

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Good News About Neighborhood Schools, Inc. Vol. 19, Issue 1 * Fall 2020

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Student Exhibition

Wednesday, December 16
6:30pm Virtual Event

Winter Break

December 21 — January 1

Biennial Learning Fair

Wednesday, April 14, 6:30pm
Thursday, April 15, 6:30pm



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How (and What!) is NS Doing This Fall?

by: Tricia Morrow



Flexibility is the name of the game as we welcome 55 students in three locations each day while following Covid-safety protocols and stepping into Outdoor Learning. Each family completes a daily online Health Survey and checks in with our remote nurse, Ashley McLellan, when questions or symptoms arise. A strong health protocol combined with the safest venue, the great outdoors, is affording us the privilege of meeting in person.

Level One's classroom is in the school's backyard, with meeting space under a "big top" tent. Tracy Pimentel and Cait Palm, with support from Drew Curtis, keep the youngest members of our flock engaged with a study of birds as they get to know one another. On Friday mornings, Johnny Blazes "zooms" in to lead movement and music! Franklin Park is a short hike away when this flock of friends wants to fly away to wilder environs.

Level Two gathers under their "big top" tent in the driveway three times a day (beginning, middle, and end) and they hike to and from their outdoor classroom in Franklin Park near White Stadium. Rachel Shapp and Shari Feibel, with Scott Morrow's assistance, support Level Two's need to socialize and PLAY while exploring nature and the indigenous people whose land we benefit from. Jai Underhill and Scott Farrell-Forstein (NS alum) teach L2 art remotely on Fridays.

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Levels Three and Four meet on the other side of JP this fall, at the campus of Showa Institute. Anna Slavin and Malika Walker lead Level Three with Joyce Mallory providing steady support. A koi pond in a Japanese garden is adjacent to their outdoor space, much to the delight of the children. Level Four is led by Lisa Nam with support from Johnny Blazes, Tricia Morrow, Samantha Hale, Joanna Khalil, Jai Underhill, Drew Curtis, and Joyce Mallory. It takes a village to make sure all learners get what they need!

On Friday mornings, Level One meets in person as usual, but Levels Two, Three, and Four meet remotely from home for a half day. Teachers have time for other work on Friday afternoon before a well-deserved weekend. Drew Curtis is Technology Coordinator and makes sure teachers, students, and families have what they need to stay well connected.

NS teachers worked in teams this summer to create our plans and to write a thorough handbook for families detailing health and safety protocols as well as outdoor and remote learning information. We are discovering that outdoor learning requires more sleep and more layers of clothing as fall progresses! The positive effect for children socially and emotionally to be together in person and to be in the healthiest mode (outdoors) makes us proud of the work we are doing.*



Tracy and Cait under the big top with big smiles!



New Ways and Familiar Themes in Level One

by: Tracy Pimentel

The children of Level One face many new transitions each fall, including a new school, new routines, new teachers, new expectations, and new (and old) friendships. Throw a pandemic into the mix, and the transitions increase. Our classroom has moved outdoors to the school's backyard! Health protocols such as keeping 6ft of distance from one another as much as possible, frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing, mask wearing, and individually bagged materials for Choices, Book Time, and Math lessons is A LOT for our young friends and teachers.

Beyond facing many challenges, the beginning of the year is when we set aside for community building, learning one another's names, learning about our interests and favorite colors/foods, and, of course, ways we are different from one another, too! We have been learning about all the ways we are different from one another in appearance, while comparing and contrasting ways we are similar. Besides appreciating each other's differences, we are also discussing ways we are similar that aren't connected to appearances.

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"We both love pasta! Like, we could eat it everyday, seriously."

"We both have only one kid in the family...no brothers or sisters."

"I think we both are kids in L1, even though we aren't the same age...I'm older."

