



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School - Issue 2 - January 2010

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C'mon Board!

Board Positions Available for 2010/2011 school year

With the end of the first semester in sight, it means we're already halfway through a spectacular year at Mountain School (and it's time to start thinking about culmination projects!). The planning for next year has already begun and we're looking for talented individuals (like you) to help run our school community through the Board of Directors. Our board is an amazing group of individuals who volunteer their time in a variety of ways.

Our dozen or so voting board members attend meetings on the first Tuesday of every month, while the non-voting members are not required to attend the monthly meetings, but are always welcome. Some positions are busy on and off throughout the year, while others have one specific task which requires only a short burst of time and energy for completion. With such a variety of positions on the board, there truly is something for everyone. Do you have financial background that you can utilize, a passion for event planning or a penchant for shopping? While the options are not limitless, choices abound and the success of our school is dependent upon parents like you who volunteer their time to keep our special school ticking.

I can say that I have enjoyed my year as board chair and yes, it's been a lot of work, but what a return! I've gotten to know so many great people, developed a deeper appreciation for our amazing teachers and learned how a successful volunteer organization is run. If you are interested in learning more about the board, what it does and what positions remain open, please feel free to give me or Jane Dodge a call or email.

Jane Dodge
janecarmel@yahoo.com
408.269.2616

Jill Hansen
jhansen@apple.com
408.395.8436

On behalf of the entire LGSONS board, thank you

Save the Date and Explore “Garden of Discovery!”

The Mountain School 20th Annual Benefit Auction will take place on Saturday, March 13th, 2010, at the Redwood Estates Pavilion from 6 p.m.-10 p.m. All enrolled families will receive a hand-delivered invitation from their class representatives. Expect a wonderful, casual evening among friends and soon-to-be friends. Fabulous hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be served along with beverages. Response cards can either be mailed or dropped in the RSVP envelope at the schoolhouse.

Definitely a night for parents to enjoy!

Morsels to digest:

Family donation forms are due January 29th...please contact Lillian Salmen at lillian@web2me.com or Maria Quillard at QQQ@sbcglobal.net for questions.

Teachers and classes should be thinking about **class donations**. These are often very popular and hold huge sentimental appeal.

If you have ideas or suggestions for **Buy-A-Spot** donations...please contact Marina Rush at marina.rush@pln.sccgov.org.

The procurement team is searching for a Timeshare or **Vacation donation**, if you have any leads...please contact Tiffanie O'brien at tiffanie_obrien@yahoo.com.

Why it's Important to Talk about Race

By Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman
Excerpted in part from NEWSWEEK
Entire article available at newsweek.com
Published Sep 5, 2009

We all want our children to be unintimidated by differences and have the social skills necessary for a diverse world. The question is, do we make it worse, or do we make it better, by calling attention to race?

The election of President Barack Obama marked the beginning of a new era in race relations in the United States—but it didn't resolve the question as to what we should tell children about race. Many parents have explicitly pointed out Obama's brown skin to their young children, to reinforce the message that anyone can rise to become a leader, and anyone—regardless of skin color—can be a friend, be loved, and be admired. Others think it's better to say nothing at all about the president's race or ethnicity—because saying something about it unavoidably teaches a child a racial construct. They worry

that even a positive statement (“It's wonderful that a black person can be president”) still encourages a child to see divisions within society. For the early formative years, at least, they believe we should let children know a time when skin color does not matter.

What parents say depends heavily on their own race: a 2007 study in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* found that out of 17,000 families with kindergartners, nonwhite parents are about three times more likely to discuss race than white parents; 75 percent of the latter never, or almost never, talk about race.

In our new book, *NurtureShock*, we argue that many modern strategies for nurturing children are backfiring—because key twists in the science have been overlooked. Small corrections in our thinking today could alter the character of society long term, one future citizen at a time. The way white families introduce the concept of race to their children is a prime example.

For decades, it was assumed that children see race only when society points it out to them. However, child-development researchers have increasingly begun to question that presumption. They argue that children see racial differences as much as they see the difference between pink and blue—but we tell kids that “pink” means for girls and “blue” is for boys. “White” and “black” are mysteries we leave them to figure out on their own.

