



OUR SCHOOL

A Non-Profit Corporation Founded in 1973

756 Cherryvale Rd., Boulder, Colorado 80303

(303) 494-4112

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From the Chair

It's still summer, so our minds are primarily on the summer session. For new children and their families, it's their first introduction to Our School. For returning children, it's getting back comfortably in a familiar setting and making new friends before fall. And for a few children, it's absorbing a last taste of new discoveries, of further initiative, creation, and fluid interaction before they are ready to join more formal kindergarten environments. **The summer 3-day and 4-day sessions end on Monday, August 6, 2001; the 2-day session ends on Tuesday, August 7.**

Before we have time to realize it, the fall sessions will be starting. Parents may have some questions on their minds, such as: When do we co-op in our session? My child has never attended Our School before, so should I stay for the session, part of it or not at all?

What if my child cries when I leave or tugs at my clothing? What do the teachers do if my child cries while I am gone? How should my child be dressed? Can my child bring a favorite "something"?

Co-oping: Each session has at least one room parent whose responsibility is to set up a co-oping schedule. The room parent **will contact you in August** to ask each one of you **when you CANNOT co-op**. Then the room parent will make up a calendar schedule for your regular day **and** a "backup day." (The latter is to fill in for the parent who has an emergency on their scheduled co-op day and needs a substitute.) Everyone will receive this co-oping calendar. If you **need to change your co-oping day** because of a conflict that month or an emergency, **take care of it yourself** by using the backup person or by switching with another co-oper. Then please:

- ⇒ Put the switches on the co-oping calendar in the parents' room and,
- ⇒ Inform the room parent(s) and the teachers of the switch.

To stay or not to stay: It often depends on the level of anxiety of the parent and the child. It also depends on the child's previous experience, as well as the degree of difficulty a child has with transitions. It may depend on how rushed the parent and the child are

before school. If you do stay, **decide yourself** for how long and make it clear **and concrete** to your child.

Bargains and rewards: Both keep children from concentrating on what the school curriculum offers. These children "move through the day" as their minds are on the rewards or attractive promises waiting for them at the end of the school day. (Please read the article on *separation* in your packet.)

"I'm ready to go but my child tugs at me and cries": If you have been concretely clear to your child about when and how you were going to leave, **then leave and do not linger**. It may sound harsh, but if you linger, the child's anxiety (and yours) will increase to the point of no return. You may have to repeat the same scene quite a few times, because your child will learn this expectation of interaction. **Be reassured that we will call you if necessary, or you may also call within the next ½ hour.** Then we will proceed according to what is then happening with your child.

How should my child be dressed? In play clothes, of course. Avoid a battle on this, even if it means bringing your child in pajamas or an inappropriate dress. Just bring the appropriate play outfit in a bag or backpack. (Please read the article on *clothing* in your packet.)

Can my child bring a “something” to school? Of course! However, **do not ask your child if he/she wants to bring something to school.** The request should be made on the **child’s own initiative.** Then it means it is needed in order for your child to have a sense of a link between home and school. At one point, you may see the reverse: your child may want to bring home something from school.

Please read the articles in your information packet, including Board Procedures, co-oping guidelines, etc., and bring your questions to Yvonne or Jim.

If you have any questions, or need information on your child and the program, don’t hesitate **to ask the teachers;** when you trust them, they are the **most accurate** source of information.

Home Visits:

As you know, all **new** children have a home visit. It is informal and lasts about one hour. The purpose is to get better acquainted with you and your child on your home ground.

Workdays:

As part of this cooperative school (see packet), families and teachers are required to give three hours of their time to put the school facility in good cleaning shape, inside and out, before the fall. The Board of Directors scheduled it on **Wednesday, August 15, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday, August 19, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.** You choose **either** date. Bring rubber gloves and rags if you have some. Refreshments will be served. **No children (except infants) for safety and efficiency.** To accommodate everyone, here are some scheduling possibilities: 2 adults

spend 1 ½ hours together; 1 adult spends 3 hours; or two adults are on 1 ½-hour shifts. Call us at 303-494-4112 **by Friday, August 10, and leave your choice on the school answering machine,** so we can plan these two workdays. We would rather that you all come on either date, because the carpet cleaners come afterwards, and the teachers will need to set up the program. **If you are out of town, let the teachers know and we will reschedule you.**

Health Forms:

If you need more time to return **all** the forms from your packets, **tell Yvonne.** Otherwise, they **all** should be returned to Yvonne **now** to be processed through the computer. **It takes time, and teachers would rather devote extra time to the children’s program.** These forms have to be put on file ready for the County Health and State Human Services Departments’ inspections. Thanks for your cooperation.

