

St. Andrew's Preschool Seasonal Gazette

Winter 2024

From the Director

I wanted to thank all of you for either responding to me quickly regarding your plans for the 2024-2025 school year or registering for next year. I appreciate your help in finding a space for everyone who wanted one before opening up registration to the community.

January brought many fun activities to our preschool. We enjoyed a fire puppet show sponsored by the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue office. This show teaches fire safety to preschoolers. As you can well imagine, it was a huge hit with everyone! Then, we perfectly timed a PJ and Donut Day the day after a snow day! Our January Nature Explorer class enjoyed time in a snowy outdoor classroom. It was the perfect fluffy building snow!

February the classes will celebrate Valentine's Day with parties, a special snack, and lots of cards! They all enjoy bringing home their decorated bags filled with cards and treats. It's always so much fun!

If you have a rising Kindergartener, please consider attending a Kindergarten Readiness presentation through ZOOM Wednesday, February 28th at 7:00 PM with Mrs. Jennifer Stockburger a Kindergarten Teacher at Orange Hunt Elementary and alumni parent of St. Andrew's. She will provide an overview of what to expect in Kindergarten and an opportunity for you to ask questions. The ZOOM link will be in Celene's weekly email closer to the event.

Please save the date for Science Night Thursday, March 6th from 5-7 PM. This is our biggest event of the year. Please bring your family to enjoy many science experiments your St. Andrew's students enjoy doing with Mrs. Smith. Molly the Bubble Lady will return along with the Emerson family who creates those wonderful balloon animals. Dr. Amy Adair will return with a variety of dental experiments and of course a photo op with Trixie the dinosaur will be available. She always steals the show!

Our registration will open to the community Tuesday, February 6th. If you know of neighbors or friends who are looking for a preschool next year, please have them contact the preschool office at 703-455-8458 or email preschool@standrews.net. They can also visit our web site preschool.standrews.net to take a virtual tour, fill out an inquiry to receive more information about enrollment, or begin the registration process through our software ChildPilot.

I saw an alumni grandma in the grocery store recently and she was commenting on how our preschool works with children at such a precious age. Her exact words, "They are a little slice of heaven." We all agree! Thank you for allowing us to be with your children each day!

Warm regards,
Tami



The Lion Class



Happy winter Lion families! We have been having a good time in the Lion class. Here is a sneak peek at what we have been up to in January and what we have planned for February. We came back from our winter break in January with gusto starting with a unit on transportation. The Lions always love this unit so it's a good way to jump back into school after having two weeks off. We discussed and brainstormed different types of transportation. We talked about the fact that transportation is anything that takes you from here to there. We named different types of land, air, and water transportation. The class made many projects relating to our unit. We played with the train table in dramatic play and in the block area we had lots of fun racing cars and directing traffic. After learning about transportation, we started our unit on snow, snow people and arctic animals. It was so fortuitous that it snowed the week we started this unit! YAY! We talked about precipitation and what that means and how it relates to snow. We talked about the science of snowflakes and that no two are alike. We discussed that snowflakes are crystals and start with a speck of dirt/dust and with water and cold weather they turn into a hexagon and then the traditional snowflake shape. We read a lot of fun books on snowmen and snow and talked about all the fun things you can do in the snow. As I am sure you saw in our hallway art gallery, our friends were quite creative making their biggest, best snowmen (based on the book The Biggest, Best Snowman by Margery Cuyler). To bring STEM into the room the Lions created a snow world using cans covered in white paper and played at the tinker table with ice cubes, arctic animals, snowflakes and cotton balls. The Lions loved learning about and comparing different arctic animals. They made great connections, and we even used our background knowledge to figure out how the animals' adaptations helped them in the arctic. We borrowed an awesome snowman from the Puppy class and the Lions had fun decorating him! The Lions pretended to be arctic explorers, played with many arctic animals, went ice fishing for alphabet letters and even went ice skating!

