

End of the Year Report 2014-2015

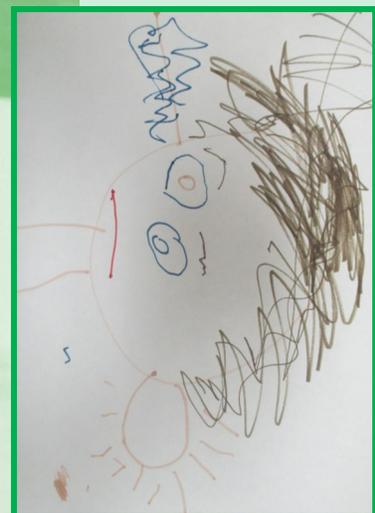
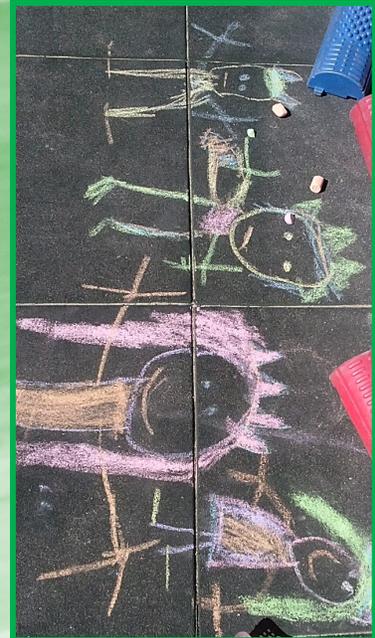
Accomplishments: Big and Small

As I look back and reflect on the past year, I am struck by our many accomplishments—both big and small. We continue our collective commitment to providing an early childhood experience that places a firm value on play and exploration. Our image of the child as a capable and competent learner is unwavering. Through our collective efforts, we've planned successful and joyful events like the Spring Fair and Winter Benefit that have brought us together in celebration of our community.



But even more important than these tenets and accomplishments is the deep, meaningful work that happens with our students and families on a daily basis. There was the young girl who stepped timidly out of her home and into a place called 'school' for the first time; with trust, experience and fortitude she (and her parents!) accomplished that transition with grace. There was the young boy, overcome by his big emotions, who needed empathy, space and development; now he is able to contain and regulate his emotions and find the words to express his internal feelings. There were the times when a child wrote their name, peddled their tricycle, put on their own coat—all for the first time!

In these seemingly small accomplishments lies the power of the work at Greenhouse. This type of growth, support and learning is central to who we are, and central to who we will be tomorrow. It is with continued enthusiasm and conviction that I look forward to another year of significant accomplishments! I feel privileged to be engaged in this important work with you.



Warmly,
Renee

Dear Greenhouse Community,

During the 2014-2015 school year the Board of Trustees worked closely with the Director to steward Columbia Greenhouse through challenges and celebrations. Through it all we continue to feel strong confidence in our school's leadership, faculty and families. Renee Mease has really made Columbia Greenhouse her home. She has proved herself to be an able manager and a strong advocate for faculty. Our faculty is committed to lifelong learning and is continuously strengthening their ability to provide the best possible learning environment for children and families. And finally, our Parent Association creates many opportunities for families to come together to learn and support each other, as well as contributing critically to fundraising efforts throughout the school year.

As it did for most people in America, 2014-2015 posed many financial challenges to Greenhouse. As we have a tuition-driven revenue model, where 92% of our operating revenue comes directly from contracted tuition, full enrollment is essential for a balanced budget. Gaps in enrollment numbers create significant income challenges for our school. In a budget where over 80% of our operating expenses are used to pay the salary and benefits of our faculty and staff, there is little room to cut cost without significantly altering our program. In the recent years, we've been fortunate that a friendly stock market has helped us bridge our budget gaps. This year the stock market wasn't as generous as we would have liked and we did not have spendable income from the reserve fund. This standing, our reserve will help us weather the vagaries of the stock market and the current gap in enrollment

numbers. The Board is confident that Greenhouse will withstand this situation in the short term while we monitor the trends and develop plans accordingly.

Most significantly, the Board and Renee are acutely aware of enrollment numbers, and are actively seeking ways to steady and maintain full enrollment in this new early childhood landscape. The Board and Director agree that we need to proactively communicate our mission and program to the broader community; this includes updating our website, re-vamping our written brochure, capitalizing on the fundraising and outreach capabilities of events like the Spring Fair and Bake Sale, and leveraging our strong relationship with Columbia's Work/Life program to reach out to even more Columbia-affiliated families. We also ask each of you to be the messenger and voice of Greenhouse in your networks, communities and beyond. Share the story that is Greenhouse with your colleagues, friends and neighbors; invite them to join this special community.

