The Parent Volunteer Community

Information for all of our newcomer parents this year: School of the Wood has a Parent Volunteer Community. It is responsible for many of the fun events on our campus. Here are the committees for this year.

Cindy Oldham Events Coordinator
Tracy Malcolm Events Treasurer
Bridget Tomlinson Communications

Committee heads -
Back to School Social Val and Rich McAvey
Care Committee Barbara Bends
Chili Cook-Off Coordinator & Volunteers Kristen Wright
Flower Power Eloise Rochelle
Newsletter Coordinator & Volunteers Denise Welling
Spring Picnic Coordinator & Volunteers
Staff Appreciation Welcome & End of Year Coffees:

You can volunteer in a very easy way.

By being a volunteer, you will enjoy the camaraderie of our campus families. To sign up, go to the opening screen of the school’s website – www.schoolofthewoods.org – and click on this little emblem: Easy!

Poinsettias and greenery for sale, September 28 - October 9

It’s called “Flower Power” – that time of the year when near-perfect poinsettias and aromatic greenery can be ordered for the holiday season, delivered in December/

The sale runs just two weeks. Flyers and such from the Parent Volunteer Community will help you remember to place your order.

And don’t forget BoxTops . . .

These little honeys are worth money to our school. You’ll find them everywhere – on just about every product you buy. Clip them off the packaging and save ‘em up. After you save a bunch, you can turn them into the Upper El classroom or the School’s main office. Counting and processing is done by Upper Elementary students.

The organization boxtops4education.com pays schools 10 cents for each one submitted to them. A full list of literally thousands of eligible products can be seen online.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle
Sensitive Periods and Montessori’s Planes of Development

“Ahh. The fulfillment of identifying a problem, sitting down to think about it, and using our hands to construct a solution brings us a peace and inner satisfaction unlike any other. This must be a hint of what it’s like for a young child in a sensitive period when he is in the process of building himself.”

Trevor Eissler
Montessori Madness

Dr. Montessori was among the first to write about sensitive periods as applied to human development. Her ideas have since been validated by scientists who study brain development.

You may hear these sensitive periods referred to as “critical periods” or “windows of opportunity” (Pedersen and Pedersen).

When a child is in a sensitive period, it means that for several intense periods each day lasting for weeks or for a year or more, there is a perfect opportunity to learn specific skills or to acquire specific capabilities with ease. It is possible to learn a skill once the sensitive period has passed, but only with extra effort.

“An opportunity is missed when this period passes. Sensitive periods stoke a fire in the belly, a physical or intellectual itch which must be fed or scratched” [Eissler].

During a sensitive period, the child’s receptivity is increased, understanding will be deeper, and learning will be more enjoyable.

Dr. Montessori wrote about many sensitive periods in a child’s development. In what she called the First Plane of Development (from age 0 to 6), that of the “absorbent mind,” children are learning movement, language, order and organization, refining the senses, exploring spatial and social relationships, and they will have a fixation on small objects and tiny details.

They will become fascinated with writing and attempt to reproduce letters and numbers (Montessori discovered that writing precedes reading).

There will be a spontaneous interest in the sounds and symbols for reading as well as an interest in forming the basic concepts of quantity and number operations.

Children at this age will internalize polite and considerate behavior if they are exposed to those behaviors. If a child’s environment offers all these elements, then a strong foundation for intellectual growth and emotional well-being is established.

The Second Plane of Development (ages 6 to 12) is a very stable and a more intellectual age.

The two main sensitive periods for this age are for abstract understanding and imagination. Here the child uses creative imagination based on reality to build an understanding of the world in which she lives and the inter-related functioning of the universe. Elementary children are able to store and organize a great amount of information from a wide range of disciplines (Heather Pedersen and Jason Pedersen, What is Montessori?).

In the Third Plane of Development (ages 12 to 18), the adolescent seeks to understand his place in society and looks for opportunities to contribute.

The adolescent is drawn to activities that involve high ideals and enjoys working on projects that require action. Youth in the early years of the third plane of development (12-15) are much like their counterparts in the first plane; they can be self-absorbed, they need adequate food and sleep to sustain rapid growth, and they need time to “just be.”

Learning and mental development may even slow down as more time is spent on their own, with friends, and eating and sleeping. They continue to be concerned with justice and fairness, they will believe they can make a difference in the world, and will be focused on finding purpose in life.

