

Friday, April 2, 2010

Dear Parents:

This has been an exciting week! We have begun our thematic unit of study about Japan. We have learned that Japan is far from Eureka. It is a small country with many people. The children have colored a map of Japan and they know that it is made of many islands. Your child is able to distinguish the flag of Japan. He/she can even draw it for you! We made rice balls today because rice is an important food in Japan.

There were two Big and Little Book this week. The first was A Bunny Tale and the second was An Easter Surprise. The Read Aloud book was A Carp For Kimiko. The Phonics Library book was Dot Got A Big Pot. The Social Studies Link Book was Momotaro, The Peach Boy.

I have recently noticed that some of the children have become fussy; more easily frustrated and seem tired. I am wondering if some children are staying up later with the recent time change where it is staying lighter for longer in the evening. I know from personal experience it is very hard to put a child to bed when it is light outside. Try darkening the room and spending time reading together. A good night's sleep is very important to being ready and able to learn.

Research study finds board games build math skills. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (3/26, Smydo) reported, "Beyond serving as a pleasant pastime, some children's board games may help raise the math skills of disadvantaged pre-kindergarten students, according to a study at Carnegie Mellon University" that was reported in the journal Child Development.

Researchers found that "preschoolers from low-income homes made significant advances in counting and other skills after playing a game that required them to move markers along a horizontal path consisting of numbered squares." Further, the "participants maintained the achievement gains nine weeks after they stopped playing the game -- an important point given the thorny problem of retention in public education." One of the researchers, Dr. Robert S. Siegler, was also a member of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel, which last week "issued recommendations for improving the nation's math performance." Siegler suggested that "one of the easiest and most inexpensive ways to" improve preschool mathematics skills "is to provide board games to Head Start centers, child-care centers serving low-income populations and perhaps individual parents." Many local thrift stores sell children's board games very inexpensively.

Thank you once again to those parents who brought a vehicle to Truck Day last Friday. Your participation made it a fun day for the kids. Come to class and read the stories they wrote.