Coming up . . .

September 20 – The all-school Welcome Coffee will be held at 8:15 AM at the Wirt Road Campus.

September 20 & 21 – Volunteer Fair, 2-6 PM. At these events, you can volunteer on the spot. Another way: go to the opening screen of the school’s website – www.schoolofthewoods.org – and click on this little emblem.

October 11 -- the planning meeting for the big Chili Do, 8:15 AM at the Wirt Road Campus.

Poinsettias and greenery for sale, September 25 – October 6

It’s called “Flower Power” – that time of the year when near-perfect poinsettias and aromatic greenery can be ordered for the holiday season. The sale runs just two weeks so be sure to remember to put your order in. And, be on the lookout for flyers and such soon. Delivery is just before the Winter holiday.

And then there are BoxTops . . .

Don’t throw good money away. Keep an eye open for this little pink logo on so many products you buy, clip them off the package and save ‘em up. They’re everywhere. The organization boxtops4education pays schools 10 cents for each one submitted to them.

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. A full list of literally thousands of eligible products can be seen online at boxtops4education.com.

Party On . . .

The Parents’ Social

Don’t miss this first big event of the new school year! Saturday, October 7, 7 PM, at the home of Sherry and Russell Herron, 12 Hilshire Grove Lane, 77055.

It’s the perfect way for new and previous parents to meet and greet.
A is for Anger

Frustration over a broken toy, a sense of failure at not living up to parental expectations, a dessert denied . . . any of these can be the occasion of an outburst of murderous rage from your child. What’s more, trying to deal with a child’s anger can be one of the most distressing -- and enraging -- experiences of parenting, probably because most of us weren’t taught to deal with this emotion in our own childhoods.

Here are some suggestions from the experts at the National Institute of Mental Health to help you in responding to and averting angry or aggressive outbursts.

Let the child know you accept his feelings: Say something like – “I see that you’re angry that we can’t stay at the park.” The idea is not to repress the emotion – it will only get acted out inappropriately somewhere down the line.

Teach kids acceptable ways of expressing anger: The simple verbal expression of a feeling – “I get very angry when you take my toy” – can help a child feel in control of the situation, thus reducing the need to act out.

Set limits in advance: Let your child know when he is not angry what the rules are – no hitting, no throwing things, no breaking things.

Explain the situation: Remember that emotions are powerful and often incomprehensible in children. Try to help pinpoint the feelings that caused the outburst.

Ignore behavior that you can tolerate: If you point out every infraction of the rules, a child will end up feeling incapable of doing anything right.

Use humor: A judicious bit of kidding can offer a child a face-saving way out of a situation and avert a tantrum. But be careful not to use sarcasm or ridicule, which can be very damaging to a child’s self-esteem.

Use physical restraint. If a child has really lost control, physically hold him or remove him from the scene to prevent him from hurting himself or others. It’s very important to hold onto your temper at this point. The child should not see this as punishment or hostility.

Catch the child being good. As often as you can, enforce good behavior. This is much more effective than punishment in the long run.

Model appropriate behavior. Your actions are the most powerful influence of all. If you haven’t mastered your own anger, you can’t expect your kids to do better.

A Choice Verse from Dr. Seuss

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You’re off to Great Places!
You’re off and away!
You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You’re on your own.
And you know what you know.
And YOU are the guy who’ll decide where to go.
Using A Sense Of Humor

“Knock. Knock.”
“Why did the chicken cross the road?”
“Why did the elephant paint its toenails red?”
Answer: Because they turned six-years-old.

Spend a few hours with a six- or seven-year-old and you might hear a joke. Or two. If you are lucky they’ll make sense. Many times I’ve sat at a table full of six-year-olds giggling at a joke that was absolutely non sequitur. At least to me.

Until about age six or seven, we, humans, take in information literally. A play on words, a metaphor, a simile, an idiom are lost on a younger child and might cause them some confusion or distress.

One summer day when I was not yet six, my father phoned from work while my mom was getting my younger siblings down for a nap. I answered the phone and listened to my father’s request. “Please tell your mom that I’m tied up at the office and not to wait dinner for me. Can you do that for me, please.”

