

Serra Preschool Newsletter - November 2014



a cooperative preschool in South Orange County where children and parents learn and love together



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Kids Birthdays

Eli McCleary turns 5 on 12/3
Drake Kennedy turns 5 on 12/18
Charlotte Schuyler turns 4 on 12/23

Upcoming Events

Fri, Nov 21st - Harvest Festival 9 AM – 12 PM (Both Classes)
Mon, Nov 24th – Fri, Nov 28 – NO SCHOOL ALL WEEK (Thanksgiving Holiday)
Mon, Dec 1st – Teacher Prep Day (NO SCHOOL)
Fri, Dec 5th – Holiday Movie Night – 5:30pm to 8pm
Wed, Dec 10th – Board Meeting 12:30pm
Mon, Dec 22nd – Fri, Jan 2nd – Christmas Holiday (NO SCHOOL)
Mon, Jan 5th – Teacher Work Day (NO SCHOOL)
Sat, Jan 10th – 6 Week Clean Up
Wed, Jan 14th – Board Meeting 12:30pm
Mon, Jan 19th – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (NO SCHOOL)
Wed, Jan 28th – General Meeting 6 PM Dinner 6:30 Meeting Starts

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS OVERVIEW

OLYMPICA GYMNASTICS ACADEMY FIELD TRIP

<http://www.olympicagymnastics.com>

When: Monday, December 1st from 9:45am-10:45am

What: Jump! Tumble! Twirl! Swing! Be a part of the action on this super fun field trip sure to tire our little ones out. Olympica Gymnastics has an awesome facility. Wear comfortable clothes. Don't miss out!

Cost: \$8 per child. Babies in carriers/slides are free. Cash payment goes in the Field Trip folder.

Bring: Your 2 separate, filled-out, and signed forms. To get the forms, you'll have to download them from <http://www.olympicagymnastics.com>. Click on "Form Downloads" on the left side of the screen. Print and fill out both the Adult Participation Form and the Special Event Form.

Directions: 26601 Cabot Rd., Laguna Hills, CA 92653. Take 5 Fwy North. Exit Oso and turn left. Turn left onto Cabot. The gym will be on your right.

Sign-Up: on the clipboard hanging by the gate or by emailing Cori. Olympica keeps their staff at a 10:1 ratio with parent-participation classes, so please don't just "show up." They need an accurate head count!

Contact Person: Cori's cell (310) 809-4500. Questions? Email <mailto:CoriPreisler@hotmail.com>

HOLIDAY STORYTELLING AT THE RITZ

When: Saturday, December 20 at 5pm. Festive gingerbread house on display at all times, so plan to come early or stay a bit later to see the magnificent display!

What: Come listen to a professional storyteller, then there's a visit from Santa. There are cookies and hot chocolate, but it goes fast! Kids sit on the floor on pillows provided by the Ritz. Parents usually sit around the perimeter. Bar/ adult beverages are offered in the back.

Cost: Complimentary. The Ritz offers a special rate for valet parking. Please donate a book. (Alcohol not complimentary!)

Bring: Guests are asked to bring a new children's book to be donated to *Miracles for Kids*.

Directions: Go northbound on Pacific Coast Hwy for approximately 3 miles through Dana Point. Turn left at Ritz-Carlton Drive/ Niguel Road. The hotel is on the left. Storytelling is in the Eco-Adventure room, located down the hall to your left from when you enter the foyer. Gingerbread display is straight down the foyer, then turn left at the bar.

Sign-Up: No head count needed; just come if you'd like!

Contact Person: Cori's cell (310) 809-4500. Questions? Email CoriPreisler@hotmail.com

Director's Message

Dear Families,

This month I would like to share an article with you that was sent to me by Claudia Rohm. It is about the value of play in early childhood settings. I hope you enjoy it and feel inspired by it.

I wish all of you a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday and safe travels if you are going away.

Gobble, Gobble, Gobble!!!!!!

