

RVCP News

MARCH 2008
A NEWSLETTER FOR GROWING MINDS

From the Teachers...



Where We Are Now: Taking Stock

by Sara Jerger

Congratulations to everyone who has made it through the enrollment frenzy! Most of us have now made a decision about where our children will be spending their time next year. Many families have been looking into kindergartens, trying to decide which class RVCP offers will best fit your family's life or making a new preschool plan altogether. Thinking about your child's needs, the needs of your family and preparing for change is always stressful. We will

never stop thinking about our children's futures. It is our job to help them grow and learn and to take part in shaping who they become. What an awesome responsibility. How scary. I worry about Abbie's "readiness". Will she be able to cope with the stress of school - new peers, more problems to solve, academics, the playground, less family time? I don't know what the future will be like, and it is this not-knowing that scares me. I start to feel better when I remember to

breathe, look around and take stock of what is happening right now. A lot is happening with our children here at RVCP and I'd like to take a moment, during this time of thinking about later to celebrate what is occurring right now. When reflecting on the past month, I am struck by how much our kids are accomplishing. Children of all ages are taking initiative, making plans and taking steps to accomplish their ideas; children are demonstrating their initiative with actions like handing the felt board characters to a teacher as an invitation to play, having an idea and sitting down with interested peers to work out the details, solve problems and get to playing, gathering paper, markers, tape, scissors, glue and friends to make the necessary props for a play idea.

Children in all classes are

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School Board Notes

Looking Ahead, And Back

by Veronica Golden

Cheers families, the end of winter is almost in sight and I hope the February break provided some sunny, relaxing days for your gang. On February 26th the Board will consider and vote on four issues. If motions are made and approved by the board, the school membership will be voting on them at the March or April parent meeting. The issues are:

1. Changing the bylaw on pages 39-40 of the handbook pertaining to Non-Classroom Status. The three person committee that reviewed the Non-Classroom Status section of the bylaws in January suggests RVCP reduce the options and emphasize that it be used on a temporary basis.
2. Adding a bylaw that states that currently enrolled families can request an exemption to a

bylaw, standing rule or guideline in the handbook by making a written or verbal request to the board at least one week prior to a Board meeting. The Board would then decide on the exemption by a vote. Simple majority wins.

3. The board will be discussing schedule changes to facilitate parent teacher conferences.

4. Deciding on whether or not to have an additional, such as yoga next year.

Please start thinking about these issues and look for further details on email or in your mailbox. Parents are always welcome to join us at our Board Meetings if you have ideas to share.

Watch for next month's article on the rewards of being a board member as we prepare to vote in a new Board at the April Parent Meeting!

RVCP Board Chair Veronica Golden is mom to Madeline, a Salmon student.



Growing in Your Garden.

by Karleen Wolfe

As a young girl, I grew up on an urban mini-farm in Seattle's Rainier Valley. We lived on a few acres near Holly Park, and Rosie, our milk cow, grazed in the large field of what is now known as Othello Park. I grew up learning from my parents as they gardened and milked the cow. I was the lucky one who got who got the job of gathering eggs each day!

I have a special love for anything that falls under the realm of "farming," and urban gardening is the closest I get to being a farmer! I try to mix edible plants into my yard wherever possible -- herbs among the rockery and shrubs, squash and tomatoes in the terraces of my back yard, and garden boxes in the front for greens and other vegetables. I solicited the help of my children while they were young, and they became helpers with the planting and watering. It didn't take long for my son to realize our garden

carrots were much tastier than those we bought from the grocer.

Gardening is a great way to teach children about many important concepts - the natural life cycle, the reward (harvest) that follows after the careful nurturing of plants. Plus gardening is a natural way to relax. It's definitely hands-on, and a love for playing in the dirt produces great benefits! Learning where our food comes from helps children develop an appreciation for eating local and children are often more inspired to eat the vegetables they have grown.

While gardening is a great learning activity, it's difficult as a school project because of summer break. When school is out, gardens "are in," so it's up to families to explore the lessons a garden has to offer. Here are a few examples of how your family can explore a gardening theme during the summer.

Seattle Tilth

(<http://www.seattletilth.org/kids/childrensgarden>)

Seattle Tilth offers children's gardening classes during the summer for children. You can find information on their Web site. A special class Peawee Classes for Toddlers (ages 1-2) is offered once a week, as is a Preschool Program (ages 3-4) twice a week. Explore the Web site to also find volunteer opportunities and to see special times when tours of the Children's Garden are available.

WSU Gardening Extension

(<http://gardening.wsu.edu/text/veges.htm>)

WSU Gardening Extension is another wonderful resource for finding information about gardening in Western Washington.

A Child's Garden

Establish an area for your child's garden, or build a garden box somewhere in the yard. A southern exposure is great for growing vegetables. If yard space is limited, try using large pots for container gardening. It's good for children to take ownership of their own garden space. If this is your first garden, start small. Help your child choose a couple of favorite plants to grow, and then

research together to learn all you can about growing those particular plants. Use real tools for gardening. Many garden tools come in smaller sizes, ones even a preschooler can easily handle. Be sure to instruct children on the safe handling of tools. And take plenty of photos!

Handling seeds is a great small motor exercise for children and planting can offer opportunities for counting, number-recognition, patterning, etc. Watering is an especially fun chore and when harvest time finally arrives, eating homegrown vegetables is a special treat.

Find some fun activities and additional links for information for gardening with children at http://www.eartheasy.com/grow_gardening_children.htm.

