



Nursery School News

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

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From Jane: Day Care Versus Preschool – What's the Difference?

When people come to look at St. Paul's they often say to me something like, "She used to go to daycare, but now that she's older I want her to go to preschool so that she can learn real things." Or, "I want her to go to a real school, not just daycare for baby sitting." But is there really any difference? My answer is - it depends.

On the one hand I would have to say that good childcare is good childcare. No matter what the length of time or setting. In the formal world of early childhood education the two are distinguished as being either center based or school based. And as far as anything about formal learning goes, good childcare is still good childcare, no matter the type of setting.

Young children are learning all of the time. Just as children grow all the time, they learn all the time. They do not learn only during special group time or teacher directed activity times. Children learn while they are eating, talking, playing, and getting up in the morning. Learning doesn't depend upon worksheets, or "academics" when it comes to preschool age children. Learning does depend on children's understanding of – and attention to – everything that is happening in their lives. It is all about making connections to their world. One simply cannot separate social, emotional, intellectual, and physical learning in the early childhood years. These things remain keenly interrelated. I am, for instance, particularly interested in the recent research that shows the importance of certain types of physical activity as it relates to brain development. For these reasons high quality early childhood practices that best promote learning can be found in all kinds of settings.

So is there any difference? Yes, mostly in the timing, not the content. When children attend preschool, they do so for brief periods of time. We therefore speed it all up. The pace that your children experience while they are here could not be sustained for 7 or 8 hours a day. We would really need to slow it down in order to provide a good setting. There is also much more involvement with a child's physical needs in daycare, again due to the time spent there that requires meals, sometimes naps, and more toileting to name a few. Also, due to the time spent in care there is a much greater need to be in tune with a family's customs, dietary practices, beliefs about discipline, and other specifically individual or idiosyncratic family practices that are important to insure a child's day long psychological and physical comfort levels. This is not to say that we don't want to know a lot about these things and do the best that we can in terms of respecting that child and her family during the brief period of time that they spend here at St. Paul's.

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From Jane: (Continued)

But let's face it; your children are not spending the bulk of their waking lives here at St. Paul's, therefore these kinds of issues simply come up less often.

This takes me to another issue, which is parent-school-teacher communication. This is probably the absolute top priority for any child and their family to have a good experience in any setting - preschool or daycare. But again, the issues of time and children's needs come into play. Parents never seem to get enough information about their child's day and this is one area that we struggle with, as do most preschools. The typical report in daycare, which should be daily, is primarily about a child's physical and health needs. Did they nap and how long, what and how much did they eat for lunch and/or breakfast, did they use the bathroom, were they tired, did they have a "good day" (eg. what was their overall mood) etc. Certainly if a child is spending the bulk of their waking day in care, a parent needs this kind of daily information. There is also more time for teachers to spend writing out some sort of daily report.

In contrast, in the school setting some of our primary goals are independence and a sense of autonomy for children. There is a fine line between good communication with parents, and encouragement of poor separation and anxious parental micro-management of children. It really boils down to basic trust. Both between parent and teacher and parent and child. Can I really trust my child's teacher to tell me if there is a problem, and can I really trust my child to operate without my presence in a preschool setting for 2 hours and 15 minutes? Of course you want to know in general what your child did during the day, after all what exactly are you paying tuition for. Parents want to know about their child's typical schedule, do they usually do some art, what kind of theme or topic are they working on, and do they usually have a friend to play with. This is important information that every parent should have about their child's experience in preschool. But when parents want daily details, I think about children who leave home for college and call their parents on their cell phone 3 and 4 times a day to make basic life decisions for them. And of course, the gut retching response of the parent when they cannot make it all ok for their child every minute of every day when there is this kind of close (enmeshed?) relationship going on.

So folks we will continue to struggle to find a good balance of information to share with you all. We do want to meet both children's needs and parents' needs around issues of good communication. But this is not daycare where you need detailed information about your child's daily life as it mostly relates to their *physical well being*. Please trust that we *will let you know if there is some problem*. And try to believe in your child's ability to do preschool on their own. The more you send a message that you believe in your child's basic competence to meet age appropriate challenges on their own, the more likely they will be able to develop that competence. There is no greater gift that you can give your children than that of letting them go - to eventually become their own independent adult selves, functioning on their own.

So, day care versus preschool – very similar in terms of what a child actually learns, if it is a high quality day care program. But in terms of the overall time that a child spends in care, very different, and particularly in terms of the necessary communications and individual adjustments needed in the program to insure that a child will be will be comfortable all day long with caregivers other than their own family members.



Mayfair Picnic



Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 19 from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. We will have our annual Mayfair picnic.

We will have our pony rides, an expanded moon bounce, all of the little games, and this year we are going to have ice cream available. The teachers will once again help out with the games. We will also have plants for sale. If you have McDonalds Happy Meal toys that you would like to get rid of please clean out your closets and bring them by, we will use them for prizes for our games, and everyone is a winner!

Julie Maselko is our Mayfair chair, if you would like to help out – particularly with set-up and clean-up - please give Julie a call at 412-831-5872.

Summer Play Camp



This year our summer play camp registration forms will be available after spring break. Summer program will begin the week June 11th – June 30th with the week of July 4th off. Then from the week of July 9th – July 27th.

Tuition is \$60.00 per week. Tuition payment when registering for up to 3 weeks is due at the time of registration. If registering for 4 weeks or more the remaining is due by June 11th, the first day of play camp. In case of withdrawal \$60.00 of the initial payment will be retained as non-refundable processing fee. There will be no refunds for withdrawal unless the request is received at least 2 weeks before the first day of the program.

Children must be 3 years of age by January 1st and toilet trained.

We will again have a 3 day program for younger children who are not 3 by January 1st. We will offer two sessions (the weeks are yet to be decided). The cost will be \$36.00 per week and the entire amount will be due at the time of registration. Registration forms for the younger children will be available after spring break.



Thank You



Many thanks to everyone for helping us collect the needed insurance information at this late date in the school year. It is information that we are required to have on file by law and would adversely affect our NAEYC accreditation if we did not have it on file this spring. Again, I do apologize for the inconvenience, but many thanks for everyone's understanding and cooperation!

Mark Your Calendar for St. Paul's Activities and Events



March/April 2007



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		27	28	29	30 Last Day of school before Spring Break	31
APRIL 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
S p r i n g B r e a k						
8  Easter Sunday	9 First Day back to school after Spring Break	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Earth Day 	23 Class pictures	24 Class pictures	25	26	27	28
29	30	May Fair May 19th	Last Day of School May 25th			