

A photograph of a bearded dragon lizard sitting on a wooden table. The dragon is light-colored with a prominent beard. It is positioned in the center of the frame, looking towards the right. The background is slightly blurred, showing a person sitting at a table in a classroom setting. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay. The text 'A Bearded Dragon' is written in a large, bold, black serif font, and 'The preschool class pet' is written in a smaller, black serif font below it.

A Bearded Dragon

The preschool class pet

Miss Florence
& Miss Tonya

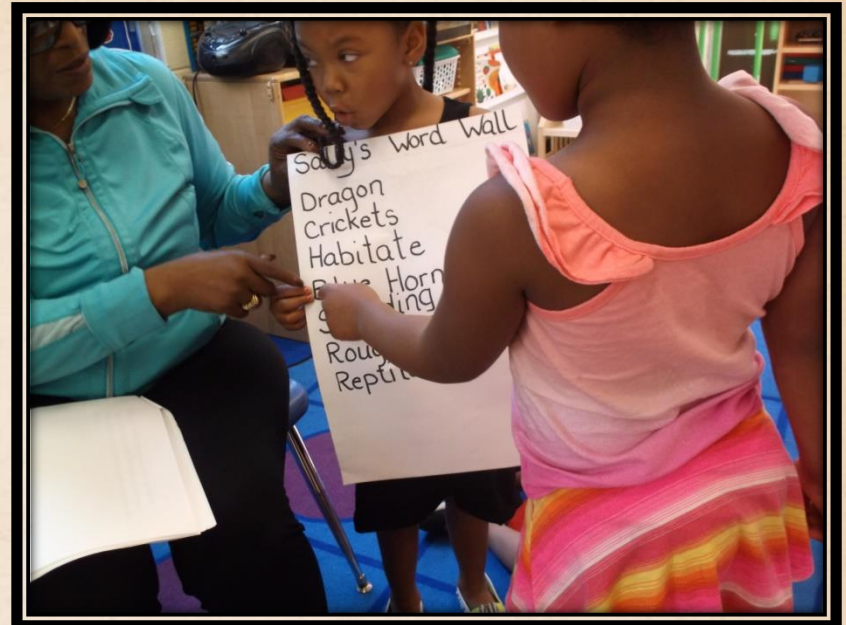
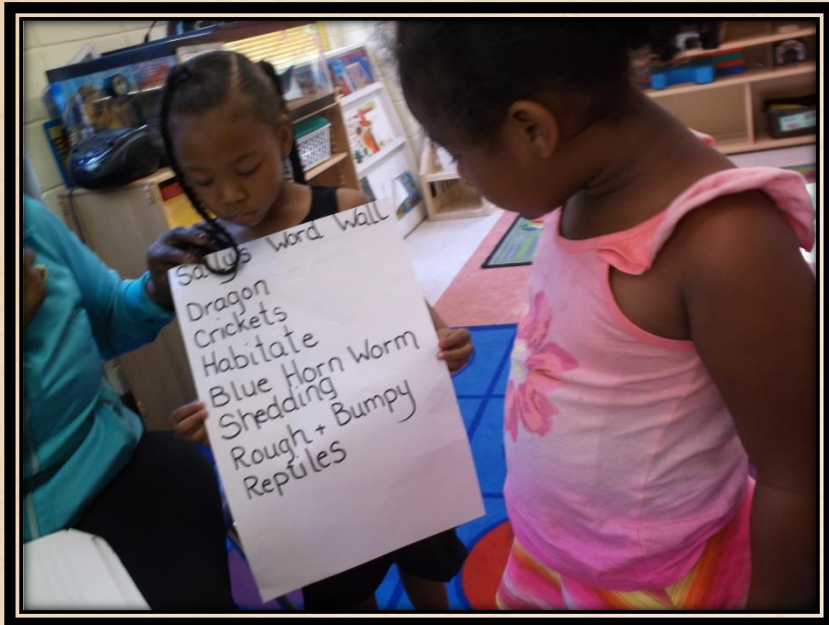
The Preschool Classroom

- The classroom serves children ages 3 – 5 years old.
- The capacity of the classroom is 18 children.
- There is a lead teacher with two teacher assistants in the morning and a lead teacher and 1 teacher assistant in the afternoon.
- Throughout the year, other living things such as insects, tadpoles, and baby chicks are temporarily in the classroom.

