

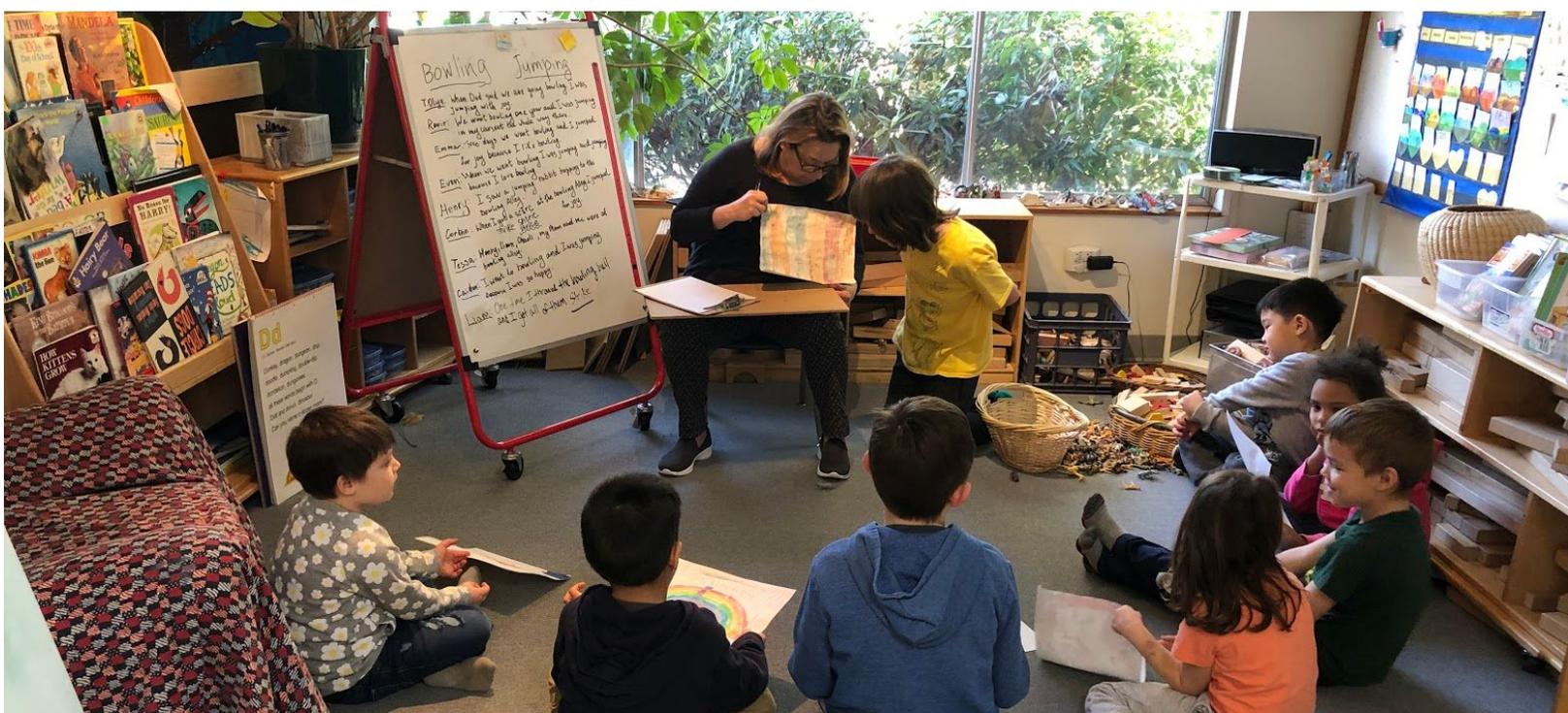
The Turtle Times

March 2019

Literacy Through Play

Developing a love and understanding of language from our youngest to our oldest students

By Casey Betcher



What is literacy?

Children are constantly making meaning out of the world around them. They are growing ideas through play, through hands on engagement, and through observation from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to bed. Literacy is a vital component of how we as humans make meaning out of the world.

Literacy is often thought of as reading and writing. But literacy actually encompasses the ability to acquire, construct, and communicate with language.

Early Literacy

For our youngest learners, literacy is developing language to support communication within their cultural and social communities. Students build a vocabulary and play with words in many ways. At CCC, children play with literacy when doing dramatic play and using their words to imagine stories with friends. At circle time, students play with literacy as they sing rhymes and fingerplays. “Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill, one name Jack, one named Jill.” When rhyming, students begin to hear how words sound similar. This is a building block of reading and writing later on. Building a rich vocabulary during the early years creates a strong foundation for the elementary years and beyond.



Preschool Years

In preschool classrooms, children are constantly working on how to communicate effectively. Students explore and try out written and symbolic language, as well as oral language, to communicate their ideas. The writing center is a place where students can make their marks-- write their own ideas down. This is the beginning of story telling and written language. Young children interpret the symbols around them--making meaning from marks. When they begin mark making, they are communicating with these symbols. This is a huge developmental milestone.



