

## *From the Chair:*

by Yvonne & Jim

A great welcome to all! The school year is on its way: separation is no issue for those new children who attended the summer sessions: their transitions into September have been smooth; for those who didn't, the confidence of their parents, the latter trust in the teachers to know how to help, and the good models of the returning children, all these factors contributed to ease these new children's anxiety or anger; therefore, this year, temper tantrums and crying spells have been at a minimum. We are all up to a good start.

Young children change very rapidly in all areas of development. Parents think they have got it (and probably did) but then it seems that they have grown overnight because all these changes were internally taking place. They seem to be toddlers at times and miniature adults at others. In fact they are neither. Each one is a unique preschooler with a unique perception and understanding of the world. They can keep a lot of information in their brains that they don't understand because no adequate connections have been yet made in them to make cognitive sense at the adult level, and, sometimes, to the adult's amazement can come with some insights of their own, especially if they are not pressured. The teachers have to be on their toes all the time, know how to make observations and accurate assessments that are never static, so they can effectively and appropriately guide children in their learning. So, do come to the teachers for understanding and support whenever necessary.

## *Field Trip*

October 15 for the 3-Day Session, and October 16 for the 2-Day & 4-Day Sessions are the dates for our annual field trip to the Pumpkin Patch at Cottonwood Farm.

We will need all children to arrive ON TIME at 8:30am for the morning - and 1:00pm for the afternoon sessions, to allow for a relaxed time for the children at the pumpkin patch, so please bring your child prepared: **Hats, Jackets & Sneakers on (no sandals or Crocs), and Sunscreen applied before arriving at School.**

## *Reflections*

By Yvonne & Jim

### *On Environment*

For some, "education" means pre-academic or even academic training in the 3-R's to prepare these young, very young children for a head start in the coming elementary years, especially reading. On the other hand, we have spoken and written extensively about the fact that this is an exceedingly narrow perspective on education. Like any worthwhile learning through life, early education is of course a valid enterprise. It's

also a much more complex process than it superficially appears; this is why addressing it never ends. Education for those young children means opening vistas of appropriate and worthwhile learning in interconnected experiences. The goal is not for those emerging personalities to be the instruments for parents, teachers and society needs, though to a small extent it may be culturally necessary for adaptation, but for all children to learn and be educated through human and other relationships, so that the context of play can provide the best experiences as children's brains mature: a process of inquiring, reflecting, creating, exploring, testing, ready to and later theorizing and analyzing - so in other words educating so that eventually a person can think well and act wisely on their own, and preserve that process through their academic lives.

Here is a diverse series of authors' quotes, not in any special logical order. Some are close to 30 years old, some closer to our time with and in different expressions; but all are in styles from thoughtful writers who are well versed in the field of education. You will discover the thread that connects them all: they have not compromised their professional integrity through parental or poorly informed public pressures: and have not let themselves be persuaded or fearfully pressured by fads or an uninformed public, including legislators:



## ***Quotations:***

### ***Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner, The School Book***

*page 83*

*Literacy is to reading what mathematics is to counting. Learning to name numbers does not ensure that one will understand their operations; nor does it imply that one can use those operations effectively. Learning to correlate spoken words with the written symbols that represent them on a page does not ensure that one will understand the operations of the spoken or written language. Both mathematics and language are systems of propositions about the world and the relationships within it...By this definition, one may be able to read and still be hopelessly illiterate.*

### ***David Hawkins, The Roots of Literacy***

*p. 683*

*Children's lives are so different in so many important aspects –obvious or subtle- that at any age their progress along any of the well-known developmental tracks is quite essentially uneven. A child who fitted close to all the statistical norms for his or her age would be a rare one, abnormal indeed. A child described as “average” is probably just one whose special talents and difficulties have been overlooked...*

*Because we too seldom provide for this wide and legitimate diversity, we tend instead to provide children a single fare and rank them on a single scale that the single scale requires. But then often the range is so wide that we are driven to create special categories for children, calling them educationally disadvantaged at one end of the scale and gifted at the other, and then to seek special help for both groups...*

*p.51*

*Thus the educative value of young children's aptitudes for play has gained some recognition, as least in a good though small minority tradition. There water and sand, clay and blocks dolls and doll houses do not need to be argued for. But one has the uncomfortable impression that such things are often valued lopsidedly,*

(continued from page 2) for only part of their true worth. Play with such material is seen as therapeutic and as contributing to children's social maturation among their peers. But the intellectual value of such play, as an exploration of intrinsically worthy subject matter, appears to me to have been typically overlooked. One unfortunate result, I believe, is that in the majority of our schools (in this case nursery school and kindergarten) such materials have been cast out as unrelated to "pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-arithmetic."



## **David Elkind, The Hurried Child**

p.192

Thus children perceive hurrying differently than we do. If we want to reduce some of the stress of the inevitable hurrying that all children in our society experience, it is important to appreciate the particular way in which they perceive the hurrying. To do this we have to decenter from our own adult perspective.

p.193

Unfortunately, both the value and the meaning of play are poorly understood in our hurried society. Indeed, what happened to adults in our society has now happened to children—play has been transformed into work. What was once recreational—sports, summer camp, musical training—is now professionalized and

competitive.

## **Lesley Webb, Nursery & Practices in Nursery Education...**

p. 81, 82

[{on differentiating socialization form and education}]

It is apparent that, unlike being educated, being socialized has to depend on where you are born. An educated man can be a universal phenomenon and his place of birth should be irrelevant...; for being critically aware, capable of rational self-direction, involved with worthwhile activities at some higher or simple level, and so on, are universally applicable criteria....

