



# End of the Year Report 2015-2016

## COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL

### To Project

**pro·ject**

*verb*

/prə'jekt/

1. estimate or forecast for a time in the future
2. to cause to appear on a surface



As I put together the pages of this year's report, I am drawn in by the detail of the effort, thought and intention our teachers, staff, children and families bring to their work. The End of the Year Report allows us to project that work for all to see. Each photo, every write-up, tells the story of Greenhouse as if it were shining brilliantly on the wall in a classroom's exploration of light. As our children project light and images on the wall during their play, they become part of the light and interact with the shadows and images in a captivating, concrete way. It is my hope that you similarly find your own connection to and engagement with the work and life of Greenhouse with the turning of each page of this document. See our shared sense of purpose and continued commitment to protect and maintain the early childhood years as unique and special. Experience our firmly placed value on play, discovery and wonder. Feel the strong and vibrant community that draws us all together to share in the experience that is Greenhouse. As I look ahead and project to the future, it is with pride and enthusiasm that I look forward to another year of deep, meaningful work.

Warmly,  
Renee



Dear Greenhouse Community,  
As I reflect back on my 12 years as a trustee of Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School, what stands out to me is how true we have remained to the core mission of our school. In a world that has seen so much change, this is an achievement worth noting. Of course, Greenhouse has experienced change too; one director retired and a new one took the helm, teachers have moved on and new ones came aboard, and all this amidst the constant coming and going of families who join our community with toddlers and leave with children ready for elementary school. Our environment has changed dramatically too, not only within our school, as teachers have developed their practice and the physical plant has been continuously improved, but beyond our walls where the economy and school demographics have changed the climate for preschools throughout the city. But through all this change, what has endured throughout my tenure as a trustee is our commitment to the children entrusted to our care, to our philosophy of education which is evidence based and time proven, and our commitment to building community and supporting children by strengthening parents.

Experiences in early childhood lead to development of skills that are the foundation upon which children construct their lives. I believe that selecting a preschool is the most important school choice a family will ever make. When you

chose to become a member of the Greenhouse community, you chose to invest in the richest preschool experience available to your family. We provide an environment that allows your children to find their voice and develop their skills by pursuing their interests.

On the front lines of everything we do are our teachers, whose investment of time, intelligence and heart make our school. We are so fortunate to have our Director who values our faculty by advocating for them and supports their development. And we have a wonderful community of families whose commitment to Greenhouse is evident in all the work of the Parent Association. The Board is passionately interested in every aspect of Greenhouse, from the way that new technology contributes to curriculum right to our long term financial health. We truly are a community with extraordinary resources.

The Board values your membership in the Greenhouse community. We wish you the very best in the year to come.

Sincerely,  
Sara Edlin, Chair  
Columbia Greenhouse Board of Trustees



## Building relationships







Building connection





## 2Day 2s: Soups on!



**“Such a soup! How good it smelled! Truly fit for a king!”**

*Stone Soup*, By Marcia Brown

Just as the two strangers in the classic folk tale, *Stone Soup*, used their soup-making skills to bring an entire town together, the 2day 2s came together as a community over their own shared soup-making experience! Cooking together gave us a first-hand communal experience; we shared in the entire soup making process from gathering ingredients, preparation, and (most importantly) eating! This year we made a variety of soups including mushroom, broccoli, black bean and potato soup. As we cut the vegetables, measured the broth or stirred the soup, we practiced taking turns, sharing a common goal and working together to accomplish a task. And while it looks like a lot of fun, don't be fooled! There was fun but there were also many inherent opportunities for thinking about and practicing contextual learning of content and skills. While cooking soup we thought about and talked about numbers, size, and measurement. How many mushrooms are in the bowl? Which potato is the biggest? Which is the smallest? We also used specialized vocabulary and language like *dice*, *peel* and *zucchini*. We looked carefully at each ingredient as a group during meeting and again individually at the art table. We used words to describe the look, feel and smell of our ingredients.



At the art table, we used magnifying glasses to look even closer at the ingredients and then used graphic materials to represent our thinking of them. Each soup-making experience was an

opportunity to talk about sequencing; first we add the potato, then we add the celery, after we stirred, we heated it and ate! We provided opportunities for our children to think about their many soup making experiences and develop their own soup recipes. With each experience, we exposed the children to whole, healthy foods and encouraged them to expand their palate. The list goes on and on; as they cooked, our kids engaged their brain in a direct and concrete way. In addition to the skill building, 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 soup and then sat down to eat it at snack. Our children felt proud and independent when they used real tools that grown-ups use, like knives, potato mashers or a food processor. Along with these self-esteem building experiences, the children also learned about community and working together. The 2day 2s learned, much as the villagers in *Stone Soup*, that when we work together, when we each contributed to the good of the group, the results are extraordinary (and delicious)!



