

SCHOOL
of the WOODS

WOODS LOWER SCHOOL
WOODS MIDDLE SCHOOL
WOODS HIGH SCHOOL

October 2015

INSIDE THE WOODS

Tradition Says: October is Chili Month

The date of our first Chili Cook-Off is a little hazy in memory but probably began in the mid-1970s – for sure by the mid-1980s. We have the evidence.

It's doubtful that more than a handful of people in Texas are not devotees of the Texas National Dish (yes, it was invented in Texas during the days of the great cattle drives).

Our school community certainly jumps into our yearly competition with enthusiasm. So put on your favorite apron or at least be there – October 25.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

Here's the low-down on our up-coming gala

SCHOOL of the WOODS



School of the Woods is rolling back the clock to the 1980's, the decade of MTV, Pac-Man, and the Rubik's Cube. In our opinion, the best new products of the 1980's are our Upper Elementary and Middle School Programs, and we are celebrating our school with the Totally 80's Gala.

Join us on February 27, 2016 at the Omni Hotel Galleria. We'll have a DJ, dance floor, great food, auction items, and a few surprises. Start working on your Totally 80's outfit and dress for the occasion.

Balancing Parenthood



*Every now and then go away,
Have a little relaxation, or when you come back to
your work
Your judgment will be surer;
Since to remain constantly at work
Will cause you to lose power of judgment.
Go some distance away
Because the work appears smaller
And more of it
Can be taken in at a glance,
And a lack of harmony
Or proportion
Is more readily seen.*

Leonardo Da Vinci
(1452-1519)

“Heather is five-years-old and I’ve never left her. Not a night away. Not a babysitter.” Betsy said as though it were a badge of honor.

The joy we experience as new parents bonds us to our children. We want to be close. To provide food and protection, we must be nearby. Babies and young children require holding and hugging to feel loved. To meet these childhood needs, parents have two basic tasks. We have to invest time with our children, and we have to be able to see each child’s point of view.

From the moment of conception, parents balance personal needs and desires with the needs of their unborn child. We eat right. We avoid unhealthy substances. We try to think pleasant thoughts. We listen to whale songs. We get extra sleep. We buy hundreds of dollars of baby supplies.

Caring for a newborn and ourselves takes 110% of our time. A newborn depends totally on his or her mother and father. The mother depends on the father for

strength and encouragement. These new relationships consume us, as well they should. *Parenting is an intense and satisfying activity with a “gotchya.”* The gotchya? Parents are to produce an independent adult from a helpless seven-pound being. We have to go from caring for an infant who needs us 24 hours a day, to being the parent of adult who doesn’t need us at all.

Parents tell us they want their adult children to possess these qualities: Happiness, confidence, independence, responsibility, respectfulness, a loving and giving nature, excitement about life, self-motivation, life-long-learning, financial security, empathy, compassion, integrity, and be a world-citizen.

These attributes are the long-term goals we have for our children, and not surprisingly, for ourselves.

Our children can achieve these attributes, if we consider two questions:

1. What do our children need and how can we meet their needs?
2. Are we focused more on our children’s behavior than their needs?

Focusing on our children’s needs to help achieve our long-term goals means that we have to relinquish control of the process. We have to focus on needs instead of behavior. Because in the end, the process of child rearing is not about what we want. It’s about what our children need to become fully functioning adults.

Betsy’s comment about never spending a night away from her daughter made me wonder whose needs were being served, mother’s or daughter’s. It is important to know that “every now and then” we need to step away from our work to get a perspective and to see if all is in proportion. As a friend of mine says, “Take a reality check.” Let’s take Da Vinci’s advice to “have a little relaxation” and make the time to step back from our work with our children. It should help us get a view of the big picture, and “enhance our power of judgment” to see what our children need in their journey to adulthood.

Maren E. Schmidt
www.kidstalk.com

CHILD'S PLAY

Time for Free Play Benefits Children's Development

If you are wondering which is best for your child – a favorite computer game or going outside to play – current research says, “outside!” Playing outside is really just exercise.

Playing outside provides more than just physical activity, however. It helps build muscles and bones, helps control body fat, It helps children deal with stressful situations. Children who exercise in the form of playing have the same benefits that would come from a formal weight-training program.

According to research from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., in Princeton, outdoor play should be given the highest priority. There are other areas of development that benefit, as well.



Developing the ability to pay attention.

This is an important skill in the processes for learning and one which is better developed by free play time. Research suggests that children who get an abundance of play time are better able to learn and are better behaved in the classroom.

Also, outside play being an unstructured environment provides kids with decisions to make and problems to solve, which in turn helps them in classroom learning and in acquiring the complex skills of planning, organizing, sequencing and decision-making.

Learning cooperation skills.

During free play outside, children develop the important skills of cooperating with others and how to compromise. During this play time, they also learn to develop empathy for others, as well as flexibility, self-awareness and how to self-regulate their own behavior.

Impact on personality.

Everybody knows that playing outside makes children

energetic and happy. Such regular physical activity – which is what play is – is generally thought to reduce anxiety, alleviate depression, help with sleep problems, if there are any, and improve emotional well-being.

