

September 2011



News from Learning Circle Preschool

Dates to Remember

- Thursday 9/22 **Parent Orientation 9 am**
- Friday Sept 30 **NO SCHOOL (Rosh Hasana)**
- Wed. Oct 5 **Presentation by Dr. Deborah Weinstock-Savoy 7:30 pm**
- Monday Oct 10 **NO SCHOOL**
- Wed Oct 12 **Financial Committee Meeting at 7 PM Board Meeting at 7:30 PM From 8 PM on – open discussion re helping children adjust to routines at home and at school and follow up to Dr. Weinstock-Savoy's talk (see flyer for details)**
- Wed Oct 19 **Curriculum Night and Pot Luck 6:30 -8:30 PM (see flyer for details)**
- Wednesday Nov 2 **Open House for Prospective Families (tell your friends!)**
- Wed November 9 **Financial Committee Meeting at 7 PM Board Meeting at 7:30 PM From 8 PM on – open discussion**
- Friday November 11 **NO SCHOOL**
- **Children's Concert Saturday November 19th 11 AM: Rick Goldin**

Getting started in the Classrooms

Welcome to a new school year!

At the beginning of each school year, our main focus is on helping children feel comfortable in their new classroom, and in getting to know each child as an individual. There are new classroom routines each year that all of us need time to adjust to. Here are some of the ways we begin this adjustment process:

1. We talk with the children about the specifics of what happens in a school day: what they can expect. For example, we may remind the children that "after meeting it's time to play, then we'll have snack, clean up, and look at books..."

2. We encourage children to make independent choices when that's appropriate. If you take a look around the classroom, you'll notice the diverse materials available to the children from which they can choose.
3. We'll help the children develop a sense of how long the school day will last. For example, we remind them that after we play outside it will be time to go home.
4. We also help children make connections with classmates as they become ready to do so, so that we can all get to know each other and start to feel a sense of community around the classroom.

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'll post a sign up for the pot luck in our entryway soon. We hope you will all be able to join us!

Learning Circle is a Peanut and Hard Nut Free Zone

Please remember that Learning Circle Preschool is a **peanut free and nut free** environment. Please do not send any foods to school that contain any nut products. Please do not bring foods to school that you have prepared at home, since we cannot guarantee that foods shared are safe without reading every label checking every product and ingredient. **Children will not share foods at snacks or lunch in school.**

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Instead of inviting you to bring in homemade or store bought birthday treats which might be a problem for some, we will offer your child a choice of muffins or pizza to bake at school as part of their celebration. You are welcome to come in and help cook in honor of your child's special day. We will be celebrating special events without food more and more as we come to terms with the fact that so many children come to school with life-threatening allergies.

Student Teachers and Volunteers

*Do you have a complete change of clothes in your child's cubby?
Have you filled out all forms completely and returned them?*

In the interest of developing a relationship with Curry College and in helping to mentor young educators, we have invited Curry students to work with us this semester. We have three students this semester. Each joins us for 18 hours per week. Students observe in areas related to coursework, prepare activities, and help us as needs arise.

Please note that the Curry students work only under the direct supervision of Learning Circle teachers; they are never alone with children. Also, the school maintains the highest level of confidentiality as it relates to any information about enrolled children.

Shoes to Wear to School

Please remember that our school policy is that **NO OPEN BACKED SHOES SHOULD BE WORN IN SCHOOL**. We will be enforcing this policy in every classroom this year.

When children wear clogs or other open backed shoes, they are constantly tripping in the classroom and outdoors. Even sandals are problematic when children run.

If you are having trouble with shoe choices in the morning, bring along a pair of sneakers and put them in your child's cubby. We'll be sure your child uses them, and will be sure to inform your child that all children will be wearing safe styles of shoes in school this year.

The green reusable bag on your child's cubby hook is a gift to you and a way to help us keep child supplies better organized. All items (clothing, rest supplies, stuffies, lunches, etc.) need to fit in this bag plus your child's cubby bin (labeled below the hooks) coat hook. There can be no exceptions! When you send supplies in a large bag or backpack it takes up a neighbor's space!

