

Field Notes



The Weekly Newsletter of The Community School of Mount Desert Island

Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 - Volume #15

From the Youngers...

This morning, as the snow flurries began to fall, and as we set our winter intentions during our mindfulness circle, the children, unprompted, began to remark that they hoped all the animals were ready for the snowfall, ready to cozy into their dens and burrows away from the winter winds and snow. They hoped that they had enough food and that they would be warm enough. The children embraced the winter in all of its wonder. With first sight of flurries outside, they were already planning their snow forts, tunnels, snowmen and snow women, plans to look at snow flakes under a microscope.



The Youngers are becoming young geographers, geologists, and cartographers in this expedition. With each map I share, the children are eager to offer their observations and excitedly point out landmarks or symbols they know. Last week, after looking closely at the island, and its formations, we went on a lovely, sunny outing to Sand Beach and Great Head.

From there we heard the story about how the Beehive was formed, and why the sand is uniquely made up of crushed shells. Ready with their magnifying glasses, the children took a close look at the many minerals that make up granite and imagined the granite once in liquid form, inside a volcano.

They added the word igneous to their vocabulary. They dug in the sand, deep down until the layers were hard and wet -- the beginnings of sedimentary rock. Erica demonstrated how rocks can tell stories of the past and tell us about the landforms that surround us. We ended the day at an overlook on Great Head,



Youngers trek across Sand Beach in this mild January of no snow.

Thank you to:

Miss Heather for helping to wrap up the desks, **Miss Erica** for leading us in a beginners geology lesson at Sand Beach, **Noel Musson**, **Richard Cleary** and **Nick Burnette** for their expertise, advice and help with zoning and codes, our parent development committee, who are busy at work: **Kelly, Jena, Kristi** and **Shawn** for their visioning, planning, and fundraising expertise, **Liz Kase** for donating fabric and yarn.

Reminders:

- It's snow pants season! Please be sure *snow pants, winter jackets, warm boots, wool socks, hats, mittens/gloves, neck warmers* come to school each day to ensure comfortable recess times and outdoor class studies.
- Please check the AOS 91 school cancelation website: <https://sites.google.com/a/mdirss.org/mdirss-school-cancellations/>, if there's inclement weather, as we follow all district cancelations.
- **No school Friday,** December 15: Faculty Inservice
- **No school Monday,** December 18: Martin Luther King Day

? Natural History Mystery ?

What is the coldest temperature recorded on earth and where was it recorded?

with peachy afternoon light warming us and the landscape below.

The children have been working on their cardinal directions, which they are becoming quite proficient at, and have crafted beautiful images of compass roses in their morning lesson books. We began taking a look at the United States this week, and they are learning the difference between states, countries, continents. The children are beginning to pick out landforms they have learned on larger scale maps, and noticing that the Earth's surface is made up of so many wild shapes and formations. They are becoming quite familiar with Maine



Youngers study a map of Acadia in their geography expedition.

and where it is located relevant to other states. It has been a joy going on these imaginative journeys across maps, and thinking about how this seeded knowledge and curiosity may live in the children as they travel one day.

The Youngers have hit their stride in English/Language Arts (ELA)! Many of them are so excited and proud of the books they are reading, and they continue to learn more strategies for moving though words that stump them. Miss Marie and I have been preparing small book collections that are just right for each child to begin taking home, along with the seasonal poem that we are working on in ELA Workshop -- we are close and the children are eager to share their progress with you.

We are planning to go for a hike up the Gorham Mountain trail to the sea caves this Thursday for our outing, to see where sea level used to be and learn about how caves are made. We will begin plotting the landforms we have visited on our very own maps.

Let it snow!
Miss Jasmine

From the Olders...

Dear families,

The Olders have continued our watershed studies this past week, delving into the complexity of food webs and water quality. While exploring Stanley Brook, we've identified aquatic organisms and placed them within our developing food web, recognizing in the process how complex the connections can be as food energy is transferred within aquatic ecosystems. The children have also explored the roles of consumers and producers within the food web.

This week, we've been discussing stewardship in a more focused way, considering our role in caring for our natural watershed communities. Noah started our lesson on Monday with the simple comment that MDI might just have the tastiest water in Maine. This started us on our way as we pondered what makes water "tasty" and why Maine water is so regarded around the world. So many connections to make and the children are doing very important work as they question their thinking and build understanding as a group.

