



What's so Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, and Understanding: Exploring Martin's Words

By Teacher Lisa

The month of January was filled with powerful social-emotional learning and explorations of justice and fairness as we focused our attention on Dr. King and his powerful words. We introduced the children to Dr. King in the following way:

Many years ago in our country there were rules about where people could play, eat, drink, and go to school. The rules were different for different people and they weren't based on the choices you made, or who you were on the inside. The rules were based just on what people looked like on the outside, on the shade of brown that their skin was.

People come in all different shades of brown. Some people have very dark chocolate brown skin, others have medium brown skin, or very light brown tan skin, or any shade in between. *We all rolled up our sleeves to examine our skin and describe what shades we could see. The children noticed that there were so many different shades of brown.*

We wouldn't have been able to go to school together or play at the park together. The rules said that only people with the same shade of brown skin could be together. If you were hungry and wanted to go to a restaurant, they might tell you, "no, you can't come here because your skin is not the right shade of brown."



We asked the children if they thought these rules were fair and they all said, "No! That's not fair!"

We continued...

There were many people who agreed with you. They didn't feel the rules were fair. They felt that all people should be allowed, but the rules didn't change. Then one day a powerful hero stood up and said, "Stop. These rules are not fair and they must be changed." He was angry, but he didn't hit and he didn't push and he didn't hurt, even when people hurt him. He kept on standing up and sharing his powerful words about changing the unfair rules. People started listening to him. They stood up too and said, "We must change these rules!" He kept talking and inspiring people with his words until the rules were changed. That hero's name was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Then we took a few moments to say his name and marvel at how long it is – Dr...Martin...Luther...King...Jr!



As the days and weeks went by, we began to explore Dr. King's powerful words and peaceful problem-solving in more depth. He taught us about making fair rules that included people, about standing up to unfair rules, about helping ourselves and others who are being treated unfairly, the power of working as a team (together, not apart), and to solve problems with love and not hate ("Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.").



As the children worked this month, we drew their attention to how they were using Dr. King's words and teachings in their actions. We noticed when a group of three children used teamwork to push another child on the ride-on train track when she wasn't able to move it herself. We noticed when children stood up and used words to let others know



they didn't like the way the play was going; and we noticed when the children receiving those messages listened and changed their play accordingly. We noticed when a powerful kick was reciprocated not with an equal kick, but

powerful stopping words. We noticed when the rules of play changed from, "only girls can play this game," to "you have to be a dragon in this game."

A natural opportunity for reevaluating a rule came up one Wednesday when Teacher Jana inadvertently forgot her lunch. Our lunch day rule is that we only eat the food our grown-ups pack for us and that we cannot share food. As we settled in for lunch, Teacher Jana shared her problem with us and asked what the children thought she could do. They were all very concerned about her, but were also reluctant to change the rule. After some discussion, a few of the parent-teachers offered her some food from their lunches and she asked the class if she could take it, because our rule is that we don't share food. We took a vote, and, although many children felt the rule should stand, the majority of the group felt that the rule could be changed, but just for Teacher Jana and just for that day.

There were also several books we shared that led to wonderful discussions and connections to Dr. King and his words. In Dr. Seuss's book, *The Sneetches*, the sly Sylvester McMonkey McBean takes all of the Sneetches' money by capitalizing on their insecurities and desire to exclude based on physical characteristics – star-bellied vs. that



plain-bellied sort. He repeatedly changes them from plain- to star-bellied, and back again, by sending them through his "very peculiar machine." Afterwards, he rides off, money overflowing from the bags on his wagon, 'And he

laughed as he drove in his car up the beach, "They never will learn. No. You can't teach a Sneetch!"

We asked the class, "What does he mean? What do the Sneetches need to learn?"

There were a lot of ideas including,

- "They should learn to spend their money better."
- "They shouldn't trust bad guys."
- "They should learn to be nice. They could play together!"

We also read a book so fitting for preschoolers that I want a copy for our classroom library! It perfectly addresses a problem that



comes up every year in our classroom. In the book, *Rex Wrecks It*, three friends are excitedly building all kinds of amazing creations.

