

PRESCHOOL DURING A PANDEMIC

INTEGRATING THE LA PLAYA CURRICULUM AT HOME



SAFE ACTIVITIES FOR UNUSUAL TIMES

A MESSAGE FROM
TEACHER TERI

Safe Fall Activites

RELIABLE CONTENT
FOR KIDS

**Affirmative
Language with
Anne**

BY ASHLEY BRODE

Thursdays at Lindberg Park are a perfect respite from the four walls of my living room! Our family is new to La Playa, and we're genuinely pleased to meet the group and socialize outdoors during the pandemic. (So glad I haven't forgotten how.) Although it's an unconventional year for many, my children don't understand what preschool looks like outside of a virtual setting. For me, taking on the role of parent and teacher is both natural and stressful. Reinforcing the Bunny group's weekly curriculum and activities, however, has been invaluable to everyone's stimulation and motivation to learn more at home. The newsletter volunteers thought about how celebrating Fall might help us endure the uncertain months ahead. We hope they will inspire you, also!

PUMPKIN OR APPLE PICKING

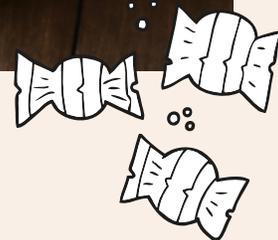
MomsLA has a list of the best ranked pumpkin patches around, and it includes a virtual map. Score! You can see some of our La Playa families pumpkin picking—and even making pies from their finds on the La Playa FaceBook page.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

Coordinate a distanced costume contest, themed story time (see our picks on page 8) or Halloween dance party with people you care about. If that sounds like too much to plan, check out the Kidspace Children's Museum site, where kids can explore an online Halloween House! to learn about pumpkins, bats, crafts and more.

NEW FALL RECIPES

One colorful, healthy treat your kids can help assemble (see photo) is mock-candy corn fruit cups. They have layers of chopped pineapple and oranges topped with whipped cream or yogurt. And if you want to try something different with your fresh pumpkin seeds, the Brodes use a pinch of salt and Chinese Five Spice seasoning on theirs.

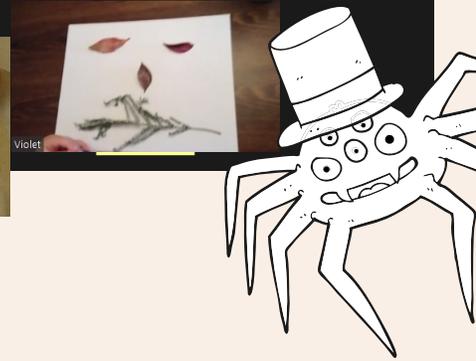


SCAVENGER HUNT

This activity is easily done from the comfort of your own space, with the things you already have on hand. It could function as an alternative to trick-or-treating, ensuring children can dress up and hunt for whatever you may hide—stickers, autumn leaves, personal notes, candies or snacks.

LA ZOO

Drive-in movies run from October 29th through November 1st at the zoo. The theme is "Hair-Raising Halloween", and many of the movies they'll show are rated PG. Arrive early to see a pre-show video featuring animals, trivia challenges and more! They also encourage decorating your vehicle.



A STUDY OF NATURE

Lessons in Review From Teacher Teri

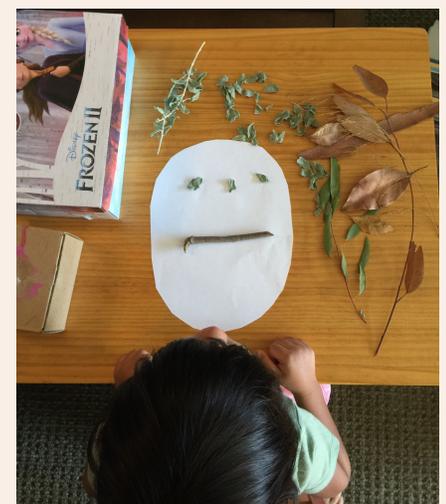
Our virtual circle time groups have been studying nature during the month of October. Each group has taken on the topic in differing ways. The teachers have been working hard to find activities appropriate to the age of their group, enticing enough to keep the children's attention and using the materials that are available at your homes (for the most part.) It has been exciting to see what the groups have been doing and to see the children participating from afar.

