

October 2011



News from Learning Circle Preschool

Dates to Remember

- Wed Oct 12 Board Meetings:
 - 7 pm Financial
 - 7:30 Full Board
 - 8 Presentation
- Wed Oct 19 Curriculum Night and Pot Luck 6:30 – 8:30 PM
- Tuesday Nov. 1 Fall Conferences Begin
- Wed Nov 2 9 AM Open House for Prospective Families
- **Friday Nov 11 NO SCHOOL**
- Saturday Nov 19 RICK GOLDIN 11 am
- **Nov 23-25 NO SCHOOL**
- Fri Dec. 2 8:30 Early-Bird Parenting Drop-in

Presentation from the Classrooms October 12, 8 pm

In response to a suggestion from some of our current families, our discussion will focus on *Setting Routines At Home and At School*.

Some of the issues we'll discuss include:

- Why are routines and consistency so important to preschoolers?
- How to plan for calm transitions and help children move through their day with growing independence

We'll also reserve time to problem-solve around issues we face at home and/or at school.

Since Dr. Weinstock-Savoy's presentation definitely relates to this theme, we can follow up on anything you'd like to continue to talk about as well.

We hope you will join us for this conversation. You are welcome to come at 8 for this part of the Board meeting, or to come earlier. The full board meeting starts at 7:30; the financial committee meets at 7.

Curriculum Night October 19th 6:30-8:30

Please reserve the evening of **WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 19 (6:30-8:30)** for the entire Learning Circle community of adults to get together to socialize and to learn more about the program. At curriculum night, there will be food (pot luck) and informal conversation with other parents and with teachers. We'll also break up into small groups (by classroom) so that you can get to know your own child's teachers, talk about the program for the year, see displays, have your questions answered, and meet the parents of your child's classmates. Representatives of the school's Board of Directors will also be on hand to describe some details about what the Board will be doing this year, and how parents can participate in the program.

We will post a sign up for the pot luck in the welcome room. We hope you will all be able to join us!

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Open House for Prospective Families Planned for November 3 at 9 am

We are planning an Open House for prospective families on Wednesday morning, November 2, 9-10:30 AM. We are beginning our outreach for families interested in spaces during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Because of some last minute family moves, we also have a small number of spaces in the program this year, and can potentially enroll children ready to start this fall or in January, 2012.

We hope that that you will help spread the word about our program, and encourage neighbors and friends to come by on November 3rd and/or to arrange a meeting time to talk about the program.

There are flyers on the trapezoid table in the welcome room with details to share about the Open House. If you are willing to post one or two while you are doing errands around town, that would be great. And if you know someone who might be interested in the program, feel free to give him or her a flyer.

Social Themes across the Whole School Curriculum

As we begin our school year together, it is important to all of us that we establish a sense of security, support, and safety for every child. Working through transitions and feelings about separation from home are part of this effort, as is assuring that our classroom rules and expectations are clear to the children. We need children to know the boundaries around behavior in school, and we need to assure that children can trust that they are physically safe in school. We also work very hard to assure that our climate offers children a sense of emotional security, so that a sense of trust can serve as a foundation for our experiences together.

This year, we are focusing directly on issues of emotional safety in our environment by beginning a series of small group experiences in every class that will encourage children to talk about their feelings, fine tune pro-social behaviors develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills, and notice kindness in our interpersonal relationships at school. We have begun our efforts to build a sense of community through music, puppetry, feelings discussions, and the writing and discussing of classroom rules. The process looks a bit different in each classroom and across development, but in each classroom curriculum is well under way to support each child's sense of connection to the whole school community.

In addition, we will be using two formal curriculums in support of social competency. One is called Woven Word, which uses literacy experiences and books to focus on social issues. Another is called Second Step, which is based in picture discussion. More details about these will follow as we move forward this year.

We hope you'll look for how this aspect of our curriculum develops over the whole school year!