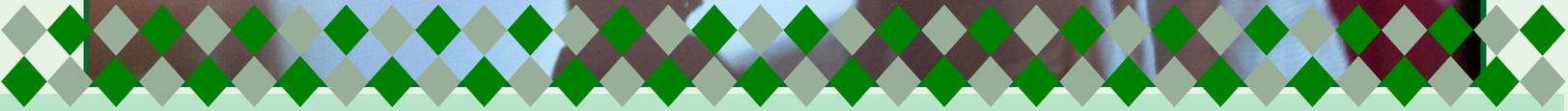
At a time when many things in the world seem to be off course, it's heartening to serve on the Board of Columbia Greenhouse. What could be more important than providing the highest quality experience for our country's greatest natural resource, our children? Everyone associated with Greenhouse contributes to making it the valuable resource that it is and to demonstrate that people can come together to work to make the world a better place. I wish the world were more like Greenhouse and that all children could have a Greenhouse in their lives.

Sincerely, Sara McLanahan, Chair
Columbia Greenhouse Board of Trustees



Exploring light and shadow





2Day 2s: Eat, play, love!



We were on a transformational journey in the 2 Day 2s this year— a journey that took us from being strangers in a strange place to a warm, connected community in a wonderful place called school. When we first arrived at this new place called “school,” we found there was much to learn: Who are these people called teachers? Why do these other little people keep trying to play with all my new things? And what happens when I put this paint on this paper? Each day brought us a little closer to becoming school kids and a little closer to being a group. As we came together as a community, we began to share experiences and break bread—literally!

There is something special about preparing and sharing food that brings people together in a comforting and natural way. Many of us have fond memories of making a special family dish in our childhood kitchen or sharing a meal around a table filled with the people that we love. Celebrations all over the world often involved special foods that bring people together. Cooking together in the 2 Day 2s certainly gave us this communal experience first-hand. Much of our cooking centered on baking bread. We baked many different types of bread from a variety of different cultures including pita bread, chapati, dumplings, pizza, Broa and quick bread. As we measured the flour, cut the bananas or mixed the dough, we practiced taking turns, sharing a common goal and working together to accomplish a goal. It was in our joint efforts that we were able to follow the steps in recipe, add different ingredients and observe how they changed. We especially enjoyed watching each of these single ingredients combine and



change into one (delicious!) thing.

In addition to bonding with one another, cooking brought

many opportunities for individual children to build competencies and a strong sense of self. There was a real sense of accomplishment and responsibility when we prepared the food that we would eat at snack. Our children felt proud and independent when they used real tools that grown-ups use, like knives or a food processor.

In addition to the social-emotional learning that occurs while children cook, there are countless opportunities for contextual learning of content and skills. We think about numbers, size and measurement. How many cups did we just put in? Which is bigger, a whole or a half? We use specialized vocabulary and language like *knead*, *grate* and *whisk*. They get to practice sequencing by first adding the ingredients, then mixing, next baking, and finally eating! We follow a written recipe and read the words and graphics that tell us what to do. The sensory experiences like smelling cinnamon, tasting lemons, touching different textures and kneading dough are too numerous to identify. We compared and contrasted the colors and tastes of white flour, rye flour, semolina flour and corn flour. The list goes on and on; as they cook, our kids are engaging their brain in a direct and concrete way.

“Eat, play, love” sums up our year so completely. In addition to the eating, there was an abundance of play and love! We found blocks to build, pictures to paint and baby dolls to feed. But most importantly of all, we found friends and teachers to love.

Faculty List 2014-2015

2Day 2s and 3Day 2s	Caitlin Koo, Head Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher Kira Rutherford-Boese, Assistant Teacher
2/3s Afternoon	Caitlin Koo, Head Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher
Young 3s	Pam Butler, Head Teacher Rachel Roth, Co-Teacher Xiomara Menendez, Assistant Teacher
Older 3s	Angela Coulibaly, Head Teacher Nina Basescu, Assistant Teacher Theresa Swink, Assistant Teacher
3/4s	Paula Doerfel, Head Teacher Erica Maldonado, Assistant Teacher Tolisa Orr-Chambliss, Assistant Teacher
4/5s	Margaret Williams, Head Teacher David Vining, Assistant Teacher Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher Charissa Ruth, Intern
Administrative Staff	Renee Mease, Director Vera Elumn, Administrator Kira Rutherford-Boese, Office Assistant
Support Staff	Lorraine Harner, Child Psychologist Colleen Itzen, Music and Movement

Growth and Transformation 3Day 2s



The 3 Day 2s grappled with themes of growth and transformation throughout the year. In a simple inquiry to see what was inside a pumpkin, we found the seeds of a rich, dynamic and relevant curriculum. As all inquiries begin with a question, we asked the children what they thought might be inside our pumpkin. They hypothesized that seeds, eggs and monkeys were inside the pumpkin. Our probing questions encouraged the children to form their own ideas and find words to express their thoughts. With our questions, we were not mining for correct answers; we were encouraging the expression of thought. When we cut open the pumpkin to see what was inside, it was our way of inviting the children to become active learners and to discover the answers to their questions.

