

The Compluvium

A Newsletter for the Atrium Community

Friday, October 2, 2000

What Happened When I Got Involved at the Atrium School, And Why You Should Too!

by Lisa Frost

We were a new family at Atrium last fall, when our son enrolled in 5th grade, and if we had had any doubts about the school (we didn't), they would have evaporated completely during preparations for and celebration of the Fall Festival.

Helping out with getting ready was fun, not work, and was an easy and enjoyable way to get to know more people connected with the school.

Many hands joined together to make very light work of what needed to be done, and the happiness and enjoyment I derived from what little I did were way out of proportion to the amount of time I spent.

The actual Festival was amazing. The spirit of the event was buoyant, creative, gentle, and welcoming.

I will never forget some of the hats children made; it was clear that this school is a place where every child is free to explore endless possibilities, and be supported and encouraged in his or her discoveries and creations.

It was a delight for our whole family, and we are looking forward to another wonderful Festival in a few weeks.

What is the Compluvium?

In ancient Roman times, the compluvium was a central opening in the roof of the atrium that let in light and air.

The Atrium Compluvium is our newsletter with notices of special events and assemblies, PTA news, and other articles of interest to the Atrium Community. This year the Compluvium will be a **monthly** newsletter.

If you have news to share, send it to sdiller@atrium.org.

More Hours, More Fun, More Learning

With more hours in the week now that we don't have half-day Wednesdays, what are we doing with the extra time each week?

Specifically we have added to the schedule:

- *Violin in the 2/3rd grade classroom.*
- *A 4th/5th/6th grade Chorus.*
- *Art Studio for all classrooms.*
- *More time for Spanish in the lower grades*

In addition, there is an open and relaxed feel to taking on new projects, letting work unfold more naturally and allowing for collaborations between grades. We can take field trips, spend more time outside, add drama projects, create more all-school events, and simply be more spontaneous! And we can do all that without impinging on the importance of a steady and consistent academic schedule.

Dates To Remember

- Oct. 8 - Early Release Day, Parent Conferences 1pm-4pm
- Oct. 9 - No School. Parent Conferences 8am-4pm
- Oct. 12 - No School
- Oct. 12 - Picture Day
- Oct 16 - Admissions Open House 9am-10:30am
- Oct 18 - Admissions Open House 2pm-4pm
- Oct 21 - Puppet Show!-- Admissions Event 1pm
- Oct 24 - Fall Festival 10am - 1pm

Annual Giving*

Welcome to a new year at the Atrium! If you are a new family I hope to meet you soon. From its very beginning, community has been at the heart of what makes Atrium a special place. Through the year you and your family will have many opportunities to be involved at the school. As the parent of a current student (David, Adventurers) and an alumna (Katherine, Class of 2007) I encourage you to participate in the life of the school to get to know the community.

One of the ways that families are involved is through Annual Giving. Last year families, faculty, trustees, alum and friends of the school raised \$111,000. Trustees and faculty members made a strong statement of support with **100%** participation. Later in the fall you will hear more about the importance of Annual Giving from the directors and from parent volunteers. I urge you to give them your attention--the strength of our school depends on the participation of every person. Your support will directly benefit our students and faculty this year.

If you would like to help with Annual Giving, or have questions about it, feel free to stop by my office (near the front desk) or send me email at anazemi@atrium.org.

Ashley Nazemi
Director of Development

***Formerly known as the Annual Fund!**

Ginny's Corner

News from Ginny Kahn, the founder of the Atrium School.



It is always wonderful to come visit the school, to see our new students, our returning students, and you the parents.

After spending some time with the whole school during Friday Assembly last week, I visited with the prekindergarten and kindergarten. How wonderful to welcome our newest and youngest students to the school. I gave each student an Atrium pencil and we talked a little bit about the many things you can do with a pencil -- write words, draw pictures and even erase things. I can see that our newest Atrium students are ready for big learning and big ideas.

After I visited the youngest students, I had to stop in and see our oldest students, the 6th graders. They too wanted their traditional Atrium pencil. That these, the oldest students in the school, still treasured their Atrium pencil, speaks to the connections and traditions we have built here. I look forward to seeing you all again for BFG Day in November.

Cheers, Ginny



Welcome Back PreKindergarten!

Every day when the Originators, our PreKindergarten classroom, walks down the hallway, they leave a wake of smiles behind them. Teachers, parents, and older students love to see our youngest Atrium students.