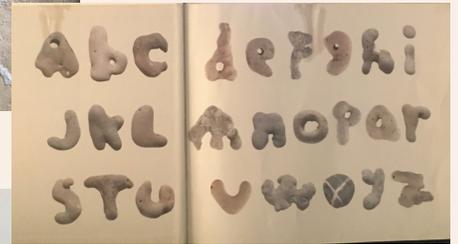
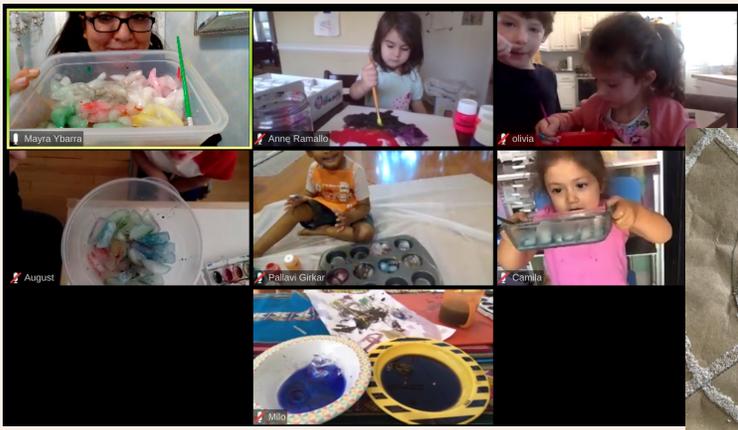
The Bunny group talked about weather. They talked about how important weather is for outside. They made clouds out of cotton, dressed their Panda friend in appropriate clothes for different types of weather and talked about how important rain is and how it is formed. The Bunny group did an ice cube painting activity to demonstrate the changing properties of water.

The Kitty groups have been looking at birds in nature as well as trees and plants. They learned that birds come in all different colors and that there are a variety of birds—including penguins, chickens, ducks.... For the tree exploration, the friends went for walks with their families and collected items from trees and plants. The children made face collages with their found nature objects. They compared the different leaves and the various colors that leaves come in. The children also explored the properties of sticks and learned that sticks are little branches of trees.

The Puppy group has been learning about trees and rocks. They read a book that had a rock alphabet in it. During tree week they explored textured art by making trees with bags or newspapers. They also talked about apples growing on trees so they painted with apples.

All in all the friends are enjoying their exploration of nature. Virtual learning is a new experience for all of us (teachers, parents, and children) and we are enthusiastically walking this path together.





GROUP SPOTLIGHT

Puppies On Zoom

By Jaime Markham

To mute, or not to mute, that is the question. When I first imagined a Zoom room full of preschoolers, I was a little worried about what it might sound like. Would there be a chorus of tiny voices echoing loudly through the speaker on the laptop, while the poor teacher struggled to complete a sentence? Would one child command the spotlight and sing loudly at the top of their lungs for the first 10 minutes of circle time? Would someone recount an embarrassing story about their parents only to have every other child rebound with even more embarrassing stories about their own parents?



Incredibly, aside from the occasional and expected technical difficulties, these kids have been amazing! Here they are, thrown into a virtual room together and much to my surprise and delight our La Playa Puppy friends are having fun playing together and finding new and unique ways to connect with one another. The Puppies begin each circle time with the drum song, they stand up... sit down... and turn around... turn around... AND turn-a-round! You're singing it in your head now, too, aren't you?

Following the song, circle time looks much like it does in person at La Playa. They take turns sharing their thoughts and ideas. There's a theme for the day, a story, some time for discussion, and an activity or two. In the past two months, the Puppies have made musical instruments, drawn self-portraits, created rainbows out of the healthy foods, created collaborative art with Teacher Ruth on a digital white board, conducted science experiments, and most recently they've explored the fascinating world of spiders.