It takes remarkably little for children to develop in-group preferences. Vittrup's mentor at the University of Texas, Rebecca Bigler, ran an experiment in three preschool classrooms, where 4- and 5-year-olds were lined up and given T shirts. Half the kids were randomly given blue T shirts, half red. The children wore the shirts for three weeks. During that time, the teachers never mentioned their colors and never grouped the kids by shirt color.

The kids didn't segregate in their behavior. They played with each other freely at recess. But when asked which color team was better to belong to, or which team might win a race, they chose their own color. They believed they were smarter than the other color. “The Reds never showed hatred for Blues,” Bigler observed. “It was more like, ‘Blues are fine, but not as good as us.’” When Reds were asked how many Reds were nice, they'd answer, “All of us.” Asked how many Blues were nice, they'd answer, “Some.” Some of the Blues were mean, and some were dumb—but not the Reds.

Bigler's experiment seems to show how children will use whatever you give them to create divisions—seeming to confirm that race becomes an issue only if we make it an issue. So why does Bigler think it's important to talk to children about race as early as the age of 3?

Her reasoning is that kids are developmentally prone to in-group favoritism; they're going to form these preferences on

their own. Children naturally try to categorize everything, and the attribute they rely on is that which is the most clearly visible.

We might imagine we're creating color-blind environments for children, but differences in skin color or hair or weight are like differences in gender—they're plainly visible. Even if no teacher or parent mentions race, kids will use skin color on their own, the same way they use T-shirt colors. Bigler contends that children extend their shared appearances much further—believing that those who look similar to them enjoy the same things they do. Anything a child doesn't like thus belongs to those who look the least similar to him. The spontaneous tendency to assume your group shares characteristics—such as niceness, or smarts—is called essentialism. Within the past decade or so, developmental psychologists have begun a handful of longitudinal studies to determine exactly when children develop bias. Phyllis Katz, then a professor at the University of Colorado, led one such study—following 100 black children and 100 white children for their first six years. She tested these children and their parents nine times during those six years, with the first test at 6 months old.

How do researchers test a 6-month-old? They show babies photographs of faces. Katz found that babies will stare significantly longer at photographs of faces that are a different race from their parents, indicating they find the face out of the ordinary. Race itself has no ethnic meaning per se—but children's brains are noticing skin-color differences and trying to understand their meaning.

When the kids turned 3, Katz showed them photographs of other children and asked them to choose whom they'd like to have as friends. Of the white children, 86 percent picked children of their own race. When the kids were 5 and 6, Katz gave these children a small deck of cards, with drawings of people on them. Katz told the children to sort the cards into two piles any way they wanted. Only 16 percent of the kids used gender to split the piles. But 68 percent of the kids used race to split the cards, without any prompting. In reporting her findings, Katz concluded: "I think it is fair to say that at no point in the study did the children exhibit the Rousseau type of color-blindness that many adults expect."

The point Katz emphasizes is that this period of our children's lives, when we imagine it's most important to not talk about race, is the very developmental period when children's minds are forming their first conclusions about race.

Several studies point to the possibility of developmental windows—stages when children's attitudes might be most amenable to change. In one experiment, children were put in cross-race study groups, and then were observed on the playground to see if the interracial classroom time led to interracial play at recess. The researchers found mixed study groups worked wonders with the first-grade children, but it made no difference with third graders. It's possible that by third grade,

when parents usually recognize it's safe to start talking a little about race, the developmental window has already closed. Is it really so difficult to talk with children about race when they're very young? What jumped out at Phyllis Katz, in her study of 200 black and white children, was that parents are very comfortable talking to their children about gender, and they work very hard to counterprogram against boy-girl stereotypes. That ought to be our model for talking about race. The same way we remind our daughters, "Mommies can be doctors just like daddies," we ought to be telling all children that doctors can be any skin color. It's not complicated what to say. It's only a matter of how often we reinforce it. Shushing children when they make an improper remark is an instinctive reflex, but often the wrong move. Prone to categorization, children's brains can't help but attempt to generalize rules from the examples they see. It's embarrassing when a child blurts out, "Only brown people can have breakfast at school," or "You can't play basketball; you're white, so you have to play baseball." But shushing them only sends the message that this topic is unspeakable, which makes race more loaded, and more intimidating.

