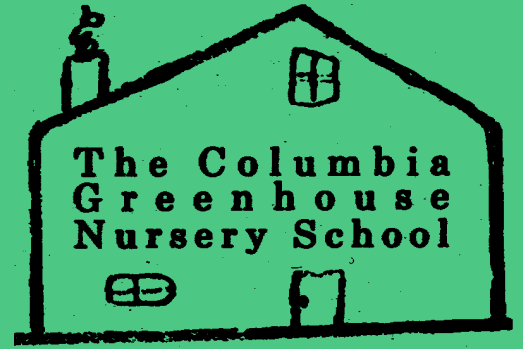


# End of the Year Report

## 2013-2014



### Community Strength

*This year at Greenhouse, a student practiced and applied her problem solving skills as she matter-of-factly declared “It looks like we’ve got a problem. How can we work together to solve it?”*

*A faculty member took extra time to watch and observe a child so she could truly understand that child’s point of view and experience in the class.*

*A parent read a story to their child’s class and in that simple action showed their child that school is so important that even parents want to spend time here!*



In reviewing the last year, I am struck by the fact that our community—students, parents, and faculty—is what continues to make Columbia Greenhouse strong. We stand firm in our collective commitment and dedication to providing a nursery school environment that ‘protects childhood’ from the pressures of today’s society, but also demonstrates the seriousness and significance of the earliest years of a child’s development. Specifically, this year we have re-envisioned our learning environments. We have intentionally designed our physical space to inspire and foster opportunities to take risks, complete challenging and real work, and interact with the natural world. We have transformed our extended day program into a more meaningful and vibrant experience for the students and faculty. We continued to move forward with using technology and our web site to better communicate with parents. Our families—each and every one—continued to plan, facilitate, support and attend the many events and fund raisers that bring us together to celebrate the work of Greenhouse. I deeply value the strength of our community, and it is with optimism and confidence that I look forward to the fall and the beginning of yet another new school year.

Warmly,

Renee



*Facility improvements included new wood laminate flooring in 404’s three classrooms.*



*Faculty intentionally chose materials that would inspire and encourage children to interact with the natural world.*

Dear Greenhouse Community,

As we wind up our second year working with Renee Mease, the Board of Trustees feels tremendously gratified that we chose Renee to be at the helm of Greenhouse. In her short tenure she has cultivated respectful and productive relationships with all her constituents: Greenhouse staff, families and the Board and in doing so, stitched herself into the fabric of the school so seamlessly it's hard to believe that she hasn't always been a part of our community. Renee is fiercely committed to Greenhouse's long tradition of offering the highest quality nursery school experience for young children and their families. Her vision of early childhood education is a strong light in a sky clouded by the proliferation of for-profit schools and developmentally inappropriate curricula. Renee is a gift to Greenhouse as well as the entire early childhood community.

Even while holding firm to our educational philosophy, this year with the Board's backing, Renee moved us forward by dramatically upgrading our physical environment, providing various professional development opportunities for the faculty and creating communication vehicles (including blogs and open houses among them) that make it possible for current and prospective families to better understand what goes on in our school. In a challenging enrollment environment, Renee improved our application process and adjusted programming to better meet the needs of children and families. This year, Renee took care of Greenhouse staff by recognizing their hard work with new job titles and raises.

The Board takes it responsibility to ensure Greenhouse's financial health very seriously. Times are hard, but thanks to a good stock market and wise financial council, we were able to maintain the school's financial health and commit to a significant financial aid budget. We were also able to give salary increases for the 2014-2015 school year with a minimal increase in tuition. We will continue to look for ways to strengthen Greenhouse's financial health.

We look forward to the next school year and to continuing our work with Renee on behalf of the entire Greenhouse and early childhood education community.

Sincerely,

Sara McLanahan Edlin

Chair, Columbia Greenhouse Board of Trustees



*Hands at play.*



blocks  
family  
teachers  
question  
build  
learn  
experience  
think  
together  
observe  
discover  
investigate  
joy  
discuss  
collaborate  
relationships  
connections  
friends  
community  
children  
paint



*Hands at work.*



## 2Day 2s: A Year of Growth



Our year was filled with learning and discovery. We explored themes of separation, group living and investigating new ideas. For many of us, this was our first time in a school setting away from our parents. Before we could feel safe and relaxed in this place called school, we needed to learn that a temporary separation from our most beloved grown-ups did not mean goodbye forever. We quickly learned that school had many fun and interesting activities to do. And while we looked forward to the goodbye song every day, we also learned that the moments in between drop-off and the goodbye song were filled with fun. We enjoyed pursuing our own interests, discovering what we both liked and disliked. Importantly, when we discovered something we disliked we learned how to deal with disappointment and express our emotions appropriately. Similarly, when we discovered something we liked, we found joy and pride in being able to do things for ourselves. We took pride in expressing ourselves with paint or building towers with our blocks. We confidently used real tools and did important work when we made our weekly snack. With each interaction, we understood ourselves to be capable individuals and our confidence in our own abilities grew.