The seeds we found inside the pumpkin were just the beginning! The children started making connections to the seeds we had in our fruits and vegetables at snack. We started a seed collection by harvesting the seeds from our snack foods. We began comparing and contrasting the seeds and pits from the different kinds of fruit and vegetables we ate. We planted the seeds and watched them transform to stems and leaves.

Like seeds, eggs grow and transform into something else. The teachers made the decision to return to the children's idea that eggs might be inside the pumpkin and further explore the idea of eggs. In our beginning, some children referred to the eggs as "bird seeds," others called them "golden seeds." These simple labels showed us their thinking and clearly demonstrated that they connected with this underlying



ing theme of growth and transformation. We explored many different kinds of eggs including quail eggs, duck eggs, ostrich eggs, emu eggs, chicken eggs and fish eggs. The students were interested to know what was inside the eggs. Many students were expecting to find chickens inside our eggs. Some were surprised when instead we saw yolks. We were all surprised to find that some of the duck eggs were actually black inside!

The children showed us what they knew about eggs as they created eggs using different media like clay, newspaper and paint. By cooking eggs in varied ways, we further expanded our experiences with and understanding of eggs. After listing animals that we thought hatched from eggs, we watched videos of crocodile and alligators eggs hatching. As we asked children questions, listened to their thinking and planned new experiences, we helped the children build their thinking skills, practice expressing their ideas and construct a new understanding. We entered into a journey of learning alongside the children as a natural and authentic way for children to engage in scientific thinking.

Over the course of our study, we placed chicken eggs inside an incubator to watch them grow. Unfortunately, our chicken eggs didn't hatch. With the much-appreciated help of one of our parents, we borrowed some baby chicks from a farm to keep in our classroom for a few days. Faithful to the scientific method, many students surmised that chicks do not come from eggs, as this is what our experience seemed to



prove. Other students continued to maintain that they knew that chicks do indeed hatch from eggs. We were all impressed by how deeply children were thinking about and reflecting on our experiences with and exploration of eggs, and by their ability to express and defend their thinking. Our young children were able to articulate their points of view and respectfully listen to differing opinions.

Much as the seeds and eggs underwent a transformation, our children themselves transformed before our eyes. We watched them grow into big school kids who were independent doers and thinkers. They grew into a community that did important work together, shared ideas and experiences and continued on their journey of life-long learning.



2/3s Afternoon: Finding Our Voice



Hats off to a year of finding our voices and coming together as group! While being in a classroom environment was new to many in the 2/3s Afternoon class, at the drop of a **hat**, we discovered that there were many fun and interesting things to do at this place called school. We painted, glued and drew. We built, balanced and composed. We measured, mixed and baked. Soon we learned that there were also fun and interesting *people* to do things with at school, too! Part of school is learning how to express your wants, needs and ideas and then, changing **hats**, to listen to the wants, needs and ideas of others. Eventually, this became old **hat** for our kids; they made strong connections with each other and with ideas. And we have a **hat** to thank for most of it!

In Reggio Emilia they call it a provocation: something (anything!) that provokes thoughts, creativity, interest or ideas. A provocation can come in any form; in the 2/3s Afternoon it came in the form of the book, *Hooray For Hat!* by Brian Won. On first reading, our children's imagination was captured by the text and illustrations. *Hooray For Hat!* is a charming book about a group of grumpy animals who cheer one another up by exchanging hats.



There are so many elements of this book that can speak to young children, not the least of which is the identification and expression of big emotions in the social context of friendship and group living. This is the perfect book for a group of young children learning how to be friends! In addition to the relevant themes, the book uses repetitive and accessible language that allows children to easily anticipate what will happen next. Pick-

ing up on the pattern of the dialogue, children participated eagerly and gave voice to their emotions by exclaiming to their friends, "Go away, I'm grumpy!" followed by gleeful giggles.

A logical next book for our group was the classic *Caps For Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina. In this timeless tale, a peddler walks through town trying to sell his tall stack of multicolored caps. Unable to sell any of his wares, the peddler sits down under a tree to take a nap, and here is where hilarity ensues. The children eagerly took on the role of the peddler, calling out "Caps, caps for sale, fifty cents a cap," and their friends enthusiastically took on the roles of the thieving monkeys. Both *Caps for Sale* and *Hooray for Hat!* provided our children with important opportunities to make literature come alive. Trying on the role of a grumpy elephant or an impish monkey encourages young children to take a risk, build confidence and take part in a group activity. As the children retold and reenacted these favorite stories, they saw themselves as active, competent school kids. They learned focus, collaboration and how to work together.

The teachers decided to use hats as our vehicle for discovery in other areas of learning. We made many different types of hats, including chef hats, sun visors, and newspaper hats. The children's personal style and self-expression could be seen in their individual hat creations. We turned our dramatic play area into a hat store (aptly named The Apple Pie Hat Store after our favorite cooking activity and snack). They took turns trying on the roles of customer and cashier. They even constructed their own ATM so that they would always be able to get more money to buy more hats! Our hats quickly became part of everyday life and brought us together as we became a community of friends.