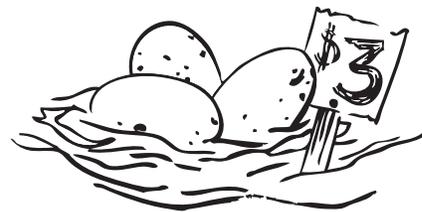
To be effective, researchers have found, conversations about race have to be explicit, in unmistakable terms that children understand. A friend of mine repeatedly told her 5-year-old son, "Remember, everybody's equal." She thought she was getting the message across. Finally, after seven months of this, her boy asked, "Mommy, what's 'equal' mean?"

The Pet People

Special Thanks to The Pet People of Los Gatos for keeping our fine guinea pigs stocked with provisions. The owners of The Pet People, Gary and Cindy Harwin, are Mountain School alums, and proud grandparents of Austen (4/5s) and Teagan (2s).

The Pet People is located at
514 North Santa Cruz Avenue, Los Gatos

Fresh Eggs For Sale



As some of you may have noticed, we are now selling farm fresh eggs at the schoolhouse. A Mountain School family donates these eggs and all proceeds go directly to the school. The hens eat only organic feed, including kitchen scraps and plenty of tasty bugs and weeds that they forage. If you haven't eaten farm fresh eggs, then you really haven't eaten eggs at all! The eggs are priced at \$3 a dozen. This is a win-win: you get nutritious and yummy eggs and the school benefits. Thanks.

Plant Peas with Your Kids Now!

Peas are some of the best vegetables to grow with little kids. Pea seeds or peas are big and easy for small fingers to grasp, they are painless to grow and they bear fruit quickly. Peas love cold weather, so now is the right time to plant them. Here are directions for an easy planting project that is guaranteed to inspire wonder!

What to Get at the Nursery

Seeds - Peas, Sugar Snap Peas, Snow Peas, OR any variety of Sweet Pea (go with either peas or sweet peas but try not to mix, peas are edible and sweet peas are flowering)

1 Bag Planting Mix

1 Bag Compost or Chicken Manure

1 Tripod Trellis (you can make a trellis with sticks, use old tomato cages, or even use an old lawn chair peas will climb almost anything)

What to do at Home

Find a sunny patch in your yard.

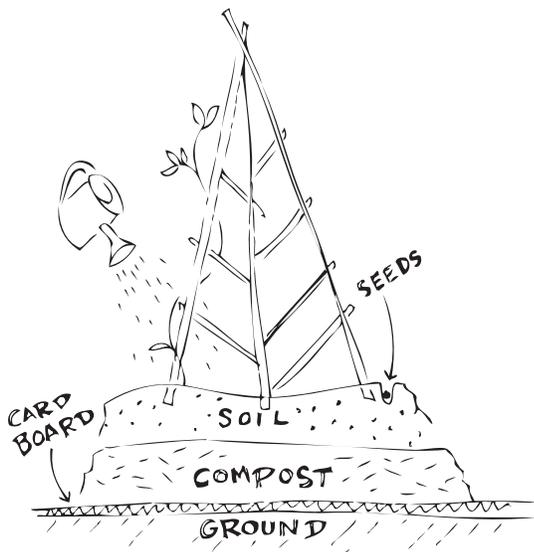
If there are weeds growing there put down cardboard or newspaper (this inhibits their growth).

Empty the bag of compost/manure and spread till it makes a plateau that is 4 inches high.

Empty the bag of planting mix on top of the compost/manure and repeat the 4 inch spreading.

Place the tripod trellis on top of the plateau.
Water the dirt if it is dry.

Poke lots of holes in the dirt around the base of the tripod and plant the seeds.



Water liberally with a child-size watering can!