Fondly,

Mrs. Nowicki

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD PRE-K

By Shael Polakow-Suransky & Nancy Nager

October 21, 2014

WITH the introduction of universal pre-K in New York City, we have created a new entry point into our public school system. This raises a key question: **What do we want our children's first experiences in school to be? What does a good education look like for 4-year-olds?**

This summer, Bank Street College of Education led training for 4,000 of New York's pre-K teachers, including both veterans and hundreds of people who started teaching pre-K for the first time last month. Worried teachers talked about how the pressure to achieve good outcomes on the third-grade state exams has been trickling down to early childhood classrooms in the form of work sheets, skill drills and other developmentally inappropriate methods.

The problem is real, and it is not unique to New York City. Earlier this year, Daphna Bassok and Anna Rorem, educational policy researchers at the University of Virginia, found strong evidence that current kindergarten classrooms rely too heavily on teacher-directed instruction. Their study, "Is Kindergarten the New First Grade?" revealed that the focus on narrow academic skills crowded out time for play, exploration and social interaction. In a 2009 report for the Alliance for Childhood, "Crisis in the Kindergarten," Edward Miller and Joan Almon reported that kindergarten teachers felt that prescriptive curricular demands and pressure from principals led them to prioritize academic skill building over play.

This is a false choice. **We do not need to pick between play and academic rigor.**

While grown-ups recognize that pretending helps children find their way into the world, many adults think of play as separate from formal learning. The reality is quite different. **As they play, children develop vital cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills. They make discoveries, build knowledge, experiment with literacy and math and learn to self-regulate and interact with others in socially appropriate ways.** Play is also fun and interesting, which makes school a place where children look forward to spending their time. It is so deeply formative for children that it must be at the core of our early childhood curriculum.

What does purposeful play look like? When you step into an exemplary pre-K classroom, you see a room organized by a caring, responsive teacher who understands child development. Activity centers are stocked with materials that invite exploration, fire the imagination, require initiative and prompt collaboration. The room hums.

Continued on next page

Continued from the previous page, THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD PRE-K

In the block area, two girls build a bridge, talking to each other about how to make sure it doesn't collapse and taking care not to bump into the buildings of children next to them. In an area with materials for make-believe, children enact an elaborate family scenario after resolving who will be the mommy, who will be the grandpa and who will be the puppy. Another group peers through a magnifying glass to examine a collection of pinecones and acorns. On the rug, children lie on their stomachs turning the pages of books they have selected, while at the easel a boy dips his brush into red paint and swoops the paint mostly onto his paper.

The teacher observes and comments. She shifts from group to group, talking with children about their work ("I see that you made a big red circle."); helping children resolve a conflict ("You both want to be the mommy. What should we do?"); posing an open-ended question to stimulate exploration and problem-solving ("What do you notice when you use the magnifying glass that is different from when you use your eyes?"); and guiding children to manage themselves ("When you finish your snack, what activity would you like to choose?").

Barbara Biber, one of Bank Street's early theorists, argued that **play develops precisely the skills — and, just as important, the disposition — children need to be successful throughout their lives.** The child "projects his own pattern of the world into the play," she wrote, "and in so doing brings the real world closer to himself. He is building the feeling that the world is his to understand, to interpret, to puzzle about, to make over. For the future we need citizens in whom these attitudes are deeply ingrained."

Earlier in the 20th century, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky made the related argument that children's thinking develops through activity-based learning and social interactions with adults and peers. When teachers base their curriculums on Dr. Vygotsky's ideas, there are significant benefits for children's capacity to think, to plan and to sustain their attention on difficult tasks.

Play has long-lasting benefits. What is referred to as self-regulation in preschool becomes resiliency in high school. The University of Pennsylvania psychologist Angela Duckworth has found that this trait, which she famously calls grit, can make or break students, especially low-income students. Over the past three years, the New York City Department of Education developed a framework to support the core behavioral elements that drive college and career readiness. Many of them — **persistence, planning, the ability to communicate and the capacity to collaborate — have their roots in early childhood.**

Next fall, there will be more students in pre-K in New York City than there are in the entire school system of Atlanta or Seattle. To his credit, Mayor Bill de Blasio has not only pushed for expanding access but has also insisted on improving quality and put real money into training and materials. This is a strong start. But we still need to help parents, administrators and policy makers see what the children themselves know intuitively: **Classrooms that pulse with meaningful play are our smartest investment.**

Mr. Turkey Poem

Mr. Turkey's tail is big and wide
He swings it when he walks from side to side
His neck is long, his chin is red
and he gobbles when he talks
Gobble, Gobble, Gobble

Raising Thankful Children from Mrs. Macker

Thanksgiving is a special time where we find ourselves reflecting on being thankful. As parents, we all want our children to be appreciative and thankful for what they have and what others do for their benefit. But the question is, how and when do children develop gratitude?