### Faculty List 2015-2016

2Day 2s and 3Day 2s 2/3s Afternoon	Rachel Roth, Head Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher Kira Rutherford-Boese, Assistant Teacher
Young 3s	Pam Butler, Head Teacher Xiomara Menendez, Assistant Teacher Indiana Bervis, Intern
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, Co-Teacher David Vining, Co-Teacher Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher
Administrative Staff	Renee Mease, Director Vera Elumn, Administrator Ashley Kuitunen, Admin Assistant
Support Staff	Lorraine Harner, Child Psychologist Marlowe Rinsler, Music and Movement Briana Sakamoto, Music and Movement



## 3Day 2s: Expressing Emotions



Our year was filled with exploration and learning. For many, this was our first time exploring big ideas like separation, group living and being in a school setting. Before they could feel completely safe and comfortable to explore in this place called school, they needed to come to terms with a temporary separation from their most beloved grown-ups. With consistent support and a predictable schedule, the 3 day 2s quickly threw themselves into the school day. They learned how to pursue their own interest and discover what they both liked and disliked. We spent a lot of time thinking about and talking about how to communicate our emotions, needs and wants to each other. We started with the ability to recognize and label our own emotions. While their physical selves might seem small, their emotional selves are not small at all! It is not unusual for a young child to be taken over by his or her emotions; whether the emotions come from missing home or having to wait for a turn, disappointments can run deep.

In order to help put some words to these big emotions, we read "When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry" by Molly Bang. The children immediately related with Sophie and made connections from her feelings to their own. Being able to put words to feelings helped our kids gain control over and begin to regulate their big emotions. We began naming and exploring many different feelings including frustrated, scared, surprised, sad, happy, silly, and excited. Each morning, during meeting, we checked in with the 3day 2s and let them identify how they were feeling on our Feelings Chart. Sometimes, throughout the day we'd see the children move their feeling; while they identified feeling sad in the morning, they realized

that later in the day they felt happy. What important learning! Feelings have a beginning, middle and end. They were able to find connections to their feelings in books, songs and play. The children enjoyed role playing different emotions and began using complex language to describe their own feelings and the feelings of others.

This awareness of their own emotional-self opened up the door to also see the emotional-self of others. With their heightened awareness of feelings, they often demonstrated compassion and understanding for each other with a kind hug or empathetic gesture. This ability to see and accept another person's perspective could be the most important learning of all in



nursery school. Each day they practiced the skills they needed to be successful in a group and they learned how to live alongside other people who were not in their family. They practiced important group living skills, including how to wait for a turn, how to express wants and needs and how to listen to other people. As young children, they are just at the beginning of this learning about their emotional selves and the emotional lives of others. As with any growing process, there were challenges. In those challenging times, we assured them that big feelings can be overwhelming but someday soon, they would be able to express their big emotions with words and get what they want and need. We provided them these words as a 'growth mindset' that respects the daily process and life-long social learning journey each one of us is on.





## 2/3s Afternoon: Finding A Friend



In September, the 2/3s entered eagerly into the classroom; they were excited to explore the materials and experience all school has to offer. They looked to the teachers for grounding and comfort and looked to the materials for inspiration. With each passing day, their world began to open up and they became more interested in each other. They were finding their first friends and finding a friend is very important work. In fact, research tells us that children that successfully make and keep friends tend to like school and perform better. Knowing that being able to build and maintain a connection with your peers is important early learning, we set off to work!

We spent many conversations this year exploring the topic of friendship with the 2/3s. As is always the case when you invite young children into the conversations, they had a lot of ideas about friendship that they wanted to share with us.

*"A friend is someone you want to play with."*

*"Friends help each other."*

*"My brother is my best friend."*

These conversations were the beginning of our intentional thinking about what it means to be a friend. We structured our program to support their budding friendships. Whether we were singing Rig-a-jig-jig and inviting a special friend into the circle or doing a partner painting, we were providing opportunities for our



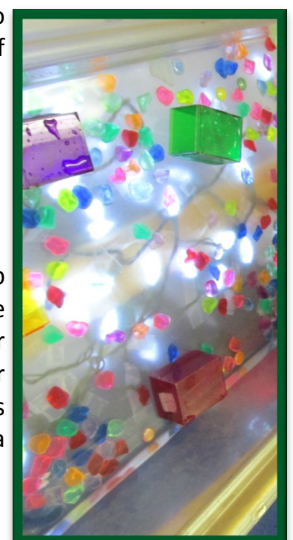
young children to be in a social setting and expand their experiences with peers. Our child-centered, play-based environment provided a natural context for the 2/3s to practice pro-social behaviors including turn taking, managing risks and making decisions. Our shared projects like the string art board gave children time and opportunity to practice sharing a goal with others, working together and seeing it through. During work time, the 2/3s practiced expressing their feelings and wants, listening to others and negotiating the give-and-take of friendship. The kids were so in tuned with each other they would write messages of love to each other. Together, we made a "friendship box" where they could share their messages and drawings with each other. We created our friendship wall and each child was able to put into words their own ideas of friendship:

*"I was happy when I was drawing with him."*

*"We play together with Legos, play dough and toys together."*

*"We're silly together."*

The 2/3s demonstrated a deep desire to want to connect with one another. Through the year, their relationships were the catalysts for fun, laughter and learning. This is important learning that will last a lifetime.





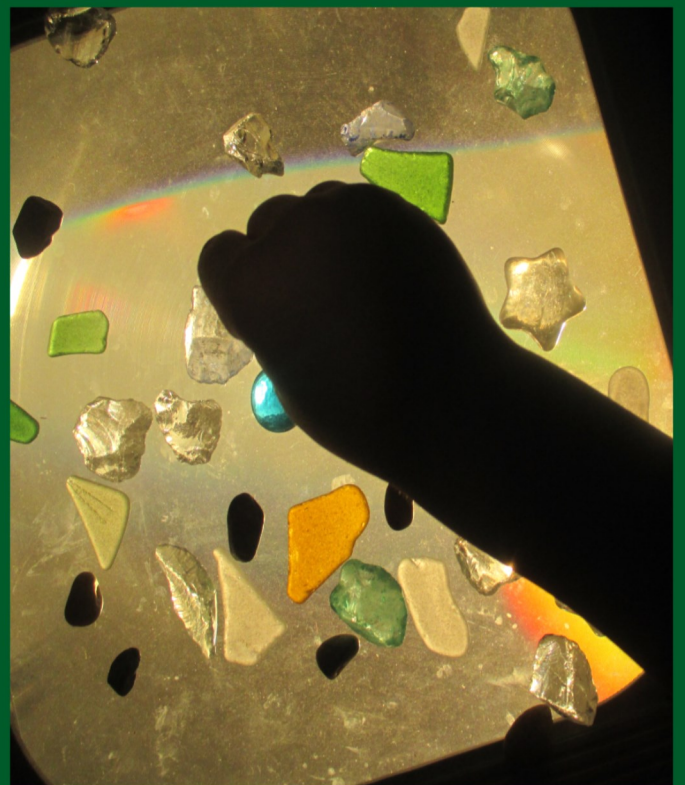
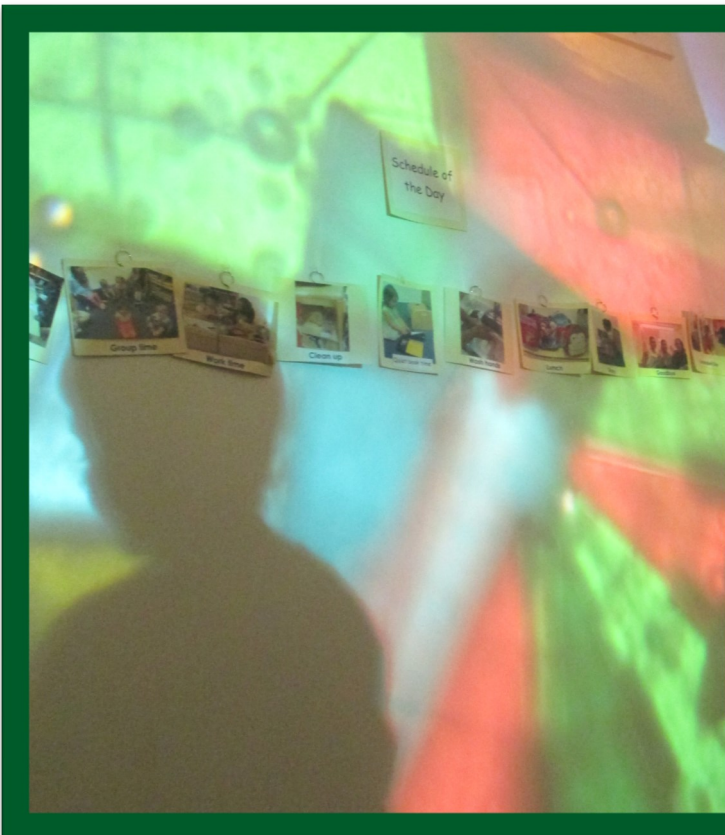
## Young 3s: Exploration of light



In September, we came into the Young 3s not knowing each other well, yet we ended the school year in June as if we had been together for a lifetime! So much of our beginning was about building our relationships; teachers, children and parents worked together to develop a relationship that was based on trust and understanding. As our relationships strengthened, it provided us with a firm foundation on which we were able to build an interesting and engaging curriculum that captured the minds, imagination and hearts of the children and adults, alike.