Preparing the Children

Our teachers prepared the children by talking with them about reptiles and bearded dragons. They read a book about reptiles, looked at pictures of different types of reptiles, and then showed them a picture of a bearded dragon.





They engaged the children in conversation about the new pet through open-ended questions. The children also asked questions of their own. They used this opportunity to introduce the children to new vocabulary.

Habitat

The teachers then discussed a bearded dragons habitat with the children. This was another great opportunity to introduce many new vocabulary words to the children. They put the bearded dragons habitat together as a group. Children were grouped by ability and given specific parts of the habitat that they were responsible for. This was a great lesson in following directions and working as a team.



The Bearded Dragons Arrival

When the bearded dragon first came into the classroom, the teacher held him while the children sat on the rug and explained to them that they needed to be calm, with both their voices and hand movements, so not to excite or scare him.

She explained that the children needed to sanitize their hands after they touched him and had each child come up to say hi and pet the bearded dragon.



Many of the children commented on how the bearded dragon's body and nails felt. This led to a conversation which again introduced some new vocabulary words to the children.



Settled In

Once each child was given a chance to pet the bearded dragon, he was placed in his habitat to get adjusted. Children were able to view him throughout the day; but were asked to do so quietly so he could get himself settled.



The Name

Due to how young the bearded dragon was, it was difficult to determine the sex. It was explained to the children that they needed to wait until he was a little older before we would know if he was a boy or a girl. With that in mind they were asked to decide on a name. Two suggestions were chosen and the children voted for the name they liked more. They chose Sally.



Lesson Plans

The teachers incorporated a least 2 activities a month regarding reptiles and Sally. Several examples are listed below:

- Reptile/ Not a Reptile Sort
- Reptile beginning letter/ letter sound recognition
- Reptile Count
- Food charts for bearded dragons
- Observations in habitat and when eating
- Introduction of new vocabulary words
- Similarities/ differences with reptiles
- Sally's Growth Chart

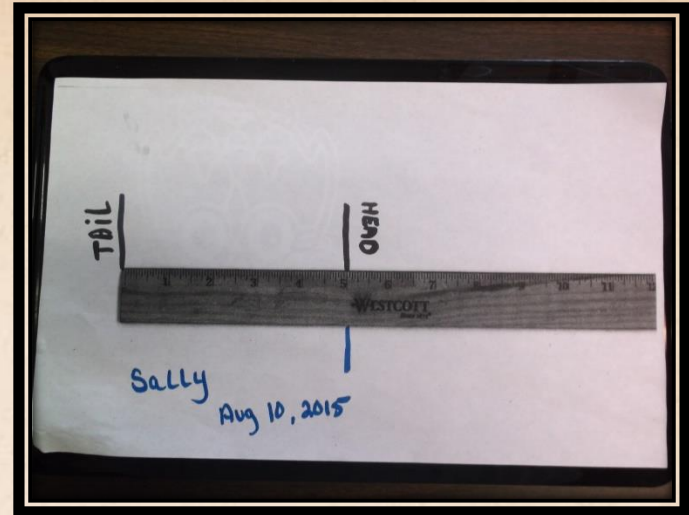
Bearded Dragon Facts

The children learn so much throughout the year about bearded dragons specifically:

