

November 19, 2009

Dear Parents,

It is hard to believe that the holiday season is fast approaching. Since this time of year is so exciting to children, we try to keep the classroom as calm and predictable as possible.

This week, the children discussed what they thought Thanksgiving was about. We'd like to share some of what they said:

"Thanksgiving is for being thankful for everyone you're thankful for."

"It started when the Jews were here and something happened. It's like Passover and Purim, but you eat turkey."

"You say 'Sorry' to the people you were bad to last year."

"It's when the Indians and the Pilgrims found a turkey and there was great joy."

"You're thankful for the things you have."

"Everybody gets to share things."

"Your family gathers and has a dinner. You eat turkey."

We then read a book about the origin of Thanksgiving and will read and talk more about it in the coming days. One LREI Thanksgiving tradition is that each class makes breads that are donated to a food pantry for the holiday. So far this week we have made zucchini, pumpkin and banana bread. Next Monday we will finish our baking with apple bread.

Early last week, we put a large, empty plastic container in the middle of the rug and asked the kindergarteners what was inside. They replied—"nothing"—and then revised their answer to—"air." We told them that by the end of the week something else would be in the

container...and it would be alive!! This stirred their curiosity and imagination and the children immediately began brainstorming possibilities. More snails? A baby cat? Fish? “Maybe it will just be plants,” one child lamented, which led to an insightful discussion about what it means to be alive.

On Thursday, there were new creatures in the container...

We spent the day observing, discussing, and admiring the new additions to our room. Most children also drew and wrote about the creatures. We observed they have 6 legs, 2 antennae, 1 head, and look like sticks. Some children wrote “stkh bg” (stick bug), “they look lik tres” (they look like trees), “thre is litl crechrs” (there is little creatures), and “tha hav ledal horns” (they have little horns).

Before lunch, we told the children we needed to discuss two important things: 1) How can we keep these creatures safe? And 2) Will they be happy and healthy living in the empty, plastic container? The children discussed signs to keep our stick bugs safe when we weren't in the classroom. They read, “plis don't tush the kuntanr” (please don't touch the container), “stick bugs wokinstik” (stick bugs walking stick), and “plese don't pull the lid oof” (please don't pull the lid off).

After looking at some books, and using our common sense and imagination, the children talked about what kind of environment these creatures might live in. We decided they would need branches, soil and leaves and constructed the environment together. We now began calling the creatures Stick Bugs or Walking Sticks.

At the end of our first day with the Walking Sticks, we discussed what we had observed and learned about them that day. This led to questions such as—What is the difference between an arm and a leg? What is an antenna? How do you feel about the Walking Sticks? Do you want to touch them? What is camouflage? How do we know they can't fly? Then we created a list of what we wanted to know about the Walking Sticks, which included questions such as “What do stick bugs do?” “What do they feel like? Are they soft?” and “How are they different color browns?”

On Monday, small groups of children examined the insects outside their home with magnifying glasses. Do they have eyes like ours? How about a mouth? A nose? Teeth? We talked about their different shades of brown. How could we tell which Walking Sticks are boys and which ones are girls? Most children touched the Walking Sticks. Some let one walk on their hands and arms. We will continue to investigate and enjoy our Walking Sticks. Please ask your children about them.

Please remember that the Thanksgiving break begins on Wednesday at 11:45 AM. There will be no lunch or afterschool program that day.

Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving,

Luise and Alisa