



Nursery School News

NAEYC Accreditation Granted

After an extremely arduous year we were once again re-accredited by NAEYC under the newly "re-invented" accreditation system. It required a tremendous amount of work on my part and all of the staff's. We are one of the first schools in the United States to receive this distinction and we are all very pleased that our hard work lead us to a successful completion of the accreditation process. Many thanks to everyone for filling out the NAEYC parent questionnaires last year. Our current accreditation is valid for the next 5 years, so we can now all take a sigh of relief! And of course the reason for all of the hard work was to insure that everything that we do here at St. Paul's is always, first and foremost, in the best interest of the children.

Fall Teacher Conferences

This year our fall teacher conferences are scheduled for Tuesday, October 23rd and Wednesday, October 24th. There is no regularly scheduled school on conference days. During your conference the assistant teachers in the Big Room will provide free childcare for your preschool child/children. We would ask that you not leave infants, (you may take them into the conference with you). Look for a sign up sheet on your child's class bulletin board later in October and be sure to sign up for a time slot.

The purpose of the fall conference is for the teacher to share how things are going and to make pertinent observations that may be helpful for you, as well as answering any questions that you might have about your child. If the allotted time turns out to be too short, another appointment can be made. We look forward to a fruitful interchange between parents and teachers.

Director's Dialogue

by: Jane Adams

And so, another year is under way. Each year we go through the same rituals; the home visits, the class visiting day, and the inevitable struggles with the first separations. Some of the separations go smoothly, others may be more difficult. A young child's first entry into nursery school, or re-entry into a new group after summer, is a challenging developmental task. I've seen many children and parents grapple with separation in all kinds of different ways over the years, and this is not surprising since we know that no two children or parents are quite alike. But there are some universal aspects of separation, and the more we understand about these, the better we will all be in assisting a child's mastery of separation.

Actually separation is a life long issue, beginning at the moment of birth and not ending until death. It is an ongoing issue that not only small children must cope with, but also that we as adults struggle with as we face adult challenges in our own lives. The most obvious for you folks at this moment as school begins is that of being able to comfortably let go of your children and hand them over to new adults in a new setting. That takes a combination of trust in the school's ability to care in a nurturing and nonjudgmental way for your child, and also trust in your child's ability to have the competence to handle preschool without your presence.

Separations that we face throughout life may be physical such as death, divorce, saying good-bye to a child leaving for sleepover camp or college. Separations may also actually be psychological, for instance in the form of letting go of unmet hopes or unattainable goals in our own adult lives. The key issue for all of us, both adults and children, is that we learn to believe in our ability to cope with and master these losses or separations.

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As parents we are our children's role models for handling separations (and pretty much everything else in life at this point). Not only do our children see the way that we cope with our own challenges, losses and good byes, but children are also masters at reading our reactions to everything that they do. If they sense through our reactions to them that we have doubts and anxieties about their ability to make it in school on their own, they will respond by feeling less competent in their ability to function away from us. This is a lot of power on our part. It is power that we should all be aware of and use wisely, but in reality it is power that in our day to day life mostly "just happens." Parenting for the most part is an inconvenient fly by the seat of your pants kind of affair.

There is so much written about how children will change your life, the cost of raising children, how to deal with sibling rivalry, how to keep children safe, how to get them to do what *you* want them to do and so on – but no one really talks about the power a parent has, whether they want it or not. For the most part, many of us have spent our adult life looking for egalitarian relationships and trying to eschew power struggles with other human beings. But once you have children, you will find yourself entrenched in a skewed balance of power in many subtle ways whether you want it or not. I am not referring to the malevolent, blatant kinds of power such as hitting children, or telling them they are bad and worthless on a regular basis. I am referring more to the subtle power of suggestion, imitation, and reaction. The kind of power that we are often so unaware of on a day to day basis, that it goes unnoticed until one day we wonder why our child is, for instance, so moody, vulnerable and easily hurt, or has so many fears. Of course on the up side we may wonder how we could have produced a child who is so capable, assertive and independent.

The real truth of the matter is that a parent has the power to make their child feel good or bad about themselves in so many subtle ways simply because they are the most important person in a child's life. If you can give your child the message that you believe in their abilities, and capability to go to school and meet all of the challenges found in school, maybe even actually have a good time without you, you will help your child move toward a healthy, more solid self concept.

