

Noticing the Helpers

By Teacher Jana

D grabs two sides of R's pants and hikes them up. "You need to pull your pants up." R smiles and they run off.

R is working on climbing down a tree, but looking a little worried. S runs up, "Teacher Jana! R is stuck and needs help getting down!"

B says "help!" Her boot has fallen off and is stuck under the tire of her bike. R runs to save the day. She picks up her boot and helps out it back on B's foot.

One of my favorite things about King Street is that we provide an environment that gives the time and space for kids to navigate the world on their terms. Our adult world is too often too busy and too hurried to accommodate their desires and needs. We adults set the pace, tone and strategy. But at King Street we slow down to "kid time." We are putting our adult-centered agendas aside so we can make room for children to discover, pursue and follow through with their way of navigating the world.

One of the most beautiful things to discover when children are in their "zone" is how much of their energy is spent helping. They absolutely desire to contribute and participate. In day to day life it is difficult to accept the "help" of children because the reality is it often creates more work and slows us down. But at King Street, whether it is wiping up messes, planting the garden, solving problems, setting things up or taking things down, we get to say "yes, you can!" As a teacher, I still find this sometimes to be the most challenging part of my day....stopping myself from talking, doing and solving for them so THEY can try first.



The Snack Room is a place where children shine as helpers. Here a child asks for a part of snack. Children nearby listen and work together to get it to her. This time of year I (happily) find it pretty difficult to get through a book because the children are so busy communicating and passing back and forth. "Please pass the carrots!" "Can I have the water?" "Where's the popcorn?" "I can go get more!" "I'll wipe that up for you."



Put-away time is another part of the day when children eagerly want to help. The more confident they become, the bigger and bigger jobs they want to tackle!! At this point in the year, they aren't so interested in picking up little toys or mats...they are interested in disassembling the climber. Our greatest gift is being there to make sure it can be done safely but allowing them to do as much as they can.

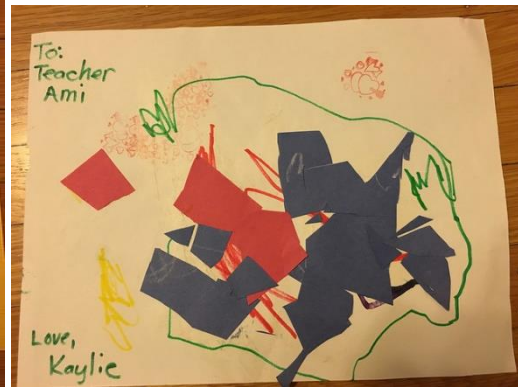


While playing, children turn to each other for advice and help, whether it is where to fill up a bucket, how to wind up a toy, or where animals could be sorted and categorized. Below a group of children are working out how to put the stair gate back in. They realize they've missed a step and work together to pull it out again to get it on track and then push it closed.





Children lean on their friends. They keep on eye out for each other's things while they are off eating snack. A crew of children to try and solve the mystery of the unclaimed backpack. They walk the backpack around the whole school asking everyone if it is theirs or if they know whose it might be so they can hang it on the right hook. They read books to each other.



Children this month got to express care and concern for Teacher Ami when she was sick. They very thoughtfully offered caring words and then spent a lot of time decorating and illustrating her card. Then over the next several days at the Creation Station, children made their own notes and pictures for Ami.

Fred Roger's mom would say to him when he was growing up, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." This calmed him when scary things would come up in life. I think this is also important for us to remember as caregivers when we are feeling overwhelmed or bogged down in the conflicts that come up with children or with life in general. It can be easy to focus on what is hard, and not notice as often what is going well. This month it was fun for me to notice all the helping that goes on so frequently at school, and it's challenging me to do the same at home.

So put that friend on the back of your bike, or grab hands, and let's keep helping each other on this journey together.



L- "you can call me if you need help."

F- "ok"

L- "my number is 9-1-1"