



Elmhurst Academy
~ RIVER CLASSROOM ~
“Riflessione”
September 9-20th 2019
Mrs. Webber, Ms. Hart, Ms. Miner and Mrs. Zayas
*A private, independent Reggio Emilia inspired
early childhood school.*

“Peace Begins with a Smile!”
~ Mother Theresa

Loose Parts Exploration: Children by nature, are curious about the world around them. To provide more ways to build on their curious capacities, loose parts are essential in Reggio Emilia Classrooms. Loose parts are materials that can be moved all around the room and used in endless ways. There are essentially no limits to what can be used. Loose parts are versatile and versatility of these materials provides children with virtually endless ways to create. Through exploring, manipulating and discovering, the teachers help the children seek answers to questions such as: “what is that?,” “how will you use it?” “what can you do with that?” We began by offering the students trays filled with different loose parts materials, along with a wooden board split into small sections. The students were free to investigate the pieces as they pleased and each student

had their own preferred method to interact with the pieces. The teacher observed the students



Mila and CC collected all the pieces and as they sorted them into the sections, they commented on all the “circles.”

What we are learning through loose parts:

- Problem Solving
- Engineering
- Creativity
- Concentration
- Hand-eye coordination
- Fine motor development
- Gross motor development
- Language and vocabulary building
- Mathematical thinking
- Scientific thinking
- Literacy
- Social/emotional development

as they sorted, stacked, tapped and collected the pieces. A few students began to use their imaginative skills by pretending the pieces were different items such as bracelets, cups and plates.

Exploring Italy: In honor of the Reggio Emilia philosophy instilled in the teaching throughout Elmhurst Academy, the River students explored with the colors that appear on the flag of Italy, which is where the Reggio Emilia philosophy originated. A plastic bag was laid across the classroom's light table. A teacher added green, white, and red paint in rows on top of this plastic bag to resemble the Italian flag. Another plastic bag was placed over the paint and taped down on all sides. A teacher turned the light table on with all the lights off so that the colors seemed to glow.

Students were invited to explore with their sense of touch. As they ran their hands across the plastic top, they discussed how the plastic felt with the paint underneath. Students could be heard saying "squishy" and "soft." Students were observed drawing pictures with their fingers. Their sense of touch and discovery were enhanced in this activity.



Jamie appears curious as he feels the paint on the light table.



"I'm drawing circles," Emery says, as she creates circles in the paint with her finger.

Questions for Reflection:

- Where is Italy?
- What is a flag?
- What colors are on Italy's flag?

Pasta Exploration: Pasta is not only known for being one of Italy's culinary traditions, it also provides a great opportunity for sensory explorations. The students were provided with trays filled with cooked pasta along with tweezers to enhance fine motor development. The teacher demonstrated to the students how they could "squeeze" the tweezers in order to pick up the pasta. The

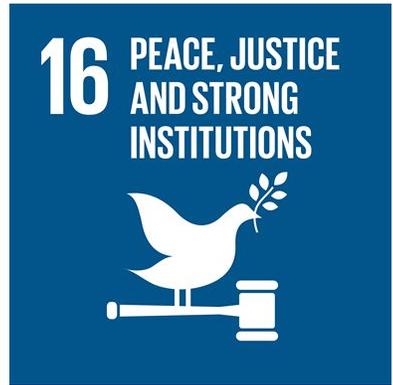


students spent much time practicing this new skill and would try to use both hands in order to pick up the pasta. Using their sense of touch, a few students were eager to see what the pasta felt like. Many students were observed transferring the pasta from one tray to another.

Chloe preferred to pick up one noodle at a time in each hand and transfer from tray to another.

- Vocabulary Words:
- Long
 - Short
 - Pasta
 - Sticky
 - Transfer
 - Tweezers

10 Days of Peace Celebration: From September 11-September 20, Elmhurst Academy celebrates *Ten Days of Peace*. The students are learning about peace within their school, home and community by participating in various peace-related activities.