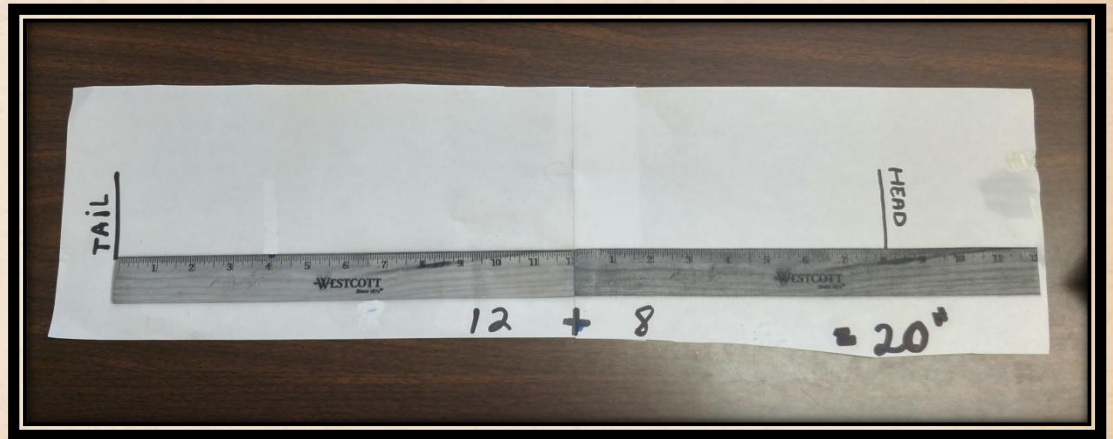
- Type of animal they are
- Habitat/ Climate
- Their bodies – scales, spikes, their nails, how they hear, smell, etc.
- Foods they can eat
- Shedding/ How big they can grow
- How to tell their age by measuring them
- How to tell if they are a male or female
- What they do when they feel scared or nervous



Current measurements the children took and recorded of Sally were displayed. They would compare them to each other to see his growth.

