



Serra Preschool

A Parent Participation Nursery School
Where Kids and Parents Learn Together.

December &
January 2018
Newsletter

Mrs. Nowicki's Message

-Keeping kids busy
in a thoughtful
creative way-

Dear Parents,

During parent teacher conferences one of the conversations turned toward the upcoming holidays. One parent was wondering how she could still make the holiday special without placing a big emphasis on "Santa" and getting toys. I thought about it for a minute and my "old door" set up came to my mind. I have written a few versions of this concept, and with the holidays coming up maybe its time to share my "old door" story again. If you have read this before I apologize.

Something I learned along the way while raising my kids was that setting up my home with areas that were inviting, helped my children to play and to play independently so that maybe I could fix dinner without them hanging on my leg or asking me to play with them. Not that playing with your kids is a bad thing but sometimes we have to get stuff done.

Preschool children do not perceive things the

way adults do. When all their toys are thrown together in a toy box for example or put away behind closed doors on a shelf, the kids can't see the toy to play with it. They have not established figure ground relationships yet. I have a drawer in my kitchen full of stuff. Its a big mess and out of the 30 things in there I probably use 5 on a regular basis. I can hold the picture of what those 5 things are in my mind and find them in the drawer when I need them. Kids can't do that yet which is why I am not a fan of toy boxes. I had to stop thinking of my house as being neat and tidy and began thinking of how I could set the stage for play.

One day as I was looking for something in our garage. I saw a pile of old doors, I picked one up, took it in the house, laid it on two crates (so it was good and low, right on the kids level) and put some play dough on it. Then I walked away. My daughter was still a baby and not walking yet but out came my son, he walked over and started playing with the play dough. I was pretty

excited about the fact that he played at the table for a long time. I always had play dough available but something about having it on that door changed the length of time he played with it.

I got some low shelves and I began arranging the environment in a way that promoted play. I set the door away from the wall so we could all walk around it. The kids could work across from each other or next to each other. When my daughter was a baby I set her seat right on top of the door/table and she would watch her brother play. Sometimes they played alone, with me or with friends. I found that if the door was in the same room or near too where I was most of the time then I could get a few things done and be near them at the same time. I set the door up with invitations to play along with inviting materials on the shelves. I made sure that clutter did not become a problem. It became fun for me to think of things to put out for the kids on the door. I always had play dough and would add things for the kids to use with



Patty Nowicki
3 Day Director &
Queen of Everything

the play dough. Things like small rocks or animals, feathers, straws, buttons anything you can think of. They would often find things outside and bring them in to see what could be done with them. Some days the door became a road for cars or trains. My kids used the door for a long time. It was a place for them to be creative and explore their ideas.

If you are struggling to think of a way to minimize the "toy fest" that happens at Christmas you might consider getting an old flat door and surprising your child or children with small wrapped gifts of things to be used on the door.

Items to consider might be things like; Play dough, water color paints, small cars or trains,

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Miss Cori's Message

Traditions and Rituals

As humans, we are creatures of habit. Routines keep us balanced, and the structure of the day is often easiest for kids when there is the assurance of predictability. Play-by-play bedtime routines are often a must for parents to get their best shot at a calm evening.

Routines help keep us sane, but rituals and traditions serve as other key pieces to family harmony (and family fun!). Family traditions are important. In his book, "The Intentional Family: How to Build Family Ties in Our Modern World," author William Doherty gives four main reasons families can benefit from traditions.

1. Family traditions make life more secure for both parents and children.
2. Sharing in family traditions and creating new ones give families a chance to reconnect and share their lives.
3. Family identity and relationships are strengthened through rituals. By establishing family traditions and rituals, we give children an identity, a group to belong to, and a sense of who they are.
4. Family rituals teach children values. Children learn what their parents value by the rituals that are observed. Rituals give children a set of values that they can take into adulthood and use in their own families.

We often view "traditions" to be annual and often tied to a holiday (baking cookies and leaving them out for Santa, writing Valentine's Day cards, going to brunch for Mother's Day, marching in the 4th of July Parade), or to a religious event or birthday. These are fantastic; children really look forward to them and also can enjoy the warmth

of reminiscing. But be mindful that families can also benefit from weekly or monthly rituals like family game nights, breakfasts in bed, outings to the zoo, Saturday biking along the beach. And it's valuable for families to make up their own traditions too, like summer solstice camping or golden birthdays. A friend of mine has the fondest memories of "last Friday movie nights with popcorn and Coke." So simple, yet such a powerful memory from her childhood. And while I wouldn't label this a tradition, in my family when we get into an elevator, my kids face the door and "strike a pose" and try to hold in their giggles long enough so that they still have their pose when the doors open on another floor to unsuspecting people. Not everything has to have deep meaning in order for it to be unique to your family!