In February we will have a lot of Valentine's Day fun. The Lions will play at the post office and will pretend to mail letters by matching uppercase and lowercase letters. The Lions will write notes and pretend to mail them. We have lots of cards with different phrases for our Lions to practice writing and they love copying them and learning how to read them. These phrase cards already live at the art table and the Lions can use them whenever we have free art. We will do many art projects to celebrate love and friendship. We will create a tinker table filled with wood hearts, pom poms, and other heart themed manipulatives. We love to see what these kids can create when given open ended materials. It is ALWAYS better than anything we can dream up. We are excited about our Valentine's Day snack "Cupid Crunch". Thank you for volunteering to contribute to the mix to make it extra tasty (along with our healthier snacks too). This is something new we are trying, so we hope the kids like it! After our Valentine's day fun we will have a unit on the author Jan Brett and the folktale "The Mitten". We will read several versions of The Mitten and we will compare them. Comparing books helps kids recall



The Lion Class continued

details of each text and it's a great opportunity to talk about the elements of a story (setting, characters, plot). This is an important step in learning to read and we do it often in the Lion class. Also, this is a simple way to teach about similarities and differences between two things. It helps develop vocabulary and learning how to make text to text connections. We used a Venn Diagram to compare the two stories (introducing another way to graph and compare information). We will end February celebrating our 100th day of school! This is always exciting for our Lions since they have been working towards this from the start of the year. We do this by skip counting (another great math skill) and using ten frames. Along with the calendar this is a great way for kids to visually experience the passage of time at school. As well as feel proud of the accomplishment of completing 100 days of school!

In February we will start having our Mystery Readers. The kids love this, and we keep it a surprise, but I remind them that each student will have someone read for them by the end of the year. Also, we will start our book exchange in February. Mrs. Nyman just organized her books at home and found a LOT that needed new homes, so we don't need contributions for the first one. The kids loved this last year, we will let you know if we need contributions! Another new thing we started in January was reading the Chapter Book series Mercy Watson. This is a great way for kids to experience different types of books. Chapter books help them focus on the story line vs. just the pictures of a book. We will also introduce the Magic Tree House series before the end of the year. We will start posting Kindergarten readiness tips outside our door and I will try and put them in our weekly email as well. You are probably doing these already and they are just suggestions. Our circle time activities have continued to evolve as the Lions get smarter each day. Instead of just counting on the number line (aka our linear calendar), I will ask questions about numbers so the Lions really have to think about what I am asking vs. just guessing. Incorporating the words more, less, addition, and subtraction into the Calendar makes it a great teaching tool for math. We have gotten through the entire alphabet now, so the "Letter Lover" gets to pick the letter. The kids are coming up with their own words that start with the initial sound of the letter instead of just relying on the picture we provide. We will also start having the kids write their first and last names at the beginning of the day for extra practice. We also tell them we don't need to be perfect, but lots of practice leads to progress.

Please try and have a hat and mittens or gloves in your Lions bag for those colder days. We do have mittens they can borrow, but it helps the process if they have their own. As always, please don't hesitate to ask any questions.

With love and a roar, Mrs. Nyman and Mrs. Jacobs





The Penguin Class

We hope you all have had a great start to the New Year as we have at preschool. During the month of January, the Penguins learned about winter and transportation. We spent time making fun art projects: snowmen, mittens, winter trees, cars with letters of our names, and vehicles with shapes. The kids enjoyed creating their own vehicle with various paper shapes. They were so creative! This is one of our favorite art projects as it really shows each child's individuality. In doing these art projects we have practiced cutting, writing, and gluing small pieces of paper. These are all wonderful ways to strengthen our hands and improve our fine motor skills. Reading many wonderful books related to winter and transportation has also been a highlight.

During morning circle, our class has spent time working on letter recognition by playing with letter bean bags and through games and art projects. We also learned about letters "G", "S", "J", and "D". We talked about the sound each letter makes, and the children practiced writing the letters on slates. They enjoyed playing "What's Missing" using objects that begin with the letters we learned. A song we've been singing reminds us to start our letters at the top. The song is called "Where do we start our letters? At the top!" If you're lucky, your child might just sing it for you. We practiced identifying numbers, counting, and adding by throwing multiple dice and figuring out the total number represented. Lastly, we discussed and read books about feelings and how they change. The children loved the different facial expressions that accompany feelings.

In dramatic play, we enjoyed playing with a train table and car rug with lots of different vehicles and taking orders and serving customers in our play 'restaurant'.

Since January, we've been saying the Pledge of Allegiance during morning circle. There are many big words to learn! We've talked about the meaning of the pledge as well as learning to say it. We will practice this each day for the rest of the school year.

We talked about first names and last names. To practice learning our last names, we will often call the children Mr. "last name" or Miss "last name". The children really enjoy this, and it helps them remember their full names.

During free art, the children can create whatever they would like with the supplies we have. Making bracelets with beads and pipe cleaners is an activity many enjoy. Some of you have been the recipients of their lovely creations! Making love notes for parents and pictures with lots of stickers are also a lot of fun for the kids and another great way to improve fine motor skills.



