

Nursery School News

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

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From Jane: Managing Change

I recently attended an excellent workshop given by Earl Braxton Ph.D. about managing change on both the organizational and personal levels. I thought I would share some of Dr. Braxton's wisdom with you all.

As far as personal change goes, we all deal with change daily in our lives, sometimes on a grand scale - for example, a move, a job change, a family event such as a new baby, marriage, divorce, or a death. But we also cope with small daily changes, often in the form of unexpected events such as our car breaking down, needing to stay at home to deal with a sick child when we had other plans, or suddenly realizing that our formerly contented, compliant baby has become a 2 year old tyrant!

Often when we are faced with change in our lives we make the mistake of looking at the situation as a single event that we can and should control. When in fact change is a process, a shift, moving from one thing to another. Often in the form of a series of small shifts that force us to problem solve in order to keep our life from becoming chaotic. It is not an either/or kind of event. When change occurs in our life we need to pay attention to what is ending as well as what is new and beginning. And we must let go of the illusion that we can be *in control* of the event - what we must do is simply let go and *manage the journey as it impacts the process*. This is very difficult because it means that we must allow our sense of personal boundaries to temporarily become somewhat fluid during the change process.

Let me give you an example. As children grow and develop they obviously change. The early years are generally full of chaos because the changes are so fast. One day we have a nursing infant, before we know it we have a wild two year old, and as soon as we figure out how to cope with our unpredictable preschooler, we find ourselves with a serious minded grade schooler, who requires much less supervision

as they gain independence and move out into the big world. And none of these changes - appropriately managed or not, can begin to prepare anyone for the storm of adolescence. And what's more, if we are going to acknowledge that each of our children are separate and unique - what works for one will not necessarily work for the other. How can we possibly discover what our individual child needs if we must forge ahead, attempting to be "in control" of every change and/or event in their life.

During the years that we are raising our children it is probably helpful, especially when change happens so quickly and we feel that we have no answers, to ask ourselves what our final goal for our children actually is. I think that we can all agree that it is to nurture them in a manner that will allow them to eventually leave the nuclear family and become independent, self-supporting adults. In order for this to happen we must have the courage to back off a bit and allow our children, as they grow and develop, to make more and more choices of their own. Sometimes it also means that we need to allow them to make their own mistakes and suffer the consequences. Allowing our children the freedom to make choices and the inevitable mistakes that will follow is a far more functional goal than attempting to control our children so that they will always be "perfect." And if we do not have the courage to trust our children and ourselves enough to allow them to grow and change, we will not empower them to discover their own separate truths and personhood. If we try to control all of the changes that happen in our children's lives we are simply imposing a self upon them. I think this kind of letting go of our children is probably one of the hardest things to do as a parent, because it all plays into some of our deepest fears and (cont.)

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From Jane: (Continued)

anxieties.

We always feel safe when we are dealing with situations that are familiar to us. Our anxiety naturally heightens when faced with new and challenging behavior from our children or new situations in our life. This is when we tend to hold onto the way we “always did it before,” or at least long for the way it was before. This is our comfort zone, but life is not static. When the world around us is constantly changing, just as our children are constantly growing, changing, and becoming more complex, the way we did things last week or six months ago will not necessarily work today. In order to contend with the complexities of life we may need to step out of that comfort zone and explore alternative actions and solutions. Otherwise life becomes havoc, and we will be unable to make the necessary adjustments in order to cope with life’s inevitable changes and unpredictability.

This is why, for instance, having a baby - particularly a first baby creates such chaos in our lives. Our entire life as we knew it is no longer. I’ll never forget one particular incident shortly after the birth of my first child. Prior to David’s birth, John (my husband) and I had easily shared the house keeping tasks as he was in law school full time and I was working. David was probably about two weeks old when my husband came home one day and suddenly complained that there were no clean dishes in the house. I was infuriated that my new role apparently had deteriorated to that of designated dishwasher! I can still remember standing in front of the mirror holding my screaming baby, looking at my chubbier body, dirty hair (who has time for showers with a new baby), and realizing that this was my new identity in life. Actually I felt that I had NO identity. I didn’t understand at that moment that I was in the *process of creating a new identity*. A change that I eventually learned to live with and love; that of mother. My husband, needless to say, had to make a few adjustments of his own. My new role and identity did not totally allow “Mr. law student” to abdicate his role of dishwasher! And of course that was just the beginning of many changes and shifts for me. We all have a story, and the more we are able to let go of preconceived notions and illusions that we can be in control of *every change* that occurs in our own and our children’s lives, the greater the possibility that we can actually find productive and creative ways to manage and cope with the inevitable changes that occur in life.