Michelle Simpson, author of "Establishing Family Traditions at Home" offers some questions: What are the events in our life, as a family, that we want to routinely highlight and celebrate? When we celebrate, what makes us feel good? In the traditions we establish, how can we honor and value each family member so that we're all in it together? Keeping traditions alive that have been passed down from your parents and grandparents is a way to honor your family and strengthen roots. The key thing is to then *do them*.

Do you sometimes feel obligated to follow through with traditions? Are traditions stressful and you wish you didn't have to do them? Take a deep breath and remind yourself how, in the long run, they will be a strong part of your family's foundation. Families don't have to have tons of traditions and rituals in order to feel the joy and love with events of the past. And sometimes rituals change a bit over time, as



Cori Preisler
2 Day Director

families merge and change and grow. When establishing new tradition for your own family, don't pick ones that directly conflict with deep-rooted, extended-family traditions. That kind of clash is just asking for more stress. Often times, traditions and rituals form for themselves without a thoughtfully planned out and orchestrated event. Time will tell.

However traditions work out for your family, have some. It'll be worth it!

Love,
Miss Cori



Mrs. Nowicki's Message Continued

creation station materials and a glue gun, small pieces of wood and a hammer and nails, new crayons or markers, colored paper and glue.

I would not go over board though. I do think kids get overwhelmed with too many things and choices. By keeping it simple you may find that they play longer with whatever it is you choose for them. The nice thing about laying the door on bins was that I could use the bins for storage.

Something I had to learn to do was to let my children be. It is hard for kids to learn to be on their own, to play, to thoughtfully consider what their options are when adults are always hovering over them. Sometimes with good intentions we want to be involved, supportive and interested in what the kids are doing that we do not leave them alone. If you notice they are busy doing something resist the temptation to ask questions about what they are doing. You can save it for later. Maybe during dinner. I have found that dinner is the best time to engage your kids in a conversation.

Happy Holidays,
Love, Mrs. Nowicki

2Dayers: What did you eat on Thanksgiving?

Brisa: pumpkin pie

Enni: apples, carrots, and a vegetable

Olivia: **I don't know. I ate Stone Soup.**

Shea: **pumpkin pie and that's it!**

Dolly: turkey and cake and some ice cream and nuts and yogurt and berries and applesauce

Margot: turkey and applesauce

Oliver: turkey and pumpkin pie and my mom and daddy and brother ate that too

Sam: marshmallows, mushrooms, fish, and broccoli

Elliot: pumpkin pie and pumpkin muffins

Macy: blueberries, popcorn, cereal

Ryder: **I don't know... food? Like pumpkin pie, pumpkin muffins, pumpkin seeds**

Dane: a sandwich! A turkey sandwich! And some cucumbers at my house but not at my house.

Sawyer: **I don't want to say.**

Arielle: pumpkins

3Dayers: How to Catch a Turkey?

Raef: Get a big net, a big big big net so you can catch it. Then you eat it.

Isaias: When a turkey comes by you just catch it with your own bare hands.

Bodhi: Put a rope on the ground and wait for the turkey to get caught then pull the rope.

Soleil: Put him in a net and then you just let him go.

Simon: Sneak up closely then jump out and catch it, roast it in the oven, then eat it.

Harper: Throw a net over it.

Ryder: I would just use my hands then give it to my Mom.

Mae: Get a net then push it down, then bring it home, kill it and eat it.

Cormac: By running and then you catch him, then you eat him.

Lily: You leave out its favorite food and then it will come out and you catch it with a net.

Mia: You have to have a rope, then you eat it.

Sylas: You could maybe get a little box and you pull it and the turkey will get it. Then I will keep the turkey as a pet.

Jackson: You set up a trap then you eat him.