Not only did we grow as individuals, but we grew as a group, too. Each day we practiced the skills we need to be successful in a group and we learned how to live alongside other people who are not our family. We practiced important group living skills, including how to wait for our turn, how to express our wants and needs and how to listen to other people's ideas. As young 2-year-olds, we are just at the beginning of learning about what it means to make friends and respect other people. As with any growing process, there were often challenging moments. In those challenging times, we learned how to mend someone's hurt feelings or forgive a friend a simple indiscretion. With each passing day, we found ourselves making strong connections with our teachers and our peers, and found our own place in the group.

One way we connected with our friends was by sharing an idea or play theme. We often took "trips" with our friends to the Statue of Liberty, the doctor's office and the Guggenheim. We reenacted what had happened at places we had been to

with our family and worked through and processed these events in our social context with our friends. Sometimes we used our creative license and embellished our stories – for example, suggesting that the Statue of Liberty could change colors – and our friends questioned our embellishments. We began looking at maps and taking longer "trips." We went to India, and asked about our friends and babysitters in Colombia and Guatemala. These topics became conversation starters, as we asked our friends about their experiences on airplanes and vacations and compared them with our own. We learned that we shared many differences, as well as many similarities.

The year went by quickly and we filled each day with meaningful learning and exploring. As the year ended, we planted radishes, beans, flowers and carrots. As we took turns watering our plants and giving them tender loving care, we commented on how quickly the plants grew and noted the changes in the plants across time. What started as mere seeds quickly grew into full plants! As we all learned this year, observing growth is a fascinating and thrilling journey and it was a fitting end to our school year!



## 3Day 2s: What lies ahead!

We did a lot of learning this year! Not least of which revolved around learning what it means to be a 'school kid,' and how to make friends and form a community. In the beginning of the year, we slowly said good-bye to our grown-ups and found our way in the class. We discovered that not only were there fun and interesting things to explore at school like paint, glue and blocks, there were also fun and interesting people with whom we could explore these things. We learned to do new 'school' things like sitting at meetings, hanging up our coat in our cubby, and lining up to go to the yard! We learned the schedule of the day and when to expect our grown-ups to come back. We learned how to share an idea with a friend and find important answers to our im-



portant questions. One of those important questions became the catalyst to our first curriculum topic.

"How does the moon know when to wake up?" One day, on a walk to the Farmer's Market, the children noticed that the moon was out during the day. One of the children asked this insightful question and a curriculum was born. We started out by reading lots of books about the moon. We particularly liked *Marcella and the Moon*, a book about Marcella, the



duck who paints pictures of the moon. She noticed that the moon was always changing size and shape. We put up pictures of the different phases of the moon in our classroom, and the children often returned to them. We sang an old Scottish folk song about a man that lived in the moon called

"His Name Was Aiken Drum." We played with a special kind of sand called "moon sand" and made our own moons out of tissue paper. During our explorations we made interesting observations, such as the fact that a full moon folded in half is a half moon! After careful observation and deliberation, we decided we liked the crescent moon and the full moon the best. To wrap up our study of the moon, we made the full moon out of paper mache. After we were done making the moon, we decided to paint it blue, as we thought this was the color of the moon. We were able to take a simple question posed by a toddler on a walk and provide opportunities for the children to make observations about the natural world and explore their ideas around the topic. Our metric for success was not to learn about the moon's orbit or the rotation of the earth; instead we used their interest in the moon to provide the children with opportunities to think and talk about size and shape in a context. We used their questions about the moon to model problem solving skills and demonstrated how to find out answers. We used their interest to build their relationships with one another and to practice the very act of learning.

