

October 2017

*Jack-o-lantern, Jack-o-lantern, you are such a lovely sight,
As you sit there in my window, looking out at the night.
You were once a golden pumpkin, growing on a sturdy vine.
Now you are my Jack-o-lantern, let your candle light shine.*

This month in the Pre-K class we have been emerging ourselves deeply in the changing season. We have not taken for granted how warm and sunny each afternoon in the yard has been. I had the pleasure of watching the children play happily without coats in the sunlight through almost all of October; jumping into leaf piles as the newly fallen leaves float down from trees in a peaceful breeze. It often seems too magical to be true, but it is a reality in our play yard! We have knit crowns, dyed them with marigolds, painted with red and yellow, and worked carefully on stringing colorful indian corn with needle and thread. The bracelets came out beautiful--and it was a very tricky, careful job to do.

The class has been playing very well together with very little conflict. We have a very cooperative class that is very good at conflict resolution. During free play inside and outside, we teacher's watch carefully as the children resolve their own issues and then step in when it is clear they cannot do it without the help of an adult. I am pleased to report that many of our students already know how to do that very well. It is important for each student to learn how to verbalize confidently, "I don't like that," or, "Please stop that." Equally as important is the lesson of *hearing* another's words. Children must also learn that when another person says, "please stop," or, "no thank you," it is their job to stop right away. These are some of the most difficult lessons to learn, especially when two children feel that they "need" the same toy, or that one child "needs" to get through and can't think of a better way than walking right through another's game. Ms. Nicole and I watch as these play scenarios unfold. It is wonderful to see a whole confrontation resolve between the children without the help from a teacher! A simple request of, "I'm playing here, could you go around me?" with the response of, "Oh, sure, sorry," are real achievements in the world of the 4-5 year olds (and in some adults, at times!) Oftentimes we parents and teachers talk too much, explain too much, and do too much of the work for our little ones. They can learn these lessons in a deeper way if we step back, observe, and guide them. When it is clear that a child cannot find the right words, or that another is not listening to the words of their friends, Ms. Nicole and I will go over and help them work it out. I will say, "Johnny, did you hear Sally when she said, 'please stop' a moment ago? I heard her, so I'm sure you did." Then I may say something like, "Sally, let's ask Johnny again now that we know he is listening and I KNOW he will stop, because he is a good friend." Another example may be a child who says "no," but in a mean, loud, angry voice. We help them to communicate and control their emotions in a group setting. Though we truly value the way in which we teach children how to resolve conflicts, stand up for themselves, and hear others, we also value the information our parents observe or hear from their children at home. If you ever feel that something is not sitting well, please write to me!

This month in circle we have been farmers harvesting wheat and pumpkins. Circle is a time when we learn language skills, rhymes, counting, learn to move in a

synchronized way, control our bodies, and learn movements which are not just good for practicing gross motor skills. The movements in our circles are also designed to stimulate both sides of the brain, a practice that has been known to produce students with a greater ability to focus and learn. We have all heard by now the studies finding that movement is crucial to learning, and we are so thankful at Northern Lights to offer your children so many opportunities for physical movement in an educational system that offers less and less time for recess and unstructured free play. One of the movements we did in circle over the last two weeks involves crossing the midline-- a movement that helps the left and right sides of the brain work together. As we are "mowing wheat" in circle the children are crossing the sagittal and coronal planes, a movement linked to increased brain activity that leads to better focus and academic success. If you ask your children how we "mow the wheat" at circle time, they may show you just how we do it. A teacher from ILS Learning Corner writes:

Even preschool is now more focused on academics and many of them tailor their lesson plans to higher learning subjects that normally wouldn't begin until kindergarten or first grade. While this push for greater academic achievement is good in theory, we are now seeing digression, even negative consequences in our students' learning capability because their development is being pushed too fast. A child's motor planning, auditory, and sensory input, and organizational skills used for math, in many cases is now suffering because we did not allow our children adequate time to develop these critical milestones used for helping the left and right sides of the brain work together.

You can also follow this link if you would like more of this article or examples of how we integrate this into the movement portion of our curriculum:

<http://ilslearningcorner.com/2015-11-why-crossing-the-midline-activities-helped-this-child-listen-to-his-teacher/>

Now the air is finally chilly, our jackets are buttoned up, and our hats are on. Nearly all the leaves in the yard are on the ground. In the weeks ahead we will be preparing for the long darkness of winter, celebrated by our lantern walk. It is an absolutely beautiful event and I hope you can all make it. We will be busy putting our lanterns together and learning songs to sing. Thank you for your support, constant donations, and your amazing children!

Sincerely, Ms. Rebecca

Reminders:

We hope that you will bring in a glass mason jar for your child to craft a lantern with next week.

Please check extra clothes bags!

Please bring lots of layers!