

November 2017

*Why it's whisky, frisky, hippity hop,
Climbs up the tree, right to the top,
Whirly, furly, what a tail,
Broad as a feather and big as a sail.
Where is his supper? Inside the shell,
Snippity, snappity, out it fell!*

Dear Northern Lights Families,

The verse above is one that we have said together before our daily story for the last two weeks. I've shared it with you in case you would like to read it with your children, who will surely know the words and can show you the hand motions as you go along. We have had a wonderful month of watching the season change from Autumn to winter. We painted with red and yellow; the colors blending together to make a deep, golden orange much like the leaves that fell all around our beautiful town. The children loved making their lanterns with the paint and the day before our lantern walk we set them in a circle on our snack table and watched them all glow. It was a magical moment. Thank you for all who attended our lantern walk. It is such a wonderful event, but every year we teacher's gather to discuss how we can improve it in years to come. One thought we had was that each class should have walked together, so that the children would feel more secure as a unit and more comfortable singing the songs we all learned in circle together. I noticed that the few children in our class who walked near me were singing along. At circle time, all of your children sang as we pretended to be gnomes carrying our lights into the darkness of mother earth's cave to put her seeds to sleep for the winter. We crawled on our knees until we came to our snack table, where we got down on our bellies and slid all the way through the dark cave to emerge on the other side. It is such a nice big table that it was dark under there and really helped us to imagine a journey through a cave. They LOVED that part, and so did I.

This month when we were not busy doing our structured activities the class was engaging in the most wonderful play! We have welcomed our dear friend Narayan to our class and everyone loves his energy and ideas. Before thanksgiving break, Narayan had the whole class gathered around his table that was set with plates, pinecones, nuts, blocks, felted vegetables--and he said a blessing before they all dug in for a Thanksgiving feast. Ms. Nicole and I watched in awe at how beautifully your children can put together such a special event and so deeply engage in it. Professional face-painters set up shop and friends line up to have an image "painted" on their face. Blocks are being stacked tall, bridges crossed, mountains climbed, dens secured, houses built, problems solved, and so much more--all before our bread comes out of the oven!

We have a busy month ahead of us. This week the children will hear the tale of Saint Nicholas, a figure often confused with the beloved Santa Claus. The Nicholas in our story is a ruler who is loved by his people. He hears word of a famine that is happening in a land far west and asks his people to gather fruit, nuts, and grains from their orchards and fields to bring to the

hungry people of the West. Nicholas gathers baskets full of food and loads them on his ship. They sail for seven days and seven nights until they reach the shores, where they quietly leave the baskets heaped with goods on the doorsteps of the needy. Because of Saint Nicholas, the people of the West are fed and able to be happy and healthy once more. In the story it is explained that St. Nicholas now lives in the sky, and every year on his birthday (December 6th) he comes down to earth to fill the shoes of good, kind children with fruit, nuts--a symbol of the good wishes and positive forces that accompany us through life. When the children are older, we hope this story and gesture will help them with the development of conscience and self-understanding, but for now, he simply comes as the spirit of generosity and goodness. I believe in the spirit of Saint Nicholas as I creep into the dark school during the wee hours of the morning to fill your children's shoes with gifts. When they ask me if he is real, I answer without a doubt, "yes." If, in this season, our minds are filled with ideas of goodness and our hands with actions of love and generosity, we can all be Saint Nick in our own way. I will place a bin/basket outside our room for food pantry donations next week as well. If you can give your child a canned good to place in the basket just as we've heard in the story, it would be a meaningful experience for them!

The week of December 11th through the 15th I will be administering the Dial-4 assessment to all UPK students. Ms. Erika and Ms. Nicole will be in our classroom during free play while I take one student at a time down the hall to the Little Dippers room to complete the three part test. Though the design of the test does not quite align with our Waldorf methods and philosophy, I do think it will come across for your children as a really fun game that gives them one on one time with me (something they all seem to love). This is not a "pass or fail" type of test, but simply a diagnostic one that will be used to map necessary resources for the school districts. The test is a screener designed to identify children who are in need of intervention or diagnostic assessment in the areas of motor, concepts, language, self-help, and social-emotional skills. The Dial-4 components are intended to help early-education professionals identify children who are at risk of failing in academic settings. The test for each child should take about 20 minutes. It is very child-friendly, full of bean bags, blocks, pictures, scissors, and stickers, so I believe that even the most hesitant children will not feel at all threatened by the experience. I will be telling them at snack about the "Ms. Rebecca time" we will have in which we will play games together. There is a short parent questionnaire I will put in your mailboxes and ask that you return at your convenience. This is a new and more detailed assessment than what we have done in the past, but it is also a must for all UPK registered students. Their performance will be "scored" on a sheet that will be directly sent to the district and I am not sure yet when or if we get those results. I will speak with the district about how and when any post-test information will be shared with parents. Please reach out to me if you have any more questions and I will do my best to answer them!

This month we will be busy making holiday gifts, for you! They will all go home before our next long break. I ask that each of you please send your child with a bar of soap (not to spoil the surprise of your gift, but it should be a brand you want to use in your soap dish). Liquid soap will not work for this craft, so please send a bar when you can. We will not begin the craft most likely until next week. Thank you for all of your support and for taking the time out for conferences! Sincerely, Ms. Rebecca