All of this is not to say that we should not make plans or set goals for our children or ourselves. Of course we should plan for the future. It’s just that once we head in the general direction of our plans, we need to remain open to a less than perfect and predictable world. When I was in my 30’s I realized that my children had reached a stage of independence that required a lot less of my time, so I decided to enroll in graduate school. I’ve often thought that if I could have predicted all of the unexpected “twists and turns” including the birth of my 3rd child about three quarters of my way through, I might not have started in the first place! And it’s probably best that I didn’t realize all of the unpredictable complexities, because I’m glad now that I did it. But, as Dr. Braxton reminded us, strategic plans, job descriptions, and goals and plans in life are fine, but they are nothing more than bullet points of what we “ought to be doing in a perfect world.” Exactly *how* the job, the plan, or for that matter raising our children, plays out in reality is a whole other, and often unpredictable process.

This topic makes me think of a quote by Marion Wright Edelman that I would like to share with you from her book *The Measure of Our Success*. It is from a chapter entitled “A Letter to My Sons.” I think what she understands and conveys so eloquently here is once again, the importance of letting go of the need to control change in our children’s lives and the importance of simply managing the process of the journey.

“I seek your forgiveness for all the times I talked when I should have listened; got angry when I should have been patient; acted when I should have waited; feared when I should have been delighted; scolded when I should have encouraged; criticized when I should have complimented; said yes when I should have said no and said no when I should have said yes. I did not know a whole lot about parenting or how to ask for help. I often tried too hard and wanted and demanded so much, and mistakenly sometimes tried to mold you into my image of what I wanted you to be rather than discovering and nourishing you as you emerged and grew.” (cont.)

From Jane: (Continued)

One of the most important points that I came away with from Dr. Braxton's workshop that I am trying to communicate with you folks is that there are often no exact right answers when it comes to living our lives and raising our children. There are truths – children deserve to be loved, nurtured, respected, listened to, and protected. But the way that each of us chooses to interact with our individual children, particularly when the complexities of change come into play, is far more complicated than most of us would like to admit!

St. Paul's 2003 Wine Tasting Event - Better Than Ever



The Date:

Saturday, November 22 at 7:00 PM

The Agenda:

Wine presentations by Palate Partners
A St. Paul's Slide Show
Silent Auction
Live Auction

The Items (just to name a few):

Steeler Tickets · Pens Tickets · Pirate Tickets · Signed Footballs · Fishing · Golf
Dinners · Hotel Packages · Jewelry · Tickets to the Opera · Dining with Chef Fetty
Wine Accessories · A Wine Collection · A DVD Package · Museum Memberships
Pottery · Paintings · Photography · Handmade Exclusives



***A trip to St. Kitts with airline tickets included ***



The Baskets:

Basket of Cheer · Family Fun Night · Gardening Basket · Gourmet Basket
Home For The Holidays Basket · Scrapbook Lover's Basket
Spa Basket · St. Paul's Basket · Italian Basket

Some Notes:

The baskets will be on display in the Big Room beginning Monday, November 17. Tickets will be sold for \$4 per ticket or 3 for \$10 each day at the display or at the event. Also, on the 17th, everyone will receive an advance copy of The Wine Tasting Program in their mailboxes. Take some time to read about all of the silent and live auction items in more detail prior to the big night. ***For the first time, St. Paul's will be able to accept MasterCard and VISA for payment of all auction items!***

Having Fun Without Promoting Unhealthy Behavior

I don't know whether you folks have noticed, but there have been a number of very good articles in the Post Gazette lately about children and unhealthy eating habits. There has been a lot of research recently about the unhealthy combination of lack of exercise and increase of fast food consumption by today's children. As a result, a greater percentage of children today are obese than ever before and there is an epidemic of childhood diabetes.

One of the articles related a study done at the Yale Center for Eating and Weight Disorders, where 283 children were offered two bowls of treats: one with candy and another with inexpensive Halloween toys. The results showed that there was not a statistically significant difference between which items the children chose. One of the study's leading researchers said that the point of the study was not to take the fun out of Halloween but to investigate "whether we can have fun without promoting unhealthy behavior."

The article makes me think not only about holiday parties for the children here, but also birthday celebrations. I am certainly not in favor of ruining children's fun, but I am in agreement with the researchers when they state that, "Americans have developed an astounding number of occasions for feeding large quantities of unhealthy food to small children."

I really appreciate the fact that most of the classes have stayed within our no nut guidelines. It was quite refreshing to not see all of the overly large quantities of gooey sugary filled treats in everyone's room this Halloween. I can assure you all from years of experience that when we offer the children lots of sugar filled treats much of it is not eaten and simply ends up going in the trash – children have small stomachs and cannot eat such large amounts of food at once. I appreciate the fact that parents care about the children and want to see them have a good time. But there are so many ways that we can do this without serving them unhealthy food. The children all seemed to have a very nice day without the excess! Many of the classes simply supplied a juice box and festive paper goods. All of the children were served Eat'n Park cookies. Some of the classes chose to bake and decorate their cookies. Keep in mind when you send treats in from the list that we handed out, to keep the portions small, otherwise it becomes wasteful and unhealthy.