So like it or not our power and influence over our children is profound. Some of you may be thinking – oh no – she's running the show, doing whatever she wants! Children all have their momentary needs and wants, and they are quite good at making them known. But in the long run, all children want their parent's love and admiration.

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Even in setting limits, we are showing our children that we respect them enough to trust in their ability to delay gratification and cope with some necessary momentary discomfort. This is the direct opposite of the parent who must always try and sanitize their child's world, making it perfect for them, rescuing them and paving the way for no unhappiness or discomfort (as though this were even possible)! When we use our power in this way, we are giving our children a loud and clear message that they are not capable of coping with any difficulties in their life separate from us.

Wendy Mogel, Ph.D. who will be speaking here in April as a part of St. Paul's 50th anniversary celebration puts it this way in her book The Blessings of a Skinned Knee.

"Like God, new parents are miracle makers. When children are tiny babies, we vigilantly monitor everything that goes into their mouths and comes out their bottoms. We make sure they aren't hungry or thirsty, and we provide constant protection and care. But as our children mature, we need to withdraw from smothering their path and satisfying all their wishes. By giving them a chance to survive some danger and letting them make some reckless or thoughtless choices, we teach them how to withstand the bumps and nocks of life. This is the only way children will mature into resilient, self-reliant adults. By continuing to make miracles on demand, we are unwittingly slowing down the development of our children's strength."

So as we move forward in the school year, try and give your child the message that you trust in their ability to cope with school, and to master all of the momentary bumps and challenges that life will bring to them. Not an easy task for any parent!

Teacher Profile: Mary Grace Bruni

I was born and raised in Mt. Lebanon. I graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School and went to Holy Cross College where I earned a B.A. in History. I returned to Pittsburgh after college and attended Duquesne University where I received my M.S.Ed. in Special Education. During those 2 years I married my high school sweetheart. We have four children, John, 15, a sophomore at Mt. Lebanon H.S., Ceci, 14, a freshman at Mt. Lebanon H.S., Ben, 10, a 5th grader at Markham, and Bridget, 4, currently in Pam and Marianne's 3 day afternoon class here at St. Paul's. Last year I was an assistant to Rita in this class (3's and 4's). I love this age!! Since I have a 4 year old at home, I am dealing with the same 4 year old issues that my class parents are. I can relate!!

SAVE THE DATE

Nursery School News



You're Invited to
St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School's
Fabulous 50th Anniversary Celebration Fall Fundraiser
On Saturday, November 17, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.

November 17, 2008

For the last 10 years, St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School has held a wine tasting fundraiser. Parents are assured a fun night out to meet other school parents, mingle with teachers, and sample great wines and delicious food.

The Board of Trustees as a "thank you" to the parents for your continued support of St. Paul's sponsors this Event. The Board hopes that this evening is a reflection of the mutual admiration shared among the school, the staff, and the families.

The Fall Fundraiser is an opportunity to raise funds that are critical for maintaining the quality teachers and excellent educational programs that the children enjoy. This year in addition to supplementing necessary operating costs, we hope to raise additional funds to help defray the cost of our 50th Anniversary speaker, nationally recognized author and child psychologist, Wendy Mogel, Ph.D. Dr. Mogel will be speaking to St. Paul's Nursery School and the larger community on the evening of Tuesday, April 8th, 2008. Her topic will be about raising resilient children in an anxious world. You will be hearing many more details about this event, as we get closer to April.

The fundraiser includes a 50/50 raffle and a basket raffle in which each classroom is assigned a theme. Parents are encouraged to contribute an item to your classroom's basket, and with every family's involvement, this portion of the fundraiser is guaranteed to be successful!

The silent and live auctions are an exciting part of the evening with unique packages and items to bid on, such as Steelers and Penguins tickets, unique sports memorabilia, golf outings, dinners at fabulous restaurants, a condo at Hidden Valley, and a behind the scenes zoo tour for 10! So, you might want to consider doing your holiday shopping on November 17th while supporting St. Paul's at the same time. If you have a contact for an exceptional auction item, or if you're interested in helping out on one of the committees, please contact one of the event chairs-

Jeanne Basse
412-344-2288
pbjkb@verizon.net

Kari King
412-563-6161
ksking@adelphia.net

Kristen Napoleon
412-341-5754
KrNapoleon@aol.com

Invitations to this event are distributed to parents in their school mailbox approximately four weeks prior to the event. Reservations are needed and should be accompanied with the admission fee of \$35 per person. A pre-event wine tasting discussion will be held at 6:45 p.m. and admittance to this part of the evening is on a first-come first-served basis. An additional wine tasting discussion will be held at 8:30 p.m., and information will be included in your invitation.

