October was another busy month for the Junior Kindergarten. Here are some of the highlights:

• Read-In Week: Four different guests from the Faculty of Education came in to share their favourite books and love of reading with us. After their visits we spent time writing thank you letters in small groups - our guests loved reading these thoughtful notes!
• Fall Celebration: We showed off our classroom and shared our learning with family and friends. Activities included name tag making, apple taste-test, birthday graphing, mini-pumpkin hunt and music class.
• Research: our class worked with several groups of U of A undergraduate students in the areas of physical education, math and early childhood.
• Music: Music highlights are on the third page of the newsletter.
Project Work

Toys:
We are beginning to wrap up our project on toys - revisiting the learning experiences that we have shared and documenting our new understandings about toys. Some of the concepts that really stand out to us are:

- The idea that people keep their favourite toys for a long time - each person decides which toys are most important to them
- Toys are for playing with and this sometimes means that they will be broken - if and how they are fixed depends on what the toy is and who owns it
- People like different kinds of toys

Stories:
As we move forward in the school year we will begin to discuss stories. This is a very 'big' topic that and we will spend time exploring it throughout the remainder of the school year. We will talk about different ways stories are told, why we tell stories, who writes stories and many more interesting topics. We will also begin to write stories individually and as groups - perhaps modeling some of the favourite books that we read. As an introduction to this project we are excited to have students share their favourite books from home, stay tuned for a new sharing schedule soon!

Don’t Forget the Blog!
Remember to check us out online at http://jrkindergarten.edublogs.org/ where you can get weekly updates on our classroom happenings, the titles of books we have been reading, view photos and even hear our favourite song about a cat named Pete!

TOY EXPERT

We were thrilled to have Larry Prochnor come in to our classroom and share his knowledge of old toys with us, he brought a set of blocks from his collection which was more than 130 years old! We were so interested in hearing his answers to our questions about old toys.

GRAPHING

We have been exploring the concepts of ‘voting’ and ‘graphing’ as we take polls on topics such as: How did you get to school? And, when were you born? We use the completed graphs to practice counting and making statements about which options are most and least popular.

CALENDAR

At the start of November we began to look at a classroom calendar. Using the calendar we will mark special dates and begin to use vocabulary such as: day, week, month, year, yesterday, tomorrow, before and after. We are beginning to notice patterns that repeat on certain days of the week.
MUSIC WITH LAUREL NIKOLAI

It has been an exciting fall in music class with the Jr. Kindergarten students. The children have settled nicely into the routine of music class which includes creative locomotor ways of entering the room, singing the Hello Song, progressing through many singing, instrumental and movement activities and ending with a song based picture book and the Goodbye Song. It was wonderful to have so many of you take part in a group music class as part of our Fall Celebration to get an idea of how your children have been making music in the JK.

Along with establishing classroom routines, students have been working on many musical skills and increasing their repertoire and music vocabulary to increase their musical ideas when they later play with music in the JK or in other environments. In the music room you will notice centres are set up with books, instruments and manipulatives for the children to access long after music classes have happened. The musical activities in the class are designed with the idea that children play “with music.” These musical centres are set up so that children may revisit musical ideas from class and make their own meaning out of these experiences long after our thirty minutes together. Take note as well of all the wonderful ways your children are playing “with” this music when you are with them.

A large portion of the fall has been spent on exploring instrumental and vocal sounds as well as movements that may be inspired by these sounds. These sounds include animal sounds, toy sounds and environmental sounds (the wind). While exploring sounds we also have explored the musical concept of loud and soft. The sound exploration has helped the children familiarize themselves with the possibilities for making sounds with the incredible selection of instruments we have in the music room and I encourage you to continue the dialogue about the sounds around you when you are out and about with your children.

We have covered a number of movement concepts in class as this kinaesthetic reinforcement of music is natural connection for young children. The children are using many locomotor and nonlocomotor ways of moving creatively. We have worked on the concepts of space, shapes and levels. The movement activities we do include both moving individually with creative movement or moving collectively as a group.

In addition to these mentioned concepts, we have been working on both steady beat and in tune singing. These are two skills that will be worked on the entire year in a variety of ways.

Please see below for a list of songs which we have sung in class. Feel free to come and explore the music room with your children when you drop them off and if you have any questions or musical stories to share please pop by the room on a Tuesday or Thursday morning. I look forward to seeing you!

**SONGS WE HAVE EXPLORED**

- Hello Song
- Play the Drum
- See How I'm Jumping
- Grizzly Bear
- Echo Song
- One Little Owl
- Falling Leaves
- Goin' to the Farm
- Wake Up Bear
- This Old Man
- Goodbye Song

**REMINDERS**

**Dressing for the Weather**
Before it gets too cold we will continue to try heading outside to play several times each week. Please help us with this task by ensuring that your child comes to school with gloves and a hat or hooded jacket each day - this helps ensure they are able to play comfortably!

**Absences**
Please ensure that your child’s absences from school are communicated to the JK staff via in-person conversation, phone call or e-mail. Our licensing regulations require that we contact the family of any child with an unexplained absence each day, as you can appreciate, with our busy classroom it is often challenging to find time to do this and we don’t want to intrude on your day with extra phone calls!

**Snack**
Some children are spending an extended period of time at the snack table each day. We would like to remind you to pack a snack that your child can comfortably eat in about 15-20 minutes. If you are packing a larger snack, please consider having a conversation with your child about the items that you would like them to eat and items that are optional.
Celebration of Giving

We are currently in the process of planning our next Celebration - the Celebration of Giving which will take place on December 15, 2011. In the month of December we will be working with Santa’s Anonymous to collect toy donations for children in need in and around our city. This will be a wonderful opportunity for the Junior Kindergarten students to discuss the spirit of the holiday season and to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. For the Celebration we will, once again, welcome all Junior Kindergarten students and their special guests to our classroom to join us in a day of revisiting our learning and experiencing new activities. Snack will be potluck-style and we welcome you to bring something to share with the class but remind you that this is not an obligation!

Field Visit Date Correction

Oops! In looking through the Field Visit information package I have noticed a mistake! The 4Cats Art Studio Field Visit is listed as taking place on Wednesday, April 18, 2012, this is incorrect. The 4Cats Art Studio Field Visit will take place on Monday, April 16, 2012. Sorry for the error!

-Shannon