T.W.A.S.

(These Weeks at School)

**March 23-April 30, 2015**

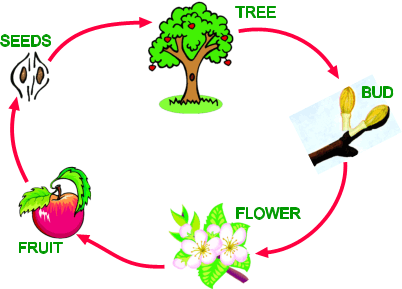
We have been having trouble uploading our past several weeks of TWAS onto our website but the problem has finally been fixed so you will now be able to find new photos and documents on our web site. For those of you who have not been online to see our website, please check out our blog and browse our collection of learning stories and parent information at [www.kbkindergarten.weebly.com](http://www.kbkindergarten.weebly.com)

In the meantime, we have decided to send you a summary of the past month to fill you in on all the learning that has been happening in KB since our last ‘hard copy’ of TWAS was sent home before the March Break. We hope you will enjoy taking some time to sit down with your child over several days to read through this collection of learning stories and photos in addition to checking out our online learning stories and photos.

**Our Learning Pathways over the past month**:

March 23-27 - Dr. Suess author study and rhyming activities

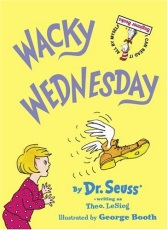
Mar 30- April 2 – Easter activities

April 7-10 – Healthy Living (dental care, healthy eating, sleep, hygiene, physical activity)

April 13-17 – Spring – growth and changes in living things (plants)

April 20-24 - Earth Week activities

April 27-May 1 – Spring – growth and changes in living things (animals)

**Literacy:** We read about Dr. Suess and spent an entire week exploring rhymes. The students loved making up nonsense rhymes and really enjoyed all of the Dr. Suess books we read. Some students made hats like *Cat in the Hat*, or fish bowls like *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*, or Footprints from *The Foot Book*, or foxes from *Fox in Socks, or* Eggs *from Green Eggs and Ham*. On Wednesday of that week, we changed our room all around before the students arrived and invited the students to find all the wacky changes we made. The chairs were backwards, the tables were mixed up, some bins were upside down, the easel was on the table, and there was even a shoe on our doorknob and another shoe stuck on the wall. Afterwards, we read *Wacky Wednesday* and the students decided to turn their shirts backwards and wear their shoes on the wrong feet all day just to be wacky. In the afternoon, they decided we should eat outside instead of inside so we enjoyed a beautiful picnic in the snowy sunshine. It was a fun and wacky day!

Throughout the week, the children discovered words that rhyme have the same ending (we call these ‘word families’) and if you say a whole bunch of rhyming words in a row it makes your tongue numb. We practiced making tongue twisters and sorting words into word families.

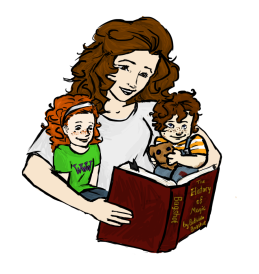
On our final day of exploring Dr. Suess books, we read *Green Eggs and Ham*. We made a prediction graph showing which students thought they would like green eggs and ham and which would not. Then we made green eggs and ham and ate them. Most of the students loved it and begged for a second helping but a few weren’t so keen.

By the end of our week, most students were able to identify and generate a rhyme, which is an important pre-reading skill and is part of the Kindergarten Phonological Assessment done 3 times per year. Our final Phonological Assessment will be done at the end of May. Please practice rhyming at home as often as possible and remember to keep it fun and wacky – Dr. Suess and Mother Goose are great resources for that!

We have been working on retelling non-fiction texts and summarizing what we learn. After reading a text, we often play a game or rebuild the story with props and labels to help us remember the important parts. This also helps children to sequence events in the proper order, which teaches them the basics of ‘time’. At home, you can help your child work on sequencing or retelling by asking them to recall parts of their day before bedtime.

