Our minds and our bodies work together to help us function, and it’s our job to keep them healthy. Each week, we focused on a component of the mind and body, how they work together, and how we can take care of that part of ourselves. We started this unit by exploring the five senses and their corresponding body parts, asking how our minds help us experience those senses and how each sense makes us feel. Next, we learned about the brain and introduced mindful habits to help take care of our brains. We then moved to the body, focusing on major body parts, how they work, and how to use our bodies to help our minds stay healthy. Finally, the unit culminated in our exploration of healthy habits, both physical and mental, learning about the importance of making sure each part of ourselves is healthy.

Our Favorite Theme Books

Circle time is a great time to hear stories that help friends learn more about our theme. This month our favorite books were:

- *Head to Toe*, by Eric Carle
- *Five Senses*, by Aliki
- *The Bones You Own*, by Becky Baines.
- *See Inside Your Body*, by Katie Daynes and Colin King

Mango Monkey Says…

Our wise puppet friend visited the friends this month to talk about our feelings in the context of mindfulness. We shared the book, *Visiting Feelings*, by Lauren Rubenstein. The story encourages the friends to reflect on their feelings in the present moment and befriend each and every feeling. In doing so, Mango Monkey and his friends identified their feelings and the friends suggested things they could do to feel better.
During the first week, the friends explored their five senses with a focus on the senses of touch and sight. The friends learned that the nerve endings from their skin send messages to their brain when they feel. They shared how it feels to be tickled or hurt and how it feels to touch the cold snow without gloves. The PM preschool friends used their sense of touch to find buttons buried inside of play dough and explore the interesting texture of oobleck, a mixture of cornstarch and water. The friends created new locker tags by drawing their own whole body with Cray-pas. When the friends learned about the sense of sight, they examined a model eye. The teachers worked with the friends to take apart the model eye so the friends could see all of the optic nerves inside that send visual messages to the brain. They learned about how their eyes work to help them see the world around them. The friends focused on their sense of vision while dancing with neon colored scarves. They enjoyed tossing the scarves into the air and catching them with other friends in different ways.

During week two, the PM friends looked into how the information taken in from their five senses is interpreted by the brain. The friends recalled their five senses from the previous week with songs about their senses and bodies such as “Five Senses” and “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.” During circle times, the friends shared what they like to see, taste, touch, hear and smell. PM Preschool teachers shared with the friends that their brain is their main operating center. The friends showed that their brains were working as they participated in yoga stretches. Ms. O’Neill provided verbal directions and visual examples of various yoga poses such as dolphin, cat, cow, and frog. The PM friends began their anatomy posters by painting a pink model brain onto the head of a body shape outline. They experienced a calm dramatic play area in the Green Room equipped with sand raking, Japanese water painting, and a lava lamp. The friends also challenged their brains by completing mazes and trying our new board games, such as Snakes and Ladders.
During week three, the PM Preschool friends explored how the brain operates as their body’s computer, sending out orders to the rest of the body. PM Preschool friends continued yoga postures and breathing during Circle times. Miss Debbie visited our class and read, “I Am Peace—a Book of Mindfulness” by Susan Verde. The friends created mixed media self-portraits onto matte board. They started to add to a “Five Senses book” in which each page was devoted to what they like to see, touch, taste, hear and smell. The friends shared hands-on experience at the water table in which they learned how the heart pumps blood through the body. The friends added water balloon lungs to their body poster and a yarn stomach. The Dramatic Play area was transformed into a doctor’s office where the friends took care of sick baby dolls. The friends enjoyed stretching large rubber bands over a giant geoboard to create shapes and patterns.

During week four, we learned about two main functions of our bones: to help protect our organs and to give our bodies structure. The teachers guided the children to feel their bones inside of their bodies. We examined skeletons and pieced together puzzles of skeletons to gain a better understanding of the many different bones in our bodies and how they all fit together. The teachers worked with PM friends to bend and stretch their muscles during circle and activity times to feel their muscles pull. The Dramatic Play Center was turned into a Doctor’s Office, giving the friends an opportunity to care for the patients’ bodies. During snack time, the friends learned about keeping their bones healthy by eating nutritious foods that contain calcium, such as string cheese and yogurt.
Healthy Habits

During week five, the PM Preschool friends focused on healthy habits by first learning about creating a “Healthy Plate” during mealtimes. During circle and activity times, the friends pieced together felt pieces from each food group and assembled jigsaw puzzles to create healthy and delicious meals. These activities brought about many discussions about the importance of maintaining a healthy diet. Week five was also filled with many different forms of exercise. In the Blue Room, the friends rode stationary tricycles and tested their balance on a balance beam. The Green Room Dramatic Play Area was turned into a calming yoga studio where the friends could practice the yoga postures they have been learning this month. In the Discovery Area, friends designed their own obstacle course that included practicing balancing, stepping and crawling skills. Then the friends completed it many times, smiling and laughing as they practiced healthy habits together.

Center Spotlight:
TheMakeshop

The purpose of the Make Shop is to challenge and nurture creativity and inquiry by offering experiences with real materials and real tools. We started this month by using our sense of touch to mold clay sculptures and paint them. We also spent time making our own paper, starting with the pulp, adding different materials like glitter and lavender to pique our senses of sight and smell. When the paper the friends made had dried, the friends decided to make fruits out of their paper. The Make Shop was then taken over by large boxes that the friends used tools to manipulate into all sorts of imaginative play spaces, including airplanes, houses, and swimming pools.
This month, Mrs. Hraber brought our sense of hearing into focus with unique musical experiences! The friends sang very catchy songs such as “1-2-3-4-5 Senses.” Mrs. Hraber played a listening game in which the friends guessed what was inside of plastic eggs after hearing the sound they made when we shook them. In the second music class for the theme, Mrs. Hraber helped to illustrate the lungs with by blowing and deflating a balloon. The friends rested and did exercises to feel their hearts beating at different paces. All the friends were delighted as Mrs Hraber sang a gentle song about taking breaths to stay calm. Everyone loves music days!

Ms. Debbie, a librarian, shares stories and songs that support our Healthy Mind and Body theme. Cornelia and Maddox work together to stretch large rubber bands over a giant geoboard on the back of a shelf in the Green Room.
Lucy Jo adds to her mixed media self-portrait.

Satoshi molds oobleck in the Green Room.

Sylas and Cornelia assemble a skeleton floor puzzle.

Cornelia and Luke work with Ms. O’Neill to assemble a skeleton using real deer bones.


Ryder learns new board games with Mr. Salinetro in the Green Room block area.
Our Month in Photos

Luke and Ryder play doctor in the Dramatic Play area.

Satoshi creates a mixed media self-portrait in the Green Room.

Lucy Jo makes a phone call regarding a sick patient in the Green Room Dramatic Play area.

Maddox shares his family page during circle time in the Blue Room.

Ryder assembles plastic pieces of a marble run.

Zeynep adds bones to her body diagram.