SCHOOL of the WOODS
WOODS LOWER SCHOOL
WOODS MIDDLE SCHOOL
WOODS HIGH SCHOOL

November 2012

INSIDE THE WOODS

Parent Education Events Continue

More opportunities for parents to really get to know what Montessori education is will be available during this month and beyond.

On November 7, there will be a math demonstration for Early Childhood and Lower Elementary grades at 8:45 AM. Another math demonstration, 4th grade to calculus, will take place December 5, also at 8:45 AM.

Our Open House programs begin in November – Middle School on November 12 and High School on November 13. These programs are helpful for parents whose students are approaching the change to Middle and High School.

January will be the "bonanza" month for these parent events, and will include the three Open House Programs for Early Childhood, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary grades (see December issue). If you have questions about anything on these schedules, please contact Barbara Bends in the Advancement Office.

BOX TOPS BOX TOPS BOX TOPS BOX TOPS

Don't forget those boxtops! Teacher Suzy Josef is in charge of the kids who process them for redemption for cash. And that's nothing to sneeze at. You can leave your collection of Boxtop logos at the front office for them to pick up. You can see the entire list of products which carry this logo on the website, **boxtops4education.com**. And thank you!

In this issue . . .

Edited by Eloise Rochelle

Did you get your share of fun in the Human Hamster Ball?

What will they think of next?

Our Chili Cook-off, always a great success, did not disappoint. It was held on October 28 and in addition to all the attractions we've come to look forward to, featured the new Human Hamster Ball this year.

There were all those chili cooks vying for the prizes in several categories of chili concoctions. They were augmented by the professionals – James Coney Island and others.

Throw in the RockWall, all those inflatable challenge thingies, face painting, multiple raffles, entertainment by our very own WHS Rock 'n Roll band, and the much anticipated student talent competition, and you've got another winning chili afternoon. We'll have more news and photos in our December/January issue.

"Social Aggression" plagues most kids' shows

By Dr. Lauren Hughes, ABC News Medical Unit

Posted online September 27, 2012

Children between the ages of 2 and 11 are viewing social aggression on television at rates far greater than what many parents may realize, new research indicates.

In a study published Thursday in the Journal of Communication, researchers aimed to understand the role media plays in children's psychosocial development. They found that among the 50 most popular television shows for 2 to 11 year olds as ranked by Nielsen Media Research, 92 percent of the programs contained some social aggression, both verbal and non-verbal forms.

"Parents need to be more aware that just because shows do not contain physical aggression, it doesn't mean that there is not anti-social behavior present," said Nicole Martins, assistant professor in the Department of Telecommunications at Indiana University and lead author of the study.

"I'm not saying that parents can't use the television at all," Martins added, "but it could be a teaching opportunity to emphasize that some of those mean remarks may cause lasting emotional scars."

In total, the research team watched 150 television episodes, three of each show, making note of socially aggressive incidents aimed at damaging social status, self-esteem or both. Specific behaviors of friendship manipulation, gossiping and mean facial expressions were examined. They found that such incidents occurred at the rate of 14 per hour, or one every four minutes.

Furthermore, Martins and her team realized that social aggression was more often committed by an attractive person, presented in a humorous context, and neither punished nor rewarded. While insults and name calling were the two most common verbal incidents witnessed, giggling and looks of disgust were the two most prevalent non-verbal behaviors.

"Of course, we cannot make firm claims about what types of effects exposure to these portrayals may have on young viewers," the study authors wrote. That would require further study.

Rahil Briggs, assistant professor of pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York and a child development specialist, recommended that young children view television shows with their parents so that they can interpret the acceptability of what

is being seen rather than being passive recipients.

"Being able to talk about what you see is a key piece," Briggs said. "In society, we have become more and more aware of the importance of bullying, and it's going to become increasingly necessary to understand the early building blocks of social aggression that may lead to this."

Martins and her co-researcher Barbara Wilson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign identified only two other previous studies that have explored social aggression in children's programming. Collectively, this former work included a smaller number of shows studied, review of British shows that may not be applicable to U.S. audiences, and programming that focused on pre-teens and teens, rather than small children.

What sets this analysis apart is the breadth and number of shows included in the study, its attempt to understand the context in which social aggression is portrayed, and its emphasis on young children.

"Television is quite persuasive," Briggs said. "I think it's helpful [to know, especially for parents who have long been aware of and concerned of implications of physical aggression on television, that social aggression is also quite prevalent."

