



Nursery School News

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

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



Volume XXXV, Issue 7

May 2006

From Jane

To let you all know where my head is at this point in my life...I just pulled out some *very old* St. Paul's newsletters and opened the May 1989 newsletter to see what it said. The reason for May 1989 is that this was the last newsletter of the year from my youngest child's final year of nursery school here at St. Paul's. I was curious to see what the director at that time had to say, as Caitlin will graduate from college on May 6th. It was an incredible feeling of *deja-vous*. Much of what that newsletter said could be applied to Caitlin's life today, just as it applied to her life back in 1989 when she finished nursery school and headed off to kindergarten at Markham School.

I guess what it says to me is that the emotions that beginnings, endings, transitions, and the inevitable separations that those events bring to lives are the same, no matter what age we are – whether we are 5 or 65. As I see Caitlin and her fellow graduating college seniors showing a combination of happy anticipation about the future, mixed with a bit of trepidation and lots of anxiety about what is to come, I see many of those same emotions among your children here as they end their year of preschool. As a result I thought it would be fun to reprint that same article that Winnie Feise (the director in 1989) wrote in May of that year. How sentimental am I?

The Year's End

As the year ends I find myself asking where has the year gone? I also find myself thinking I wish I had just a little more time with these children, as some

of them are just beginning to get the idea. Some of us will be saying "good-bye" after many years of association at St. Paul's. The feelings are undeniable, separation is not an emotion or process to be ignored.

Children *do* have trouble with endings, beginnings, and transitions. Not all children, but many. They get uptight, feel the stress as they recognize that the class they are in will shortly be no longer, that their teacher will not be their teacher another year, in short that change is in the offing. It may be particularly difficult for children who are leaving a very familiar and mostly safe environment for a new school, a school for big children with many new rules to learn and people to meet along with the school work.

It should not surprise us, but it always does, when children regress in the face of change or anxiety or loss or newness. At such times the best response usually is to accept the regressed behavior, to search for the cause and to help the child understand it while helping the child get passed the anxiety and to work toward growth.

The end of the year also affects staff and parents. We get attached to the children and their families, we have enjoyed the contacts and interaction, and we are saddened by the good-byes, even as we are pleased to see the children move on, whether to another class at St. Paul's or to kindergarten. We have to process the loss before we turn our thoughts and energies to next year's classes, which we will do with anticipation and enthusiasm.



Nursery School News

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

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



Volume XXXV, Issue 7

May 2006

From Jane

To let you all know where my head is at this point in my life... I just pulled out some *very old* St. Paul's newsletters and opened the May 1989 newsletter to see what it said. The reason for May 1989 is that this was the last newsletter of the year from my youngest child's final year of nursery school here at St. Paul's. I was curious to see what the director at that time had to say, as Caitlin will graduate from college on May 6th. It was an incredible feeling of *deja-vous*. Much of what that newsletter said could be applied to Caitlin's life today, just as it applied to her life back in 1989 when she finished nursery school and headed off to kindergarten at Markham School.

I guess what it says to me is that the emotions that beginnings, endings, transitions, and the inevitable separations that those events bring to lives are the same, no matter what age we are – whether we are 5 or 65. As I see Caitlin and her fellow graduating college seniors showing a combination of happy anticipation about the future, mixed with a bit of trepidation and lots of anxiety about what is to come, I see many of those same emotions among your children here as they end their year of preschool. As a result I thought it would be fun to reprint that same article that Winnie Feise (the director in 1989) wrote in May of that year. How sentimental am I?

The Year's End

As the year ends I find myself asking where has the year gone? I also find myself thinking I wish I had just a little more time with these children, as some

of them are just beginning to get the idea. Some of us will be saying "good-bye" after many years of association at St. Paul's. The feelings are undeniable, separation is not an emotion or process to be ignored.