Collaboration in the Young 3s

Imagine 12 people all working together on a common goal—all agreeing to the end game, to the roles that everyone will assume; all finding their own way to engage with that goal and idea; all solving problems in an agreeable way. Now imagine that those people are three years old!

That is exactly what we witnessed in the Young 3s this year. Early on, we noticed that various children were playing Ice Cream Store in the yard. Some days, they pretended to be ice cream makers or sellers. They used the tricycles as their delivery vehicles as they took ice cream to customers all around the playground. Variations of ice cream play continued across several days and sometimes included the entirety of the group. What a feat! It takes a deep social understanding to share a plan with another person—not to mention 12 other people! With little adult guidance or structure, our kids expertly found ways to be included in this group play and were able to solve serious issues ("Who will deliver the ice cream today?" is a very serious question for a three-year-old who is deep in play).

Our challenge was to find ways that we could extend the positive social learning that was occurring during the ice cream play, while also finding ways to expand their work and build onto their thinking. We decided to start with materials!



We brought in real ice cream scoops and cups for the children to use inside our classroom in the dramatic play area. Quickly, the children accepted our invitation and continued their ice cream play indoors. At group meeting, we reflected our observations back to the children, “You seem to be very interested in ice cream. What else can we learn about ice cream?” In pursuit of answers to our questions, we visited a local ice cream store. We also visited the library to find some books about ice cream. Another way to find out about ice cream is to make it and eat it! We made lots of different (non-dairy!) kinds of ice cream, including avocado and banana. While we were busy following recipes or making lists of the items we found in the ice cream store, or going out into the world to find answers to our questions, we were accumulating facts and details about ice cream, but more importantly, we were practicing how to learn!

Being good observers, our children began to notice many different shapes in our ice cream study; they thought cones looked like triangles and scoops looked like circles. The children were applying concepts and labels that they knew (the names of two-dimensional shapes) to accommodate the shapes of these three-dimensional objects. We decided to explore 3-D shapes. We placed many cone-shaped objects like funnels, blocks and pyramids in our environment. In both small and large group conversations, we compared and contrasted circles to spheres and triangles to pyramids. We made models of three-dimensional shapes with various materials. Soon we started hearing the names of three-dimensional shapes used in everyday situations and seeing 3-D shapes everywhere—even at construction sites!

In addition to the shape explorations, the children came together to build an ice cream store. As we’ve witnessed, our children have strong collaboration skills, and those come in handy when one is planning and constructing a small business! We designed and made everything we needed: ice cream and cones, walls, a door, a signs, money “to give the man” (employee), a cash register and sprinkles.

As in all project management, unforeseen problems arose! How will we keep the walls standing? How we will find just the

right color of paint for the walls? How will our customers know what flavors of ice cream we sell? All of these questions became opportunities for the expression of ideas, negotiations, deep thought and further explorations. A big question that we grappled with was: How can we make a door that opens and closes? After looking closely at some doors in our school, we discovered the hinges! We walk through doors every day of our lives but we’ve never noticed the hardware that attaches the door to the frame. We explored different types of hinges and varying ways to attach them. This opportunity to look deeply at an object that is found in our real world helps us hone our observational skills and build our knowledge.

Another matter that provided an invitation for learning was the naming of our store. True to our democratic style, we took a vote and “Sprinkles” won! The act of voting provides many ways to extend our thinking. Inherently, voting is about a collective decision-making process. How can we all have an equal say in the final decision? Also, there are mathematical concepts like more/less/most that are imbedded in voting. While to an outsider it might look like we are simply naming our ice cream store, we know that we are practicing the concepts of numbers and quantity, as well as participating in the beginnings of democracy!

The finished ice cream store provided rich and meaningful opportunities for children to pretend and take on roles. As they got deep into their roles, the children brought their real life experiences to their pretend play when they placed delivery orders on their cell phones or closed the store unexpectedly to give the employee a break. Dramatic play gives children the chance to try on the life and work responsibilities of those around them. It is through this kind of rich play that young children develop executive function skills and the ability to organize their thoughts and behaviors. This ice cream study began and ended deep in the roots of collaborative dramatic play. Along the way we ate some ice cream, learned lots of things and made even more good friends.



As a Flower Grows in the Older 3s

The Older 3s had a year filled with growth, change and learning. We found our inspiration this year very quickly. Two children were overheard talking about and naming the types of flower decorations on their shoes. This got us all thinking—what kinds of flowers do we know?

We set off to find flowers in our neighborhood and were thrilled to find begonias, chrysanthemums and hydrangeas. There were many types of flowers that we didn't recognize, so we took some photos to do further research back at school. We also discovered a flower store on a walk. The children were fascinated by the beautiful flowers and arrangements that we saw there. We bought some flowers to bring back to school and used them to create flower arrangements to decorate our classroom.

