder Box? What have you found inside the Wonder Box and who made it? Where can you find lines in nature? What types of lines are there? Can you make different shaped lines with your body? How is a shadow created? Does everyone have a shadow? Is your shadow always the same size?

Warmest wishes,
Stephanie