As soon as the line went dead I burst into tears and ran sobbing to my mother. “Mommy. Mommy. Daddy just called and some bad men have him tied up at the office and won’t let him come home for dinner.”

At that point in my development, language was still literal, and I don’t think I had a sense of humor. I’m thankful that my mom did.

When we start to hear the “knock, knock” jokes, we are getting a signal that a child’s brain is changing and the child is beginning to be able to use his or her imagination to see beyond literal meanings.

Word study and playing with words then becomes fun. Searching for homonyms, words that sounds alike, such as “bare bear”, is interesting to the six to nine-year-old. Games with antonyms, or opposites, and synonyms, (say synonym fast five times), or words that have the same meaning, can be fun. For example, pick a word and try to find as many antonyms or synonyms as possible. Our class once spent a week collecting a list of words that meant “green”, which allowed for many laughs.

Charles Dickens made the simile game famous in his play, The Christmas Carol. One person thinks of a simile and leaves off the last word. “As quick as ….”, might be the clue. People guess until they figure out the simile. Which, by the way, is “as quick as a wink”.

Riddles are another manifestation of jokes and the word play that humor engenders. “What’s black and white and red all over?” A newspaper or a sun burnt zebra.

Joke and riddle books were in constant use in my classroom. The children loved to read them out loud to each other and to handwrite them into their personal joke books.

Jokes and riddles seem to connect the young and the old. I still remember the riddles my great-grandfather told me over forty years ago. Jokes can be powerful words. We can use humor to teach important lessons and values. Think of all the television sit-coms that use humor to make an important point. Limericks usually end with a humorous message.

When you think that you are elephant joked to the max, take refuge in the knowledge that your child is beginning to develop a sense of imagination and agility with words and ideas. Feed your child’s sense of humor with joke and riddle books, and word games using homonyms, synonyms, antonyms, similes, and more.

It’ll be a barrel of fun.

Maren E. Schmidt
www.kidstalk.com
Morality can be defined as "a set of value-laden behaviors embraced by a cultural group whose main function is to guide social behavior" (p. 222). Moral sense has been shown to be universal across all cultures according to an interesting set of data compiled through the Moral Sense Test developed by a group of Harvard researchers.(1) Because we know the ability to make certain moral decisions is absent when specific parts of the brain are damaged, we can tell that moral sensibility is something we are born with.

"We are born with a universal moral grammar," says cognitive scientist Steven Pinker, "that forces us to analyze human action in terms of its moral structure" (p. 223). Yale psychologist Paul Bloom believes a sense of justice, our emotional responses to thoughtfulness and altruism, and our willingness to judge another person's behavior are included in those inborn characteristics." Some researchers believe our moral sense is developed to aid...cooperation" (p. 222). In fact, even our primate cousins have been seen to display a capacity for altruism.

"Our brains come preloaded at birth with certain limited moral sensibilities, which then develop in a semi-variable fashion, depending on how we are raised" (p. 223). When a person is able to follow a moral norm despite the fact that there is no possibility of being caught or that there will be no punishment, we know morality has been internalized. Internalization of a moral code is the hallmark of a fully developed moral sense. We want our children to become aware of and

“align themselves with their own inborn sense of right and wrong. You can create moral maturity in most children. And, perhaps surprisingly, there is neuroscience behind it" (p. 222).

Researchers who study moral development have found that somewhere around age three, children begin to realize their parents are not omniscient. One way children test this hypothesis is by telling lies. Children become aware that they can tell their parents false information without being detected. In other words, children learn to predict what others will believe by manipulating what they tell them. This newly learned skill of being able to "pull the wool over the eyes" of their parents improves over time as they continue to test its limits. The fact that children of this age have difficulty understanding the difference between what is real and what is imaginary probably plays a part in this activity.

"This timeline of ever more sophisticated lying suggests to researchers that children have an age-dependent relationship with certain types of moral reasoning, too. Kids might be born with certain moral instincts, but it takes a while to coax them into their mature form" (p. 227). There are three components on this timeline of the progressively maturing moral sensibility. First, avoiding punishment, then learning to consider the consequences, and finally, acting on principle.