Children *do* have trouble with endings, beginnings, and transitions. Not all children, but many. They get uptight, feel the stress as they recognize that the class they are in will shortly be no longer, that their teacher will not be their teacher another year, in short that change is in the offing. It may be particularly difficult for children who are leaving a very familiar and mostly safe environment for a new school, a school for big children with many new rules to learn and people to meet along with the school work.

It should not surprise us, but it always does, when children regress in the face of change or anxiety or loss or newness. At such times the best response usually is to accept the regressed behavior, to search for the cause and to help the child understand it while helping the child get passed the anxiety and to work toward growth.

The end of the year also affects staff and parents. We get attached to the children and their families, we have enjoyed the contacts and interaction, and we are saddened by the good-byes, even as we are pleased to see the children move on, whether to another class at St. Paul's or to kindergarten. We have to process the loss before we turn our thoughts and energies to next year's classes, which we will do with anticipation and enthusiasm.

From Jane: (Continued)

Some parents whose children are taking off for kindergarten struggle with the realization that although the children are ready for the next step they are still little children. They fear for their children in the new environment, they are uneasy at the signs of immaturity and imperfection and need reassurance that all is well. Others, of course, are delighted that their nursery school days are behind them. To all, we wish a very fine summer and look forward to seeing many of you in the fall and the summer program.

Play

With the coming of summer many of you are thinking about vacations and how your children will be spending all of their "free time." Sometimes parents worry that their children will get bored without lots of structured activities. As you all know I am a firm advocate of play – particularly creative, unstructured play for preschoolers. I ran across an article the other day about the evolutionary roots of play that was quite good, so I thought I would share it with you all.

Play – Evolutionary, Universal and Essential

By Stuart L Brown, M.D.

What is shared by mass murderers, felony drunk drivers, starving children, head banging laboratory animals, anxious overworked students, and all reptiles? They don't play. What do most Nobel Laureates, historically renowned creative artists and inventors, successful multi-career entrepreneurs, and animals of superior intelligence have in common? They are full of play throughout their lives.

There is something profound about play, yet the full story of play has not been told. Most of us do not spend much time pondering the subject of play, or consider it as basic as, say oxygen, or sleep. Hold your breath for 45 seconds and your body will tell you of its need for air. Stay awake for two full nights and every cell will ache with the need to sleep. Try staying awake unendingly for two weeks and it is fatal. But when an adult misses play for a few days about all that seems to happen is that life loses its brightness and sense of purpose or meaning. Be seriously deprived of play in childhood, though, and the consequences are likely to be dire, though delayed. So we do not equate the need to play as belonging in the survival ballpark with food or sleep. Staying alive and play deprivation don't seem directly linked. Or are they?

Every child, well-fed and safe in addition to breathing and sleeping, also universally spontaneously engages in play. From the first moments of post-feeding nipple play, to the shared babbling between parent and child, to peek-a-boo and ring-around-the-rosy, any bonded protected nourished child is energized by and finds its waking hours dominated by joyful acts of play.

But where does play fit into the big scheme of things? An evolutionary look at it shows that as it has developed over the eons, it closely accompanies the establishment of a large brain and warm bloodedness. The smarter, more flexible, and adaptive the creature, and the more they play, paradoxically, the greater is their immediate risk to life and limb. So play is different, more connected to the details of the environment than oxygen or sleep, but just as inevitable-and necessary.

Snow leopards box, kelp-laden sea lions play tug of war, otters do most anything in order to play; bats dabble with their sonar, killer whales tease sea gulls, ravens slide down snow banks on their backs, and given the chance, wild wolves and grizzly bears play with each other despite their dissimilarity in size

Play (Continued)

and long carnivorous heritage. And humans? Well, we are the champions of play, designed by biology for play through all of our lives, but sculpted by culture as to its adult forms.