What a gift of enthusiasm and hope for the world these students bring as they move into the Fourth Plane of Development to find their place in society

Adapted from the North American Montessori Center Website
http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com)
Pull An Art Box Out Of Your Hat

“I’m so bored. There’s nothing to do.”

The Rainy-Day-It’s-Too-Hot-It’s Too Cold Blahs. Whenever the blahs hit, parents and grand-parents wish they were more prepared.

Get ready by having a special art box organized and ready to pull out on short notice.

For a small investment, about the cost of taking four people to the movies, you can create an art activity box that will jump-start kids’ imagination and creativity, and banish the blahs.

Here is a list of supplies and the prices from a local discount store. Some of these items might already be in your home.

Plastic tub with lid (12x17x5) $4.00
Washable markers $2.00
Cup to hold markers $1.00
Colored pencils $2.00
Pencil sharpener, (hand held) $1.00
Cup to hold pencils $1.00
500 sheets typing paper $4.00
Colored construction paper $4.00
2 pairs children’s scissors $4.00
(one left and one right handed)
1 washable inkpads $3.00
2 glue sticks or school glue $1.00
Watercolor set $4.00
Two vinyl placemats $2.00

The key to successful art and craft projects is to give short lessons on how to use and clean up each material.

For example, with the glue sticks, show how to turn the tube to a certain level, how to turn it back and how to replace the lid.

With school glue, show how to squirt it out, clean the top and twist the top to close. Use school glue in a small dish with cotton swabs for easier application.

Show how to safely use scissors and that they should only be used to cut paper. If you think a child is not ready for scissors, wait to do any cutting projects.

Give lessons on how to use an inkpads, watercolors and washable makers.

Show how to clean up water spills, and how to use vinyl placemats or a tablecloth to define and protect a work area.

Be prepared.

Cut typing paper into half sheets, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, to have a supply for smaller projects. These half sheets are perfect for making cards or small books. Any of Ed Emberley’s books, such as Make A World, or The Big Orange Book are great for ideas with step-by-step drawings for books or cards.

Cut colored typing paper into 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inch squares to use for origami projects. Used wrapping paper, cut into squares, makes attractive origami and other undertakings. A good website for origami ideas is www.paperfolding.com

Save bits of ribbon, stickers, magazines, old wrapping paper and other fancy stuff to add to projects.

Now you have a box that is ready to make fun objects such as:

Birthday Cards
Christmas Cards
Reading Books
Origami
Paper weavings of colored paper or old wrapping paper
Drawings
Paper mosaics
Snowflakes
Collages from magazines

Here are other drawing projects:
Draw a map of your neighborhood, your house, your room, and more
Draw yourself, your family, your pets
Do a still life drawing by grouping three to five items
Make potato prints with the ink pad
Working with the objects in this box will help break the blahs.

Maren E. Schmidt
www.kidstalk.com

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This book is concise and easy to understand. It is written for parents and teachers – the child’s main educators for life. Maria Montessori underscores the importance of a child’s spiritual expression.

This spiritual expression is essential for the constant growth and formation of a child’s personality. She further adds that adults need to learn to respect, understand, and support “all reasonable forms of activity the child engages in.” When an intervention is premature (whether it is an appreciation, criticism, or even calling for attention) it thwarts the spiritual expression.

Children are extremely sensitive to external influences. These findings of Maria Montessori come from her systematic and scientific observations of children across several cultures. Likewise she presents the basic principles of her educational theory through real life examples.

Throughout the book, Maria Montessori brings out some of the salient characteristics of children and adults. Since a child lives in an adult world, the adult (parents and teachers) must diligently remove obstacles that prevent a child’s natural and innate spiritual expression.

Through this expression, the child learns and understands that he/she is an important part of or a significant link to his/her environment. Hence, it is the creation of such a climate which allows for a child’s free and natural spiritual expression that forms the basis for Maria Montessori’s educational philosophy.

Some of Maria Montessori’s insights on children and suggestions for adults are summed up below:

- A child is commonly viewed as an appendage to the adult. On the contrary, he is a separate entity with different needs, one who constantly strives to fulfill the highest ends of life.
- “Only the immediate observation of children whose freedom was respected, revealed some of the inner being that I understand to be of universal value.”
- “Many parents believe that their children should submit to order without any discussion and at the same time, would have their children love them with all their hearts. Here, too, the child is often the teacher of the parent, for his thoughts are pure and his sense of justice unbelievable.”
- Being concerned about a child’s physical needs and safety are not enough. What is significant is to respect the impulses of his spirit and know how to support them. It is “most important to respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them. We must support as much as possible the child’s desire for activity -- not wait on him, but educate him to be independent.”
- As children are quite sensitive – more than we know – to external influences, we should be cognizant of our interactions with children and of our behavior around them. This does not imply that we ought to “appear perfect in the eyes of children, rather, it is necessary that we recognize our defects and patiently accept the child’s just observations. Recognizing this principle, we can excuse ourselves before children when we have done something unjust.”