In CCC students are also exploring written language in other meaningful ways. Students are seeing name cards and trying to match a name with a friend while singing songs like *Willaby Wallaby Woo*. They are seeing written language in the morning “sign in” questions. In response to the written question, “What do you like better--Ice Cream or Hot Cocoa?”, students get to make their own mark--writing their name in their own ways. It is the act of making marks that demonstrates their desire to communicate through written symbols. In a mixed age classroom, how one student writes their name may look different than another, but both are developing strong

foundations for written language.

Children explore our traditional alphabet and symbols with songs like *Marching Around the Alphabet* or games like *Pendulum Bowling* (knocking down letters on blocks instead of pins). Teachers also demonstrate the value of our written language by documenting and writing down students ideas at circle times or in small groups daily. Having conversations about stories, making predictions or discussing the choices the characters made, help student make meaning out of literary texts.

What is important is that children build confidence and a willingness to engage with language. Literacy rich environments are classrooms that demonstrate the value of both the written and verbal language, supporting literacy development ways that children can access.

Early Elementary

By the elementary years, students are digging into the vast arrays of texts, rules of language, and the diverse ways we communicate. Students begin with emergent reading by retelling stories they have heard many times. Older elementary students begin to use their phonological awareness to decode words and read longer and longer texts. Book illustrations capture children’s imaginations and inspire them to read, discuss, and understand a book in different ways. Literacy at this age can still be playful. Kids can read to baby or doggie visitors--taking the stress and anxiety away and while



creating a fun environment. At CCC, kids regularly read with partners having both book discussions--making meaning from a story--as well as helping each other with challenging words. Poetry is one text that is full of new ideas and ways to look at the world through fresh new eyes. Poems support students development of fluency and vocabulary while creating a love of reading and big ideas. All around the classroom, opportunities for purposeful play lead to inspirations for story telling. From the block cities to building a covered wagon, the elementary student’s ideas become illustrated stories and journal pages. There is so much to share with each other and their families!

Literacy is not isolated to one place like school or to one activity. “Literacy development occurs not only in school but in every aspect of daily life. We interact with others when we have a conversation. We read maps, advertisements, newspapers, recipes, manuals and websites. We analyze and interpret vast

amounts of media information. We write poems, songs, reports, blogs, and emails. Literacy opens the door to the world.”

<https://education.alberta.ca/literacy-and-numeracy>

Takeaways

Here are some playful ways to support your child’s literary journey:

- Help your child get their own library card
- Reading picture books and wordless books--kids telling you the story
- Writing a letter to grandma, grandpa, aunties, or uncles
- Telling oral stories together as a family-- “The Trip to the Grocery Store”
- Dramatic play--imagining the possibilities
- Giving 3 or 4 pages stapled together to “write” a story across pages



The Lunar New Year Celebrations

In the mixed age preschool classrooms, Rainbow Rascals and Sunshine Kids both celebrated the Lunar New Year this February! In Rainbows, the community prepared stir fry feast complete with chopsticks! They began by inviting each child to bring in the vegetable of their choice from home. The children enjoyed washing and chopping their fresh produce to fully participate in the preparation of our food. We also rolled and cooked sweet rice balls called tang yuan. It was a proper feast complete with mandarin oranges, festive place settings and traditional music. Teacher Vivian even taught them how to count and sing in Chinese and demonstrated mandarin characters associated with the New Year. To close the celebration, the children made paper lanterns and carefully painted and decorated a dragon head. We used red fabric as the body of our dragon and we all worked together to have a dragon parade. The children loved trying to coordinate their movements with their heads covered with fabric. The room swelled with laughter.



In Sunshine Kids, Ansel's mom Pei-Yu came in to teach the class more about celebrating Chinese New Year and her family's celebrations. She shared a story about the origins of the Chinese zodiac. We learned which animals are part of the zodiac and how to say the names of the animals in Mandarin. Children also had the opportunity to try out some special crafts as well as calligraphy. Children painted mandarin symbols on bright red paper. Cooking filled both classrooms--Children in Sunshine Kids also had the opportunity to make a special new year dessert and a stir fry too. The preschool classes were connecting to each other by celebrating the unique cultures of our community!



Fun with Food in Play Pals

Something magical happens when we prepare food together as a class. When the children see cutting boards come out, they are thrilled and rush around the table. Curiosity will attract our entire Play Pals class over where they will have opportunities to engage all their senses in preparing the food that we will be eating. Being able to smell, touch, examine, stir, slice, and pour helps them build a relationship with food and connect as a community.

According to Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget, for a child to know and understand, foods like fruits and vegetables, they would need to encounter these foods through social transmission and experience.



Our class has really come together over the love of food! Our families have embraced providing children with these unique experiences. Eva and Sarah brought in paleo pancakes. Kids cracked eggs and added shredded carrots. What fun it was to try something new together! Jones brought in homemade pizzas. Kids piled on the toppings adding things they'd never have tried just on their own. Friends are a big motivator at this age. For Valentine's day, friends gathered together to chop and build fruit skewers. Despite never making it on the sticks, the kids built strong relationships with each other and with food by participating around the table together. When you visit our class for mini-meal, you will usually find a yummy, child made meal, full of healthy choices. This in big thanks to our Play Pals parents for helping create such a meaningful environment full of friendships, nutrition, and much more!