Go Green

This is just a reminder that we are planning an e-waste fundraising event this year, although we have yet to confirm an exact date. We are hoping to again partner with Akeena Solar and are shooting for early April. So please hold on to your e-waste! This is potentially a big fundraising event for our little school. Last year's event was very profitable. We will keep you informed. If some of you have storage issues, contact us at cspears65@yahoo.com and we will make arrangements. Thank you for your patience and continuing support.

Missing

By Julie Andrews

I've lost my sense of humor,
It fell into a well
That's full of dark self-pity,
As far as I can tell.

I'm glared at by the children.
I'm yelled at by the boss.
And every little word I say
Makes everybody cross.

I'd run away and not come back
If it would do some good.
But nobody would notice
So I don't think I should.

I miss my sense of humor
And if, by chance, you see
It peeking round a corner
Please send it back to me.

Class Photo Days are Coming

By Anne Warner, School Photo Coordinator

Individual and class photos will be taken in color in an outdoor setting on your class photo day about 15 minutes after the start of class.

Saturday, February 27th - All Saturday Classes

Wednesday, March 3rd - Wed 2s and 4/5s

Thursday, March 4th - 3s and 3/4s

Friday, March 5th - Fri 2s



Sibling and or buddy photos can also be taken upon request. Please dress your children in colorful play or dress clothes.

Trees

By Harry Behn

Trees are the kindest things I know,
They do not harm, they simply grow

And spread a shade for sleepy cows,
And gather birds among their boughs.

They give us fruit in leaves above,
And wood to make our houses of,

And leaves to burn on Hallowe'en,
And in the Spring, new buds of green.

They are the first when day's begun
To touch the beams of morning sun,

They are the last to hold the light
When evening changes into night,

And when a mood floats on the sky
They hum a drowsy lullaby

Of sleepy children long ago...
Trees are the kindest things I know.



Camping with Friends - Unstructured Time in Wilderness

Alis Whitman
4/5s class

At the first 4/5s parents circle meeting this year we were asked to describe our most vivid childhood memory. Ninety-eight percent of my fellow parents described an activity that took place outdoors, and without parent supervision. We all agree that times have changed since we were kids. But boy times have really changed since Daniel Beard's era. In "The American Boy's Handy Book", first published in 1882, there is not a single mention of parents. In the scenarios Beard envisions, boys are presumed unsupervised and are expected to fend for themselves. They were to find/buy their own materials for projects, prepare their own meals, and even camp overnight in wilderness unchaperoned.

Last weekend we found an easy way to simulate some of that independence for young children without completely compromising modern day parent supervision standards. Our school encourages people to camp frequently at destinations not far from home. We accompanied many other families to Portola Redwoods State Park for the annual Fall Camping Trip. What happened on this trip that was so remarkable you

ask? Well my son politely and blissfully ignored me. I had about 10 minutes of interaction with Seth a day. Five minutes upon waking at dawn, and 5 minutes right before bed. The rest of the time he was off with his peers who were not with their parents either. A huge gaggle of kids ages 3 - 10 managed to get along beautifully, entertain themselves, teach others and learn. All without any parent intervention.

You might think that children unsupervised would result in a "Lord of the Flies" scenario, but in fact we witnessed quite the opposite. The kids, some of whom had never met before, acquainted themselves in the campsite. By the time we got down the trail to the creek they were old friends. They all knew each other's names, and got to work in the creek right away. In the photos at www.boysalmanac.com the kids are working as a team to harvest charcoal from a burned out Redwood trunk. They have brought it to the creek side, and are adding water to make black paint in their industrious factory. The teamwork displayed in this endeavor was nothing short of miraculous. A true testament to the innate collaborative nature of children when left to their own devices in a wilderness setting.

One of the other parents remarked, "If it was just our family on this camping trip, I would be the entertainment. The kids would come to me saying they were bored and ask me what they should do." I think what he said resonates with most parents. Our children are too dependent on us for structure. In Daniel Beard's day there would have been school for most youngsters, but the rest of the time they could help with chores, or they could head out to be a person in the world.