These same skills, and more, were also reinforced in our "fix-it" exploration. During the second half of the year, we became interested in fixing things. We started off by using masking tape and puzzle pieces in the shape of tools to "fix the train" (known to others as the bench!). Next, we found some more realistic tools to explore. One day, there were also empty cardboard boxes just waiting for us to find a use for! After much consideration and deliberation, we decided to make one box into a stroller and the other into a car. We needed to make many decisions and work collaboratively during our constructions. What color should we paint it? What features should it have? And how can we make it move?

We decided we needed four wheels. We tried to attach cast-

er wheels to our car. Our attempts to attach the wheels led to many interesting conversations and problem solving opportunities. First, we struggled over *where* to place the wheels. We tried to place the wheels on the side of the car. However, we soon realized that for the wheels to work they had to be on the *bottom* of the car, so we had to *turn the car over*. These challenges led us to expand our vocabulary, listen to other's ideas and collectively brainstorm to solve a problem. Finally, it also taught us to think about the practical uses of objects and how things work. Next, we struggled over *how* to attach the wheels. We tried to attach the wheels to our car by poking holes in the box and trying to stick the wheels through the holes. We soon found out, though, that the wheels did not stick on their own, so we attempted to use both glue and tape, neither of which worked. We eventually decided to return to an earlier idea of attaching our car to a skateboard. It worked! We taped the car to the skateboard and finally had a car to drive around. Building a car together was the perfect way for us to learn how to solve problems and, more importantly, how to own the answers!

We focused our work on solving problems, making observations and forging connections. By practicing these skills, we were surprised and delighted by the things we learned and the things that we could do together. We learned the satisfaction of a job well done! One student mentioned on our last day together that he missed our butterflies. As a class, we had watched the caterpillars spin their chrysalides and eventually emerge as beautiful butterflies, which we then released into the world. We reassured this student that the butterflies were ready for the challenges that lay ahead for them. And, much like those butterflies heading out into the world, as we move on to our next class or our next school, we too are ready for what lies ahead!



## 2s Afternoon: A Year of Exploring

We got to work quickly! Our days were filled with making meaningful discoveries and connections. We “discovered” our first curriculum topic almost instantly. Each day we enjoyed sharing stories about how we got to school. Who rode the bus? Who walked to school? This led us to create our transportation chart. As part of our morning routine, we placed our picture in the column on the chart that represented the mode of transportation we took to school that day. It led to many discussions about buses, trains and taxis. Our conversations led us to many interesting activities like exploring MTA bus and train maps, painting with the wheels on a train and even building our own bus! Building a bus with your friends is very difficult and important work. First, we identified all the parts of a bus that we wanted on our bus including wheels, seatbelts, and a table. We worked together to create the things we needed to make our bus a reality. We used paper plates to represent the wheels on our bus and some found string quickly became our seatbelts.

For the next step in our discovery of buses, our teachers took us on a ride on the M11! We rode the bus to the Cathedral of



St. John the Divine. We enjoyed showing the driver our MetroCards and sitting in the bus seats with our friends. As often happens out in the world, we had experiences that made a profound impact on us, as a group. During our exploration of the grounds and gardens at the Cathedral, we were breath-taken by the sight of two peacocks. This magical moment turned into a memory that lasted with us for the rest of the year and often came up in our discussions at school. When we returned to school, we realized there were some very important features we were missing from our bus. We set off to work to create seats, a door and a “stop” button (the bell people ring to alert the driver that they want to get off the bus.) Having this real-life group experience on the bus really informed and enriched our construction work of our own bus.

While we continued to explore the idea of vehicles in many ways, our imagination was also captured by an occurrence in the dramatic play area. One day, our baby in the dramatic play area “had a fever” and needed to go to the doctor. Our teachers helped us create a list of tools we might find in a

doctor’s office. We decided we needed lots of things like a thermometer, a “heart” (aka stethoscope!), Band-Aids, something for the ears and a banana! As more tools were added to the dramatic play area, our pretend play became more elaborate. We wondered how we could weigh our babies at the doctor’s office. First, we used a food scale to weigh the babies. We liked looking at the red needle as it pointed to different numbers as we placed different objects on the scale. Our teachers found other scales for us to explore like a balance scale and a bathroom scale. We weighed and compared the weights of many objects like rocks, feathers, and salt. We used words like ‘heavy’ and ‘heavier.’ We also worked to find things of equal weight on the balance scale. We then weighed ourselves on the bathroom scales. We tried to think of ways we could represent our own weight; one friend concluded “I’m heavy like stones. I need 40 rocks because I am 40 lbs.”



