

# Tara Redwood School Newsletter

## Tara Mandala

*..Empowering children to make a positive difference in the world...*

**November 2010**

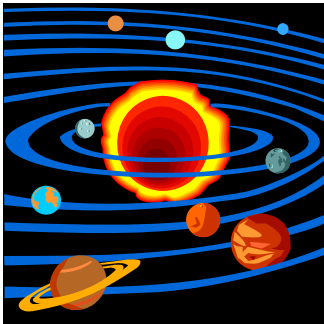
### Essential Education

*Essential Education, the secular, non-sectarian education project which guides Tara Redwood School, aims to create an exemplary learning environment of parents, children, teachers and staff committed to developing knowledge, strength and compassion. Essential Education has seven philosophical threads that are woven throughout our curriculum and inform everything we do. Throughout the year, we will devote a portion of the newsletter to explore these seven steps. This issue: Step 3! To read more about Essential Education, please go to: [http://www.tararedwoodschool.org/essential\\_education.htm](http://www.tararedwoodschool.org/essential_education.htm)*



### Everything Changes

Our appreciation of the interconnected nature of things leads naturally to an understanding that all things are in a continuous process of change. This understanding can be fostered by encouraging the children to explore the question: "Can you think of something that never changes, but always stays the same?" This investigation focuses at first on external phenomenon. We look at such things as the passage of the seasons, the rotation of the earth, and the movement of the planets in our solar system and the stars beyond it, and we also explore more immediate realities, such as the way our neighborhood, our friendships, and even our own bodies change over time. We then move into a deeper investigation of the changes taking place within ourselves. As a result of such investigation, children can become more accepting of the inevitability of change, and thus better able to work with the constantly shifting outer and inner conditions they encounter throughout their life.



**Remember to check your weekly email bulletin from your children's teachers. These emails contain all of the important information regarding dates, field trips, and other classroom business!**

# Preschool News

## Dear Preschool Families,

Here it is already the Halloween season, with acorns and rain and early evenings making summer seem a long ago event—not that we had a very impressive summer season this year! Your children have settled into preschool beautifully, and Joy and I marvel at our great fortune in being privileged to work with a group of such bright and happy children.



## School Notes

As some second-year parents may have noticed, we are approaching the school newsletter a little differently this year. Instead of a monthly rather lengthy all-school newsletter with photos, curriculum, and coming events information, this year we are emailing you a weekly bulletin (usually on Monday evenings) of important dates and information of a timely nature. We will send out a newsletter with photos and curriculum details every couple of months. We hope these weekly updates will help to remind you of the time-sensitive information you might miss if you were not able to read the whiteboard in the front hall. We ask that you please do make an effort to read the whiteboard and weekly emails, as it is really our only way to inform you of current events as they are happening at school.

## Curriculum Focus

Our curriculum will focus, for the next couple of months, on the changing seasons and the celebrations and festivals that occur at this time of year. We are deep into the season of fall, and are noticing all the changes that come with the lessening of daylight, the cool weather, and the rain. We have noticed that things fall in the season of fall- leaves, nuts, fruit, and rain- and are talking about the harvest season- especially that of apples and pumpkins! We will be talking about the days getting shorter, the nights growing longer, and will think of the effects on plants and animals. We are introducing the concepts of



migration, hibernation, nocturnal/diurnal, and the seasonal habits of various animal families in nature. We will be noticing that things in nature are interconnected, that everything has a cause, and that everything changes. And we will soon add a golden circle to the morning mandala, symbolic of the cycles of life (and of friendships) and will look at the life cycles of some local animals and plants, as examples of interconnection and change.

# Preschool Continued

## A Culture of Giving

November is the beginning of a special season of giving in our culture, and we like to take this opportunity encourage the children to nurture and explore this wonderful practice. In a day-long symposium called "Scientific Explorations of Compassion and Altruism" featuring twelve scientists and the Dalai Lama (which Lilian, Pam and I attended at Stanford University on October 15<sup>th</sup>) Bill Harbaugh, a professor of Economy at the University of Oregon, reported that he has discovered in his research that rejoicing or celebrating that someone else gets something, lights up a part of the brain close to the area that lights up when we get something ourselves- (and is so much more helpful!) So we are going to be cultivating that altruistic light in the next couple of months with our artwork, baking for families in need, offering skits to you parents at Thanksgiving, perhaps making a food collection, making gifts for family and schoolmates, and participating in the "Adopt a Family" program. Details of these opportunities to extend our generosity will appear in the weekly emails and on the white board. In December we will look at the various festivals of light which occur at this dark time of year- Hanukkah, Yule (solstice), Christmas, Kwanzaa- and will explore the relationship between giving and celebration.