Two moral reasoning circuits are involved in this process: one allows us to make rational moral choices (make up our minds about something) and the other is based more on
an emotional level. The emotional level allows us to visualize the consequences of our behaviors. The ventromedial prefrontal cortex is connected to both these areas of the brain and gives us the ability to integrate these two aspects. The three steps in this process are: (1) the part of brain that involves emotions is activated, (2) the signal connects to the higher centers of the brain, (3) fact centers analyze the information and decide what to do.

During this process, the brain must judge right from wrong, separate the critical from the trivial, decide what is necessary and what is a choice, and then make the decision. The integration of these processes is so "tight" that researchers are not sure where one leaves off and the other starts. However, "children who aren't guided to step two can't get to step three" (p. 247).

The maturation of emotional regulation and executive functions play an important role in the process. Developing these two so they become integrated will help children learn to make internally motivated moral decisions. The learning that takes place by observing others also has a powerful influence on moral development.

An explanation is of primary importance if we are to guide children to moral decision-making. When children are punished without any discussion or explanation they do not make it to step three. The idea that they will be punished crowds out their ability to make a reasoned response to their internal moral compass because they are constantly on the lookout for an external threat to guide their behavior. Spanking is not only counterproductive, but it runs the risk of creating more aggressive behavior in the child. Hitting a child is a "lazy form of parenting" (p. 249).

Children need clear and consistent rules that are administered in safety (the child is not complying under a threat of harm) and are clearly stated, realistic, and visible to all.

Parents need to make sure they are rewarding positive behavior and not inadvertently rewarding unwanted behavior. Too often when parents are overly busy, it is the negative behavior that gets attention. It may be necessary to make a note to spend time with your child when he or she is behaving appropriately.

Immediate and related consequences should be applied when rules are broken. Sometimes the consequence will occur naturally as a result of the behavior. These are the most effective. Other logical consequences may be applied by the parent and usually involve the removal of the child from an activity or the removal of a privilege. These must be consistently applied and emotionally safe. Consequences must be accompanied by some sort of "cognitive rationale" that explains why the rule and its consequences exist.

Your child's particular temperament plays a role in how intense this process is. The child with a fearless and impulsive outlook on life needs a different approach than the child who reacts fearfully to sharp corrections. One temperament may react catastrophically to the same correction that another is able to shrug off. "Understand your own child and adapt your discipline strategies accordingly" (p. 248).

Parenting this way takes effort, but when explanations are consistently employed over a period of years, the child will automatically relate an "internal attribution" to the situation based on the rationale you have supplied during the corrections from past incidences. As the child matures, he or she will also be able to generalize the lesson to other situations. "Parents who provide clear, consistent boundaries whose reasons for existence are always explained generally produce moral kids "(p. 247).

http://moral.wjh.harvard.edu/
The Montessori Method – The Classroom

Dr. Maria Montessori observed that children go through various sensitive stages, in which they are very receptive to learning specific skills. She stressed the importance of developing the senses between the ages of two and six, when the child naturally wishes to use and perfect his or her senses.

Thus, the materials used by the children are designed for them to learn by:

Seeing
Touching
Hearing
Feeling
Moving

The Montessori prepared environment allows children to meet their needs through individual, spontaneous activities. The child’s sensitivities guide his choice. To build concentration and self-discipline as they learn skills, the children work with scientifically selected materials. Their education is an active – rather than a passive – process. The child educates himself.

In a Montessori environment, the teacher prepares and presents the materials needed for the child to carry out his/her great work, and offers them to the child in the form of individual or small group presentations. Once an initial presentation or lesson has been given, the activities are freely chosen and frequently repeated according to a child’s needs.

The Montessori classroom fascinates both children and their parents. The classrooms are normally bright, warm and inviting, filled with plants, animals, art, music and books. There are interest centers filled with intriguing learning materials.

These five areas are practical life, sensorial learning, math, language and geography, and cultural. Each area includes intriguing, concrete, most often self-correcting materials which allow the child to work on his/her own, building self-confidence through competency.

