



## DECEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

This past week Heart Lake United Church treated us to an early Christmas gift and has agreed to renew our contract for the upcoming school year, 2012 and 2013. Thank you to the parents and past families for the support you gave us last spring and summer as we felt it made a huge difference. We will continue to offer a top quality preschool and kindergarten environment for children in our community.

Thank you to all the parents who contributed to our Fall Fundraiser. We hope you all are happy with your orders.

We had a very busy and fun fall at Building Blocks. All classes have settled in and are thoroughly enjoying their time at school.

The SK class starts their day with Mrs. Sanger and stay with her for the first hour and a half. Please read their letters to Santa that are posted on the wall opposite the Parent Bulletin Board. The level of printing and spelling is amazing for SK children. Most children would not do this level until Grade 2 in the public system. SK has a 12 - 1 child teacher ratio at Building Blocks. The children in this class have a weekly spelling test of 10 words, enjoy a curriculum that includes phonics, journals, math, science, songs, movement (Tai Chi) and literature with Mrs. Sanger.

During the second half of their day the SK class moves into the large yellow room. In this room they work with Mrs. Geddes, Ms. Kuehni and Mrs VanderBurgt in the morning, and Mrs. Geddes, Ms. Kuehni and Mrs. Quibell in the afternoon. The art for SK is planned by Mrs. Quibell and is at a higher level and works on various skills that require higher level thinking and motor skills. During the 2nd half of the day the JK and SK children are together. In the afternoon class SK children have closing circle with Mrs. Freer and Mrs. Sanger.

The JK class starts their day with Mrs. Freer and Ms. Kuehni. The ratio for JK at Building Blocks during the active learning time is 8-1. Our JK class is very different than JK that is offered in the public system and different again from our preschool classes. JK at Building Blocks is very structured and has many teacher directed activities. The children in this class start out in September with limited reading and printing skills for the most part. A majority of the children are now reading many simple words and by Christmas will have learned over 25 sounds. We learn a total of 40 sounds in JK. This week the JK children learned the **ai**, **oa**, and **ie** sounds and were successfully reading words such as **rain**, **paint**, **goat**, **road**, **coat**, **pie**, **tie** and **even magpie**. Lessons are done on a daily basis and children come to school eagerly each day wondering what

sound they will learn that day. We had a person from an agency comment in October that she had only seen early birthday children (eg. Jan, Feb Mar birthdays) read at this level well after Christmas in phonics based programs she had seen. Our program makes reading easily a masterful skill where children learn to understand how to both read and print. Children in this class also enjoy movement songs and yoga practices which help both in body awareness and maintaining focus. In JK the children learn first we work and then we play. In this first half of their day the children also enjoy a theme based story and have the question of the day which brings awareness to how their friends think, name recognition, turn taking in a larger group and concepts of more and less. Imagination is also encouraged at this stage in the children's development.

We receive so much positive feedback from our JK parents starting in October when they experience firsthand their children doing so much active learning. Our JK and SK parents love our class sizes and come to realize first hand the Building Blocks philosophy that children do much better when in smaller numbers. Quality in early childhood is about ratios. Class sizes make a difference and give children a chance to succeed. Good habits are formed under the guidance of kind teachers.

During the second half of the JK day Ms. Kuehni follows the class into the yellow room where she does the art with the JK students. JK art incorporates more skills, and where possible language is incorporated. As the year goes on the children will do more and more printing with their art work. In October during apple week, the children were encouraged to print **a** on their apples. In contrast in November during our Nursery Rhymes Unit the children were highlighting words like **the** and **I** and reading some of the simple rhymes. The JK children spend the second half of their day with Mrs. Geddes, Ms. Kuehni and Mrs. VanderBurgh in the morning. The afternoon children spend their second half of the day with Mrs. Geddes, Ms. Keuhni and Mrs. Quibell. Afternoon JK ,SK and preschool children have their closing circle with Mrs. Freer and Mrs. Sanger.

We have had many visits from our former SK students who are now in Grade One during the fall season. We have heard from their parents that children who have gone on to private schools are at the top of their classes in the skills they have. Children who have gone onto French Immersion classes are also doing very well as our children who are in regular Grade one classes. These parents are always asking us to consider doing higher grades as they have loved the warm and loving environment that Building Blocks provided for their children.

Our Preschool classes have all settled into their routines. The preschool children start their day in the big yellow room where they are warmly greeted each day by Mrs. Geddes, Mrs. VanderBurgh and Mrs. Quibell in the morning and by Mrs. Geddes and Mrs. Quibell in the afternoon. The children come in and sit down on a mat and look forward to finding out about their day. It's so nice to see the smiling faces and happy children. One little girl said recently "This mat is just the right size for my bottom.....it's not too big yet". Our numbers are not as high in the afternoon and we require only 2 teachers in these classes. Mrs. VanderBurgh had an injury to her back early this fall and was happy to work mornings only until her back healed. She is planning on returning to teaching additional Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in January. We have

had a few more children sign up for this class and are hopeful that we can have 3 teachers in the 2 afternoon class.

Preschool children are busy exploring the yellow room and enjoy their wonderful age appropriate activities that work on skills that this age group need in order to develop. Social skills are so important at this age. Getting along with others in a group, following directions and listening are the most important tools for children at this age. All the preschool art is planned by both Mrs. Geddes and Mrs. VanderBurgh. During the second half of the preschool day the children go into their small circle groups with Mrs. Freer, Mrs. Sanger and Mrs. Quibell in the morning classes and then for the afternoon classes with Mrs. Freer and Mrs. Sanger. During small circle time the children have a calendar time, sing theme based songs and fingerplays and have a story read to them. There is always lots of music and movement. During the month of December the children practice together for the Christmas concert in the church as a group with Mrs. Freer, Mrs. Sanger and Mrs. Quibell in the mornings and Mrs. Freer and Mrs. Sanger in the afternoon. We make the concert practice fun for the children. It's always very sweet to watch. Mrs. Sanger and Mrs. Freer take turns doing the closing circle.

Each group of children experience much throughout their day and come into contact with each teacher, some more than others. All the teachers enjoy working with your children throughout the year. Many times over the years we have all been proposed to. "Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ I want to marry you when I grow up." We give out many hugs and cuddles. We all had great fun preparing for our annual parent day. It was such a delight to watch you enjoy your time with your child. We hope you all enjoyed the concert by Marcus. One of the SK students commented on Marcus, "Oh I remember him, he's the one who forgets the words to songs." We think he is amazing.

We are busy preparing the children for gifts that they will make you. We are also practicing for our Christmas concerts. Each month is full of fun and surprises for the children.

A thank you goes out to our two amazing Early Childhood Students, Jassy and Angie. Jassy worked with the SK class and Angie with the JK class. They are just finishing up a 4 days a week 7 week placement.

Please keep spreading the word around your community about Building Blocks. Most of our families come to us through referrals. We still have afternoon openings in our preschool classes. Our JK class is full and capped at 16 children both in the morning and afternoon classes. Our SK classes has 11 full time students in the morning class and 12 students in each of the afternoon classes.

School resumes Jan. 9 or 10th. We wish you all a safe and wonderful holiday season.

**We keep the child in childhood.**

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## School Closure Policy

If the Peel School board cancels all schools due to a snow storm then Building Blocks will close. If only the busses are cancelled Building Blocks will remain open. Radio stations and local television news always carry this coverage. We will also change our phone message if we close.