Inviting children to question, and to inquire about shades of brown that make up our skin profile also invites the children to trust that they can bring up a topic that can many times make adults feel uncomfortable. "Where do I begin if my child asks me about light skin and dark skin? What if I say the wrong thing? What if my biases impact my response?" Using rich, authentic literature, and allowing the children to lead the discussions based on their curiosities and background

knowledge is a crucial "first step." Understanding the science around what makes up shades of brown in our skin is just as important. "What about us can't we change? Can I go to the store and buy myself new skin? Why are all our skin shades sooooo different?"



Due to Covid, I was not able to take our annual "Shades of Our Hands" photo which is placed on the back cover of our first class book together, but I was able to create a quick collage of photos of our hands, and we were amazed by the myriad of ways our hands looked different! Not only were our hands different in shades, but also length, structure, some had freckles, some had wider fingers, some were one shade on the fingers, but different shades throughout. Our collage is a concrete way of showing and validating what we learned to be true - we are all unique, we are all different, and it's truly special.

As we navigate our days exploring the great outdoors and continue to make sense of our new normal, we are also embracing this different year together. And that is something truly beautiful. *



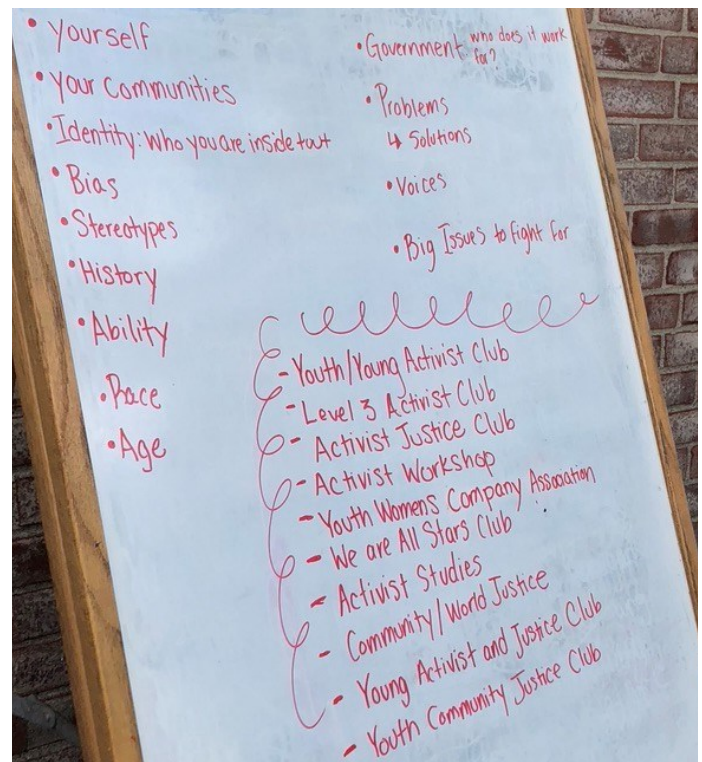
Level Two gathers at school before hiking to Franklin Park, where their outdoor classroom awaits!

New Course in Level Three

by: Anna Slavin

Last week, Level Three students were given an exciting task: name a new class. They were told the different kinds of content we would talk about (see the picture at right). Students immediately engaged. They came up with a range of names such as *We Are All Stars Club*, *Young Activists Club* and *Community and World Justice*. After a vote, *Activist Studies* was selected.

On Friday, we had our first mini-class of Activist Studies. We learned that activism connects understanding history and making change now. Then, we began to talk about Indigenous Peoples' Day. Students questioned why it is called Columbus Day in most parts of the country and we talked about the myth about his "discovery" of America. One student wrote, "Why would we ever celebrate someone who did so many horrible things?" Malika and I offered the fact that even when we were in school (not too long ago in Boston), we learned a different story. On Tuesday, we will continue our discussion of "The Big Lie," as Tracy (L1) calls it, of white supremacy and why Neighborhood School calls the 2nd Monday of October "Indigenous Peoples' Day" instead.



