

Children's School

FAMILY NEWSLETTER February 2003



Weathering the Winter of 2003

This winter has been unusual with snow, ice and temperatures that have been below freezing since January 10. Because Children's School staff and families live in diverse areas in and around the city, we cannot factor travel conditions from every location into our decision about whether to delay or close school. At 5:30 AM, we listen to the news, determine what other schools in the city are doing, and make our best judgement on whether to have, delay or close school that day. Since our children do not walk to school or wait for buses, we do not typically delay or close purely for cold temperatures. Depending on the road conditions, we may decide to choose one of three options:

1. **One Hour Delay**

During a one hour delay, we will greet the Kindergarten at 9:30 AM, the Morning Four Year Old Classes at 9:30 AM and the Three Year Old Classes at 9:45 AM. Dismissal will be at the normal times and the Extended and Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedule.

2. **Two Hour Delay/No Morning Preschool**

During a two hour delay, we will greet the Kindergarten Class at 10:30 AM and dismiss at the normal time. The Morning Preschool and Extended Morning Programs will be canceled and the Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedules.

3. **Close the school.**

Option #1 is new and enables us to conduct the morning preschool classes, while giving our staff and families time for the road conditions to improve. We tested this option on Wednesday, January 29th and found that it worked well; most of our children attended school unless they were ill.

We announce our school closing/delay on both WTAE (1250 AM) and KDKA (1020 AM). Please listen to the radio or television if you suspect that the Children's School may close/delay due to the road conditions. WTAE also announces school closings on their web page, wtaetv.com. After calling the news stations, Mrs. Simpson will send an e-mail to our families.

In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgement about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

Calendar Notes

As with most holidays, we have only a minimal emphasis on Valentine's Day at the Children's School. Each class will have a chance to share simple cards with their friends. If you would like to send Valentine cards to school with your child, please include one for each member of his/her group. You may also include cards for any child in other groups. Have your child bring the cards to school on Thursday, February 13th. If you are not familiar with the Valentine's Day tradition and wish to send cards, please check in the office to see samples. They can be made with common materials or purchased in sets very inexpensively. Remember, helping your child to sign each card can be a very good language experience. For kindergartners, adding their friends' names to the outside of the card is also encouraged. Please remember our holiday policy (found in your parent handbook). Our children often prepare their own special snack related to the different holidays and many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets). For these reasons, do not send any food/candy or any other gifts for children.



There is no school on Friday, February 14th and Monday, February 17th. Friday is a Professional Development Day for our staff and Monday is President's Day. Enjoy the long weekend!

Vision Screening



Margie Dubner, from the Easter Seal Society, will be here once again in February. On February 10th, 11th & 12th she will be conducting free Vision Screening in cooperation with Pittsburgh Vision Services. She will be screening our children for visual acuity, muscle imbalance, lazy eye (amblyopia), and color deficiency. If you want your child to participate, please complete the enclosed permission form and return to Mrs. Simpson by Friday, February 6th, 2003! Screening is important because children's eyes are fully developed by eight years of age, yet few children have eye examinations before entering grade school.

February's Web Artists are:

Isaac M., Serene K., A.J. M., Jacob C., Maggie M., Julie M.,
Haley Z., Zoe H., Arky H., Olivia S., and Emma H.

The 2003/2004 School Year

Letters to reserve your child's space in the three-year-old and kindergarten programs for the 2003/04 school year will be mailed February 1st. The \$200 deposit and signed consent forms for the three-year-old and the kindergarten programs are due by **February 21st** to reserve your child's space. After this date, the spaces will be made available to applicants not currently attending the Children's School.

The kindergarten class is limited to twenty-two (22) children. After the first twenty-two deposits are received, the remaining deposits will be put on a waiting list in the order they arrive.

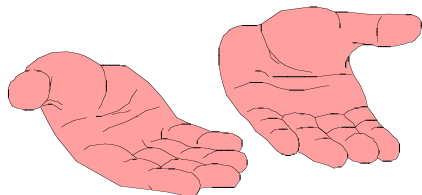
Applications for the extended-day programs will be mailed with the acceptance letters. **There is limited space available**. Preference is given to currently enrolled extended-day students. Registration will then be on a "first come; first served basis". To apply for an extended-day program, complete the application and include a \$50 deposit. Applications received after the programs are filled will be held on a waiting list and checks will be returned.