10 Days of Peace and Author Studies:

Creating a Feelings Book: Each month, the students in the River classroom will study the works of a different author. During the month of September, the River students are learning about Sandra Boynton. To begin their author studies for the month, the River students read *Happy Hippo, Angry Duck*. This book exposes children to the variety of different emotions they may feel, and is often helpful to read at the beginning of the school year as starting school often evokes a range of emotions in children. Upon reading *Happy Hippo, Angry Duck*, the River classroom felt that the book could be connected to their celebration of the 10 Days of Peace. After hearing the story, the teacher encouraged the students to reflect on the different emotions they feel by showing the students emotion cards, cards of children making faces that correspond with a specific emotion (i.e. happy, sad, angry). Once the children had been

- Vocabulary Words:
- Emotions
 - Happy
 - Sad
 - Angry
 - Nervous
 - Excited

Margot shows her excited face after explaining she feels excited when, "Mommy Daddy come back!"

presented with the card, the teacher asked, "What does it look like this child is feeling?" After identifying the emotion, the teacher asked each child to make the face that would correspond with that emotion and took a picture of the students making faces representing different emotions. To further the conversation, the teacher prompted the students to think about what kinds of things make them feel a certain emotion (i.e. What makes you feel happy?) and created a list of what makes each child feel each emotion. As a group, the students then brainstormed a list of ideas of activities that they could take part in when they

feel big emotions, such as angry or sad, that could help them regulate their emotions. These pictures and lists were then compiled into a classroom feelings book that the students will be able to look at and reference throughout the school year.



Questions for Reflection:

- What kinds of different emotions can you feel?
- What makes you feel happy, sad, angry, or scared?
- What can you do when you feel happy, sad, angry, or scared?

Ezra shows a teacher this expression when asked, "What do you look like when you are angry?"

10 Days of Peace: Cleaning the Discovery Play

Garden: As the River students continued to celebrate the 10 Days of Peace, they learned about what it means to be global citizens. The River students came to understand that an important element of being a global citizen is helping out within their own community. After discussing the ways in which we could help out our community, the River students were encouraged to think of ways that they be global citizens while playing on

the Discovery Play Garden. Several River students began to notice that there was some garbage on the Discovery Play Garden that could negatively impact our school's community. After discovering the garbage, the River students were

Vocabulary Words:

- Global Citizen
- Community
- Garbage



encouraged to work together as global citizens to each pick up a piece of garbage and throw it in the garbage can. The River students were very enthusiastic about helping, and began encouraging one another to, "Clean up!" Activities that promote global citizenship and community building foster interpersonal skills and local, community, and global awareness among the River students.

10 Days of Peace: Peaceful Exchange: An important element of the 10 Days of Peace is finding ways to share peace with one another. During our Peaceful Exchange, the River students are provided with an opportunity to share peace with the other classrooms at Elmhurst Academy. One of the River students' favorite ways to calm their bodies and find peace within themselves is through singing some of their favorite songs; this is what inspired the River students to share a song with the other classrooms during our Peaceful Exchange. Over the course of a couple of days, the River students took turns going in small groups to the Nido, Prairie, Woodlands, and Lakeview classrooms and singing *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* in order to share peace with the rest of the Elmhurst Academy community. The River students were very enthusiastic about sharing a song that they love with their siblings and friends!



A group of River students sings *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* for the Prairie classroom.

10 Days of Peace: Symbol of Peace: The River students continued to learn about ways that they could share peace within their school by creating three symbols of peace to share with the Prairie, Woodlands, and Lakeview classrooms. A teacher presented the River students with three doves that had been cut out of blue construction paper. Next, the teacher explained that doves are a symbol that can be used to represent peace, and informed the River students that we would be working together to decorate each dove and then sharing these symbols of peace with the Prairie, Woodlands, and Lakeview classrooms. The River students were then provided with white cray pas and encouraged to use the

- Vocabulary Words:**
- Dove
 - Cray Pas
 - Symbol
 - Peace

cray pas to decorate the three doves. As the students were decorating the doves, they could be seen working together to ensure that each dove was decorated, and sharing space with one another as multiple students colored one dove at the same time. After each student had been given an opportunity to decorate the doves, the River students joined the rest of the Elmhurst Academy students on the Cortile for our final celebration of peace. A teacher read the peace pledge to the Elmhurst Academy students and then the River students presented the Prairie, Woodlands, and Lakeview students with the doves they had created for them. These symbols of peace will be used to decorate the Prairie, Woodlands, and Lakeview classroom's peace poles, and will remain



"Birdie!", Fiona exclaims as she uses a white cray pas to color the dove.

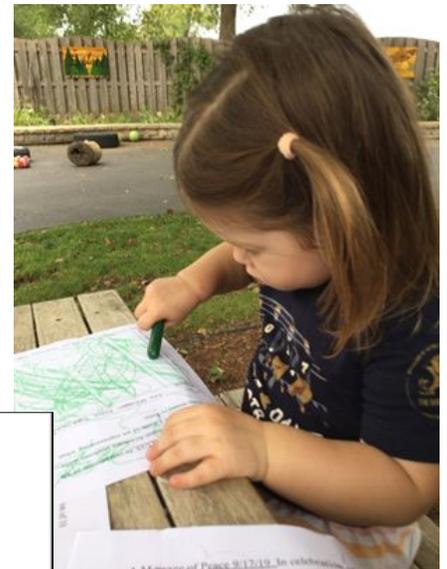
on the peace poles throughout the year as a symbol of making and sharing peace.