Each time they finish, though, Rex excitedly runs over and knocks the creations down. They get frustrated. The three creators work together on several possible solutions, but each one they try has the same outcome – Rex knocks down their buildings. Finally, they come up with a plan to invite Rex to build with them, and it works! It turns out that he was just wanting to play and when they chose to solve the problem with love (inviting him to play) instead of hate (yelling or hurting him), they were able to find a solution that made everyone feel good and connected.



It was a wonderful month filled with great problem-solving, empathy-building, and explorations of fairness. Thank you Dr. King for your inspiration and thank you to all of our children and families for their ideas, thoughtfulness, patience, and hard work! I am grateful that our children have this space and support to work through challenges, to develop understanding and connection to those who approach the world differently than themselves, and to learn through experience that any problem has multiple possibilities for solution. These lessons are so much more powerful than simply instructing children to "be nice" and to "share."



FREE Seattle Asian Art Museum

WHEN: Thursday, Feb. 12, 2015, 5 – 9 a.m.

WHERE: Seattle Asian Art Museum, 1400 E. Prospect St.

LINK: <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/>

Yo-Yo Championship

WHEN: Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015, 10 a.m.

WHERE: Seattle Center Armory, 305 Harrison St.

LINK: <http://pnwryoyo.wix.com/pnwr2015>

2nd Saturdays for Families

WHEN: Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015, 5 – 7 p.m.

WHERE: Crossroads Bellevue, 15600 N.E. Eighth St.

LINK: <http://www.crossroadsbellevue.com/specialevents/2ndsaturdays>

*Bonus - support Honora's dad at his new restaurant, Wunderbrat, right next to the main stage area!

Lunar New Year Festival

WHEN: Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

WHERE: Hing Hay Park, Maynard Avenue S and S King Street

LINK: <http://www.cidbia.org/>

Cartoon Happy Hour

WHEN: Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

WHERE: Central Cinema, 1411 21st Ave.

LINK: <http://central-cinema.com/happy-hour/>

CulturalFest International Expo

WHEN: Thursday, Feb. 26, 2015, 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

WHERE: University of Washington, Husky Union Building, 4001 Stevens Way N.E.

LINK: <http://www.fiuts.org/events/culturalfest/culturalfest/expo>

March 5 is the first Thursday of the month. Many museums are FREE! Check out one of the following:

Burke Museum

Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI)

Nordic Heritage Museum

Seattle Art Museum

Seattle Asian Art Museum

Henry Art Gallery

Northwest African American Museum

Museum of Flight



Community Events

Love-ly Art (and a recipe)



Fingerprints are everywhere, so embrace them!

What you need:
white construction paper
or painters canvass
painters tape
paint - at least 2-3
different colors

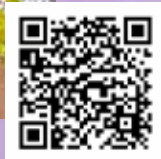


Handprint Valentine's Craft

Josiah 2013

Aluminum Foil Art

What you need:
foil
paint



"Magic" Wax Drawings*

What you need:

white crayon
watercolour paints
paint brushes
white watercolour paper or card stock
red (or other) cardstock
glue



*although this is presented as a Valentine's card project, it would be awesome for anything - even random squiggles!

A few weeks ago I brought in Breakfast Cookies for snack. The kids went nuts for them, so I thought I would pass along the recipe. Enjoy!

-Karen

Healthy Peanut Butter Oatmeal Cookies

- TheSkinnyFork.com

Ingredients:

2 Ripe Bananas, Mashed
1/3 C. Peanut Butter
2/3 C. Applesauce
1 Tsp. Vanilla
1/2 Tsp. Salt
1/2 Tsp. Cinnamon
Dash of Ground Cloves
Dash of Ground Nutmeg
1 1/2 C. Quick or Old Fashioned Oats
1/4 C. Nuts (I used dry unsalted peanuts.)
1/4 C. Semi Sweet Chocolate Chips
1/4 C. Shredded Coconut (Optional)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Mix together the bananas, peanut butter, applesauce, vanilla, and spices. Add in the oats, nuts, chocolate chips, and coconut; stir until well combined.

Spoon a rounded 2 tbsp. of the cookie mixture onto the lined baking sheet, leaving an inch or two between each and flatten slightly. I placed a few more chocolate chips on top of each cookie. Bake for 20-30 minutes and allow to cool slightly.