Down by the Bay

By the Coconut Class of June 2010
June 25, 2010

Dear Coconuts,

Throughout the year we’ve watched you grow on your own, and all together as a group of learners. Your incredible personalities shine through the pages of this book. We thank you for a year that has been filled with joy, wonderment, amazing accomplishments, and of course humor. We will miss you, and wish you the best of luck!

Love and Hugs,

Maura, Helen, and Stacey
Down by the Bay

For graduation this year the Coconut class chose to sing “Down by the Bay”. After becoming familiar with the original lyrics, the children naturally began to add their own rhymes while singing. Thus began a project about rhyming.

After rehearsing the song one day, the group decided that we needed pictures to hold up so everyone in the audience could see which rhyme was coming next. At group meeting time we spread out on the floor and brainstormed some ideas. The seven rhymes that make up this book were the final decisions. To begin the project the teachers split the children into groups of three, assigning one rhyme to each group. Using the rhymes as inspiration for illustrations, the members of each group drew a “rough draft”. Later the groups met again to collaborate on a bigger drawing of their rhyme, negotiating with each other about who would draw which parts. Those large scale drawings were then painted, mounted on tag board, and held up at graduation for everyone to see.
So, as you may have heard passing by the Coconut room, this project never really “ended”. The children continue to create silly rhymes at all times of the day. Whether it’s one boy whispering at rest time, or a whole group of girls running up and shouting to me on the playground, I always know a great new idea is coming when they start with “Helen! I just thought of another one!”

The following list comprises the extra rhymes we were able to jot down:

Have you ever seen a...

- dolphin, goin’ out golfin’
- lizard talking to a wizard
- squid underneath a lid
- duck driving a truck
- chick pecking at a stick
- flower wasting his hour
- bear with no under-wear
- truck getting stuck in the muck
- an otter driving a heli-copter
- cow taking a bow
- cat really wanting a mat
- clown hanging upside down

Many theorists and educators believe children at this age use imaginary play to make sense of the real world. Likewise, when they use seemingly
nonsense language, they are truly learning to reason. In the following conversations G.A., P. Co., and P. Ch. are problem solving together to bring validity to their silly rhymes:

1. P. Co. – Have you ever seen a car, eating a bar?
   G.A. – How is a car eating?
   P. Co. – I’m pretending it has a mouth.
   P. Ch. – Yeah, how about the headlights are the mouth.

2. P. Ch. – Have you ever seen a K, riding a J?
   G.A. – Like pretend the J is a horse and the K is riding it?
   P. Ch. – Yeah.
   G.A. – So the J is sideways.

When we enter into a child-initiated and emergent project such as this one, we use observation and reflection to gather data on how the children are learning. What they are learning is more straightforward: the patterns, rhythm, and structure of spoken and written language. They are gathering pre-reading and writing skills by noticing sounds in language and making connections.
To better understand the children’s thought process about rhyming, I asked them the following questions:

- How did you think of the rhyme?
- How do you know it’s a rhyme?

The answers to these open-ended questions provide insight into how they are constructing knowledge, while also giving the children the opportunity to explore and reflect on their own learning.

“I just thought it in my head. I think really really hard.”

“I know that you make up a word.”

“I’m thinking of one hundred words! My mom said them and they got stuck in my head. That’s how I learned my rhymes.”

“I just found it out.”

“A rhyme is when you put two things together and they sound like each other.”

“You could just sound it out.”

S.N.’s response after creating the rhyme “a clown hanging upside down” tells us an incredible amount of her understanding about words and language:
“I think of rhyming words but they have to be real words, like ‘clown’ and ‘upside down’. Like if it was ‘moose/toose’ that’s not a real rhyme. ‘Moose brushing his teeth’ doesn’t rhyme, but it’s real words. But they would never really do that, actually, because moose do not have toothbrushes.”

We hope you enjoy singing along!
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a bird writing a word

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a whale with a polka dot tail

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a goose kissing a moose

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a fish washing a dish

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a dragon riding in a wagon

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a bear jumping in the air

Down by the bay?
Down by the bay
Where the watermelons grow
Back to my home
I dare not go
For if I do
My mother will say
Did you ever see a shark dancing in the dark

Down by the bay?