



We've been in a blur of getting our children into the myriad of wonderful kindergartens all over the city, as well as taking in our newest crop of adorable Twos, Threes and Fours. As always, I feel privileged to meet so many amazing families, from Sri Lanka to Bombay, from Iowa to Canada to right here in NYC – what a spectacular and varied panoply of families! Doctors, lawyers, actors, computer experts, writers, fundraisers, entrepreneurs, teachers, developers and on and on came through my doors this season – all intriguing and differentiated by placing a strong value on education and community service.

In the small child department, I had an adorable little boy in my office the other day for pushing and not being nice to his friends. We had heard he might have thrown up the night before and we asked him, to which he responded, "I did throw up last night, it's true!" I guess this young reprobate is all ready to take the stand! As opposed to in the Two/Threes where I greeted Scarlet by saying, "Hi sweetie," and was immediately corrected, "My name is Scarlet and I'm marrying Kavi!" Her mother reports that she asked, "What if we are late for school?" to which Scarlet said, "Oh, he will just be in love with someone else."

Dennis the Menace



◊ I'M FULL... BUT NOT 'SKIP DESSERT' FULL. ◊

Take a stroll through our classrooms and see what's going on. The Threes are Teddy Bear Picnic-ing, putting on The Three Little Pigs play and doing self portraits with a list of their favorite colors and foods (to the little boy who listed Gummy Bears as his favorite food, I'm with you!). The Fours are doing penguin studies and designing personalized jigsaw puzzles. The Twos are working on calendar skills, Mother Goose rhymes and studying zoo animals. So we are all very busy and happily enjoying Daylight Savings Time!

Looking forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming events,

Wendy-

Mark Your Calendars

Mar. 24 -28 ECNS closed for Spring Break

Mar. 31 Staff return, ECNS Community Service Day

Apr. 1 Children return to school

Apr. 8 Ladies Luncheon

Apr. 15 ECNS closed for Passover

Apr. 18 ECNS closed for Good Friday

Apr. 30 Family Fun Night (5:30-8pm)

May 1 No school for Y2s
(Parent-Teacher Conference)

May 2 No school for all children
(Parent-Teacher Conference)

May 9 Ongoing school meeting
(8:30-10:30)
3s Mothers' Day (10:30-12)

May 12 4s Mothers Day (10:30-12)

May 13 Babysitters Breakfast

May 20 Buddy Breakfast

May 26 ECNS closed for Memorial Day

May 27 Twos End of Year Picnic

May 28 Threes End of Year Picnic

May 29 Fours and Four/Fives
Moving-on Ceremony at All Soul's

Have you met...

Mekenzie Kruger, the new assistant teacher in the Middle Threes? Born and raised in Maryland, Mekenzie spent a lot of her childhood in her mom's classrooms. (Mekenzie's mom, and inspiration, has been a teacher in Maryland for many years.) As she watched her mom work with young children, she knew that someday she would also be a teacher.



During the summers of her college years Mekenzie worked as a camp counselor for 3 and 4 year olds. This confirmed how much she enjoys teaching young children. For Mekenzie, the most exciting part of teaching is when she sees a child's "light bulb go on." She loves teaching new concepts to children and helping them understand.

Mekenzie had always wanted to live in New York City so here she is! In addition to working here at ECNS, she is a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education studying towards a Master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education.

Mekenzie loves to travel and since she is relatively new to our city, she is exploring it bit by bit, mostly through its many coffee shops. When she is not teaching, studying or exploring, Mekenzie likes to sing. She had voice lessons when she was younger and had learned to sing operas. Now she uses her classically trained voice to sing to a more demanding audience, the Middle Threes!

Four/Fives



The polar vortex invaded the East Coast this winter and caused us all to become even more creative in keeping the kids moving around. The Four/Fives came back from winter break with tales about their fabulous vacations in the sun, skiing and even having some special family time around NYC. We decided to transform our classroom into a winter wonderland with the children's hand cut snowflakes and snowmen. To make their snowmen the kids worked diligently on their cutting skills since they had to cut out three different size circles and then put them in correct size order.

