



From the Chair

We are now well into the Fall semester and parents, new and returning, are feeling more and more comfortable. The article on co-oping later in this newsletter will provide more information to further increase your comfort level.

As you probably know, we *only have one Fundraiser a year* and the Our School annual Fundraiser is ramping up! Over the next few weeks you will hear about the committees, the kick-off party, the need for interesting and fancy items for the silent auction, and the selling of dinner and raffle tickets. It is a fantastic event and everyone cooperates to make it happen! And on Saturday, March 5th we can all enjoy the excellent food, drinks and company just like in a huge family party, and relax knowing that we have met the projected financial goal. It is critical that all the parents stay well-informed and know their responsibilities. So...follow your e-mail, follow your mailboxes, follow the deadlines, read the posters in the Parents' room and direct your inquiries to Kathy Hagen, Rachel Hanson, Jim and Yvonne. Also, please refer to page 6 in this newsletter for a listing of key upcoming dates.

The revenue we get from the Fundraiser becomes part of our budget. As stated in the Our School Policies, the fundraiser supports the program portion of the operating budget, the tuition assistance program, the acquisition of special equipment that cannot be covered by the regular budget, and supplements expenses incurred through the operating budget. This is important information to know as you sell raffle and event tickets to our venue at the Gatehouse in Lafayette.

The children, of course, directly benefit from the Our School Fundraiser. The material they play with is rich and varied, and carefully purchased or made to meet their different levels of development and individual or cooperative interest. The material also permits extension and connection in play, therefore, allowing children's cognitive abilities to expand in many directions rather than shrink from lack of stimulation.

Introducing Our School's Teacher Assistant

We are happy to welcome Jonah Bea-Taylor who has come to Our School to learn about and teach the children in the afternoon session, as well as, periodically visit the other sessions to observe the developmental learning process of the 2½ to 6 year old. He is highly educated and intelligent, and already well-read in child development. His goal is to understand the congruent connection of philosophy and practice in a truly child-oriented program. Here is Jonah introducing himself in his own words:



I'm very grateful for this opportunity to again be a student at Our School. I have very few, but some very vivid, memories of my preschool experience 19 years ago when Our School was at the Unitarian Church location. I remember the Guineas and I remember a mighty boat expedition down the creek behind the school – complete with catching crayfish. Most of all, I remember the presence of Jim and Yvonne in the classroom.

I was fortunate to stay in touch intermittently with Jim and Yvonne over the years, and I began to learn about Our School from the teachers' perspective. I became fascinated with how Jim and Yvonne work with children's early social skills – especially in preventing prejudice and bullying. I've had several volunteer experiences in different classroom settings, both in the United States and abroad, and I was always impressed with how many different classroom environments are possible. Some classrooms are overwhelmed by constant, disruptive conflicts, but others have a much more constructive atmosphere. Certainly a teacher has some control over this, but it seemed to me that a lot of these patterns of social interaction had already been established in children from an early age. I was excited, then, to come to Our School and see how children build their very first social relationships outside of the family.

Next fall, I will be continuing my studies to get a masters degree in organizational psychology, and I'm glad that I will have some grounding for that work in the very real world of early childhood education. I am very thankful to Jim, Yvonne, the 4-day session parents, and the children for opening the very special world of Our School to me. I have so much to learn; every day brings something unexpected and marvelous.

Announcements

Membership We'd like to extend a warm welcome to a new family in our 3-day session. Liza Patrick and Steven Wolhandler and their son, Jacob, have joined Our School. Liza and Steven also have a 18 month old daughter named Isabel.

We still have openings in the 3-day session. Bring friends, colleagues, relatives and acquaintances to our Open Houses or ask them to visit our web site www.ourschoolpreschool.org as an introduction.

We are also taking applications for Fall 2005. Again ask prospective families to come to our Open Houses.

Congratulations to Cynthia and Jay Matthews on the birth of their son, Joseph Sheldon. Benjamin (in the 3-day session) is very excited and talks a lot about his new brother. Still, he claims the baby wakes him at night (which is denied by his mother who realizes Ben's dilemma). Adjustments to a new addition in the family take time for young children.

Thank you for the banana and zucchini bread and soy beans in the shells. It's a nice addition to our usual snacks. Also, please don't forget that we can use all of your old corks and bottle caps. They are great supplies for the children's collages!

Parking We have designated a spot in the parking lot as the "co-oper's spot." It is the last parking space at the end of the driveway and closest to the backyard entry gate. That spot is a double spot. If you are the day's co-oper, please pull all the way to the front of that spot to leave room for cars to turn around. If you have questions, please contact your room parents.

Fundraiser Report

Helpful Hints for Successful Soliciting

- Relax. Be open and friendly. Don't be afraid to ask for a donation.
- Ask for the manager. They are the ones who can make the decision.
- Introduce yourself as a parent of a child attending Our School.
- Explain the purpose of the dinner/auction. The auction is our one and only fundraiser. The money raised is for the children's programs.
- Give the details of the event: Saturday, March 5th at the Gatehouse in Lafayette.
- Tell them we are expecting 200 guests. In addition to the benefit of the tax deduction, their name will be promoted to all attendees.