They are preschoolers, playing together, discovering the world together, laughing together, and totally unmuted with great success. It has been great fun to observe these little ones in this atypical environment, one in which they seem to have seamlessly adapted to.



TAKEOUT TUESDAY REMINDER

(Tuesday, October 27) Panda Express
(Tuesday, November 10) Benny's Tacos
(Tuesday, November 17th) Pitfire Pizza
(Tuesday, December 1st) Burger Lounge
(Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, December 7,8,9)
California Pizza Kitchen



ART IN THE PARK + HULA HOOP PARTY



AFFIRMING AFFIRMATIVE LANGUAGE

TALK-OVER IN ACTION

BY ANNE RAMALLO

Guys, stop! Just no!” It’s 4pm—deep into our day, but still an eternity from bedtime. The hangry is kicking in and the caffeine has worn off, and this is my exasperated refrain: just no. This is when I most need Teacher Ruth’s talk-over on positive, affirmative language.

After nearly four years at La Playa, I’ve heard this one a few times, and it’s always an inspiring reminder to use direct language rich with affirming guidance and non-confrontational, clear boundaries. It was particularly poignant this year, though, as my kids and I sink deeper into our own worlds and bad habits as we seek non-traditional outlets for our needs and energies (anything from afternoon chocolate raisins to drawing on walls to hair pulling matches, folks!). Teacher Ruth’s video talk-over hit me like a cool breeze this year, at a time when I find myself tempted to take verbal shortcuts in my parenting out of exhaustion or desperation.

“If you could make one change that will make a huge difference, this would be it,” Teacher Ruth says. I’m giving it a shot. I’ve tapped into my better self and worked out some creative, affirmative re-phrasing for many of the common situations around my house.

Hopefully these things are not so common for you (though we’re all human) and if I can inspire anyone by opening up my process, I’m happy to over-share. Here goes:

NO/DON'T

No more TV!

No more sweets!

Don't leave that plate on the floor!

Do you have to dump that out?

No, you can't have that new toy from the commercial.

Don't grab that from your sister.

Don't color on your sister's homework!

No drawing/painting on your body!

No climbing the walls!

Don't scare the cat!

No, you can't. It's bed time.

AFFIRMATIVE

TV time is done for now. We could read a book or play a game.

I have healthy food available that you can eat if you're hungry.

Please put your plate on the counter/in the sink.

Let's take out one thing at a time...

We're all out of space for toys right now. If you really want that thing maybe we can choose a few old toys to trade for it.

Please use words to ask for a turn.

Let's find you your own piece of paper.

Here's some washable make-up. Have fun.

If you want to climb the walls, you must wash your feet [in your best Mummy Pig voice].

Posy is our friend. Let's be gentle to her and use slow movements and soft voices.

We're out of time for tonight. Let's add it to our list for tomorrow.

Is it perfect? No, or at least not yet (let's keep a growth mindset—ah, a talk-over for another time...). Kids can still come back at the most positive statement with a no or I don't want thaaaat. But sometimes a positive statement can really sidestep a power struggle by going straight into your preferred solution.

The biggest difference I've found is the one it makes in me and my attitude. Framing things in positive statements forces me to think about what my values are in the moment—what I want and what I can let go of. It moves me from experiencing problems to looking for solutions. And sometimes, on a hot and tired afternoon, that makes all the difference.

TV REVIEW

SOMETHING PARENTS CAN RELY ON

BY ANNE RAMALLO

When's the last time a kids' TV show has (almost) mad you cry? For me it was **Bluey**, a cartoon series featuring the antics of Bluey the Blue Heeler dog and her family. Each seven-minute episode (perfect for when you need a quick treat without necessarily letting TV consume your afternoon) features play and imagination and focuses on relationships among the characters. It's strikingly authentic, from Bluey's cheeky games of copy cat to the way Mom and Dad collapse on the couch after a long day out, leaving Bluey and her sister Bingo to climb their snoozing bodies.



DO YOU HAVE
ANY FAVORITE
POSITIVE
STATEMENTS?

FEEL FREE TO
SHARE WITH
OUR
FACEBOOK
GROUP!

