



# C O L U M B I A **GREENHOUSE** N U R S E R Y S C H O O L

## THE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



### greenhouse

**noun**

\ 'grēn-,haūs \

: an enclosed structure used for the cultivation or protection of tender plants.



This vision of a greenhouse – as an intentional place of protection that has the sole purpose of nurturing growth and development – has been such a guiding image for me this year. As we held the outside world at bay, we turned inward and focused on our kids. Our brave and dedicated faculty and staff committed to ensuring that our kids felt safe and grounded at school. We focused on building connections and relationships and we let learning flourish. The classrooms became a shelter – for kids and teachers, alike. While there were struggles and challenges and changes, ultimately, our kids found the right mix of light, love and fertile ground inside the walls of Greenhouse. Despite the world outside, our kids laughed, learned and thrived at school. Columbia Greenhouse as a sanctuary, as an oasis, as a refuge – that idea is what strengthened me this year. I am eternally grateful for every faculty member, every Board member, every Greenhouse family that made this year possible. This year was the result of a compelling and vibrant combination of commitment, dedication and trust shared across our entire community. It is this spirit of connection that fills me with pride, hope and optimism and what propels me forward to the fall and the beginning of another new school year inside our beloved Greenhouse.

With deep gratitude,

*Renee*



Dear Greenhouse Community,  
Steady, as she goes! While this school year was filled with unprecedented challenges, it is also a source of deep pride. Thanks to the resiliency, innovation, adaptability and perseverance of our entire community, Greenhouse re-opened for in-person school in September 2020 and remained open for the school year. This incredible feat demonstrates the power of the Greenhouse community. When we come together, we can accomplish hard things!

The Board of Trustees' remains focused on safe-guarding Greenhouse's future and ensuring the Greenhouse experience for generations to come. While the budgetary ramifications of the global pandemic have been many, the Board continues its work to ensure the school's long-term stability. Hiring and retaining a dedicated and talented faculty remains a top priority and we are proud that we are able to keep our full faculty and staff moving into the new school year. We are looking to the future with enthusiasm, dedication and confidence.

I wish you all a restorative and healthy summer,

Sara Edlin

Chair, Greenhouse Board of Trustees



# being together









# “VITAMIN G” FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF SCHOOL YEAR

Climbing a tree...

Blowing dandelion seeds into the wind...

Watching the clouds drift by in the sky...

All examples of universal childhood experiences. It is widely understood that children benefit from daily interaction and sustained contact with the natural world. Research is clear, whether it is parks, gardens, or forests, human beings thrive when they get what Frances Ming Kuo (2019), a cognitive scientist, refers to as a regular dose of “Vitamin G” (G for green). However, much of modern, urban living and contemporary family life does not support young children’s regular opportunity to be out and active in their natural world. Until now! While the global pandemic has wreaked havoc on much of our lives, it has given us an opportunity to think about how we, as a school, can restore and promote children’s interaction with the natural world. This year we gave ourselves the goal of spending at least 50% of class time outdoors. Even we were amazed at the rich, meaningful, varied curriculum opportunities our children and teachers discovered as a result. As one faculty member observed, “every walk brought an opportunity for observations or questions.”

As a school that is committed to inquiry-based, project approach learning, our daily curriculum is informed by the experiences and interests of the





group. This year – in every single class – the effects of our time outside the classroom (both in nature and in the magic of the city) had a profound impact on our curriculum. Whether it was studying gardens, birds or rainbows, each class found meaningful, rich curriculum opportunities from their daily exposure to nature.

**The Explorers:** Whether they were going on shadow walks through campus or discovering ways to make rainbows with reflective surfaces, the Explorers were ready to explore! As one teacher pointed out, the children were thinking about the big ideas underlying the inquiry both inside the classroom and outside in the world. The children used flashlights, overheads and the light panel inside their class to play with light and shadow; they also recognized and identified shadows as they played in the big yard or walked to the park. What a profound way to experience and understand that learning happens everywhere – not just in the classroom.

**The Navigators:** The passing of the seasons became a meaningful provocation for the Navigators. In the fall, they were transfixed by a lone leaf that hung onto the branch for a long time. They watched it closely, waiting for it to fall! They even wrote a group story about the leaf that wouldn't let go. Their imagination was equally captured by three different sized snowballs they observed outside. From afar, they watched these snowballs melt and melt. Back in the classroom, there were countless opportunities for exploration about spheres, snow and melting. Ultimately, they took a deep dive of science learning into the forms of water and the water cycle.

