

PREP News
Issue 2, December 2003

Calendar

December

19- Last Day – Winter Break and Professional Development

January

5-9 Professional Development Week – no classes

7 Workshop for Educational Assistants

12 Classes resume

20 Transition to ECS Info Night

February

13,14 Classes as usual

16 Holiday Family Day

Advertisements

Educational Assistants Workshop @ PREP

Wednesday January 7, 2004

9:00 – 11:30 am

Lunch to Follow

Factors to Consider When Choosing a Community Preschool

Factors to Consider When Choosing a Community Preschool

1. **Attitudes** – Did you get the message that your child is welcome?
2. **Class Size** – How many students are in the class? How many students are in the AM class vs. the PM class?
3. **Parent Helpers**—Are parents encouraged to sign up to help in the class?

4. **Teacher Qualifications**—Does the program have a certified teacher?
5. **Classroom Set Up** – Is the classroom clean and well maintained? Are there engaging play centers?
6. **Family History** – Do you want your child to attend the same preschool as his/her sibling(s) attended?
7. **Family Schedule**— Does an afternoon or morning placement work best with the family schedule? Does your child have the stamina for an afternoon class?

Remember...

- * Your child is ready for school ... no matter how scared you are!
- * Start “shopping around”! Review the options that are available in your community.
- * Once you have picked the school of your choice, make an appointment to introduce yourself and your child to the staff at the school. It’s a “heads up” that your child is coming and advance planning can be activated at the school.

Transition to Preschool/ECS Workshop

Tuesday, January 20, 2004

7:00 pm

(Babysitting Available)

Coffee Morning Write-up–

On November 24, Kimberly Eckert addressed parents from Early Learning and E.C.S.. She spoke about the approaches one can take to become an effective advocate for your child. The three main points of discussion were why people communicate in the manner they do, how parents can best enter into an exchange with people and be effective advocates, and finally, the importance of maintaining emotional control.

When communicating with others, parents will run across many different types of communicators. Sometimes people will say anything they think others want to hear. These people sit on the fence and often nothing gets done in this type of discussion. They can be labeled as pushovers. Others will run the conversation relying on fear and intimidation. They will want to control the outcome at all costs and may resort to name calling and anger to do so. Still other people will approach an exchange from a position

of apathy. Perhaps they have little creativity left and anything you suggest may just seem like just too much work. Positive attention, cards and cookies work well to motivate this type.

Regardless of the different approaches others bring into a social exchange, there is something parents can do to work towards effective advocacy for their children. Specifically, it is paramount to be clear and upfront with your personal expectations. It also helps to clarify what the beliefs and expectations of others at the table are. In doing so, all those involved can work together and realize the issues at hand. This will facilitate open lines of communication and reduce the need for any guesswork. If, when in an exchange, you find the discussion heading in a direction that isn't constructive relative to the expectations, take the time to restate them or perhaps even to reschedule to a more appropriate time.

Finally, Kimberly reinforced that alongside the importance of being clear and direct, the ability to maintain emotional control is extremely important. Keep in mind it is only your own emotions and responses you can control, not those of others. Potentially, this can be hard work but with patience and practice, it becomes easier and a very effective strategy when dealing with others who do not share your expectations.

In conclusion, accepting that people communicate differently will assist you in the job of advocacy. Taking the time in a meeting to learn where others are coming from and recognizing their communication style and how they communicate will give you a heads up and an opportunity to avoid confrontation and the chance to possibly understand where the pitfalls might lie. You can then be clear about your expectations, invite them to do the same, and as a result keep your emotions under control. All these strategies help parents advocate more effectively for their children.

Classroom News

ECS

What a wonderful fall we have had! Both of the ECS classes loved learning about ghosts, witches, cats and pumpkins. They practiced for "Trick or Treating" in the warm surroundings at PREP. It was great to have several moms, brothers and sisters join us at our Halloween parties.