In addition to our ongoing explorations of topics like weight and transportation, we also used our senses to explore many ideas and observations. Each week, we looked forward to cooking a snack together. We tasted, smelled and touched many different ingredients like cocoa, lemon, sugar and cinnamon. Before we knew it, the end of the year was here! Our days together were spent exploring, making discoveries and building a new understanding of the world.

## All Aboard the 2/3s Classroom Train!

The topic of trains and subways surfaced as an area of interest very early in our year. One day in the play yard, we noticed that the children had built a train out of the milk crates. Their pretend play with the construction was very rich and demonstrated their ability to develop a plan (“Let’s build a train!”), share that plan with others (“I got the trainee hat. Put it on your hair.”) and practice important group behaviors like taking turns (“I am the driver first, then it will be your turn.”). The children carried their strong interest in trains into the classroom. Some groups of children chose to build subways, tunnels and tracks together in the block area; look at train books quietly in the cozy corner; or paint with trains in the art area. We decided to hold a circle time conversation and find out what the collective group knew about trains. As it turned out, they knew a lot – but there were also things

that they still wanted to know about trains. It was time to go and experience the subway station as a group! In three small groups, we walked to the subway station on 116<sup>th</sup> and Broadway to collect data about trains and train stations. We went down the stairs and through the turnstiles. The children noticed so many different things: different numbers on the walls and trains, the shapes of the doors, the sounds of the trains. While some children may ride the train every day, this experience of visiting the station for the purpose of observing details primed the children to experience the station in a very different way. Our trip provided time for wandering, opportunities to notice details, and friends to share in the discoveries! Importantly, when each small group returned from their trip, we shared our observations with the others in the class.

From here, the children had the opportunity to work individually to construct their own version of a train. First, as a group, we identified many parts of a train: “wheels”, “conductor”, “engineer”, “train cars”, “seats”, “doors”, “caboose”, and “people”. To provoke the children’s thinking, the teachers then gathered many different

types of materials, including plastic lids, cardboard tubes and various types of paper. Working individually, each child was given the opportunity to choose the materials they wanted to use to create and construct their vehicle. Each child had their own plan and vision for the materials.

Once all of the children had had the opportunity to work individually on their own trains, it was clear that they wanted to build a subway big enough to actually go into. Group construction projects take a lot of planning, negotiating and collaborating! Through individual and group conversations, we created a list of the parts of the subway and what we could use to construct it. Over the course of many weeks, we made a three-car subway that included: cars, lights, windows, subway letters, seats, poles and more! Children then were able to play together on their newly developed train and “ride to new places.”



### 3s Aft: Coming Together

Mixing paint colors, taking care of sick baby dolls, cooking delicious snacks, singing “My Pigeon House”, practicing “school routines” like finding their name on the job chart—these were just a few of the new experiences that the Afternoon 3s encountered this year. They also worked hard to create a class community and find new friendships. For many in our class, this was their first experience being in a classroom setting. We know that working with materials is a good way for young children to connect to one another. And nothing connects young children like concrete, hands-on sensory experiences! We provided lots of different sensory experiences—including sand, water and gak for our children to explore and observe. These experiences provided good sensory input as well as an opportunity for the children to ask important questions like “What would happen if I brought this [water] to Antarctica and then to a summer place?” and make observation like “Look, I am making rain” while sprinkling flour onto the table top. Through each of these open-ended explorations, our children were finding unique ways to use new materials, connect and relate to their peers and learn what it means to work in a group.

We observed an example of their group process one day when they all decided to build a bus out of the classroom chairs. They lined them up in a single row, making room for a driver and passengers. The children returned to and recreated this activity over the span of many days, sometimes adding different details, like seat belts. Each time, the children would work together to construct the bus and then take turns driving or acting as a passenger. The collabora-

tion and negotiation that was taking place between the children was quite noteworthy! They shared the plan and all worked together to see it through.

We decided to take a walk outside to see if we could find a bus. We were thrilled to find a charter bus, city bus, public safety bus and double-decker bus all in one adventure! Who knew there were that many buses to be found? We decided to expand on their experiences by directing a ‘group building’ activity. Together, as a group, we built a bus out of blocks. Each child had a turn to choose a block to add to the vehicle. Directed group building activities help children see other’s perspectives and negotiate a changing idea. We also made individual vehicles using smaller cut-out paper shapes and glue. Children had to first envision their vehicle and then implement that vision onto a piece of paper – all the while exploring shapes in space!