It began quite simply, with a shared discovery! Someone shared a flashlight he had found at home. With glee, he shared his discovery at meeting, "Watch what happens when the lights are off!" And an exploration was born! Natural elements (such as light, sand, or water) provide the perfect opportunity for open-ended exploration. With each hands-on inquiry and exploration, our children formed concepts and ideas about the natural world. In our inquiry about light and shadows, we worked with many different light sources including an overhead projector, flash-

lights, the sun, and light bulbs. We used an enormous amount of materials to interact with the light sources including blocks, magna-tiles, water, prisms and paper. Sometimes the children explored in small groups; sometimes they explored on their own. In all instances, they developed questions, made connections, and tried out new ideas. Each exploration led us directly to the next! Why do the wooden blocks make a dark shadow and the magna-tiles make a shadow with color? Will water make a dark shadow or a color shadow? Why can we sometimes see our shadows outside but at other times, we cannot see our shadows? The questions became our guide and the materials became the road traveled. Each observation, led to another question, each question led to more activity. We were excited to witness the thrill of discovery in each and every experience; the children truly owned this thinking and wondering. Through their hands-on experience, the children learned to observe, think critically, seek out additional information, interpret that information and then truly change the way they thought about a concept—experiential learning at its purest! Their genuine interest in the active exploration was palpable. And as is true in any good inquiry, there were multiple points of entry for the children. Some children were captured by the ideas of shadows, others were interested in the idea of finding rainbows inside light. Regardless of their question, light source, or materials, each child's active participation transcended curiosity and academic learning and reached a place of deep personal investment and moved them further along on their journey of life-long love of discovery and learning.





## Older 3s: “Why is the moon in there?”

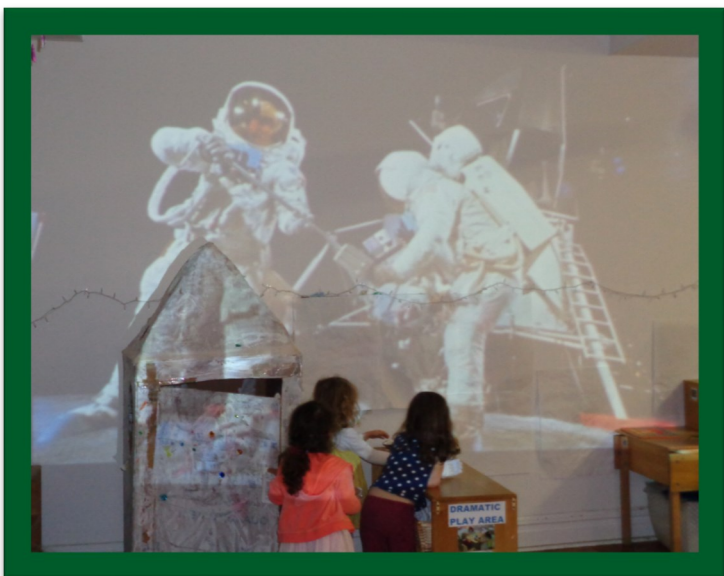


We found our beginning question! One day, while playing in the yard, some children in the Older 3s class noticed the moon in the bright blue morning sky. “Why is the moon in there?” asked one child. “The moon only comes out at night!” added another. They were eager to share their discovery with their peers and teachers. This next moment is a critical moment in an emergent curriculum classroom. Could we, the adults, have answered their question about why the moon was out in the morning with facts about reflecting sunlight or explanations about revolving around the sun? Could we have Googled their question and read them the scientific answer? All are possible next steps; instead we chose to let that great question simmer! We let that question become the seed for thinking, discovery and making connections across the weeks and months of the school year.

“Why do you think the moon is out?” We opened up the conversation to the Older 3s and asked them to tell us their ideas and theories. We quickly discovered we had a room full of children with great ideas! Their answers showed us their prior knowledge about the moon and also illuminated how they made connections from their own experiences. Whether we were talking about why the moon was out during the day, what we thought the moon surface looked like or how many days it takes to fly to the moon, our meeting discussions provided the perfect opportunity to provide contextual practice in conversational turn-taking, staying on topic, and building onto an idea.