Dr. Eugene Beresin, director of the child and adolescent psychiatry residency program at Massachusetts General Hospital, emphasized the urgent need for additional research in the area.

"We need more research on the impact of media on kids on all ages -- violent, sexual, and socially aggressive media," Beresin said. "What are the conse-qences? Which kids are vulnerable?"

Beresin added, "Most kids are not going to become violent or socially inappropriate or aggressive based on media, but some percent will. But we don't know what percent will. And we don't know how young this starts."

Martins and her team made the case that parents need to be aware that perpetrators of social aggression may be potent role models for their children and that it may encourage unwanted behaviors in childhood.

Martins, however, hoped her research would increase awareness of the effects of social aggression not just for parents but also among television producers.

"Maybe this will encourage the industry to be more responsible in their portrayals," she said. "Perhaps they can make these scenes a lot less funny or associate pain or consequences with these remarks, instead of the way it is portrayed now -- because it may encourage children to be cruel to one another."

Observing and Coaching the Emerging Intelligence of Your Child—Insights From John Medina's *Brain Rules*

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

We know that "intelligence has both heritable characteristics and is powerfully influenced by environment" (p. 97). The study of human intelligence has revealed some essential components: the ability to record information and the capacity to adapt that information to unique situations, the ability to recall and recombine specific parts of that recorded information, and the ability to learn rapidly from mistakes and to apply that learning into novel combinations.

IQ is malleable; it is not fixed. One of the most interesting pieces of evidence for those who think IQ is not malleable is the fact that for some reason, IQs have been increasing for decades. If we ran the numbers back a century at the same rate they have increased since 1947, we would find some serious mental retardation in most of the citizens in the United States. Although you can learn about a person from the results of an IQ test, it is not really clear exactly what an IQ test is measuring.

The research evidence does tell us there are 14 separate regions of the brain responsible for various aspects of human intelligence, "different people use varying combinations of these regions to solve complex problems. These combinations probably explain the wide variety of intellectual abilities we can observe in people" (p. 94).

With intelligence, as it is defined by scores on IQ tests, it "is probably smart to reject a one-number fits-all as the final word on your [child's] brain power" (p. 96). Five areas of intelligence that may not show up on these tests of intelligence are worth paying attention to.

The Desire to Explore

This is what is responsible for the little scientist in every child. The components involved are sensory observations, making predictions based on the observations, designing and putting into action experiments for testing the predictions, evaluating the tests, and adding that knowledge to a self-generated growing base of information about the world. Children are not taught how to do this; they are born with it, and children all over the world do it. This exploratory set of traits are what lead to innovation, a skill that is highly prized in today's world. Some of the common characteristics of innovators are (1) the ability to see connections between seemingly unrelated concepts, (2) the ability to ask questions like "what if" and "why not," (3) an incessant need to test things, to push the limits.

Unfortunately, a lot of children lose their desire to explore and ask questions sometime in the elementary years because of the nature of traditional educational systems. Children in these settings quickly catch on to the fact that they are only expected to learn one right answer. You, as the parent, can encourage the desire to explore because you know it contributes to your child's intellectual success.

Self-control

The components involved in self control belong to a group of skills that are collectively called executive function. It engages many parts of the brain, including a form a memory referred to as working memory. The skills involved include the planning, having foresight, problem solving, and setting goals.

Learning to delay gratification is important for self control, as is filtering out distracting thoughts, especially in a world saturated with digital stimulation. These are things that can be practiced over time.

Creativity

Our ideas about creativity may vary by our own individual experience; however, most will agree that the core components of creativity include the ability to see new relationships between old things, that is, the ability to think up new ideas that don't

currently exist. Creativity involves risk-taking, particularly the type of risk-taking called "functional impulsivity," which is characterized by cold decision-making combined with what is considered to be high risk decisions.

Although many brain regions may be involved, two in particular stand out in the research on creativity. These are referred to as episodic and autobiographical memory systems. These effect the ability to keep track of the events happening to you, which allows you to reference experiences in different times and places. The brain regions involved are larger in humans than in any other primate.

Verbal Communication

Although many theories abound about the unique human talent for acquiring language, we know it develops early in life and often progresses quickly. By 18 months of age most children can pronounce about 50 words and are able to understand about 100 more. By the time a child is 3, the number of known words is about 1,000, and just before the age of 6 the number skyrockets to 6,000. In total, the mastery of English requires knowledge of about 50,000 words. Children must also master the sounds of language (phonemes) and the social meaning of the words, including many idioms.

