

Dear Early Childhood Families,

Each morning when I arrive at school, I take a peek at the state of the construction of our new building. To be quite honest, I know there is a lot of work happening but it isn't the type of work that gets the same amount of attention and excitement as when a structure begins to pop out of the ground. What is being built right now is the foundation. And a building cannot be strong if this vital step is skipped and is not approached with attention and intention.

The same can be said about the importance and attention that must be given to developmentally-appropriate practice in the early childhood setting. Research demonstrates that foundational skills are built through hands-on, playful learning experiences that encourage the development of curiosity and social competencies. Academics will come more easily if the strong foundation is there.

One example of building this foundation throughout our Early Childhood classrooms is our literacy work with our youngest students. In our Nursery and Junior Kindergarten classrooms, teachers are creating opportunities for students to play with words through talking, reading high quality literature, singing and chanting. Our educators are keen observers of the children in their classrooms and provide planned, purposeful and playful explorations that give students the building blocks necessary for success in learning to read and write. These building blocks include oral language development, vocabulary building, story comprehension, print knowledge and phonological awareness.

Each year builds seamlessly on the next and by the time the children get to Senior Kindergarten, they are ready to go deeper and teachers are prepared to support this growth through continued developmentally-appropriate academic and social-emotional practice. Phonemic awareness endeavors are still play-based but become more targeted, moving from sound and word discrimination, to rhyming, syllable splitting, blending, phonemic segmentation, phoneme deletion, and phoneme manipulation. Encoding is emphasized utilizing developmental spelling as students move from writing one word to creating complete sentences. And, most students begin their first foray into conventional reading as they begin to break the code through high frequency, sight word, and word family development. As the children explore fiction and non-fiction, they continue to build a knowledge bank to spark their curiosity and wonder and to learn about the world around them.

Just as we look with excitement to our new building sprouting from the sturdy foundation the construction workers are creating, as early childhood educators we feel that same excitement as we quietly and carefully support our young students' development. We know this step cannot be skipped and with that foundation in place, the seeds of learning will grow and ensure a bright and successful future!

Wishing you Shabbat shalom!

Warmly,

Abby Aloni
Head of Early Childhood