We had more cutting practice when we prepared for Valentine's Day since many hearts needed to be cut for valentines for one another and for the veterans. To make sure the fourth floor looked amazing for the Valentine's Day Hop we made hearts filled with

tissue paper and adorable buzzing "Bee Mine" bumble bees. (The children's patterning skills were honed while making these bees.) The Hop was very special and we all had a blast dancing the night away together! February wouldn't have been complete though without the kids' favorite day of school...pajama day! With no surprise this year it was definitely a highlight, and we had a dance party in our pjs which brought smiles to everyone's faces!

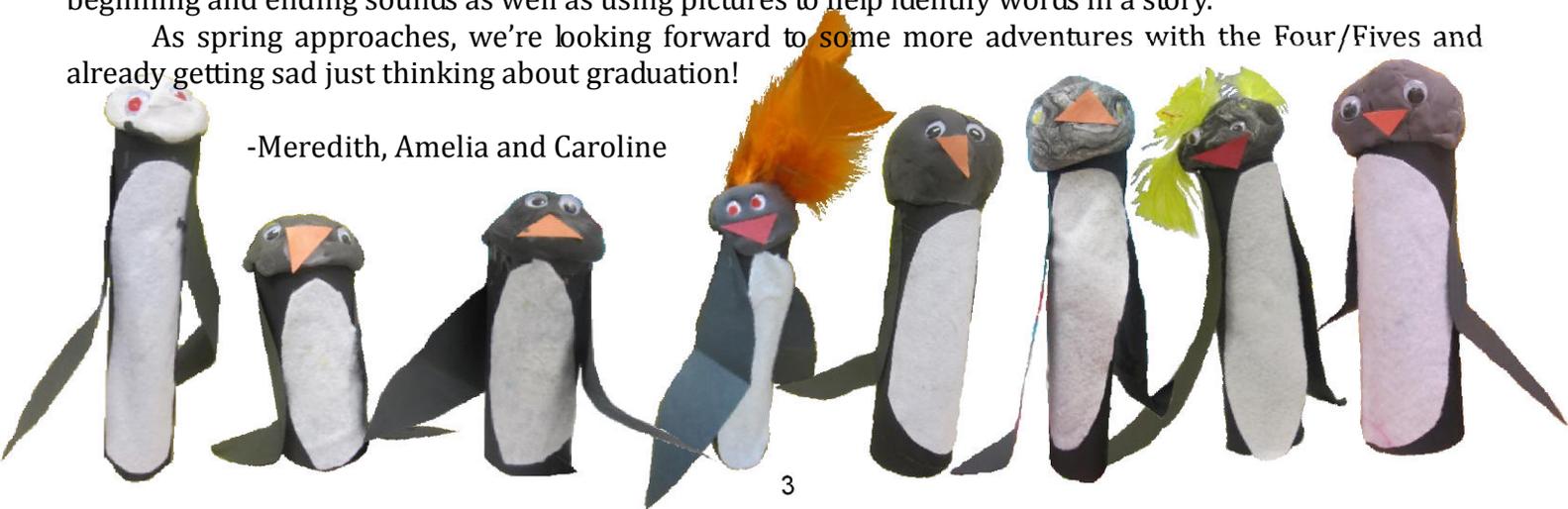
We were so lucky to celebrate Chinese New Year with the Fours and Jude A's mom Mimi. Not only did Mimi teach us many things but she also brought us Chinese dumplings and fried rice which the kids all loved. We pinned the tail on the horse (for the Year of the Horse), made necklaces, painted lucky quince flowers and colored our own dragons. We also learned how red is a lucky color in the Chinese culture and that they perform a dragon dance to help bring in the New Year.

We then switched continents and began studying about the 17 different types of penguins that inhabit the Antarctic. First we found out what the children knew (or thought they knew) about penguins, and to our surprise, they knew quite a bit. We read some books and learned some fun facts about penguins. A group of penguins is called a rookery and the father protects the egg while the mother goes out to find food for when the chick hatches. We made a class book in which each child was responsible for a page that included a fact about penguins that they had to write and illustrate. The children then chose from a Macaroni, Emperor, Little Blue, Yellow Eyed or Rock-hopper Penguin to create. These are proudly displayed in our own rookery!