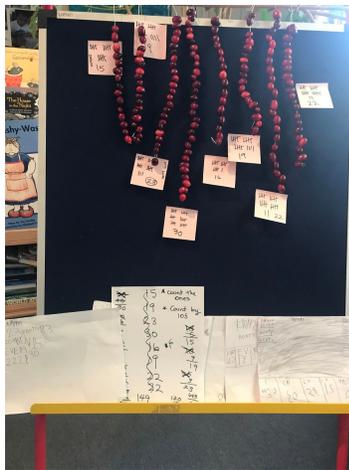
Elementary Mathematical Adventures

Mathematicians are sprouting knowledge in the CCC Elementary classroom! Math is all around us every single day. As they prepare for the hundredth day of school, the students pulled out the school calendar and tabulated the total class days for each month (up to March 1). After working in small groups and coming up with a total, they confirmed their answers using unifix cubes. "Aha, our total is 103!" everyone shouted. But wait, "Should we add in or subtract the snow days?" we wondered. "Add them in!" they all agreed. As the 100 week continued, the children created collections both in and out of doors. The items were grouped into fives or tens, then counted up and down, exploring



combinations in new and exciting ways. This type of “hands on” math is building a strong foundation of place value understanding while having fun organizing and calculating.

Prior to winter break, a lunch with fresh cranberries turned into a mathematical project and a planned spring feast for the birds. Students looked at the massive bowl of cranberries and wondered how many came in the package. After guesstimating they found the answer by stringing the berries on long wires. This lead to counting each strand and calculating individual and classroom totals. Measurement played a role as the children measured out their strings and compared how many berries it takes to make a foot. The students had such fun sequencing numbers, comparing values, and writing multi-digit numbers. Afterwards, they hung the berries to dry with a plan to feed the birds, (or make muffins), during our 100 week celebration! Now putting their lab coats on, these scientists are so amazed at how cranraisins are made! But that’s another story!



Upcoming Events:

- Plant Sale Begins March 18
- Garden Party March 19 from 3:30-4:30pm
- Diversity: PCPO Early Childhood Conferences March 16
- Spring Break March 25-29
- Teacher Inservice April 12
- Parent Teacher Conferences April 22-26

CCC Plant Sale

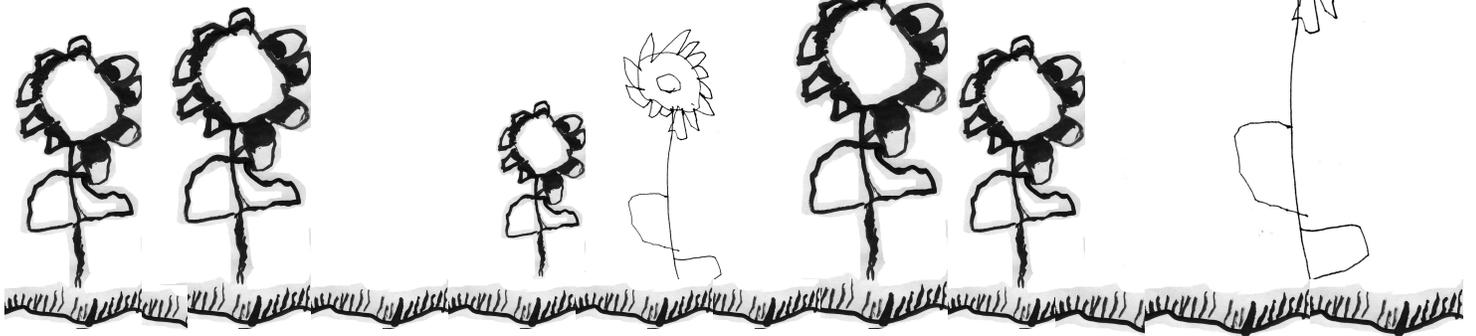
Every spring, the singing birds return to the play yard, the flowers start to bloom, and CCC parents come together to support the school with our annual spring plant sale! This fundraiser helps keep tuition costs down and keep our school thriving. CCC Parent support is essential to help make this fundraiser a success.



The large selection of locally grown vegetable and garden bed plants from New Leaf Greenhouse are perfect for friends, family, and you to make your yards look amazing. But the best part is that a portion of each item sold goes to CCC to help us get new materials and maintain our high quality school. The Plant Sale begins on March 18th. Families will have time to contact friends to see if they would be interested in purchasing some hanging baskets, planters, or garden starts. Plants are delivered to CCC on Saturday, May 11th and picked up by each CCC family between 11-1:00pm. CCC families deliver the orders to their customers.

More information will be sent home to families about this great fundraiser on March 18th. If you are interested in taking a sneak peek and seeing the great options early, go check out New Leaf's website at:

www.newleafgreenhouse.com.



2019 Early Childhood Conference

presented by [Parent Child Preschools Organization](http://www.parentchildpreschools.org)

Saturday, March 16, 2019

8:00 am to 3:15 pm

A conference for parents and educators with great workshops on lots of different topics. For more info, go to PCPO's website. Register at:

at: <https://www.parentchildpreschools.org/>