In addition to exploring buses and other vehicles, the children also became skilled story writers this year. The children had many opportunities to dictate stories to the teachers as we captured them on paper. Often the children would draw pictures to accompany their stories. We had many conversations about what it means to be an author, and about the parts of a story. A highlight of the year was our Author Appreciation Day, when the children got to share their written stories with friends and family.



## 3s : A Classroom Pet

Sometimes curriculum actually falls right out of the sky! That was the case this year in the 3s classroom. In the Reggio Emilia approach, educators talk about “provocations.” A provocation is a shared experience that sparks questions, conversation, and interest, and which actively engages children’s thinking. Our “provocation” turned out to be a dead bird that we found in our play yard. We researched what type of bird it was, drew pictures of it and read a story called *The Dead Bird* by Margaret Wise Brown. We eventually decided to bury the bird in Morningside Park. We engaged the children in many discussions about the bird, including their thoughts on what might have happened to it.

Prior to finding it, we had started a conversation with the children about choosing a pet for our classroom. During one of our discussions about the bird, a child actually connected the two topics by wondering if the bird had an owner—had it been someone’s pet? This brought us back to the idea of pets, and specifically to what kind of pet we would like to have in the 3s classroom. The children had lots of suggestions, including an elephant, a dinosaur and a cat! After some further discussion, we decided there were some questions we needed to answer before we picked our pet. The children voted for three animals that they would like to research as possible classroom pets—hamsters, turtles and rabbits. The children formed three investigation groups and set out to learn more about these animals. Our research took us in many directions. We read books and conducted interviews with pet owners to find out relevant information. Each group reported their findings back to the class at circle time. We made a chart to record the information we uncovered and reviewed the similarities and differences among our three research animals.

The dramatic play area became a vital stage for us to explore our own ideas about pets and animals. First, we set up a veterinary office in the dramatic play area. We used stethoscopes, thermometers and syringes to check on the health of the animals and gave them medicine, food and water to help them feel better. Eventually, the dramatic play area became a pet store. We made signs for the shelves and enjoyed taking turns

### Faculty List 2013-2014

2Day and 3Day 2s	Caitlin Koo, Head Teacher Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher Socorro Cordova, Assistant Teacher (Sept.-Apr) Kira Rutherford-Boese, Assistant Teacher (April-June)
2s Afternoon	Caitlin Koo, Head Teacher Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher
2/3s	Pam Butler, Head Teacher Rachel Silberman, Co-Teacher Xiomara Menendez, Assistant Teacher
3s	Angela Coulibaly, Head Teacher Nina Basescu, Assistant Teacher Theresa Swink, Assistant Teacher
3s Afternoon	Pam Butler, Head Teacher Xiomara Menendez, Assistant Teacher
3/4s	Paula Doerfel, Head Teacher Erica Maldonado, Assistant Teacher Cathleen Perez, Assistant Teacher
4/5s	Margaret Williams, Head Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher Tolisa Orr-Chambliss, Assistant Teacher David Vining, Intern
Admin Staff	Renee Mease, Director Vera Elumn, Administrator Kira Rutherford-Boese, Office Assistant
Support Staff	Lorraine Harner, Child Psychologist Colleen Itzen, Music and Movement





working the cash register or shopping for items. We made some dog biscuit cookies and sold them to the children in the 2s classes. We even had a "Buy One Get One Free" sale on dog biscuit cookies on our last day of business. The children were very eager shoppers that day!

Some of our most valuable learning happened outside of our classroom. We visited the other classrooms at Greenhouse to find out if they had pets. We discovered that the 2/3s and 3/4s classes had stick bugs, but that the 2s and 4/5s did not have any pets. Eventually, we visited a real pet store so that the children could see some live animals. Armed with clipboards, the children walked around the store searching for turtles, hamsters and rabbits, putting a mark next to the picture of each animal as they found them. As is the case when children are out in the field collecting data, they were very excited to see and experience knowledge in a concrete, hands-on way! We also left the classroom to interview Renee about the rules and regulations involving pets in schools. We learned that rabbits and hamsters are permitted in schools, but turtles are not. Finally, after all of the research and investigation, we decided to get a hamster for our class. With the help of one of our families, we adopted two female dwarf hamsters. After all the work and thinking the children had done in deciding what kind of pet would be right for us, they were so excited and thrilled when the hamsters arrived! After a very tight vote, our newest members in the class were named Cutie and Batman!