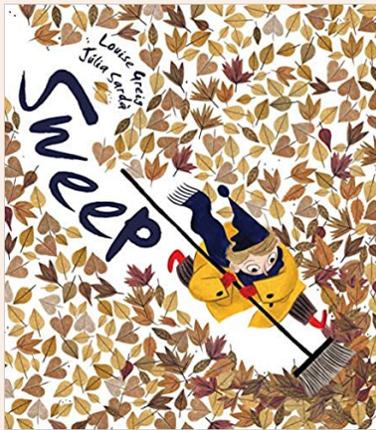
And the show doesn't shy away from big, emotional topics, like angry feelings or lost friends, in a sensitive way that encourages resilience. (That episode that brought me to the brink of tears: Bluey made a temporary friend on a camping trip who made a big impact on her life despite a language barrier.

Available on ABC Kids and Disney Plus



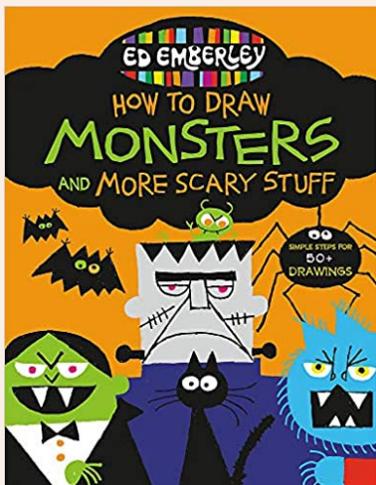
BOOK ROUND-UP

GREAT READS FOR HALLOWEEN AND FALL



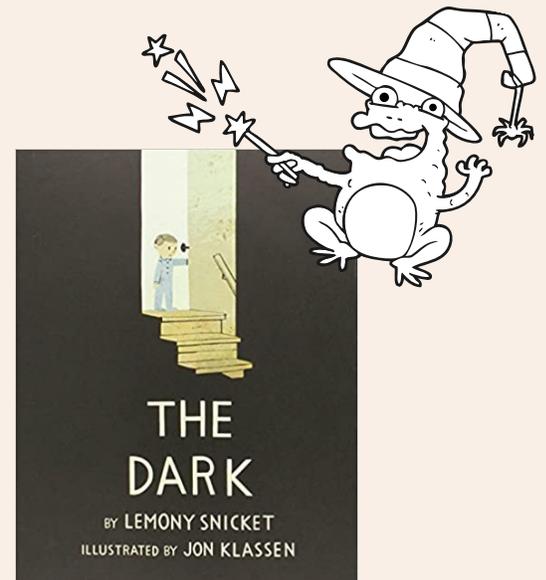
"SWEEP" BY LOUISE GREIG

This book provides an allegory for confronting big feelings. When Ed feels a bad mood take hold—one that buries city buses in large piles of leaves—Ed tries to sweep his troubles away.



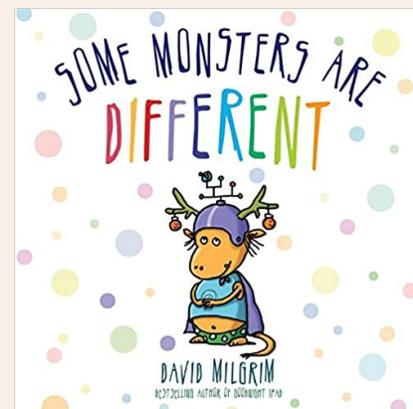
ED EMBERLEY'S "HOW TO DRAW MONSTERS AND MORE SCARY STUFF"

Learn to draw jack-o-lanterns, skeletons, witches, black cats, monsters, and more in this how-to-draw book by acclaimed illustrator Ed Emberley—perfect for the Halloween season and all year round!



"THE DARK" BY LEMONY SNICKET & JON KLASSEN

Laszlo is afraid of the dark. But when his nightlight fails, Laszlo confronts the dark right in his own bedroom. This beautifully illustrated, lyrical book takes Laszlo on a journey through his house and into the basement, in search of lightbulbs, boldness, and ultimately peace.