We spent a lot of time observing, touching and smelling different types of flowers. In both small groups and large groups, we looked closely at the colors, textures and designs found in the flowers. The act of careful observation fosters a child's ability to slow down and look with intention. The next step in this process is asking the child to create a graphic representation of what they see using various media. When our children were sketching flowers in the garden on Morningside Drive, painting still-life portraits of their flower arrangements or even building flowers out of our unit blocks, they were symbolically representing their thinking of and knowledge about flowers.

Dramatic play is always an important vehicle through which children show us their thinking. After our visit to the flower store, we decided to set up our own flower store in our dramatic play area. Using silk flowers, vases, pumpkins, a cash register, small stuffed bears and many other items we had seen in our visit, we were able to recreate our real-life experience in the flower store. Later in our study, the dramatic play area became a garden filled with shovels, rakes, hoes and pretend soil. The surrounding walls were decorated with the beautiful colors and textures of child-created flowers. During each dramatic play experience, children were able to try on many ideas and concepts about flowers in their play. As they assumed the roles of shopkeeper and customer, they practiced the give-and-take of sharing a plan with a friend. As they prepared the pretend soil for planting, they organized their thinking and behavior in ways that would allow them to successfully complete the steps of their play. Dramatic play is the place for young children to practice being cognitively flexible and to stretch their creativity. They get to try on different emotions and different roles (and take them off when they are done!). In play, our children used complex language not only to communicate their needs to their peers, but also to practice the vocabulary of our study in a concrete context. Powerful learning happens when young



children pretend.

In our study of flowers, there were regular opportunities for the children to understand the natural process of decay inherent in living things. We observed this process many times as we watched our fresh flowers eventually wither and die. We made connections and comparisons to other living things like our pumpkin and other fruits and vegetables from our snack. We observed how our carved pumpkin decayed much more quickly than the pumpkin that was not carved.

Another life science concept we explored was that of living and non-living objects. In our study of flowers we used many live flowers and many silk flowers. We noticed that the live flowers were the only ones that went through this changing process. In a purposeful observation of a live sunflower and a (very realistic!) silk sunflower, we asked the children, "Which is living and which is non-living?" Initially, the children had a very difficult time determining which one was the live one. Across many days, the onset of decay made the distinction much easier to determine. Again, this kind of intentional observation and discussion encourages the children to think deeply about and analyze what is going on around them.

We also explored the question, "Do all flowers come from seeds?" While we did lots of planting of seeds and watching of stems growing from the soil, we also watch flowers come from bulbs. At first, the children guessed that the bulbs were onions or garlic and they predicted that flowers would not grow from them. As we planted the bulbs in water (without soil), we were able to see the roots form very rapidly. The stems popped out of the bulbs and reached for sunlight very quickly, too. We were all thrilled to return from break to see the beautiful Paperwhites that grew from our bulbs. Like the observant scientists they are, the children changed their thinking as a result of this experience, and now know that not all flowers come from seeds (and some don't even need soil!).

As those Paperwhites stretched toward the light, growing taller and stronger every day, so did the children in the Older 3s. Each day they grew and learned and became confident, solid school kids. It was indeed a year of growth in the Older 3s.



The **Extended Day program in the 3/4s** expanded the children's exploration of visual art by doing a comprehensive study of sculpture. We began the study by looking closely at sculptures in our neighborhood. We were amazed to find so many types on campus; we enjoyed observing, touching and comparing the different sculptures. We found some pieces that were realistic and others that were abstract. After looking closely, we asked the children to sketch what they saw. This activity of drawing from observation encourages children to slow down and take time to see intricate details and then put them down on paper. Drawing from observation is a very different activity and reinforces different skills, as opposed to drawing from one's imagination.

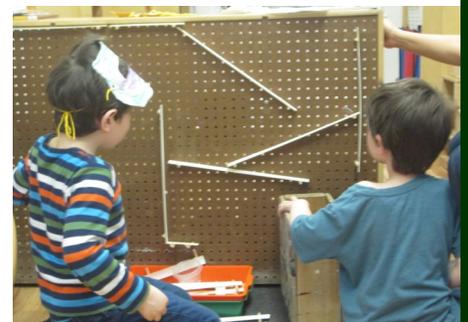
Back in the classroom, we began exploring different sculpting materials. First off was clay! Just like in our observations of sculptures in our neighborhood, some of us made abstract compositions, using interesting form and shape, while others made realistic objects found in our everyday lives. We created sculptures using many different media including foil, wire, blocks, wooden skewers and Styrofoam pieces. We found that the material we were working with really informed our process and our products. Materials like the skewers and Styrofoam pieces encouraged us to explore size and work on a grand scale. But foil encouraged us to work on a smaller more intimate scale. The children enjoyed sharing their process and final products with each other. In extended day, new relationships were formed with peers, materials and teachers.