Contrary to popular belief, children do not learn to be thankful by being taught the social scripts of saying thank you. Prompting children to use “please” and “thank you” words is a good start, but the concept of being thankful is one that is learned for many years and it may take awhile before a child truly “gets it.” Teaching children to be thankful is a complex art in parenting. While researching for this newsletter I found techniques that I think would be helpful. Here are some tips:

1. **Model being thankful.** Show your child when you are thankful. “Thank you for coming right away when I said it was time to leave the park. I know it was hard for you to get off of the swing.” “Thank you for your hug. It made me feel happy.”
2. **Start traditions for showing thanks.** Create an end of the day routine where you share what you are most thankful for then ask your child, “What are you most thankful for today?”
3. **Read books about what it means to be thankful.** Books help children make sense of new and complicated ideas. Here is a list of some good age appropriate books on being thankful:
 - *The Thankful Book* by Todd Parr
 - *Biscuit Is Thankful* by Alyssa Satin Capucilli
 - *Little Critter, Just So Thankful* by Mercer Mayer
 - *Giving Thanks, A Native American Good Morning Message* by Chief Jake Swamp
 - *All The Places to Love* by Patricia MacLachlan

I am thankful for the beautiful faces of the children in the 2-day class. I’m thankful for the warm sunny days of watching the children explore and eagerly learn how to make friends. I’m thankful for the support and kindness of the parents and our fearless leader, Patty.

Joan Macker

From our President, Cindy Parker

For the past few years we have joined the craze of keeping an elf on a shelf in our house. I have stressed myself out moving it, setting it up in funny poses, jumping out of bed at 3am to find just the right spot for it. Trying to get the boys to follow along with the story and believe that he really made a Lego house for himself.

This year as I cringed when I pulled it out of the box thinking of what new ideas to do, I started looking for an alternative. Google is awesome! I found the kindness elf... same idea but it promotes the idea of doing something kind for others. Instead of focusing on a child's behavior throughout the holidays the kindness elf just gives little reminders to do something nice as easy as opening the door for someone, or making cookies for the neighbor! I thought it was genius and I wanted to share! So with all the hustle and bustle of the holidays it's not the perfect turkey we should worry about but it's the beautiful mess we make as a family. I hope everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving!!

Lots of Love,
Cindy

More about the kindness elf @ <http://theimaginationtree.com>

How to Cook a Turkey (from a child's point of view)

Hank – I would pick all the feathers off and take it home and put it in the store.

Jett – Put fire on it and then eat it.

Andrea – Cook it in the oven, then it smells good then I would eat it.

Maverick – By putting it in the oven then eat it.

Olivia - You put it on the stove. If you want you can sometimes stuff it. That's all I really know.

Clara-Rae – I'll get it, I'll kill it, I'll put it in the oven, then I'll eat it.

Ryley Bailey – You cook it in the oven; see if it's done, if its not done, then you have to wait for a few more hours. After a few more hours, you can eat it.

Sophia – We get a big knot run after it and catch it then eat it.

Drake – Put it in the oven then I would make a sandwich and eat it.

Mikayla – You squish it then you squeeze it, then you hug it, then you play with it.

Elisa – You get dough. You put it into a turkey, then you shape it, then you put it in the oven.

Riley Parker – You chop it up, then put it in the oven, then you eat it.

Marcus – You just put him in the oven, then put salt on it, then put him back in the oven.

Jameson – You put some salt and sprinkles on it, then put him in a cake. It will be a yummy chicken cake.

Arjun – Put it on the fire. You cook it, then its done.

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