

St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter



October 2020

Dates to Remember

- 10/1 Lunch Bunch starts
- 10/2 Pizza & Popsicles – 3's 5:30-7:00
- 10/9 Pizza & Popsicles – 3's 5:30-7:00
- 10/16 No School - Teacher Work Day
- 10/29 Halloween Party – 2's
- 10/30 Halloween Party – 3's/4's

From the Director's Chair – by Rita Dai Wang

What a great beginning to the school year we have had! It is hard to believe that we are already in the second month of school!

Parent Survey: Now that we are one month into the school year, we'd like your feedback on how the school year is going. Please complete the survey by Friday 10/9. Thank you in advance!

<https://forms.gle/LC8kYjKPbviUNwj87>

Pizza & Popsicles Picnic: Thank you to the 2's families who joined us Friday evening! It was so nice to get a chance to hang out and chat. We are looking forward to having an equally good time with the 3's on Friday 10/2 and the 4's on Friday 10/9!

2's Lunch Bunch: Lunch Bunch has started! Our first one was so much fun. We ate, chatted, and played. It's not too late to join. Your child can stay for lunch once or twice a week. You can sign up for the entire year, one month at a time, or if you aren't sure of your schedule, you can even sign up for one day at a time whenever you need it. The fee is \$5 per session. Let me know if you are interested!

Halloween Parties: In light of the pandemic, we have decided to make our Halloween parties student-only events. We will end the party with a parade outside, so parents are invited to come to school a few minutes early to attend. Don't forget to bring your cameras! More details will come home in the next few weeks.

Flu Shots: In this time when we are all worried about coronavirus, please don't forget to protect yourself and your children from the regular flu. According to the CDC, flu shots prevented around 4.4 million flu cases and about 3,500 deaths in the 2018-2019 flu season. Getting the flu shot this year is critical because the flu shares similar symptoms with COVID. Being protected against the flu can avert unnecessary worry, quarantining, and COVID testing. Let's all do our part to help prevent a dual-epidemic scenario.

For a discussion about flu shots with CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta, check out the following podcast:

<https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/corona-virus>

Safety Protocol Updates

Now that we are several weeks into the school year, we have settled into a routine of handwashing and mask-wearing. **THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING HONEST AND FORTHCOMING WITH US ABOUT SYMPTOMS AND TRAVEL PLANS!** We are essentially in a bubble together, and it is vital that we continue doing our best individually to keep all of us in this bubble safe. Here are our current safety protocols:

Safety/Cleaning protocols in action at St. Peter's:

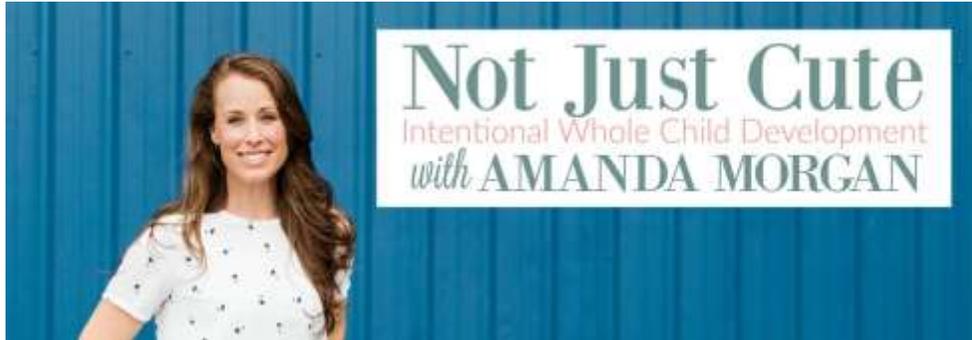
- Daily Health Check and temperature check
- Washing hands frequently (upon entry into school, after playing outside, after blowing nose/bathroom/etc., before eating, throughout day as needed)
- Disinfecting toys every day, surfaces multiple times a day, playground between groups
- Teachers wear masks when indoors, sometimes face shields during Circle to facilitate communication
- Students wear masks as tolerated, encouraged to try every day
- Teachers do not wear masks outside, but will put masks on if get close to children when feasible
- Classes do not co-mingle
- Chapel lessons with Fr. Bruce outside, Fr. Bruce is masked
- No outside vendors, parent volunteers, or field trips
- Open windows/run fans
- Removal of rugs/soft toys that are hard to disinfect
- Rotate books/puzzles that are hard to disinfect
- Individual art supplies/playdough/sensory bin for each child
- Water bottles brought in and sent home daily
- Lunches brought in daily with ice pack, stay in cubbies not refrigerator
- Teachers serve snack and milk
- Different dismissal areas to encourage physical distance between parents while waiting
- Zero Tolerance Illness Policy

That said, our primary job at St. Peter's is to educate your children. It is not developmentally appropriate for young children to socially distance, and our job is not to be mask or distancing police. We distance when possible, but strive to keep everyone healthy by making sure only healthy people enter the school. We practice mask-wearing every day, but if you want your children to wear masks all day long, you need to discuss that with them directly. We will encourage your children to follow your guidelines, but we cannot be mask police. Thank you so much for your support!