..... So, don't delay – get your babysitter today!
Plan to join us for a fabulous 50th anniversary champagne toast!

Daily Classroom Information

by: Jane Adams

Some parents have requested that they receive information about the daily classroom activities of their children. Each year I get these requests at the beginning of the year, and it is certainly a logical request from a caring parent who is interested in knowing just what goes on in the classroom. My answer is that we do not give a daily report of activities, and there are number of reasons for this.

First of all, we simply do not have the time to write out a detailed description at the end of each day of all of the specific activities that took place for 12 to 16 children. Certainly you are welcome to see each classroom's schedule, which consists of free play, art, job chart, snack, music, and stories. Because our curriculum is a negotiated curriculum that is individualized for each child, as well as one that offers many choices, the class as a whole does not necessarily do the same thing. Although the teacher may have the water table out, not every child will choose to play in the water table. The same for art; children are not required to participate in art (occasionally we have "must do's"), but if your child decides to make a collage from those materials that are always available, as opposed to painting with water colors that the teacher has offered for that day, it is really fine. Even the overall flow of the larger class curriculum is often redirected in midstream in order to react and respond to the specific interests and questions of the children.

A good preschool curriculum is best described as more of a compass (general direction) than a railroad pass (specific and rigid time table). Young children need to be offered lots of choices and to be encouraged to use their own creativity throughout their day. This is not to say that they will not be exposed to a rich array of literacy, math, science, and social studies through their school experiences on a daily basis. It is important to remember that 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. In fact it is important to remember that pre-operational children (Piaget's term for preschool age learners) learn most and best through hands on trial and error activities of their own choosing. Children learn while they are eating, talking, playing, and getting dressed in the morning. One simply cannot and absolutely should not separate social, emotional, cognitive, and physical learning during the preschool years. Our job here is to offer a wide array of interesting, challenging, materials and to encourage lots of opportunities for rich socio-dramatic play.

Each classroom teaching team will send out a monthly newsletter that is in essence a reflection of what has occurred during the past month. You should all be receiving one of these soon (if you haven't already). So for those of you who are new to St. Paul's, be patient about feedback early in the year. The early days are really just a time for the children to adjust to a new setting, with new friends and teachers. As the year progresses you will actually receive lots of general information about the classroom activities. And please be assured, if there are any concerns about your child in school, their teacher will let you know immediately!

Car Pools and Pick Ups

As new car pools are set, we would appreciate it if you would remember to add any new names of people authorized to pick up your child to your emergency card. Don't forget - we will not release your child to anyone not listed on your emergency card without specific permission from you. Please list all caregivers too.

Again, I remind you all of the importance of timely pick-ups. Children become anxious at the end of the day when all of their classmates have been picked up and they are still waiting for their parent or caregiver. We want to nurture children here at St. Paul's and we need your cooperation in this matter.

Upon arrival, your child's teacher will open her door when she is ready for your child to enter the classroom. Teachers need to set up their room for the children at the beginning of the day, and it is not safe for children to be left in the room without the teacher's undivided attention. You are welcome to wait until you child's teacher opens her door in the Big Room, the parent lounge, or on the playground when there is not a class already using it. Again, thanks for your cooperation in these matters.

Teacher Profile: Kim Beggs

This is my fifth year here at St. Paul's. I am one of the assistants is Kathi Schuster's T.Th. a.m. and p.m. young 3's class. I grew up in Mt. Lebanon and graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School I went to WVU where I earned a B.S. in Finance. I worked for a few years in my field before having my three children. My oldest, Lauren, is a senior at Mt. Lebanon H.S., Lindsay is a freshman at Mt. Lebanon H.S., and my son, Will, is in sixth grade at Mellon Junior High. I have really enjoyed the past five years working here at St. Paul's and getting to know the children and their families.



