

News From the Hill

A Newsletter for St. Peter's Preschool

Stacy Warkentine, Director

January 2017

Dear Parents,

As the Holidays wind down and we begin to settle into our routine once again, we tend to turn to the year ahead. For the Pre-K families, January typically is when everyone's thoughts turn to kindergarten and how best we can prepare our children for this transition. I can assure you all that Mrs. Furin is thinking kindergarten and talking to the children about it over the course of the next few months. She discusses with them what it will be like, how much fun it will be, and what their teachers' expectations will be. To prepare at home, you can talk about these things as well and we generally like to suggest to our parents that you might want to begin the New Year with assigning a chore or two to your child to get them ready for having these expectations. Making them responsible for a specific task will help prepare them for Kindergarten and some of the independence that goes along with it.

I recently had an interesting discussion with my daughter Ella, the teenager, (if she only knew how often I used our conversations in my newsletters...) about change and adapting. It all started with our Groundhog Day conversation about forgetting her math book. This was at least the fifth time she had "forgotten it" (it's a heavy book and she walks to and from school) and her solution every time was to text her friends in her class and have them take a picture of the page so she could then complete the assignment. It worked ok the first few times but, lately she was getting a text response with the information after 9pm. She would sit idle during the free time she had to do homework and then must cram like mad during the time that she was supposed to be preparing for bed. It created a whole domino effect with her waking up later and exhausted the next day thus setting a bad tone for the rest of the day. When we first sat down to discuss this I offered a few different suggestions of how to prevent this from happening, none of which relied on her friends texting her the material. She had an excuse as to why every suggestion I had didn't work and seemed determined to keep doing things the broken way. That's when we talked about change and adapting. Children love routines and the comfort they bring and certainly at a younger age, these routines are what help us and them keep our sanity. But in life we are constantly tweaking our routines to make them better, and we adapt and often flourish.

Important Dates Ahead	
Dec. 14	3-Day Christmas party!
Dec. 15	2-Day & Pre-K Christmas parties!
Dec. 16, 9:30am	2-day, 3-day & Pre-K children report to the Church for the Christmas program
Dec. 16, 9:45am	Christmas program & Reception!
Dec. 19-Jan. 2	Christmas break – NO SCHOOL
Dec. 24, 4pm	Family Christmas Eve Mass in the Barn – see below
Jan. 3	Early registration for 2017-18 begins
Jan. 16	MLK, Jr., Day – NO SCHOOL
Jan. 18	Pre-K & 3-day Pajama Day!
Jan. 18	Open registration begins
Jan. 28	Pre-K & 3-day conferences NO SCHOOL
Jan. 29	NO SCHOOL

Kindergarten will take a bit of adapting, some change to routines, but in the end, will foster independence and positive growth. Starting a new school may make your children scared, anxious, or nervous but with us supporting them and helping them acclimate (despite our own stresses) we can give them the right tools to handle anything! Preparing them for the transition and keeping tabs on them throughout the process will make it all go smoother. We can help our children set the tone for success!

Kindly,

Stacy Warkentine, Director

A Huge Thank You!

Thank you so much for all of your contributions to the Phoenixville Clinic, the Chester County Youth Center, and PACS for our Christmas outreach projects. I cannot say enough how blessed we are at St. Peter's with such loving generous families! I am overwhelmed by the amount of donations we collected to help those in need! What a wonderful Christmas gift!

What to Expect In the 2nd Semester

All right, everybody's settled in (mostly), and we're heading into the longer second semester! Keep in mind that each program at St. Peter's is intended to prepare children for the next step: 2-day-ers are getting ready for the 3-day class, 3-day-ers for Pre-K, and Pre-K-ers for kindergarten. The challenges get a little more challenging in the second semester, and what we ask of our children, we ask in a little more uncompromising fashion. Don't worry – we still meet children where they are! But we just begin to encourage them to take a step farther if they're not already doing so on their own. And in this, as in everything, our approach is positive, congratulatory, and heavily weighted toward a child's success: the child who often has to be convinced to finish a project is enthusiastically complimented on doing all the steps even if the last step is obviously not her best work; the child who is learning to cut along a line gets lots of kudos for the great cutting along the straight part of the line even if the curvy part doesn't follow quite as well.

Parents, you're preparing too – especially Pre-K parents who haven't already experienced the pomp and circumstance of elementary school. Think about your morning routine and how elementary school will change it, and then consider making some of those changes now, just to get everyone used to the new regimen.