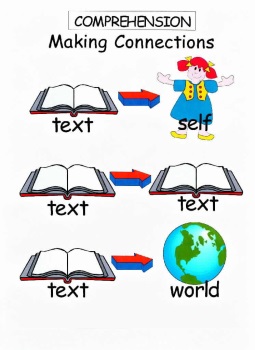
We continue to work on asking questions, making connections, and making predictions using clues on the page. This builds oral language skills by encouraging various types of sentence structure. We are also learning to recognize the features of non-fiction (captions, subtitles, labels, photos) and the students are getting really good at labeling their own pictures or writing a caption for a photo. At home please encourage your child to use Kid Writing (independent sounding out) to label anything they draw or create. You could even encourage them to make signs for their roads or train tracks, label their stuffed animals, trucks, or cars, and label toy bins or things in the house. Overall, the students are beginning to understand the purpose and function of non-fiction texts, which is most important. Last week, someone asked what animal left a huge pile of seed casings under the tree and someone else replied “let’s look for clues and then look it up on the Internet”. At home, please encourage your child to find the answers instead of just giving them the answers. This nurtures independent thinking and beginning research skills.

Many students love our Snuggle Up reading homework and are quickly plowing through the books. Thank you for taking the time each night to read these leveled books with your child. We also really appreciate your comments on the recording page because it helps us to understand your child’s reading behaviours at home. **Some ideas for comments:** did your child use picture clues; did they make predictions; did they take the risk to decode unfamiliar words on their own; did they recognize sight words; did they understand the story, did they make connections or predictions; did they read it on their own; did they need help; did they enjoy or dislike the book; did they sound out words; did they read it several times; what did it remind them of; could they identify the setting? the problem? the solution? the characters?; which character did they like best?; is your child pointing to each word (tracking) as they read?; does your child understand the difference between a word and a letter?

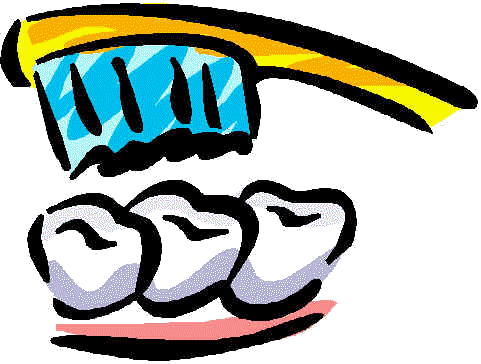
In the early years, reading is not just about reading the words on the page. Our goal is to help students learn to use and practice a variety of reading strategies and comprehension strategies each time they read. For example, using pictures as a clue to help decode words is a very important reading strategy that “good readers” use. Please encourage your child to use the pictures. At school, we often use posters with pictures and no words as a strategy for building oral language skills. We ask the children “What do you notice?” “What do you wonder?” It’s amazing what inferences and details they come up with. Some will even tell an entire story from one photo.

Memorizing the pattern in the story to help predict the words is also an important reading strategy. It’s OK if your child memorized the pattern an doesn’t appear to be paying attention to the words ☺. A next step would be to encourage your child to track the words with their pointer finger to make sure they are reading the appropriate number of words and not making any insertions. Then, you could invite your child to add their own adjectives or synonyms to change the sentence. (i.e. the truck is little; the red truck is tiny)

And, being able to make connections to the story (i.e. I fell of my bike once, I have a cat like that) and predictions about what might happen next (i.e. I think the cat is going to catch and eat the bird) is an important comprehension strategy. This shows prior knowledge and the ability to use past experiences or learning to make inferences.

When children are first learning to read, nurturing their confidence and encouraging risk-taking is a priority. In order to develop your child’s confidence in themselves as a reader, it is important to let your child decode words on their own and to let them read at their own pace no matter how slow. If we constantly correct or urge children on by doing it for them they learn helplessness and dependency and eventually refuse to take the risk to even try. They will begin to appeal for adult intervention every time they read a word or come to an unknown word. If your child is doing this (turning to look at you for approval, or saying the word with a question inflection, or getting frustrated and giving up quickly, or not trying at all) simply say, “What do you think it might be?” or “Use the pictures to help you” or “What makes sense” or “Let’s go back and look for a pattern”. If they try really hard and cannot figure it out then it is OK to assist before they get frustrated. The point is for them to receive the message that you think they are capable of figuring it out all on their own.