The Originators are learning how to bring the attendance to the front desk; how to walk down the hallway, how to welcome the Kindergartners into their classroom. They are busy in library, Spanish, art and music.

And from the front office to the library, it feels so wonderful to have them here.

Rachel Crimmel is our new prekindergarten teacher and she will be joined this week by Barry Wilensky as the prek assistant. Barry is not only our newest teacher on staff, he is also the parent of an Atrium alumna.

And did you know that the mural in the Originator's room was painted by an Atrium alum Becky Benett, '05?

Our youngest Atrium students have a lot of history in their classroom.

Theme at a Glance

The Originators

PreK/Inergarten

Rachel Crimmel and Barry Wilensky

What is Change?

This year the Originators will learn about change! Our overall theme in Pre-K is organized around the big question, "What is change?" We will explore the changes in ourselves, our community, and environment. The goal of our theme is for the children to reflect on themselves and environment and notice what has been modified or altered and find an understanding of why these changes occurred. Originators will study the change in the trees, from season to season, look at how animals change for different types of weather, study the life-cycle of butterflies and plants and most importantly reflect on the changes each of us make throughout the year! It is sure to be an exciting year in the Originator Classroom.

The Travelers

K/Inergarten/First Grade

Merry Murray Meade and Liz Perekrests

What About Water?

The Travelers (K/I) are studying the Charles River this year. Who were the first people to utilize the river, why does it need bridges and dams, and how is it used today? We will visit the river frequently and use inquiry based science methods to test out dams and bridges we make ourselves! Community will also play an important part of our investigations. We will begin by establishing a strong classroom community and then discuss and discover communities in and around Watertown. Our first project was making watersheds out of paper to help us understand how rivers are formed- please feel free to come in and see them!

The Explorers

Second/Third Grade

Jill Ferrarresso and Susan Jacoby

What is A Human Being

Our overall theme in our 2-3 classroom is organized around the big question, "What is a human being?" A significant component of our human being study centers on human resilience in the face of struggle, and bravery. We learn about what all humans have in common as well as human variation. We will explore ways

that human beings can be different in terms of learning styles and abilities.

We will also build on the concept of respect, including respecting and taking care of ourselves, each other, and the environment. We will learn about finding our own authentic voices, listening to the voices of others, being allies to ourselves and others, and standing up for what we think is right. We will learn how to be an "ally" and what being an ally has meant in many different historical contexts, such as the Civil Rights Movement.

The Innovators

Fourth Grade

Tina Jaillet and Nicole Notaro

What Does it Mean to Be Innovative?

Our theme this year addresses the question, "What does it mean to be innovative?"

While exploring this question, the fourth grade Innovators will learn to think critically about their world and grow to see each other as resourceful members in their community. This big idea is infused in all of our academic subjects.

We begin by exploring our own hopes and dreams and defining our personal values in order to create a set of rights and rules for the classroom. The students research how other innovators determined their own rights in the past and how their decisions have influenced society.

The next step will be to study maps and learn about their associated climates. We will discuss how the environments in which people live influence their decisions about how to live. Students will develop a shelter that best suits an environment of their choice. An idea that will evolve out of the shelter project is that form follows function.

From there we will begin to work with a new medium, Lego's. The children will learn about force, friction and gravity as they explore and create objects that meet specific design criteria. Once the children become comfortable with the materials, they will be introduced to the Lego Mindstorms NXT kits as well as the NXT-G computer program. Using this and other real-world examples, the students will study, experience and build simple machines, including inclined planes, levers, pulleys, wheels and axles, wedges and screws.

The Adventurers

Fifth Grade

Craig Rochkind and Kristen von Hoffman

What is Freedom?

This year our 5th grade students, the Adventurers, will be looking at the history of immigration at the turn of the 20th Century. The class will study the challenges and hopes that peoples from all parts of the world experienced in leaving their homeland and immigrating to the United States. Ellis Island on the east coast as well as Angel Island in the west processed thousands of individuals and families for entry into the country. We'll look at what their life was like, their living conditions, health, education, etc., and actually recreate a tenement in our 5th grade classroom. Along with the theme of immigration, we'll look at the tragedy of the Titanic, reading accounts, having discussions and ultimately having the students produce a brief theatre piece that will highlight that horrific night for both the wealthy on board, and those who looked to begin new lives in America.