Finally, if a home garden just isn't in the stars for your family this summer, make dates to visit each of the community farmer's markets this summer. Start with our own Columbia City Farmer's Market and then set out to see what others have to offer. They are all listed at <http://www.seattlefarmersmarkets.org/>.

Karleen's Parent Ed Schedule

Karleen will be available to meet with families in the Sunshine Room once a week (additional times available by appointment). Her March schedule is as follows:

- Tues, March 4th, 9am - 12pm*
- Mon, March 18th, 12:30pm - 3pm*
- Wed, March 19th, 9am - 12pm*
- Tues, March 25th, 9am - 12pm*

Working together to nurse a sick child back to health.



Teachers ... continued from page 1

taking the time to explore materials. It is a pleasure to observe children taking their time to get an intimate look at what's in front of them. At times it is difficult for me to slow down and listen to what the children are saying with their actions - there's a schedule to keep, a class in the afternoon, my child to pick up from school, and on and on - but when I remember to slow down and let the children set the pace, I discover what they are discovering and I can pay attention to what is important to them. Children have been exploring the sensory characteristics of play dough, the malleability of wire, color, clay, construction materials, ice and much more. Through this exploration, children can learn how these materials work and begin to use them with intention, which is happening in all three classes at many

different developmental levels.

Children are **creating!** In every class, in every way, our children are making new and original items - they are using the art media to express themselves in ways that verbal language does not allow, they are building worlds out of blocks and wire - two children in the Caterpillar class built "The Whole World" using all the space in the block area and beyond, another group is working on "Penguin World", a project which is spanning many days - they are writing stories, drawing pictures, making menus, acting stories out - stories that are written by other authors, their own written stories and the spontaneous stories that play out during their dramatic play. Through this constant creation, children are making expressions of who they



Conflict of the meat-eating dinosaurs solved, these students can continue their play.

are, building relationships, taking risks, solving problems, making mistakes, trying again - thinking of themselves, seeing themselves, as competent learners who can figure things out, both alone and with the help of others.

Children are making choices about what and how to participate. This freedom of choice gives children the opportunity to joyfully participate. Whether it's yoga, meeting or a planned activity, kids are making up their minds about what they like, don't like and what level of participation works for them.

Children are learning about each other, building relationships and accepting differences. Children are playing with kids who have varied interests and

backgrounds, different play styles and are of all ages. See children making adjustments in how they play to find common ground and observing each other to discover who people are. Children show a genuine fondness for each other. They seek one another out, laugh and smile together, comment on one another's accomplishments, figure out how to include all who are interested and, of course, solve problems. This is, perhaps, the most important work our children are undertaking; building skills of self awareness, awareness of others around them and acceptance.

Our children are learners, problem solvers, artists, explorers, engineers, architects, actors, scientists, authors, friends and community members. Right Now.

A Sunflower student explores playdough: pinching, wrapping, and grabbing with her fingers.



MARCH

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March 4 | Parents' Meeting

March 10 | New Family Applications Due

March 20 | Board Meeting

March 21 | NO SCHOOL
Teacher Planning,
Newsletter Deadline

March 31 | Spring Break
Begins, NO SCHOOL

Applications Due!

Applications for new families hoping to join our Co-op are due:

Monday, March 10th



Choosing a School:

Why RVCP Works for My Family.

by Shana MacLeod, Caterpillar Parent

When my son was just 17 months old, a good friend with an older child casually suggested that I look into preschool for the fall. It was only January. I don't remember if I was more shocked by the notion of my baby starting school, or by having to apply in February for a spot in September. What was this, college?

Even though it was in the dreary basement of a church, the teacher seemed great and we decided to put our son's name in the lottery. Ultimately we were told he didn't get a spot (17th on the wait list, if I remember correctly). I didn't feel particularly bad about the news. To be honest, I couldn't believe my son - turning two in August - was school aged yet!

So, we were shocked when, in early September, we got a call asking us whether or not we were still interested in RVCP - a spot had opened up. We felt we had nothing to lose and cheerfully

accepted. The school was only a block away and it was only for two mornings a week -- and it was a Co-op, whatever that meant...

Five years later, my second child is in her second year at RVCP. My son's three years at RVCP are already a blur in my mind. The changes our little school has gone through in the past 5 years are amazing. RVCP has grown enough to hire two amazing teachers. A Diversity Committee was formed several years ago with the goal of encouraging adult and

"...having to apply in February for a spot in September. What was this, college?"

child education around the issues of white privilege and racism and social justice. The school voted to spend money on special programming and has added yoga classes.

I take great satisfaction in the relationships I've gained through my children's preschool years. I often think that my better parenting moments have been shaped by our amazing teachers and wonder what my family's language around solving conflict would sound like if we hadn't borrowed so heavily from the ways of Teacher Julie. I'm so grateful that my children have experienced "their golden years" as all children should - in a loving and supremely supportive preschool.



Beloved Books.

Sunflower Oona's favorite Books (today):

Lily's Purple Plastic Purse | Kevin Henkes

When her beloved teacher confiscates Lily's new purse, she vows revenge and learns a lesson in humility and empathy for her impulsive mistake.

Rupert Bear | Alfred Bestall
Classic British tales of a bear's childhood in the idyllic village of Nutwood. Gorgeous illustrations.

The Tale Of Mr. Jeremy Fisher | Beatrix Potter

The classic tale of a frog's misadventures while fishing for his supper.



Located in the heart of Columbia City, Rainier Valley Cooperative Preschool welcomes families of all races, genders, religions, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds. Learn more about our school online:

www.rainiervalleycoopreschool.org