In the **4/5s Extended Day program**, we noticed children using ramps and cylinders to make machines in the block area. At the onset, we saw the children's deep interest and excitement in their exploration of the physics behind rolling round objects down ramps. Indeed, their shared interest in ramps, tubes, mazes, gravity, and friction carried us through much of the year in the Extended Day program. We experimented with pipes, chutes, blocks and window blinds; cotton balls, ping-pong balls and marbles. We discussed the factors that made things roll faster or slower, straight or crooked. We tried out different shapes, angles and methods of propulsion. There were races, games, puzzles, traps, diagrams and plans (and a lot of fun!), all using our acquired knowledge about what makes things roll. We were able to construct more intricate contraptions and do more extensive tests of our hypotheses because we could spread out and use the whole class if we needed to. We could roll marbles all over the floor without having to worry about tripping up our friends and teachers. We could take our machines to the yard to a marble from the top of the climber and measure how far it went. That is the opportunity that comes in Extended Day: deep, focused exploration and meaningful learning in a small group that takes its own path.



"That is the opportunity that comes in Extended Day: Deep exploration and meaningful learning in a small group that takes its own path."

Extended Day



In Service of Our Intellectual Pursuits

Our faculty, as a community of learners, are firmly committed to their own professional development. This year was filled with opportunities for us to hone our thinking, skills and knowledge of early childhood education.

We visited *The Wonder of Learning* exhibit in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The traveling exhibit is a collection of stories and documentations from schools in the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Each story told of how children had found meaning and learning from a simple experience. In elaborate detail, the exhibit explained how the faculty and children used observation, reflection, materials and conversation to take that experience and develop it into a meaningful learning opportunity that demonstrated children's thinking, planning and expression.

The faculty walked away thinking about many “big ideas”:

Co-construction of knowledge: Through the detailed descriptions of how these projects unfolded, we were able to see the power of collaboration that occurred between children, teachers and parents.

Respect for children: Over and over again, we saw how children's *work* and *thinking* were encouraged and supported by the teachers. The children were free to see, think and express their own understanding using words, materials and tools.

Interesting and beautiful materials: We were struck by the types of materials the children explored—light, glass, wood, stones and leaves, to name just a few.

In addition to the many inspiring stories and documentations of projects, the exhibit included two “ateliers,” or studios, that were arranged and fully stocked for our own exploration. Both the Ocean and Light/Shadow ateliers provided us with opportunities for inspiration, exploration and fun. The day was filled with provocation, collaboration and learning—our dialogue continues!

Faculty members also attended various workshops and conferences held throughout the city, including The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance's (NAREA) national Winter Conference, the 92Y Wonderplay Early Childhood Conference and Bank Street's Infant and Toddler Institute.

In addition to the learning opportunities outside of school, we meet regularly as a full faculty to share and develop our own intellectual pursuits. Twice a month, we gather to reflect, discuss and challenge our thinking and practices. A book entitled *The Intentional Teacher*, by Ann S. Epstein, provided the framework for much of our discussion and work together this year. We grappled with the balance between teacher- and child-led learning; we stretched our understanding of content learning in the early years. We debated and disagreed; we verified and validated. Most importantly, we spent valuable time collectively focusing our thoughts and conversations on our own practices and intellectual pursuits.



Check out our NEW website
www.columbiagreenhouse.com

Parent Association: A Look Back

It is hard to believe that the 2014-15 school year has already come and gone. Looking back, we had an exciting and fun year, highlighted by a few events recapped below.

We began the year with the PA Cocktail Party in October, at a new venue: the Feldberg Room in Warren Hall. Our opening cocktail party always proves to be the perfect opportunity to reconnect with old friends and welcome new families to Greenhouse. This event gave us an opportunity to mix and mingle with fellow parents, faculty and staff in a relaxed environment. It was a great way to kick off the academic year and is a favorite of many.



In November, we held our 2nd Annual Book Fair at Book Culture on 114th Street. The book fair took place in the children's room, with light snacks upstairs on the main floor. The turnout was terrific and the store was buzzing as Greenhouse took over. Children and families walked away with new books for their shelves, and our libraries in each classroom received books from their wish lists. We learned a lot from last year's fair; the elimination of the craft projects and an increased number of story times helped to alleviate some of the congestion in the Children's Room during the event. Moving forward,

experience will continue to help us find ways to perfect the event.

In March, the PA hosted former Greenhouse parent Pam Korson, LCSW. Pam led



a discussion and provided support on issues related to child development and effective parenting. Those in attendance enjoyed valuable insight and conversation regarding many of the issues we all struggle with as parents, including discipline, sibling rivalry and transitions.

We are so grateful for your participation throughout the year and feel fortunate to be a part of such a special community at Greenhouse. We would also like to extend a very special thank-you to the class representatives for 2014-15, who served as a valuable resource for parents.

Planning for the 2015-16 school year has already begun. We look forward to seeing many familiar faces in September. Have a wonderful summer!

Best,
Stephanie, Pam and Katie

Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the many parent volunteers who took on leadership roles in this year's activities. Your willingness to serve reflects the generosity, spirit and commitment of the Greenhouse community.