It’s even OK for your child to completely make up the words as they read (i.e. if the text says “the cat looked at the bird” and your child says “the cat liked to play with the bird”). As long as your child’s interpretation of the story is somewhat in context, let it go for now. The initial step of reading is for young children to open a book and pretend they are reading by making up the words. This shows an understanding of print concepts (books have words, writing conveys meaning, stories are made up of words, etc.) and basic book conventions (i.e. which way a book opens, how to turn the pages, directionality, where the reading starts, how to track words). Later during another reading of the same story, you could encourage them to point to each word as they ‘guess’ the words so they at least learn to match their made up words with the number of words on the page (i.e. if there are 5 words, they should be ‘guessing’ 5 words). Then, the next step would be to reread and help them find sight words or letters by playing games (i.e. I spy the word in on this page - can you find it? I notice a pattern that is the same on this page as the last page – do you notice it?). After several readings, your child will eventually recognize some words on the page and start to read what is actually written. And throughout this process, their independence and confidence remains intact and they feel like they have been reading the story all along. There is no harm in that whatsoever. We hope that helps provide some ideas about how to build new literacy skills and develop reading confidence each time your child rereads a book.

**Health**

We learned about our body and how to take care of it. We learned the importance of brushing and flossing our teeth twice a day and we practiced on dinosaurs and Lego blocks. We learned how to wash our hands properly and read about the importance of keeping our bodies and clothes clean. We bathed dolls, dinosaurs, animals, and toy people. We washed and combed their hair, and dressed them. We even washed some of the dolls’ clothes.

We learned about the importance of sleep and how our bodies grow when we are asleep and will not grow if we do not get enough sleep. We learned that our brains function well with sleep and shut down when we are tired. We learned that our immune system stays strong when we are well rested and we are more likely to get sick when we are tired. We learned that children need 10-14 hours of sleep a night and that our bedtimes should remain consistent.

We learned the importance of physical activity on our bodies. We used a thermometer to listen to heart rates and participated in a variety of physical activity stations in our classroom and outside. We learned that physical activity helps keep our brain sharp, helps us sleep better, and keeps our immune system strong so we don’t get sick. The students loved using the doctor kit to help take care of the sick animal puppets.

We learned about the 4 food groups and the importance of eating something from each group at every meal. We learned how some food harms our teeth and our bodies while other food strengthens our teeth and our bodies. We sorted healthy and unhealthy food and fed our baby dolls healthy food. We checked our lunches each day to make sure we had food from each of the food groups. Please help your child pack a healthy lunch each day so they can sustain the appropriate energy needed for long, busy days at school. And as the dietician and dental health nurse both say, please leave sugar drinks (juice, Kool-Aid other), at home. Since the students cannot brush their teeth at school, anything other than water is harmful to teeth and causes decay. Another idea from dental professionals – consider packing an apple or another hard fruit or vegetable to help scrape plaque or unwanted sugars off your child’s teeth during the school day.

**Science**

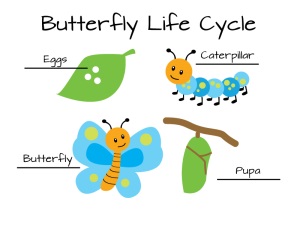
During Earth Week, we learned about the Earth and how to take care of it. Since we spend so much time in nature this is an easy concept for our students. They truly appreciate the world around them and show a lot of empathy for how to care for nature and wildlife. We picked up garbage all around our school yard and in the forest but again, this is something our students do every day. They really are amazing caretakers of the Earth.

We played recycling games and learned how to take used paper and turn it into new paper like they do in the recycling centre. We learned about the dangers of plastic on wildlife especially when it winds up in the landfill. We buried an aluminum can and some plastic in a container with soil to see if it will decompose. We also buried food waste in a compost container to see how long it takes to break down. We still have our pumpkin from the fall which completely decomposed without soil into a solid mass the size of an orange. We have discussed how burying it in soil would help it break down further and create nutrients for the soil.

We watched a short video showing the harms of plastic on our environment and we watched a short clip of WALL-E to see what Earth would be like if we didn’t take care of it. We also read and watched the Dr. Suess version of *The Lorax* to highlight the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the importance of sustainability. Afterwards, we planted a seed and completed a variety of Lorax crafts.

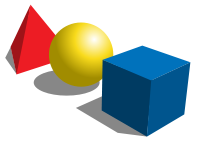
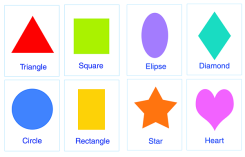
Throughout Earth Week, the students created crafts, structures, and objects out of recycled materials. Thank you to all the families who donated Beautiful Junk – the students have really enjoyed turning it into beautiful and inventive creations. They are displayed on our bulletin board right now but will come home at some point for you to admire.