Is the child too busy to play?

Many children are in fact too busy to have time to play creatively or to relax after school. Those who complain about the number of activities they're involved in or refuse to go to them may be signaling that they are overscheduled. If that seems to be a possibility, talk with them about their feelings on extracurricular activities.



Adjusting scheduling now, if advisable, would be preferable to handling the effects of this kind of stress later.

Adapted from:
<http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/wellness/info/news/40765.asox>

The Importance of Self-Regulation

by Elizabeth Stepankiw

When work has become a habit, the intellectual level rises rapidly, and organized order causes good conduct to become a habit...Freedom in intellectual work is found to be the basis of internal discipline.

--Maria Montessori (1917/1965)

Most of us have been lead to believe that intelligence as measured on IQ tests is the primary factor leading to success in academic settings. Recent research conducted at the Pennsylvania State University published in *Child Development Journal* indicates the ability to self-regulate is more crucial than intelligence in determining academic success in all subject areas.

Planning, problem solving, and goal-directed behavior were found to be strongly predictive of all academic outcomes but were particularly associated with early ability in math. Researchers have found "all aspects of children's self-regulation are uniquely related to their academic abilities, over and above their intelligence" (*ScienceDaily*, 2007).

Focused attention, inhibitory control, attention shifting, and impulsivity levels have been correlated to parent, teacher, and peer ratings on a child's perceived warmth, generosity, and ability to cooperate as well. Being able to pay attention means a person is able to self-regulate (Angeline Stoll Lillard, 2005, p. 103).

"At-risk children who can self-regulate have higher test scores than their peers" reported

a study conducted by Oregon State University graduate student Michaella Sektnan and Megan McClelland (April 27, 2010). It supports the other studies, reiterating that self-regulation, or children's ability to control their behavior and impulses, is directly related to academic performance.

The self-regulation skills are often called executive functions. These executive functions "allow us to organize our behavior over time and override immediate demands in favor of long-term goals" (Peg Dawson & Richard Guare). Executive functions include the ability to plan and organize activities, to complete tasks, attend to what is most important, handle emotions, and to understand our own thought processes.

Parents and teachers can help children practice these skills in several ways. Keep regular daily routines and use calendars or schedules as visual supports so children are aware of upcoming changes in routine and are able to learn to understand the history of events in their lives.

Limit TV watching and computer games that just require the pushing of a button (these short-circuit your child's ability to participate in ways that build self-regulation

skills). Work on building home activities that allow the child to plan and organize, cooperate with others, and/or actively manipulate materials.

Stories and cartoons may be used as a springboard for discussions about behaviors that you value. Talking about emotions helps your child learn to identify her/his own feelings and thus gain more control over them as time passes. Discussing motives helps your child learn to think about thinking.

Meditation has been shown to help develop those parts of the brain involved in self-regulation--the task of attending fully to the here and now. It can be seen as an exercise in attention-training (Angeline Stoll Lillard, 2005).

Games and activities that keep your child engaged for increasingly longer periods of time, which for younger children often means things they can use with their hands, help build the ability to concentrate.

The current literature suggests self-regulation and attention can be trained with practice and will lead to good social skills, higher academic performance, increased happiness, and even improved immune response (Angeline Stoll Lillard, 2005, p. 105). In Spontaneous Activity in Education: The Advanced Montessori Method, Dr. Montessori describes the process: "Each time that such a polarization of attention took place, the child began to be completely transformed, to become calmer, more intelligent, and more expansive" (p. 68).

Good Question: Why are students asked to attend elementary, middle, and high school conferences?

The parent, teacher, and student conference is an important opportunity to establish trusting and cooperative relationships and benefits the student in multiple ways:

- ❶ *The mutual goal-setting orients the students toward learning goals.*
- ❷ *Because the students are part of the conversation, rather than the ones being talked about, they gain a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education.*
- ❸ *The students obtain experience in their ability to lead the conference as well as planning and organizing.*
- ❹ *The conference is an opportunity for parents to see the work of their student and note areas of growth, identify strengths, and emphasize the value of working hard.*
- ❺ *The conference gives the students a chance to reflect on what they have learned.*
- ❻ *Parents, teachers, and students are able to talk about any situations where information has been lost in the translation.*
- ❼ *The conference gives students a time to voice their own ideas and concerns.*
- ❽ *Conferences give the parents and teachers a time to mutually convey their support for the student's success and future plans.*
- ❾ *Conferences in which students participate allow the students to play an active role in all aspects of their school experience.*

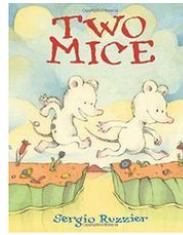
Mysticism for Beginners

The day was mild, the light was generous.
The German on the café terrace
held a small book on his lap.
I caught sight of the title:
Mysticism for Beginners.
Suddenly I understood that the swallows
patrolling the streets of Montepulciano
with their shrill whistles,
and the hushed talk of timid travelers
from Eastern, so-called Central Europe,
and the white herons standing—yesterday? the day
before?
like nuns in fields of rice,
and the dusk, slow and systematic,
erasing the outlines of medieval houses,
and olive trees on little hills,
abandoned to the wind and heat,
and the head of the *Unknown Princess*
that I saw and admired in the Louvre,
and stained-glass windows like butterfly wings
sprinkled with pollen,
and the little nightingale practicing
its speech beside the highway,
and any journey, any kind of trip,
are only mysticism for beginners,
the elementary course, prelude
to a test that's been
postponed.