**The Adventurers:** Early on in the year, the Adventurers were captured by the idea of







camp fires, s'mores and tents. Can a group of city kids really study camping? As it turns out – yes, they can! They built tents out of various materials, they crafted tools they needed for their pretend campsite in the dramatic play area, they went on walking trips through the forests (in Morningside Park!), they researched forest animals, drew trail maps and so on. In the end, they found a place for their class campsite in the park where they climbed trees, built camp fires and even ate s'mores!

**The Researchers:** How many different gardens do you think you could find in Upper Manhattan? Would you believe it if I told you the Researchers explored eight different gardens right here in our neighborhood! They spent time comparing and contrasting different gardens, designing their own garden and even making their own Kusama-inspired flower sculptures. The garden exploration moved easily from outdoor learning to classroom learning and provided months of varied, meaningful curriculum opportunities.

**The Investigators:** And how many different birds do you think you could find in Upper Manhattan? The Investigators took bird watching to another level! Red-tail hawks, woodpeckers, blue jays, song birds, egrets, herons, ducks, geese, robins, doves, and so many more! In addition, they capitalized on a universal truth about kids – their love of sticks. Young kids everywhere will see a stick and pick it up! There are boundless possibilities for play found within a stick. The Investigators combined this truth with their study of outdoor sculptures and created a multi-step group stick sculpture in their class.

These are just a few of the examples of how our talented teachers and inquisitive children used their time in nature – with regular doses of Vitamin G – to expand their learning this year.






















PLAYLIST

# Greenhouse Faculty Summer Time Playlist

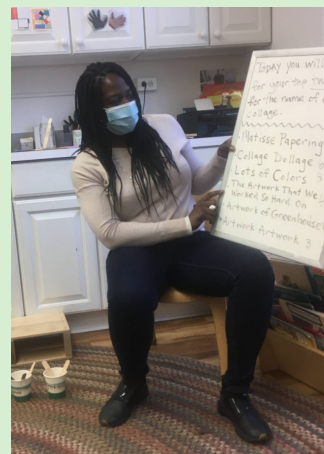
"Name a song that makes you think of summer -- when you are in the park, surrounded by friends and family, what is the song that comes on and fills you with summertime joy?"  
We hope the faculty and staff's summer songs fill you with joy, too!



- ▶  **Summertime - Single Edit** **KALEMAH**  
DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince
- 2  **Vivir Mi Vida** **STEPHANIE**  
Marc Anthony
- 3  **Dancing In The Street - Stereo** **PAULA**  
Martha Reeves & The Vandellas
- 4  **My Head & My Heart** **NEXHI**  
Ava Max
- 5  **Just the Way You Are** **HEATHER**  
Bruno Mars
- 6  **Move Your Feet** **OHANYS**  
Junior Senior
- 7  **Calma** **ERICA**  
Pedro Capó
- 8  **Wake Me Up** **ANGELA**  
Avicii
- 9  **Yellow Submarine** **INDIANA**  
The Beatles
- 10  **Happy - From "Despicable Me 2"** **KAREN**  
Pharrell Williams
- ▶  **Wake Up (feat. Madison Reyes)** **DAVID**  
Julie and the Phantoms Cast, Madison Reyes
- 12  **Kokomo** **MEI**  
The Beach Boys
- 13  **Sunshine** **PAM**  
Matisyahu
- 14  **Summer Breeze** **SARAH**  
Seals and Crofts
- 15  **Three Little Birds** **RACHEL**  
Bob Marley & The Wailers
- 16  **Before I Let Go** **LISA**  
Maze, Frankie Beverly
- 17  **Sunday Best** **RENEE**  
Surfaces

## Faculty List 2020-2021

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>2day 2s</b>              | Rachel Roth, Head Teacher  |
| <b>3day 2s</b>              | Stephanie Condori, Assistant Teacher   |
| <b>Explorers</b>            | Ohanys Rodriguez, Assistant Teacher  |
| <b>Navigators</b>           | Angela Coulibaly, Head Teacher<br>Nexhi Avoricani, Assistant Teacher                                       |
| <b>Adventurers</b>          | Pam Butler, Head Teacher<br>Erica Cintron, Assistant Teacher<br>Sarah Uhrman, Assistant Teacher            |
| <b>Researchers</b>          | Paula Doerfel, Head Teacher<br>Tolisa Orr- Chambliss, Assist. Teacher<br>Indiana Bervis, Assistant Teacher |
| <b>Investigators</b>        | David Vining, Head Teacher<br>Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher<br>Karen Chisolm-Wint, Assistant Teacher |
| <b>Administrative Staff</b> | Renee Mease, Director<br>Kalemah Henderson, Administrator<br>Mei Au Yeong, Admin Assistant                 |