The 3 year old class has been busy working on classification of body parts, foods, and objects. They have been going shopping to bring back items that match with what is in their shopping basket. With Christmas just around the corner they are learning new Christmas songs to share and are busy preparing decorations to "Deck the Halls".

The 4 year old class is working hard building their vocabularies, sequencing, matching, sorting and following directions. Dressing skills have been the main focus during their

OT time. Snack time is always a hit when they come together as a group to practice eating and drinking skills.

ECS Christmas parties will take place on Dec. 18, and 19th. On the 19th we invite parents from our 3 year old class to join us from 10:00 – 11:30 for festive activities.

Classroom Volunteers

It's time to check your schedules for January, February, March and April. It is a requirement at PREP that all families volunteer in the classroom once monthly. Your extra pair of hands is greatly appreciated and it is a positive experience for your child to have you in the classroom. It is also your chance to observe speech therapy and circle activities to continue the learning at home. We value the time parents spend in the classroom and your children are thrilled to show off for you! Volunteering is not just for moms. Dads and other interested family members are also welcome.

Over the holidays children appreciate some time to relax and hang out, to enjoy their new toys, read new books and play with their siblings. May your holidays be filled with rest, relaxation and many happy times with family and loved ones!

Language Group

Ho, ho, ho and away we go! Language Group is in full swing and the parents and children are moving right along. The toddlers are all settling in nicely, learning to wait their turns at circle time and making efforts to try gestures and make sounds. After massaging and waking up little muscles, we are all ready for some action! Waving hands and patting tummies are only a couple of new additions to our action song. Repeated practice is paying off as the children are imitating actions more independently.

In the Christmas Spirit, the children are having fun *tap, tap, tapping* reindeers feet; *Hee, Hee, Heeing* with Santa's Elves; and, *Ho, Ho, Hoing* with Santa Claus himself. On cue, Santa hides every time we sing *Where is Santa?* Then we all practice our *Ho, Ho, Ho's* as Santa reappears. Placing bright yellow stars on the large felt board sky has become a favorite closing activity. *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* is a special song we sing while completing the activity. All the children love to pat, pat, pat as we put our stars up high.

Paint continues to be a hit as Christmas stars and snowflakes are painted on a vertical surface. Little shoulders and arms are being strengthened as each ornament is created. Shortened paint brushes help to make a comfortable tripod (thumb, index finger and middle finger) grip.

We invite parents, students, grandmas and grandpas to attend the Tuesday, December 9th, and the Thursday, December 11th, parties. It is our last week before Christmas break; a great time to celebrate all of our successes and visit with one another.

Parent interviews are scheduled for Tuesday, December 16th, and Thursday, December 18th. We wish you a wonderful holiday and many blessings in the New Year!!!

First Day Back in Class: Tuesday, January 13th and Thursday, January 15th.

It is time to start planning for next year. Watch for ECS registration in January!!

Learning Through Play

The focus in circle time continues to be on imitating actions. Tara has all eyes on her as she models actions for the children to join in and follow along. Many of the children are becoming more adventurous and interested in leaving Mom as they dive into an activity. This encourages them to make eye contact with their peers and start their steps towards separation from Mom. As we move around the classroom, the mirror is a fun place to make funny faces and loud patting noises. The children love to lead this activity as Mom imitates and repeats each action with lots of expression.

With Christmas coming upon us and all of our relatives arriving, take the opportunity to practice some “*Hi’s*,” “*Bye’s*” and “*Ho, Ho, Ho’s*.” Remember to stay active and pair the words with actions! Turn these into valuable teachable moments for children and guests. Take the time to model slow talking and repetitive movements to your visitors, allowing your child to show off new skills. Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Important dates:

December 16th & 18th : Parent Interviews (Tuesday & Thursday classes only)
January 13th, 15th & 16th: Classes resume

Family Support

Family Support would like to wish all of the Early Learning and ECS families a wonderful Christmas holiday and a joyous 2004. We look forward to continuing the coffee groups and monthly workshops in the New Year. Make sure to visit our link on the PREP website for community activities that your family can enjoy during the holiday season. Merry Christmas to all, from Annamarie and Barb.

