

YELLOW SCHOOL NEWS

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE YELLOW SCHOOL AT MEMORIAL DRIVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
11612 Memorial Drive, Houston, TX 77024; 713/784-0820

May 2016

Wow! Another year has flown by! It has been such a joy to work with the children as they have learned so much about themselves and their world. It's such fun to observe the "ah ha" moments when the new concepts click! Each day brings something new to the children and often their discoveries teach us something new, too. Learning is such fun!

ART SHOW/BOOK FAIR

Thanks to all of you who worked at, attended and supported the annual FAMILY NIGHT, ART SHOW and BOOK FAIR. The weather for Family Night was beautiful, the art was fantastic and we had a wonderful selection of books to enjoy and purchase. Everyone enjoyed the train, the fishing game and the tattoos. Lots of delicious hot dogs (and all the trimmings) were consumed. Many thanks to all the kitchen helpers and volunteers who helped make the dinner possible.

The children collected about \$803.18 in their banks and that, combined with a generous discount from Southwest Book Company, enabled us to purchase a wonderful assortment of

hardcover and paperback books for the children at Small Steps Early Learning Center. Thanks to all of you who supported that most worthwhile effort. In case you were wondering, the coins weighed 22 pounds and consisted of 1,308 pennies, 318 nickels, 632 dimes, 700 quarters and two \$1.00 coins. In addition, there were 370 \$1.00 bills, two \$2.00 bills, two \$10s, two \$20s and 20 \$5s plus 17 assorted foreign coins. ☺

In addition, parents and friends of the school donated 56 books to the school library. Don't forget – families are welcome to borrow books from the school library.

Special thanks to Saylor Robbins, Book Fair chair, and Amanda Ollison, co-chair, as well as all the helpers (parents and board members), for all their great ideas, organizational skills and hard work! Special thanks, also, to all of you who donated and/or solicited door prizes. We had an awesome collection of prizes and lots of very happy winners!



MORE THANKS!!

So many of you created wonderful, delicious meals for the teachers on Teacher Appreciation Days. We want you to know how much we enjoyed eating and eating and eating! You all are such kind, generous and thoughtful parents. Thank you so very much! Thanks, too, to all the parents who shared their talents and time in the classroom, on field trips, etc. We appreciate your help and involvement and couldn't do without you!

CHAPEL CHAT

What an honor and privilege it has been teaching your children the word of God.

Thank you for sharing them, with us, this year during Chapel Time! We are grateful to have had the opportunity.

To finish off the year, we will be learning how we can be disciples of Jesus by helping and sharing hearing lessons from the book of Acts.

Your children are always welcome at Ark Adventures, our Preschool Sunday School program at MDPC, at 9:45 and 11:15 as we learn more about the love of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. We wish you a happy summer!

Becky Funderburk

LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR

As you know, we have a wonderful "Grandpa" program during

which the children have the opportunity to work with a "grandpa" and have help building whatever their imaginations desire. Since young children typically spend the majority of their time with women, this is a wonderful opportunity to interact with men – and sometimes men of two generations. That interaction is the object of this monthly activity. While it does involve woodworking, in reality, the grandpas do much of the building.

The Woodworking REACH class (held at the church after school) offers a great woodworking program designed for children to not only produce a finished product, but to learn about tools, how to care for them, how to use them safely, and so on. Taught by a talented Montessori-trained teacher, these classes offer your children a completely different woodworking experience.

I mention this just so you know that the two programs are very different and serve to develop different skills.

PARENT SURVEYS REPORT

Thank you to all you parents who took the time to complete and return the PARENT SURVEYS. It is very helpful to have your suggestions and very affirming to read your many wonderful comments.

MORE INFORMATION

Some of you have asked for more frequent reports. This is something we struggle with. We always contact parents when there are concerns; we admit we are often remiss at sending notes home about the good things. We

continue to work on this. Next year we will go back to sending home the *What's Happenings* once a week instead of once a month. The kindergarten class will continue with the monthly *Happenings*, and we will augment that with some weekly information.