# NOTICING SAME AND DIFFERENT

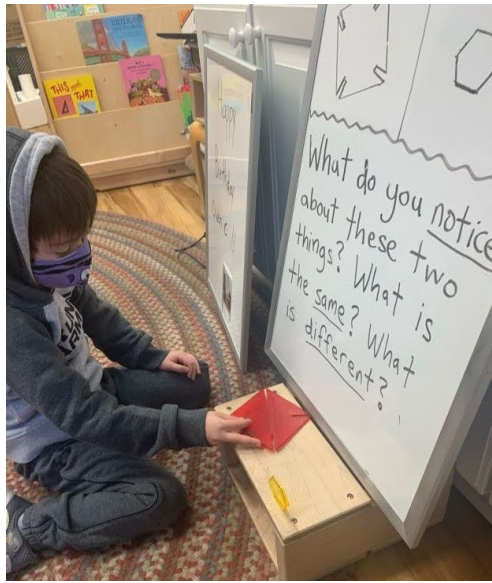
## BY DAVID VINING

**“What do you notice?”** In the Investigators class many of our interactions and discussions with children start with this simple question. With this type of open question, we are encouraging the kids to draw on their experiences, opinions, values and understandings. Their verbal answers allow us to learn about their ability to organize ideas and express them in a logical way. Whether we were working to make the color fuchsia or comparing leaves, “what do you notice” provided us the perfect opportunity to learn about how and what our children think and know. So much so, that we decided to use it as a structure for our Question of the Day. We began our morning meetings with a presentation of a pair of objects or pictures and ask “What do you notice about these two things? What is the same? What is different?” We asked these same three questions for many days in a row, presenting leaves, rocks, works of art, different shapes of blocks and more. We encouraged the children to observe carefully, notice deeply and describe in detail, without judgement. As is so uniquely the case with emergent curriculum, following the children’s lead inspired rich and interesting experiences that allowed the children to build a deep, interdisciplinary connection between content, skills and ideas.

In our discussions, we were not looking for the children to recite certain agreed upon “right” answers, but to look closely, think and make connections. They always came up with surprising and insightful observations! They noticed

differences in size, shape, texture, weight, material, and of course color. They speculated about the uses and origins of objects. They even began to test objects by dropping them, stacking them, squeezing them, and testing them in any way they could think of. One strand of thinking that challenged the children was the idea of attaching value judgements to differences. During one of our early conversations about same/different, someone verbalized that “different is bad.” What a concrete opportunity to discuss a very abstract idea! Do differences in objects make one of them better or worse than the other. Is something better because it is taller? Is something worse because it rolls slower? For our discussion purposes, we decided that differences were important to note but were not reason to rank or rate. As the children’s ability to observe and objectively describe the attributes of various objects developed, we made the intentional plan to expand their thinking to more personal reflections.

In our project work in the art studio, we were exploring how to make the color brown. We decided to connect our color mixing exploration with our same/ different discussions. During one morning meeting, we displayed two different types of wooden blocks, one the lighter brown of our classic unit blocks, and one from a set of darker hardwood pieces that we were using in the dramatic play area. The children commented on the difference in size, shape and texture. One child noticed, “they are both brown, but one is darker and one is lighter.”

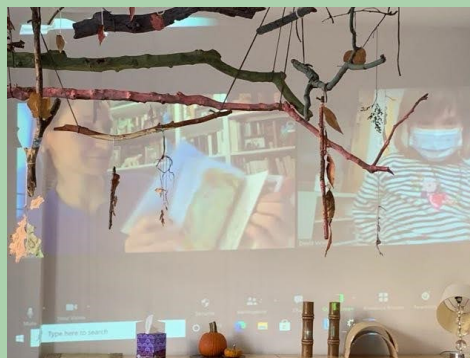




Another child built onto this idea by adding, “like we are all different colors!” From there, the conversation moved from comparing the blocks to comparing each others skin tone. Eventually the children spontaneously put all their hands into the circle and shared their noticings with great enthusiasm. Because of course they see and notice different skin colors -- they see differences everywhere! We quickly noticed that each of our skin colors was unique and different! We leveraged this opportunity to reinforced that it is ok to talk about the differences we notice about people AND that these differences are valuable, interesting and important to respect but not a reason to judge or separate. From there it was natural to add fairness to the conversation. Four and five year olds are deeply invested in the concept of fairness and they have lot to say about it. The children were energized and full of righteous indignation when we told them that people were sometimes treated differently (and unfairly) because of their skin color, (or what language they speak, or their gender, or who they love.) “That’s not fair!” they exclaimed. And they are right, of course. We moved the conversation and exploration back to the art studio and created lots of different shades of brown paint. Later, taking that paint to create a group art project that beautifully reflected the many shades and colors of us. We continued to noticed the skin tone of the characters in the books that we read, always looking for attributes that were the same and different. What began as a simple question, “What do you notice?” grew to include experiences in every area of the classroom, connecting ideas found in math, literacy, art and more. And ultimately, we explored ideas of identity, community and social justice. One of the key messages, for me, of antiracist teaching is that there are things that we can do to change the world around us. Opening up the connections between imagination, critical thinking, and social justice helps children to see the world as different than it is now. “What do you notice” about the world around you that should stay the same, and what would you change? Teaching children not just about the existing world but how to imagine the world as better than it is now is the ultimate antiracist message. We may not have solved all the world’s problems this year, but hopefully we encouraged the children to know that their ideas, observations and noticings can be part of those solutions.