These insights remind us to reexamine our attitudes and behaviors toward children and adults alike. It urges us to recognize the sacred and important role we play in the lives of our children. “We are no longer powerful adults but adults made humble.”

Reviewed by Lalit Ecka, PhD
Former faculty, Woods Middle School
Great new books to look for

**Ben Draws Trouble**
by Matt Davies. Ben Luken loves to draw but he has lost his special sketchbook. It’s full of caricatures of his schoolmates and teachers. He goes on a frantic search, to no avail. Back in his classroom, he sees that a classmate has found it and everyone is looking at the sketches. It all turns out fine when the teacher places it back on Ben’s desk. 32 pages, 2015, ages 4 to 8.

**How to Draw a Dragon**
by Douglas Florian. The great illustrations and easy-to-read, rhyming text guide the reader in drawing scaly, knobby-kneed dragons that fly, ride bicycles, play musical instruments, love singing, and learn to draw each one along the way. Ends with a dragon-drawing art show for all! 2015, 42 pages, ages 4 to 8.

**My Pen**
by Christo-pher Myers. This acclaimed author-illustrator uses rich black-and-white illustrations to bring a sketchbook to life, showing that with a simple pen, a kid can do anything! Highly sophisticated concepts and art invite the long and close examination by older readers. 2015, 32 pages, ages 7-12.

**Edward Hopper Paints His World**
by Robert Burleigh. Edward Hopper’s story is one of courage, resilience, and determination. As a boy, Edward Hopper knew exactly what he wanted to be when he grew up. He was fascinated with painting light and shadow. 2014, 40 pages, ages 5 to 10.

**My Shadow**

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And sometimes goes so little that there’s none of him at all.

He hasn’t got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close behind me, he’s a coward you can see;
I’d think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

Robert Louis Stevenson

*A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1885)

Note: Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1850. As an adult, he went to San Francisco, where he met and married a widow with two children. In addition to *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, he wrote many other books, poems and short stories, and even music. The family packed-up and moved to the South Seas in 1888. He died in 1894 and is buried in Vailima, Samoa.
The Usefulness of Good Discipline Methods

Discipline is not punishment. It is a way to teach social behavior. With discipline, parents can teach their children how to manage their own behavior rather than parents controlling children's behavior for them.

Using discipline as a teaching tool takes time and patience. It involves allowing children to make mistakes and letting them learn from those mistakes.

Sometimes we overreact to our children's mistakes by yelling or spanking and then feel guilty and stressed as a result. How can we set fair limits and enforce them without causing those feelings?

Why Kids Need Limits

Dr. Alfred Adler, founder of Individual Psychology, wrote that people are social beings and are motivated by the desire to belong. Children want to know how they belong in their family, their neighborhood, school, etc.

Children act, parents respond, and children are guided by that feedback. This helps them learn how to belong. They “test” their limits to feel secure.

Another reason children push against limits is reported by Erik Erikson in Childhood and Society. At about 15 months, the “age of separation” begins and children grow in independence and autonomy. They push against limits for the chance to learn new ways of becoming self-reliant. As they learn new skills, their abilities increase and their limits expand.

Communicating Limits

For children to know what is expected of their behavior, parents need to know first. That means you should consider the child's particular stage of development and make a list of behavior that is acceptable to you. Once you know what you expect, you will be able to communicate your expectations (dishes go in the sink) and limits (“I know you can put your dish in the sink all by yourself”). Focus on a few expectations at a time and allow for plenty of practice as your children become more responsible.

When children understand what their parents expect of them, as well as the consequences for their behavior, they can be responsible for their choices of behavior.

Keeping Limits

If children break the family rule, it's important to create follow through with a “logical” consequence. If they know the consequences before the rule is broken, then they experience the enforcement of the consequence as the result of their own behavior and not as an arbitrary punishment. They learn that they, not their parents, are responsible for actions and that they have a choice to cooperate . . . or not to cooperate.