**lil' elves
workshop**
A special event for ages 3-5 years

San Clemente Playschool is decking its halls for a day of holiday cheer! Children will enjoy special guest appearances from Santa's helpers, make holiday gifts, play festive games, decorate gingerbread houses, and more marvelous activities!

friday **DECEMBER** | 10:30AM-12:30PM
7 | SC Community Center
(100 N. Calle Seville)

REGISTRATION #6463
\$15 per child

Dad Joke of the Month
What kind of exercises do lazy people do?
Diddly Squats!



Please use www.smile.amazon.com when shopping on Amazon, and Serra will receive a percentage of your purchase (you pay what you would normally pay anyways, but Amazon will donate funds to Serra!).

Serra Preschool Board of Directors

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- Dates to Know:
- Dec 4 | Story Walk
 - Dec 12 | Street Sweeping
 - Dec 13 | Street Sweeping
 - Dec 15 | 6 Week Clean Up
 - Dec 19 | Street Sweeping
 - Dec 19 | Nutcracker 3Day
 - Dec 20 | Street Sweeping
 - Dec 21 | Winter Break Begins
 - Jan 7 | School Resumes
 - Jan 9 | Board Meeting
 - Jan 19 | 6 Clean Up
 - Jan 21 | MLK Day No School
 - Jan 23 | General Meeting



- December & January Birthdays
- Dec 8 | Mae Thrash
 - Jan 11 | Scarlett Fee
 - Jan 15 | Addison Gales
 - Jan 20 | Sam Gorham-Madrid
 - Jan 21 | Cori Preisler
 - Jan 22 | Zephyr Slone-Torres



Serra Preschool Christmas Charity



Operation Christmas Spirit 2018 Info for SoCal Donors

Important Dates:

- ✦ **November 15-December 5th: Wish list distribution**
- ✦ **December 5th: reminders and directions will be sent to all donors**
- ✦ **December 12th: Target deadline to collect angel tree gifts and target date for delivery of mailed packages. Those of you adopting a family through angel tree efforts, it's good to have a few days to gather outstanding gifts and sort through everything.**
- ✦ **December 13th, 4-8pm, Gift drop off #1, Rancho Santa Margarita**
- ✦ **December 14th, 8am-10am Gift drop off #2, San Diego**
- ✦ **December 14th, 4-8pm pm Gift drop off #3, Camp Pendleton**
- ✦ **December 15th, 9am-1pm Family gift pick up event Camp Pendleton**

Check list for adopters:

Fulfill family wish lists: The wish lists request both gift cards and specific gifts. With a goal of being consistent for our families, we have guidelines to help you shop.

- We strive to give each family a minimum **\$200** (more for larger families) **in gift cards** to enable them to do Christmas shopping of their own and meet immediate needs in addition to wrapped gifts for individual family members according to the following breakdown:
 - A minimum of **2 gifts per adult**
 - A minimum of **3 gifts per child**
 - A minimum of **1 family gift** (family needs, games, movie tickets, outings, photo sessions, etc.)

* When needed, OHH can supplement your efforts with items and funds from our general collection, or we can pair you with another donor, please just ask us!

- ✓ **Wrap: gifts are wrapped and labeled.** We'll have gift wrap and tape at the drop off events AND volunteers to help if you're unable to wrap.
- ✓ **Donor Information Sheet: filled out.** (next page). This sheet will help us check you in. It helps us verify your mailing address one more time and fill out tax receipts.
- ✓ **Pick a Drop-off event: See drop off options December 13th-14th above. Exact directions will be sent out in our December 5th reminder email.**

✓

Sign up to donate items to the Ramos family. Copies of the Ramos Family's wish list will be available in the sign up folder. An updated list of donated items will be available on Team Snap. All items donated will be collected from Serra Preschool on December 13th For delivery on the 15th

ONE DAY May Change Your Life!

MEET
Play
LOVE
Engage, Enrich, Enlighten

CCPPNS
70th Annual Convention
Saturday, March 9 2019

KEYNOTE:

Dr. Lawrence Cohen
*Author of Playful Parenting and The Opposite of Worry,
co-author of Best Friends, Worst Enemies.*



MEET

Experts supporting quality
education: body, mind & spirit.

Play

GREAT WOLF LODGE

Giant indoor water park!
Family Vacation:
Learn and Play together

LOVE

Share connections and
common community mindset

Come as a family: *stay, learn and play.*

Come with School friends: *stimulating insight and laughter!*

Come for YOU: *toward the best parent & teacher you can be!*

REGISTRATION OPENS NOVEMBER 1