



# Nursery School News

## Director's Dialogue

by: Jane Adams

## Santa Breakfast

Believe it or not the Santa Breakfast will be here before we know it! It will take place from 9:30 – 11:30 on **Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**. We'll have a sing along with Margaret, continental breakfast, and of course Santa himself

Save the date and plan to come for bagels, Starbucks coffee, fresh fruit, and muffins. Look for your invitation in your mailbox!

## NAEYC

This year the National Association for the Education of Young Children is being held in Chicago IL. Marianne DeVito, Erin Egal, Dottie Lust, and Margaret Hooton are attending the conference. Going to national and local conferences is a wonderful way for the St. Paul's staff to stay on top of the latest information and research about early childhood education through attending the key note addresses and a variety of workshops presented by experts in the field. We learn a lot and bring it all back with us to use in the classroom with your children. It is also an excellent way to network with our colleagues in the field. This year Margaret Hooton has once again been selected to present a workshop. In order to be selected, one must go through a rigorous process, and we are all very proud and excited that Margaret has been chosen as a presenter at this national level.

In the November National Association of Episcopal Schools newsletter message, The Rev. Daniel R. Heischman uses the analogy of "speed bumps" and what it means to be an adult as it relates to parenting and working with children. I like that analogy, and I particularly like it as I think about moving into the holiday season.

As adults, we are the ones in our children's lives who set the pace for daily activities, set boundaries, and help our children navigate the complicated parameters between home, school, and other activities. As our adult world becomes ever more "speeded up" with multi-purpose cell phones, e-mail, and our own myriad of adult activities, our role as parents who can act as "speed bumps" for our children's lives is becoming more and more difficult to fulfill. It is so easy to forget that children need us to assume a different pace; to readjust our frantic schedules on occasion, and to be available to them on a level that "fits" their needs, which is very different from our complex adult needs.

The more we can differentiate our adult agendas and quite frankly, competitiveness, from our children and the way that their little lives are a reflection of us and our parenting, the more likely we will be able to protect them from our own "fast track" adult lives. And of course, the holidays are a time when we get so "speeded up," it is easy to lose sight of an appropriate "pace" for a preschooler.

Not only is our pace out of whack, but our focus on perfection, end products, and material things during the holidays gets us even further off track with what is best for children. It is a little bit like swimming upstream if we think of pausing to enjoy the process of letting our children help us with holiday preparations, as opposed to focusing on rushing around to get things done as though we must meet a deadline that is written in stone! So what if Christmas cards don't arrive by December 25<sup>th</sup>!

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# 2007 50th Anniversary Fall Fundraiser

## Director's Dialogue

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As I write this article the Fall Fundraiser is behind us. Everyone did their part, and it was a fun and successful evening. Thanks to the efforts of the co-chairs Jeanne Basse, Kari King, and Kristen Napoleon everything was organized and ready to go. Thanks to Carol Eskew and her committee and all of the parents for the beautiful baskets, they were truly amazing. Thanks also to Becky Sutherland and Nate Herring for organizing the food, wine, and beer. And finally, thanks to all of the teachers for pouring the wine and to Kathi Workman for keeping all of the RSVP's in order and keeping the money organized throughout the evening. Overall, everyone in the school helps to make this evening a success through their participation and many donations.

It is a good thing to remind ourselves about the reason for the evening which is to raise money to put back into the school for the children. It was a spectacular evening. It was so much fun to see everyone all dressed up in "adult attire," and to enjoy the delicious food and to have an opportunity to socialize with friends. And at the end of the evening everyone knew that they had helped to make the school a better place.



School Director Jane Adams with her collage gift from the St. Paul's families at the Fall Fundraiser.

What if we were all to attempt to choose simplicity this holiday season. There is an elegance in simplicity. It forces us to eliminate things that are unnecessary in our lives and to think about our priorities. It would mean fewer activities, less expense, and ultimately more time to spend with our children and families. Most important of all, it would mean more time to reflect upon and actual meaning of Christmas. After all, isn't that what it is really all about?

There was a segment on the news last night about Walmart moving "black Friday" to the first weekend in November in order to pump up Holiday spending. Personally, I had never heard of black Friday, but I presume it is what has traditionally been the "big shopping" Friday after Thanksgiving. At any rate what a nightmare, ads designed to pressure us to make it a priority to rush off to Walmart to buy "bargains" such as \$1000.00 flat screen TV's! As you might imagine I am one of those people who still has trouble turning on the regular TV with all of those remote controls, I don't know which one goes to what! Needless to say black Friday shopping deals for electronics at Walmart would not be a priority in my life.

