

Southminster Nursery School News



April Showers Bring May Flowers



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From Michele

It is always hard to believe when the end of the school year is near. At the beginning of March, I thought we had so much time left. Not thinking that now. It looks like the rest of the year will fly by just as fast as this past month.

When looking back on this year, my favorite thing has been watching your children learn with excitement, eagerness and pure wonderment. It's amazing to watch them figure things out and make sense of all that is in front of them. I really think this is the best part of my job. To quietly sit and listen to your children and watch them learn.

I also think the most important part of my job, and all of us in the early learning field, is to advocate for young children and to support the facts with regard to how young children learn best.

This is becoming a more difficult task these days.

As many of you know, kindergarten has become more like a first grade classroom. Due to the core standards that school districts have to follow. Core standards are the new thing. Before that was no child left behind, and before that was something else. A few years from now, it will change again.

What is easy to see is what is right in front of all of us. The way young children learn is the same now as it was when you were little, when my kids were little. Even when I was little.

Child development remains consistent and constant. All children still pass through Piaget's stages of development sequentially. They may progress at different rates, but it is always sequential. So, if we know this to be fact why do the powers that be think it's ok to change the "requirements" of what children should be able to do before entering kindergarten?

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APAT NEWS

Greetings families!

It's hard to believe that the end of the school year is just around the corner! For some of your children, like our oldest boys, they will be off to Kindergarten in the fall. For the younger children, they will be moving onto the next level of preschool. It's always bittersweet as a parent to think about them growing up, stepping out of their comfort zone and taking on exciting new adventures. We wish all of the children (and you) the warmest of wishes as these new beginnings get underway!

The Ice Cream Social & Dance Party is this Friday, April 7. Please join us in Fellowship Hall for dancing with D.J. Bob and Scoops on Beverly Ice Cream Sundaes (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.)

Thank you so much to all of our families who participated in this year's fundraisers! Your support of these efforts goes a long way to helping us reach our goal of a new school playground!

Our last social event of this school year is the Year End Picnic which will be held on Thursday, May 11. We hope that your family can join us for this fun filled day at the park! Details about the event will be sent out as we get a little closer to the day.

Enjoy the rest of Spring and have a safe and enjoyable Summer!

Stacie Carlson & Lauren Kocher \
APAT Co-Chairs

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Seriously, just because the core standards are in place why do kids have to come in ready to do things they are not developmentally ready to do?

All this does is stress out a child. A child coming into kindergarten will be ready to write their letters and numbers, count past 20, do math, beginning reading sounds, etc. once they have mastered the early childhood things we focus on in pre-school.

Kindergarten and beyond is about learning in a formal way, correct answers are necessary and are expected. Not so for pre-school. In pre-school teachers nurture a child's curiosity. To nurture curiosity and motivation to learn, teachers use children's interests and ideas to create activities. A child discovering a worm on the playground can be turned into an exciting learning opportunity, imagination fuels learning.

When teaching math and early literacy, yes we really do teach these things, we do so in the context of activities that are interesting and meaningful to children. Not as isolated exercises.

The prerequisites for entering kindergarten should not be mastering writing their uppercase and lowercase letters. It should not be writing their number from 1-20 or knowing all the sight words and becoming experts in phonetic development. The focus on kindergarten readiness should be the ability to take care of their personal needs, be able to play with others, have a very strong curiosity and eagerness to learn. They should be able to self-regulate as in controlling impulses, pay attention, follow directions, handle frustrations and negotiate solutions to problems.

Academically, I do agree young children should be comfortable with, not masters of, letters, shapes, colors and rhyming words, counting objects to 10 and writing their own first name. BUT the most important skills for young children to have before entering kindergarten are social and emotional skills. These are the skills that will make them ready and eager to succeed throughout all elementary school.

Pushing academics into their pre-school years is not only wrong, but it is harmful to a child. Children who are forced to learn in more formal ways during these early years are robbed of the excitement and the curiosity that comes naturally to a child. What happens then is we send, to kindergarten, a child who is bored, anxious and not interested in learning. When we do our job right, children go to kindergarten with the same eagerness to learn that we see here in Pre-school.

To prepare your child for kindergarten you need to limit screen time so they can play more to develop both gross motor and fine motor skills. You want them to be in a quality pre-school program where child readiness is based on their developmental levels. Where their needs are met. Where they feel safe and can develop positive relationships with their teachers. If you put all this in place for your child they will achieve what they need for kindergarten: the ability to follow directions, to focus and pay attention, to take turns, to control themselves, to solve problems with words rather than through aggression. The ability to work independently, to work well in a group, to be able to make friends, to communicate with other children and to communicate with adults.

School districts are continually trying to push down into pre-school mastery and exposure to things that were, not too long ago, skills that were taught in kindergarten. Please remember, the way children learn at three and four years old is much different than the way they learn at five, six, and seven years old.