Food Certificates:

Approximately **15 forms are still outstanding.** Just like with health forms, the Treasurer, Jim, does not want these delays to affect time better spent on the children’s program. The School would appreciate your cooperation on this matter.

Our School Library:

We are pleased to report our children use it extensively. We have close to 1,000 books at this point and increase the amount periodically. To keep track of books, we need to routinely follow certain procedures.

Taking a book out: An adult (mostly the teachers, but not exclusively) supervises the child’s selection from the shelves in the “guineas” room. Jim or Yvonne register the **date and the child’s**

full name on the white card inside of the book jacket. The card is given to Jim or Yvonne. The child “writes” his or her name on a piece of paper that that child puts into this jacket. (Often it is scribbled, decorated, stamped, etc. Be patient. For a child it is part of understanding the library process of borrowing and to be literate or creative about it.)

Book return: After trying many systems, we have found that the simplest way is **to return the book to Jim or Yvonne.** This avoids the book being placed back on the shelves before Jim processes it on the computer.

Damaged and lost books: Books go in backpacks or plastic bags to avoid unnecessary damage. Parents and drivers are to be watchful and responsible for the books taken out or brought back (the children are **only partially responsible.**) Please repair a book in case of damage and inform the teachers. If it cannot be repaired or it is lost, **Our School will bill you** for its replacement (the School can get discounts for book purchases.) Please check your Our School Policies. We appreciate your cooperation on this because, obviously, the message the adults want to convey to the children is that books are **permanent and precious** objects for one’s enjoyment, imagination and information.

Board Meetings:

Open to the membership any time (unless the Board is discussing a confidential matter). Ask Yvonne about the agenda. If you think you need the Board to consider some item, talk to Yvonne, the Chair, ahead of time. (Consult your packet for procedures and composition.) The Board usually meets on the last Tuesday of the month.

The Child, The Adult and Our School's Environment

By Jim and Yvonne

Every environment has some kind of structure, of course. Some are more tailored to children's developmental needs than others, no matter the claims. Human beings are part nature, part nurture. For young children, nurture has to follow the understanding of nature, so that adult expectations are tailored to that understanding. With a fairly close match, we may avoid distorting the healthy developments of a given child.

At Our School, the expectations follow children's developments. It translates into routines that match these in terms of fatigue, hunger, cognitive focus and physical needs. A young child is a person in movement, developing differentiated emotions together with concrete intellectual rationales that meet that child's present understanding. It's a person who also needs to interact directly with things and people to make concrete sense out of them. Responsible autonomy and the sense of one's own creative ability to observe, explore, and discover what one is and is becoming in the world of living and non-living things, are fundamental parts of learning in the early years. In many ways, a healthy personality development depends on that balance of nature and appropriate nurture.

To start with, parents have basic questions to establish some comfort level of trust and reassurance in this new environment. How is my child coping with separation? Does my child play with other children? Does my child only play with...?

How come my child doesn't want to come to school or leave school without difficulty?

The next level of questions derives from co-oping or home observations. Why is this child moving from place to place or this one staying with one activity? Why is this one staying with the teacher and this one following a parent? How come this one is by herself or this one following a child or children? Why is this one crying or running around when making a transition but another one seems to move with the flow of things? Why does this one say "watch me, watch me," but that other one does not? Why is this one painting, but this one wants to build? Why is this child playing with play dough day in and day out rather than paint or build? My child is irritable at home since the start of school; I can't figure out why. What are children learning through play, painting, blocks, etc.?

All are good questions. There is no single, simple answer to them, apart from developmental guidelines and what is relevant subject matter for preschoolers. After these considerations, there are many possible answers. It depends! You'll hear these two words frequently from the teachers because they consider a variety of factors and events as each child is a unique person with unique responses to events in their environments.

In a sense, teaching is science and art. The science part is to discover the developing patterns of a given child: tempo, interests, focus, abilities, cultural and family experiences, interaction and communication, habits, health, and more. These are revised and reinforced with time and as more observations are added. The art is how teachers then proceed with

interventions (or none) to nurture the latent potential of any given child in positive and constructive approaches. These rigorous assessments guide artful teachers as to when, how, with what and with whom to intervene, to what extent, and with what possible outcomes. Play, body language, linguistic tone and expression are the organized "body of research" that leads to the art of teaching.