...There are totally immoral societies, and immoralities within most societies. The difficulty is to form objective criteria of 'what is moral'; that is criteria which apply a whole spectrum of human societies and which are valid through time and material change.

## **Frank Smith, Understanding Reading**

p.24

Meaning is not contained within the sounds of speech or the printed marks of writings, conveniently to be discovered or decoded, but rather must be provided by the listener or the reader. As a consequence, an understanding requires a more complex theory of comprehension than one that simplistically assumes that meaning will take care of itself provided a reader can identify individual words correctly.

## **Frank Smith, Insult to Intelligence**

p. 33

Meaning comes first—the process of understanding written language starts with understanding entire stories or statements and then goes on to understanding sentences, words, and finally letters, the reverse of the way most children are expected to learn to "read" in school.

Competent readers did not learn the alphabet and the sounds of letters so that they would be able to read; they acquire the "basic skills" as a consequence of

*(continued from page 3) reading (and being helped to read). No child ever learned to put together the “sounds” of the word “McDonald’s” in order to be able recognize it. But recognizing the words enable children to make sense of instruction concerning the sounds of those letters. Arithmetic drill do not help anyone to understand addition and subtraction, but understanding transactions involving numbers results in learning to add and to subtract.*

*p. 75*

*In language learning, in mathematics and in science generally, teaching the “skills” or the “basics” first and hoping that understanding will come later may be the easiest kind of instruction for teachers who do not really comprehend what they are doing in any case. Children learn to read and to write when they are engaged in activities that naturally involve reading and writing, as a whole, not in bits. Children learn math and science when engaged in enterprises that involve math and science – when they are shopping, building, creating, and exploring, and they can see a purpose and a value in what they do.*

### **Jane Healey, Endangered Minds**

*p.69*

*The brain grows best when it is challenged, so high standard of learning is important. Nevertheless, curriculum needs to be considered as of of brain-appropriate challenge. Reorganizing synapses is much more difficult than having the patience to help them get arranged properly the first time around.*

*p.72*

*As well-intentioned parents and teachers, we all sometimes end up taking charge of learning and trying to “stuff” in rather than arranging things so that the youngster’s curiosity impels the process.*

*p.329*

*The last thing today’s children need is more bits of learning without the underlying experiential frameworks to hang them to. In tomorrow’s world of instant information access activities like memorizing*

*the names and characteristics of dinosaurs could be as anachronistic as the creatures in question. Moreover children who have concentrated on getting the right answer rather than on building the independent reasoning to ask the right question, or who by replacing playtime with too much computer time have failed to develop “big picture” frameworks from self-initiated experience, may become dinosaurs themselves.*

### **John Dewey, Experience and Education**

*p. 75*

*It thus become the office of the educator to select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potentiality of presenting new problems which by stimulating new ways of observations and judgment will expand the area for further experience. He must constantly regard what is already won not as a fixed position but as an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands upon existing powers of observation and of intelligent use of memory. Connectedness in growth must be his constant watchword.*

*p.25*

*The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience.*

These authors have written other books on the same or related topics. We think the above samples may generate discussions among members or at session meetings and seminars.

## Reminder:

You need to be available on your back up day. If not possible, switch with someone else in your session. Now that you're getting to know the other parents in your session, you may be able to exchange baby sitting for your coop day. You may be called on your back day to coop. Be prepared! Arrange with another family –ahead of time- to take care of your child(dren) if this emergency happens and be ready to reciprocate.

## Membership:

The membership Committee is actively recruiting but needs cooperation for all of you to give them leads and also attend at times (with your children) Our School Open Houses, and whenever possible some interested families. You will be contacted and we are confident you will help.

*Thanks for the lovely rocking chair; it's warmly inviting and has already been much used by the children.*

*Thanks for the tomato and pepper plants and not forgetting to water them, and the colorful pansies in the "children flower bed".*

*(By the way have you noticed one or two regular humming birds visit there?)*

### Note for Calendar Events

All meetings start at 7:00 pm and are at Our School unless otherwise noted.

Meetings are for parents only unless labeled as "All School" or "Families Welcome".

Required meetings noted - seminars and session meetings are recommended.

Board meetings are open to all members.

\*Please bring interested families to open houses, and current families interested in attending an Open House please R.S.V.P.

## *Fall Semester Calendar of Events:*

### **OCTOBER**

- 15 Pumpkin Patch Field Trip 3-Day
- 16 Pumpkin Patch Field Trip 2-Day & 4-Day  
Seminar ~ Topic TBD
- 18 Open House (Families Welcome!) 10a.m.-12p.m.
- 21 Semi-Annual Meeting \*REQUIRED\*
- 28 Board Meeting

### **NOVEMBER**

- 5 2-Day Session Meeting
- 8 Open House (Families Welcome!) 10a.m-12p.m.
- 11 Seminar ~ Topic TBD
- 15 Open House (Families Welcome!) 10a.m.-12p.m.
- 16 Fundraiser Kick-Off Potluck Party \*\*REQUIRED\*\*
- 19 3-Day Session Meeting w/Kindergarten Discussion 7-9p.m.
- 26-28 NO SCHOOL ~ Thanksgiving Break

### **DECEMBER**

- 2 Board Meeting (for November)
- 6 Open House (Families Welcome!) 10a.m.-12p.m
- 11 4-Day Session Meeting w/Kindergarten Discussion 7-9p.m.
- 13 Open House (Families Welcome!) 10a.m.-12p.m.
- 16 Board Meeting 7:00p.m. (if needed)
- 22-January 4 NO SCHOOL ~ Winter Break