The educator, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot puts it into perspective when she writes, *"Our cultural values or value frame is primarily about the patterns of interaction and quality of life that the accumulation of resources and money requires. It is about competition and expediency (going faster and farther) rather than about wisdom and grace (going deeper). It is about a focus on ends rather than means, living in the future rather than the present, and caring more about the end product than the process. All of these tendencies and preoccupations tend to work against the creation of relationships that are good for children. An honest relationship is fluid and organic and supports a process of mutual discovery, one that is always responsive to the individual idiosyncrasies and developmental needs of the child and his development."*

So speed bumps folks. When we fail to slow things down to a comfortable pace for our children we are simply not providing them with a nurturing space. Keep that analogy in mind during this Christmas season – slow down and enjoy your family.

## Registration for the 2008 –2009 School Year

Registration for currently enrolled children and their siblings will be the week of **January 21 –25**. Forms will be placed in everyone’s mailbox prior to January 21. Forms can be handed in or mailed in anytime during that week in order to maintain your priority during that time period for **currently enrolled students and their siblings**.

The deadline for the earliest date that all other priorities may be mailed in or handed in will be **Monday, January 28**.

Typical progression for students will be as follows:

1. Children enrolled in AM sessions will remain in the morning.
2. Children enrolled in PM sessions will remain in the afternoon.
3. Children will have the choice of remaining at the same days per week or adding 1 day per week – eg. Thursday/Thursday children may remain in 2 day per week classes or move up to 3 days per week (MWF) classes. 3 day per week children may remain in 3 day classes or move up to 4 day per week classes.
4. If a parent desires to switch their child from morning to afternoon or vice versa they may request to do so and if space is available we will grant the request. If a child desires to move from a 2 day per week class to a 4 day per week class, or a 1 day per week class to a 3 day per week class, they may request to do so and if space is available we will grant the request.
5. All currently enrolled children are **guaranteed** a space following the typical progression. Other requests will be granted only if space permits.

## Calendar

**Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**  
9:30 - 11:30, Santa Breakfast

**Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>**  
Last day of school, Christmas break

December 2007						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

January 2008						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**Thursday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
First day back to school

**Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**  
No school, Martin Luther King day

# Bev Bos Newsletter Play Article

Bev Bos is one of the nation's foremost experts on preschool education. She is an internationally renowned speaker who gives seminars and is asked to speak at conferences throughout the United States. This past August, Margaret Hooton, our music teacher, was fortunate enough to attend a week-long conference presented by Bev Bos in California. Margaret brought back some wonderful ideas and information that she has shared with all of the staff.

Bev e-mails a newsletter that I regularly receive. This month's newsletter had such a wonderful message about play and the importance of play during the preschool years, that I decided to share it with all of you. With the advent of No Child Left Behind and the ensuing issues of push down academics in elementary schools and preschools as well, it is easy for both educators and parents to forget about the importance of play in our children's lives. Bev reminds us of the importance of play in her newsletter article which follows.

*"Dear friends,*

*Did any of you happen to come across the following euphemism "deliberate practice" (ie. rote work) from "Hot House Kids?" Anders Ericsson, a professor from Florida State University, coined it when arguing that it's this kind of practice and enrichment, rather than natural giftedness, that more often results in talented adults. Sometimes I find it hard to be amused at seeing this kind of language when attempting to define children's play and work. It seems to be a topic many researchers are delving into lately, but I have yet to find any definitions of "play" and "work" that really sit well with me.*

*Someone that I do pay attention to, and who lately has reconsidered the validity of the statement "play is children's work" is David Elkind. Back in May 2003, he wrote an article in Young Children Magazine entitled "Thanks for the Memory – the Lasting Value of True Play." In it he wrote, "I no longer advocate for free play on the basis of its intellectual, social, or emotional benefits." He went on to write that during play "Children are having fun and enjoying themselves here and now, and this is every bit as important and valuable as preparing for the future."*

*This statement, "enjoying themselves here and now" in part, has led me to consider adding another element to the "Conditions for Growing Wiser" from my Expanding Your Horizons Workshop. What originally started out as four conditions eventually evolved to eleven. Without going into too much detail here, it's these "conditions" that have to exist everyday in children's lives (adults as well) in order to grow to their optimum. They are: Belonging, Risk, Power, Productivity, Passion, Support, Mentors/Models, Humor, Solitude, Gratification Deference, and Reseeding. And there is only one place where all of these conditions exist for people – and that's PLAY.*