Check your Fundraiser Packet for more helpful hints and information.

On Co-oping
By Yvonne Mayer



Co-oping at Our School is a process-oriented experience. You can reinforce what you already know about yourself in interactions with children, and you can unlearn and learn anew. It can be easy or difficult and always challenging.

We intently listen to parents' perspective of their co-oping day experience. The process of learning strikes them as a complex, intricate, significant and highly-focused spiral of evolution, and this is absolutely correct. They also realize that both children and they are entering into learning paths that open their minds into wider dimensions.

For parents new to the school, it can be an uncomfortable, uneasy or puzzling experience. They witness the growing independence and competence of children, and sometimes are at a loss about their own roles in this environment. It is difficult, because there is no set answer. In fact, this is the challenge – it all depends. However, the teachers can guide you in this respect. Below are some commonly asked questions and their answers, but always feel free to ask the teachers about any interaction at school.

Should I tell a child what activity to undertake or invite a child to join an activity in progress?

It depends on the personality already developing in the child, how the child came to school that day, what the child's previous experience may have been, on his maturity, etc. Just **observe** and you will get a wealth of information. Otherwise, your intervention may be perceived as pressure or that you believe the child lacks the competence to initiate

an activity. In the morning sessions, children understand that each day is a fresh experience. (This will continue until the days can be combined and categorized in their brain on a certain continuum and at their own tempo of understanding.) So at the beginning of the day, some may watch, move about or remain thinking of Mom or Dad's departure. It usually takes close to fifteen minutes until a child makes a spoken or unspoken **autonomous** decision.

Should I make whatever a child requests from me (i.e. play dough, building, painting, cooking, etc.)?

Ninety nine percent of the time, the answer is **no**. It undermines the imagination and sense of competence of the child, and her ability to take a risk. Sometimes technical help may be necessary, such as how to use a brush, fingers or hands, or balance a structure, or start a pattern, etc. But **observe** first! Then you'll be in a position to assess whether to

help or not. Remember, it is this child's play, including her failures, corrections and understandings. For instance, when play is in the house area and "cooking" is taking place, you may be a "guest" but the cooks, mother, babies, etc. are peers. The child initiator of the activity usually can invite others, but eventually each child has her own agenda, mostly playing in a parallel fashion as appropriate. When you follow the focus of the child, this is particularly apparent in the 2-day session. This is also very relevant for the 3-day morning session. However, they chatter a lot and often assign roles to others. At this stage in their development, they begin to need to ask others to participate to lessen their still natural egocentricity and to realize the complementary roles of others.

In the afternoon session with the older children, the same somewhat applies. However, the role of the adult is to not only to supply material, but to guide children toward information resources, such as other children or books, and determine when autonomy or cooperation is warranted. To do this you must listen to their ongoing focus and process without irrelevant distraction. **Keen observations are paramount, of course.** These children understand that they can rely on their peers for stimulation and constructive suggestions. The role of the teachers is to be the resource for appropriate information and, as the days or weeks go by, to envisage possible extensions and connections for more continuity and creativity while allowing time for reflection to emerge.

What do I say or do when a child declares "I'm done or finished"?

Think **process, not project.** Just say, "You're stopping." This is an accurate observation and leaves room for the possibility to go back to the activity and, therefore, allows for the possibility of continuance. If you're not sure what to say next, ask the teachers. They'll give you a clue to help assess further possibilities. For example, is there an obstacle in the creative process, or has the child's focus been distracted? Does the child need to move on due to satiation, fatigue or sense of satisfaction, or does the child need to urinate, wash hands, or blow his nose? In this last instance, you may say, "Your collage, building, etc. will wait for you to come back."

When you guide children through an unhurried self-engagement, they then have time to go through a process of mostly silent observations and can realize that the creative "product" wholly depends on the skills, concentration and imagination of the ongoing process. When this is achieved, much in their later years, "projects" which require planning and consistent execution will also be of quality.

I understand that the particular language used by the adult in an interaction with a child can make a difference in setting limits and getting cooperation without confusing the child. Give some examples.

A young child responds best with clear, concrete and brief statements and questions. Their ability to follow language abstraction such as adult metaphors, "polite" language formulas and rhetorical questions is not yet achieved. This means that communication must be mostly literal. For instance, "Be ready in 2 minutes," will be interpreted in an experiential, psychological fashion. "You're pulling my leg" is not interpreted by a child as a joke or a story, but as a literal action. "Please" is interpreted as "I have to say that to be gratified," rather than a respectful demand. To a young child, "Can you pick up your

toys?” means a choice of yes or no. What the adult means is a direct request – “pick up your toys” – with a friendly tone, of course!

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.