The Penguin Class continued

Looking to February, we will cover units on Valentine's Day and Families. This will be a wonderful time to work on our writing skills. The children will practice writing notes to friends and family as they create, process, and deliver mail in our "post office". They will be making beautiful valentines, and we have just started preparing our "hugs" to mail to relatives. We are so excited to start receiving mail back later in February. Please remember to send in two addresses, if you have not, so that your child's "hugs" can be mailed.

We hope that the weather cooperates in the coming weeks for more outside play in the sunshine!

Thank you for your support! Mrs. MacArthur and Mrs. Kockler



The Fish & Frog Classes



The Fish and Frog classes have grown so much educationally in the last three months! In group instruction we have learned all of the uppercase letters and are now moving onto lowercase letters and sounds. We have also reviewed numbers 1-10 and introduced dice in which we add up to 12. Reviewing the calendar each morning provides extra counting practice.

During centers each day, we are able to pull students individually for instruction. When teaching one on one, we focus on sequencing, creating patterns, counting and writing. Individual instruction gives us the opportunity to learn where each child is in their development, meet them there and provide opportunities to grow.

Each morning after handwashing and before picking a daily job we ask everyone a “Would you rather” question. We then count and graph our answers. We learn terms such as most, least and the same. Some of the questions of the day are as follows: Would you rather wear mittens or gloves? Ride a bike or a scooter? Have a robot or a magic flying carpet? The students enjoy the activity and remind us if we forget to graph!!

The students enjoy watching our classroom plants grow and we occasionally measure and graph each plant. Currently we are waiting for one section of a plant to propagate. A tiny root emerged last week and we are hoping to plant it in soil when the root system is established. In March we will plant our own seeds and hopefully have a plant to share with our families in April!

Sincerely,
Amy Bailey, Cynthia Steele and Holly Welty





The Puppy & Kitten Classes



Hope everyone has had a happy and healthy start to the New Year. We really enjoyed talking to all of the families during conferences at the end of January.

January was a very busy month. The Fire department came at the beginning of the month and put on a fire safety puppet show. We learned about fire safety and each child loved getting a fire hat to take home!

We also spent a lot of time talking and learning about winter weather and arctic animals in our classroom. We had a couple of snow days in January giving us an opportunity to enjoy the snow for a short time before it washed away with our rainy days.

Right after our snow day, we had a fun day at school, where we wore our pajamas and had donuts for a special snack! The whole preschool participated and we really enjoyed that!

We made fake snow in the classroom using baking soda and white hair conditioner. We added arctic animals to the snow and the children had a lot of fun with it. We also had a play station with woodland animals who went to "hibernate" in dens and caves, using wood blocks and magnetic tiles to build houses.

Our sensory table was a winter wonderland with glitter salt, glittery snowflakes, Styrofoam snowballs, and shiny gems along with penguins and other arctic animals. We discussed how water freezes to form ice and melts back into a liquid water.

We spent time talking, singing and learning about snow in our classroom. We sang a fun song the children loved, called "Once There Was a Snowman". They really enjoyed the motions, starting as a tall snowman and then melting to a puddle at the very end of the song!

The children enjoyed making a variety of winter themed art projects too. We made sparkly winter pictures with white and blue paint, glitter and salt. The Puppy class also created their own snowmen, using buttons for the eyes, popsicle sticks for the arms and ribbon for a scarf. The Kitten class enjoyed decorating snowflakes using salt and glitter. We also had a lot of fun making decorative mittens.

Towards the end of January, we transitioned into a unit on Community Helpers. We read books about Doctors, Veterinarians, Dentists and Fire Fighters. The Puppy and Kitten class created different Community Helper art projects, such as trash trucks, mail trucks and fire hats.

For January, our dramatic play area changed from a winter focus with hats, scarves, mittens and building a snowman with boxes to a veterinarian clinic, with stuffed animals and pretend medical tools.





The Puppy & Kitten Classes continued



Our sensory bin changed a couple of times throughout the month. We started January with glitter salt for our winter unit, we switched it to dried black beans and added recycling bins, recycling trucks and number rocks for our community helpers theme. In February we will transition to colored pasta, plastic hearts, gems and Valentine heart erasers. For our transportation theme, the sensory bin will change to sand and gravel with black rocks, glass beads, cars and shovels.