Here are the coffee group dates for the New Year :

Weekly coffee groups: Every Tuesday 11:00 – 11:45 (Starting January 13)
Every 3rd Thursday 10:30 – 11:30 (Starting January 22)
Every Friday 11:00 – 11:45 (Starting January 16)

Check Out the PREP Resource Library

Knowledge, resources and inspiration are at your finger tips in our library to browse through or sign out for the 2 week loan period. There are books on diverse topics including child development, speech, sensory integration, reading, math and curriculum adaptation. All books and materials (2 per family) can be signed out for a two week

period. Please ensure that materials are returned on time so they can be utilized and enjoyed by all.

Picks of the Month

Series:

Your Child at Play: Birth to One Year –Discovering the Senses and Learning About the World

Your Child at Play: One to Two years – Exploring, Learning , Making Friends and Pretending

Your Child at Play: Two to Three Years – Growing Up, Language, and the Imagination (1998) By Marilyn Segal, Ph. D. “In-sightful, warm, and practical ... expert knowledge that’s a must for every parent”. This series presents hundreds of time-tested ideas and suggestions to help parents and caregivers turn everyday routines into playful learning opportunities and enhance communication between children and adults.

The book series is jargon-free, has easy-to-read language and recognizes the value of different parenting styles.

Cover Article

Encouraging Independence for Your Child

Below are suggested activities to encourage your toddler and preschooler to be an independent learner. Most children learn best from their parents and in their home environment. If there is opportunity, children can learn independence. If children are not allowed to experiment, explore or try things out, they stay dependent on adults. The more independent your child is in daily routines the more:

- self help skills are mastered
- independent appropriate play skills mature
- self confidence grows
- success with self help skills will carry over to school

Remember don't expect your child to do at school or grandmas what you don't expect him to do at home.

In the toddler years, your child can:

- Pick-up toys

In the preschool years, your child can:

- Put away toys. Help clean up

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put books on shelf • Indicate a choice (e.g. start with 2 objects) • Wipe face and hands with cloth • Attempt to brush teeth • Finger feed • Hold a spoon • Start to drink from a cup or a straw • Remove hat, mitts, jacket (once undone) • Pull up/down zipper (started) • Pull down pants and remove • Pull shirt on/off head • Empty boxed goods from the grocery bag • Climbing and cruising on furniture • Using push toys • Walking with hand support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry/pull grocery bags from door to kitchen (depending on distance) • Empty groceries from bag • Carry milk jug to and from fridge. • Wipe table • Help make (pour, stir, decorate) simple deserts and snacks • Start to use a child size spoon and fork • Start to use child size knife to spread and cut soft foods. • Drink from a cup and straw • Wash & dry face and hands • Put on socks, shoes & boots • Put arms through coat and shirt sleeves • Start using one hand to stabilize material to zip/unzip • Help feed pets e.g.) pour cup of dog/cat food into bowl. • Help out in the yard with child size shovel, rake & scoop • Match socks • Climbing stairs with hand support
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Taking the time to let your child try to do things on his own takes patience and understanding. Understand that for a child with Down syndrome, repeated practice in daily routines is what it takes to learn to do things "by myself".

Bits and Pieces

Announcements:

Congratulations to Rod and Jackie Walker as they welcome a new baby girl into their family – Zoe Lee Walker.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy (PT) is recommended to monitor your child's foot posture, gait pattern, and gross motor play skills. This service is provided through Developmental Clinic at Alberta Children's Hospital.

Anita Wamsley is the Physiotherapist with the Down Syndrome Team. During your visit, she can discuss the frequency of physiotherapy needed for your child. She will also provide you with two copies of recommendations for your child. Please pass one copy to your child's teacher at PREP.