As our interest grew around space travel, the children made rockets out of anything they could get their hands on! The unit blocks, manipulatives and art materials quickly turned into rocket ships. We decided to construct our own rocket ship! A shared idea (such as building a rocket ship) provides a concrete way for young children to share a plan and practice collaboration and negotiation. During the process of constructing the rocket, we needed to agree to its shape, color and design. We needed to determine roles and share work space and materials. We designed and constructed other materials to go along with our rocket, including space helmets. The entire process was an exercise in collaborative, small group work. As dramatic play is an important way young children process information and show us their thinking, we placed our rocket in the dramatic play area. The children further enjoyed working together as they pretended to blast off into space, walk on the moon’s surface and, of course, meet some aliens. Our deep dramatic play inspired us to dictate space stories and make a book of our space adventures.



We spent time looking at the phases and different shapes of the moon. We experimented with many different ways to make stars. We used various materials including clay, tape and cookie dough to practice making moons and stars. We used the Older 3s expanding and deep interest in all things space to make observations and build onto their knowledge about the natural world. Our metric for success was not to learn about the moon’s orbit or the rotation of the earth; instead we used their interest in the moon to build thinking skills and problem solving. We used their interest in the moon to build strong, reciprocal relationships with one another. We used their interest to build and practice content skills. Ultimately, we used their interest in the moon to practice the very act of learning.



## Music for music's sake



Music is a powerful and meaningful force in the lives of young children. It is widely known and understood that the exploration of musical elements hold deep perceptual and cognitive benefits for children. Music invites kids to hear language, express ideas, and find patterns. For some, music has become a mere vehicle for this cognitive learning. While, this learning is inherently found inside our explorations of music, **at Greenhouse we value and honor the importance of engaging with music for music's sake!** Play some music in a room full of children, you instantly see and feel joy enter into the space. At the simple strum of a guitar or the beginning lyrics of a song, you see even the youngest of children bring their full selves to attention. There is a deep, intrinsic reward for children when they hear and explore the elements of music. Exploring open-ended musical instruments promotes a sense of competency, control and empowerment. Music also builds connections— between our home and school lives and in the social space between each other. When we make music together we bring our sounds, voices and joy together in a concrete and meaningful way. Every day during meetings, transitions or play, you will find our children and teachers making music together. We've looked for other ways to incorporate music into our school lives, too. This year we've added school-wide Sings to our calendar. Each month, the full school gathers together in a classroom to share in song. In addition to her weekly music classes, Marlowe, our music teacher, leads our monthly Sings. At the Spring Fair, we added sing-a-longs with Kira and an "instrument petting zoo" with Bloomingdale School of Music. It was very special to hear

the live music playing at the fair and watch the children feel and touch musical instruments and interact with the grown-up musicians as they played. Parents came into our classrooms and shared many different types of instruments and song. We are fully committed to providing the time and space for young children to explore, engage and experience the joy of making music.



"If I cannot fly,  
let me sing."  
— Stephen  
Sondheim





# The Art of Looking



This year the faculty focused their professional development inquiry on the act of observing and documenting children's learning. In our classrooms, our teachers are observing and watching your children every day. How do we use what we see to better understand your child? How do we take that understanding and plan a curriculum that is responsive, relevant and engaging?



We began our inquiry by asking ourselves why we observe young children. Ultimately, we agreed that we observe to better understand your child's point of view. We observe your children at work, not just to see

what they are doing, but instead to try to understand what they are feeling, thinking and experiencing inside their mind and body. The story of who your child is— as a unique person—is found in the details of their interactions with materials, ideas and people. We want to fully know each child's unique experience; the way to do that is through intentional, focused and systematic observation.

Our faculty meetings involved sharing children's work, words and interactions. We developed and experimented with different tools, graphs and charts to help us organize the data we were collecting. In our classrooms, we jotted observations in notebooks or on post-its, took hundreds of pictures, collected painting and drawings every day of the school year! We hosted a forum for educators from other early childhood schools to share their experience and understanding of observation and recording. Most importantly, each week, as a teaching team, we reflected on what we saw and collected; we talked, debated, hypothesized and wondered. Eventually, together, we made meaning out of your child's words and behaviors and we found a deepening understanding of each child's individual experience in our classroom.

We expanded our practice of observing and reflecting during our professional development day visit to the *Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling*. Here we participated in a facilitated exploration of a technique called visual inquiry. During the exercise we looked deeply and shared our thoughts with each other. The deeper and fuller with each other. Just as our understanding of the



art work grew during our time looking, talking and reflecting, our understanding of your children continues to grow the more we look, talk and reflect on their work, ideas and interactions. With this new understanding of your child's unique experience, we are able to build a strong, deep, authentic relationship with them. We are also able to plan a curriculum that is rich, responsive and engaging.

