



# Nursery School News

A Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School

1066 Washington Road · Pittsburgh, PA · 15228 · (412) 531-2644

Volume XXXII, Issue 6

February 2003

## From Jane: Dealing With Conflict



As I sit here today there are many things going on in our adult world that make normal, caring parents worry about how they can protect their children. The nation is on high alert for a terrorist attack (code orange – whatever that means)! There was a news story yesterday about a 13 year old that shot and killed his mother. And this morning on CNN there was a very disturbing call in segment addressing the relationship between increased adolescent violence and increased drug and alcohol use among teens.

On a personal level it makes me glad that my children are grown. On a professional level it makes me wonder how St. Paul's can help your children grow up safely and learn to function in a world that sometimes seems very out of control.

When I was in New York at the NAEYC Conference this past November, a number of the workshops I attended addressed the need to allow children to experience conflict in the classroom in order to learn to work out problems and better understand more than one point of view. We were also reminded that there is a paradox that often occurs when adults are scared and view the world as unsafe. During times of unrest and uncertainty teachers and adults often emphasize obedience and pressure children to conform. "Over managed" class rooms that allow little free choice, little free play, allow no conflict or creative problem solving, which only allow routines and a teacher directed atmosphere may seem appealing when the larger world seems chaotic. The paradox is that this is a time that more than ever, we need to help our children understand how to deal with conflict, angry feelings, differing points of view, and to learn how to make rational, intelligent choices on their own.

Any time conflict and diverse views are expressed, we are bringing more intelligence into use as we think and work out problems by understanding more than

one point of view. This ability begins in the preschool setting. In fact, helping your child deal with conflict and anger during their day is one of the most important things that we do here in preschool.

Anger and conflict is a topic that most people would simply like to see go away as far as children are concerned.

Allowing conflict and handling children's anger can be puzzling, draining, and extremely frustrating for adults. One of the problems is that during our own childhood most of us, especially women, were taught that to disagree and bring in conflict was to be "bad." We were often made to feel guilty if we expressed any angry feelings or caused any conflict in life. Once we get past this rather misguided notion it is much easier to help children learn to deal with conflict and find a resolution to their problems before they reach the stage of anger and ensuing tantrums. Our goal here at St. Paul's is not to destroy or deny, or repress angry feelings in children – or ourselves – but to help them find ways of accepting their honest feelings and to help them channel their conflicts toward a constructive resolution. Admittedly that is a lofty goal! And one that we must realize is not mastered quickly, but something that takes many years of growth and development.

Granted, in the short run it is much easier to simply not allow conflict and ensuing angry feelings to be expressed at all. One of the most useless (*cont.*)

### Inside this issue:

<i>From Jane</i>	1-2
<i>"Hot Topic"</i>	3
<i>Summer Program</i>	3
<i>Clothes</i>	3
<i>Parking Lot</i>	3
<i>Board Nominations</i>	3
<i>Vision Screening</i>	3
<i>Mark Your Calendar</i>	4
<i>Mayfair</i>	4

## From Jane (continued)

things that a parent can say to a preschooler is “be nice.” And that is an expression I hear said with exasperation over and over again. It is essentially meaningless to a very young child because they are not being given any skills or information that will help them deal with conflict, anxiety, and the disappointment that they may be feeling when they are not “nice.” When things do not go the way a child would like them to, when they are denied something that they want, it is important that we give them some guidance. When a child wants a toy that another child is playing with in class we give them choices i.e. –“You can wait your turn or play with something else.” Better yet – “You can play together sharing the pieces (puzzles, Legos) or you can each use a car on the block road.” First the teacher has the ideas for compromise, and later (often *much* later) the children themselves begin to resolve their own conflicts.

Often the first step in helping children resolve conflict is to acknowledge how angry they feel that they must wait their turn. Once we allow a child to honestly express their real feelings of anger and frustration, they can then begin to curb their impulsivity and think about how to resolve the conflict. There is an important distinction that we must make here. Just because we acknowledge a child’s anger does not mean that we allow them to express it in an aggressive, out of control or hurtful way. What is key here is that our role (as parents and teachers alike) needs to be that of helping our children find ways to constructively problem solve so that they can then rationally deal with angry feelings.

Another very important piece of the dynamic is to encourage children to tell other children who may behave in an aggressive or out of control manner toward them how it makes them feel. They need to assert themselves toward the aggressive child telling them that they may not hit or use hurtful words or

take their toy.

Once children have been given reasonable choices and alternatives and they still cannot accept the situation and refuse to negotiate an acceptable compromise it is really OK for the adult to set a firm limit. At that point please do not tell them to “be nice.” Something to the effect of “cut it out” or “you’re done” works quite well. They get the message, particularly if you are consistent and continue to offer alternatives and choices in future episodes. You’d be surprised how quickly most children turn it around and become good citizens once we acknowledge their real feelings, and give them choices and alternatives.