Officers

Stephanie Schafer, Co-Chair
Pam Schnatterly, Co-Chair
Katie Smith, Secretary

Class Representatives

Natasha Augoustopoulos
Megha Charalambides
Aimee Christian
Abby Diamond
Jinny Prais
Sarah Rosenbaum-Kranson
Kristen Sauer

Spring Fair Committee

Rebecca and Pascal Weel, Co-Chair
Liz Sorem and John Lussier, Co-Chair
Jenny Falcon, Rummage Co-Chair
Suzette Berkey, Rummage Co-Chair
Lee and Alex Saltzman, Games Chairs
Sang Park, Set-up/Clean-up Chair
John Lussier, Central Booth Chair

Auction Committee

Vera Elumn, Greenhouse Coordinator
Kara Putrino, Chair
Kate and Bryan Black
Britta Faust-Burak
Katherine and John Cooper
Kristine and Michael Johannes
Ksenia Kaliaguina and Richard Kendall
Beverley Sutherland and Sunil Kumar
Rachel Maniatis
Judith Margolin
Bernie McCormick
Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith
Agi Legutko and Michal Olownia
Maxine and Peter Roel
John Sanful
Mana Mann and Joshua Stern
Lauren Taggart Wasson and Baxter Wasson

Auctioneer

John Schnatterly

Apple Day Bake Sale

Kerry Ann Evans-Thompson
Kari and Brian Strong

Parents League Rep

Allie Baker

Event Photographer

Jennifer Pease
Sharmilee and Shiva Ramudit

Have Tools Will Travel

Seth Bruno
Jared Fox



THE VIBRANT AND GENEROUS GREENHOUSE COMMUNITY

The Spring Fair is a family favorite! Once again, we took over 116th Street and filled it with bouncy rides, fishing ponds, rummage items and more! There was a steady stream of current students, alumni and neighborhood families trading their tickets for sand bears and pony rides. Taking a break from the rides and games, the food table was stocked with a wide range of delicious food choices (many made and donated by Greenhouse families). No other event brings our entire community together with such joy, abandon and glee.



The Annual Winter Benefit, held at Union Theological Seminary, was a night to be remembered. Despite the cold outside, the room was filled with the warmth of friendship and laughter. Partaking in our biggest fundraising event, the entire parent body gathered in celebration and support of the work of Greenhouse. The silent auction was packed with goodies like tickets to see the Broadway show *Wicked* (with a private backstage tour!), a luxurious spa visit and a private class at Super Soccer Stars. The live auction proved exciting, too: who would win the Italian getaway or the gourmet dinner? Thanks to everyone's good spirits, enthusiastic participation and generous donations, the evening was both a great fundraiser and great fun!



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Apple Day Bake Sale



Family Picnics

Friendships and Spiders

"You have been my friend," replied Charlotte, "That in itself is a tremendous thing." E. B. White, Charlotte's Web

The year started as it usually does in the 3/4s: eighteen uniquely individual children entered the classroom filled with ideas, emotions, and expectations. It was only a matter of time before a provocation presented itself. And sure enough, it did!

One morning in early fall, we noticed a spider web inside our stick bug tank! This provoked much discussion and debate. It also provided us with an important question: "What makes a spider a spider?" Looking back on our year-long study of spiders, we find a rich, multi-disciplinary project filled with meaningful explorations, investigations and observations. We collaborated, researched, created, wrote, sang, weaved, built, constructed, shared and expressed our knowledge of spiders. We made meaning out of words like *cephalothorax*, *ballooning*, and *tarantula*! We built skills when we counted the spider's legs, wrote spider stories, and researched the traits of our individual spiders.

In addition to finding the provocation that led to all that learning, we had also found our vehicle that led us on our journey of becoming a community of learners. Our work—researching spiders—provided the perfect opportunity to come together. Deep, lasting friendships were born over comparisons of the orb spider and the water spider. Connections and relationships were built with shared smiles and joy while creating our giant spider or weaving our enormous web. Studying spiders and making friends coincided perfectly when we read E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*.



In addition to the rich spider study, there were other interesting provocations that presented themselves to the children in the 3/4s. One such provocation happened in the art area during a simple invitation to explore strips of paper, scissors, and glue. In this invitation, we gave no directions or instruction; we simply presented the materials in an inviting and provocative way. The only limitation was the properties of the materials. We found that each child approached the materials in their own way. They brought their own

thoughts, feelings and ideas to the activity. This individual, creative process and journey was clearly reflected in their finished products. As we watched the children use the scissors to cut shapes and compose their collages, we were reminded of the work of artist, Henri Matisse.

We knew we had a joyful responsibility to expand upon the children's experience with this medium and technique. We extended the exploration to include the purposeful cutting and deconstruction of shapes. As the children manipulated the shapes they were cutting, they organized their thoughts and developed logical and creative thinking. Problem-solving abilities were relied upon as they made decisions about where and how to place their forms and shapes. Some children worked in a freestyle manner, letting the shapes speak to them. Others planned their compositions, manipulating the shapes to fit their ideas.