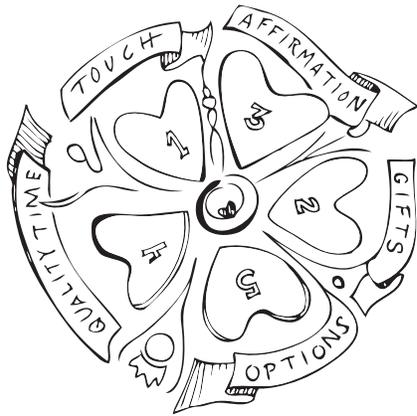
Richard Louv and other proponents of the "children in nature movement" espouse that in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century children would have played in wilderness areas far more than children today. The theory being that natural settings are calm places without "human structure" where children can tap into their primal play roots. The young brain is designed to practice becoming a human in non-built environments. Environments that are shaped by natural tree lines, open sky, rocky canyons, flowing streams are all felt to be the type of stimuli that foster unstructured play, an essential part of healthy child development. I, for one, witnessed collaboration, creativity, problem solving, community and the utmost positive attitude when we let our children "fend for themselves" over this family camp weekend. You can easily try this close to home on a camping trip with other families. Or, if you already live in a rural area, you could have a play date to just go to the creek. Hang back and let the kids to the work, they seem to know exactly what to do. Your job as a parent is to give them the chance.

Here are a few helpful links/reading materials if you are wary of this idea and need to be nudged toward nature :-)

Children in Nature Collaborative www.cincbayarea.org
Children & Nature Network www.childrenandnature.org
"Last Child in the Woods" by Richard Louv

The 5 Love Languages of Children

Submitted by Jennifer Clark



One of the members of a local moms group highly recommended a book that resonated with many parents. The book is called, "The 5 Love Languages of Children" by Gary Chapman, Ph.D and Ross Campbell, M.D. Here is the information my friend shared with our group:

"I love the book The 5 Love Languages of Children!"

According to the authors, each child expresses and receives love through one of five different communication styles. A parent's love language may be totally different from that of his or her child, which causes hurt feelings and misunderstandings. With the help of this book, adults can discover their child's primary language and learn what they can do to effectively convey unconditional feelings of respect, affection, and commitment that will resonate in their child's emotions and behavior.

1. Observe how your child expresses love to you.

Chapman and Campbell: Watch your child; he may well be speaking his own language. This is particularly true of a young child, who is very likely to express love to you in the language he desires most to receive.

I've seen this with my own 4 1/2 year old. Noah will come up to me or my husband, and try to engage us in a wrestling match. Or he'll pat our arms, give us a hug, etc. He has shown us that his main love language is that of Physical Touch.

2. Observe how your child expresses love to others.

If you notice your child making crafts for relatives, or wanting to take presents to classmates or teacher, this may indicate that her primary love language is Gifts.

3. Listen to what your child requests most often.

If your child often asks you questions like "How do I look, Mommy?", "What do you think of my drawing?", or "Did you think I did well at practice today?" this pattern may indicate that his love language is Words of Affirmation.

4. Notice what your child most frequently complains about.

Frequent complaints such as "You never have time for me", "Why don't you play games with me?", or "We never do things together" would be indicative of the need for Quality Time.

5. Give your child a choice between two options.

Chapman and Campbell suggest leading your child to make choices between two love languages. For example, a Dad might say to his son, "I have some free time Saturday. Would you like me to fix your bike, or would you rather go to the park together and shoot some hoops?" The choice is between Acts of Service and Quality Time. A mother may say, "I have some time tonight. Would you like to go shopping, and I'll help you pick out a new book, or would you rather stay home and we'll do a puzzle together?" You've given her the choice between Gifts and Quality Time.

Chapman and Campbell explain: As you give options for several weeks, keep a record of your child's choices. If most of them tend to cluster around one of the five love languages, you have likely discovered which one makes your child feel most loved. At times, your child will not want either option, and will suggest something else. You should keep a record of those requests also, since they may give you clues.

Of course, the choices you offer your child will depend on age and interest.

I highly recommend this book for understanding your child's own unique love languages, and how you can better fill his or her "love tank"!