It becomes more and more apparent each day how special our Four/Fives are and how they are all maturing so nicely! We are very proud of how much their handwriting and drawing skills have developed. Four/Fives are always working on letter identification and corresponding sounds. Sometimes the children are given the name of a letter to find, other times they are given the sound of the letter and they have to figure which letter to find. This was a definite "smart brain" activity that the children really enjoyed. We've also been taking "picture walks" prior to reading a story to get our minds thinking about what is going to happen in the story and making predictions and then seeing if our predictions are correct. We are working more on beginning and ending sounds as well as using pictures to help identify words in a story.

As spring approaches, we're looking forward to some more adventures with the Four/Fives and already getting sad just thinking about graduation!

-Meredith, Amelia and Caroline





Fours

What do you call a room full of creators, artists, authors and explorers? A pre-kindergarten class!

This question and answer (which I altered slightly) is originally an ad for the NYC Teaching Fellows program that I saw in the subway recently. It grabbed my attention and made me smile. What a wonderful and refreshing way to look at the children who come through our door each day! It reminds us teachers of how amazing and special the children that we work with each and every day are. They are so open, full of potential and ready to take on all that life has to offer them. They need guidance, nurturing and unconditional support. The only thing that we teachers ask of the children is that they do the best that they can. How can we, as parents and teachers, help bring out all that they have to give? While there are many ways of accomplishing this, here are three that I think are important.

- Always keep sight of your whole child and remember that your child's self-esteem is the most important thing of all! Positive self-esteem is truly the best indicator of not only their success in school, but also their happiness in life.
- Remember you are your child's first role model and teacher. Children are amazing observers and learn by watching. We cannot expect any more from them if we do not model for them first.
- And lastly, trust them. As you probably know already, children love making decisions. Allowing them to take part in decision making whenever possible gives them a valuable sense of empowerment and self worth, and teaches them about being responsible for their actions and the decisions.

We came back from winter break and went right into our health study. Some of the highlights of this unit included making four batches of whole wheat bread, putting together the fruits and vegetables graph at snack time (which definitely has helped inspire many of the children to at least try some things they normally wouldn't have), having guest speakers, learning about organs we didn't even know we had, and all the different things we can do to stay healthy! The alfalfa sprouts that we grew in the classroom and then ate for snack were another fun surprise because almost half of the children liked them! (Sprouts are really packed with many important nutrients and fun and easy to grow.)

We are now currently in the middle of our Community Animals Study learning about black bears, deer, foxes, raccoons, rabbits, skunks, turtles, squirrels, robins, red-tailed hawks and porcupines. We are making a class book about all of these animals, and each child will be responsible for contributing information on one of the animals. We have also begun making animal dioramas with masonite boards as a base, and a mixture of saw dust, glue, plaster of Paris and water as landscaping material. It is a multi-step process and provides a truly new experience for the children. The bonus is that the children are having fun with it!

We hope you all have a wonderful Spring Break!

Liza, Daniela and Alexis





Middle Threes

Middle Threes had a really fun time these past few months. We learned all about St. Patty's Day and the mischievous leprechaun that visited our classroom and made a mess of it. Little Green Guy (the children named the leprechaun) and Shorty Pointy Toes have caused much mayhem in our classroom, but all in good fun! We made some delicious scones for to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



We had a very extensive study unit on dinosaurs. The children learned how big they were, if they were herbivores or carnivores and why. We also learned that they came in different colors, sizes and shapes. We made dinosaur eggs and waited for them to "hatch" (it took such a long time). One of the most exciting things in this unit was the volcano that we made. It really exploded!



The highlight of March was our Teddy Bear Party! Fourteen bears, including Red Bear, came to the Middle Threes for Red Bear's 4-year-old birthday party! The attendees included 9 brown bears, 1 jet bear, 2 pink bears, 1 white bear in a pretty outfit, 1 polar bear, and 1 monkey. The children came back from the roof and all the bears were hiding in the classroom. We had to look everywhere, in the cubbies, on the easel, in the sink, to find them! Once we found our bears, it was time to go searching for food and people.