We will focus on a valentine unit at the beginning of February. We will also have fun working on valentine art and sharing our love and friendships in and out of the classroom. We will read lots of Valentine's Day books. We will also spend time talking about family love. We will read books about families and learn that all families are different. We will have a special valentine snack and have the opportunity to deliver valentines to friends.

Our focus will switch to transportation towards the end of February. This is one of our favorite themes. We will be busy making trains, creating cars and building rocket ships. These are some of our favorite art projects because it shows each child's individuality.

Most of the activities we do in the Puppy and Kitten class are centered around imaginative play and social and emotional development. For physical and cognitive skill development, we plan activities to help develop the children's gross and fine motor skills, hand and eye coordination and hand strength. Here are a few examples from this month.

Gross motor: Riding the scooters and walking across stepping stones during indoor playground time; stomping, hopping and jumping in music class.

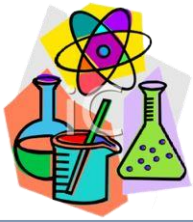
Fine motor: Picking up small items to glue onto craft projects; sorting jewels in the sensory bin; building with magnetic blocks; drawing circles.

Hand strength: Squeezing glue out of the bottle, rolling balls of playdough, making snowmen.

Looking ahead to March we will be doing a unit on St. Patrick's Day and Fairytales. We will then switch our focus to Easter and Spring.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Kroeger and Mrs. Stites



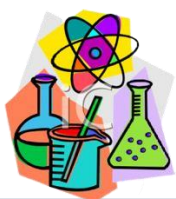


The Discovery Room

"Where no discovery is too small"

What did the bear say after hibernation? I'm 'bearly' awake. You guessed it! Our first January unit focused on everything associated with bears. We began by learning important facts including: bears are mammals, identifying eight bear species by name, bear habitats, various adaptations, and finally migration versus hibernation. The students absorbed these facts and concepts with incredible ease. Just ask your child to name all eight-bear species. They can do it! After a common characteristics introduction, we dove into individual bear units beginning with the polar bear. This species of bear was introduced using a non-fiction book. National Geographic Readers: Polar Bears revealed that polar bears are the largest carnivorous land mammal. The student's role played how they lived using plastic polar bears and foam blocks in individual water bins to replicate their balancing act on floating icebergs. They also played in a large fake snow diorama scene complete with white pillow stuffing caves and polar bear prey. The next bear study we concentrated on was the brown or grizzly bear. We began by reading Animal Adaptions and National Geographic Readers: Sleep, Bear! Activities related to this literature included playing with a brown bear forest scene complete with bear dens, sorting animals into hibernating versus non-hibernating categories, and a life size stuffed bear named "Big Bear" hung out in the reading nook section for companionship. During the final bear study, we focused on the cutest bear species based on class votes--the giant panda. National Geographic Readers: Level 2-Pandas taught students that Pandas are primarily herbivores spending the majority of their day eating bamboo. When they need to move quickly pandas forward roll. Since giant pandas are excellent climbers, students practiced balancing figurines in a bamboo forest composed of thin wooden boards and bamboo support beams. The light table was also panda themed with more plastic figurines to place inside a forest they built from green Magnatiles. There were two new board game additions to the bear centers this year. In the Beware of the Bear game two players tried to take as much food as possible from a hibernating bear before he leapt out from his den, Jack in the Box style, surprising and making the player who triggered it return the food. The player with the most food at the game's conclusion wins! Grizzly Gears is a one player game that builds problem-solving and spatial insight skills by challenging you to twist trees and guide characters across a forest labyrinth. Board games are excellent at teaching students critical life skills such as waiting your turn, decision making, problem solving, and how to handle losing graciously.

Why didn't the skeleton cross the road? It didn't have the guts! During January we also took a look inside the human body. As an introduction to the unit, we read numerous books on the topic including My Doctor Visit, My Five Senses, Bones, Muscles, The Human Body and Drops of Blood. There was a plethora of stations for the students to explore throughout this unit. One favorite was the organ vest where children can take off all the organs and Velcro them back on. Students also explored adding playdough muscles to skeletons, completing skeleton and human body layering puzzles, studying x-rays, brushing and flossing teeth, and diagnosing illnesses and injuries while completing check-ups on dolls in a simulated pediatric hospital complete with stethoscopes and baby scales. There was a miniature hospital and ambulance for the students to role play an emergency situation



The Discovery Room continued

and stretch their imaginations through dramatic play. The sensory bin had a model of the parts of the blood. The ping pong balls were of course the white blood cells and the red poker chips were the red blood cells. The pink foamy pieces were the platelets and the water the plasma. Group favorites were the "match the smell to the picture station" and the blood typing (A, B, AB, O) with food coloring stations. One station in particular really surprised the kids this year and everyone had a small adjustment period because it looked so realistic. The students were asked to put "fake teeth" into clay gums in the proper locations along the gumline. The teeth were sourced from a temporary tooth replacement company which made them appear and feel like real teeth.

