

Copper Beech Montessori



Newsletter for January, February, and March 2012

Important Dates

Friday, January 27 3 PM
closing for faculty meeting

**Monday, February 20
through Friday, February
24,** February recess

**Wednesday, March 14
through Sunday, March 18,**
Ann in San Francisco for
AMS conference

Friday, March 16 3 PM
closing for faculty meeting
and CPR training

Willow Birthdays

February 22 Elsa

Arce Birthdays

January 28 Kate
February 20 Jack Ozro
March 7 Paloma
March 18 Stengarve

Aspen Birthdays

January 19 Alisa
March 21 Saskia

Cypress Birthdays

January 26 Luke
February 19 Amira
March 19 Alexander
March 21 Cameron

Message from Ann

I know this newsletter is almost a month late. The truth is that I am not sure what the focus of it should be. Usually I pass along interesting articles and announcements of school events using email. The "Important Dates" are listed at our website and you each were given a copy of the list for the year. Each classroom posts the children's birthdays. So there are times when I do not have anything new or unique to mention.

I know I need to make changes and get unstuck. What would you like the newsletter to contain? Are you content with just the date reminders and my various musings? Do you want more parent education? More anecdotes? I would like to respond to suggestions rather than continuing on my own here. So, I guess I will find out if anyone even reads this newsletter (and, if not, I don't really have to worry about being more relevant) by the number of responses I receive. One change I am making on my own is to

switch to a quarterly, rather than bi-monthly, schedule.

Gas Odor Update

The fan works! Although the odor seems to have diminished greatly, if we even have a whiff, the fan clears the air.

Mommies-to-Be

Some of you may be aware that both the lead teachers in Cypress and in Aspen are pregnant and due in May. In Aspen, Jessica will take over as lead teacher and we are hiring a second assistant. That configuration will (I hope) be permanent and continue next year. In Cypress, Amelia will be the opening teacher and we will engage a substitute from Arbor Associates for at least May and June. We will see if she will be needed for the summer. In September Clarissa will be back.

Next Year Changes

Starting next September we will have a change in the pick-up time for children on the days we have a faculty meeting. We will have a 1

PM pick-up rather than 3 PM. I realize this will be inconvenient for some parents but, as the teachers and I strive for better service to the children, we have to do it. We need more time to really hammer out issues within and between the classes. We need time for a higher quality of communication among ourselves and coordination of our resources. And, I want to have regular in-house trainings and workshops that I can count on as being informative, enlightening, of high quality, and relevant. I want to insure that all the teachers attend. I want every teacher here to experience the importance of what we do and develop a higher sense of professionalism. The extra two hours will give me the opportunity to do all these things.

We will have another change next year which will not at all be an inconvenience for parents. The first parent/teacher conference of the school year (late October or early November) is really just about discussing how the child is settling in and it gives the teachers the opportunity to learn about the parents' concerns. The first real "progress report" will be sent to parents in January and, if they want to discuss it, they can schedule individual meeting with the lead teacher. The second parent/teacher conference in May will have an end-of-the-year report.

Art Show

The Second Annual Art Show will be held in March this year. We have two possible venues: The Aviary on South Street and my house on Walnut Avenue (across from White Stadium in Franklin Park). We will frame

the children's masterpieces and again offer them for sale. Either venue will be much larger than the one last year and in March it will not be so hot. I will let you know when the exact dates and location are decided.

AMS Conference

I will be away in San Francisco for the AMS annual conference in mid-July where I will be taking 3 workshops with my hero, Joann Deak. I have seen her at many AMS conferences and at the NAEYC conference last October. She is an expert in brain research and a fantastic, exciting, and funny lecturer. She also loves Montessori and makes a point of expressing that at the Montessori conferences. She is my hero and I respect her opinion so her endorsement is such a validation of what we do. Thought I would pass that along.

Having spent the past ten years reviewing many of the same studies the authors review for my own book, "Mind in the Making", I wholeheartedly agree with their conclusion the "best gift" you can give your children is self-control. They note that self-control and other executive functions of the brain (like working memory, flexible thinking, and resisting the temptation to go on automatic) "contribute to the development of [children's] most important basic brain function: the ability to control their own behavior in order to reach a goal." Noting that self-control underlies so many capacities, from socialization to schoolwork, they state that "preschool children's ability to resist temptation is a much better predictor of eventual academic success than their IQ scores."

It was a very similar realization from my own review of the research that led me to postulate seven life skills to help children succeed emotionally, socially, and intellectually. All of these life skills are based on executive functions of the brain. Importantly, Aamodt and Wang bust another myth when they report that we promote self-control not by making children sit still, but by encouraging them to play. They write "It probably doesn't matter exactly what excites your children; as long as they are intensely engaged by an activity and concentrate on it, they will be improving their ability to self-regulate and thus their prospects for the future"

- Ellen Galinsky in **Welcome to Your Child's Brain** by Sandra Aamodt and Sam Wang

Art Show



Brain Research