When the children felt their pieces had been completed, they often gave their finished work a title, demonstrating that they understood that art can foster feelings and ideas. When their collages told a story, we transcribed their words to capture their descriptive language. Also, new content vocabulary was introduced as the children used different techniques like fringes, overlapping, negative and positive space, swirls and curls, and semicircles. The children even coined entirely new words to describe the creative techniques used in their work.

To further expand children's understanding of shape, form and composition, we presented them with pre-cut, transparent Matisse-esque shapes to use on our light table. We found that this gave the children a new freedom for exploration; they could focus their creative energy on the composition and placement of the shapes without having to rely on their ability to operate scissors and paper. The children worked in pairs, manipulating the shapes and creating remarkable compositions.

To experience the scale and grandeur of Matisse's work, we introduced the overhead projector. Now the children could project their shapes onto the wall, creating vast and malleable works of art. Children explored repositioning the shapes and colors on the projector and watching the collective image shift and alter on the wall. The way the children engaged with the light, shadow and color projections on the wall was magical, whether they were concentrating hard on their individual work or gleefully sharing their discoveries with a friend.

One road always leads to another, and yes, the spiders did eventually appear on the overhead projector! Much as the spiders provided an opportunity for our children to come together in thought and play, the creative process and study of Matisse's techniques provided the children with the same. Life in the 3/4s class is very much about finding a common interest that unifies us, through which we make meaning and strengthen our bonds.



4/5s: Monsters Taking Trains in the Neighborhood



First Impressions: *High energy! Verbal! Settled into work! Contained! Cautious! Quiet! Uncertain! Purposeful! Smiley! Shy! Curious! Knowledgeable! Bold!* These are some of the things that we observed about the 4/5s when they came for their school visits in September. That was just the beginning, the very first step of a journey that we were all going to take together: our journey of development and discovery.

We know that the main developmental task of four- and five-year-olds is to figure out who they are, and then how they relate to others. Who am I like? How am I different? What parts of me are permanent and will stay forever and what parts will change? And then, importantly, how will the relationships with the people that I love change as I continue to grow and become more autonomous? We know that they are innately curious and have a growing ability to make sense of the world around them. We know that their physical bodies are strong and capable.

In that vein, we make careful plans to co-create a curriculum that supports each child's academic, social, physical and emotional growth. Whether we are working together to build a train, design a monster or draft our own maps, there are strong cognitive skills and thinking imbedded in each activity, and there are equally strong opportunities for our blossoming social four-year-olds to practice working with each other in a mutually satisfying way. Our neighborhood study provided plenty of opportunities for such growth. In the winter months, we took many outings in the neighborhood. We ventured out with the specific goal of observing; when you set your mind to really *look*, you find that you see many things you might typically not otherwise notice. The children were intrigued by what they found in our neighborhood and wondered what else there was to discover! So we broke into four small groups, each of which explored one of the four streets that border Greenhouse. Clipboards in hand, we counted, measured, discovered and categorized the elements of each block. Back at school, we used our data in charts, collages, number lines and stories. We even created a game based on our block! Literature was another important part of the project, and we read lots of books about neighborhoods. One book in particular, *The Block*, a collection of poems by Langston Hughes, inspired us to create collages using our observations and data. The detailed and intricate collages were another way to interpret and share the information that we collected.

When children have the experience of seeing their ideas and efforts take form in group projects (like our neighborhood project or the monster study) and they can use their skills in symbolic representation and communication, they see themselves as active, competent learners with worthwhile ideas and interests. In the context of an activity (like designing and creating a board game based on our research) our children learned to focus, delay gratification and seek the help of others in the pursuit of a self-generated goal. As the year ends, we see how much they've grown. Physically, their bodies are bigger and stronger; cognitively, many are sounding out words, playing with rhyme, and sorting materials to make sense of their world; emotionally, they are more regulated and focused; socially, deep friendships have formed with their peers. As our children move on to kindergartens all across the city, each classroom with its own approach and goals, we know that our kids will approach the academic demands of their future school lives with the self-confidence and eagerness that they acquired through the satisfying learning experiences in the 4/5s class. They leave us with valuable experiences and a powerful self-knowledge that they are active thinkers and contributing group members.



2014-2015 Annual Fund Contributors

Each year, the generosity of Greenhouse parents, alumni families and friends allows us to continue to provide exceptional programs and quality experiences for our children. Their contributions to Greenhouse serve as the catalyst for change and growth, which enables us to continue to refine and enhance the experience that is Greenhouse. The Annual Fund is the cornerstone of giving to Greenhouse and supports the ongoing operational expenses of the School. In the past, Annual Fund monies were used to renovate the small yard, purchase much-needed classroom equipment and provide professional development opportunities for our faculty.

Greenhouse Nursery School thanks and acknowledges the generous contributions of the following individuals and companies to our Annual Fund:

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