While research was a vital part of our curriculum, the children quickly learned that now that they had live creatures in their care, there was more for them to experience. The children took turns giving their new pets food and water; they learned how to touch them gently and use quiet voices around them. The children looked at the hamsters carefully and drew detailed pictures of them. They enjoyed studying them at close range, observing how they eat, and noting how they like to run on the exercise wheel. Most of all, they loved when we put one of the hamsters into the exercise ball so that she could roll all around the classroom! This experience of deciding as a group to care for other living creatures proved to be the perfect vehicle through which the 3s learned how to ask questions, find answers, build skills, work together and create a strong community.



## Parent Association Look Back

The Parent Association had a busy and fun year. We certainly met our goal and provided many events that brought the entire Greenhouse community together.

Our first event, the PA Cocktail Party in October, proved to be the perfect opportunity to reconnect with old friends and welcome new families to Greenhouse. This event gave us an opportunity to mix and mingle with fellow parents and staff in a relaxed environment. It was a great way to kick off the academic year.

In November, we decided to change things up a bit and hold a Book Fair for Greenhouse families. The book fair took place in the children's room at The Book Culture. We

held it on a Saturday, giving Greenhouse families and children the chance to enjoy two story hours, arts and crafts, light refreshments, as well as get a leg up on holiday shopping. The turnout was terrific and the store was buzzing as Greenhouse took over.



In January, the PA was thrilled to host Pamela Korson, LCSW. Pam led a discussion and provided support on issues related to child development and effective parenting. The meeting was held in the morning so families had an opportunity to attend after dropping their children off in their classrooms.

Our March meeting, was joined by Renee and some of the amazing teachers of Greenhouse. In their presentation, "Math in the Classroom," they used photos, anecdotes and actual children's work to demonstrate how Greenhouse supports and encourages the development of Math skills at every developmental level. We all were reminded just how lucky our children are to be here at Greenhouse!

We closed out the year with a May meeting highlighting the journey of the kindergarten search in New York City. A panel of Greenhouse parents were kind enough to share their individual experiences navigating the placement process in private and public school settings.

A huge thank you to all the class representatives. They did a great job of bringing individual classes together and supporting the work of the PA. We are all looking forward to seeing everyone in September and already planning for another school year!

Stephanie, Pam and Katie

**Families In The Classroom! This year the parents and other important grown-ups in our children's lives found many different ways to become involved in the life of our classes.**



*Some shared a special skill, hobby or interest. Others read a book to the class or chaperoned a class trip.*



*Family Visiting Day and Curriculum Night are two more valuable ways families learn about what happens in their child's class.*



***Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the many parent volunteers who took on leadership roles in the this year's activities. Your willingness to serve reflects the generosity, spirit and commitment of the Greenhouse community.***

**Parent Association and Committee Members**

**Officers**

Stephanie Schafer, Co-Chair  
Pam Schnatterly, Co-Chair  
Katie Smith, Secretary

**Class Representatives**

Abby Schneiderman-Hordell  
Aimee Christian  
Allie Baker  
Ariella Evenzahav  
Jo Mispel & Bernard Devlin  
Lisa Park  
Natasha Augoustopoulos  
Pam Korson

**Apple Day Bake Sale**

Kerry Ann Evans-Thompson, Co-Chair  
Kari and Brian Strong, Co-Chair

**Newsletter**

Joakim and Ebru Aspegren, Chair

**Parents League Rep**

Sabrina Silver

**Auction Committee**

Vera Elumn, Greenhouse Coordinator

**Donations**

Janice Lewart, Chair  
Jennifer and Anish Chakravorty  
Adrienne Frohlich and David Kleinhanzl  
Sarah Rosenbaum-Kranson and Donny Kranson  
Abby Trager-Rogers and Matthew Rogers  
John Sanful

**Organizing and Display**

Kara Putrino, Chair  
Judy Margolin and Seth Schwartz  
Allison and Alexander Baker

**Database**

Catherine Williams and Steve Mooney

**Auctioneer**

Eli Rodriguez

**Graphic Designer**

Nina Edwards

**Spring Fair Committee**

Rebecca and Pascal Weel, Co-Chair  
Liz Sorem and John Lussier, Co-Chair  
Nancy and Sharn Jenkins, Food Committee Chair  
Jenny and Gabe Falcon, Rummage Committee Co-Chair  
Suzette and Rob Berkey, Rummage Committee Co-Chair  
Lee and Alex Saltzman, Games Chair  
Sang and Lisa Park, Set-up/Clean-up Chair  
John Lussier, Central Booth



***PA Cocktail Party***



***PA Meeting: "Math in the Classroom" presentation by Greenhouse faculty***



**The Spring Fair—a family favorite!**



**The Annual Dinner and Benefit**





**Apple Day Bake Sale**



**Family Picnics on Math Lawn**

## 3/4s: Inside and Outside

Two seemingly opposite worlds came together to help us create friendships and build a sense of community.