Here are some of the ways that the social skills curriculum will be implemented in our various classrooms in the next few weeks:

- ☞ Feelings faces will be mounted on the wall on a Velcro strip in the classrooms. Have a feeling you'd like to express and/or talk about? Just choose the closest representation on this chart to begin a process
- ☞ In all classrooms, self portraits are encouraged, as children examine their features in mirrors, draw, and describe.
- ☞ In all classrooms, structures are in place to assure that the routine includes singing children's names, and using name cards (encouraging the recognition of one's own and those of others in the class)
- ☞ When strong feelings are expressed, follow up conversations include all children, so that there is both social support from peers and an opportunity to share perspectives (I remember when I was sad...)
- ☞ Many classroom songs include singing the names of classmates, and include space for simple improvisations from each child
- ☞ A kindness bell system has been implemented in the nuthatch and goldfinch room, where children who notice kind behavior on the part of another child can ask that the bell be rung in recognition of the kindness. In the chickadee room, teachers recognize and commend the kind words and actions viewed daily in the classroom, and encourage children to do the same.
- ☞ Puppets representing various feelings will be made soon, to encourage children to develop a feelings vocabulary and to encourage conversation about times children feel happy, sad, angry, disappointed, sleepy, surprised, shy, etc.

Here are a few titles of children's books that feature themes relating to our feelings curriculum:

Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day; Judith Viorst
C is for Curious; Woodleigh Hubbard
Chrysanthemum; Kevin Henkes
Darcy and Gran Don't Like Babies; Jane Cutler
Feelings; Joanne Murphy
The First Day of School; Patricia Relf
The Goodbye Book; Judith Viorst
I Like Me; Nancy Carlson
Julius the Baby of the World; Kevin Henkes
Making Friends; Fred Rogers
Shy Charles; Rosemary Wells
The Story of Ferdinand; Munro Leaf
There's a Nightmare in my Closet; Mercer Mayer
Today I Feel Silly; Jamie Lee Curtis
Too Close Friends; Shen Roddie
Wemberly Worried; Kevin Henkes
Where the Wild Things Are; Maurice Sendak

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Upcoming Fall Conferences

We are planning to start fall conferences in late November and early December.

Conferences are times to sit with a teacher for about 30 minutes to talk about your child's initial adjustment to school. Teachers will be happy to discuss any questions you may have about the school year so far and to talk to you about the year's goals and curriculum as they relate to your child. Conferences are also times for teachers to share the beginnings of the portfolio systems that are in place to record your child's growth and development in school this year.

Since there are so many parents to meet, and time is so limited, we ask that you choose your conference time carefully. Please be sure you'll be able to arrive on time and come without children, since we cannot have an extensive conversation with little ones there. And if you must cancel, please be sure to call us well in advance.

You may want to talk with another parent about watching your children for you while you meet teachers if you are willing to reciprocate. We can try to help you coordinate a schedule and a space for the children to play if you decide to do this.

A Note on Parent/Teacher Communication and NAEYC

Good communication and a strong partnership with families are central to our mission at Learning Circle Preschool, and it is an important area to consider in relation to NAEYC accreditation as well. We have many systems in place to accomplish this:

- Daily notes on our doors about the day's activities
- Journaling through teachingstrategies.com or other email communication
- Talking in person with someone from each child's family at arrival and departure times at least once per week, if not more
- Making sure we are available for telephone calls or other communication that you feel we need
- Weekly notes about past and upcoming curriculum themes for each class
- Newsletters monthly with information about points of interest across the whole school
- Documentation of children's work and play via displays in the classrooms, welcome room, and hallways

Are we meeting our goals? Please let us know if we are not reaching your family, so that we can fine tune our systems and assure you are receiving all the information about your child's day at school that you need!

Another note about NAEYC: This August we received word that our Annual Report to NAEYC has been accepted and approved. This document highlights annual program improvements that help assure our systems continue to represent best practice in early education and care. We are pleased that our efforts have been recognized again this year.