Parent Partnership Report: November's Hot Topic

The first Hot Topic of the year is scheduled on this Thursday, November 13, in the upstairs lounge. With the holidays fast approaching we all get geared up for the events, parties, celebrations, and traditions that are plentiful this time of year. It is sometimes difficult to allow yourself and your children the luxury of quiet time or a slower pace so that stress doesn't overcome the family. For that reason, we have invited Cindy Millberger, Ph.D., who is a child psychologist in our community, to come and discuss "Holiday Happiness—Holiday Stress." Cindy will talk to us about what's best for our children during the holidays. She will give tips on how to give our children the positive experiences we so want them to have while minimizing the stress that can often accompany such a busy time of year. She will be joined by our very own Jane Adams and Eileen Sharbaugh who both have experience and expertise in child development and safety. Coffee, tea and bagels will be served for refreshment. Babysitting will be available for \$5.00 per hour per child.



Scrap Paper Needed

Over the years parents have often donated old computer paper or unused letterhead paper that they no longer want for the children to use for drawing in the classroom. If you have any old unwanted paper around your house that you would like to get rid of we would be happy to use it here. Another recycled item that we are running low on is mat board. We often get scraps from frame shops. If anyone has access to old mat board or scraps from a frame shop please bring it in or let us know about it. Thanks!

Art Builds Skills

This past month Mattie and I joined a panel of educators at the Pittsburgh Association for Education of Young Children Conference from the Cyert Center at CMU and Shady Side Presbyterian Nursery School for a discussion about the arts and how children learn through art. It was an interesting panel discussion; here are some points of interest that I thought I would share with you all.

The Arts – music, drama, visual art, creative movement, and play – provide children with various methods for expressing, learning and investigating cognitive and affective experiences. The arts promote an interest in environmental patterns and beauty. They also create a climate for caring and creating products that pass on to future generations those things that add to the quality of life. The arts allow children to explore, problem solve, make decisions, create, be successful, feel competent and have fun!

Art builds many skills:

- Observing
- Recording
- Organizing
- Expressing feelings
- Working with purpose
- Problem solving
- Respecting self through personal achievement
- Communicating
- Discovering a personal point of view
- Appreciating different view points and cultures
- Creating change in the environment
- Making aesthetic discoveries and judgments
- Developing fine and gross motor skills
- Expanding creative thinking
- Expressing ideas in many dimensions



Formal studies confirm what parents and early childhood professionals have long known – the arts promote the growth and development of young children. Research has identified these contributions to early development:

1. Brain Development

The arts give children the opportunity to use more than one avenue for learning and to make connections among different parts of the brain.

2. Social Development

The arts invite play partners, whether adults or other children. Creative experiences give children a way to build bridges with others who are different from them.

3. Emotional Development

The arts provide an outlet for children's emotions; they allow them to integrate experiences, and achieve mastery over strong feelings.




4. Physical Development

The arts engage children's senses, and provide opportunities to experience different sensations; body awareness is increased, fine motor skills and coordination are enhanced.

5. Cognitive Development

The arts allow children to contrast and compare, think independently, make decisions, solve problems, associate related information and ideas, sequence events, make predictions, understand cause and effect, and communicate non-verbally.

Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities & Events November 2003

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
10	11	12	13  Hot Topic 9:30 AM Upstairs lounge	14 Wine Tasting RSVP due in Jane's office	15	16
17 Wine Tasting Baskets on Display— Tickets on sale	18	19	20	21	22  WINE TASTING 7:00 PM	23
24	25 Last day of school for Thanksgiving	26	27  Happy Thanksgiving	28	29	30
Dec 1	2 First day back To school	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 Santa Breakfast 9-11 AM	14

St. Paul's Annual Santa Breakfast

It is very hard to believe, but it is time to announce that Santa is arriving soon at St. Paul's Nursery School. Make sure you mark your calendar for **Saturday, December 13** when our annual Santa Breakfast will take place! The undercroft will be festive and magical for the children to enjoy crafts, a puppet performance, singing with Margaret and visiting with Santa Claus. The breakfast this year will be delicious and healthy with fruit salad, bagels & cream cheese, muffins, Eat'n Park Smiley Cookies and hot coffee. Invitations should arrive in your mailboxes at the end of this month!



Email If you haven't already done so, please stop in to Jane's office and give her your email address!