

ACADEMY A.R.T.S. NEWS

The Academy of Movement and Music

605 Lake Street

Oak Park, Illinois

(708) 848-2329

DECEMBER 2009

VOL. 14, NO. 3

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

December 21-January 3: Winter Break

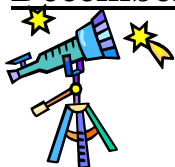
Academy Closed

January 4, 2010: Classes Resume

January 12: 2010-2011 A.R.T.S. Registration begins

Upstairs A.R.T.S.

December



We will be starting our new unit "The Winter Solstice and the New Years" which will allow us to explore the planets and stars. Our paper mache planets will soon be hanging in the downstairs hallway. Be sure to view them with your child. We also have a planet challenge. We will be learning the names of the eight planets. That's right, we have lost Pluto as a planet. It is now a Dwarf Planet. When we have ten children who have learned the order of the planets, we will have a planet cookie day. Any parent who would like to bake some "planet" cookies please contact Donna.

We will compare the actual shape of the earth with the view that the Egyptians had of the world. They thought that the universe was in a box. The stars and planets hung like lamps from a celestial vault, which was supported by mountain peaks. Together we will create a box universe.

Fire and light were often an important part of winter solstice ceremonies. We will explore the activities centered around the winter solstice and fall New Years celebrations.

We'll investigate our stars and the constellations they make.

The children's "Sharing Time" has been informative and a lot of fun. It also helps the children gain confidence and develop their speaking skills. Wednesday and Thursday of the third full week are usually the days for the children to share. Look for the Smiley Faces on the calendar. Children may choose one or both days to share. If your child has something to show that enhances the topic of the day, then any day is appropriate for them to bring that item.

~ Donna Pries

Thank you to . . .

Carson Brown for the Thomas' Great Race Game to celebrate his 4th birthday.

This game will provide a fun way to develop our counting, sorting and color matching skills.



Emmett Harmon for the Match It Sequencing and Very Silly Sentences to honor his 5th birthday. They will both help us develop our language skills.

Eve Wasylik for the Flower Match Garden Patch in celebration of her 5th birthday. Our "Growing Things" Unit will be enhanced with this delightful project.

Special Thanks to ...

Dentist Kevin Raihle, dad of
Downstairs A.R.T.S. student



Sean Raihle, loves coming to the Friday Science Area and the children are always excited to see him. He encouraged the children to have good dental hygiene when we were studying our mouth and teeth. He gave each child a coloring book and a toothbrush.

All the parents who have read to the Upstairs children this fall. If you want to sign up, the sign-up sheet is in the classroom or send a note to Donna.

Downstairs A.R.T.S. Celebrations of Light



The Downstairs A.R.T.S. children will find the three weeks before our winter break a great opportunity to explore Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Christmas in our unit "Celebrations." As the people around us - in our neighborhood and in our school - begin preparation for Kwanzaa or Hanukkah or Christmas, we will look at the customs, traditions, and symbols that are a part of these celebrations. We will first direct our attention toward Kwanzaa; the African-American harvest festival celebrated December 26 until the New Year begins. Our vocabulary will increase as we learn such Swahili words as *mkeka* (woven mat) and *kinara* (candle holder). The second week we will focus on Hanukkah and its customs and symbols. There will be many opportunities to spin

dreidels of various sizes. The last week of this unit will find us looking at Christmas and some of the different customs that are a part of its traditions. The focus of our books, art, and music will change each week as we change our attention from one celebration to the next. In the excitement of these December festivities, we hope each child will enjoy learning more about their own traditions as well as those of others. Happy holidays to all!

~ Niki Merrick

Downstairs A.R.T.S.

Thank you to . . .

Aiden Sheibany for the book The Tickle Monster is Coming in celebration of his third birthday. It is already becoming a fast favorite in our book corner. Happy 3rd birthday, Aiden!



Milo Hansen for the book Olivia Forms a Band in celebration of his third birthday. Olivia is a classroom favorite and this new story is certain to be enjoyed again and again. Happy Birthday #3, Milo!

Ava Weiler for the book I'm a Turkey in honor of her fourth birthday. What a perfect book for a Thanksgiving time birthday. Have fun being four, Ava!

Special Thanks to ...

All of our Downstairs A.R.T.S. parents who have come and read to us. Thanks for being a part of our day!



Kristen Alfonsi, Tyler's mom, for donating a case of tissues to the Academy.

The PTO for providing some delicious treats for parents, children and staff during the conferences.

Phone List Changes

Phone number corrections:

Eve & Olivia Pruden
312-925-2468



Aiden Sheibany
352-999-2021

Nina Zjalic
708-583-1646



Feeling Lucky?

The Academy A.R.T.S. PTO will be holding a raffle at the annual Valentine Sock Hop in February. Funds raised will go directly to the Downstairs and Upstairs A.R.T.S. program plus to help us put a sidewalk around the East End of the building. Tickets will go on sale in January.

Valentine Sock Hop Raffle



There is still time to donate items for the Raffle, which will be held during the Valentine Sock Hop on Saturday, February 6. Examples of prizes we are looking for:

- Children's items (basket of toys, books)
- Gift certificates for merchandise
- Gift certificates for services (salon, spa, home improvements, etc.)
- Tickets to movies, theater or sporting events
- Trips or hotel getaways
- Restaurant dinners
- Family admission to museums or other attractions
- Airline miles

If you or someone you know would like to provide a raffle prize, please contact PTO Raffle Committee chairpersons: Paula Maggio at 708-358-0037/maggio@mc.net or Karen Smith at 708-358-8598/karensmith1000@me.com. The deadline for donations to be secured and listed on the raffle package information sheet is Friday, December 11th, but donations will be accepted up until the raffle date. Thanks for your support!