The children in their bear costumes and with their bears went throughout the school. Our first visit was to Wendy's office. Wendy could not believe how many bears went to visit her and how great we all looked in our costumes. Having met our first challenge we continued to visit other classrooms. Everyone loved our masks, outfits and bears.



Back in our classroom, the party continued. We read stories about teddy bears, The Teddy Bear Picnic by Jimmy Kennedy and Where's My Teddy? by Jez Alborough. We learned about real bears, what they like to eat and do and who had the first teddy bear. We sang "The Bear Went Over the Mountain", "Sleep Bears Sleep" and "Do Not Wake the Bears". We went on a "bear hunt", over a bridge, through a river, a dark, dark forest and tall, tall grass, up a tree and then into a damp and smelly cave. With our flashlights we spotted not just one bear but a whole family!! We ran very very fast out of that cave. Boy, were we ready for our snack. Red Bear blew out his birthday candle and we marched to Anne Murray's "Teddy Bear Picnic" to our snack. Bear shaped bread and honey, Teddy Grahams and Goldfish (because bears like fish!) were all part of our picnic. Finally, a party would not be a party without dancing with music so we danced all around with our bears. What a party!



Thank you to the parents and older siblings who came to help in our class; we love visitors! We're look forward to the next two months of school.

-Linda, Joni & Mekenzie



Michelle's Twos



Hi all, it's hard to believe that it is already the middle of March. We've added classroom jobs into our routine and the children truly loved the introduction of the job chart; line leader, sticker picker and the goodbye person seem to be the classroom favorites. We rotate the jobs weekly so each child has a turn to do each and every job. We've had an action packed few months! In January we learned all about winter, winter clothing, arctic animals and snow. We also enjoyed celebrating Chinese New Year. We had so much fun in February learning about Valentine's Day and transportation. In March, nursery rhymes were our focus.

We started off the New Year talking about cold weather and activities we enjoy during the winter months. We learned about snow and animals that like living in snowy places. Making our heart shaped penguins helped us with skills such as following directions and learning positional words (on top, in the middle, under). We also talked about how the clothes we wear in the winter are different from the clothing we wear the rest of the year. We made our very own winter outfits, hats, mittens, and boots decorated with paint, pom poms, yarn, and felt.

Following our winter unit we celebrated Chinese New Year. "Happy New Year" in Chinese, "Gung Hay Fat Choy" and we can identify symbols such as dragons, lanterns, red envelopes, and gold coins for good luck. We picked up pom-poms with chopsticks (which helps strengthen fine motor skills) and got to jump on bubble wrap, which simulated the sound of firecrackers.

We learned how to say

For Valentine's Day, our Twos worked together to make giant valentines and delivered them to Wendy, Carrie, Carly, Kathy, and Julie. We learned that it is just as nice to give a gift or a card to someone else, as it is to get one. We cut strawberries, raspberries, and bananas and blended everything with yogurt and ice. "Pretty in Pink" smoothies!

Our Transportation unit was so much fun! We used toy cars to paint instead of paintbrushes. We filled containers with different colored paint then let the children drive the cars through the paint and onto paper. Then the cars had to go in the "car wash"!! We used a tub of soapy water and toothbrushes. In cooking we made "Traffic Light" Veggie Snacks. First we spread cream cheese onto the celery sticks. Then we used a metal frosting tip to cut circles from red, yellow and green bell peppers. After that we placed our circles on the cream cheese, just like traffic lights.

Nursery rhymes, a Twos Room favorite! In addition to rhymes that the children already knew like "Itsy Bitsy Spider", "Three Blind Mice", and "London Bridge", we learned some new ones "Hickory, Dickory, Dock", "Hey Diddle, Diddle" and "Humpty Dumpty". This unit was an excellent way to build the children's phonemic awareness, memorization and rhyming skills. We did some fantastic role-playing, pretending to be "Jack Nimble" as we marched, crawled, tiptoed, and jumped over the "candle stick". We made "Humpty Dumpty" eggs. The children pushed eggs off a (fake) brick wall into a big bowl emulating Humpty's great fall. When all of our Humpty Dumptys were broken, we made scrambled eggs!