Our year began with a challenge: how could we turn our small yard into a more natural play environment? The children discussed their ideas about the natural world and brainstormed possible natural materials to add to the environment. Their enthusiasm brought them together as they explored and expressed their desires about the outside world: "Trees, stumps, sticks, fairies, dirt, mud!" Materials were gathered and collaborative decisions were made about how and where found items would be displayed. Children collected and accumulated gifts of nature, proudly sharing their bounty. This activity in the natural world awakened the children's senses and stimulated their sense of wonder.

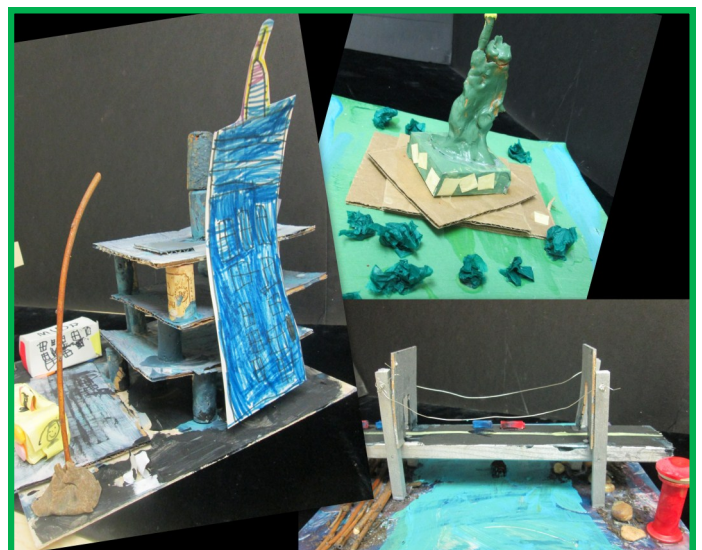


During a discussion about redesigning the small yard, we came to the conclusion that we needed a more structured plan that included a map. The children created maps for our classroom and both of the play yards. They especially enjoyed creating their own treasure hunt maps! We also explored a variety of other maps. Two maps resonated with the children – the New York City subway and bus map, and the map of New York City. Quickly questions started to arise: "Where do you live?" "How do you come to school?" We set out to map the answers to some of their questions. Their common interest in the maps and how they related to their own lives began a bond that brought the children together. They started to see, first-hand, their physical relationship to their classmates and to their school. While looking at the New York City maps, they used their finger to trace their routes to and from school, to a friend's house or on a traveled subway or bus line. "Wow! Your home is close to mine." "We all travel from different places, but we all come to Greenhouse!" These were just some of the responses that we heard as the children explored the maps of their community. These conversations and interactions grew as the children shared their knowledge and experiences of their outside world – New York City.

As we started exploring our relationship to New York City inside the classroom, outside in the yard the children returned to exploring their place in the wonder of nature. The world of nature is exciting and filled with endless opportunities for exploring and discovering. A leaf, a rock, a stick, or a drop of water could contain a whole world. Imaginations were released and soon could no longer be contained. Outside there were no boundaries or restrictions on space and materials. The children experienced nature as a shared world with boundless possibilities. Private spaces were created, experiments were conducted, and hypotheses were tested. Soon bonds were formed as children shared their discoveries and interests in a hole in a tree stump, a new sprout in the garden, or a spider or an ant crawling by.

Two worlds – the natural world in our small yard and the man-made world in New York City – became equally important in establishing us as a community of learners. As the children continued to use both areas creatively and collaboratively, their questions, investigations, and interactions grew deeper. Whether they were building a fort outside or erecting the Empire State Building in the block area, they found that each class member brought his/her experiences and new and different ideas to the task. Strong bonds and a shared spirit were established. Outside in the yard, connections were formed as they took turns jumping off stumps, collecting sticks with a friend and building a fairy house. Inside the classroom, the children found similar bonds in their search for answers to their questions about their lives in the City. The sharing of places, like Morningside Park or The Museum of Natural History, emphasized the inter-relatedness that we all had. "You know that place too? "I go there with my dad." Children shared their favorite places that had once seemed to be unique to their own existence, now discovering that a friend had had a similar experience. More commonalities and bonds emerged as the children came together in their investigations and play as it focused on the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, and the George Washington Bridge.