10 Days of Peace: Message of Peace: In celebration of the ten days of peace, Elmhurst Academy students were invited to create a work of art representing what peace means to them. They were provided with crayons to draw and scribble as the teacher asked "what makes you happy?" These pictures will be added to each student's developmental portfolio.



When asked "what does peace mean?" Michaela responded "mommy and daddy" as she colored on the paper.

Sebastian uses the purple crayon to make scribbles and markings on his paper.





On Friday, September 20, 2019, the entire Elmhurst Academy students and staff gathered to say their peace pledge to be peaceful warriors. We brought our symbols of peace to hang from the peace poles

International Dot Day Celebration: *International Dot Day*, a global celebration of creativity, courage and collaboration, began when teacher Terry Shay introduced his classroom to Peter H. Reynolds' book *The Dot* on September 15, 2009. *The Dot* is the story of a caring teacher who dares a doubting student to trust in her own abilities by being brave enough to "make her mark". What begins with a small dot on a piece of paper becomes a breakthrough in confidence and courage, igniting a journey of self-discovery and sharing, which has gone on to inspire countless children and adults around the globe. To begin celebrating International Dot Day, a teacher read *The Dot* to the River students and discussed



Lolo uses her paintbrush to create brushstrokes and her fingers to tap dots on top of her dot.



Gloria selects the color blue and uses a sponge to create texture on her dot.

what it means to be brave, and what it means to have confidence. Each River student was then invited to make their mark, similar to the teacher in the story, by painting their own dot. The students were presented with a piece of paper that had been cut into the shape of a dot and were encouraged to paint their dot however they felt best expressed themselves. As the students were painting, the teacher

Vocabulary Words:

- Brave
- Confident
- Technique

facilitated discussion about what paint colors each student was using, what painting techniques each student was using, and how each student was being brave and showing confidence by creating their own unique dot. While some students preferred to use a paintbrush to make strokes of paint on their dot, others preferred to use popsicle sticks and sponges to tap on the paper and create dots on top of their dots! After each child had been given the opportunity to design their dot, all of the dots were added to the top of a cut-out stem and displayed on the door of the classroom to create a River classroom dot garden. Celebrating International Dot Day fosters creativity, courage, and confidence within the River students, and provides students with another opportunity to appreciate diversity by celebrating the many different ways each child “makes their mark.”

Questions for Reflection:

- What does it mean to be brave?
- When have you been brave?
- What does it mean to have confidence?
- What makes you feel confident?

Clay Exploration: Clay is an art medium that is used on a regular basis throughout our school days. In small groups, the students were presented with clay. Each student interacted with the clay in his or her own unique way. The students were encouraged to “squeeze”, “tap” and “roll” the clay. For new students, this was their first experience working with clay while other students honed their creativity and imagination as they molded the clay and shared their experiences with their teachers and classmates. Using the tools, the students could see how their tools left different textures on the clay.

Vocabulary Words:

- Clay
- Tap
- Roll
- Squeeze
- Press
- Push
- Pull

Joe was observed first poking the tools into the clay and the flattening that area with his hands.



Shapes: Recently, the River students began learning about shapes! For the activity, different size triangles and squares were drawn on the bottom of two cookie sheets. The students were presented with these cookie sheets and multiple magna tiles of different shapes and sizes. The teachers challenged the students to match each tile with the corresponding outline drawn on cookie sheets. Students were seen hovering a magna tile over each outline until they found the correct one that fit. The students would place the magna tile in the outline on the cookie sheet and continue on with another magna tile. The teachers heard many of the students identifying “square” and “triangle.” They were also heard naming the colors of each of the magna tiles. They appeared enthused about being challenged to find the right space for each shape.



June repeats “square” as she places them onto the tray.

Questions for Reflection:

- What does a triangle look like?
- What does a square look like?
- What does a rectangle look like?