The question is, do you want your child to enter elementary school excited and ready to embrace the challenge ahead, or do you want them to be bored, tired and stressed out from taking on an approach to learning they are just not Developmentally ready for?

Please remember, a child coming in from a play based pre-school program will be just as prepared, as a child who comes from an academic based pre-school program. The difference is, they will be eager to continue to learn. The other child, well they may very well be tired of the whole learning experience.

Happy Spring!

-- *Michele*

APRIL/MAY DATES TO REMEMBER

April 3 & 4: Science with Mrs. McGinley

April 4: Chipotle Fundraiser

April 7: Ice Cream Social & Dance Party

April 10 – 17: No School

April 27: 4's and Pre-K trip to the Museum

May 1: Open House 6:00-8:00 – More information to come

May 11: APAT End of Year Picnic @ Mt Lebanon Park – details to come

May 19: Last Day of School

May 30 – June 2: First week of camp

June 5 – 8: Second week of camp

Please remember camp is available to our students who have completed the 3's, 4's, or Pre-K classes.

Two Day Two's

It is hard to believe we are coming to the end of our school year so soon! We can't believe the time has gone by so quickly. The kids each continue to amaze us with how much they have grown and changed. From using a friend's name, sharing a coveted toy or playing much more interactively, we see how far they have all come this year.

In April and May, we will focus on growth and change through studying plants, butterflies and bugs. We plan to squeeze as much fun and learning into these last few weeks with things like planting seeds, caring for plants and learning about the lifecycle of butterflies.

Thank you for allowing us to spend our mornings with your precious children. We have had so much fun!

Lori Guenther and Nicole Gilberg



Two Day Three's / Three Day Three's

March blew in with a lesson on the shape of a diamond; we hope that you enjoyed flying the kites at home! The children made a sun catcher out of wax paper and glue and hung them in the window to showcase the glorious sun in these early days of Spring. The children were in rare form in the ballroom pretending to hide the eggs (playground balls) in the nest (circular balance beam) and chirp loudly when a snake was too close! They explored the variety of birds, nests, and bird calls. We are looking forward to the month of April: purple, shape of the oval, and the study of the butterfly. We will conclude the year with a study of Spring.

We are thankful for the support of the families and caregivers throughout the year. The library shelf was always filled with interesting books, the play dough table was delightful, and the donations-priceless. The children have blossomed and are on their way to more good things; thank you for choosing our school for your little one!



Kindest Regards,
Mrs. Szigethy, Mrs. Santos and Mrs. Hannan

Three Day Three's

It is hard to believe that our time together is almost up! It has been so much fun and honor to work with your children. Throughout the month of March we learned about buildings. We read about different types of houses around the world and talked about different ways to build houses. We read three different versions of the Three Little Pigs and created houses made out of straw, sticks and 'bricks'. They also made their own buildings out of cereal boxes and played with their 'city' in our room. During our short month of April we will focus on Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. We will sort materials in class, read stories about recycling and reusing items, and find ways to use our 'trash' for art projects. This is a fun theme and I am sure your children will become great recyclers by the end of it! As always, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask!

Mrs. Maggio and Mrs. Frederick



Three Day Four's

Happy Spring! Thank you so much for attending the Spirit of Music program. The children did an outstanding performance! We are so proud of all they have accomplished this year.

March was our Ocean study and the children explored the deep blue sea in our cardboard submarine and coral reef. We discussed where sea shells come from, how waves are formed, and tested whether an egg will float in clear or salty water. The children also created beautiful art after such as foil fish and jellyfish. I think the most fun they had was the ocean water table!

April will bring us to our Dinosaur study. Some of the exciting activities we plan to do are going on a dinosaur dig in the sand containers searching for fossils, using our math skills to determine how big some dinosaurs truly were, recreating dino scales. On April 27 we will celebrate our study by taking a trip to Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

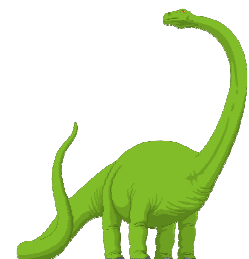
April will also be the start of Creation Station! Thank you so much for all the recyclables. The children are brimming with excitement at the thought of being able to use these materials in our classroom. I can't wait to see what they do.

May is our last month together as a class and we will end our time together with giggles and smiles! We will be ending our Dinosaur study in May, then continuing with a mini study of plants and seeds, messy art, water science and play, pool noodle obstacle courses, and of course Creation Station.

P.S. Thank you parents for being Super Special Readers! The children absolutely love when you come in!

