

Park West

Cooperative
Nursery
School

Little Link

Information for families



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Hi Everybody,

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Welcome back, we hope your break was great! Usually by the end of a vacation there have been enough variations and disruptions in our usual routines that the adults can feel relieved to resume a normal schedule. But don't be surprised if some of your kids show reluctance to get back in the swing of things. Keep in mind they have all been away from school a long time and have settled into different rhythms, so this is one of those periods in the calendar year when kids may exhibit any of the same types of resistant behaviors you may have experienced in the fall. Should that happen, try not to be discouraged. It is a normal response to such a big transition. Remember, they have worked through it before and with our help they will do it again.

Before the holiday we tried some different kinds of painting projects at school. These are activities where kids have a chance to make observations about how their actions may affect their results according to force, distance, speed and direction. For that reason, we refer to them as physical knowledge rather than art activities. We began with marble painting. We lined 14x4 inch boxes with paper. Using a spoon, kids could then coat the marbles in different colors of paint, then transfer them to the box, and tilt the box for the random or occasionally desired effect. Initially it did not occur to anyone that they could use the box to move the marble, but even after a suggestion or demonstration from the teachers, some kids just preferred to push the marble with their spoons or fingers. Those who employed the box tilt method soon came to realize how easily the marble could fly out according to their speed and angle. For the most part kids stuck to rolling the long way, side to side. It was a revelation when someone occasionally struck upon the idea of tilting so the marble would move up and down the short width of the box.

Following marble painting we tried spool painting. The idea is the same, but now for every roll, the spool leaves two trails instead of one. We introduced two variations: one the same long boxes we had used for marble painting and the other an old water table insert measuring about three and one half feet long lined with butcher paper. For this activity, we also introduced various scissor-like tongs to transfer spools from paint to table. These proved to be so interesting that quite a few kids spent a long turn just putting spools back and forth on the paper. Now two kids could work together to tilt the larger vessel.

Physical knowledge activities often afford some great social byproducts. While working together kids have to coordinate their ideas with their actions. You begin to hear them using language like this: "Now pick it up", "No wait I'm not ready", "Let's change colors." We did offer a list so kids could sign up for a turn, but if the list had run out and someone new came to have a try, they might decide with the help of a teacher to go out and find a partner.

Over in the blue sand table we offered yet another painting challenge for pairs called paddle painting. Once again the table was lined with butcher paper, but this time the painting implements were balls and paddles. Here kids could use tongs to dip their balls in different colors and then transfer them to the table where they would hit them back and forth with their paddles. Understandably, it's very easy for kids to get really excited in this activity, so it takes a lot of self control and physical adjustments to keep the ball in the table.

Meanwhile we keep trying to evaluate which activities seem the most stimulating and satisfying to kids. For example, spool painting had more than a few rough edges. The spools frequently upended so they wouldn't roll. Now that's ok even great if it offers kids an interesting problem to solve, but if it only results in disinterest then it's a dead end. So we ask ourselves, abandon it? Look elsewhere? Or is there perhaps a different way to approach it? We have to keep thinking and rethinking. Throughout all of these activities teachers are trying to observe kids actions and interests, looking for what new ideas will germinate from them.

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