



# PARENT *December* NEWSLETTER

## RECSCHOOL HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS, WEDNESDAY, DEC. 19 & THURSDAY, DEC. 20

RecSchool holiday celebrations are held in mid-December. Your child's class meets for only an hour and a half on this day, for the celebration only.

A.M. classes..... 9-10:30 a.m.  
P.M. classes..... 12:30-2 p.m.

Your child should invite **only one** special adult (e.g. mom, dad, aunt, uncle, grandma or grandpa) to join us for the celebration; no siblings, please. Limiting the attendance at indoor events helps create a more relaxed atmosphere for everyone and gives the child individual time with someone he/she loves. We have planned several fun holiday activities, songs and a snack. A sign-up sheet for the holiday snack will be posted at school the week of Dec. 10 (please, no treat bags). RecSchool is closed Friday, Dec. 21 through Tuesday, Jan. 1. RecSchool reopens Wednesday, Jan. 2.

## PUMPKIN, PUMPKIN

Thanks to everyone who brought uncut pumpkins to RecSchool. The children carried and rolled them, balanced on them, hammered nails into them, cut them up with pumpkin knives and scooped out the seeds. This hands-on study supported many areas of learning including coordination, safety, texture, weight, shape and natural processes such as decomposition. To wrap up the project, we rolled the pumpkins into the woods behind the barn to feed the squirrels, and so we can watch them decay. That is learning through play!



**HAMMER**



**CUT**



**ROLL**



**SCOOP**

## SECRETS, SURPRISES AND PRIVATE TOPICS

During staff training, Teri Kinsway, child abuse prevention and recognition instructor for Nationwide Children's Hospital, discussed the threats and "secrets" child abusers use to entangle and control children. She suggested parents help children understand the difference between surprises and secrets. "Surprises will make a person feel good. Secrets are usually hurtful and can make a person feel bad." To help your child understand which information is appropriate to share in each setting:

- Teach the child that he/she can always discuss private topics and secrets with parents. Tell him/her that if someone tells a secret that "should be kept from parents," the child should speak up immediately. Reassure the child that parents will keep him/her safe.
- Be prepared to answer children's questions, but if the topic is private, tell the child you will discuss it with him/her when you are alone. Be sure to revisit the issue later, "Remember when you asked me about..."
- Define private topics that can be discussed within the family, but don't need to be shared with others. "I know you overheard us discussing your brother's grade card. Please don't share that information with anyone else to respect his privacy."
- Set limits about discussions that do not involve the child. It is okay to say, "Right now I need to talk to your dad. Please wait in the other room so we can have a little privacy." This helps the child understand some discussions are for adults only.
- Involve your child actively in creating surprises for loved ones. Even if he/she spills the beans, the child will still enjoy being involved in the surprise.
- Never encourage a child to keep secrets from a loved one. While surprising a parent with a birthday gift is fun, asking a child to keep a secret about family matters harms the child and teaches deception.

Above all, remain calm when your child asks questions or shares struggles with you. Your calm reaction will help the child trust that he/she can share anything with you, which is valuable as he/she enters the teen years.

## **ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, AND RECEIVE, AND RECEIVE!**

We appreciate all the parents who provided requested items: acorns, seed pods, insects (dead and alive), small pets to visit with, antlers, taxidermy animals (from a pheasant to full-sized turkey,) and deer pelts, as well as envelopes, scrap paper and hospital extras. Your contributions make our classrooms rich with opportunities for observation and exploration, as well as providing plentiful supplies for children's artwork.

## **LEARNING AT HOME: BAKING COOKIES**

Baking cookies is a wonderful tradition during the Christmas season. When you have plenty of time (and patience), pull a stepstool up to the counter for your child and stir up a batch of gingerbread together. It is a great opportunity to sneak a lot of learning into a fun activity.

- Reading the recipe helps children understand the meaning of print. Be sure to point out the numbers, so children can "read" how many cups of flour or teaspoons of salt.
- Observing, touching and smelling ingredients builds knowledge about texture and scent. How can anything that smells as strong as molasses taste so good in gingerbread?
- Naming ingredients builds vocabulary. Be sure to name the parts of an egg: shell, white and yolk.
- Stirring builds strength, cross-body coordination and balance. Hopefully most of the ingredients stay in the bowl!
- Baking allows children to observe the changes that happen inside the hot oven.
- Decorating with small items promotes fine motor skills.

While baking with kids is usually messy, takes much longer and may yield slightly imperfect results, the quiet time spent working together is the best gift a parent can give a child... in any season.

### **RecSchool's Favorite Gingerbread**

Combine "wet" ingredients in order, mixing well after each addition:

- 1/3 cup soft butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup molasses



In a separate bowl, combine dry ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups flour (add a little more if the dough is too wet)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

1. Slowly stir the dry ingredients into the wet mixture. Mix thoroughly.
2. On a well-floured board, gently pat into a circle, and roll to 1/4" thickness.
3. Cut out shapes and decorate as you wish.
4. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes, or until just "set."
5. Brush with vanilla icing while still warm.

## **IN THE CLASSROOM: PERSISTENCE, INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM**

*As the class began to get dressed to go outside, Maggie tried to hand her coat to a teacher, saying, "I can't put it on." Rather than take Maggie's coat, the teacher tucked her hands behind her back and said, "Let's see... where do your arms go?" The teacher then turned away to help another child with zipping. Maggie frowned, looked at her coat and turned it around in her hands. Eventually she slipped one hand in a sleeve, struggled a little with the second sleeve, and marched over to the teacher with a broad smile. "I did it!"*

By age 3, most children should be able to fully dress themselves with simple, child-friendly clothing. Still, some children would prefer not to work that hard, and may employ all kinds of tactics for getting a parent or grandparent to put on their socks, shoes, pants and shirts. We know because children try those tactics at school too. "But I can't put on my socks," as the child pouts, staring at the socks on the floor. Our response, "Well, you'll need to pick one up, open up the top and put your toes in first."

Winter can be a challenge; we plan extra time for dressing to go outside now that coats, hats, mittens and scarves are needed. Children are encouraged to straighten out their own coats, figure out how to get arms into sleeves, and attempt zipping. Many children can already zip their own coats but, admittedly, a little help from adults may be needed with stubborn zippers. Still, we ask children to try because in the struggle they might just accidentally figure out how to make it work. Struggles, frustration, persistence and (eventually) success are the true building blocks of self-esteem.



## **Important Dates**

Wednesday, Dec. 5 .....	January Tuition Payment Due
Tuesday, Dec. 11.....	Scholastic Book Orders Due, for Christmas delivery
Wednesday & Thursday, Dec. 19 & 20 .....	Holiday Celebration
Friday, Dec. 21-Tuesday, Jan. 1 .....	RecSchool Closed
Wednesday, Jan. 2.....	RecSchool Reopens

"The child who is disciplined as well as he or she is loved is a happy, healthy child."

~ John Rosemond, "John Rosemond's New Parent Power"