

"Just You & Me" - Empathy, Sensitivity, Openness:

Margaret, Wren, Colin, + Kalei January 9, 2018

Margaret requested "we do something just you & me." This is a request we devised some time ago as a way she could subtly express to me that she is feeling emotionally vulnerable & is in need of more of my attention in effort to reduce the natural impulse to "act out" by seeking negative attention. It is a VERY difficult thing for even an adult to candidly say "I'm scared/sad/angry/overwhelmed/confused, please help me" so it is extremely admirable when 5 years-young Margaret curbs her strong impulses to work toward her (& our) best interest. (How often have you been passive aggressive, slammed a door, lashed out when you couldn't communicate your feelings?! All the time.) Today, on the first day back to school in over two weeks of exciting, novel vacation, she missed her dear father who is on "a very long, cold travel for work." She asked for us to work with clay together.

One-on-one time as co-teacher of 22 is hard to come by, & Margaret is very aware that she will have to practice patience in order for me to find an appropriate moment for us. She only asked me several times before finding herself work for the meantime at the table in the mini-studio fashioned as a desk (computer monitor, keyboard, numbered paper pads). Wren sat nearby, wanting to join Margaret in creating drawings to prop up on the monitor. Margaret already had two drawings up there & felt there was no room. "Go away!" Wren cried & looked to me for justice. I recognized Margaret's need for space, & explained to Wren that she can work at the table but not quite so close: "M, say: 'I am working here, I need space.'" She did so, & I moved Wren's chair but Wren's expression told me she felt wronged. "I wanted to do it like her!" "Oh," I said, "you want to help her put pictures up on the computer screen too?" She nodded. "Margaret, is there room for Wren's drawings too?" She shook her head. "Okay," I agreed, "say: 'Wren, there is only space for my drawings. You can do it when I'm done.'" She did, & added confidently "I'm going to do clay with Kalei soon so you can have it then!" Wren pouted, disappointed there wasn't room for both of them, but seemed to see the logic of it. I felt at that moment I could leave the two friends to handle any immediate conflict so I take the opportunity to set up a small clay table in the piazza. When it's ready I quietly let Margaret know that we could begin, but that we'd have to do it with the door open so I could see into the classroom/keep an eye on other children in the piazza hall. She bolted up "Come on, Wren, lets go do clay with Kalei!" I was going to tell Wren it was finally her turn with the computer set up but no need; the girls settled into the clay together with joy.

The clay had been kept on "the porch" over winter break & we discovered it had little patches of ice on its surface! The excitement must have attracted Colin, who was earlier playing with ice on the playground. I sensed the girls might become territorial. They calmly said "only we are doing clay right now." I replied that it seemed Colin really only wanted to look at the ice, & that we could certainly cope with that for a minute. Instead of balking, Wren said "I'll go get him some tools!"