### Thank You!

Thank you all so much for your parent participation activities! The snacks and hot lunches have been wonderful and thoroughly enjoyed! The laundry is getting done, the newly sanded and stained deck is a great improvement, field trips are being planned, parent/teacher meetings were great, and we now have dirt in our new garden space. We really appreciate your enthusiasm and diligence, and just love working with your wonderful children!

Best wishes to all of you,  
Bev and Joy



# Primary News

## Greetings Primary Families!

We have had a great start to the new year. September and October have flown by and we have had a lot of fun. The children are amazing and have acclimated well to the classroom and our daily routine. We had a wonderful time on our first fieldtrip to Live Earth Farm. We learned about organic farming, picked grapes and strawberries, visited with the chickens and the goats, and made apple cider before heading back to school. The children have been busy writing thank you notes that will be sent to the farm.

## Curriculum Notes

At the beginning of September we were in the Fire theme. We talked about the sun, the equator, the seasons, and reptiles.

This month we are in the Earth theme. We will continue our exploration of the world in the coming weeks by concentrating on North America. Other topics include vertebrate classification, mammals, Thanksgiving, and Native American culture. We have begun planting and are talking about the seeds we plant, whether they are plants that will grow in our garden or the seeds we plant with our intentions for our classroom and the world. We are beginning to talk about perception and how it can influence our decisions. We are learning about the helpful emotions and the children are enjoying exploring different ways of dealing with their emotions through role-playing opportunities at circle.

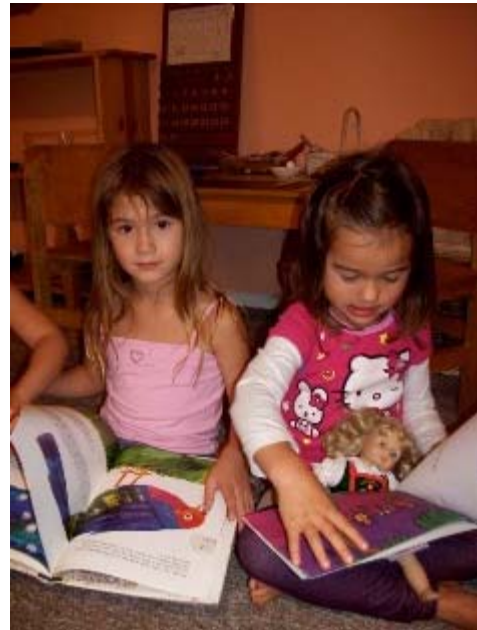


# Primary Continued

## Special Thanks

We would like to thank all of you for coming in for conferences last month. It was so great to have that time to share information about your child. Thank you to all of the parents who have volunteered their time: driving on fieldtrips, cooking hot lunch, taking pictures, and for bringing in the wonderful, healthy snacks for the children each day.

All of our best to you and your family,  
Margaret and Sirena



# Elementary News

## Greetings Elementary families!

To begin with we want to say what a wonderful group of children we have in our class this year. Thanks to all the families for making this year possible and for the continual support to the classroom. We all feel so lucky and privileged to be apart of the Tara community. We have great expectations for an amazing year of developing friendships and growing academically.



It was very nice to get to know the families better on our hike and picnic into the Enchanted Forest. We plan to have more family outings together in the future. It was also a pleasure sharing about the successes and common goals for the children during conferences. We really have an excited group of learners this year. Always feel free to come into the classroom to see our materials, the students' work, or to check in with the teachers.

