

## CONSERVATORY NOTES

# Making All Learning Experiences Count

By Jill Martin

In the past decade, the pendulum in education has swung away from Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences and the creative learning process, and closer toward data-driven learning activities that teach to a test score. Here at South Shore Conservatory (SSC), our arts-integrated Preschool, PreK and Kindergarten classes embrace the whole child, his or her personality, and consider the child's possible areas of intelligence. We support their ability to be creative, engaged, and inspired by the curriculum, in the hopes of fostering a lifelong love of learning.

In our school we integrate the "arts" and core curricula into meaningful, creative and inspiring activities that enable every child to feel successful and that utilize all intelligences. We believe in making a classroom connection throughout their entire schedule, where all teachers and specialists come together to make the most out of every learning experience. A typical day in our full-day kindergarten room involves happy, engaged, inquisitive minds hard at work collaborating with peers about hands-on activities throughout the room! They traverse throughout the centers documenting their results with pictures and writing on their clipboard sheets, like mini scientists and mathematicians.

Let me give you an example. We recently

began a two-day study of apples. At one center, we weighed our apple on a double scale with the ballast being small, plastic teddy bears. The question was "how many teddy bears will it take to balance the scale with your apple?" Next, they measured the circumference of their apple with a string and then estimated how many unifix cubes it would take to be equal with the length of the string. Then the students eagerly pranced over to the water table for a sink and float experiment of their apple. They predicted the outcome and then tested their hypothesis. When the math and science portion was over, we cut their apples in half and read the "The Legend of Apple Star", showing how every apple has this magical star. We took our cut apples and proceeded to dip them in fall colored paints to make beautiful prints, emphasizing the art technique of "overlapping" which was being reinforced from the previous week's art lesson of Georgia O'Keeffe's, Autumn Leaves.

While the prints dried we visited Ms. Su's music class, where we sang a song about the life cycle of an apple tree, acting out each season with body movements and sound. When we returned to the classroom, we sang a song about short "a" and generated a list of short "a" words, and then we wrote about our favorite part of our apple day in our journals.

We ended the day by baking a homemade



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apple pie together, drawing pictures and writing words for the ingredients that went into our delicious apple pie! As the children were being dismissed, one of our students gently leaned over to his mother and said, “Mrs. Martin makes the best apple pie in the world!!”

Our goal at SSC's Preschool, PreK and Kindergarten is to make all children's learning experiences count. It is a joy and a gift to work in an environment that celebrates the creative process in children and adults.

*Jill Martin is the Conservatory's lead kindergarten teacher. A graduate of Stonehill College, she received her Masters degree in Education from Wheelock College, with a concentration in Pre-K through 3rd grade/Inclusionary Practice.*