Note: In previous years, the extended day program has filled VERY QUICKLY! Submit your forms early if you are interested in this program!

Letters to reserve your child's space in the four-year-old programs for the 2003/04 school year were mailed in January and those deposits are due by **February 7th**.

Extended Day Openings - Now!

We have an opening in the extended afternoon program. This program runs Mondays through Thursdays from dismissal (2:30 for the kindergarten and 3:15 for the preschool) until 5:45 PM. Please call Mrs. Simpson for more information.



Safety Corner

Wash Your Hands!

It could be the best preventative medicine. In fact, handwashing has been described as the cheapest, easiest, single most effective way of preventing the spread of infectious disease. Experts say there is no substitute for washing hands vigorously for 10 seconds with soap and hot water, however, if water is not available, hand sanitizer or baby wipes are the next best thing. You may have noticed the handwashing signs in our school. NAEYC requires that we follow proper procedures during handwashing, and we recommend it for everyone! Proper handwashing procedures include washing with soap and warm running water for at least 10 seconds, using single use or disposable towels, and avoiding recontamination from faucets by turning off faucets with towels. So, stay healthy this season and help others stay healthy by washing your hands properly and often!

Nutrition Corner

How do you create healthy lunches that children will actually eat and enjoy? Start by involving them in food selection and keep lots of healthy food in the house. Remember, don't over pack. If your child tends to eat half a sandwich, then just send half a sandwich. The goal is to pack a protein, a grain, and a fruit or vegetable. Dessert should not be an everyday item, and milk, water or juice are ideal drinks.

Ten Tips for Making Kid's Lunches Healthier *(taken from Health America)*

1. Sneak some veggies or fruit into their sandwich. Try slicing thin slices of pears or apples and adding them to sandwiches.
2. Choose 1% or fat-free milk. Whole or 2% milk is by far the largest source of saturated fat in children's diets.
3. Leave the cheese off sandwiches, unless it is low fat or fat free. This is the second leading source of artery-clogging saturated fat in kids' diets.
4. Switch from ham, bologna, salami, pastrami or corned beef, to low-fat or fat-free alternatives such as turkey breast, chicken breast and roast beef.
5. Include at least one serving of fruit in every lunch.
6. Use whole grain bread instead of white bread for sandwiches.
7. Limit cookies, snack cakes, doughnuts, brownies and other sweet baked goods. They are nutritionally empty.
8. Pack baked chips, pretzels, Cheerios, bread sticks or low-fat crackers instead of potato, corn, tortilla or other chips made with oil or olestra.
9. If you pack juice, make sure it is 100% juice. Many juice drinks have no more than 10% juice, making them more like soft drinks or soda pop.
10. Avoid prepackaged cheese, lunchmeat and cracker combinations sold in grocery stores. Most contain extremely high amounts of fat, sodium, preservatives and sugar.



Library Committee News

(from Nancy Knowles)

Are you getting tired of your collection of books and videos? Have you exhausted your library branch's selection? There is an easy and free way to access almost any book or video out there by using the Carnegie Library's online request service. Here is how to do it:

- Log on to www.carnegielibrary.org. You can do this at a branch, also.
- Click on 'for kids' (I have tried 'search the catalog' from this page but it flashes on and off and won't allow a search).
- Click on 'search the catalog'.
- Enter the title in the open box. If you don't know a title, but have a rough idea, use 'advanced keyword'. If you like a certain author, click on 'author' and enter the name. If you're looking for recorded books, and like a certain reader, you can enter the name as 'author'. One of my son's favorites is Jim Weiss, a very soothing teller of tales. For a video or DVD, use 'advanced keyword' and under 'material' choose 'video' or 'DVD'. You will probably want 'all locations', but you can designate a specific one by clicking on the arrows and scrolling down the very long list.
- Click on 'search'. Sometimes it will go straight to the entry you want. If there is more than one possibility, or if your one-word title is part of multiple, longer titles, then you will get an orange page with all the possibilities.
- Click on the title that best fits your search. Your entry should appear, with author, description, and then the libraries that own it.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page. There are eight rectangular 'buttons' across the page.
- Click on 'request' (the button farthest to the right).
- Enter the name of the cardholder, then the barcode number from the library card, and finally choose the location where you want to pick it up.
- Finally, click on 'Submit above information'. Soon (hopefully!) you will receive a notice in the mail telling you your book or video is available.