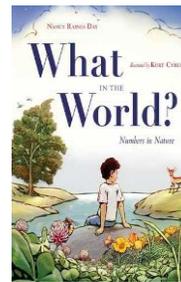
By Adam Zagajewski

Translated from the Polish
by Clare Cavanaugh 410

New Books all about numbers



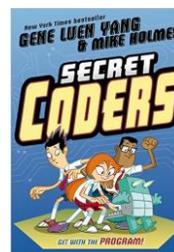
Two Mice, by Sergio Ruzzio. Two mice wake to explore their colorful world in a text using only two-word phrases. Young readers will soon notice the number pattern and slow down to see how the droll illustrations extend the story. With its text simplicity, they will return to it over and over. Ages 2-6, 32 pgs., 2015.



What in the World? Numbers in Nature, by Nancy Raines Day. This innovative counting book shows how the natural world is full of sets of numbers: from birds' wings in twos and clover leaves in threes to deer hooves in fours and octopus arms in eights, and ends with the stars in the sky—too many to count! Ages 4-8, 32 pgs., 2015



Charlie Piechart and the Case of the Missing Pizza Slice, by Marilyn Sadler, Eric Comstock. With a dinnertime mystery and 5 hungry suspects, Charlie Piechart makes fractions fun. Charlie Piechart has a pie chart for a belly that is great for showing fractions for little math enthusiasts. Math picture book, ages 4-8, 40 pgs, 2015.



Secret Coding, by Gene Luen Yang. First of a new mystery series about two friends, a boy and a girl, who use logic puzzles and basic computer programming to solve numerous mysteries at their new school, Stately Academy. Paperback, 96 pages, ages 8 and up, 2015.

Encouraging Positive Behaviors At Home

Everything your child needs to know about life is developing long before kindergarten. Your school is helping you to develop positive skills, attributes, and character qualities every day. Explore ways that are comfortable for you to incorporate into your own household with routines and actions that build on these character qualities and traits.

Chores around the house, of all types, develop accountability and character. When you ask your child to do something, follow up and make sure it is done.

To help children learn to make wise decisions, present them with choices (example: Do you want to do your chores now or in one hour?). Never give a child a choice when there is really no choice. Let your child live with the consequence.

Create daily routine and family traditions. Not making frequent and abrupt changes in routine gives daily continuity and coherence to children's lives. It is the occasional change that adds spice to the routine.

Work with your child to develop tenacity. Allow time for tasks to be finished and limit distractions that preclude concentration. Activities that foster concentration include reading, board games, puzzles, conversations with questions and answers that require thought.

Build confidence by helping your child develop a skill or a hobby they can be good at.

For the development of initiative, encourage creativity. Have an attitude of non-criticism when things don't turn out as they should. Help your child learn to clean up after herself.

Teach good manners by example: please and thank you, may I.

Help your child learn to work well in a group by having him help to cook or clean. It takes more time but it builds a strong family bond.

Establish guidelines for at home movement. We walk inside, we run outside, we put things back where we found them.

Allow children to repeat activities until they are done well.

Deal gently with character flaws while encouraging character qualities.

Be aware that there are "teaching moments" all the time.

Occasionally use the off button on the sounds of civilization. Help your child listen to her own thoughts.

Foster success by helping your child know what the expectations are so he can meet them.

Promote a good work ethic by working with your child. Children tend not to work well alone on projects not of their own choosing.

Don't make your child grow up too soon. Time is the essence of life. Give your child more time. Reduce his stress and yours. Start your morning earlier so your child has time -- time to eat, time to make the bed, get dressed, etc.

Don't invest much emotion in a child's mistakes. Invest time in helping him work through them. Blame doesn't bring success, happiness, or mastery. Give your child time to self correct.

Prepare for beyond time and space. Share your spiritual life with your child.

Adapted from Edward Fidellow, *Getting Your Money's Worth Workbook*.

Our Book Discussion group is fun and informative

The date is Thursday, October 15 and the book is *Permission to Parent* by Robin Berman, MD. The place: home of Bridget Tomlinson, 8841 Cedarbrake. Join in with parents from all classrooms for a lively discussion led by Sherry Herron.

In her book, Dr. Berman shows that over the past few decades, the power structure intrinsic to the family unit has flip-flopped. By trying to constantly please their children and make them happy, parents are actually making their children anxious. In attempting to veer from the strictness of their own upbringing, many parents have gone too far the other way, showering praise onto their children in the hope of increasing self-esteem, forgetting that self-control is a key to instilling self-confidence.

Dr. Robin Berman's extensive clinical experience has helped parents and children navigate the emotional and psychological minefields of family dynamics.

Dr. Berman is Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Geffen School of Medicine, UCLA, and founding board member of the Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA. She also maintains a private practice.

This is the first of two book discussions this school year.