The Trailblazers

Sixth Grade

Dan Riles

What is the cause of social injustice, how does social change happen, what is work, and who are workers?

These are the guiding questions the Trailblazers will use to frame our study of the Labor movement. Too often, historical and social change is attributed to an extraordinary individual or group of people. This separates and diminishes the contributions of the great numbers of people who contributed to the dialogue, action, and eventual new status quo. The Labor Movement is often attributed to Samuel Gompers and a few others. Occasionally, texts mention Mother Jones but rarely delve into the amazing collective action by a widely diverse population that drove the labor movement forward. This year we will study this collaboration that spanned language, race, gender, and economic boundaries to create social change and shaped our current notions of fair labor practices.

In the second term, students will be guided through the process of service learning. They will canvass a target population to determine what needs exist, design their service project, implement it, and evaluate its success. This unit will reinforce students' desires to affect positive change in the world around them while building skills to ensure the work they do is needed and effective.

What is Thematic Teaching and Learning?

Themes are unifying concepts or essential questions which frame and inform the learning of many topics, ideas, and skills. At the Atrium School, thematic curricula are ongoing and evolving and are intrinsically interesting to a particular mix of students and ages. Through themes, teachers and students are drawn together in an examination of a concept or question. Children are encouraged to make connections and associations between the knowledge they possess and the knowledge they are acquiring.

A thematic curriculum enables students and teachers to draw from many sources including literature, first-hand accounts, news articles, personal accounts, technology, science, historical and contemporary experience, art and music. Students develop processes of learning which value the acquisition and application of skills and specific knowledge and which cultivate conceptual thinking. Through the development of effective thought processes, students become creative problem solvers.

By emphasizing unifying connections, themes focus student thinking on fundamental ideas. The strategies used to identify these fundamental ideas are applied to the study of other themes and to the ways in which children confront new opportunities and challenges of the familiar and the unknown.

Would you like to read more about the themes and work in these classrooms? The handbooks for all the classrooms will be on display at the front desk during parent conferences!

Class Potlucks And You!

Class potlucks are wonderful ways to build community in your child's class.

Not every parent has the opportunity to spend time in the mornings or afternoons to chat, to connect, and to feel a part of the Atrium community. Potlucks provide a great way for new parents as well as old parents to connect or reconnect in a relaxed and unhurried setting.

Please check in with your class representatives to find out when your class potluck will be. We hope you will all enjoy one soon!

Seasonal Flu And You!

At school we are working to make sure that children wash their hands frequently, and sneeze into the crook of their arms. The CDC says that the best way to avoid colds and the flu is simple good hand washing. Please help us keep the school as healthy as possible by:

- Encouraging your child to wash his/her hands frequently
- Not sending your child to school until he/she is fever-free for 24-hours without fever suppressing medication such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin).

Admissions And You!

What can you do to support this year's admissions? Get the word out. We have two Open Houses coming up in October. The first is Friday, October 16th and the second is Sunday, October 18th. Please let your neighbors, friends, acquaintances know about the Atrium. What else can you do?

- Offer to take friends on a tour of the school!
- Come to an Open House to speak with prospective parents.
- Go back to your child's preschool and talk to the director about Atrium.
- Put up Open House flyers in your community.
- Tell YOUR story about what Atrium has meant to your family to as many people as you can. The word will spread.
- Invite friends and their children to the Puppet Show (See [Puppet Show and You!](#)).

Parent Conferences and You!

Next week, parents and teachers meet for their first of three parent conferences during the school year. In this first conference, parents may find that they are doing a lot of the talking, and that is just the way it should be. This conference is a time for parents to share what they know about their child, to consider their hopes and dreams for the child this year, and to connect with their child's teacher. Building a caring community of learners means that not only are your children learning, but your children's teachers are learning and so are you! Enjoy the conference.

Pumpnickel Puppets and You!

The Pumpnickel puppets will be performing at the Atrium on October 21 at 1:00pm. This show is open to the public and free of charge. It is a great Admissions Event. The show is geared toward 3-7 year olds -- *The Frog Prince*. Please invite prospective families, friends and children. Younger siblings of course are invited as well.

The Atrium Board of Trustees

What does the Board of Trustees do? The Board is responsible for the long term health of the school. Members of the board volunteer their time, their vision, their expertise to the school, working on such committees as Academic Excellence, Finance, Development, Building and more. Interesting in learning more about the Board? Speak to any board member...

Board of Trustees –2009 - 2010

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