Please remember that we are happy to conference with you whenever you wish, either in person or on the phone. Do not hesitate to let us know of any questions or concerns that you might have at any time throughout the year.

PARTICIPATION

Some of you wished for more parent involvement. The handbook states that parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in many ways, we issue that invitation at our orientations and we try to remind you during the year. Please, don't be shy! Let your child's teacher know of your desire to participate. Come and read, help with a project, show a collection, a musical instrument...just let us know of your interests. We want you to feel comfortable and open with us. This is your school, too! Be involved!

SCHEDULE

One or two people wondered about why we have consecutive days rather than days spread out during the week. Research shows that children learn much better when they have immediate reinforcement. Even though it is a long time from Tuesday to the following Monday, the lessons learned on Monday and reinforced on Tuesday are more firmly entrenched in the children's developing brains. We see evidence of this when a 3 day child is absent on the

middle day. Since children have a different concept of time than adults do, it is much easier for them to understand "tomorrow" rather than "the day after tomorrow" or "Wednesday".

WRITING/FINE MOTOR

A couple of moms wanted more time devoted to writing names and the alphabet. That is not an easy topic to address in a few short sentences, because the ability to write is dependent on many things. Children need to have lots of opportunities to strengthen their fine motor muscles; if their strength is lacking, they will have a difficult time holding a writing implement and will want to stop in a short time. That is why we do lots of activities such as playing with clay and chalk, using squeeze bottles and tweezers and the like. Also, children need to see print as important so the more they see parents using print (writing lists, letters, thank you notes, reading), the more interested they will be. Reading books to children and asking them questions about the story that encourage thinking such as "What do you think would have happened if...?" also makes them more interested in words and sounds. Singing songs and discovering the rhyming words, playing simple word games, learning nursery rhymes all are good ways to get children interested in writing.

That said, each of our classrooms has a letter/word wall on which we write new words that we have encountered and, not only do we look at the words and the sounds of the letters, but we look at the shapes of the letters – does it have straight lines? Curved lines? Angles? We write lots of books and the children are encouraged to dictate their "stories"

to us and, as they are able, write their own. Each classroom has a writing center and the children are encouraged to use the various writing implements and various kinds of paper to write each day. We label, we write notes and memos, make lists and word graphs. We play games to learn sounds and syllabication. We count the words in a sentence. The pre-k children all have *Handwriting Without Tears* workbooks that they use and, of course the kindergarten children do lots of writing and journaling. It's fun to read their invented spelling words as they use all the sounds they have learned.

In the next few days I will post some information on our webpage about the stages of writing.

TEACHING RELIGION

One mom wanted to see scripture memory verses and bible stories in our curriculum. We do have chapel time with Ms Becky during which time she shares bible stories with the children. We also sing songs (some you will hear on the CD you'll receive before the end of the year) about Jesus. In addition, we pray with the children at mealtime and live out our Christian teachings as we talk about God's plan and taking care of God's creations, ourselves included. We stress living out Jesus' teachings of loving one another and living the Golden Rule. These are things children seem to be able to understand very well.

NAPS

One mom asked if we could let families know if their child has napped.

That's a good suggestion and one which we will brainstorm. Thank you.

MORE ACADEMICS

Although the majority of you were very pleased with the balance of play and more formal learning, some of you asked about more academics.

We actually spend a great deal of time on reading, writing and math. In all of the classes, many of our transition activities are centered around rhyming words (games and silly songs), sounds of letters and finding words in our daily news or on our wall or in our *Let's Find Out* papers. We have large soft blocks on which we write math or literacy activities. The children toss the block and do the activity or answer the question. We work with our calendars for numeral recognition as well as literacy and days of the week, months of the year and seasons. We vote and count which thing won. We make graphs of all kinds.