*The story of who your child is—as a unique person—is found in the details of their interactions with materials, ideas and people.*





## Parent Association: A Look Back

Dear Greenhouse Parents,

As we approach the end of another year at Greenhouse, we want to thank all of the teachers, administrators and parents for working together to create a wonderful community. The community is what makes Greenhouse special and we are incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as leaders of the Parent Association.

In looking back, there were several events that highlighted our year. We kicked it off with our annual PA Cocktail Party, which was hosted by Greenhouse board member and alum parents, CC and Julien Ehlers, at their beautiful home in Harlem. The cocktail party always proves to be the perfect opportunity to reconnect with old friends and welcome new families to Greenhouse.

In November, we held our Annual Book Fair at Book Culture. The turnout was terrific and the store was buzzing as we literally took over the store. Our class representatives volunteered to read books for a staggered story time. The event was a success, as kids enjoyed story time with their friends, families walked away with new books for their shelves, and our classrooms received books from their wish lists.

In January, we were thrilled to welcome parenting author and blogger, Janet Lansbury. The turnout for the event was terrific, with over 60 Greenhouse parents in attendance. We were thrilled to bring such an accomplished resource to the Greenhouse community and are grateful to 3/4s parent, Jinny Prais, for helping us make it happen.

Greenhouse held its annual benefit in February. Again, we had a fantastic turnout, with many current Greenhouse parents and faculty, along with past faculty members and former parents. The class reps outdid themselves by organizing amazing class-wide

donations. A big thank you to all of the parent volunteers who made the event one of the most successful in years!

In May, Greenhouse held our annual Spring Fair. The fair is a favorite at Greenhouse and something the children look forward to year after year. Between the games, bouncy houses, and pony rides—fun was had by all! We couldn't do it without the many parent volunteers who gave their time to make it all happen. Thank you!

Another thank you to this year's class representatives, who did a terrific job of creating opportunities for each classroom to build community. They planned events for their class outside of school, including class dinners for parent's night out, play dates at local playgrounds on conference days, class outings on days off from school. One class had a group of parents that purchased an auction item, the BioBus—a mobile science lab—was the site for a class event outside of school time! This year, one of our goals was to be more intentional about organizing activities to build classroom community and boy did the class reps deliver!

Finally, this is the last year at Greenhouse for the three of us and our families. It is certainly bittersweet! We have loved being part of such a special and feel so fortunate to have had our children grow up at Greenhouse. Thank you for the tremendous support throughout the years. Have a wonderful summer!

Best,  
Pam, Katie and  
Stephanie



*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.*

### PA LEADERSHIP

Stephanie Schafer, Co-Chair

Pam Schnatterly, Co-Chair

Katie Smith, Secretary

Isabelle Levy Jakobishvili, Class Rep

Sanya Rizvi, Class Rep

Aдриene Frohlich, Class Rep

Anika Tam, Class Rep

Lisa Bruno, Class Rep

Sharmilee Ramudit, Class Rep

Joanne Hinkel, Class Rep

### Spring Fair Committee

Rebecca and Pascal Weel, Co-Chair

Lindsay and Mike Pitzer, Co-Chair

Jenny Falcon, Rummage Co-Chair

Suzette Berkey, Rummage Co-Chair

Jessica Kimplell, Games Chairs

Seth Bruno, Set-up/Clean-up Chair

Jennifer Pease, Central Booth Chair

### Auction Committee

Vera Elumn, Greenhouse Coordinator

Rachel Maniatis, Chair

Siew Mei Au Young and Terrence Ching

Katherine and John Cooper

Jessica and Chris Cunneen

Ebone Brown-Emdin and Chris Emdin

Chad Hughes

Kristine and Michael Johannes

Adey Fisseha and Amanuel Kiroso

Stephanie Hodor and Ted Lasala

Judith Margolin

Bernie McCormick

Hilary Sample & Michael Meredith

Yom Odamtten Fox

Lindsay and Mike Pitzer

Lisa and Barry Percopio

Maxine and Peter Roel

Alicja and Ernesto Reuben

Alla Feldbarg and Vladimir Sheynzon

Mana Mann and Joshua Stern

Lauren Taggart Wasson and Baxter Wasson

### Auctioneer

John Schnatterly

### Apple Day Bake Sale

Kerry Ann Evans-Thompson and

Bradford Thompson

Ben Cohn and Sean McDaniel

### Parents League Rep

Jinny Prais

### Event Photographer

Marco Pirone

Georgia Marantos

### Have Tools Will Travel

Alex Kogan

Jared Fox



# THE VIBRANT AND GENEROUS GREENHOUSE COMMUNITY

The rain stayed away! And the Spring Fair was as magical as ever. Once again, we took over 116<sup>th</sup> Street and filled it with the old favorites—bouncy rides, fishing ponds, and ponies; we also added a sing-a-long with Kira, an instrument petting zoo with Bloomington School of Music and a pet adoption van! There was a steady stream of students, alumni and neighborhood families throughout the day. 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). The Fair brings our entire community together with such joy and glee.