*So now I've decided to add "PRESENCE – as in BEING PRESENT" to the list of conditions for growing wiser. Presence – hereness, to dwell in, of or at this time, existing or happening, now at hand. Presence and play go hand in hand except, that is, when adults get involved. There always has to be some goal or outcome before adults are comfortable with kids just playing. We justify their play by connecting it to math, physics, or language...rarely does it ever seem to be about enjoying themselves here and now. So much of the thinking these days is about what lies ahead rather than what is standing right here in front of you.*

*In fact, anguish about the future (often termed readiness) is something that I'm asked about in almost every workshop that I do. "How well do these kids do when it comes to transitioning into kindergarten?" In particular, there seems to be a lot of anguish about children being able to sit for extended periods of time. A child that has had their needs attended to for the first five years of their life is more than likely going to be able to sit if and when the need arises. But if they have not had the opportunity to move around or stand when their young developing bodies have insisted, that need is still going to be present, it doesn't just disappear or wither away. Imagine trying to hold a beach ball under water. No matter how hard you try, it's just below the surface. Tragically, when they have not had their needs addressed, they tend to manifest themselves in other mostly negative ways.*

*The kids, while at our school, have had a young life immersed in the here and now based on the now. They have their legs under them, so to speak and are thus better able to cope with what the world has to throw at them. Besides, I've said for years, "Children don't learn from sitting down, it's not the way it goes in." And I should point out that I'm not referring to just children, that's the way adults learn, too – by doing. I'm always coming across recipes, or ideas for art, or finger plays to use with the kids at school. I immediately try them out. Watch someone of TV prepare a meal and it looks easy. But when you try it yourself it's going to take longer, it's going to look a lot different and then there's taste – whoa! The more you do – the more you can do.*

*The current mood in education with its focus on reading is to fill children with information about things in the hopes that having read about something means that they "get it" or can "do it."*

*Here's a quote I love that comes from Joseph Chilton Pearce:*

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## Children's Christmas Outreach Project

Each year St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School chooses an outreach project for the children to participate in. This year we are asking the children to bring in food to help stock the South Hills Food Pantry.

The South Hills Food Pantry responds to hunger in communities stretching from downtown Pittsburgh to the Washington County line. You and your child can help by bringing in a non-perishable food item and placing it under our Christmas tree in the Big Room. **Standard sizes** are preferred. The last week of school before Christmas break the children will go upstairs with their teachers and place the food items in the St. Paul's Church South Hills Food Pantry bin so that the church can deliver the food items. This is a wonderful way for you child to learn about helping others in need during this Christmas season.

Below is a list of suggested items.

Canned tuna  
Canned soup  
Crackers  
Noodles  
Pork and beans  
Macaroni and cheese mix  
Jello and pudding mixes  
Cake mixes  
Pasta  
Canned spaghetti sauce  
Tomato paste  
Canned vegetables  
Jelly  
Tea bags  
Cereal  
Baby food  
Canned fruit

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### Bev Bos

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*“Every stage of development is complete in itself.  
The three year old is not an incomplete five year old.  
The child is not an incomplete adult.  
Never are we simply on our way!  
Always we have arrived!  
Enjoy Now!”*

Soon enough there will come a time when children start to focus in on a certain pursuit or become passionate about something. And it's only right to anticipate how we might help them move toward achieving their goals. But when the topic we are dealing with is young children, who are completely focused on the here and now, we have to take care and not to get caught up in mapping out their future. We have all heard the horror stories about parents whose child didn't make it into the prestigious preschool and will now have to settle for something other than an Ivy League education or some similar snare. Unfortunately, it's hard to imagine this kind of anxiety on the parent's part going unnoticed by their children. To a lesser extent, but no less troubling, we have even had children in our own preschool announce, “This is my last year, next year I'm gonna go to kindergarten.” It's only October! They should not be concerned with the future at this age. This time is for having as many rich experiences as possible without the interference of adults and their dread and foreboding about what lies ahead.

Lately, I have been using the following acronym of the word “fear.” F.E.A.R. = Future Events Already Realized or False Evidence Appearing Real. What we should really be fearful of is by focusing on some future situation that a child may someday find themselves in, and thus causing them to miss out on important parts of their development in the here and now.

For the children's sake do your best to stay “present.” -Bev



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