

## CONSERVATORY NOTES

# Fostering a Love for Reading

*By Laureen Brown*

I believe that fostering a love for reading starts at an early age. As the reading specialist for South Shore Conservatory's arts-integrated kindergarten program, I've helped the classroom teachers select a reading program designed to enrich as well as assist beginning readers. The program, a new series from McGraw-Hill, consists of many different components that allow children a vast exposure to select literature as well as writing opportunities. This program is also Hingham Public Schools' top choice, making it easier on our students to transition from the Conservatory to Hingham Public Schools upon graduation.

Using music, movement, art and instrument play as teaching tools, the Conservatory's kindergarten teachers provide children with enriching and rewarding experiences, centered on weekly themes that allow children to grow and flourish in a nurturing environment. Before I even enter the classroom, teachers Jill Martin and Karen Hill have exposed the children to the common theme running through all they encounter that day, including their reading material. I'm grateful to work with such a supportive and warm group of teachers.

While reading is the ultimate goal, I focus my one-on-one instruction on experiences

and confidence building while engaging in the text. Once a child has the desire to pick up a book and interact with the literature, he/she has started a lifelong journey. We work on phonemic-based work in group settings while maintaining a whole language approach to learning. We integrate writing to a great extent in fortifying our readers. Response journals are used daily and shared with both teachers and peers, promoting confidence in writing through letter and sound recognition. Sharing their work whether it is reading, writing, or acting is what builds confidence in knowing they are developing a meaningful skill set.

My favorite part of the reading program at South Shore Conservatory is observing the progress the children make from the beginning to the end of the year. It fills me up with joy to see how excited a child is when they can read on their own. Their attitude and demeanor change when they truly start reading independently. I love to see them choose a book and find a quiet corner in the room, and become absorbed in a story to the extent that they don't even realize they are sitting at school. It is as if the book has taken them to another place. That is the epitome of a true reading experience.

I am fortunate to work in such an arts-rich environment with a great group of



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children. They bring so much enthusiasm and life to the table. Each unique in their own way, they share the stories of their lives with me. As a mother of three, I realize the desires parents have for their children. I believe South Shore Conservatory provides that unique place for children to read with passion, discover at their own pace, and become creative and confident lifelong learners.

*Laureen Brown lives in Hanover with her husband Sean, son Alex, and daughters Julia and Caroline.*