Play movements are recognized across species lines, and play signals, such as a relaxed open mouth expression, (the "play face") can be seen in both mammals and birds and is understood by both to mean "no harm will come to you, what follows is play." Thus play, anciently and slowly established during evolution, has established a language which forms the basis for trust of others and forms an action pattern of beginning integrity. Play signals and languages are powerful and can override more stereotyped communications such as those which frequently precede a fight. We have not learned to utilize these languages fully in our daily dealings with each other.

Play also reduces the social distance between individuals and assists in the development of more intricate intimate bonds. It provides a repertoire of behaviors to alleviate stress and helps the player cope with ambiguity.

Authentic play, which occurs whenever the playfulness itself gives more pleasure than any goal associated with it, is the means by which adaptability and flexibility are added to the players' existence. Thus play serves as the grounding core of learning

Many studies of violent anti-social men have revealed major play deprivation. Detailed evaluations of other selected comparison populations show the importance of play to their healthy adaptable development. Thus, play seems necessary as an antidote to the development of violent tendencies as well as a partner to effective socialization.

Play and games seem necessary for the development of community which requires mutual trust, cooperation, and common goal setting. They are necessary to develop a sense of future optimism and perseverance. Handicapping, the play induced behavior where the stronger one voluntarily withholds domination in a situation of unequal power, is learned in the crucibles of solitary and social play by all social creatures.

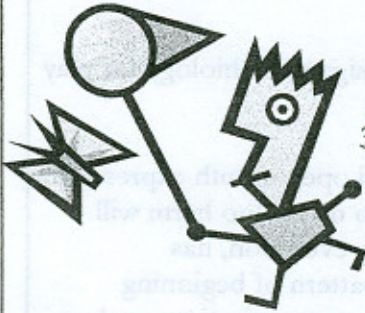
For humans, play is also surprisingly active in the shaping of one's own inner private narratives (actual sense of self), and thus is directly related to mental health and elasticity. It is also the means by which we shape a model world.

Thus it serves as fulcrum to whatever takes on meaning. The growing virtual world, which is now often being seen as the only reality in which we exist is, at base, a play-imaginary world.

Play also acts as a freeing non-rational action. Play emanates from intrinsic special systems of the organism. Witness a monkey leaping and pirouetting gleefully from a tree into a pond while looking at peers, and play can be seen as art in action. Once thought to be the domain of humans, a predilection to choose symmetry (beauty) in matters such as mate choice, rather than being driven by blind instinctive forces is now seen by numerous leading edge investigators as also a capacity of some animals. A close look at the sources of aesthetic links it with the capacity to play.

So, it appears that nature has provided us options we do not always appreciate or incorporate into our lives. Perhaps the time has come for us to allow its wisdom to be enacted.

Summer Play Camp



If you would like your child to attend St. Paul's Summer Play Camp you can pick up a form in Kathi Workman's office. Summer program runs from June 12th – June 30th, with a break the week of July 4th, then the last 3 weeks are from July 10th – July 28th. Children must be 3 years of age by January 1, 2006 and must be toilet trained. The 3 day a week program for younger children is currently full. For more information please call Mindy Hudson, camp director, at 412-531-2644.

Playground Bricks

We will be putting in engraved playground brick pavers on the path leading out to the play ground this summer. If you would like to purchase a brick with the engraving of your choice please fill out the form (included in the newsletter) and turn it in with your check to Kathi Workman by the end of the school year. Take some time and walk out to the playground path and look at the bricks for ideas – it's a fun way to help the school and to also have your family and children honored on our playground. All of the funds raised through the sale of bricks will be put toward playground up keep and new outside equipment.



Lost and Found/Parent Bookshelf

Be sure to check the lost and found before the year is out. We will put things out on a table in the Big Room the last week of school.



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





May 2006



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|-----------------------|---------|-----------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 Mother's Day  | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 May Fair  |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 Last Day of School | 27 |
| 28 | 29 Memorial Day | 30 | 31 | The first day of Summer Camp is June 12 | | |