



# Fraser School<sup>®</sup> News

*A Newsletter for Parents of Fraser School Students*

## An Open Letter From Deedee

Dear Families,

The past five weeks have been a whirlwind of learning names and faces, reading Fraser School policies and practices, and greeting Fraser School families. If I haven't been able to meet you yet, feel free to stop by my office (across from the Platypus classroom) and introduce yourself.

Thank you to those of you who were able to make it to the school's open house. I know that weekday evenings can be very full, however, attending school events can show your children that you are interested and involved in their education. This is especially important to establish when they are young so that, as they grow, they know that you will remain involved in their education.

Speaking of education, did you know the kinds of curriculum that Fraser School utilizes in our different classrooms? I didn't, so I asked the school's assistant director, Brenda Hall, to summarize them for you. She did a tremendous job and you will find this information on page 2 of this newsletter.

As I'm learning the Fraser School policies, I want to make sure that you are aware of them too. For example, even though having your child (even older children) punch the numbers on the keypad at the doors may seem like a great math activity, it is a Fraser School safety policy that only adults open gates and doors at the school. We want to make sure that **all** Fraser personnel and families are consistent with this policy. If children would run ahead of their caregivers, they could open the doors and be unattended in our hallways. This is unsafe and a violation of the state regulations by which we are licensed. Thank you so much for cooperating with us about this.

Another Fraser School policy that I've learned is that it is extremely important for caregivers to drop off and pick up their children when they are scheduled. Classrooms are staffed based upon the number of children who are expected. When even one child comes earlier or is picked up later than scheduled, an extra staff person may be needed and may not be available.

Another concern that has surfaced is the snacks that are offered. Our health consultants plan snacks based upon nutritional content and keeping in mind the most common childhood allergies. They also consider foods that are choking hazards (such as grapes) because the snacks are served to children younger than 3. Finally, as in all childcare centers, cost plays a role in snack selection. As the school

year progresses, we are hoping to expand our snack menu to include some additional choices that fit all the aforementioned criteria. And, as always, if you would prefer that your child not eat a snack that is offered on a specific day, you are welcome to send an alternative snack.



Finally, various staff members have had some questions about the learning environment here. On page 4 of this newsletter I've written a small article about our developmentally appropriate practice of play-based learning and how effective this is for the early childhood years. If you have further questions, you can check this philosophy out at the National Association for the Education of Young Children ([www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)).

Have a fantastic October!

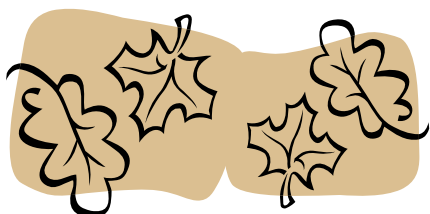
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### Schedule Notes

**October 16– CLOSED**  
record keeping day

**October 17– CLOSED**  
conferences

The Fraser School calendar  
can be found at  
[www.fraser.org/calendar](http://www.fraser.org/calendar)



## **Fraser School uses a variety of curricula to teach children in all developmental areas.**

Fraser School curriculum is theme based, developmentally appropriate and individualized to meet the developmental stages of each child. We have adopted the philosophy of Lev Vygotsky, believing that we learn through socially interacting with others who are more “expert” than ourselves and the most important aspect of an early childhood program is improving a child’s social skills and interactions. We believe that:

- children and families benefit from the experience of diversity;
- play periods are as important as structured learning times; and
- music therapy plays an integral role in physical, cognitive and social/emotional development.

### **Pro-Social Development Curricula:**

Fraser School preschool classrooms choose between two pro-social development curricula. Many elements of children’s learning are based on caring relationships with teachers and peers. Social and emotional skills provide the foundation necessary for children to thrive, think and achieve academically. When schools have social competence and emotional literacy as a goal, behavior problems and aggressive behaviors decrease and the children are able to take full advantage of their abilities and learning opportunities.

### **The Incredible Years**

The Dinosaur Social Skills and Problem Solving curriculum is a child-centered curriculum that strengthens social, emotional and academic competences such as understanding and communicating feelings, using problem solving strategies, managing anger, practicing friendship and conversational skills, as well as appropriate classroom behaviors.

Curriculum is delivered 1-2 times a week and consists of 10-20 minute circle time lessons taught through puppets (Dina the Dinosaur, Wally, Molly and Tiny Turtle.)

**Second Step** is an award winning pro-social development curriculum aligned to our state educational standards. It integrates academics with social and emotional learning with weekly lessons, pictures and the use of puppets (Impulsive Puppy and Slow Down Snail.) Children learn and practice vital social skills such as empathy, emotion management, problem solving and cooperation.

