

Friday, May 2, 2008

Dear Parents:

We have finished the first week of our thematic unit on plants. We have learned that plants are living things and that they need water, sun, soil and air to live and grow. The students have learned that many plants grow from seeds. They also have learned the four parts of plants: roots, stems, leaves and flowers or seeds. They have planted seeds and are observing them daily.

The Teacher Read Aloud Book was [Spring Is Here](#). The Social Science link book was [What Season Is It?](#) The Kinder Friends book was [Growing Flowers](#). The Phonics Library story was [Get Set! Play!](#)

The Barbara Saul book was [Tommy Bear](#) for a special reason. This week we celebrated Bear Day. The students practiced their oral language skills by talking to the class about the stuffed animal they brought to school. They practiced their writing and art skills by writing and illustrating a story about their stuffed animal. We practiced math skills by measuring the teddy bears.

I have recently noticed that some of the children have become fussy; more easily frustrated and seem tired. I am wondering if some children are staying up later with the recent time change where it is staying lighter for longer in the evening. I know from personal experience it is very hard to put a child to bed when it is light outside. Try darkening the room and spending time reading together. A good night's sleep is very important to being ready and able to learn.

Research study finds board games build math skills. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (3/26, Smydo) reported, "Beyond serving as a pleasant pastime, some children's board games may help raise the math skills of disadvantaged pre-kindergarten students, according to a study at Carnegie Mellon University" that was reported in the journal Child Development.

Researchers found that "preschoolers from low-income homes made significant advances in counting and other skills after playing a game that required them to move markers along a horizontal path consisting of numbered squares." Further, the "participants maintained the achievement gains nine weeks after they stopped playing the game -- an important point given the thorny problem of retention in public education." One of the researchers, Dr. Robert S. Siegler, was also a member of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel, which last week "issued recommendations for improving the nation's math performance." Siegler suggested that "one of the easiest and most inexpensive ways to" improve preschool mathematics skills "is to provide board games to Head Start centers, child-care centers serving low-income populations and perhaps individual parents."