The kindergarten children play lots of games designed to teach various concepts. Hangman with sight words is a favorite. There are also relay races using assorted math and literacy concepts, choral recitation, games for rhyming, games for using initial and ending sounds, math mystery equations and more. Even in music class we play a game about syllabication.

STRUCTURED PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

The pre-ks and the kindergarten children participate in yoga as well as games like shadow tag and Red Rover and relay races. We move in different ways, play ball games and walk on

balance beams of various kinds. Our multi-purpose room is often turned into an obstacle course on days when we cannot get outside, which are fortunately few and far between.

Many of you had such wonderful, affirming comments such as: "My child loves school and was always upset if he was too sick to go." "I feel like the teachers on staff are top notch! They truly care and love these kiddos and it's obvious they have been carefully selected." "Fun learning lessons, teachers recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each child and know how to encourage and motivate." "We love the home visits!" "PLAY vs book/desk work. Letting the children play to learn is so important."

Some of the school's strengths that were noted were: "Loving caring teachers and staff"; "My child feels welcomed"; "Academic learning is hands-on and lessons are interesting to the children"; "Outside playtime is important"; "Small welcoming environment where children are allowed to explore and learn through experience"; "Giving independence to the child with structure. Fostering a creative, thinking atmosphere. Understanding each child's needs. Constructive discipline that allows the child to make better choices." "Great staff!"

If I have not addressed your concerns and/or suggestions or if you would like to speak more about any of these things, please do not hesitate to call me. Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to the survey. We are always happy to hear from you, so

don't wait for the next survey if you have a concern or suggestion.

END OF YEAR PICNICS



We are looking forward to our end-of-the-year picnics.

- Tuesday, May 17th – picnic for the MT and MTW 3s
- Friday, May 20th – picnic for all other classes

ALL children in the afternoon class come to school in the morning on Friday, May 20th (8:45)

Who comes? – Moms, dads, siblings, grandparents, other relatives and friends.

Where and what time? – Meet us on the Yellow School playground at 11:45 am

What do I bring? – Bring a picnic lunch and drinks for you and your family and something on which to sit. We will provide dessert.

At the end of the picnic, please gather around the deck. The children and teachers will gather on the deck and serenade you with many of our favorite Yellow School songs.

When will it end? We are usually finished by 1:00 pm.



HELP WANTED

We periodically need teachers and substitute teachers. If any of you (particularly those of you with teaching backgrounds) or your friends might be interested, please let us know. That's how we get our best staff members.

PARENTING TIPS

Summer fun: incorporate physical fitness with literacy, science and family fun. Take a walk or a hike. Go bike riding together. Play catch, kick a ball around, have some relay races. Document what you see on your hike/walk. Take pictures and label them.

Take your binoculars and magnifying glasses. Collect things. (Don't forget containers in which to bring treasures home.) Make a list of foods and drinks you might want to take along. Read *The Ants Go Marching*, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and *Walking Through the Jungle*. Discuss the following things: what shape/size/color is it? Does it feel rough/smooth/sticky/prickly? What sounds do you hear? What do you smell? How do different plants smell? Read *The Shape of Things*, *The Cloud Book* and *It Looked Like Spilled Milk*. Lie on the ground and look up at the sky.

Discuss the shapes of the clouds. Imagine what all they could be. On a sunny day, find your shadows and the shadows of objects. On the sidewalk, draw chalk lines around the shadows. Play shadow tag. Take a variety of objects outside on a windy day and ask your child to predict which ones the wind will blow. Does it matter if the objects are

upright or lying flat? Read *Gilberto and the Wind* and *Kite Flying*.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer school at YS– June 7 through June 30

Preschool Playground Playdate on the church playground from 2:30 to 3:30

Summer Celebration – July 11 through 15

(contact Becky Funderburk at bfunderburk@mdpc.org for more information)

Wacky Wednesday Water Day – August 10 from 10:00 to 12:00 noon.

Register at www.mdpc.org

YS Parent orientation – August 25

YS First day of school –Aug. 29

We wish you and your family a wonderful summer!