Montessori classes are organized to encompass an age span, which allows younger students to experience the daily stimulation of older role models, who in turn blossom in the responsibilities of leadership. Students not only learn with each other but also from each other. Since the basis of the Montessori approach is the simple observation that children learn most effectively through direct experience and the process of investigation and discovery, days are not divided into fixed time periods for each subject. Instead, teachers call students together as they are ready for lessons - individually or in small groups.

Further the age range of children in the same environment fosters cooperation and mutual help among the children. The opportunities for freedom of choice, movement and communication help develop inner discipline. The child’s freedom to repeat an activity develops concentration, which Montessori says is the only true foundation for education.

Source: http://circleofinclusion.org
University of Kansas, Circle of Inclusion

“There are many who hold, as I do, that the most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. For that is the time when man’s intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed. But not only his intelligence; the full totality of his psychic powers.”
Some really great books from 2017

The Prehistoric Times, by Stella Gurney. A newspaper-style activity book for the discerning dinosaur, packed with paleo puzzles, fearsome facts and giganto games. Meet real-life reptiles and read fascinating features, which include: Seeking a self-defense class? Hear what a cetiosaur has to say about staying safe. Wondering what’s happening with the weather? See whether meteor showers are here to stay with our fail-safe forecast. Confused why #trees are trending? Learn why the hypsilophodons think branches are best. Published in June, 32 pages, ages 5-9.

Spot the Mistake: Lands of Long Ago, by Amanda Wood and Mike Jolley. Ten scenes from ancient civilizations, such as the Stone Age, Han Dynasty China, the Maya, the Vikings, medieval Europe, etc., are each laced with 20 anachronistic items for alert young historians to spot. Some are easy, others a bit trickier. The book is a learning tool, offering a discussion of each item and insights into ancient technologies. Published in May, 48 pages, ages 7-10.

Charlie’s Boat, by Kit Chase. Best friends really are the best when they use their imaginations to help each other. Charlie, Oliver, and Lulu love to play outside together. One fine day they all go fishing, but Charlie doesn’t have much fun—all he can catch are sticks. Next, they build little boats and have a race, but, once again, things don't go very well. Charlie's boat comes in last. Things seem pretty gloomy until Oliver comes up with a plan. They build a special boat they can all play on together. Published in May, 32 pages, ages 3-5.

There Might Be Lobsters, by Carolyn Cremi. A little dog’s paralyzing anxiety gives way to bravery when someone smaller is in need. Lots of things at the beach scare Sukie because she is just a small dog. The stairs are big and sandy, and the waves are big and noisy, and there might be lobsters. With endearing illustrations and text that captures a timid pup’s looping thoughts, this funny read-aloud is about how empowering it is to overcome your fears when it matters the most. Published in May, 32 pages, ages 3-7.

Show and Tell: Transportation Activities, by Nous Vous. Kids love things that go, so naturally an activity book based on transportation themes makes an ideal travel companion. This one features a nice variety of distractions, including doodling prompts (design your own car), a maze, a connect-the-dots challenge and a make-your-own-adventure-story page. The stylized illustrations are by Nous Vous, a London-based collective of graphic designers, and depict a pleasingly utopian view of modern urban life with people of all shades performing the activities. Published in March, 18 pages, ages 2-5.

Doodle Town, by Dominika Lipniewska. This doodle book seems likely to make everyone feel right at home, even kids who typically don’t gravitate to drawing. The author provide just enough scaffolding to get young doodlers started, while keeping everything abstract and primitive-looking enough to be unintimidating. Users are invited to transform the town and its residents by adding houses, playground swings, new hairstyles and jazzed-up outfits. Stencils in the shapes of clouds, flowers and raindrops are included. Published in December, 64 pages, ages 3 and up.

The Adventures of John Blake: Mystery of the Ghost Ship, by Philip Pullman. An import from the UK, this story was originally written as a comic and has now been published in the US as an extensively illustrated (by Fred Fordham) novel. The ghost ship is the Mary Alice, a lost-in-time schooner from the 1920s. It became unmoored in time following an experiment gone awry involving Albert Einstein and a mysterious floating device that looks like a cross between an impossible trident and the Antikythera mechanism. The ship is the focus of intense searches conducted by a multimillionaire, the British intelligence service, and a maritime organization. WOW! Published in June, 160 pages, ages 10 and up.