Pajama Days

One of our favorite days of the year! On Jan. 18th, 3-day-ers and Pre-K-ers can wear their PJs and, if they wish, robes to school. (I get to wear my PJs both days! A perk of the job!). Children may bring a toy they bring to bed (teddy bear, doll, etc.) if they wish. The kids really love to dress in their PJ's and share their favorite bedtime toy!

Registration Opens in January

Unbelievably, registration for the 2017-18 school year opens to current St. Peter's families on January 3! Current families will have priority access to registration until Monday, January 18th, when registration will open to the whole wide world. As you know, we structure our classes so that every known current St. Peter's child (including eligible younger siblings) will have a spot available, but it definitely makes our lives easier (and my administrative life *much* easier) if current families use that time to register so that I can accurately tell outside families whether we have space in our programs.

Tuition information and registration materials for the 2017-18 year will be available in January, but rest assured that, as always, I'll be working with next year's budget to ensure that the inevitable rise in tuition will be as small as possible. The registration fee will remain at \$100 per *family* and will apply to 2017-18 tuition. Please remember that tuition assistance is available on the basis of need, so don't hesitate to inquire!

Because we should have space for new families in all programs next year, please consider telling your friends about us! I am always happy to provide more information on one of my Preschool tours.

Snow Day Preparation

Hopefully, we will not have too many, but we wanted everyone to be prepared should we have a snow day. We follow Great Valley School District's snow closure schedule. If GVSD is closed *or delayed*, we do not have school that day.

We will post our closure status on Facebook and email the Preschool Group that we are closed. So if the weather looks iffy, please remember to check your email or our Facebook page.

If for some reason we must have a snow day when GVSD is in session (for instance, if we have a power outage or a giant tree blocks our driveway and can't be moved before school begins), we will call all families directly.

Please always assess driving conditions at your house and use your best judgement! Remember, this is only preschool; there's no need to risk life and limb to get here, even if conditions here at school are fine.

Finally, about missed days. This year we built extra days into the calendar to cover any missed days for snow or emergencies. We will not be making any missed days up this year.

Conferences Jan. 27th

Mrs. Furin and Mrs. Brown will be spending time in January doing some specific assessment activities with the children in their classes, to prepare for conferences on Jan. 27th. Of course, their assessments will incorporate everything they've been working on and observing about your children all year up to this point as well. Please try to arrange your schedule to accommodate a conference lasting about 20 minutes on the day specified!

2-day parents will have their time in May to sit down with the teachers and review their children's progress.

I will be available throughout scheduled conference times on Jan. 27th to play with children, (both St. Peter's children and their siblings) during your conference, so that you can speak freely with your child's teacher.



Dressing for the weather

If the weather at the beginning of December is any indication, we will likely get some more snow this year than we did last year! If school is in session, however, and it is simply cold, but there is no snow blocking our way, that will mean that we'll be able to go outside on the playground more often than not. Please be sure that your child brings a **warm coat, gloves or mittens (labeled if possible!), a hat (also labeled) if the coat doesn't have a hood, and shoes or boots that can withstand cold and not-very-dry conditions**. To the greatest extent possible, it's best if children don't have to change shoes; it's already quite a production to maneuver an entire bunch of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds into their winter outerwear!

We will play indoors in the Parish Hall, getting out our various large-motor-activity toys, if we have to be indoors for more than a couple of days running.

If we do end up with long-lasting snow on the playground, we'll try to set up a snow-play day, notifying all families that we'll be going out into the snow to play on such-and-such a date. On that day, children should definitely have all their snow stuff, including either snow pants/snowsuit or a change of pants. We'll have a certain amount of extra clothing in the event that a child is not quite prepared, but we won't have enough for everyone – so please try to send your child as prepared as possible!

We do have strict rules about children's outerwear, and all children are required to adhere to them: If teachers say that coats will be zipped or buttoned, *all* coats will be zipped or buttoned. If hats and mittens are determined to be necessary, *all* children will wear them – protests will be firmly squelched. These rules exist for three reasons: to reinforce the idea that our few and reasonable school rules must be followed, to ensure that no child appears to be receiving "special treatment," and first and foremost, for your children's health and well-being. Please prime your children for these rules by reminding them at home that sometimes home rules and school rules are different, just as the rules at a friend's house may differ from home rules, but that school rules are to be followed just as home rules are. Thank you!