So as we navigate through our rather out of control world we might begin by giving up our illusion of total control where our children are concerned. We

*“Any time conflict and diverse views are expressed, we are bringing more intelligence into use as we think and work out problems by understanding more than one point of view..”*

need to allow them to express honest conflict, make some choices with our guidance, and we must respect their genuine feelings (even when they are not feelings that we

like). And we can also feel reassured that we do have some control in the fact that we are the grownup in the situation. We do not have to allow our children to act out impulsively, aggressively, or in any way that is hurtful to another. We can set limits and meet our children’s emotional needs at the same time. We can best do this by being motivated by a need to protect and teach our children as opposed to a desire to punish.

Once we give up the illusion that conflict is always wrong and should be denied and suppressed, we will then be able to help our children learn to live in a world of diverse points of view. We can then help our children learn to choose, think, and negotiate which ultimately will lead them to learn how to participate successfully in conflict resolution. Therefore, we must provide essential skills to help our children jump through the hurdles necessary to survive in today’s world.



## “Hot Topic” - Keeping Our Children Safe



Please join us on March 4 at 1:00 PM in the upstairs lounge to learn about and discuss how to keep our children safe. We have two great speakers lined up so you won't want to miss this “Hot Topic.” Kelly Riddle, Mt. Lebanon Police Officer, will speak about a card game called “Tell Mommy,” which is a game that parents can use to interactively discuss safety situations with their children. The games will be available for purchase at the end of the discussion. Eileen Sharbaugh, one of our very own teachers, will also speak about child safety. Eileen is involved with “safety Kids,” a nonprofit organization addressing personal child safety. Coffee and bagels will be served and babysitting will be available for \$5 per hour per child.

## Summer Program

We will have our usual six-week outdoor summer program starting Monday, June 16<sup>th</sup> and ending Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. The program runs from Monday – Friday from 9:15 am – 11:45 pm for children who are 3 by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003. This year we will also have a program for children who are 3 by June 1<sup>st</sup> that will run Tuesday – Thursday from 9:15 am – 11:45 pm. ALL children must be toilet trained to participate in our outdoor summer program for health reasons. Children may sign up for only one week or as many weeks as you choose. Registration forms will be available in the office after Easter Break. Mindy Hudson will continue this year as the summer camp director. Any questions about the program can be referred to Mindy

## Clothes

We are particularly in need of socks and shoes for our “accident” clothes closet. We also need larger sizes in general for pants and shirts. If you're cleaning out closets this spring keep us in mind. Thanks!

## Parking Lot

Just a reminder to you all: The parking lot in the winter can be very dangerous. We have a snow plow contract that comes out and plows the parking lot and salts it regularly in the mornings on snowy days. But as the day goes on it often becomes icy and as new snow falls during the day it once again can become slippery. Our janitor, Vlad salts as best he can, but it can still be dangerous. It is also on a fairly steep slant, so be very careful as you walk and drive on it. Also always hold your child's hand, if a small child runs ahead they can be hard to see as people back out of parking spots!! Thank you for your cooperation in this *very important* matter.

## Board Of Trustees Nominations

Geoff Hurd, our nominating chair is currently looking for parents and community members who would be interested in serving on the Nursery School Board of Trustees. We are always particularly interested in individuals with backgrounds in finance, law, education, communications, and psychology. If you or anyone you know would be interested please contact Geoff Hurd at 412-563-4931 or you can e-mail him at [ghurd@aol.com](mailto:ghurd@aol.com).

## Vision Screening

We will be doing vision screening starting March 3rd. Look for your vision screening permission forms in late February.

## Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities & Events February/March 2003

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	March 1
2	3 VISION SCREENING BEGINS	4 "HOT TOPIC" 1 PM UPSTAIRS LOUNGE	5	6	7 MAYFAIR MEETING ALL ARE WELCOME	8
9	10 CLASS PICTURES	11 CLASS PICTURES	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22

### Mayfair 2003

Mayfair is coming together nicely. Laurel Flaherty is our chair and Katherine Doyle is her co-chair. Laurel and Katherine are planning a Mayfair home room mother meeting on Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am and an all school Mayfair meeting on Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. Mark those dates on your calendar – children are welcome!!

The spirit of Mayfair is one of a fun fair for the children. Our primary fundraiser is the wine tasting event in the fall, so we are now looking at Mayfair as an event that is strictly a time for the children to come and enjoy themselves at their school at the year's end. I really do not want the parents to feel pressured to primarily raise money that day, but to look for ways to provide a fun day for the children!

# **Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities & Events JANUARY 2003**

Kindergarten Readiness Panel Discussion  
Tuesday, February 4, 7:30 PM



**St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School... 45 Years And Growing**