Whatever Happened to Predictability?

by: Johnny Blazes

Teaching and learning outdoors is difficult in all the ways I imagined it would be -- but more surprisingly, in a bunch of ways I didn't foresee. Who knew that the majestic, shade-giving tree, towering over us and protecting us from too much sun or drizzle, would also be so LOUD when the wind blows through its leaves? I never pictured myself fighting with a century-old tree to be heard when speaking to my class. Or how about: how do you pick which person will have to stand in the one spot in the circle looking directly into the sun, having to squint to see everyone else? Do you just always make semi-circles? Probably should've seen that one coming...

One Wednesday we had a totally predictable challenge: rain. I knew my first rainy day would be tough: soggy shoes, adapting lesson plans, not being able to use paper and pencil or even juggling scarves, making sure the kids are happy and learning. As kids started to dot the lawn with their bins of school supplies, arriving in ones and twos, the light drizzle got a little more hearty, and then, before I had quite gotten my mind

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around it, it was raining -- REALLY raining. And you know what? I got wet. And so did the kids. Some of them sheltered under the giant tree, some under the eaves of the building, and some ran around pretending to build a lightning rod out of some sticks. Where I had predicted grumpiness and hardship, I saw buoyant 11-year-old energy and I heard laughter. As the rain turned back to drizzle, we scrapped morning meeting for a game of Yee-Haw.

That afternoon in drama class, I asked the kids to tell me the story of the morning weather by mapping the emotional "beats." I wrote out the moments on the board and then brainstormed what we had been feeling in each moment. The ways that the kids felt during the rain were: happy, hopeful, curious, excited, wondering what would happen next, the same as they felt before the rain, interested in a book they were reading, glad to have time to talk to my friends, silly... Everyone felt different, and no one said anything about soggy socks.

I know it might be different when it gets colder, or when the rain lasts longer, or just when we're collectively having a tough day. It's not always idyllic, and believe me -- it's still REALLY hard. But, throughout all that, the kids still manage to challenge my assumptions and upend my predictions -- just like a normal school year. *



Lisa leads yoga to start the day at Showa.

A Note from Kaye

We received a loving note from Kaye Scherer, retired Level One teacher.

I hear of the extraordinarily creative measures you and the teachers have taken to provide children with safe, exploratory, outdoor learning experiences while the weather permits. This pandemic requires original, out-of-the-box thinking, which was always a strength of yours. The children and parents are incredibly fortunate to have FULL TIME school that is not only engaging and interesting, but where children can interact and play together, albeit with safety limitations.

I hope you and the teachers feel gratified for the incredible learning and community building environment you are striving to provide to children and that you are healthy and able to sleep well at night. You all deserve that and more. If I were a philanthropist, I would give you all huge bonuses. If I were a magician I would give you all time off to breathe, relax, play and receive training in on-line teaching...along with continued good health. Instead, I write you these words of recognition, praise and admiration. Your stamina, devotion, brilliant thinking and planning deserves written appreciation. I am beyond sad and distressed that you (and all schools) have to endure such hardships and restraints. My heart and well wishes go out to all of you at NS. Your stellar work is being acknowledged.



The Price of Reopening

We are counting on Sustainers and Friends of NS to provide for Covid-related costs exceeding the budget. Yes, this is our most expensive year at NS; but **the benefit of meeting kids' social-emotional needs during a pandemic are beyond measure.** Watch for our Annual Appeal in November and please make NS one of your giving priorities.

Pandemic-related Tuition credits:	\$75,000	Plumbing and fixtures @ PPR:	\$5,800
Covid-related Personnel costs:	\$70,000	Tent rental and purchases:	\$5,500
Rent and Cleaning @ Showa (fall):	\$14,000	Outdoor gear: bins, buckets, mats:	\$1,000
Laptops, iPads, and other tech:	\$10,000		

2019-20 Contributions

Our sincere thanks to the more than 120 individuals and organizations who contributed to the Annual Fund in support of the Neighborhood School Scholarship Fund and our 2020 *Second Story Play*!

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