Remembering the Values of Play

We parents are all aware at some level of how important play is to children, and we look for ways to support engaging playful experiences for our children. But it's also true that in our culture it's getting harder and harder to "justify" children's time at play. We may be worried about our child's skill development, and readiness for future academic requirements. We may be worried that our children will miss an important "window of opportunity" for learning in the areas of language or music. We may come to believe that if an activity is marketed as "enrichment" it is necessarily more enriching than experiences that the children are capable of creating on their own in their play. And, in our interest in connecting with our children, we may feel unsure about how to join our child's play, and wonder whether or not our joining is a valuable use of time.

In the first few months of school, hallway displays, featured articles and books will share some current thinking about play, and will highlight how imperative quality playful experiences are to each child's growth and development. I hope that we can give you some insight into how teachers join and support play, and that you will be inspired to take similar opportunities to follow your child's lead at home. And, I hope that we can all be reminded that play is for grownups too!

NAEYC and Accreditation

Learning Circle Preschool achieved NAEYC accreditation successfully because of the collaborative efforts of teachers, Board members, and families, along with plenty of hard work on the part of the staff documenting some of the many valuable experiences for children here in any given school year.

A big part of accreditation is collecting information from families about how we are doing and how you feel about our program. We've developed a great deal of written information over the years to keep you informed, and have a variety of systems in place to communicate with you regularly about your child's experiences at school. Please help us keep you informed by reading newsletters like this one, classroom notes, emails, etc. regularly. Also remember to refer to your Parent Handbook, which has a review of just about all our policies and systems, and has extra copies of many important communications you have received.

In addition, we hope all of you have accessed Teaching Strategies. If you haven't, please let your child's teacher know ASAP so that we can begin an exchange about your child's school experiences, and share photos and observations from the classroom.

In October or November we will distribute a family survey that we are required to have you fill out as part of our self-assessment process with NAEYC. It is a two page survey with some general questions about your experiences here at the school. We hope that we will have 100% participation in this survey process, so that the feedback we share with NAEYC accurately reflects family views about our program.

In each newsletter I will try to highlight some aspect of the accreditation process that is important to us. This newsletter's focus is on building Parent-Teacher Partnerships.

For more information you can go to NAEYC's website: for families at www.rightchoiceforkids.org.

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

At Learning Circle Preschool we take communication with families seriously, and want to do everything possible to assure that everyone feels connected and has good information about what's happening at the school. Our mission statement speaks to this commitment:

Founded on respectful and nurturing interactions between teachers and children, and building on each child's curiosity and creativity, we come together as a classroom community whose goal is to inspire a lifelong love of exploration, thought, and learning. ...We work in partnership with parents, communicating closely, encouraging family involvement in the program and offering support and education on issues relating to child development and early childhood education.

Keeping you informed is only one part of good communication. Our challenge is to help facilitate two way communications, so that we can develop your child's program informed by your insights, intuition, and values.

As you look through our Parent Handbook, you'll see many ways that we try to achieve on-going, meaningful communication with families. Whether it's the informal chat as you bring your child to school, your participation on a Board committee or at a discussion, an email you send to alert us to an issue your child is facing at home, the history forms you thoughtfully fill out to give us some ideas of how to support your child at school, your participation (reading, playing, cooking, or doing a project) in your child's classroom, or an invitation to use our online portfolio and journaling systems for communication, we hope that over time you will feel comfortable sharing your perspectives, even if you think we will not agree. When we work together on behalf of the children wonderful things can happen!

This year one of our essential questions asks "How Do the Principles Developed in Reggio Emilia inform our relationships with children and families?" We will explore this question beginning in our fall curriculum, and hope that you will all find ways to contribute your ideas. We also hope you'll join a related discussion at our October Board meeting.

The following article from NAEYC's resources for parents online (*Early Years Are Learning Years*) called [Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships](#) highlights some of the important connections that we focus on at school.

NAEYC Program Standard 7: Families

The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.

Rationale: Young children's learning and development are integrally connected to their families. Consequently, to support and promote children's optimal learning and development, programs need to recognize the primacy of children's families, establish relationships with families based on mutual trust and respect, support and involve families in their children's educational growth, and invite families to fully participate in the program.

NAEYC Program Standard 8. Community Relationships

The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals.

Rationale: As part of the fabric of children's communities, an effective program establishes and maintains reciprocal relationships with agencies and institutions that can support it in achieving its goals for the curriculum, health promotion, children's transitions, inclusion, and diversity. By helping to connect families with needed resources, the program furthers children's healthy development and learning.