Our Twos have come so far and learned so much in just a few short months!

-Michelle, Erica, and Chini



ECNS Cares



Valentines for Vets



Gabrielle Nafie (Y2s '09) and Miles Pilchik ('11) co-wrote and narrated a short film about how much fun technology is. "Full S[T]EAM Ahead" was one of 16 films chosen by the White House to be part of the first annual White House Student Film Festival. They went to Washington on Feb. 28 to attend the festival...in the company of President Obama! Wow!!

Email sent from Jude A.'s dad: "Hi Carrie. Entire family diagnosed with a case of winter blues. Doc says that beach is the only cure. Heading to Antigua for treatment. Jude will miss school the rest of this week. PS. Pls tell his teacher that for the letter of the week he will be playing in the Sand. Xoxo"

In Memory



Former ECNS mom, Kyla Sharma (Sept. 3 1970 - Feb. 25, 2014)
Loving mother of
Sophia ('10) and Annika ('12)
ECNS will be hosting a book drive for the girls, age 9.5 and 7.5
Details to come

Victoria Sutton (13), as "Wendy for the day", shakes hands with Fours and Four/Fives.



Lara's TWOS

Our Twos have been so busy since the holidays and the first order of business for the New Year? Learning anything and everything about winter! We made hats and mittens, skates and

snowmen, polar bears and penguins. We weren't too busy, however, to sit down with a cup of hot chocolate that we had made ourselves! One of the best parts of winter is gathering with friends around a table to eat a bowl of hot soup and the Twos did just that. Each child brought in a favorite vegetable to contribute to a very special Friendship Soup. The only thing better than eating soup together is working together to make it!



The Twos rang in the "Year of the Horse" by making red lanterns for good luck, firecracker collages, and fried rice. As a special treat Lily came to celebrate the holiday with us. With her help we made a lucky fish, painted quince blossoms, practiced using chopsticks, and popped bubble wrap (sounded just like firecrackers in our room!).

The Twos couldn't wait to celebrate Valentine's Day, a time to tell your family and friends how much you love them! We made hearts and exchanged valentines but the best part was going around the school giving our friends the red velvet cupcakes we had baked.

"Old MacDonald Had a Farm" and so did the Twos! For farm week we made egg salad and even our own butter. We "went to the zoo, zoo, zoo," and learned about monkeys, giraffes, and zebras!

The luck of the Irish can always be found on the second floor. We celebrated St. Patrick's day by making pots of gold, four leaf clovers, and of course, soda bread! AND "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" the Twos learned about mixing colors!

We've certainly done a lot in the past few weeks. There's much more ahead of us when we come back from Spring Break. Stay tuned for our final update!

-Lara, Kathy and Leslie





Old Threes



Boy, have the Old Threes been busy playing with friends and investigating the world around us!

We began by exploring winter, what happens, what we see, and what we can do. We had a blast playing with snow in the classroom, creating special winter art, and learning about birds migrating. We especially loved our "Flying South" song.

To learn about Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we discussed the importance of working together, celebrating one another's differences and the meaning of peace. Our favorite book was *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane Deroif. In this story a child's crayons discover that even though they are all different, they can work together to create a beautiful picture. After reading this story, we enjoyed working together to create some of our own class pictures. Old 3s also explored different ways to show "peace" in their lives. Some ideas include "drawing pictures for everybody I love," "eating dinner with my family," and "sharing my toys."

After Peace Week came the much-anticipated Outer Space Theme. We were very impressed with how much everyone learned during this unit! The Old 3s worked hard while investigating the different planets, the order they are in from the sun, and what makes each one so unique. We had many space songs as well as art projects. The children loved working together to create our own solar system in the classroom and were very proud of their rocket ships as well!

Valentine's Day is always an exciting time in preschool and it wasn't any different in the Old 3s! We loved creating our valentines for our families and sharing special valentines with our friends.

