"The human hand allows the mind to reveal itself.”
--Maria Montessori

Navigating Through Our World...
Working With Our Hands.

Dear Families... Welcome Back! We look forward to sharing a beautiful spring together with your child. How different they are now than in the fall term. Looking at each child and how they choose to use their hands to discover, explore, and communicate... it is one of many languages they possess.

The children are realizing marks can represent thoughts and ideas. These beginnings will flow into early writing skills.

Penelope holds her drawing with one hand and points with the other to share with us “look at this!” She is proud of her marks.

Avery grasps his brush and steadies his paint tray. He is learning to control his marks and choose his color.

Elena realizes she must hold her paper firm as she uses her marker. She is intentional with her marks “dot, dot, dot” then “round and round”... and begins to discover circular form.

You can watch these boys learning as they play... See the focus on their face and determination in their hands!
Another quote from Montessori: “Hands are the instruments of man’s intelligence” really spoke to me about the particular growth your children are experiencing this year. We have seen such emphasis in each child expressing their thoughts and discovering skills using their hands.

Penelope presses down on the wheel of the clay cutter to make it roll thru the clay. The ‘wheel’ reminds her of a favorite song as she sings “wheels on the bus go round and round!”

Wooden beads can be difficult to maneuver. Onyx concentrates to place each one in the right place.

Jack is very precise as he pinches hold of the straw to poke into the clay.

The children discover the nature of materials and how things work.

Hobbes learns to pinch the ‘eye dropper’ for his painting project.

We need to sweep up sand in the classroom... Avery works on the vacuum cleaner!
While using their hands, the children build relationships not only with new materials and tools... but also with each other.

At left, Onyx and Ramona work together on gaining their balance on the climbing structure. Stable hands are such a big part of their security. Right, Abigiya and Penelope concentrate on their food preparation. Their hands delicately handle our kitchen materials.

“Give children time, most importantly... time to explore materials and make choices... time to repeat things over and over again... time to just look and ponder.”
-Ursula Kolbe “Rapunzel’s Supermarket”

Onyx was very ardent in observing Penelope as she gathered her collection of glass pieces. He carefully gathered his own pieces for a special collection of his own.

Avery worked closely with Jack filling the container with small crunchy pieces of multi-colored cellophane from a light table project.
How Far Have Our Hands Taken Us... What Have We Learned?

Remember when... the children were just beginning to manipulate their fingers with new materials? Sometimes tentative in their approach, other times bold and confident in their exploring.

To the left as an infant, Lyla worked with larger pieces of clay, moving them from one place to another or sharing pieces with her friends. Now she works with great focus and skill as she pulls apart many small pieces and makes a collection in her bowl.

So.... What Skills Are We Mastering?

- **Holding writing tools in a successful manner**
- **Paint brush marks with purpose, and selecting choice of colors**
- **Representing specific items and amounts in counting**
- **Molding and transforming clay: poking, pressing and rolling, pinching, pushing, pulling, shaping**
- **Refined mark making... dots, lines, circles**
- **Balanced and structured work in block building**
- **Maneuvering our physical space, especially climbing**
- **Problem solving**
- **Verbalizing and describing our actions and achievements**

Avery loves to climb! He has been very excited about our outdoor slide and recently he has learned to *hold on tight* as he maneuvers his feet up the steps. Avery is happy!

Jack works to *press down hard* on the block to make the paint ’squooosh’ under the contact paper.

Lyla builds with clay and straws *“I have two!”*

*These skills and capabilities are building blocks for your child’s future, setting a valued foundation for subsequent learning.*
Hands and Clay... Ideas, Imagination and Skill Building... The children have used lots of energy this term working with clay... thinking and wondering and experimenting... how can we use this new material? We have offered a variety of clay tools over these last weeks, and have discovered the children are currently most interested in poking and prodding... making impressions and marks in the clay. They have also shown great interest in gathering their clay pieces together in a variety of sizes and making their own unique collections in cups and containers. They show pride in their accomplishments! Fine motor skills are growing! We have also been using small animals (puppies!) with the clay to spark where our imaginations may lead... Clay offers the opportunity for many discoveries!

Jack imagines. He pushes his stick into a big piece of clay “a bean!”

Onyx has been showing us his interest in block building, and gives it a try with pieces of clay. Sometimes if you press hard enough, the pieces stick together!

Hobbes is intent. He realizes the stick he holds can make many impressions in the clay.

Take a moment to study each child’s face... and wonder what they might be thinking...

We pick out many pieces for our collections.
Imaginations in Clay… we brought in small animals, sticks and straws for props... wondering how the children might react, and what they might visualize. Stories begin...

Before working with puppies, we watched a few youtube segments about puppies, and also read about ‘Whiskers,’ one of our favorite dogs. Lyla formed a very particular clay piece and described her thoughts... the puppies “were rolling in leaves!” and “I made more puppies. They eat cabbage!” Lyla’s thoughts take concrete form and shape.

Elena imagines with her sticks...“a tower!” Lana asks ‘which one is big?’ Elena points to the popsicle stick! Lana asks ‘which one is small?’ Elena points to the golf tee! ‘How many towers, Elena? “Two!” Lana said ‘one is big...’ and Elena follows up “one is little!”

As we included creatures in our clay experience, we talked about animals and birds... where they sleep, what they eat, etc. Hobbes favored a small blue parakeet. The bird was standing in the clay, and Hobbes (left) makes the birdie fall over... “sleep!” and later (right) we ask ‘what does the bird eat? “tweet, tweet, tweet!” and Hobbes helps the bird peck his beak in the clay!
And so, dear families, we look forward to each day in this new term... learning and growing with your child. Happy Spring! We will continue to explore new discoveries with clay, bringing in a variety of tools, props, and natural elements to enhance our experience and expand our skills. We will resume our work with paint... bringing in influences from our blooming natural environment. I hope to purchase an easel for the classroom, and introduce the children to mural painting. The classroom is always open to you... please come visit!!

It has been gratifying thinking back on our time together... putting together these images for all of us to share. Often I've worked on the quarterly in our classroom at naptime. As the children wake, they often come over to join me as I work on the computer... we have really enjoyed looking at these photographs together, identifying friends and revisiting experiences.

Best wishes on new beginnings.

Many things we need can wait,

The child cannot.

Now is the time his bones are formed,

His mind developed.

To him we cannot say tomorrow...

His name is today.

--Gabriela Mistral

Love you, wobblers xo