Beginning the last week in January we will dive into our meteorology unit. This unit is full of hands-on experiments and students will enjoy studying the different types of weather that can occur, clouds, water cycle and states of matter. During the latter half of February, we will switch gears and dive into the final frontier-space! I can't wait to explore the solar system, constellations, the phases of the moon, the day/night cycle, light and shadows during this unit.

Our fish tank has been very fruitful and one tiger fish has recently had ten fish babies also known as "fry." Please let me know if you are interested in "adopting" and adding a fish to your tank at home!

Yours in Discovery,

Mrs. Smith



Music



2024 started off with a Happy New Year dance party in the music room at St. Andrew's, complete with shiny decorations and lots of balloons! The children had a great time singing, dancing, and bopping balloons back and forth to each other. During the rest of January, we celebrated the joys of wintertime, pretending to build snowmen, throw snowballs, and engage in winter activities like skiing and sledding. We spent a few days learning about penguins, polar bears, and other creatures who spend their lives in the cold, snowy regions of the world. The children had the opportunity to play hand drums while singing a song about polar bears - they mastered the "pat pat clap" rhythm and then enjoyed rubbing their hands across the top of the drum to simulate the bears "swimming." Another one of the children's favorite songs was "Walking Through the Arctic," where we pretended to see a variety of Arctic animals, including reindeer, snowy owls, and walruses, just to name a few! We also enjoyed celebrating Donuts and Pajamas Day with some fun songs and activities. We talked about when we usually wear pajamas (at bedtime - not to school!) and then we pretended to get ready for bed. We "took a bath" using bean bags for our washcloths, "brushed our teeth" with maracas, and then listened to a lullaby while we "went to sleep."

In February, I will be taking 4 weeks of medical leave as I recover from breast cancer surgery. Thankfully, Holly Welty has graciously volunteered to teach music class in my absence. During the first week, the children will sing songs about different types of weather, in alignment with the weather unit that Mrs. Smith is currently teaching in the Discovery Room. Then Valentine's Day will be celebrated with action songs and dances, plus a few fairy tale activities to go along with the "love" theme. Later in the month, the ever-popular parachute will make an appearance, and I know the children will be thrilled to "pop some popcorn" and play hide and seek with items under the parachute! Finally, February will wrap up with a super exciting adventure to outer space, where the classes will fly to the moon, take a spacewalk, and even meet a Martian!

I look forward to returning to St. Andrew's in March following my recovery. In the meantime, I will greatly miss seeing the children's smiling faces and hearing their sweet voices and laughter! I'm sure I will be begging the teachers to send me photos and videos to cheer me up!

Mrs. Rachel Elliff





Chapel News



Hello Preschool families! I can't believe we are in the final stretch for the year! It has been SUCH a pleasure teaching chapel to your inquisitive, kind and thoughtful children. Remember that you are always welcome to join us for any chapel, but especially on your child's birthday when we do a special birthday blessing and song. Stories we will be covering the rest of the year include The Good Shepherd, the story of Jesus' life and the Easter story, The Good Samaritan and possibly Jonah and the Whale. Remember to always ask your children "Wondering questions" - "I wonder..." gets them really thinking and feeling like their ideas matter!

Blessings to all of you as we head (hopefully) into an early Spring.

Mrs. Amy Tibbetts

Church News

Vacation Bible School

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church 2024 Vacation Bible School will be July 29th through August 2nd. Registration will be open later in the year. We will let you know as soon as we have the sign up available.

In the meantime, please mark your summer calendar! If you have any questions please contact Amy Tibbetts at amy@standrews.net.



Science Night

St. Andrew's Episcopal Preschool Science Night

Thursday, March 6

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Come join us for an adventure into the world of science. We will have more than 20 hands on stations, raffle tickets for prize baskets, balloon animals made by the Emerson family, dental experiments with Dr. Amy Adair and Mollie the Bubble Lady.



As the weather is changing please make sure your child has a seasonal change of clothes in their bag as well as jackets and appropriate shoes for outside everyday!!



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