



RecSchool Preschool Program

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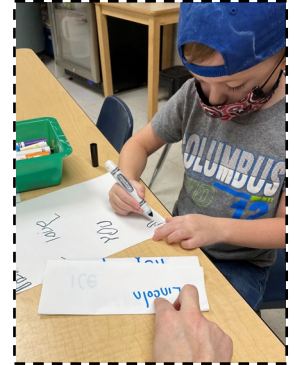


Parent JANUARY News

IN THE CLASSROOM – HANDWRITING PRACTICE

Children in both classes have been practicing developmentally appropriate writing skills. Children in the upstairs classes have worked on pencil grip and hand-eye coordination by copying directional lines, circles and connected shapes. Next we'll introduce "doodles:" fun, inventive symbols.

Children in the downstairs classes regularly write spontaneous notes or copy words related to the current study on "lined" paper. After reading several versions of the Gingerbread Boy story, children chose words to write: fox, baby, man, river, cowboy, house and, for the really adventurous, gingerbread. "That's a really long word!" Like all development, handwriting abilities vary widely. Rather than set high expectations, we work with each child at his or her own level, celebrate successes and trust gradual, natural development.



THINKING AHEAD TO 2022-2023

Registration for 2022-2023 RecSchool classes begins soon. To reduce exposure to COVID-19, all registration will take place through RecTrac. Parents of children currently enrolled in RecSchool will receive information on Jan. 24 by email, titled "RecSchool Registration 2022-2023." Parents who wish to register a child for one of next year's classes are able to sign up before all others.

- Friday, Jan. 28.....2022-2023 Registration opens for **CURRENT** students; online, 7 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 2.....2022-2023 Registration opens for **SIBLINGS** of past or current students; online, 7 a.m.

RECSCHOOL VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Do you know any families in the community who are looking for a preschool program for the coming school year? Please help publicize RecSchool by sharing program information. New families interested in receiving information should call Gantz Barn, 614-871-6330, to be placed on the email list. Families, including those currently enrolled in RecSchool, will be invited to view our RecSchool-at-a-Glance video. While it won't be as personal as an interactive, hands-on Open House, it's the safest way to introduce new families to RecSchool.

CHILDREN AND ELECTRONICS: BALANCING SCREEN TIME WITH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH



Parents occasionally observe that there are no computers in the RecSchool classrooms. It's not for lack of funds, but a purposeful choice to provide a space where children are engaged in active play, critical thinking, creative experiences, self-direction, social growth and emotion regulation – all without the option of screens for direction or distraction.

In **Media and Young Minds**, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) links excessive media-viewing to increases in obesity, sleep difficulties and cognitive, language and emotional delays. Ambient media has an impact, too. "Parents' background television use distracts from parent-child interactions and child play." These findings published in 2016 don't address cell phone use: the screens we now take everywhere! With so many parents working from home or older siblings spending entire days on computers, the challenge has multiplied.

Dr. Sara Lappe, pediatrician at the Cleveland Clinic, recommends changes parents can make to help their family unplug and connect:

- **Prioritize family dinner.** Teach conversation skills by finding out what happened during each other's day.
 - Ban electronics from the dinner table. Family meals are the time to connect with each other, rather than the folks on Facebook.
- **Remove TVs from bedrooms.** Looking at screens at bedtime influences sleep patterns, leading to interrupted sleep and behavior problems.
 - Be prepared for protests, but be firm.
- **Put limitations on screen time.** The AAP recommends parents of children aged 2 to 5 years limit screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programs.
 - This includes phone games in the grocery store or restaurants and viewing videos during short car rides. It adds up quickly!
- **Set aside active playtime.** Play with your kids: kick a soccer ball, take them to the park or help them build a fort in the living room.
 - Remember, boredom is the mother of invention!
- **Get interactive with your children.** If you're going to use screens, use them together.
 - Take charge of your children's viewing habits. Eliminate violent or disrespectful content. If it makes you cringe, turn it off!



Technology is only going to advance. Parents must decide how it influences the structure, health and relationships of their family.