Are Preschoolers Supposed to Sit Still?

As parents, we know how wiggly young children can be. Instead of fighting this natural tendency, let's look at the scientific research that explains why young children need to move and how beneficial that movement is for their learning. Amanda Morgan, an early childhood educator, discusses this topic in her article below. For more, check out her website "Not Just Cute" at www.notjustcute.com.



The Paradox of Sitting Still in Preschool

Sometimes, when people picture what learning looks like, they imagine perfectly quiet children in perfectly arranged rows, sitting perfectly still.

Sounds perfect.

But research tells us that's not always what learning looks like. Especially when it comes to young children.

Movement is an important part of the learning process for two main reasons.

ONE: Movement engages more of the brain in the learning process. In order to incorporate more of the body, more of the brain must "light up", which in turn also creates more feedback. By engaging more of the brain and creating more connections, movement enhances learning and memory retention.

TWO: Movement helps the brain to work more optimally, by generating more oxygen and blood flow to the brain, along with chemicals that promote focus, motivation, memory, and mood.

It's fascinating to me that the first sensory systems to mature are those governing motor activity (cerebellum) and spatial orientation (vestibular). These systems work together to gather and process information, helping us plan our movements and direct our attention. We are literally wired early on to learn by moving and interacting with our environment. ([source](#))

Additionally, we know that educating children goes beyond the brain. It is more than educating a "disembodied mind", as developmental theorist William Crain would say. Children are building cognitive skills, but also fine motor skills, large motor skills, language skill, social skills, and many more. These skills are not learned effectively when children sit still. They need to move, interact, handle things, and actively engage with their environment.

Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead warned,

"I lay it down as an educational axiom that in teaching you will come to grief as soon as you forget that your pupils have bodies."



Nowhere is this truer than in the early childhood classroom. Overlooking a child's need to use their bodies in order to learn will not only manufacture needless behavior issues but also get in the way of real growth.

Pediatric occupational therapist and author Angela Hanscom posits that current the trends showing increases in sensory and motor issues stem in part from a reduction of movement in children's lives today. According to her research, many aspects of physical development (like balance, spatial awareness, proprioception, fine motor control, muscle tone and strength) is on the decline in children.

The irony is, that movement actually makes it easier to sit still and pay attention.

Work by Dr. Olga Jarrett of Georgia State University demonstrated that students who were given time for movement (through a recess break) were "less fidgety and more on task", with the biggest effects observed in those with hyperactivity.

Neuropsychiatry expert Dr. John Ratey, of Harvard Medical School, explained to CNN: "When you move, you stimulate all the nerve cells that we use to think with, and when you stimulate those nerve cells, it gets them ready to do stuff. **When you exercise, you turn on the attention systems**, so that means you're (paying) better attention, you're able to deal with more frustration, you're able to stay with it longer. You're able to manipulate information by turning ... on the front part of our brain to make it work better, and that's really key and important in terms of taking in information as well as performing with it."

This link between movement and learning isn't simply a short-term cause and effect relationship. Sitting up in a chair, holding a pencil, turning the pages of a book —so many of the skills we ultimately associate with upper-level learning— require a strong foundation of physical strength and development. Core muscle strength, arm stability, fine motor precision and endurance, vestibular development. **These abilities are not built by sitting still.** They are built through movement.

It seems to run against reason, but the reality is that sitting still and writing is not caused by time accrued early on, sitting still and writing. It is actually the end result of lots and lots of movement.

In the TEDx talk below, Hanscom declares that children today are "going to school with bodies less prepared to learn than ever before in history." Due to a lack of movement, many young children today simply do not have the muscular or vestibular development required to perform at what would be considered a normal developmental level. Add to that the compounded and far too frequent effect of developmentally inappropriate expectations and we have a recipe for disaster.



School preparation isn't simply the miniaturization of sedentary schooling. It doesn't look like tiny children sitting in tiny rows writing on tiny papers. Preparing children to succeed in school looks like active children running, climbing, dancing, squeezing, squishing, grabbing, holding, skipping, rolling, and swinging through childhood. Those children will have more fully developed brains and more fully developed bodies, fully ready to continue learning.

Young children must move to learn today, and they must move to prepare their bodies to learn in the future.

It's one more reason why play is not just cute.