When parents are inconsistent about keeping consequences, children learn that they are not accountable for their own behavior and that their parents will excuse them from the discomforts of life. Though parents must protect their children from real danger, protecting them from their own mistakes interrupts this significant learning process. This learning time before children internalize or “own” a rule can be frustrating for the whole family.

Exactly what parents do to discipline may change with each new situation, but the underlying process remains the same – encourage positive behavior and independence, reduce choices, use natural and logical consequences.

No matter how many options you have, your children will surprise you with “crisis situations” needing immediate discipline. You may be too angry to effectively deal with the situation. If you want to hit or yell, help your children and yourself by taking a “time out” – tell your child, “I am so angry I can’t speak” or “I need time to think.”

You can also remove yourself – go to your bedroom, the bathroom or call a baby sitter, while taking time for reflection.

Leaving will keep you from venting your anger on your children. Also, children who hear you admit your anger, and see you take action to manage it, will learn from your example. When you are calmer, tell your children specifically what your concerns are and talk about more acceptable behavior.

With three-year-olds and older, invite them to suggest fair consequences for the next time rules are broken and agree on the ones you will use. Children who take part in the disciplining process are more responsible for their behavior and less resistant to enforced consequences.

Discipline can be a less stressful part of parenting when children know their limits before they break the rules, practice making choices daily, and by age three, take part in deciding the consequences.
Establishing a Parting Routine As Your Child Begins School

The beginning of the school year is a challenging time for young children. For many, it is their first school experience and the first time that they are daily away from parents. They feel these changes in their routine and schedule and it is reflected in changes in their behavior.

Separation is a necessary process that occurs throughout life. It starts with birth and evolves with each new experience. Separation for the young child can be an experience of successful mastery or of frustrating failure, and it can have a lasting effect on how the child will handle similar challenges in later life. Sometimes it can be difficult letting go of your child. Keep in mind that he/she will go through many challenges in life and you cannot always be a participant.

Every child is a unique individual, yet some behaviors are common to certain ages. Knowing this is helpful in understanding these transition periods. Children from nine months to 20 months often have the most challenges with separation. They cannot keep the mental image of their parent in their minds as a comfort. During this stage, the child follows the parent around from room to room. They do eventually discover that a parent does not cease to exist when out of sight.

Children from 2 to 8 years old often handle separation with more ease, especially if they have had past success with separation. However, parents and teachers may see a return to younger or more immature behavior, like tantrums, wetting pants, thumb-sucking or baby talk. It takes time for a young child to adjust to the new school experience. With parents and teachers working together, providing support to the child, these experiences can lead to a new level of independence.

Here are some suggestions for helping a young child master the transition and separation process:

Prepare your child for the new school routine. Avoid the “morning rush” by preparing as much as possible the night before. Lay out clothes and prepare lunches.

Keep the new routine consistent. Children rely on such consistence for comfort and feel safe because the concepts of days and time have not fully developed at this age.

Prepare your child for being dropped off. Explain the drop-off traffic line (See drop-off/ dismissal procedures in the classroom handbook). Be sure to stress that you both will remain in your car and will say your goodbyes there as the carpool teacher opens the door. Express your confidence that your child’s day will be successful.

Some children have no problem during the first two weeks of school. However, during the third week, their behavior changes and they may have difficulty separating from you. This is usually a healthy sign, and means that your child is comfortable enough to show his/her feelings. Identify and acknowledge their feelings. Give them encouragement by letting them know how confident you are in their progress.

Be positive. Help your child understand that he/she is leaving you to experience something wonderful. Discuss all the fun activities that will occur – not how much you will miss each other. Make your parting short and sweet. “I’ll be back later. Have fun!” Do not dramatize the moment with excessive hugs and kisses.

Let the teachers in the carpool line help your child get out of the car (and please refrain from socializing at this time).

Trust the professionals. The teachers have been prepared to deal positively with each child. They have experienced hundreds of parents and children dealing with separation! Let them tell you when to step back, when to stay and when to leave.

Once you leave, do not linger. Your lingering gives your child mixed messages and may upset other children who are adjusting to the routine too.

Be honest. Don’t promise your child things about which you are not able or willing to follow through on.

Be prompt at the end of the day so that your child can know that he/she can depend on you.

Handling separation in a positive way reinforces the love between you and your child by giving the message that with each challenge toward independence, your love is as solid and dependable as ever, even when you are apart.

Summation: Take the learning process of parent/child separations seriously. Changes can be stressful, frightening, and at the same time, are exciting learning experiences.

By Pilar Higginbotham, Early Childhood Full Day Class

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