The Annual Winter Benefit, held at Union Theological Seminary, was a night to be remembered. The entire parent body gathered in celebration and support of Greenhouse. Through our community's deep generosity, we raised record-setting funds this year! Thanks to everyone's good spirits, enthusiastic participation and kindness, the evening was both a great fundraiser and a great fun! In addition, we were thrilled to honor Rachel Roth's 25 years of service to the children and families of Greenhouse. Rachel is a vital part of our history and our future; we were delighted to celebrate her work and legacy at Greenhouse.





Apple Day Bake Sale



Parenting Workshop:  
An evening with Janet Lansbury



PA Cocktail Party



Getting Acquainted  
New Families Cocktail Party



PA Book Fair



Family Picnic



3/4s class get-together at the  
Conservatory Garden



## 3/4s: “Who will be my friend?”

This serious question was posed by one of the 3/4s students very early on in our year. As the school year began and children from various classes came together into the 3/4s this deeply personal question put into words the vulnerability, worry and wonderings of others in the class. Finding your place in a new community, finding someone to connect with, finding a friend is important work for us all—especially for four year olds. This questions, ‘Who will be my friend?’ became the guiding inspiration and common thread to all of our work this year in the 3/4s class.

We began with some intentional community building experiences. The children interviewed each other; they were excited to find out who else had a dog or who also had a baby sister. They shared their family books and used a camera to take pictures of each other. They raised their voices together in song...

It was inside the song “This Land is Your Land” that the class found its first topic of inquiry. The song inspired us and made us wonder, “What is a diamond dessert?” In our inquiry into the song lyrics, regions of the United States and the traits and animals within those regions, we discovered the work that brought us together! What better way to make a friend then identify a common question and find its solution? In small groups, we set out to learn all there was to learn about the Gulf Stream water, Redwood Forest and the Diamond Desert. We learned about what grew in each area and the animals that lived there. More importantly we learned we could work alongside our classmates, share a plan and find answers to our questions. With each activity, with each question answered, we found ourselves closer to finding a friend. During our research, we ventured outside of the classroom and took a trip to the local library. This shared experience of being outside of school together also brought us closer together as a group. We were inspired to turn our dramatic play area into a library. From that library grew our next shared inquiry—an author study of Ezra Jack Keats.

We explored eight books by Keats that revolved around the neighborhood of Peter and his family. Each book evoked discussions about conflicts, friendship and neighborhood. We made connections from Keats’ books to our own lives, friendships and neighborhoods. Our work—recreating our own neighborhood in the style of Keats or writing puppet shows using familiar characters—provided the perfect opportunity for us to come together in a shared purpose. We found deep, long-lasting friendships were born! Each of the children in the 3/4s found their own way into the work and there they all found not just a friend, but many friends!





## 4/5s: Differences, Similarities and Transformation



In September, fifteen sets of bright eyes and fifteen curious minds entered the 4/5s classroom. What would they see? What would they learn? Would they make friends? Who would help them if they needed it? What mattered the most to them? And so began the journey to create a community of thinkers and learners. We were all in it together – teachers, children and parents with one common goal -- to have an enriching, fulfilling learning experience. An experience that engages the children's minds, challenges their bodies, fosters their creativity and piques their curiosity, both individually and collectively.

A sure way to spark this engagement and collaboration is to intentionally provide provocative materials to draw the children in and then to uncover their thinking. At the beginning of the year we examined light and shadows. The 4/5s used the overhead projector to explore the properties of these natural elements. They used a variety of materials directly on the projector to create patterns and illustrations that they could see projected on the wall. They discovered the ways that things are the same or are different. While we knew the materials (the lace, stones, or bottle caps) would be inviting to the children and the ideas (why is the shadow of the stone bigger than the actual stone? Why does the light go through the clear caps but not the white caps?) would be interesting to think about, we also counted on the fact that the collaborative nature of this work would help to bring our kids together and support us in the making of our classroom community. In addition, making observations and exploring the properties of the physical world is one important way that children gain and organize information. As they repeat their discoveries over and over, they solidify their knowledge about the properties of the world and they are able to incorporate new ideas into their knowledge base.

As the exploration of light and dark deepened, we transitioned from using the overhead projector to a light table. We added natural materials for the children to explore such as twigs, corn, beans, stones, pine cones. The children were invited to select from the array of materials to make a "collection" which they then used to make a composition on the light table. The final step was to document their composition in a drawing.

