



# Serra Preschool

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

April  
2019  
Newsletter

## Mrs. Nowicki's Message

-Spot it, Say it,  
Ok it-

The other day at school, the sun and the moon and all the planets were all in line and I experienced one of the most perfect, beautiful interactions between kids that a teacher could ever hope for. I also needed something to write about for this months newsletter!!!!

I will try my best to share it with you. It was between Raef and Oliver. Raef was standing behind a tree with a very mad look on his face. What I did was **"spot it" and then I "said it."** I walked over and said **"I see that your face looks angry."** "I am wondering why you have those **angry feelings?"**

Raef went on to explain to me why he

was mad. He was mad at Oliver for getting on the bike he was riding. I **then "okayed it" by saying "I would be really mad too if someone took the bike I was riding."**

I could almost physically see his body relax a bit and his brain switch over to a state where he could begin to solve the problem by giving a message or asking for help. He was no longer in the **" I am soooooo mad state of mind."**

What really happened and how Raef perceived the event were different, and it was not my job to try and talk to Raef about that while his brain was in an angry state. It was my job at that moment to **"ok" his feelings.**

When he was ready I asked him if he would like to give

Oliver a message and that I would help him deliver that message? He said yes and off we went to find Oliver.

**Here's how it went:**

**"Oliver, Raef has a message for you."**

Oliver stopped the bike he was riding and looked at Raef.

**"Raef what to you want Oliver to know?"**

**Raef said, "Oliver you took the bike I was riding."**

Oliver thinks for a few seconds and says, **" You were not on the bike."**

**Raef says, " I know, I got off then I was going to get back on and thats when you got on."**

Oliver thinks again for a few seconds and says, **"I did not know you were going to get back on."**



**Patty Nowicki  
3 Day Director**

At this point I said to Raef, **"Raef, Oliver did not know you that you were going to get back on the bike, that means he thought you were done."** This is when I provided clarification for Raef about what really happened. **Raef's angry feelings** came from his thinking that Oliver just took his bike. Interactions between kids where there is a misinterpretation like this one happen multiple times a day. It is because kids are so egocentric. They can only perceive things from their **point of view. It's our**

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## Miss Cori's Message

### The Effects of Play on Brain Development by Cori Preisler

At our recent CAPPNS Convention, one of the break-out sessions included a lecture from Chia-wa Yeh, the Head Teacher and the Research Coordinator at Bing Nursery School, a laboratory nursery school at Stanford University. What's a "laboratory" nursery school? It's when university students and professors conduct research and learn about the preschoolers through observation and experience in the classroom, sometimes directly with the children and sometimes through a mirrored window/wall.

Ms. Yeh highlighted, "The **significance of children's ability to cross** their arms and hands over to the opposite side of their body, a movement known as midline crossing, is crucial. Midline crossing is critical for children in early childhood when they develop handedness (a dominant hand) for writing, and later, for reading—when their eye muscles are able to visually track across the midline so they are eventually able to read across a page."

I hope the idea of crossing the midline is familiar to many of you, as it's the reason we often take away the chairs at the art table! When children are playing and crossing their midline, they are strengthening the thick band of nerve fibers that connect their left side of the brain with their right side of the brain. It also strengthens a child's proprioception, a big word for knowing where your body is positioned in space and how to

move your body within a given space. You know those little brooms in the garden shed? Pass those out! Have you seen the kids wipe down the tables? Keep it going! Those are also great midline-crossing activities.

Ms. Yeh also spoke about the need for children to freely choose what to do both indoors and outdoors. Serra doesn't operate where children are put into groups and then rotated systematically through different centers. While we invite children to play at tables and encourage them to try new things, we respect the children's needs to navigate the room and yard in a way that is fulfilling their need at that time. Play isn't just for fun. It's a multi-sensory experience that's imperative for brain development.

More from this lecture: "...Play **promotes young children's brain** development. Hands-on learning is invaluable as young children make sense of the world around them. During play that engages different senses, such as sight, sound and touch, young children make important neural connections at a critical period of their lives. These connections are optimally made through repeated experiences. Jamshid Ghajar, Stanford clinical professor of neurosurgery, stated: "**During the first five years of their lives, children have a biological drive to play.**" **During play, brain** cells make connections that establish predictive timing in interactions, which is essential in taking in information and anticipating what to do next, such as determining when to hold out hands to catch an incoming ball."



**Cori Preisler**  
**2 Day Director**

We continued our discussion on how important it is in our daily lives to be able to predict. The repetition of play actually helps with prediction, which is also why we repeat our songs and fingerplays at circle time. We add new songs and chants as well because children also need novelty for brain development. Both repetition and newness enhance brain development: the first strengthens neural connections in the brain while the latter can make new connections (think about our brain cells communicating... We want billions of them to talk to each other, but we also want that conversation to be a good one that will endure.).

