

Field Notes

The Weekly Newsletter of the Community School of Mount Desert Island
Thursday, September 24th, 2015

From the youngers...

The fall gnomes have returned to the classroom with the equinox, and the air in the morning is crisp and clear. Seal Harbor has been sparkling over the tops of the apple-laden trees along the beach, and we are noticing a certain slant in the golden quality light. Fall is here!

Along with the autumn changes, changes are happening in our classrooms as well. Herbs that we harvested from the garden are hung to dry in our windows, our apple rose-hip jam cooks down on the stove each morning and the children are cozying into our classroom nest. Just like the leaves are beginning to change to their rich fall colors, our classroom is alive with the colors of a busy and eager-to-learn class. Brilliant paintings hang or think of from a line, Morning Lesson Books have the first of many careful illustrations, Math books show the work of fractions by apple slices, our Full Value Contract to one another proudly hangs on the wall, and beautiful handwork projects pepper the window sills. The class is settling in and making the classroom come alive with their work and presence.



In front of the light-keeper's house on Baker Island



Exploring a cellar hole on Baker Island

As we began our first official Math and Language Arts Workshop classes this week, we also began to explore what it means to be present and mindful. The children made an impressive list on the board of what being present looks like, and we are kindly reminding our classmates of these things if they are feeling overwhelmed, rushed, frustrated or mad. The children are beginning to

Thank you to:

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We have many people who helped to enrich our first couple of weeks of school.

Thank you to:

Carrie Graham for taking us on an insect walk, **Ian Heyse** for organizing team building games for us on Bar Island, **Rocky Man** for welcoming us to his studio and teaching us about clay, **Toby Stevenson** for taking us out to Baker Island, **Sam Day** for exploring the Stanley Brook watershed community with the youngers, **Julia** the oceanographer for collecting, letting us hold, and teaching us about ctenophors (little jelly fish-like critters that are transported by the ocean currents).

NHM:

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What causes a lunar eclipse? (Watch for the lunar eclipse on Sunday night)

learning environment would look and feel like. This list of agreements hangs in our classroom, with the understanding that we might need to make amendments from time to time. We had healthy debate about each agreement and the children were able to share concerns with each other and in the end, each item on the list was voted on and approved unanimously.

articulate their understanding of mindfulness more clearly, and offer beautiful, concrete examples. Mindful communication is something that we will continue to practice, perform in puppet shows, role-play, and reflect on in our circle and Morning Lesson work, as we believe that this is the foundation to a solid sense of self and community.

We will be venturing to visit Billy Halprin at the Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary this week for our outing. Billy will share how their loon monitoring program, and other wildlife and conservation initiatives contribute to our island community. We will also bring our nature journals out into the field for the first time, for an entry along the banks of Somes Pond.

We are excited for our special trip to The Common Ground Fair this Friday!

Happy Autumn,
Miss Jasmine



From the olders...

Dear Families,

Thank you for a lovely first parent meeting. I always enjoy these times of laughter and sharing.

This group continues to play and share freely in the classroom and at recess. Last week, we drafted our classroom constitution, imagining what our ideal



Gathering for a story on Baker Island

We have spent the last week in the planning stage of our desk building, learning the importance of accurate measurement and discussing proper height and size for both the children and our classroom space. Applying the skills of area, perimeter, measurement, multiplication and addition through this practical lens gives the children something tangible to reference when we review these skills in future math workshops. The first cuts have been made and we'll begin sanding down the edges this week.

In preparation for the desks, we visited F.T. Brown's in Northeast Harbor. We discussed different sandpaper grits with Tom Brown and picked up the proper screws and drill bits. The children enjoyed this visit into town to collect the necessary materials for this project.

We continue to enjoy the beach and the lovely weather we have been blessed with as we move into the Autumn season.

With warmth,

Bethany



Visiting the Gilley family graveyard on Baker Island

Specialty Classes

Handwork

In the olders classroom, we began this week's handwork with a story called Extra Yarn. It is a sweet and inspiring story, perfect for all ages. I recommend checking it out from the NEH library for a fun family read aloud. The children continued work on their knitting needles. This next and final step involved rubbing the entire needle with a soft cloth and a dab of olive oil. The oil smooths the needles, helping the yarn to glide easily. The oil also gives the needles a rich appearance. After finishing their needles, the students continued on with their finger knitting. They are working on drawstring cords for their individual handwork bags. Finger knitting is an excellent introduction to needle knitting. They practiced using even tension, challenging themselves to keep each loop the same size. One of our students is continuing with crochet from last year. He is challenging himself with a three dimensional project - a hacky sack!



