



Nursery School News

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

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From Jane: The End of The School Year



Another year is about to come to an end! It really is true that the older we get the faster time seems to pass. One of the best things about working with young children is their happy enthusiasm for life, and their trust and confidence in the adults in their world. I must say that I am thankful that I can be a part of their world; their joy, inquisitiveness, and their continued growth and development, especially at a time when our adult world seems so jaded and full of worries and concern.

I find it comforting that some things never change – three and four year olds still love to ride bikes in the Big Room, climb dirt mountain, and create wonderful works of art of all sorts! They also eventually outgrow preschool and move on to bigger challenges. And of course it is our challenge to encourage and facilitate those changes, endings, and new beginnings. The hard part about all of this is that once we find our children in a relative “comfort zone” we often hesitate to encourage them to move on. As the school year ends we now see that our children have mastered their class routines, know where they fit into their class group, and know how to problem solve “nursery school” issues independently – often without tantrums and negativity!

In spite of the fact that we would like to freeze frame many of the children here who have finally gotten it all right, we must remind ourselves that with each new day comes a new challenge, both for us and for our children. As soon as our children master one

stage and we finally breathe a sigh of relief, along comes the new one and we all cope with what usually becomes an even more complex and challenging stage than the previous one. For those of us who can take the risk of being life long learners, and model that life style for our children, we will encourage and facilitate our children’s journey into uncharted waters of the future. And even if we do try to hang onto everything that is comfortable and familiar, our children really do not allow us to.

Everyone has concerns when their children move on to new environments, and especially with any signs of immaturity and imperfection that we see in our children. But on the up side we should all find reassurance in knowing that even though they are young, they really are capable and ready to take on new challenges and move on to the next stage in their lives.

So folks, as they say, “It’s been real.” Life moves on and we should embrace the happiness with the sadness. Have a good, safe, and restful summer. For those of you leaving the school do keep in touch, and for the rest of you – I will see you during the summer program or in September.

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Communications Survey

Attached to the end of this newsletter is a short survey for you to fill out. The goal of this survey is to take the pulse of our St. Paul’s families to see how well we are communicating. A lot of information gets circulated through out the school year about events, meetings, volunteer opportunities and things that you may need to know or want to know. Please fill this survey out—it will only take a few minutes—and turn it in to **BOX # 90 by May 19** so we can see possible areas where we may need to improve how we communicate to you and others. This is an anonymous survey, you can include your name only if you would like to. Thank you!!

The Balance Between Protection & Encouragement

The other day I was talking with my youngest daughter about her plans for next year. She will be a junior in college where she is majoring in English. She told me that she was looking into programs for a semester abroad. I was initially enthusiastic, as it seemed logical that she would look into some program in England, or perhaps some other area of Europe. Our conversation continued and she began to tell me about what she referred to as an “exciting program in India.” INDIA! All of my internal alarms began to go off. Not safe – too far – she’s too young for travel to such a different area of the world etc. etc.!

To make matters worse my oldest daughter (she’s now 30) spent about a month in India a few years ago working as a journalist, not far from the southern border of Pakistan. During the period of time that she was working there, a horrendous earthquake struck northeastern India. I didn’t hear from Ann for a number of days after the earthquake as communication from that part of the world was virtually impossible, and needless to say it was not a pleasant experience waiting to hear whether she was o.k. Fortunately she was fine. It wasn’t until she got home that she told us about spending a few days in an Indian hospital with dysentery and having her passport stolen!

At any rate, after a long silence Caitlin said, “You don’t want me to go there do you?” After 30 plus years of raising children I’ve finally learned to filter some of my knee jerk reactions, so my only comment was something like I’m just surprised you picked that part of the world. She proceeded to tell me that just because her sister ran into “some little problems over there,” I should quit over reacting and treat her like an adult!

One of the most difficult tasks of parenting is finding a balance between protecting children and, at the same time, encouraging them to grow and take appropriate risks in life. The drive to protect our children is profound and can easily extend to “sanitizing” their lives in a way that does not allow them to grow and mature into their own separate person. And even more complicated is to fight the urge to insist that we know what will make them happy in life, when in fact we don’t always – ultimately only they know - we just don’t want to feel too much anxiety about the unknown. It is often hard to see our children make choices in life that we ourselves would not make. Fortunately with preschoolers the choices and risks are still about morning or afternoon preschool, or how many weeks to sign them up for summer program. You have a few years before the debate about independent travel abroad begins!

This all reminded me of an article by Bonnie Neugeberger that appeared in Exchange, a publication for preschool directors that I particularly enjoyed, so I have reprinted it here for you folks.

A Manner of Speaking

Waves gently lapped and swirled as the baby did an eager knee-toe crawl to the water’s edge. Just as the baby’s fingers reached for ocean foam, his father swooped down, scooped him up, dangled his toes in a gentle swing in and out of the water. Returned to the safety of the sandy beach, baby immediately headed knee-toe to the shore. Again, just as the foam licked his small fingers, his father scooped him up, dangled his toes in the water, and returned him to the sand. Over and over father and child replayed this scene-the baby ever eager, the father ever vigilant.

As I watched, I felt myself rooting for the baby - disappointed each time father’s arms descended. I wanted baby to feel the cold slap of the water against his face. I wanted to see his look of astonishment. And I wanted to know his reaction. Would he gurgle with delight? Would he cry?