If you have any questions regarding this service, contact the Developmental Clinic at 229-7275.

Secret Santa

Secret Santa, on December 6th was a huge success. Ten children brought their Dads or Uncle to PREP to have some fun, share a snack, and show off the activities they do at school. We hope the Moms enjoy their special gift!

New OT at PREP!

Welcome to Ashly Black who joined the PREP team in November. Ashly received her training in Occupational Therapy at the University of Western Ontario. Prior to joining PREP, Ashly worked at the Rotary Children's Centre in Waterloo, Ontario. Ashly is working with the Thursday ECS class, PREP 3 and PREP 4 students.

Santa's List

When purchasing toys for your child, keep in mind that good toys don't have to be expensive. Toys should provide your child with opportunities to concentrate, problem solve, develop eye-hand coordination and strengthen and control body muscles. Several of these fun ideas can be made at home or purchased at little expense from a dollar store:

- home made play dough with a set of plastic cookie cutters
- put up a chalkboard and buy fat chalk
- blocks and pop beads
- homemade band instruments (i.e. drums and shakers)
- toy telephone
- big soft balls for kicking and rolling
- fill an old suitcase, stroller or wagon with dress-up clothes
- a stroller or wagon to push or pull dollies and stuffed toys in
- large beads to string
- home made puppets
- a nylon tunnel from Ikea
- a plastic case or decorated box filled with scissors, crayons, paper and stampers
- video tape yourself singing favourite songs, very slowly
- video your family

- toboggan with back support
- child size table and chairs

Song Sheet

I'm a Little Snowman

I'm a little snowman,
Round and fat,
With an orange nose
And a big black hat.
I like to be outside
On a snowy day
Until the sun
Melts me away!

Santa Claus

(to the tune of "Mary Has a Little Lamb")

Santa Claus goes Ho, Ho, Ho
Ho, Ho, Ho
Ho, Ho, Ho
Santa Claus goes Ho, Ho, Ho
All winter long.
(Reindeer's feet go Tap, Tap Tap
Santa's elves go Hee, Hee, Hee
Little ones go Peek-a-Boo
Christmas bells go Ring, Ring, Ring.

Jack in the Box

Jack in the box,
So quiet and still,
Won't you jump up?
Of course I will.

Monkeys in the Bed

5 little monkeys, jumping on the bed.
One fell off and bumped his head.
Momma called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"No more monkeys, jumping on the bed!"

4, 3, 2,...

One little monkey ...
And the doctor said,
“Send those monkeys straight to bed!”

Can You Find?

(to the tune of “Have Your Ever Seen a Lassie?”)

Can you find the _____ (name of object)? The _____, the _____,
Can you find the _____, and put it under the tree.

Oh, _____ (child’s name) found the _____ (object), the _____.
_____, the _____,
Oh, _____ found the _____ and put it under the tree.

Ring Your Bells

(to the tune of “Row Row Your Boat”)

Must Be Santa

Who has a beard that’s soft and white,
Santa has a beard that’s soft and white.
Who comes around late at night,
Santa comes around late at night.
Late at night,
Beard that’s white.

Must be Santa,
Must be Santa,
Must be Santa, Santa Claus.

Who wears boots and a suit of red
Santa wears boots and a suit of red.
Who wears a red hat on his head.
Santa wears a red hat on his head.
Hat on head,
Suit that’s red.
Late at night,
Beard that’s white.

Must be Santa,
Must be Santa,
Must be Santa, Santa Claus.

Who has a big red cherry nose,
Santa has a big red cherry nose.
Who laughs this way, Ho, Ho, Ho.
Santa laughs this way, Ho, Ho, Ho.
Ho, Ho, Ho, cherry nose,
Hat on head, suit that's red,
Late at night, beard that's white.

Must be Santa,
Must be Santa,
Must be Santa, Santa Claus.