Youngers with their home-made "magic sticks"

Monday afternoon was warm and sunny, so the youngers had Handwork class outside. We began class with the book Good Night Fairies. I chose this story for the beautiful, magical illustrations. The children inspected each page, searching for, and finding many magic wands.



Magic sticks, sanded with care

With thoughts of magic in the air, we continued the work of creating our magic sticks. Each child chose a beautiful silky yarn. We tied our yarn to the wooden sticks that we had so carefully sanded the previous week. Around and around, we wrapped the yarn, slowly and methodically. If the yarn bunched up, we unwound and resumed our wrapping. The children took their time and did fine work. Our

patience and care was well worth the effort, as our magic sticks are simply beautiful! Our needle knitters continued on with their projects, a gnome and brown bunny.

I will be out of town next week, so there will be no handwork classes. I look forward to seeing the children again in two weeks.

Warmly,
Miss Karen



Making knitting needles

Music

The youngers made the world's largest guitar this week! I wanted the youngers to understand that sound is a vibration, so we took a 50' rope, pulled it tight and "plucked" the giant string to watch and listen for the deep, slow vibration of our giant guitar. The kids were fascinated by the different wave patterns that could be made on our string. We also learned about the different qualities that make up music: loud and quiet, slow and fast, high pitch and low pitch. Finally we listened to a number of different pieces of music and tried to identify these attributes into the songs; they really did an amazing job. We also had a bit of a dance party with the faster numbers!

The ukulele is great because it is very easy to hammer out a simple tune, this also means that good technique and musicality are sometimes sacrificed. I say this because I want you to help your child remember that the foundational skills we are currently working on may seem unnecessary to them right now, but if they focus on these seemingly simple things, it will really pay off when we start exploring more advanced and exciting material. This week the olders learned good strumming technique and learned 2 chords that they have been asked to practice so they can build up some muscle memory in their left hand.

Nick

Upcoming Events

Common Ground Fair:

As a piece of *Our Place, Our Home, Our Community* expedition, we will be venturing to The Common Ground Fair in Unity next week, Friday, September 25. **Please note: We will depart from the school**

at 8am, and return to the island that evening at 6pm. Please arrive at school at 7:45 on Friday morning. We have enough drivers, though if you would like to join us, you are more than welcome! It will be a fun day.

Please send your child with:

- A light, comfortable backpack
- 1 extra layer
- A sun hat
- Plenty of snacks (the school will provide a snack bag for each car, for the ride, too)
- 2 water bottles
- \$25 in an envelope, for lunch, and spending money at the farmer's market

We will send out a memo to all drivers/chaperones with further details about the day on Thursday evening.

Apple picking

Next Thursday, October 1, we will go apple picking, as an all-school outing.

Apple-Bake Friday

On the afternoon of Friday, October 2, we will be joined by a special guest who will teach us how to make delicious pies and crisps from our freshly picked apples! We will sample these apple desserts at our Heirloom Apple Day, on Saturday.

Heirloom Apple Day

Join us for a festival of apples, in the orchard at **Beech Hill Farm on Saturday, October 3 from 11am-1pm.** Please bring a dish for the potluck lunch! There will be apple tasting, cider pressing, apple games, apple art and music. We will share our apple pies and crisps that we bake on Apple Bake Friday with the community at this event.

Community School News

Our first apple share has arrived! Every other week, we receive a box of Heirloom apples from John Bunker and his crew in Palermo, Maine. John, a Maine apple expert sends along stories of the apples, their history, and what they are best used for. His wife Cammy includes several yummy recipes that we will try this fall. John and his crew source these heritage apple varieties from their very own Super Chilly Farm, and other small orchards from around the state. When the apples arrive, each class at The Community School learns how to identify the apples, and some facts and stories about each variety. We describe the unique taste of each apple and cast a vote for our favorite variety. We have 4 more deliveries this fall, and we welcome you to come taste sometime!



Tree climbing in our beloved spruce