## Reimagining Parent Partnerships

Building strong partnerships with parents is a vital part of the Greenhouse experience. With COVID restrictions and safety protocols requiring social distance, we knew that we would need to rethink how we communicate and partner with parents. From phase-in to parent-teacher conferences, it was time to reimagine what was possible! From drop off and pick up outside on the sidewalk to virtual parent group meetings, we found new and innovative ways to share information, connect and partner. We used technology like Google Photo shares and Zoom birthday celebrations. We met parents outside in the park, play yards or on campus. While there were drawbacks, there were lots of success, too. The parents that completed our end of the year parent participation survey, overwhelming supported our continued offering of virtual parent connections (in addition to – not in replace of—our in-person offerings). As we move into next year, the reimagining will continue; we look forward to working with parents to find the right mix of opportunities for parent communication, participation and relationship building.





Dear Greenhouse Parents,

Looking back on the year that we had at Greenhouse, I recognize that this was a year where community has never been more important. We all started the school year nervously, unsure of what was the right decision for our children. And still on that first fall day, I remember how the parents and children yearned to connect with others upon arrival. And while there was no Parent Coffee Hour or Apple Day Bake Sale this year, we found ways to socially distanced outside of each school building and connect. We reassured our kids and ourselves -- after the months of never being apart. And slowly, going to school started to feel normal.

The cold weather came, and we bundled our kids in layers. Parents organized outdoor group activities -- like soccer - even through the winter! We still enjoyed our snow days, even though we missed the Winter Benefit. And with chattering teeth behind masks, we dropped our kids off outside of the buildings and connected.

Finally, the spring arrived with vaccines and a light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. Some of us felt comfortable to do in-person Parent-Teacher conferences, and spent time inside the classrooms for the first time. Some of us enjoyed the flexibility of Zoom to attend conferences. Spring birthdays were celebrated in the park. While the Spring Fair was sorely missed, we were able to gather as a school-wide community at the end-of-the-year Children's Concert in the Park. It was so gratifying to see the children, parents, faculty and staff all in one place! As we say goodbye to this extraordinary year, our community has never been closer in some ways, because we've been through so much this year.

Looking back on all of the growth and change that has happened, we cannot be more grateful for the warm and supportive community that Greenhouse has provided during this challenging year. We are indebted to our wonderful teachers, whom we trusted with the toughest job and made it all seem magical. We are so thankful for Renee, who navigated us through our fears and all the unknowns. We appreciate the wonderful staff who stood outside in all weather and made sure our numbers "were just right". We are filled with gratitude to our amazing Class Representatives who managed to find creative ways of bringing our class communities together during a pandemic. Finally, I want to wish Katie Baker and Marissa Zalk good luck as your new Parent Association Co-Chairs! Thank you both so much for stepping up and taking a lead within our community.

Wishing a bright and healthy future to all Greenhouse families,  
Liza King, PA Chair



**OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE TO THE PARENT ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP. YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE IN THIS DIFFICULT YEAR REFLECTS THE GENEROSITY, SPIRIT AND COMMITMENT OF THE GREENHOUSE COMMUNITY.**

Liza King, PA Chair  
Michelle Lerner, Class Rep  
Katie Baker, Class Rep (x2!)  
Aura Taylor, Co-Class Rep  
Lauren Vien, Co-Class Rep  
Mignon Edwards, Class Rep  
Marissa Zalk, Class Rep





# 2020-2021 Annual Fund Contributors

***Especially in these difficult times, 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. As all other fundraising events were cancelled this year, contributions to our Annual Fund became the vital cornerstone of giving at Greenhouse; the Fund supports the ongoing operational expenses of the school. Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School thanks and acknowledges the generous contributions of the following individuals and companies:***

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Thomas Woehrle  
Marissa & Cody Zalk  
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