



News from the Five Towns Early Learning Center

Child's Play

FALL 2010



Center Celebrates 70th Birthday

On a beautiful Sunday in May, we celebrated the 70th Birthday of the Five Towns Early Learning Center in the Gertrude Rieur Play Garden. We honored our past presidents and our co-sponsors, NCJW Peninsula Section and Five Towns Community Chest.

The annual reports from the past 40 years told a story of the Center through the eyes of its leaders. Each past president left an indelible mark. As one passed the baton to the next, the Center evolved through the years from custodial care to a model early childhood center. As we look around today we clearly see the fruits of their labors.

We are grateful to all those who served and made the dreams of yesterday become the realities of today. The party was a wonderful opportunity for people to reconnect and realize how important the Center has been to so many.

Our New Name

We have a new name and our building has a new face but our commitment to nurture children and provide an excellent learning environment for young children remains the same.

In the 1940's, the Child Care Center began in response to the needs of the community by providing care to the young children of servicemen whose wives had to work. After the war, when the government money for child care ended, the philanthropic women of the Five Towns community worked hard to keep the Center open, continuing to provide care for the children of working mothers. Over the next 50 years, the Center moved from providing custodial care to providing quality early education for young children.

Recent research on brain development has discovered the importance of supporting learning starting at birth. The early years, 0-5, are critical for optimal learning. Nurturing care and a developmentally appropriate learning environment actually support the development of neural pathways that act like the roadmaps to later learning.

The Board of Directors and staff recognize the early years as important learning years. As we celebrated our 70th year of service to children and families of the community, the Board decided to go into the next 70 years with a new name - one that reflects what goes on at the Center all through the day - LEARNING .





As a college professor, I often wonder if my students apply all the theories that are taught in our education courses. Do they value play as “children’s work”? Will they protect the most important way children learn? As playtime is eliminated at many early childhood centers around the country in favor of academic preparation, I worry that our children are being robbed.

I decided to find out for myself if we could help children learn and grow using blocks. I chose blocks because many graduate students find it difficult to utilize blocks in their classrooms. Block play is loud, messy, space-consuming, and temporary and there is no “cute picture to hang on the refrigerator”.

This summer I had the opportunity to be part of an exciting project at the Five Towns Early Learning Center called Block City. Two classes (3’s and 4’s) participated. Here block play is a popular activity. Boys and girls were equally involved. The children built tall buildings and houses for pretend families. We read books that inspired us and deepened our understanding of design. We gathered pictures of famous structures around the world. The children also identified patterns all around them i.e. the joists outside on top of the pergola. As we were building, we needed a shape to fit an opening. Three year old Thalia picked out a Gothic arch shape from across the room. It fit perfectly, demonstrating highly developed visual perception strength.

My favorite experience was watching the children build a water park with labeled rides, parking lot, restaurant and a separate bathroom. What began as play with a few, large, hollow blocks on a small blue rug evolved into building

with all of the blocks and using the entire all purpose room. At the graduation ceremony, Sarah announced she wanted to be an architect when she grows up.

This experience has been very rewarding both personally and professionally. I am thrilled to see creativity, competence and play alive and well at the Five Towns Early Learning Center.

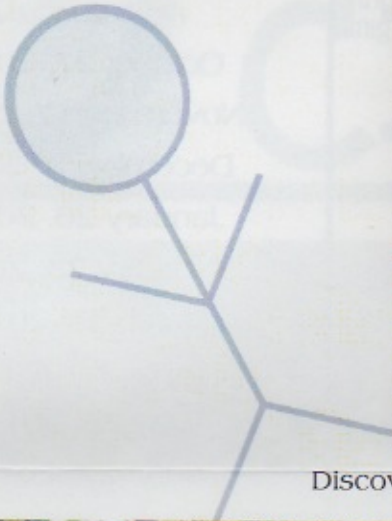
10 Reasons Why Unit Blocks Are the Perfect Learning Material for Children

- 1. Children Make Connections-** Children form mental images of all that they see around them. Playing with blocks gives them an opportunity to recreate these pictures.
- 2. Executive functioning skills develop –** Blocks allow the child to plan ahead, tackle a problem or try something new, demonstrating improved flexibility in thinking.
- 3. Math and Science –** Children learn about abstract concepts in a hands-on manner: size, shape, number, area, length, patterns, weight and gravity.
- 4. Speech and Language Development –** Children talk about their constructions, increase vocabulary and develop writing skills while making signs or labels for their designs.
- 5. Physical development –** both small and large muscles are strengthened during block play. Eye-hand coordination also improves.
- 6. Blocks are appealing to children of all ages –** Blocks feel good to the touch. They are engrossing.
- 7. Connecting with Literacy –** stories are read that inspire and support the children’s ideas.
- 8. Emotional Development –** Block play provides an opportunity to learn to handle frustration, (tower falls down) resiliency (let’s put it back together) and task persistence.
- 9. Building the Roots of Democracy –** Children learn to work together, help each other, negotiate for materials and listen to the ideas of others. They identify with group success conversely as they depend on each member’s involvement. Children become responsible members of a community by understanding safety rules and care for materials.
- 10. The sky is the limit.** Blocks are an open ended material. They provide a safe way to learn by trial and error. There is no right or wrong -possibilities are endless. Block play supports pretend play and enhances creativity.





Learning: Everyday in Every Way



Discovering Mathematical Relationships



Heather Makes H's - Working on Authentic Writing Experience



The Children's Garden: Where both the children and the plants grow



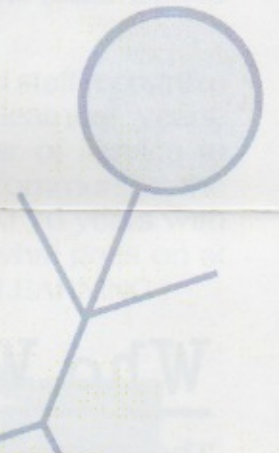
Princess Firefighters Put Out Fires with Baby Bottles- At Dramatic Play Children Practice Roles



Learning our ABC's - Hands-On



Children engage in Literacy



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Ways You Can Help

Give a special gift this year. Make a donation to the Five Towns Early Learning Center in your loved one's name and you will both get the gift of knowing you made a difference.



Choose from:

- * *Holiday Cards*
- * *Tribute Cards*
- * *Valerie Marrero Cultural Enrichment Fund*

A personalized acknowledgement will be sent to the gift recipient.

Write checks to Five Towns Early Learning Center.

For more information call 516-239-4660 or e-mail fivetownelc@optonline.net.

2010-2011 Goings On

BOARD MEETINGS

(Wednesdays)

October 27, 2010

November 17, 2010

December 8, 2010

January 26, 2011

February 23, 2011

March 23, 2011

April 27, 2011

May 25, 2011

June 22, 2011



112 Wahl Avenue
Inwood, NY 11096

Who We Are



The Center is a not-for-profit agency co-sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women and Five Towns Community Chest. The center provides care for children, 18 months to four years old, of working families in a full day setting licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. A dedicated staff and volunteer board of directors are committed to quality early education.



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Inwood, NY 11096
516-239-4660
fivetownselc@optonline.net