ChewOnThis.org

A nutritional web site that is aimed at kids and has activity sheets, this could be a good teaching resource and launching point for parents to address nutrition with their kids. It has information about tricky advertising, nutrition and healthy foods all shared in language that kids understand.

www.chewonthis.org.uk

The 11 Best Foods You Aren't Eating

By Tara Parker-Pope
<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/>

Maybe you should be eating more beets, left, or chopped cabbage ...

Nutritionist and author Jonny Bowden has created several lists of healthful foods people should be eating but aren't. But some of his favorites, like purslane, guava and goji berries, aren't always available at regular grocery stores. I asked Dr. Bowden, author of "The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth," to update his list with some favorite foods that are easy to find but don't always find their way into our shopping carts. Here's his advice.

1. **Beets:** Think of beets as red spinach, Dr. Bowden said, because they are a rich source of folate as well as natural red pigments that may be cancer fighters.

How to eat: Fresh, raw and grated to make a salad. Heating decreases the antioxidant power.

2. **Cabbage:** Loaded with nutrients like sulforaphane, a chemical said to boost cancer-fighting enzymes.

How to eat: Asian-style slaw or as a crunchy topping on burgers and sandwiches.

3. **Swiss chard:** A leafy green vegetable packed with carotenoids that protect aging eyes.

How to eat it: Chop and saute in olive oil.

4. **Cinnamon:** May help control blood sugar and cholesterol.

How to eat it: Sprinkle on coffee or oatmeal.

5. **Pomegranate juice:** Appears to lower blood pressure and loaded with antioxidants.

How to eat: Just drink it.

6. **Dried plums:** Okay, so they are really prunes, but they are packed with antioxidants.

How to eat: Wrapped in prosciutto and baked.

7. **Pumpkin seeds:** The most nutritious part of the pumpkin and packed with magnesium; high levels of the mineral are associated with lower risk for early death.

How to eat: Roasted as a snack, or sprinkled on salad.

8. **Sardines:** Dr. Bowden calls them "health food in a can." They are high in omega-3's, contain virtually no mercury and are loaded with calcium. They also contain

iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper and manganese as well as a full complement of B vitamins.

How to eat: Choose sardines packed in olive or sardine oil. Eat plain, mixed with salad, on toast, or mashed with dijon mustard and onions as a spread.

9. **Turmeric:** The "superstar of spices," it may have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties.

How to eat: Mix with scrambled eggs or in any vegetable dish.

10. **Frozen blueberries:** Even though freezing can degrade some of the nutrients in fruits and vegetables, frozen blueberries are available year-round and don't spoil; associated with better memory in animal studies.

How to eat: Blended with yogurt or chocolate soy milk and sprinkled with crushed almonds.

11. **Canned pumpkin:** A low-calorie vegetable that is high in fiber and immune-stimulating vitamin A; fills you up on very few calories.

How to eat: Mix with a little butter, cinnamon and nutmeg.

You can find more details and recipes on menshealth.com, which published the original version of the list last year.

Kindness

by Jane Krejci

I am often disturbed by the lack of civility in our society at large.

There is disrespect - bullying - foul language - put-downs - the rancor of partisanship.

(Do I sound old? Yep, I am - but hopefully only chronologically!)

We can blame the media, social networking, globalization; but first we need to look at ourselves.

"Socialization of our children begins in our own homes and is reinforced by our extended family, the friends we keep, the communities we choose to be part of."

Do we respect ourselves and others? Do we have compassion for ourselves and others? Do our words and actions and behavior reflect this respect and compassion? Socialization of our children begins in our own homes and is reinforced by our extended family, the friends we keep, the communities we choose to be part of. These are the most influential groups for

our children and the preschool years are the most influential times.

What is kindness? Kind is not synonymous with nice. Kindness means that we are thoughtful in word and deed. We are honest, but not hurtful. We assess any situation and choose words and actions that will do the least harm and contribute to the greatest good. Kindness has power both in its simplicity - and its breadth. It might be as simple as holding a door open for another - or choosing to buy fair trade goods.

Our speaker on emotional intelligence reminded us of the importance of acknowledging and expressing feelings. Communication (open and honest dialogue) is key to building and maintaining a healthy community. As teachers and parents, we are modeling daily for our children how we express feelings, respect others, resolve conflicts, meet our own needs and contribute to the larger community. Are we doing it with kindness?

