

Grants and Snow at the Hilltop Center

Thanks to a partnership and a mini grant, as well as the late January snowstorm, students at the Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center learned about science, became better readers, and saw, firsthand, what snowplows and trucks do to clear snow.



Center Youth Services Coordinator, Teresa Allen, reports that, thanks to a mini grant from Delaware Afterschool Network (DEAN), students “completed 4 hours of activities taken from the Mizzen Education app.” In addition, Teresa says science programs are being considered for this year’s summer camp. “Right now, we are planning field trips and deciding on what types of STEM/STEAM activities we will be providing this year.”

The partnership was with Delaware United Way to resume the *Book Nook* program which, Teresa says, is “a statewide computer program designed to help students become better readers. The children spend 30 minutes a day on the computer reading different paragraphs that become a little more challenging as they read each day. There is a staff member guiding them through the readings, and when 30 minutes of reading time is up, they are told how well they have done. We also use *Book Nook* during our Summer Camp.”



So where do the snowplows come in? Center Curriculum Coordinator, Dashaba Fielder, says it came during a session about construction.

“*The Construction Site* in dramatic play included hard hats and safety vests. (Students) learned the names of several construction vehicles. In the wake of the recent snowstorm, the children were able to see a bulldozer scoop up the snow and dump it into the back of a dump truck. The children were excited to see the construction vehicles doing their job.”

What would a study of construction sites be without a review of signs? Dashaba says many different signs were reviewed. “*Signs Keep us Safe* allowed our ECAP (Early Childhood Assistance Program) children to learn and create street signs in the classroom. The children created their own neighborhood using blocks,

vehicles, and signs. The students created a traffic signal and discussed the inventor of the traffic light, Garrett Morgan, in honor of Black History Month.”

On the business side of the Hilltop operation, Executive Director Michelle Willilams reports that early childhood education classrooms will participate in a professional learning experience (PLE). “This a mandate from the Department of Education for all State Funded and Early Head Start programs. The Pyramid Model is a multi-tiered, evidence-based framework designed to promote social-emotional development and address challenging behaviors in early childhood. Hilltop’s PLE will begin in February and lasts through June.”