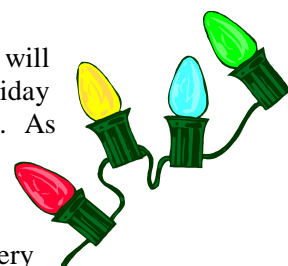
Reminder ~ Emergency Closings

We are registered for school closings due to inclement weather at www.emergencyclosings.com. Enter "Academy of Movement and Music" to check our status. A.R.T.S. Preschool families will be contacted via a "Phone Calling Tree" as well.

HoliDAZED?!?!?

The month of December will undoubtedly hold a flurry of holiday celebrations in many of your homes. As parents, you may be interested in knowing to what extent we, as a preschool, join in the holiday frenzy.

The A.R.T.S. staff works very purposefully to avoid becoming "holidazed". In our classrooms, we want to educate the children, not



entertain them. We try to focus on a few simple things found in the various holiday celebrations that are meaningful to our preschoolers. We work to help the children make sense of all the hustle and bustle rather than add more stress and busy-ness to the season. School is often the one constant for our preschoolers during the coming weeks. Our primary goal is to teach the children to be respectful of each family's special celebrations, rather than to trivialize or send mixed messages about what these holidays are all about.

As adults, we need to be mindful of the fact that the most meaningful parts of the season (the things the children can see, hear, touch, smell, explore) can get lost. December brings snow and evergreens, darkness and light, hats, mittens and boots. For children, December brings the simple wonder in the changes of the seasons – something in and of itself to celebrate!

The Top-Rated Toys For The 2009 Holiday Season



Play is the “work” of early

childhood; it is essential for a child's ability to learn and grow. Through play, children figure out how things work, develop vocabulary, pick up new ideas, build and gain control over both large and small muscle groups, use their imaginations, solve problems, and learn how to cooperate with others.

In their play children need good toys, just as we need good tools to do our work well. Good toys are not necessarily expensive, and children do not need very many. In fact, many favorite activities involve what seem not to be toys at all – Tupperware, cardboard boxes, kitchen utensils, water, to name a few. Some good toys, such as blocks (wooden ones and Legos/Duplos) and books are fairly expensive – but these usually appeal to a child for many years and will last for generations. Other toys are so perfect for children that they are still good investments, even if they get used up or only appeal to a child for a brief period. Art materials, stacking toys, and simple puzzles are some examples.

Since the toys you choose affect what your child learns and how he or she feels about him/herself and about others, it is important to select different types of toys so that your child can become a well-rounded person. The basic categories which should be represented in any family's toy collection are:

HANDS ON TOYS (puzzles, shape and size sorters, pegboards) – build hand-eye coordination, encourage ideas about how things work, foster cooperation and problem solving.

BOOKS AND RECORDINGS – a source of shared experiences for children and adults; they foster appreciation of literature and music and develop language skills.

ART MATERIALS – foster creativity and build skills that lead to reading, writing, and simply seeing the beauty in life.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS (blocks, building sets) – develop science and number concepts, contribute to muscle strength and coordination.

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS (sand, water, clay, musical instruments) – are ideal because children have so much control over them; they engage the tactile and auditory channels for learning.

ACTIVE PLAY EQUIPMENT – builds strong muscles and instills confidence to meet physical challenges.

PRETEND PLAY OBJECTS (dolls, stuffed animals, dramatic figures, dress-ups) – provide a chance to try new behaviors and use imaginations and foster an understanding of the world and how we can work together.

With these categories in mind, the A.R.T.S. staff has compiled the following list of toys that we, as early childhood educators and parents, consider to be “winners” in any holiday season:

- Big cardboard blocks
- Large chalkboard
- Baby doll and buggy
- Play kitchen
- Any Fisher Price play food sets
- Tea set and/or dishes
- Duplo or Lego sets
- Playmobil or Playmobil 123 toys
- Play workbench and/or tools
- Big dump trucks, fire trucks, etc.
- Brio train sets
- Balls
- Hats, big square scarves, vests, sashes, etc. for dress-up
- Wooden and Lauri puzzles
- Lap harp
- Books and more books!

The Magic Tree bookstore offers hours of enjoyment as well as great assistance in exploring through its numerous shelves of books. Some of our favorites include What's in Fox's Sack? Chicka Boom Boom, Go Away, Big Green Monster, This Is Our House, all the Miss Spider books, and One Duck Stuck.

Dear Academy Families . . .

Years ago, some of our families began a tradition of holiday contributions to the Academy A.R.T.S. PTO. Many of us who teach here have been doing this for so many years that our cupboards are full of teacher mugs and our homes are overflowing with holiday decorations. We love having original drawings and cards made by our students, and we really enjoy the family photos that you send with holiday cards. However it is the holiday contributions that make possible improvements in the classroom that all of us

enjoy and use for many years to come. Past generosity from the A.R.T.S. PTO, along with contributions from another Academy organization, **MOMENTA** have made the Academy accessible for persons with disabilities; gifts have allowed us to install a beautiful sprung dance floor upstairs, a new stage curtain (with a motor!), wonderful cabinets for the preschool program, new mats, CPR/First Aid training for teachers, and many, many things we use daily year after year. Thank you!

This past year the Preschool PTO raised funds to help us put a sidewalk around the East End of the building. The project has taken much longer than anticipated since the sidewalk is on both our property and the townhome association's – and this has meant negotiations and engineers! It is also going to be more expensive than anticipated so continuing to fundraise for this and for major classroom items is still much needed! Your gift to this organization is a gift to all the teachers and students here.

Thank you all so much for being a part of the Academy family!

The Academy A.R.T.S. Faculty and Staff