## Parent Participation

Parent participation is a great way to stay connected to the classroom and to learn about the how our classroom is unique. We have had a great show of parents stepping up to take on the volunteer jobs, and cooking hot lunch. Thank you to Lori, Nanette, Tese, and Nori for the delicious hot lunches. We have created a hot lunch menu that accommodates every ones food choices and needs. All the children enjoy participating in preparing of the food, setting the tables, serving the food, and cleaning up after hot lunch. We will soon be able to start having salad and herbs from our garden. Hot lunch is a very important aspect of our curriculum and it is also the financial source for our compassion in action. We will donate all proceeds to a cause in the continent we are studying. We are currently studying about South America.



# Elementary Continued

## Academic Work Periods

Our academic work period has begun to hum with inquiry, learning, and growing. All the students have begun to understand the systems of the classroom and can function with focus and interest. Students are excited to work from their individual work plans and to master new materials. They are working well during group projects and as independent learners. We have been teaching about how to create the type of classroom we all want and about how all of our individual efforts will make it transpire. It is obvious that the students have great pride in their classroom. Our afternoons are also packed with great opportunity for learning. We have been studying Essential Education, science, social and cultural studies, geography, gardening, physical education, and music.



## Essential Education

We have started out the year by having many discussions asking ourselves, “What do we want? What kind of place do we want to come to each day? What do we want to create for ourselves here at school?” This yielded many great ideas such as “a compassionate place; a peaceful room; a respectful place; a place where I have kind friends.” The discussion then led to, “How can we make this for ourselves? Which actions will help this come to be?” From there we brainstormed a list of specific actions that will create the place we want. We then each made a commitment to the group of what we could promise to do individually. Together we have been working towards creating a place we all want. We have been recognizing each other’s positive actions at the end of each day. Colorful jewels are collected into a clear jar represent these actions. This shows clearly how we are all working towards our common goal of creating a magical classroom. We have also been exploring the interconnected nature of all things, the inevitability of change, respecting every one’s perception, and the ability to transform one’s own emotions. We incorporate these themes in all aspects of the curriculum and in our relationships with each



other. Each morning one student sets an intention for the group for the day. It is truly amazing to hear each intention, it really shows the depth of understanding the children have. For example some of our recent intentions were, “I hope that people can transform greed into generosity,” “Respect others so they will respect you.”

# Elementary Continued

## Science

In science we have been studying about the rain forest in South America. We have learned about the layers of the forest, the plants, animals, and about the Amazon River. We will continue to explore the various habitats of South America. We have also been on several exploration hikes looking for fossils and collecting seeds. We will begin more in depth plant, animal, and geology research during work period. Learning more about the microscope and doing experiments are scheduled for November. The garden will continue to provide us with great opportunity for garden science, understanding plant life cycles, soil life, and nutrition lessons.



## Social and Cultural Studies

In social studies we have been discussing South America's geography and people. We have created physical geography maps of South America, as well as political maps to learn about the different countries. We have learned about the extremes of South America and more about what makes it a unique continent. We've explored what it is like to live on the Amazon River and how that compares to our own lives. We will be going into more studies of ancient as well as modern day people of South America over the coming month. We will also begin researching the countries that make up South America more in depth.



# Elementary Continued

## Physical Education

We have had so much fun in PE so far. We began with a four-week study of Capoeira, which is a martial art from Brasil. The children loved to learn new moves, songs, and rhythms. We have moved on to our next four-week study of soccer. Our PE class is a skill building, non-competitive approach to sport and athletics. We encourage everyone to work to the best of their ability and we create an atmosphere that fosters learning and enjoyment. Yoga, which happens every Tuesday and Thursday morning for 30 minutes, is another essential part of our PE program. The children are becoming amazing at being focused, balanced and flexible. The children are learning that yoga is a gift that they give to themselves.



## Birthday Celebrations

In this classroom, our birthday routine is as follows: On your child's birthday, the class will make him/her a birthday book full of good wishes and drawings for them. Since this is a special gift from their friends, we wouldn't want those summer birthdays to miss out, so we will celebrate half birthdays of those born when we are not in school. If you would like to share a special birthday treat with the group, please arrive early so we can have our celebration at the end of the day at 2:45. This will enable any sugar rush to promptly be remedied by running around the playground.

Thank you again for all the support and for sharing your wonderful children with us!  
Lots of love,

Ami and Lisa