This three step activity encouraged the 4/5s to plan and to make choices based on their plan; to pause and to think critically about the possibilities that the materials presented. Finally, it helped the children to build intention, purpose, focus and flexible thinking.

We extended the exploration by projecting images on the wall and providing interesting 3-D materials for the children to use to interact with the image. Whether children were building an under-the-seascape or constructing skyscrapers in Time Square, the children found another way to explore shadows, light and reflection. Throughout the entirety of this exploration, we found the children eager to ask questions, draw conclusions, point out similarities and differences, take risks and experience the joy of discovery.

Simultaneously, we were noticing the rich and involved work our children were engaged in while playing in the dramatic area. Most days the theme of the play revolved around family; most of the children had a turn working in dramatic play and adding their own thoughts about what 'family' means. As we observed the children working we realized the powerful connection that each child had to the idea of family. Each child's notion of family was connected to their own experience, and as they continued their work in dramatic play they began to realize that everyone's experience is unique. This was the beginning of our family study. We learned about different kinds of families by doing research in books. We also gathered data about our own families (including interviewing our grandparent!) which we organized and represented in charts and artwork. We created the Grandparents' Game which started as a board game and then grew into a life-sized game that was played both inside the classroom and on the big yard. The children conceptualized the rules of the game, designed the structure, and created the game board and pieces in both the table version and the life-sized one. They worked relentlessly and cooperatively, sharing ideas and skills, in the single pursuit of completing the task. The highlight of our study was the Family Shares. Each family came in to share a story, tradition, memory or heirloom with the class. It was moving and illuminating and it brought us all closer together in our knowledge that however different our families are, families are where we feel safe, loved and grounded in something that is bigger than we are as individuals. We understand that the most appropriate 'social studies' for the youngest children often begins with a child's immediate experience. As children grow, their interest expands to include finding their place in the immediate world around them, most specifically their family. Being able to explore and share their own place in their family, learn about their friends' families, and identify the similarities and the difference of the two, helped to move our kids beyond the natural egocentricity of the early childhood years and encouraged them to begin to take on the perspective of others and begin their own journey of becoming part of the larger world beyond their home...and beyond Greenhouse. As the school year came to an end, it was evident to us all that our kids were ready for that journey; their transformation from preschoolers to school children was complete. They are ready to find their place in the world.



## 2015-2016 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 in many ways including the improvements to the small yard, purchase of classroom equipment and support for 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:*

Anonymous

Vicki and Gary Aspenberg

Anne Ausubel

The Barons

Nicole Gordon and Roger Bernstein

Evi Vakiani and Govind Bhagat

Jay and Elizabeth Cooper

Joann and Anthony Dupee

Sara and Brian Edlin

Poppy Fox

Andrew and Amanda Gallo

Luis and Christina Garza

Jonina Herter and Norman Gay

Orren Alperstein and Seth Gelblum

Wanda M. Holland Greene

Parnell, Lynn, Justin, and Toby Hall

Lorraine Harner

Alice H. Henkin

Hannah and Andrew Johnston

Carl Kaplan and Pamela Mendels\*

James and Elga Killinger

Bhawani Venkataraman and Jay

Kirschenbaum

Beverly Sutherland and Sunil Kumar

Beverly W. Sutherland

The Sutherland Family

Stephanie Hodor and Ted Lasala

Erin Ferenchick and Eric Le Guen

Jerry Lewart

Christina Weyl and Richard Lichtenstein

Lily Shohat and Lloyd MacKay

Tom and Rachel Maniatis

Bernie McCormick

Jennifer Pease and Renee Mease

Wes and Christine Miller

Paul and Sarah Muscat

Stephen and Susan Nahley

Mike and Lindsey Pitzer

Stephen Pred and Katherine Randall

Sanya and Abbas Rizvi

Barbara Robey

Theresa and David Rogers

Julia and John Rudolph

The Huntington-Sanful Family

Stephen Saxl and Alice Naude

Warren Scharf and Jane Spinak

Carol Hinkel

The Scribners

Ian Shapiro and Kate Cassidy

Stuart and Hannah Slavin\*

Lauren Kogod and David Smiley

Kara Putrino and Rob Smit

Kyle and Katie Smith

Abraham N. Stein and Sabrena Silver

Arminda Bepko and Victor Suthammanont

The Tomas Family\*

George Van Amson

Anika Tam and Rob Vorel

Marsha Wagner

Rebecca and Pascal Weel

Charles and Dolly Williams

Tom Woehrle

\*Denotes matching gift

### Matching Grants

AIG

Pfizer

The Wallace Foundation