### **Classroom Enhancement Curricula:**

**Opening the World of Learning (OWL)** is a comprehensive early literacy program designed for preschoolers. OWL includes six units, each providing weekly activities in all content areas of development. OWL provides activities and experiences that children enjoy and that ensure the learning of academic and social skills leading to school success.

### **Big Math for Little Kids**

is a comprehensive program for 4-5 year olds. It develops and expands on the mathematics that children know and are capable of doing. The program uses activities and stories to develop ideas about number, shape, pattern, logical reasoning, measurement, operations on numbers and space. The program produces playful but purposeful learning of deep mathematical ideas and encourages children to think about and express their mathematical thinking.

**SPARK** Creative Arts Curriculum is a literacy-based, culturally sensitive classroom curriculum that provides opportunities for children to achieve developmental and school readiness skills by actively attending to specific stories and by participating

in activities based on concepts in the areas of music, art and make-believe. Children learn by using open-ended materials as they engage in hands-on creative arts activities.

### **Observational Assessment Tools:**

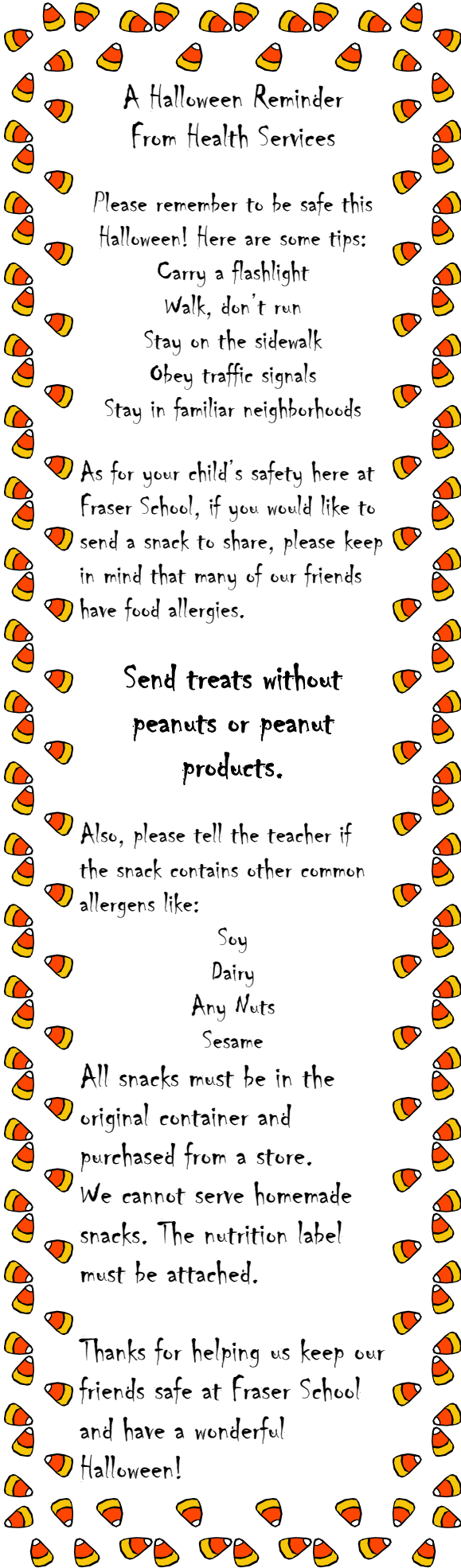
#### **Infants & Toddlers use The Ounce Scale**

is an ongoing, functional assessment system for children birth to 3 1/2. It is an observational assessment that focuses provider’s attention on developmentally significant events in children’s lives. It focuses on how children use skills in the context of their natural environment. Providers and families work together to learn about the child’s development in four basic domains: social and emotional, communication and language, cognitive development and physical development. This information is recorded onto an age-appropriate developmental profile that is shared with families at conference times.

#### **Preschoolers use The Work Sampling System**

is an authentic performance assessment for children 3-5. It helps teachers document and evaluate children’s skills, knowledge and behaviors using classroom-based experiences, activities and products. The system is based on seven domains of classroom learning and experience: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts and physical development. This information is recorded onto an age-appropriate developmental checklist and shared with families at conference times.

**All Ages-Portfolios** are purposeful collections of children’s work that illustrate efforts, progress and achievement. They are intended to display the individual nature and quality of children’s work and progress over time. Collected items are designed to show growth over time by representing learning within a specific domain.



## A Halloween Reminder From Health Services

Please remember to be safe this  
Halloween! Here are some tips:

Carry a flashlight

Walk, don't run

Stay on the sidewalk

Obey traffic signals

Stay in familiar neighborhoods

As for your child's safety here at  
Fraser School, if you would like to  
send a snack to share, please keep  
in mind that many of our friends  
have food allergies.

Send treats without  
peanuts or peanut  
products.

Also, please tell the teacher if  
the snack contains other common  
allergens like:

Soy

Dairy

Any Nuts

Sesame

All snacks must be in the  
original container and  
purchased from a store.