You can also go to any branch and have them enter your e-mail address into your record for online notifications. Of course, in a couple of days you can check at the branch yourself. **YOU CAN RETURN THESE MATERIALS TO ANY LIBRARY BRANCH**, no matter where you picked it up or the branch it came from. Don't be discouraged if you get an 'entry not found'. Try the title another way, or try the author, or use 'advanced keyword' or even 'subject'. The database can be picky about how you punctuate or spell the title. Good luck! And enjoy all the good reads you will be having with your children!

P.S. Of course you can also request and search for adult materials. Request a video you've been wanting to see and save money on rental fees.

If you need ideas, I recommend getting a copy of the Chinaberry catalog (www.Chinaberry.com or 1-888-481-6744). The editor writes a review of every book and explains why she recommends it. There is a wide selection of children's books at different levels, as well as good reads for adults. The Carnegie Library also has lists of recommended books based on a child's age.

Director's Corner

In recent weeks, several parents have approached me with essentially the same question, “**How do we tell the children ...?**” The topic might be divorce, a serious illness, or whether humans will become extinct like the dinosaurs. Given the prospect of war with Iraq, many of us may be faced with similar questions in the near future. I have formulated my perspective on ways to handle such questions both by helping parents through challenging situations and by preparing a session for my Principles of Child Development class on “Explaining Complex Issues to Children”. Though the exact approach depends heavily on the situation, and my assignments over the years have focused on topics ranging from prejudice to suicide to poverty to mental illness, the psychological principles for formulating appropriate explanations are quite general.

As with many parenting challenges, it helps to **take a long-term view**. Addressing any complex issue requires a continuing conversation over days or months, depending on the child and the situation. For something with direct family impact, the child will re-process the issue at new levels as the child develops. Recognizing this process takes the pressure off of today’s explanation, which is really only one piece of the puzzle that may take years to complete.

The best first piece is to **give the problem an accurate name**. This name will be the core of the child’s developing concept and will distinguish it from other similar concepts. For example, calling stomach cancer a bad stomachache may seem less scary initially, but the euphemism will cause problems the next time the child has the stomach flu. Remember that children have significantly less experience than adults, so a term like “cancer” is not already associated with lots of extra negative images.

Over the long haul, the key to strong parent-child relationships is trust. For that reason, it is essential that parents **always tell the truth**. While not doing so may be easier in the short run, the lie will ultimately be exposed and will damage the child’s sense that the parent can be trusted. At the same time, unlike the courtroom, there is no requirement for parents to tell the whole truth. Tell only the part of the story that is necessary at the moment. Details, future projections, and multiple angles may confuse, overload, or unnecessarily scare the child.

Similarly, since there are many aspects of life over which we have no foreknowledge or control, be careful to **only make promises that you can keep**. Focus primarily on the present and immediate next steps with phrases like, “We’re going to work with the doctors to ...” or “We’re not sure, but right now ...” At all ages, children are concerned about their emotional security and physical safety, so be sure to reassure them that, whatever the challenging circumstances, the adults who love them will do everything possible to take care good care of them (feed them, take them to school, read stories to them, put them to bed, etc.).

Preschoolers pose a special challenge where explanations are concerned because of their level of cognitive development. As they attempt to understand their world, they often make connections between events that happen close in time but may otherwise be unrelated (e.g., “this bad thing happened today because I did that bad thing yesterday”), they focus primarily on how things appear (e.g., “she forgot my name so she must not love me”), and they often use magic to fill the gap between what they know and what they observe (e.g., “I’m gonna wish real hard for ...”). Fortunately, many early childhood professionals have written excellent children’s books designed to help children understand, while avoiding common misconceptions. Also, support group web sites often have helpful information about addressing questions and concerns that children of different ages typically raise about particular difficult situations.

In the end, **being willing to talk** with your child about challenging issues is what helps her most to cope. In fact, the non-verbal aspects of your explanations are likely to matter more than the exact words that you choose. Your child monitors your emotional reaction and uses it as a model to shape her own. Take care that you have the support you need so that you can communicate in a calm and supportive manner, particularly when the issues hit close to home.

Please feel free to talk with me or any of the staff members about the questions your child is asking or the situations you’re finding difficult to explain. We’ll be happy to brainstorm with you about the approaches that might work for you and your child, as well as to suggest resources that you might find useful. In this way, we can collaborate to support your child’s development, which is always our shared goal.