Vocabulary Words:

- Shape
- Size
- Rectangle
- Square
- Triangle

Enrichments:

Foreign Language: ¡Bienvenido al Nuevo año escolar! Students eased back into Spanish as we greeted each other and got to know new friends using common Spanish greetings. They watched Spanish Sesame Street to see all the ways we can say “hello” in Spanish and to hear how to introduce yourself to someone new. We have been reading works by this month’s author Sandra Boynton. After reading *Buenas Noches A Todos*, they exercised, said good night, and relaxed while listening to *¿Estrellita, Donde Estas?* (Twinkle, Twinkle). We also read *Azul el Sombrero*,



Verde el Sombrero. After the story, they high fived their favorite colors and named them in Spanish. ~Mrs. Lardin



Creative Dance and Movement:

Ms. Burdi began demonstrating warm up moves and stretches with the river students.



Art: "I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world." ~Sadako Sasaki We began our Art classes this year by celebrating peace art around the world. The teacher talked with the River students how the symbol of the peace crane and how people from all over the world see it as a statement of kindness, friendship and peace. Once they all received an origami peace crane, they decorated them using various colors of paint. These were sent home last week with information about the peace crane project. Students also worked together with other classrooms to paint a friendship bench that will be placed in our outdoor campus as a place to form friendships.



Environmental Education: To celebrate the beginning of the 10 Days of Peace and become acquainted with their outdoor learning environment, River students went on a Scavenger Hunt for natural materials. Students picked leaves, flowers, and grasses from the gardens while naming their colors. Working together, the students pressed the leaves to contact paper to create a beautifully abstract piece of botanical artwork. Students then engaged with various natural materials in an outdoor sensory bin. Students sorted, stacked and compared the materials, noting the differences in colors, sizes, and textures.



Something to do this weekend:

https://www.illinoistollway.com/home?p_p_id=101&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&_101_struts_action=%2Fasset_publisher%2Fview_content&_101_returnToFullPageURL=%2F&_101_assetEntryId=457922&_101_type=content&_101_urlTitle=live-2016-family-safety-fair&inheritRedirect=true

Classroom and School Reminders:

- Tuesday, September 24, 2019, River Classroom Curriculum Night 4:30-6:00 p.m. in the Lakeview Classroom. Please be sure to R.S.V.P and if you are not able to attend, we will send a link so you can access the items that will be covered that night.
- Chicago Speech will be conducting their annual free speech and language screenings on Tuesday, October 1-Thursday, October 3, 2019. More information will be sent home next week along with parent consent forms. Any questions, please contact Mrs. Webber at mwebbe@elmhurstacademy.com
- **Box Tops contest going on now!** The family that turns in the most Box Tops by October 11, 2019, will win **25 free raffle tickets to the Fall Festival** on Friday, October 18, 2019.. Going forward, instead of clipping from packages and checking expiration dates, all Box Tops will be earned digitally by scanning your receipt. The Box Tops for Education team has worked hard to build a NEW-and-improved, user-friendly **Box Tops mobile app**, available now. The new app features state-of-the-art technology that allows you to scan your store receipt, find participating products and instantly add Box Tops to our school's earnings online. Elmhurst Academy is already registered so all you need to do is download the Box Tops app and designate Elmhurst Academy as your school of choice. While the app is continuing to develop through updates, your family can still submit your cut-out box tops and place in a zip-lock bag and drop it off in the marked baskets in your child's

classroom Please be sure that the family name is on the bag. You can also take a screenshot in the "My Earnings" in the app and send the information to me directly. Learn more about these changes at: www.bffe.com. Any questions, please email Mrs. Webber at mwewebber@elmhurstacademy.com

- The Art Department is looking for donations of old shoes, any size or type that can be recycled into an art installation. Please let Ms. Flynn or Ms. James know if you have any questions. Thank you!
- If you have not done so already, please provide an updated family photo for the family board.
- ****Holiday Wreath Fundraiser has begun!** Think ahead to the upcoming holiday season and order evergreen decor for your home early! Order forms can be found in your child's mail folder. Funds raised benefit the growth and enhancement of the outdoor campus and school gardens. **Orders are due Friday, October 18th, 2019 and will be delivered the week of the Thanksgiving holiday.**
- **Global Citizenship Committee would like to introduce the Family Connection Form. If you would like to share an important event or cultural experience you and your child participated in over the weekend, please fill out a Family Connection Form and bring to your child's classroom teacher, for the opportunity to share our experiences with each other and bridge home and school.** <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17feohQKsTjpAGPcjpWCazKoUy5ldqoQ8SRqcHdEBobU/edit?ts=5d83ea8a>
- If you have not done so already, please be sure that you bring in your child's ribbon to add to the classroom wreath.
- Please be sure your child has two sets of shirts, pants and socks for extra clothing and that all items are labeled with your child's name or initials. Rain Boots also come in handy for the puddle exploration!