“Above All, Be Kind”

- Zoe Weil

I observe our wonderful teachers displaying great kindness as they work with the children.

- They observe.
- They listen.
- They reflect.
- They ask questions.
- They express feelings.
- They empathize.
- They respond with firmness.
- They assess situations.
- They acknowledge mistakes.
- They say, ‘I’m sorry.’
- They facilitate play.
- They revere the natural world.
- They help to resolve conflicts.
- They respect the children.
- They build the group.
- They learn from the children.
- They learn from parents.
- They learn from other teachers.
- They care.

....and through it all they are KIND! (Thank you teachers!)

“My life is my message.”

A reporter once asked Mahatma Gandhi, “What is your message?” He answered, “My life is my message.” What a powerful and universal truth! I challenge myself - and all

of us - to reflect on the messages we are sending. I know I will constantly strive to make kindness an integral part of my message. How about you?



The best, like water,
Benefit all and do not compete...
In their dwelling, they love the earth;
In their heart, they love what is deep;
In personal relationships, they love kindness;
In their words, they love truth.
In the world, they love peace.
In personal affairs, they love what is right....

- Lao Tzu

Cranberry Fun and Fruit Leather Recipe



Recently in the 4/5s class, mommy Ashleigh set up a galvanized tub on a table, filled it with water, and - to the delight of kids who investigated what was floating in the water - added cranberries! The effect was something akin to a cranberry bog, and the kids were in charge of harvesting. There were strainers to “harvest” the berries, and mashers to “process” them, and for cooking time she brought homemade cranberry fruit leather. The cranberry cooking day in the 4/5s class was spectacular. Thanks Ashleigh! If you want to try this with your class, here is the recipe:

Cranberry Fruit Leather

- 1 bag of cranberries
- honey to taste (about 1/2-1 cup per bag of cranberries)

Puree in a heavy duty blender like a vitamix or Cuisinart. If too thick, add a tablespoon of water at a time or more honey. Sometimes I add a persimmon or an apple or any other ripe fruit that might be tasty. For chunkier fruit leather puree less, for a smoother fruit leather puree more.

Pour puree onto cookie sheets covered with plastic wrap. Spread the puree about 1/8 inch thick. You can spread thinner but it is difficult to peel off if too thin. Dry in oven at 140 degrees (many ovens have a dehydrate function) for about 12 hours but it can take up to 24 hours if your puree is really thick or really liquid. Remove from oven when dry, let sit for 5 minutes to cool slightly and peel off plastic wrap and wrap in parchment paper or plastic wrap to store. You can also use a food dehydrator and follow its instructions for drying the fruit leather.

A Lifetime of Lessons (aka Carpool Crazy)

By Teacher Marie

Does your carpool drive you crazy? Are you worried that your child will pick up every bad habit that he or she is exposed to during the 15 minute ride up to the mountains or even the 2 ½ hours at school itself?

Remember that childhood is a time of experimentation; a time to try on different personalities, different behaviors and responses just to see what happens next. It's almost an unconscious act, not one premeditated to annoy the adults who love them. So what is one to do?

- Ignore the behavior and it will decrease without your reinforcing attention

- If it is hurtful to others, be authoritarian (this is an appropriate parental response after all) and say "that is not ok with me to talk that way...I will stop the car if I hear it again" – or whatever consequence you prefer.

- Help each child – especially the victim of the moment - to find their own voice and protest loudly. This is perhaps one of the most important lessons to learn. It takes years of practice and the sooner one begins the better. Most of us wish we could express our own needs and desires more clearly to those around us, I know that I certainly do.

- And don't forget the parenting tool that has such potential to lighten one's day: HUMOR! Make up silly words to use as warnings or ways to remember a rule. Get the children to help as silliness is their specialty.