One of the most dramatic demonstrations of the fact that certain types of learning have special "windows of opportunity," what Montessori called sensitive periods, is the way in which we learn the sounds of language. From the moment of birth, infants are able to distinguish between the sounds of every language, but by the first birthday, this ability had subsided. The child will have already absorbed the sounds in the language that he or she has been exposed to.

Our knowledge of language acquisition points to an idea that continues to surface throughout all of the research involving human intelligence; "*human learning in its most native state is primarily a relational exercise*"(p. 113)! It is through our relationships with other humans that we learn.

Many of us are aware that the best window of opportunity for acquiring a second language is during this early period of rapid language acquisition, but studies also show that the language must be delivered by a live human, not some digital device!

Interpreting Nonverbal Communication

Although face-to-face communication exists in many animals, "we [humans] have the most sophisticated nonverbal message system on the planet" (p. 114). Psycholinguist David McNeill has suggested that the ability to talk, our speech, and the ability to make gestures are tied together in the neural circuits of the brain. Studies have shown that people who lose the ability to move their limbs will also slowly lose their ability to communicate verbally. In babies, fine motor control must improve before they are able to gain a more sophisticated vocabulary. Kids who took an American Sign Language class for nine months made impressive gains on tests of attentional focus, spatial abilities, memory, and visual discrimination.

Facial expressions give us a lot of information about other people. The universal basic emotions common to all humans are happiness, sadness, surprise, disgust, anger, and fear. Some of the facial expressions that communicate these emotions are not under our conscious control. Apparently the area around the eyes can't lie. Infants are very busy learning to identify these emotions in the faces of the people around them, especially when they are from five to seven months old.

The importance of developing nonverbal communication skills can not only be surmised from the need to cooperate for survival purposes in early human existence (during a hunt for a large animal, for instance), but scientists have found a large region of the human brain (the fusiform gyrus) that is completely devoted to the single task of processing faces.

The ability to cooperate and work together as a team requires us to understand information about the intentions and motivations of others; reading emotional information from a face is the quickest way to make predictions about another person. It is crucial for babies and children to spend time interacting with other people to develop these skills!

Weekend Trips are Great Fun

Next time you and the family get itchy feet for a weekend trek, consider chasing down some of Texas's Spanish missions. They are just all over the landscape. Those pesky Spanish explorers and missionaries established some 35 missions in Texas alone between the early 1600s and late 1700s. They are located in six or seven clusters spread across the lower half of Texas, from El Paso eastward to Nacogdoches.

A good place to start is the grouping in the San Antonio region, but we'll skip the Alamo (everybody knows about it) and talk about some other interesting sites. The San Antonio Missions Trail officially includes the Alamo, plus four other missions, accompanied by auxiliary sites.

Mission Concepcion is first on the Missions Trail. It preserves a lovely stone church built in 1755 with typical Spanish-colonial features: thick walls, Moorish windows, a pair of tall bell towers, and a solid stone staircase. It is the least restored of San Antonio's missions, looking much as it did more than two centuries ago. Its interior decoration is considered the finest of all the missions. The highlight is a ceiling painting of a starburst depicting God as a mestizo, a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry. It is located in what is called the "God's Eye room," the mission's library, named for the decoration.

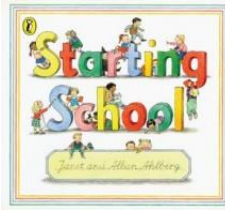
Mission San Jose, founded in 1720, is the largest and best preserved of the missions. Known as the Queen of Missions. Inside its high walls is a huge open courtyard around which are numerous structures, including a large granary that could hold 5,000 bushels of corn and the living quarters for the American Indians. In one corner stands a magnificently ornate church that is still used for parish services. Each Sunday at noon, a Mariachi Mass is held, and visitors are invited. The church's wood doors were carved in 1937 to duplicate the ones removed in the 1880s. Its Rose Window is regarded as one of the finest representations of Spanish colonial ornamentation in the country. You can also see a remnant of the acequia, or irrigation ditch, that brought water to the mission's farm fields.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is much simpler than the first two missions on the trail, Established on its present site in 1731, it offers its own rewards. A Romanesque arch marks the entrance to the courtyard, which is a quiet place to relax. Its little chapel supporting a bell tower is still in use. Built in an area of rich farm and pasturelands, the mission was a major supplier of produce for the region. Among the beneficiaries were presidios, the military garrisons that helped protect the missions from raids by invading Apache and Comanche Indians. It features a self-guided nature trail.