Our outing this week to the Waste Water Treatment plant in Seal Harbor has been rescheduled due to the upcoming weather. I am currently rearranging and will be in touch as soon as our new outing is confirmed!



The Olders check out the ice as they continue searching for the headwaters of Stanley Brook.



Eliza and Noah work on the final stages of making their desks.

This past week has also been spent adding our final touches to our class desks. This is truly an accomplishment to be celebrated! The children have shown long-term dedication and a strong sense of teamwork as they've supported each other in the building process. We have learned that good things do not always come right away and I see a sense of pride in each child at the work they've accomplished. Thank you all for your support and lending of advice and tools in this process! We are planning an unveiling to celebrate, so please be on the lookout for further details.

With warmth and gratitude,
Bethany

Specialty Classes

Handwork

Our knitting verse:

In through the front door,
Around the back.
Peep through the window,
And off jumps Jack.

The Olders have been busy at work! Just before the holidays, two of our knitters completed their first knitting projects, colorful bean bags. They are already progressing well on their next project, earwarmers. In fact, all of our Olders are knitting earwarmers or scarves. Perfect timing, as Father Winter has certainly arrived!



Cedar knits a beanbag.



Lolie knits a bunny.



Eliza knits a beanbag.

We were delighted to welcome Phoebe to class today! Phoebe was our beloved handwork assistant last year who is currently on winter break from Oberlin College. The atmosphere in class today was lovely. Molly, Phoebe, myself and the students, sitting in a circle, all with knitting in hand, sharing conversation. Perfect!

The Youngers handwork class has been abuzz with a variety of projects. We have been creating plants and animals from Sculpey clay to decorate our terrariums. Mushrooms, snails, snakes and salamanders are just a few of our many creations. Some of our students are learning to finger knit. With practice, patience and the passage of time, our experienced finger knitters are moving on to needle knitting.

Our class is comprised of students with a variety of handwork experience. Of utmost importance is allowing each child to fully engage in the task at hand and to gain proficiency and confidence before moving on. It is a real delight to be sharing handwork with such a sweet, eager and engaged group of children.



Eliza knits an ear-warmer.



Penelope knits a gnome.



Kimberly finger-knits.

Warmly,
Miss Karen



Noah knits.



Lolie's Terrarium.

Upcoming Events and Info

Frozen Classroom Day

Thursday, January 21

The frozen classroom all-school, all-day outing is grounded in winter ecology and reverence for the natural beauty of the winter landscape here on MDI. Temperature and ice permitting, the frozen classroom will take place at Somes Pond, where we will have three rotating stations throughout the day: ice fishing, tracking/winter ecology walk on the trails around the pond, and campfire tending/dutch oven cooking at a conserved property on the pond with a fire pit. Joining us are guest teachers Billy Halprin of Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and Sam Day, watershed conservationist and avid fisherman. Parents are welcome to join for portions of the day if they wish! Please stay posted, as we will postpone this outing if the conditions are not safe. We have someone monitoring the ice on the pond for us and we will confirm with you next week. Please note that pick up will be at the Somes Pond swim landing (on Oak Hill Road) on this day.

Winter Parent Meeting: Academics At The Community School

Tuesday, January 26, 6pm

What do we mean when we say Experiential Education? What does a community based education look like? How does our academic program compare to area schools? Our winter parent meeting is open to parents in both classes, and will delve into The Community School's academic philosophy and practices, research behind our practices, and a discussion around what we call, teaching "the whole child." This is an opportunity to learn more deeply about how our academic philosophy plays out in the classroom and throughout the grades. We strongly encourage at least one parent from each family to attend. We look forward to a rich evening together!

Re-enrollment, Financial Aid and Supplies Fee

It is hard to believe that it is this time of year...February is re-enrollment month! Please note that there are some changes in the timeline from last year, regarding when items are due:

- February 1: Enrollment contracts go out.
- February 28 (or before): Return signed enrollment contract and \$500 deposit if you plan for your child to attend The Community School next year.
- March 15: Financial Aid information due to TADS.
- March 15: If re-enrolling, Supplies Fee due for school year 16/17.
- April 1: Families will be notified with their financial aid package by The Community School.

Each step will be outlined in greater detail in the enrollment contract. The earlier dates are in an effort to have a better sense of enrollment and aid amounts, so we can best budget for the upcoming year. Thank you in advance for your timeliness.

Cultivating a Sense of Self, Place, and Community.