Most behaviors that we just can't stand are temporary and as soon as we release our own anxiety around the situation things seem to get better and the behavior actually decreases. Be thankful that you have the time to play such a vital part in your child's life and actually know what is going on with him or her and the other children in your class. You are modeling conflict resolution for your children and we learn most by doing, by facing the challenges of difficult situations straight on. Children need to hear the adults around them talking about their feelings and brainstorming ideas for solving problems. To become good at anything one must practice quite a lot. I've heard it takes 20,000 hours get good at something – becoming a musician or an athlete – so laugh a little and welcome another opportunity to practice your parenting.

Talk to everyone in your class and in your carpool. How do they handle this situation? What works? What doesn't? How can you work together to make things better?

And what if it is another parent rather than the children who

are the source of your difficulties? Examine yourself first. Why does the situation bug you so much? Is it about timeliness or cleanliness? Are your wishes reasonable? Or are you a perfectionist who needs to relax a bit? How can you best express your feelings? Take a big breath and talk about the situation with that parent. Ask them about their feelings. Becoming a parent opens up so many new opportunities for personal growth and life is about our growing as well as our children. Celebrate every small step in improving your communication skills with both adults and children.

With a smile, a hug, a silly joke and some matter-of-fact rules or expectations you may not go crazy after all.

Love,
Teacher Marie

Patience and a Dry Towel

by Jill Hansen

Happy New Year! There were so many ideas running through my head as I contemplated writing an article for the newsletter. Honestly, where do you begin? I decided to focus on one of those items that is difficult for many of us - living in the moment and keeping your patience.

This morning when I was getting ready to leave for work, Nicole asked me to get her boots and umbrella out of the garage so she could go out and stomp in the giant puddle we get in our backyard each time it rains. I have a hard time saying no when she asks to go out, but I know that it will only be a matter of moments until she begins one of her favorite rituals.

Nicole likes to go out with her ladybug boots and new matching umbrella to stomp in puddles. She likes to make sound effects to go along with the plop of a heavy dog ball sinking in water. Plop goes the ball. Splash goes the dog. Nicole likes to kick and stomp, feeling the mud between her toes, but the boots get in the way! Off go the boots, with a precise, practiced flick of the leg. Then the pants get wet, because the boots aren't there to protect them, and it's hard to take your pants off while you're holding an umbrella! Nicole is then forced to sit down and peel her wet pants off. Sitting down in the mud gets her underwear wet. Off go the underwear. Within 5 minutes she is naked in the backyard with the umbrella, running, stomping, splashing, squishing and playing. As soon as she finds some mud that sticks to her legs, she abandons the umbrella and paints her body. When I go to check on her, I can see where she has been playing based on the deposition of clothes and shoes across the yard. I remember what it felt like to be a little kid, **WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD!**

My lesson from this morning is to live in the moment, be patient, and always have a dry towel handy.

Food and Fund Drive

When? Now! We are collecting donations until February 13th.

We are excited to rally in aid of our community and run a food & fund drive to benefit Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. Most of us know someone who is struggling to make ends meet and we have the opportunity to ensure that no child, family or senior goes hungry.

Through your generosity we can provide hope for the 207,000 people Second Harvest feeds each month. Please join us in this effort to feed our neighbors who, each month, have to decide between paying for rent, utilities, or medicine and providing food for their loved ones.

Where and How?

Donate funds online: Go to www.VirtualHarvest.net to make a donation and see how Second Harvest can stretch your dollar.

Choose Donor Type: school and our organization's name, LGSONS to have it count towards our community drive.

Donate food onsite: Drop off food donations in the barrels located at the School house.

Please use our shopping list of most needed foods:

Meals in a Can (Stew, Chili, and Soup)

Peanut Butter

100% Fruit Juices

Canned Fruits

Canned Vegetables

Tuna/Canned Meat

Low-Sugar Cereal

Cans with pop top lids

Why? Nothing else matters when you're hungry. Give a gift that matters at this critical time. If your cupboards are full, please help others who don't know where their next meal will come from. No donation is too small; giving as little as \$10 is enough to provide 20 people with the most basic human need: food.

Because every \$1 provides 2 meals and 95 cents of every \$1 donated to the Food Bank is used to feed hungry people in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, you can be assured your contribution will make a difference. Visit their website at www.SecondHarvestFood.org for more information.

Thank you in advance for your participation!