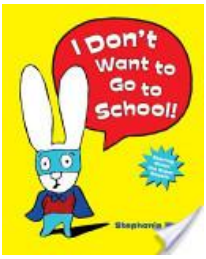
Mission Espada: Seemingly as remote as it was in 1731 when it was established, Mission Espada preserves segments of the historic acequias, the irrigation system built to provide water for crops. A marvel of Spanish colonial engineering, the Espada Aqueduct, completed in 1745, was built to carry water from the San Antonio River across a small creek. It is still used to bring water to fields near the mission.

Mission **Espiritu Santo**, just a few miles further SE at Goliad, is the site of the infamous black bean drawing in Texas history.

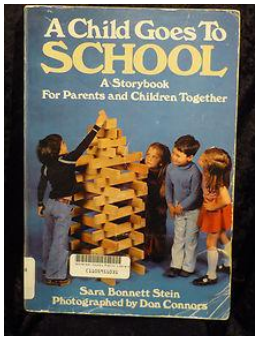
These books will help children who are starting school or day care



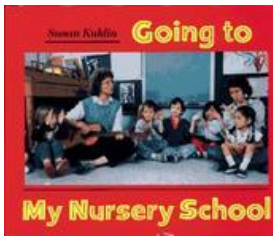
Starting School, by Janet and Allen Ahlberg. is an enchanting picture book for reassuring children who are about to start school for the very first time. The colorful pictures and large, simple text make "Starting School" the perfect book to be read to and read by children learning to read. 1988, 28 pages.



I Don't Want To Go To School by Stephanie Blake. That's what Simon says, but after a day of drawing, playing, eating, resting, making music, Mom tells Simon it's time to go home. His answer? "No way! Stephanie Blake has created a lovable character in Simon the Super Rabbit, whose cautious approach to something new will seem familiar. 2009, 32 pages.

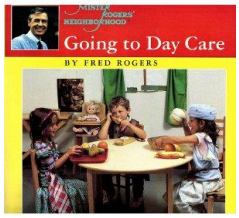


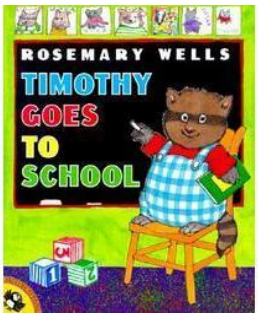
A Child Goes to School, by Sara Bonnett Stein. An Open Family *Book* for and *Children.* Separate discussions for youngsters and parents about starting school and growing up. 1978, 242 pages.



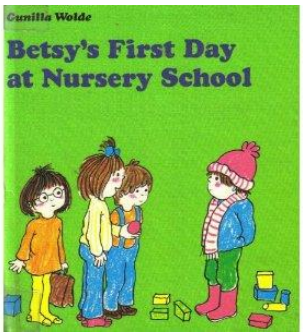
Going to My Nursery School, by Susan Kuklin. A realistic glimpse of a day at a New York City Nursery school, focusing on the activities of a class of four-year-olds. Readers follow Heath as he visits his cubby; says goodbye to his father; decides on an activity; cleans up; and enjoys snack time, playground time, and circle time. His security and his freedom to make choices are emphasized. Wrapped up in delightful endpapers featuring a bright display of preschoolers' marker drawings. 1990. 40 pages.

Going To Day Care, by Fred Rogers. Describes the typical activities and feelings children can experience at a day care center, including the fun, excitement, and apprehensions involved in being away from home. Excellent color photographs of multiracial children. The text discusses both family day care and day-care centers and deals with activities that concern children, such as eating, sleeping and going to the bathroom. 1985, 32 pages.





Timothy Goes to School, by Rosemary Wells. Timothy is very excited about starting school--until he meets Claude. Claude sits next to him, and he wears all the right clothes, says all the right things, and garners all the praise from his teacher and classmates. Timothy is feeling down, until he meets a girl who's having the same problem with her seatmate. Children will easily relate to this tale, in which humor and realism effectively mesh. 1981, 32 pages.



Betsy's First Day at Nursery School, by Gunilla Wolde. Betsy is apprehensive about going to Nursery School until a little girl sticks her tongue out at her and they both start laughing and making faces at each other, next they jump on pillows and have a ball and all of a sudden it's time to go home. Betsy is excited about returning to Nursery School now! 1976, 24 pages.