In collaboration with the FDK curriculum and the Mind-Up curriculum we have been emphasizing the importance of litter-less lunches as an easy and manageable change for students to make that will have an enormous impact on the Earth over the long-term. Thank you for helping your child to pack their lunch in reusable containers and helping them to establish this mindful action for the world early in their academic development.

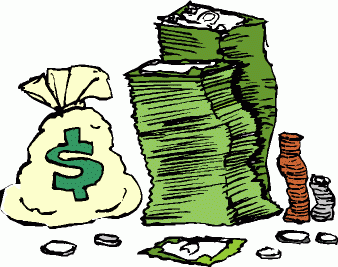
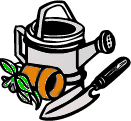
We have been learning about living and non-living things and about life cycles. We have also been discussing the learning process and how to ‘learn through play’ – ask a question, make a prediction, read to learn, and respond to reading by showing what was learned through play. So, to practice this process, we have been asking students what living thing they want to explore in order to cater the learning to their own interests. Then, we set up a variety of learning stations to support those choices. We provide non-fiction books, puzzles, toy animals, paper, pastels, paint, craft materials, magnifying glasses, and whatever else the children request. The students choose which life cycle or living thing they want to explore and learn about and create whatever they want to show their learning. So far, we have offered a variety of insects (grasshoppers, butterflies, ants, beetles, ladybugs, praying mantis), birds, dinosaurs, sharks, dogs, fish, frogs, worms, and sunflowers. All kinds of creations have come out of the learning and we are learning right along with them as their questions continue to unravel and expand. Someone wanted to know what other animals came from eggs besides birds which lead into another inquiry cycle involving alligators, frogs, snakes, dinosaurs, and insects. Someone wanted to know how eggs survived which lead to an inquiry into the strength and durability of eggs. We are planning to conduct some egg experiments this week to test our predictions. Ask your child what happened?

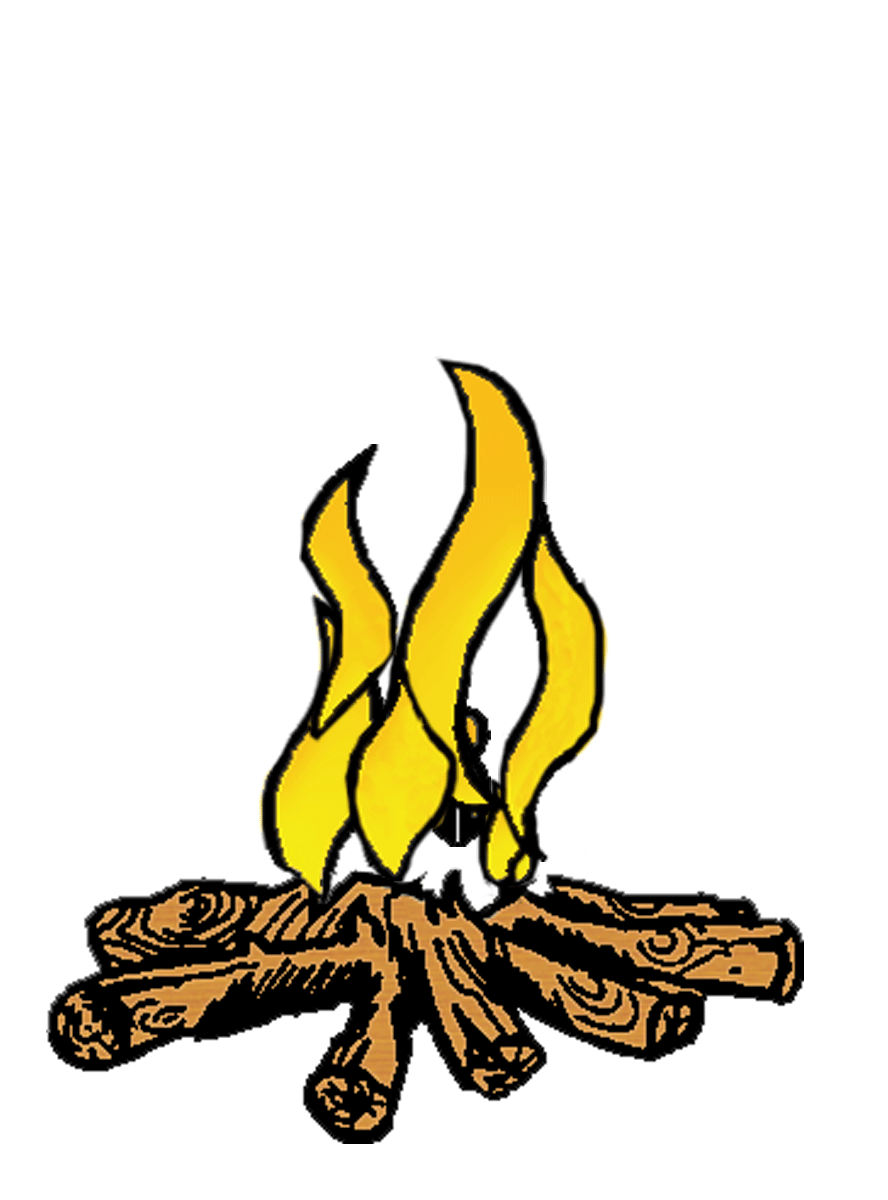
As a class, we explored the life cycle of a plant through art, drama, games, puzzles, and a scavenger hunt. Afterwards, we all planted a seed and have been watching it grow for several weeks. We even brought some math into it by measuring our plants, weighing our plants, and estimating how long it would take to grow. We have also conducted a variety of plant experiments based on the students’ inquiries. Someone wanted to see what would happen if we planted an apple seed so we did. We decided to compare it to an avocado seed which we have planted in water. We are growing radishes, beans, peas, nasturtiums, and tomatoes in our class to see which grow fastest. We planted a seed and put it in the closet to see if it would grow without light. We planted another seed and have not given it any water to see if it will grow, and we planted a seed and wrapped it in plastic (greenhouse effect) allowing it water and sun to see if it will grow faster than the plants without plastic. We also planted a carrot top to see what would happen. Ask your child to share their observations with you.