"SOME MONSTERS ARE DIFFERENT" BY DAVID MILGRIM

Through light-hearted humor, this book emphasizes the point that all monsters are different but they're all wonderful just the way they are.



“Watching young children grow during preschool is a wonderful experience. Each child is unique. They bring something individual to the world. It is a joy to be able to share this with parents at La Playa. That is the beauty of working at a cooperative school. Teachers and parents witness children’s growth together.”

— Teacher Teri

WE DEDICATE THIS ISSUE TO TEACHER TERI!

POEM BY ANNE RAMALLO

Teaching little kids to communicate,
Empathize, speak up (but also sometimes sit down),
Relying on some deep well of patience, cool, and love,
Inspiring parents to love their kids, not more, but better.

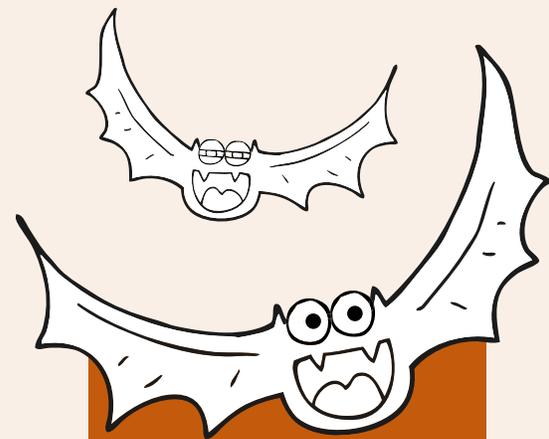
POEM BY JAIME MARKHAM

Soft tears of a goodbye met with a hug and a smile
Greeting bright faces of new friends
Waving goodbye to those who have grown too tall
Knowing in our hearts that we are never too old to play

Catching sight of hidden treasure beneath the sand
Gleaming, shimmering in the morning sunlight
With pockets full of sand we reach out to you
Smiling and nodding you are excited, like us.

You are the jewel in our lopsided paper crown
You are the newly opened box of crayons
You are the melody in our favorite preschool song
You are the A, the Z, and everything in between.

To us, you are Teacher Teri.



Happy 10th
Anniversary,
Teacher Teri!

2010 — 2020

Thank you for
a decade of
dedication and
service to
La Playa!

CELEBRATING 10 MAGICAL YEARS WITH TEACHER TERI

By Jaime Markham

One decade ago, La Playa was given the gift of Teacher Teri. I wasn't here when she arrived, but I imagine her as Mary Poppins, floating down from the clouds, umbrella in hand and a warm smile upon her face. That Teacher Teri smile is one of a kind—warm, kind, loving, and comforting.

Teri began teaching preschool in 1988 and soon discovered how much she loved working with young children. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Dance, embracing her creative, physical, and cognitive sides. After teaching for several years, she was inspired to return to school to earn her Master's Degree in Human Development. She attended Pacific Oaks College, which paralleled her own philosophy in education.

She joined La Playa in summer of 2010. Teri recalled, "Over my career, I have done a lot of adult teaching. Parents, aspiring teachers, and others interested in working with young children have all been my target audience at one time or another. These experiences were so uplifting that I have been encouraged to continue working with parents."



I have always admired her patience and innate ability to bond and communicate with children—even with very young children or those who don't yet have the ability to verbalize their feelings. Teri finds a way to make them feel comfortable and connect with them on a very basic human level. She is a compassionate educator for children and parents alike. Sometimes, as a parent, I've found myself in need of help and Teri is always there to offer sage advice with zero judgment.

One of the most beautiful things about Teacher Teri is that you can feel her love for each child. She enjoys watching them grow and learn at La Playa. We are so thankful for her decade of leadership and service to our school! We appreciate the empathy and patience she has shown our children. She has proven herself to be a dedicated and creative teacher who rises to any challenge.

All of us are fortunate to be a part of Teacher Teri's world. Much like Ms. Poppins, she's pure magic and practically perfect in every way (or in all the ways that count when you've devoted your life's work to educating preschoolers and their parents).



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