We explored our five senses next. We learned about different textures with our touch collages, played listening lotto, and used our sense of sight to play games such as Candy Land and Go Fish. We had a blast smelling different "mystery" foods and guessing what they were. Some of us loved the smell of coffee and others preferred the smell of pickles! The most exciting day during this unit was our taste test. We tasted Hershey's Kisses for "sweet" (almost everyone loved this one). We tasted pickles for "sour" (only 4 children liked this!). We tasted potato chips for "salty" (everyone loved this), and we tasted turnips for "bitter" (only 4 children were brave enough to try this but they liked them!)

Our most recent unit was Fairytales. *The Three Little Pigs* was a huge success! The Old 3s created masks and houses to act out the story together. They loved acting out the stories as well as being in the audience and cheering on their peers. We even got Wendy and Carrie to participate one day!

We're looking forward to an exciting rest of the year!

-Becky, Phyllis, and Mariel





Young Threes

The Young Threes have been so very busy. We have put up the job chart and every child has a job in the classroom. They are excited to see what that job is each week. Whether the job is line leader, door holder, snack helper or table washer, the children have really enjoyed doing them.

We did so many great projects for our winter study. The children made snow scenes using white paint and cotton balls to create falling snow. After we discussed different winter sports, the children made ice skates and laced them. A favorite treat in the winter is hot chocolate and each child designed and made his own “mug” of hot chocolate, then added cotton balls (like marshmallows) on top. Another winter conversation we had was about the clothing we wear when it’s cold. The children had a chance to create their own mittens using different materials including fabric, felt and pom-poms.

The children really loved Valentine’s Day and they created some fabulous art to celebrate this holiday. First we made heart people, with one of a kind faces and “dancing” arms and legs. Then everyone made a unique piece of “chocolate” that went into our giant heart shaped chocolate box. Almost good enough to eat!! Finally, each child also made a special bag to carry all the valentine cards that he/she got

“All About Me” was a really popular topic with Young Threes. We talked about how we are all special in different ways. We all really liked learning about ourselves and our friends. The children made individual frames for their family pictures. We also made “All About Me” puppets. The children tried to make their puppets look like themselves with yarn similar in color as their real hair and clothing that they liked. We put a little bit of ourselves into the cooking project of this unit; we made thumbprint cookies!

St. Patrick’s Day was the most recent holiday we celebrated. The children loved making their own rainbows as well as a pot of gold using tissue paper. Since green is the color of this special day we decided to make spinach dip. Green, healthy and delicious.

Hope you have a great Spring Break!

-Tara, Jenn and Inez



CARRIE'S

CORNER



I often write about children's music in this column and in this edition, I sadly write about the loss of Pete Seeger.

Several years ago I was fortunate enough to see this wonderful American singer/musician in concert with Fred Hellerman, one of the other four members of the original singing group, the Weavers. Pete Seeger was 91 years young at the time and

had more energy and exuberance than many of our 4 and 5 year olds. The concert was a tribute to another American folk icon, Woody Guthrie, composer/lyricist of "This Land is Your Land" and numerous other American folk songs. (The illustration above is from the book of the same name, with a foreword by Seeger and shows the only cat in the book). Seeger led the audience in song and encouraged participation. No problem for me! How thrilling it was to sing with him and listen to him play the banjo. "Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore," "This Land is Your Land," "Wimoweh (The Lion Sleeps Tonight)," "Turn, Turn, Turn," "If I Had a Hammer," and "Blowin' in the Wind" were a few of the selections. Needless to say, it was a very memorable evening!

Seeger was "instrumental" in reviving the use of the five-string banjo and was known for strumming it in concert as well as teaching both children and adults to play it. He co-wrote "We Shall Overcome," the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement, among many other songs. Carl Sandburg called him "America's tuning fork." In addition to receiving a number of Grammys, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor. He helped found the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc., the non profit organization established to clean up the Hudson River. There is a growing movement to name the new Tappan Zee Bridge in his honor. He was a great liberal and activist, but a victim of McCarthyism. His politics were often called into question and yet, he always sang out against injustice. In 2011, he even joined the Occupy Wall Street protests. Do try to watch the two documentaries on PBS about him - *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song* and his 90th birthday celebration concert.

Pete Seeger always ended his concerts with the apolitical hit he wrote, "Goodnight Irene." In tribute, I end this piece with "Goodnight Pete"... And yes I will be happy to sing it for you.

Carrie 