Halloween @ St. Paul's

Each year the question of costumes, masks, and make-up comes up at Halloween. As a staff we have had many discussions about the best way to celebrate Halloween. For many years we allowed the children to dress-up, even in the younger classes. But over the years we have come to the conclusion that coming to school dressed in costumes mostly causes a lot of chaos and upset in the children in general.

I understand that as parents, many of you enjoy seeing the children all dressed up together and find it to be a fun photo op. But I can assure you that it does not allow for a fun or productive day in preschool. Some preschool age children are comfortable wearing costumes away from their parents; but many are not. It is important that we as adults understand the child's perspective on this holiday. First of all it is important to remember that the human face is very important to babies and young children. We as a staff work very hard throughout the year to create an environment that feels safe and secure, and also to help children with the task of distinguishing fantasy from reality. When children are encouraged to wear costumes that they are not comfortable wearing apart from their parents, or if the children dress in costumes that frighten or distress their classmates, we as adults are not making appropriate decisions.

All of the classes will have costumes in the dress-up area to try on in the days leading up to Halloween if they choose. We have an extensive collection of non-threatening fanciful costumes. It is often easier (less stressful) for a young child to have the choice when they are away from parents to choose to dress up or not. The children love to talk about what they are "going to be" for Halloween and there is lots of hype and excitement associated with the idea of dressing up. Yet when the time comes to actually wear the costume, many young children become frightened or quite overly excited. Please help us as we try and keep the excitement in bounds during the school day. There are many opportunities that offer more appropriate activities for dressing up such as going out to "Trick or Treat" with parents, or to community parades or parties *with parents present*.

So folks, trust me on this one...lots of very young children running around in all kinds of costumes (some very scary, some threatening and aggressive, and some provocative) does not create a particularly pleasant or productive day in nursery school for anyone! Costumes can really be fun, creative, and a way for children to express parts of themselves that they may not otherwise be able to in everyday life. But in the preschool setting, away from parents may not be the best place to have it happen for very young children.

One suggestion would be for your child to bring in a picture of him/herself dressed up in their Halloween costume. The teachers would be glad to display their picture, or if your child would prefer, they could show all of their classmates their picture during circle time.

October

Open House

Monday, October 15th - 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Pam & Marianne's 4 day am class
Diane & Dottie's MWF am & pm classes
Joan & Martha's MWF am & pm classes

*Thursday, October 25th - 7:00 - 8:00 pm

(*Please Note Date Change)

Mary Grace & Marianne's T-Th pm class
Kathi, Kim, & Beth's T-Th am & pm class
Eileen, Dottie & Martha's T-Th am class
Eileen, Dottie & Pat's T-Th pm class
Rita & Erin's T - F am & pm classes

Tuesday, October 23rd & Wednesday October 24th
NO SCHOOL - Parent Teacher conferences

November/December

November 17th

Fall Fundraiser 50th Anniversary
7:30p

November 20th

Last Day Before Thanksgiving
Break

November 27th

First Day Back After Thanksgiving

December 15th

Santa Breakfast

TUITION ASSISTANCE

YOU ALL RECENTLY RECEIVED A LETTER ABOUT DONATING TO OUR FINANCIAL AID FUND THROUGH THE UNITED WAY. SOME PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME IF THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER WAY TO GIVE TO THE FUND AS THEIR WORK, OR THEIR SPOUSES DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN UNITED WAY. CERTAINLY, ANYONE IS WELCOME TO MAKE A DONATION TO THIS FUND. SIMPLY MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO ST. PAUL'S NURSERY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND. KATHI WORKMAN WILL THEN AUTOMATICALLY SUPPLY YOU WITH A RECEIPT FOR YOUR RECORDS AS THE DONATION MAY BE USED AS A TAX DEDUCTION. THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION IN THIS MATTER.

Forms

Thanks to everyone for downloading your school forms from our web site. It streamlined things around here for us and saved us some money not to have to copy and mail out everything to all of the families enrolled in the school. Many thanks again for all of your cooperation.

St. Paul's Play Dough Recipe

3 cups flour
1 ½ cup salt
6 tsp. Cream of tartar

Mix all dry ingredients

Separately mix
3 Cups water
3 Tbs. oil
food coloring of choice

Mix all dry and wet ingredients together and stir constantly over medium heat until right consistency is reached. Roll out dough until smooth. Glitter may be added last.



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