WEARING MASKS AT PRESCHOOL: PROTECTING OTHERS

To better protect the health of our classroom community in response to the recent COVID surge (if a child is infected but has not yet developed symptoms), Grove City Parks and Recreation is now requiring masks for all program participants, until further notice. Thank you for sending your child to RecSchool in a mask. We understand that this is a learning situation, and that many children will need reminders, support and patience. A few children have tried to refuse, "I am not wearing that mask!" Teachers explain that this is not a choice; it's a new rule in our classroom.

Honestly, the first days of universal masking were a learning experience and a little challenging. But each day has been better, and children have become more tolerant and capable, with practice and consistency. Children are learning to listen carefully to each other, read eye expressions, and speak clearly to be heard by friends. Children are able to take masks off while outside, a welcome break.

Many thanks to the parents who have shared opinions about this new "mandate." Honest, courteous feedback is always welcome. So far, about half the people who have responded are fully supportive, and the remainder are equally divided between "I can go either way" or "not a fan of masking children:" concerned about the effect of expecting children to wear a mask while learning to speak with others, read emotions and solve conflicts with others. Teachers shared those same concerns, but have been impressed with how quickly children have adapted, almost without skipping a beat.

IN THE CLASSROOM – AND AT HOME: "Establishing the Voice of Authority"

During a walk to the woods, two children ran ahead of the group. After being called back twice and reminded that, "children need to stay behind the teacher in front," the pair was sent to the back of the group to hold the other teacher's hand. That teacher said, "Running ahead is never safe. Stay with me now so I can keep you safe." Although neither child was happy, the immediate, concrete consequence, directly related to their actions, made an impact.



Parents often comment that their child listens to the RecSchool teachers much better than the child listens to them, "You always seem so calm, and my child does what you tell him!" Our years of experience show that becoming a leader in a classroom of 3 and 4 year olds doesn't happen overnight. We all work on developing voice, direction and "authority" skills in the classroom so children can feel secure, understand the classroom expectations, and trust that teachers will act on the rules consistently.

Children thrive under purposeful, consistent guidance at home, too. To develop a "sense of authority" as a parent:

- **Create a vision** of how you want your family to operate and treat each other.
- **Act with confidence**, even when you have doubts: use a low voice, make direct eye contact and believe your child will comply.
- **Set clear, concise expectations and limits:** "When we are in the library, we have to talk quietly so we don't bother other people."
- **Do not allow disrespectful or hurtful behavior**, regardless of the setting. "I will not let you talk to me like that."
- **Take action after one reminder:** quiet consequences always have a greater impact than lengthy explanations. "Why did I put your books back? Because I won't let you borrow library books when you don't respect the library rules."

Even with consistent expectations, children will still test parents, especially in new settings or when several authority figures are present.

At the end of the school day, a mother arrived to pick up her daughter. While the parent and teacher were speaking, the daughter repeatedly hit her parent from behind. The mother turned around and caught her daughter's hand, "Do not hit me. Ever. You can stand quietly beside me while I talk to your teacher or you can sit on that chair."

This little girl obviously did not want to wait, but chose an inappropriate way to express herself. The teacher was relieved when the mother took charge of the situation; authority had clearly been transferred to the parent. Always feel comfortable correcting your child's behavior in front of teachers (we applaud you), in the grocery store or at Grandma's house – this will establish the parent as the ultimate authority in the child's life and relieve the child of the need to test every situation.

By establishing the parent's influence in the family and expectations for behavior early in life, parents can minimize the struggles that inevitably follow during the teen years. If it is not going to be enjoyable at age 14, don't tolerate the behavior at 4!

IMPORTANT JANUARY DATES

Monday, Jan. 17..... RecSchool closed; SWCS closed

Tuesday, Jan. 18.....RecSchool open; SWCS closed

Friday, Jan. 28..... 2022-2023 Registration opens for CURRENT students; online, 7 a.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 2... 2022-2023 Registration opens for SIBLINGS; online, 7 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 5.....March tuition payment due