I never found out. When father tired of the exercise, baby was snuggled in his mother’s arms, as she stood ankle-deep in the surf. Blanketed from the sun, he remained undaunted. He squirmed in her arms until he could see the waves and the play of older children at water’s edge. In a flash his arms were free and his feet were poking out from the blanket. (cont.)

The Balance Between Protection & Encouragement

This was a baby with a mission! A mission never (to my knowledge) accomplished. How unfulfilling! How frustrating! And yet how reassuring to know that each time he reached a brink, safety would be there. The power of those arms - deciding how far to let him go, determining when and how to intervene- providing safety.

Early childhood teachers are like those arms. A thousand times a day they must decide whether at that given point and for that particular child they will provide protection from or encouragement toward a new experience. Some of the decisions they make are good ones, some of them poor...most of the time teachers never know because the next 20 decisions are streaking their way. It is motivation that is important. It is knowing what we want for this child, for these children. Knowing when to scoop and when to stand back is a skill that we acquire from experience. It grows from an understanding that children need room to explore; they need to feel the slap of a wave new and then, the pain of an awkward hammer blow, the prickle of a cactus spine. This is learning. Children also need to develop a basic trust that they will be protected from danger and pain and injury. This gives them courage.

Knowing that we are there provides a reference of trust for children. They know that they can adventure forth and that whatever the real world presents, there are loving arms from which they can try to understand their experience. Some children will strain against this protection, just as they depend on its safety.

The balance between protection and encouragement is a delicate one and we can never ride it perfectly. But if we act out of a genuine love of children, a solid understanding of their developmental needs, and a respect for the characteristics of each particular child, we will accomplish our purpose. The fact of our being there, ready to swoop or encourage or applaud and always to love, shapes how the children in our care see the world.

And as far as the trip to India goes – the verdict is still out on that one!

Who Wants To Be A Mentor?



Remember when you were new to St. Paul's and you didn't know the "lingo?" What is Mayfair? And, what exactly is a Chinese auction St. Paul's style? As St. Paul's continues to grow, our new families are also growing. Think back to when you were a new family walking through those doors. Wouldn't it be nice to know that at least one other parent was there to answer your questions and give you some added guidance?

We are currently developing a Mentoring Program for our new families. Each new family will be assigned a veteran who will personally welcome the new family to St. Paul's. The responsibilities are not difficult. Right before school starts we will host a new family picnic for the new families and their mentors. The other "big" responsibility

will be to check in with your family at least once a month to answer questions and keep the family up-to-date. These are the only "requirements." Additionally, you may choose to ask your family to go with you to the wine tasting, get the children together to play, or meet moms for coffee.

If you would like to be involved in this new program, please contact Katherine Doyle at 412-341-4732. More information will be available in the summer Welcome Packet, which arrives July/August.

Parent Partnership



Next year Sarah Falbo will chair and Carol Eskew will co-chair the Parent Partnership organization for St. Paul's.

“The mission of the Parent Partnership is to facilitate and support collaboration among the parents, staff and Board of Trustees of St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School by providing opportunities for parents' involvement in activities for: parent education, enhanced communication, volunteering and fundraising.”

Many thanks to Wanda Proteau for chairing and Laura Buerger for co-chairing the organization this year, and to all of you in the organization who helped out in so many ways. We have a great group of committee chairs and committee members in place for next year. There is always a need for more volunteers, and anyone in the school who would like to be involved in the parent education committee, communication committee, or the volunteering and fundraising committee is welcome. Please contact us if you would be interested in getting involved. You can contact Carol at 412-341-2592 or Sarah at 412-343-4530, and they will be glad to take your name and answer questions that you may have.

Lost & Found/Parent Bookshelf

By the end of the year we have always collected a large supply of lost and found items. We will put everything out during the last week of school so that people can retrieve lost items, in the mean time be sure to check in the lost and found.

Also check and see if you have books at home from the parent bookshelf. If you find that you do, please return the books to the school office. Thanks for you cooperation.



Please join in the fun of Mayfair
at St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School
Saturday, May 22nd 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Rain or Shine



Mayfair 2004 is Coming!!

This year Mayfair will be Saturday, May 22nd from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. We are looking at Mayfair this year primarily as a year-end celebration for the children. We have some exciting innovations! We will have the moon walk, pony rides, balloon sculpturing, and for the first time ever here at St. Paul's we will have a train ride for the children!

We will still have all of our games and prizes, a bake sale, and food. This year we will have pizza and hot dogs for lunch. By now you have all received a flyer in your mailbox letting you know what can be donated to Mayfair.

Keep bringing in your fast food toys or other small appropriate toys that you'd like to get rid of. Any other food item asked for on the flyer can be dropped off in Jane's office. Bake sale items should be brought in a day or two before Mayfair. Once again Mindy's class will be making "Simply St. Paul's" strawberry jam. Many thanks to Jody and Rick Sunseri for donating all of the strawberries!

If everyone finds one thing to donate and if those who are able can give some volunteer time - it will be easy for us to give the children a fantastic send off for a great year! If you have questions or suggestions - call Katherine Doyle at 412-341-4732 or Laverne Duffy at 412-344-2204.

MAYFAIR 2004

- Games
- Prizes
- Face Painting
- Pony Rides
- Balloon Artist
- A Fire Truck
- Bake Sale
- Hamburgers & Hotdogs
- Pizza
- Train Ride
- Plus More...



Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities & Events May 2004

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 ★ Comm. Survey Due in BOX #90	20	21	22 ✋ MAYFAIR 2004	23
24	25	26	27 Last Day Of School	28 Last Day Of School	29	30
31						