As a class, we played the ecology game to learn about the food chain and we have played the life cycle game several times to help students remember the different stages of life for a variety of animals (ladybug, grasshopper, butterfly, frog, bee, fly, worm, and mosquito). Then, we went in search of animals and plants in their different stages of life and made all kinds of interesting discoveries that you can read about in our Forest School section.

**Math**: We learned about 2D and 3D shapes through a variety of explorative activities inside and outside. The kids loved building structures, going on a shape hunt, making 2D pictures, measuring objects using shapes, making patterns with shapes, weighing shapes, sponge painting with shapes, sculpting play dough shapes, and using recycled materials to create objects. At home, please help your child look for 3D shapes and name them (i.e. “this can is a cyclinder”; “this cereal box is a rectangular prism”). It would also be helpful to search for 2D shapes around your house and out in the real world together (i.e. hexagon, circle, square, triangle, rectangle). Today one student noticed the yellow diamond shaped “children playing” sign while we were on our walk and asked what it meant. After inviting several guesses, we explained that the diamond shape meant ‘caution’. Then, we searched for other diamond shapes, and the kids started naming all the shapes they found. At school, the students enjoyed making 2D shapes out of toothpicks, popsicle sticks, play dough, and pipe cleaners. They loved making shape shadows, pressing shapes into the sand, sorting shapes by number of points and sides, and guessing shapes by reaching into a bag and feeling the corners and edges.

We have been working really hard on Number Sense and Numeration. We are trying to encourage the students to count on from sets they already know. For instance, if they have 6 blocks in their tower and can recognize 3 without counting, we encourage them to start at 3 and count on from there, rather than starting at 1. Every day, we do a 5 minute Number Talks lesson where we show the students a collection of dots for 3 seconds and then ask them to tell us how many they saw. This program builds mental math skills so that children learn to group objects into sets of friendly numbers (2, 5, 10) instead of counting by 1. This program also highlights the idea that everyone uses different strategies to solve math problems. Some might see 4 and 1 more to make 5 while another person might see 3 and 2 more to make 5. Both are correct and both are equally acceptable methods of arriving at the correct answer. At home, please encourage your child to count every day but try to determine how many objects your child can recognize in a set without counting. This is called subitizing. Some recognize 6 while others only recognize 3. Once you have determined this, encourage your child to count on from that number every day until they can subitize beyond that number. Dice games help improve a child’s ability to subitize. It would also be beneficial to have your child practice printing and making numerals to ensure they use proper directionality. We sent home a number booklet with poems to help your child remember the proper direction. We also sent home a description of the “left helper hand” to assist children in the proper formation of numbers. The students practice this every day at school so should be able to recite all of the poems and tell you all about the left helper hand. However, extra practice at home helps to reinforce this learning. It would also help to talk about what number comes before and what number comes after. Try it with your child and see where they get stuck.