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## Mrs. Nowicki's Message Continued

job to provide clarification. And our timing can make all the difference.

I then said to Raef, "Raef what do you wish could happen next?" I have found that using the word wish instead of want helps the child to understand that they may or may not get what they want. Using the word "want" suggests more of a demand and can escalate negative feelings.

Raef said, "I want the bike back."

I could see that Oliver was thinking very hard about what to say next. He did not want to give Raef the bike back right at that moment. After thinking for about a whole minute, he said "ok you can have it when I am done."

I turned to Raef and I said "Oliver said you can have it when he is done." Even though Raef was not completely happy about not getting the bike back immediately he accepted it. His brain was in a calm enough state to do that. I then said, "We can look in the shed and see what else is in there for you to ride while you are waiting."

Although Raef did not get his wish to get the bike back immediately he delivered his message and his feelings were validated.

Raef did figure out what else he could ride and Oliver eventually finished his turn with the bike. He forgot that he told Raef he could use it when he was done. That was ok because I did not forget and I reminded Oliver to let Raef know that he was done with the bike. Oliver ran over and told Raef he was done and Raef said "thats ok I do not want it anymore."

At our end of the day meeting one of the working moms wondered if saying "its ok to be mad" would be helpful to a child who was angry. I think anything that parents say to kids out of love and trying to be helpful is always appropriate and there are other things we can say as well. Ultimately what we want kids to do is to be able to move on from those feelings, too change their state of mind so they can be open to moving forward in some fashion. One way we can help **this process begin is by "okaying"** their feelings.

Examples of beginning phrases that might "ok" a feeling could be:

I would be mad to if....

That would make me sad to, if....

I would be happy to, if someone gave me....

I would feel frustrated if I tried and it did....

So my message to all of you is "Spot it, Say it and then Ok it."

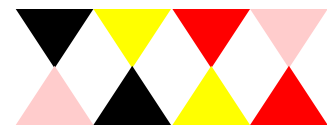
Thank you parents of Raef and Oliver for allowing me to share the above events with everyone. Being able to do that in such and open and unhindered way helps everyone learn!!!

*Love, Mrs. Nowicki*

P.S. Has anyone been thinking about the words "but versus and?" If you are not sure what I am talking about it was in my portion of the last newsletter. I still think of about it and my first version of this letter had a few "buts" in it. Which I gladly removed and replaced with what I think was more helpful language!!!!

### Dates to Know:

- April 1 | Spring Break Begins (No School)
- April 9 | Open House Field Trip
- April 10 | Street Sweeping
- April 10 | 3Day Picture Day
- April 10 | Board Meeting
- April 11 | Street Sweeping
- April 11 | 2Day Picture Day
- April 13 | 6Week Clean Up
- April 19 | Earth Day Field Trip
- April 24 | Street Sweeping
- April 24 | General Meeting (Silent Auction)
- April 25 | Street Sweeping
- April 25 | 2day Conferences
- April 26 | 3Day Conferences



### April Birthdays

- April 8 | Margot White
- April 13 | Oliver Bright
- April 18 | Brisa Boisseranc



## Mrs. Cori's Message Continued

"Without play and making those cerebellar connections, children can't learn and interact efficiently," Ghajar said. "Exposure to a wide variety of play experiences, such as painting, climbing and digging, enables the motor and sensory areas of the brain to interact with each other and synchronize."

There were 5 main open-ended materials that have been shown to be the very best for brain development:

1. blocks- building, stacking, lining up
2. clay/ playdough- pliable and responsive, yet resistant
3. sand- digging, scooping & filling, wet or dry
4. water- filling, pouring, over pouring, (can also be other "pourable" things like rice, beans)

5. paint- with brushes or any kind of utensil or with hands

The idea saddens me that in some preschools, children are given workbooks and worksheets day after day after day, and they have to finish those worksheets before they are allowed to go play. Trust me... your children will have worksheets coming out of their ears soon enough. While some elementary school teachers do see the value of more hands-on learning, your kids will eventually have a great amount of work with just paper and pencil (or computer and printer, really). My daughter dreaded reading one of the greatest works of children's literature, Charlotte's Web, because she was worksheeted to death. Every few chapters brought along a new

stapled packet of fill-in-the-blanks and true & falses. I can't imagine a preschooler being given workbooks filled with paper/pencil work. Being at Serra lets your child cherish this beautiful and tender time of play, play, play.

I'm so glad I got to go to the Convention and participate in this Play & Brain Development session! If anything, it made me feel so confident in our curriculum at Serra and how our play-based philosophy is truly what is best for young children.



