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## **Self-Portraits Our Bodies Inside and Out**

### **Ascension Childcare Preschoolers 2013-2014**

**There is a book called *People* by Peter Spier in our book area that is favored by many to have read from time to time. As a teacher read it one day in September to a few children gathered round comments arose, “I don’t look like her (in the book).” Holding her arm next to her friend’s arm she said, “Mine (skin color) is like yours. Not that girl’s.” The girl in the book had a darker skin tone. We read on and another child said, “I like to wear earrings but hers are really big.” She was an African girl with large hoops in her ears. We continued on and so did the chatter about similarities and differences.**

**As we consider the co-construction of learning, our team met to discuss the children’s thoughts, realizations, and their desire to read on and learn more. We, our team of three teachers: Cara Hart, Cheryl Couillard and Tom Shotwell, brought students’ quotes, our impressions of many provocations that arose from the children to a discussion. We made some predictions as to what may happen if we brought this book called *People* to circle time. We drew up a preliminary web of ideas of provocations we’d bring forth to the directions we could see this interest moving and materials we’d need to gather to be prepared for the plan that may transpire. We knew we’d like to see the children simply recognize *their own* body parts in conjunction with noticing differences and similarities among themselves and their classmates.**

**A teacher brought the book to circle time one day along with two mirrors: one large standing and a hand held mirror. The presence of the mirror made most children want to look into it. This was an exciting moment. Each child was invited to tell about what they saw.**



**“My face...I have two eyes and my mouth.”**

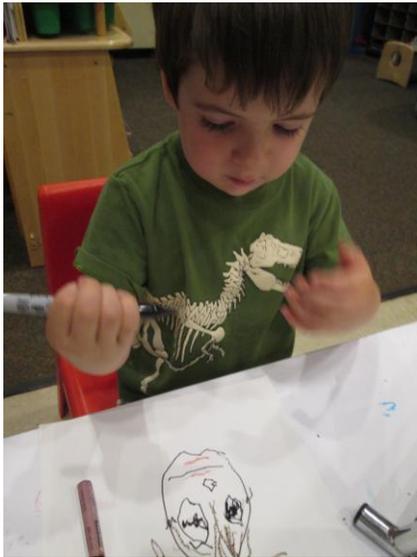
**“I have brown hair...its curly.”**

**“Mine is straight and I hair hairs here (points to his forehead).”**

**“I look like him in this book. He has brown skin like me. I have curly hair too.”**

**They found the drawing and painting supplies at the table again: Sharpies, oil pastel Craypas, and Reeves watercolor paints. Cara asked each child if they were ready to draw their face as they peered into the mirror.**







**We couldn't stop with just our heads ... "my neck is attached to my head! And then my tummy and my arms!" "I have two legs and two feet on them." So each child worked individually with a teacher to draw their bodies and choose their skin color, paint and cut out their entire body. The teachers helped to hold the paper as it was a *big* endeavor to manage for some.**





**The children kept saying they were “naked” and “need clothes”. So we gathered fabrics. The teachers offered to help them draw and hold the fabric as they cut out a pattern of pants, shirt, shorts, skirt, dress? Our classroom became a clothing factory. All of their paper bodies don clothing and the owners are in the process of telling stories either Fiction or Non-fictional stories of themselves.**



**As each child in our class became interested in participating in this project, there were other activities offered to choose from each day, i.e. measuring using non-standard units using blocks, shoes lined up, cars or playing with a sensory element e.g. Oobleck, Flubber or water. We also plucked seeds from sunflowers and did still life watercolor paintings. Even though you may not see your child in a photo know that he/she has their body up in our classroom which took them much time and effort honing their fine motor skills, problem solving, decision making, math skills (spatial orientation, recognition and drawing shapes, storytelling and more).**

**Our team met regularly to review what we thought they'd be discovering and how this would jibe with the areas of development (Core Standards) that the investigations might cover. Some areas of development: making connections (comparing and contrasting) between their body and their peers' or adults' bodies around them. They may even comment on the different languages spoken in our classroom, different ethnicities, nationalities, and how we all appear to one another. These anticipations supported us to become the better guides and co-constructors of their learning.**

**A mother came in one morning telling of a question from her child the night before, "Mommy what's under my skin? I know bones! Right?"**

**This mother is a doctor and she offered her child to come down to her office to see/examine the full length skeleton that they called Mr. Bones. They did and she told us her child *really* wanted to bring it into her classroom and tell everyone of her new found knowledge *what's under her skin!***



**Mr.Bones has become quite the provocation which spurred on the investigation Inside Our Bodies.**

**“How many teeth does Mr. Bones have? Mine are smaller.”**



**My heart beats slow when I am sleeping and it gets fast when I am running. “You be the patient and I will give you a check up. Your heart is beating.” Patient reports, “If it stopped beating I would not be alive.”**

**More parents showed interest in lending and donating their time and materials to our classroom over the next two months. We have two PAs- Physician Assistants, a pathologist, a doctor, and one of our team member's spouses is a doctor. In one of our regular weekly discussions about our children, our threads and where they're heading or not, and how it's all jibing with our standards came the idea of erecting space that might be considered a hospital with an "ambulance" on wheels, and a stretcher or bed.**



**The children helped and watched while the three teachers bolted the top portion of our old loft together and situated it directly on the floor level in an open space that would invite dramatic play.**



## **Casting a broken leg and trying the cast for the first time**



**While using the stethoscope, many of the children noticed differences in the “bump bump bumps”. So with that provocation we asked the children to run and put their hands over their hearts to feel the ‘bump bump bumps’. They all exclaimed, “Its fast!” “My heart is beating bump bump bump bump!” (said very fast) Now sit still and continue to feel your heart beating. “My is slow now.” “Ahhh... I’m all rested.”**

**The investigation inside our bodies took a turn toward wondering how our bodies tick. Many books were made available related to our organs, muscles, staying fit, importance of exercise, eating well, and annual well check-ups.**

**Yoga has always been a favorite time during our day.**



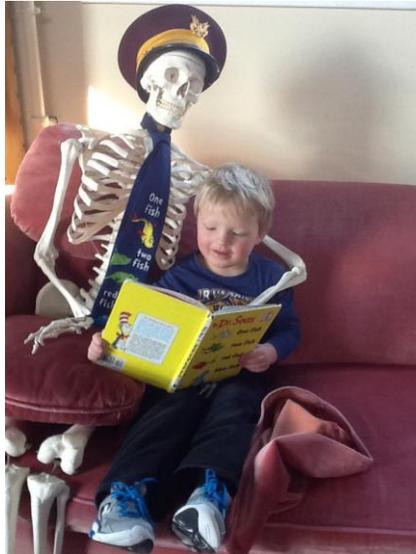
**Running for exercise.**



**Protecting our bones and when they accidentally break we need to repair them with a cast.**



**Our investigation of *Our Bodies Inside and Out* continues to be inspired by more child queries almost daily relating to how their “insides” work. We, Cara, Tom and Cheryl, our parent body, and our class of preschoolers continue to work together to be co-constructors of learning.**



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