Have a Great Summer,

Mrs. Byrne and Mrs. Watts



Four Day Four's

We are very happy in 4 Day 4s about the arrival of spring weather! We have spent March doing a study of oceans. Students have learned about the importance of oceans through various sensory experiences, as well as stories and art projects. The highlight of this study seemed to be the creation of sea creatures-particularly the octopus. We will be moving on to a study of dinosaurs in April to prepare us for our Natural History Museum trip. Students will be learning about the types of dinosaurs, how they lived, and how big they were. We will also be hosting painted lady caterpillars and observing their growth and metamorphosis. This will help us to learn about life cycles. During our open house in May, you will have the opportunity to see some of the projects from these studies on display. We hope to see you there. We will finish out our year with a quick study of recycling in May. Thanks so much for sharing your incredible children with us this year! It has been our privilege to learn and grow with them.

Mrs. Kontos and Mrs. Moses



Pre-K

Spring has finally arrived and our Pre-K class has been very excited about the beautiful weather! In March, we have been studying oceans. Students have spent time learning about various sea creatures and the impact oceans have on our world through stories, art, and sensory experiences. Painting underwater scenes and making jellyfish were among the favorite activities. In April, we look forward to a study of dinosaurs, which will prepare us for our field trip to the museum at the end of the month. We will also be learning about the life cycle of a butterfly through our experience of hosting painted lady caterpillars during their growth and metamorphosis. We hope you will join us for our open house in May, during which you will see many projects from our studies on display. We will finish out the school year with a quick study of recycling in May. Thank you so much for sharing your amazing children with us this year! It has been our pleasure to grow and learn with them.

Mrs. Kontos and Mrs. Moses



Pre-K

March brought the ocean roaring to life in the Pre-K classroom. The children had the chance to jump on a surf board and paddle out to the surf. We were happy to explore the depths of the ocean with a bulletin board showcasing the kelp forest. The children created a coral reef and were able to go deep in a submarine complete with periscope, flashlights, and 'robotic' arm. They touched sea shells, star fish, and went fishing in the water table. They listened to whales singing and pretended to be manatees rolling. We are looking forward to exploring the dinosaurs and a field trip to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in April. In May we will complete the alphabet folders, journals, the Weekly Reader series and a study of summer fun!

We are filled with feelings of pride and joy for the children that will be moving on to Kindergarten in the Fall. They have experienced a sample of what the future holds and have embraced the studies through play in preschool. The best is yet to be in their educational journey and we are grateful to have been a part of that development!

Kindest Regards,
Mrs. Szigethy and Mrs. Watts



Kindergarten Enrichment

April will bring the Kindergarten Enrichment class to our final continent - Australia!

Our first topic to study will be the Great Barrier Reef. We will learn about how many living things depend upon the coral reef, including humans! The kids will make a coral reef in the hallway and fill it with fish and other animals that live there.

We will move on to talk about the native people to Australia, the Aborigines. The kids will study the traditional art forms of the Aborigines which are characterized by white dots. The kindergarteners will make paper canoes in the liking of Aboriginal fishing boats. Then they will use dot art to paint the canoes.

The Sydney Opera House will be our final stop in Australia. After learning that the design for the opera house preceded the technological capabilities at the time, we will design our own original structures. The kids will then build these structures out of packing peanuts.

Throughout the month we will learn about marsupial animals that are native to Australia.

April will be the month we wrap up our tour of the world!

Mrs. Haberberger &
Mrs. Guenther



Camp Information

- Please join us for camp this year. All children currently enrolled in our 3's, 4's and Pre-K classes are invited to join us.
- Camp dates are: May 30 – June 2 and June 5-8. Please note, the first week is Tuesday-Friday and the second week is Mon-Thursday. All classes are from 9:00-11:30.

Sign-ups will come home soon!

Eat + Play = Learn

We visited the ocean in March in E+P=L! The children created puppet jellyfish, bubble wrap starfish, painted an ocean mural, and decorated a seashell. April will be our Science Experiments theme. Some experiments we may do are 1) make a boat 2) water displacement and 3) homemade butter to name a few. In May we will do a mini study of plants and seeds.

We are starting to notice at lunch that the children are now able to open, twist off, and tear their packages in their lunches. "No, thank you. I can do it by myself", is what we often hear them say. You all should be very proud!

Easter will be upon us soon and that means candy. Before you add that piece of chocolate to your child's lunch please check to see if it contains nuts or peanut butter or has been processed in a facility that contains nuts. Thanks.

Have a great summer,
Mrs. Byrne and Mrs. Frederick

Music

I hope you all enjoyed the Spirit of Music week – I thought the children were absolutely amazing

As we end the year, we will revisit some of our favorite songs and dances and continue to learn new songs and rhythms.

I have had several requests for information about the songs we sing in class. Watch for an email before the end of the year with information about where you can find these songs and albums. I encourage you to play and sing all summer long!

Thank you for a wonderful year!
Mrs. Kline

Five Little Flowers

Five little flowers standing in the sun
See their heads nodding, bowing one by one?
Down, down, down comes the gentle rain \\
And the five little flowers lift their heads up again!