Now they were ready to witness first-hand the New York City that they had shared in the classroom. What a very powerful



experience it was as they went side by side, hand in hand, beyond the classroom and out into the city! What had started as the simple sharing of personal stories and experiences of New York within the confines of the classroom, now grew into traveling and experiencing the city together. The children's confidence as learners grew as they took in new information and ideas.

Two worlds, the natural and the man-made, blended to provide an opportunity for us to express, interact, construct meaning, share ideas and develop very strong bonds with their environments and their peers. In September, the children entered the class with their unique perspectives, ideas and experiences. They left in June with connections and broader perspectives, and friendships built on camaraderie and collaboration. They leave here with a deeper understanding built on a sense of shared accomplishment and problem solving. A real feeling of satisfaction prevails. These experiences, both outside and inside the classroom, will provide these children with a strong foundation for being lifelong learners.

## 4/5: Friendship, Community, Love

Block groups, measuring height, the restaurant in the dramatic play area, farmer's market trips, space exploration, *Frozen*, planting pumpkin seeds, singing, writing stories, weaving, shoes, roller coasters, trains, friendships, community, butterflies, carousels, MetroCards, cooking: these were just a few of the elements of the year in the 4-5s. Through these separate features, we explored and expanded our skills and ideas and found a deeper understanding of our overall themes of the year – friendship, community and love.

In September the children came for individual visits to the classroom. Some were shy and worried, some were curious and excited, some were a little of both. Even though most of the children in the incoming class had been at Greenhouse for many years, and were familiar with the 4-5s teachers, this was different. This was important – the beginning of the year in the oldest and last class at Columbia Greenhouse. They knew it. The parents knew it. And we knew that the best way to start the new year was to create a sense of community from the beginning.

The first part of the year was devoted to developing that sense of community. The children had friends who had been in their classes from previous years; however, we wanted them to get to know children from the other classes. So we planned lots of assigned small group work. They built together in block groups, they walked to the Farmer's Market in small groups, and they had snack and lunch at assigned tables. And they began to form new friendships.

Making friends and keeping friends is hard work. It requires patience, empathy, cooperation, compromise and communication. You have to grow up a little to be able to put another person's needs ahead of your own, and to be able to appreciate and recognize that quality in yourself. We continued the

discussion of friendship all year as new social situations presented. Some children were challenged by the give-and-take nature of group life and some were willing and eager to grapple with the concepts. We created a Friendship Wall (where children wrote down and posted their own "acts of kindness") in order to have a visual representation of their increasing ability to contribute to the social harmony of the class.

And love! The friendships were intense and the emotions ran high. There were couples who were inseparable and there were open, unsolicited declarations of love. There was concern that friendships and relationships would be lost after Greenhouse. And there was heartbreak when someone's heart's desire moved on to another. For many, it was the first time they had strong feelings for someone other than their family – a step toward realizing autonomy and achieving self-actualization.

The most captivating curriculum piece this year was the unit that we did on space! The 4-5s knew a lot about the planets and the solar system, which led to discussions about what else was in outer space. We read books, did research and visited the Hall of the Universe at the Museum of Natural History. The 4-5s created a solar system, asteroids, meteors, space stations, the Hubble telescope, individual imaginary planets and finally a rocket that the children could play in. They were very practical and deliberate in the choosing the things to go in the rocket: sample bottles, a "radio" to communicate from one part of the rocket to the other, maps to see where to go, headlights, engines, a control panel, a speedometer and wings. The highlight of the unit was when NASA astronaut Mike Massimino visited our class and talked about his experiences in space. He also had a photograph of himself when he was 6 years old dressed in an astronaut costume that his mother had made for him. You could see a sparkle in the children's eyes which revealed that they knew it was possible that someday their own dreams would come true!

As we flew into June, it was clear that we had come together just as we had known we would. The class – children, faculty and parents – all felt a deep sense of community and connection. No more were we simply individuals sharing a space, we had become a group – a group that did important work together, shared ideas, resolved conflicts and inspired one another to continue to learn and grow. And the memories and connections that we made in the 4/5s class will always stay with us as we move into the future.



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