We are now focusing on Measurement and Estimation. The students are exploring capacity by seeing how many bugs can fit in the container; we are measuring the length of plants with gems; we are sorting bugs by size (biggest to smallest and vice versa); we are weighting bugs, plants, and objects from nature with rocks; we are measuring the passage of time by finding things that sometimes happen, always happen, and almost never happen; we are learning about money (coins only) by buying flowers, trowels, pots, water cans, rakes, and garden gloves at our drama centre which is set up as a flower/garden shop. and we are measuring the area and capacity of gardens using beans and seeds.

**Forest School**: Just before the snow melted, the students enjoyed playing in the sunshine and building many different sculptures out of the easy to form snow. Some of the creations were: a spaceship, a hot tub, a giant marble track using a snowball for a marble, an ice cream stand, a hamburger store, some snow cupcakes, and a dinosaur. We offered the students a variety of materials (cardboard, rope, paint, spray bottles with coloured water, kitchen supplies, shovels, pails, paper, scissors, carabineers, pulleys) and they used them for a variety of creations. One group constructed bird feeders out of cardboard, rope, lard, and seeds. Another group made a salamander trap with a box, some scissors and a rope. And another group built a sea animal lift (to rescue animals from the ocean) using a pulley, some rope, and a bucket as a basket. Their imaginations really are amazing and their creativity shines with very few materials and the simplicity of nature and the wonderful outdoors. Who needs plastic toys?

As we are sure you’ve heard, we had a campfire and cooked hot dogs and s’mores. We spent several days learning about campfire safety and how to build a low impact campfire. The children gathered all of the wood over a series of days. They built the boundaries, shoveled the snow to create the pit, built benches from logs and stumps found in the forest, and then cooked their own food over the fire while the adults tended the fire and monitored safety. We sang songs, Olivia played her guitar, and we told stories. It was lovely. We can’t wait until next time. We just spent our outdoor time the other day setting up our next campfire spot.

[](http://www.google.ca/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fimgarcade.com%2F1%2Fsap-clipart%2F&ei=7IJHVeWGMc2ZyATT5YHQCQ&bvm=bv.92291466,d.aWw&psig=AFQjCNG3WEbqRnI2zoQbOWnviLUjWKpqDw&ust=1430836245716818)We tapped 2 trees during the week before Easter and collected sap for 3 weeks. We initiated this experience as an inquiry so, like the campfire, it took several days to prepare and the students completely owned it. We read “*Food FromTrees”* and asked students what trees we get food from? They talked about cherry trees, peach trees, apple trees, and orange trees. We asked which ones were in our forest and they immediately remembered all of the apple trees we devoured in the fall. Then, we asked what other trees in our forest might give us food and they arrived at Maple Trees giving us maple syrup. We asked how that worked and they made many predictions. They decided the syrup either fell from branches or came out of the bark somehow. We read *Grandpa’s Sugar Bush* and then went searching for maple trees in our forest. It took several days for the children to figure out which trees were maples. We read non-fiction books about maple trees and provided tree identification guides to help them. They learned about evergreens in this process as many kept choosing evergreen trees. They also learned how to look at bark and buds more closely to help determine the types of trees. In the end, they chose 2 big healthy maples and helped us drill and hammer the spiles into the tree. We tasted the sap and the kids said, “It’s watery”. We checked the buckets daily and learned about proportional reasoning when we boiled a huge pot of sap into a ½ full yogurt container. When we have our next campfire we are planning to make some bannock over the fire and enjoy it with the syrup we made from our own backyard. We can’t wait!