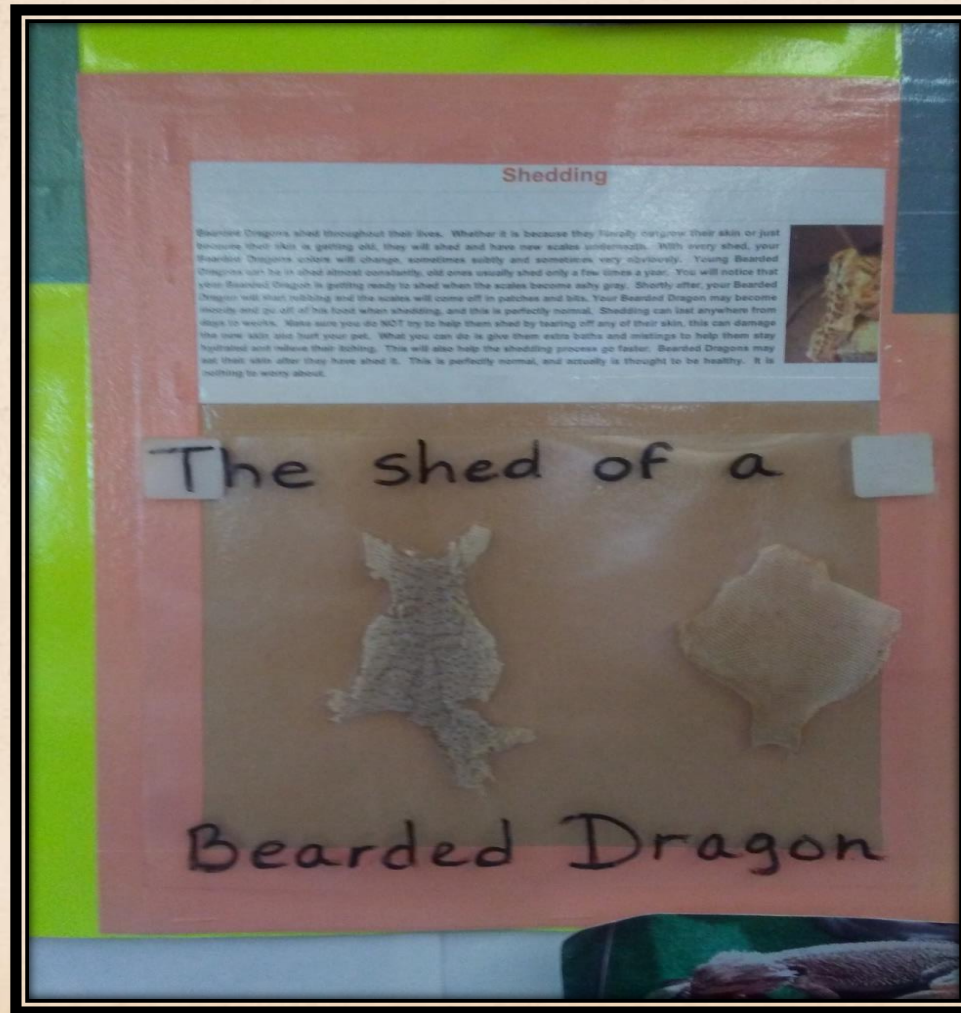


August 10, 2015



June 28, 2016

Samples of Sally's shed were kept, laminated, and placed in the science area for the children and families to explore.



Children were able to explore the live insects Sally would eventually eat.



Crickets



Blue Horned Worm

The children bonded with Sally and he eventually was like one of the children. He would walk around the classroom exploring, get baths, participate in activities, and take trips outside on warm days.



Staff/ Family Involvement

The teachers even managed to get other staff and family member involved with Sally even though they were not big fans of reptiles...



Sally's Gender

For some time, no one mentioned or asked about whether or not Sally was a boy or girl. Then one day, one of the children was watching him in his tank and asked the teacher. Being he was older, she decided to check.

She explained to the children how to check and showed them a picture of a girl bearded dragon and boy bearded dragon. She turned him over a bit and had the children compare Sally to the pictures. A few children had a tough time with it, some said Sally was a girl, but many determined sally was a boy...and they were right. Sally is a boy.

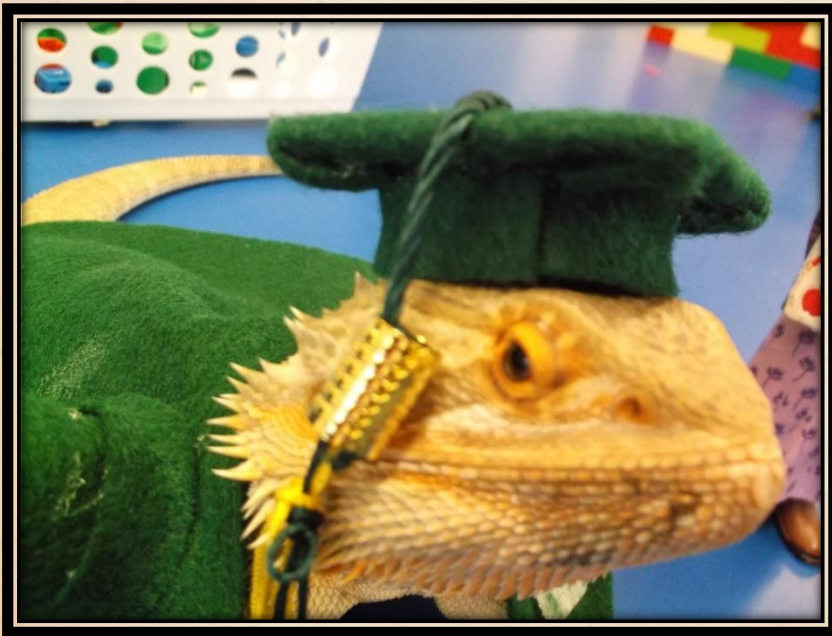


The next day during circle time, the teacher announced to the children who were not there the afternoon before that Sally was indeed a boy. The children got concerned because they thought they had to change his name because “Sally” was a girl’s name.

However the teacher explained that “Sally” could still be his nickname because it could be short for Salvador. The children had just learned about the artist, Salvador Dali so they were excited about Sally having the same name.

Graduation

Sally had been with the class for a little over a year, so it only made sense that he be apart of the graduation with the other children.



Mission Accomplished

Many families have commented on how if it weren't for us having Sally in the classroom, their children would never had experienced learning about and caring for a reptile, specifically a bearded dragon. They either aren't pet people, are too busy to properly care for a pet, or pets are not allowed in their apartments. This was our mission when we chose a bearded dragon as our class pet. We wanted the children to experience something new and different.