**2Day: If you saw a tiny, little leprechaun, how would you catch him?**

Olivia- I would get a cage, a big one!

Shea- with a rope and I would roll him around like a big ball.

Gigi- I would see him with my night light but not on the bright part. I could hide him under my bed.

Enni- **I would run and catch him with a net, but it's hard because he always gets out.**

Avery- I would run super fast and put him in jail with my magic wand.

Dolly- I would step on him and throw in in the sink, but my sink is broken. Bam!

Dane- **with a cage. I'd catch him with my hands with money.**

Scarlett- **I'd catch him in my room and close the windows and put some tape on him. And then I'd put a statue right next to him and show my mommy.**

Cormac- I would get some gold and get a rope, and when the leprechaun bends over to get the gold, the pot dumps over, and I would trap the leprechaun.

Ryder- I would jump on him and run to catch him.

Sawyer- **I don't catch leprechauns.**

Sam- with a trap, a mouse trap.

## 2Day: If you had a pot of gold, where would you hide it?

Cormac- in a box, big enough for a person to fit in.

Enni- behind the Lego box. **It's dark behind** there.

Elliot- in the bushes because I like going into the bushes at the park.

Avery- in my room, **behind my bed. It won't get** stolen.

Brisa- **in my bed's pillow.** No one would ever find it.

Sam- **under Jack's bed.** I found a pout of gold at **the end of... what's it** called? A rainbow. I took

**it and hid it under Jack's** bed.

Dolly- over the rainbow **because that's where lep-**rechauns hide it.

Macy- in my room.

Sawyer- in a pile of stuffed animals. No body would find my pot of gold.

Summer- in my room, in the closet. I would hide it from my mommy, but I would give her a clue.

Arielle- somewhere in **my room, at my bed. It's** safe.

Margot- under my bed because the leprechaun

wouldn't find it because **it's too dark down there.** **Or the couch or my sissy's** bed or my closet or my **doll house or my parent's** bed. Or maybe back to my closet. Yeah, there.

Shea- behind a tree in the woods. No one else would find it.

Gigi- under the bed. I have a new bed. **Julian can't have small things** because he could choke on it. **Gold is too little for him, like Moana's heart.** Julian eats bubbles in the bathtub.

Addison- in the fridge. **The leprechaun can't get** it there. I would also hide it in the blankets on my couch, and if the leprechaun found it, I would put it in the bathroom and close the door.

Dane- under the bridge, **a goat's bridge. The troll won't get my gold because** I hide it under the rocks.

Ryder- under the blanket, the blanket that is yellow and brown on the **couch. We don't want the** bad guys to get the gold. My sister will fight them.

## Dad Joke of the Month

What do you call friends that you like to eat with?  
Taste Buds!



Please use [www.smile.amazon.com](http://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!).

Legoland Field Trip  
May 13, 2019



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[allgriff@yahoo.com](mailto:allgriff@yahoo.com)  
[shanepowell99@hotmail.com](mailto:shanepowell99@hotmail.com)  
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[Kadeboisseranc@cox.net](mailto:Kadeboisseranc@cox.net)  
[alykade@cox.net](mailto:alykade@cox.net)

Serra Preschool  
1005 Calle Puente  
San Clemente, CA 92672  
949.492.8188

[serrapreschool@gmail.com](mailto:serrapreschool@gmail.com)  
[www.serrapreschool.org](http://www.serrapreschool.org)



# City Springtacular

**the sensational**  
**SPRINGTACULAR**  
 3 SENSATIONAL EVENTS, 1 SPECTACULAR DAY!

**SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2018**  
**Vista Hermosa Sports Park Meadow**  
**(987 Ave. Vista Hermosa)**

**9 am - 12 pm SPRINGTACULAR ACTIVITIES\***  
 Breakfast hosted by Chef TLC's Sidewalk Cafe

Bunny Visits • Pony Derby • Train Rides • Giant Slide  
 Egg Hunts • Face Painting • Petting Zoo • Spring Games

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**EGG HUNT SCHEDULE**

10:00 am:	1 & under   2-3 yrs   4-6 yrs
11:45 am:	7-9 years   10-12 years

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**9 am - 12 pm SUMMER CAMP PALOOZA**  
 Summer Camp Discounts • Meet Instructors • Free Giveaways

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**12-4 pm SPLASHTACULAR PARTY at the AQUATICS CENTER**  
 Recreation Swim • Snorkel Bunny • Water Games • Music  
 Visit **CAMP PALOOZA** for free entry or recreation swim fees will apply.  
 Food truck will serve lunch for a nominal fee

\*Nominal fees apply, cash only

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 P.O. Box 1000 • San Clemente, CA 92673 • (949) 425-1000