We cannot serve homemade  
snacks. The nutrition label  
must be attached.

Thanks for helping us keep our  
friends safe at Fraser School  
and have a wonderful  
Halloween!

On October 23, Fraser School will host children's author, Nancy Carlson, at our Family Fun Night. Ms. Carlson will be reading from her new book, How About A Hug? She will also be selling autographed copies of this book for those families who are interested. Family Fun Night will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m., but the celebrations surrounding this book will be happening the entire week of October 20-24. More information will be coming closer to the event so keep your eyes open. In the meantime, here is Nancy's biography.



### Teaching Kids About Themselves With Fun Drawings and a Few Good Words.

Nancy Carlson is an accomplished children's book author and illustrator who has published more than 50 books. She is one of the few people who knew even back in kindergarten what she wanted to do for a living, "Make pictures and tell stories!"

Nancy is a life-long Minnesotan. Born and raised in Edina, Nancy had a happy and fulfilling childhood surrounded by an outgoing family. Her parents read to her and her brother and sister every night. The comic books she loved to read as a child have influenced her style of drawing and use of color. Many of Nancy's stories are taken from her own childhood experiences.

Nancy graduated from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design with a major in printmaking and shortly afterward became fascinated with children's books while working at Minneapolis's Walker Art Center. Nancy began to write her own stories and created accompanying drawings. It wasn't long before she found herself approaching publishers with her own ideas for children's books. She had numerous art exhibitions before getting into the publishing world and her artwork is held in many private and public collections. Recognition for her published work includes several Reading Rainbow selections, the Children's Choice Award from the International Reading Association and Children's Book Council, the Minnesota Children's Museum Great Friends to Kids Award and several others.

Nancy believes that life should be fun for everyone, but especially for children. This optimistic message permeates her picture books and provides a positive counterpoint to much of what children are influenced by in today's society. Her characters aren't always perfect. They often have fears, anxieties and disabilities. Through her books, kids learn to cope with different challenges. They can learn that they don't have to be perfect to be a good person. Her characters also convey positive messages without being "preachy." They gently remind children what is right.



## “Play is a Child’s Work”

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori, famous educator and founder of the Montessori method, knew that children learn best through play. This fundamental early childhood education principle still applies today. Even though many of us remember doing worksheets, there are much more effective ways to teach young children the concepts that preschoolers need to learn.

First of all, children learn socially. Lev Vygotsky, Russian sociologist, found that children learn through interacting and learning from children of all abilities. Children can learn from children who are at an older developmental level by watching and listening to the demonstrations of their abilities. That demonstration can occur by watching a child balance wood blocks, complete a puzzle, or by sorting small toys by color. Conversely, children can also learn from others who are at a younger developmental level by watching and listening to the demonstrations of their abilities. Those encounters can lead the child to more patience, more empathy, and more understanding.

Fraser School uses the work of Vygotsky as a model for our inclusive environment. Our mission statement says that we, “help each child feel successful in some way each day...” Through our social interactions, we try to accomplish this mission.

Next, children learn through activity. If you are trying to teach the concept of colors, children learn best through playing games about colors, singing active songs about colors, playing with colored play dough, painting with colors, and mixing colors in water and watching the result. This play-based learning has a three-fold effect. First, it demonstrates the concept of the color. Second, it reinforces the concept through repetition. Third, it teaches children that learning can be fun which makes children have a more positive feeling toward school.

Finally, children learn through discovery. Young children, especially, are experimenting with the world around them and discovering things daily. Infants learn that when they drop a toy, it falls to the ground. This is an early discovery of gravity. Throughout their early childhood years, they will continue to experiment with dropping things and knowing that items always fall down to the ground. Often, infants will then immediately learn that, if they drop a toy, an adult may pick that toy up and give it back. This is one of the first tests of cause and effect. If the infant causes the toy to fall, the effect will be that they will get adult attention in addition to getting the toy back. Children experiment with the concept of cause and effect repeatedly throughout their early childhood years. Similarly, young children learn basic concepts of physics, biology, chemistry, geometry, vocabulary, grammar, and other advanced subjects through discoveries in their early years.

In the introduction to his recently published pediatric report, *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*, Kenneth R. Ginsburg states, “Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child. This birthright is challenged by forces including child labor and exploitation practices, war and neighborhood violence, and the limited resources available to children living in poverty. However, even those children who are fortunate enough to have abundant available resources and who live in relative peace may not be receiving the full benefits of play. Many of these children are being raised in an increasingly hurried and pressured style that may limit the protective benefits they would gain from child-driven play. Because every child deserves the opportunity to develop to their unique potential, child advocates must consider all factors that interfere with optimal development and press for circumstances that allow each child to fully reap the advantages associated with play.”