We all know individual human development *is far from simple*. However, the teachers are always available to help parents with support and understanding. It is their responsibility to educate children well and help parents raise children with the understanding, joy and wonder that is necessary, at times, to minimize parents' frustration. Raising children "naturally" is easy. When parents love and respect their children as individuals, then both children and parents grow together and thus all can manage well. Raising children with the educational understanding of their individual nature, while providing nurturing environments to meet that understanding, is demanding. In this case, adults need to question their own childhood upbringing, the influence of cultural factors, and filter for accuracy the information they received from everywhere. Also know that a child cannot simply be molded and trained in a Skinnerian fashion. Children's minds, bodies and emotions are a blend of their own biology and response to their various environments. Adults who are curious learners also learn from children, not to relinquish their parental responsibility, but to evolve it as their children grow up. Many parents follow such a process or learn to do so, more or less, consciously or unconsciously.

The fascinating and challenging aspect for the teachers—but sometimes the most frustrating or overwhelming one for a parent—is the ever-changing patterns within the continuity of development: body, emotions, and mind mature in invisible threads of subtle differentiation and understanding. We witness the end product, or the expression of a phase, not the process itself. The teachers are constantly aware and alerted to it. Children’s social interaction progresses in a less self-centered and more responsible manner, and their interaction with material evolves into ever more complex and expanding patterns. Emotions are gradually differentiated, just as physical abilities slowly get more refined. Biology does not do it alone. Just like any other living organism, environmental provisions influence the outcome in an eternal present.

This is one of the main reasons Our School is a cooperative where both mothers *and* fathers can enjoy the support they and their children need. Co-oping, class meetings and workshops help and, we hope, so do the home visits and spring conferences. Recently, a parent that had her four children in Our

School, starting with her first born **28 years ago**, came to visit to give a cash donation to the school. Why? Her answer was that she had learned so much from the school’s teaching that she thought it had made her a much better parent and now grandparent and also a better counselor professionally. It is not the compliment itself that gratifies us, but the fact that our professional knowledge and dedication can make a difference.

Fall Sessions:

Fall sessions begin at the end of August with children’s start dates staggered over two days:

AM 2-Day Session

- ⇒ **Tuesday, August 28:**
Ryan Murphy-Houseman, Dylan Dorvee, Maryjane Sulka, Mary Hanson, Ellie Shiovitz
- ⇒ **Thursday, August 30:**
Rachel Fitzsimmons, Mosi Landsman Joseph, Devin Tunkay-Green, Olivia Sherman, Qinton Dombrowski

AM 3-Day Session

- ⇒ **Wednesday, August 29:**
Ben Patzer, Matthew Moran, Lauren Feiman, Alyssa Wengryn, Eli Rosen, Brandon Ashbaugh, Katherine Johnson, Molly Robinson

- ⇒ **Friday, August 31:**
Michael Harasti, Genevieve Bowie-Caskey, Garrett Hickman, Samuel Rockinger, Trevor Aweida, Terran Weider, Leah Bell-Johnson, Zetta Mason

PM 4-Day Session

- ⇒ **Wednesday, August 29:**
Samual Graff McCallum, Brian Mowat, Izaak Sulka, Julia McCue, Elena Familetto, Ataliah Landsman Joseph, Ewan Cheng
- ⇒ **Thursday, August 30:**
Logan Collins, Madison Webb, Amelia Webb, Michael Topping, Adam Fitzsimmons, Trevor Simmons, Samantha Mardick, Terra (Wen Jing) Vaughn Flower

Calendar

July 31: Board meeting, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Aug. 6: 3-day & 4-day summer session ends
Aug. 7: 2-day session ends
Aug. 15 & 19: Workday (see *Workdays* in this newsletter)
Aug. 28: Board meeting. Meets at 6 p.m. every August for a **training Board session** before our regular Board meeting. All Board members are required to attend; it’s a potluck. Bring something to eat and to share if you wish.
Aug. 28: ½ of the 2-day session attend for regular hours (8:30-11:30 a.m.)
Aug. 29: ½ of the 3-day **and** ½ of the p.m. session attend for regular hours (8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m., respectively)
Aug. 30: ½ of the 2-day **and** ½ of the p.m. session attend for regular hours
Sept. 9: School potluck picnic



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