[](http://www.google.ca/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.erodent.co.uk%2Fgardenpond%2Fapril2002.htm&ei=koNHVdzSOMqYyAT584CgDw&bvm=bv.92291466,d.aWw&psig=AFQjCNHdniqiuMj7SiQtsExze9uscYZwsg&ust=1430836470616226)[](https://www.google.ca/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fweed-science-classes.wikispaces.com%2FAnnelids%2B(segmented%2Bworms)&ei=w4NHVYGKE46eyAS5pICwAQ&bvm=bv.92291466,d.aWw&psig=AFQjCNHph_3ZglYz-eCvmhsN-HO9vJuo8A&ust=1430836532470277)We have enjoyed the beautiful weeks of sunshine watching spring emerge. Every day, the students search for signs of spring and since we spend so much time outside each day, they were able to recognize and appreciate the smallest changes (i.e. being able to dig in the mud, the creek ice melting, the water beginning to flow, the first bug, the first bud, the melting snow, the first green sprout, the first mosquito larvae, the first robin, the geese returning, new and different scat). It’s amazing how attuned the children are to the growth and changes in our forest. As soon as the ice began to melt in the creek, they began to build boats, dams, waterfalls, and bridges. They continue to search for tadpoles and frogs every day and were ecstatic when the snow melted out of the sand box and they found their first worm. They’ve been busy making mud cakes, sand pizzas, and nature art in the trees. And every day, they make several new discoveries: a turtle, frogs, mosquito larvae, beetles, ants, frog eggs, flowers, tadpoles, birds, feathers, and many kinds of insect larvae. At recess they even pay attention to nature and notice living things. And they always encourage others to leave it alone and not harm it. Then they run to get us and show us what they’ve found so we can take a picture. We’ve been talking lots about using our eyes to look but leaving creatures where we find them so they can make new living things and take care of their new families. They are very good at reminding others to be mindful in this regard too.

We took a walk to the boardwalk where we saw our first tadpoles and a frog. We listened to birds and looked at them through binoculars. They are beginning to recognize the song of a few common birds. We found a beaver lodge and waited for the beaver to emerge but didn’t see it this time.

Last Friday, we walked to the arena and watched the Stars on Ice rehearsal for 40 minutes. It was really neat! Afterwards, we played on the playground at the arena.

Today, we walked to the Pirate Ship playground at The River Cone. We worked on street and crossing safety on the way as a lead into next week’s lessons on Safety in our Community. The students loved it there.

**Reminders/Notices:**

* Today was Library Day. **Our next library day is Monday May 11th**. Please remember to check our classroom calendar for library days.
* **ASES Family Math Night is on Thursday May 7 from 6:00-7:30**. This is for children of all ages. Hope to see you there!
* **Cops for Cancer/Pedal for Hope** is coming to ASES on **Tuesday May 5th.**
* Please add poems that we send home to your child’s poem book and practice them often. Shared Reading is an important first step in beginning to read. We have sent home two spring poems, and a 3D shape poem over the past few weeks and this week a Speckled Frog song/poem will come home.
* Please encourage your child to practice their sight word rings or alphabet rings every night before bed and return the ring when they have mastered them so we can add more. These are words your child needs to know before the end of Kindergarten.
* Please establish a habit of reading your child’s Snuggle Up homework book each night and return when you have read it several times and completed the comprehension strategies and activities outlined in the folder and in this issue of TWAS.
* Please check the weather and dress your child appropriately so they are comfortable throughout the day. We spend a minimum of 160 minutes outside every day.
* Rubber boots are needed every day for our Forest School expeditions because the children love to explore the creeks and mud. Please send them daily if your child wears shoes to school or feel free to leave them at school during the week and we can return them each weekend if that’s best. Thanks.
* It’s time to slip slap slop! Please provide sun protection for your child by applying sunscreen before they come to school as well as a labeled sunhat every day.
* We sent home your child’s musical instrument the students made. Hope they made it home.
* Portfolios came home on April 30. Please celebrate your child’s accomplishments and return the folder so we can begin to collect more of your child’s work. The work inside the folder is yours to keep ☺
* We are in need of Kleenex and would greatly appreciate any donations.

Thanks for your ongoing support and involvement in your child’s development and learning.

[](http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.grubbylittlefaces.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Walking-through-muddy-puddles.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.grubbylittlefaces.com/autumn-days-slow-walks-puddles-and-berries/&h=2592&w=3872&tbnid=aQzASo8zqxyMaM:&zoom=1&docid=fdoPSSZYhHPRuM&ei=lYRHVaHVEZL7yATP4IEw&tbm=isch&ved=0CDMQMygrMCs4ZA)Ms. Ferren and Ms. Hewitt