

From the Head of School

Planning Playdates

With the way the end of the year speeds past, I have no doubt that I will need only blink and summer will be upon us. With its lazy days and long nights, summer just might be my favorite season. Especially during May, when there is never a moment to catch your breath, the dream of days full of nothing seems enchanting! Of course, I do remember when I was home with young children and how the anxiety of days full of nothing seemed daunting. (Those of you looking for ideas to fill those moments should come to the Parent Discussion on Tuesday, May 3 at either 10 AM or 2 PM.)

One wonderful and natural way to fill the hours is with playdates. These are a nice way for children to maintain social connections that have already begun at school. Often, because of the age of the children at our school, these are also a great way to build a parent support group, as parents tend to stay and spend time with each other while the children socialize. I highly recommend playdates for children of all ages. However, I know that they do not always go smoothly. Social dynamics are always tricky, and difficult for even the most mature of us to navigate. Below are a few suggestions of ways to help them go a little smoother.

Prepare to be involved. Young children require a great deal of social scaffolding when it comes to building relationships. They will continue to need support for longer than you might think. As wonderful as it can be when children just go off and play together peacefully, you should never expect that it should be the case. Expect that you will need to help them discover activities to do together, and to negotiate conflicts should any arise. Conflicts are very common for children, and are extremely important in helping them to grow as social beings. You will definitely find yourself in situations where you must balance letting children work through things themselves, and stepping in to direct the course of action. My general rule is to jump in faster the more physical the conflict, protecting physical well-being first and foremost. Next, take the time to really listen and let everyone express their needs and wants. Finally, help them to voice these needs to each other. Some children will need more help than others at expressing their feelings and desires. Those of you with more cautious children may need to stay more involved to help them to negotiate their needs. As a parent, you



MAY/JUNE 2016

Dates to Remember

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| 5/3 | Parent Forum
10:00 am and 2:00 pm |
| 5/12 | Art Festival
5 to 6:45 pm |
| 5/13 | NO SCHOOL
Teacher Work Day |
| 5/14 | Earth Day
9 am - 12 noon |
| 5/18 | Parent Orientation
6 to 7:30 pm |
| 5/27 | Parent Appreciation
Day |
| 5/30 | NO SCHOOL
Memorial Day |
| 6/2 | LAST DAY OF SCHOOL |
| 6/2 | End of School Picnic
Congress Park
5 to 7 pm |
| 6/3 | Teacher Work Day |

don't want to dictate the course of the play. However, you do want to help your child to express himself and to avoid being bullied or constantly dominated by another. That said, it is equally important to remember that some children enjoy following during play, and adults need only get involved if there is actual conflict. If an older child expresses frustration at never getting her needs met, you might brainstorm strategies together, before the play date.

Choose a good location. Playdates at people's houses can be fun and easy. Visitors enjoy the novelty of new toys and most hosts houses are set up appropriately for children of a similar age. However, young children do have a hard time sharing and this should not be underestimated. One way to deal with this is, if you are the host, allow and encourage your child to put away items that she absolutely feels that she cannot share. As Montessorians, we value the idea of taking turns, which differs from demanding that children share. We all want our children to develop generosity, and they will if we model it in appropriate ways. However, we do not expect other adults to share precious possessions and should not push that on our children. If your child has an especially difficult time allowing others to play with his toys, consider playdates to outside places like parks, libraries, museums, the zoo, etc. Look for child friendly locations that allow for easy supervision and space where adults can socialize at a safe distance.

Stretch your comfort zone. One of the things that children truly get to choose is their friends. Just like you wouldn't want someone else to pick your friends, your child does not really want you to pick her friends. I guarantee, you won't like every friend that they have. That should not mean that you don't let them have that friend. We all choose different people for different reasons. You can always express support when they struggle with a friend, offering them advice about what sorts of behaviors indicate friendship. And remember, you don't have to be friends with the parents of your child's friends. But, sometimes it is nice to try new things, even as an adult. So, stretch yourself a bit and invite that new child for a playdate in the park. Maybe it will be the beginning of a wonderful new friendship for both of you!

Respect your limits. Remember that playdates are fun, until they aren't. Be mindful that children get hungry, tired, and simply overwhelmed. Try to anticipate your child's needs, and end things on a high note. Anticipate transitions, and prepare your child beforehand, then follow through. Recognize that sometimes children are just having a hard day, and that you might have to leave before you are ready. If your child is acting up and not listening, it is okay to leave and reschedule for a future day. Every one of us will have a time where our child is the one melting down, being selfish, and not listening. That's just how children are sometimes. It's okay to have a do-over.

Bekke Howell

Parent Coffee Heading into Summer

As we wind down the school year thoughts of changing schedules and routines may be both welcome and dreaded.

Please join us **Tuesday, May 3rd at 10:00 am or 2:00 pm** to discuss and share summer tips and ideas for giving children important unstructured time while still keeping them engaged and everyone relaxed and happy, at our last parent coffee of the school year.

Please rsvp to bhowell@cgmontessori.com or jboes@cgmontessori.com

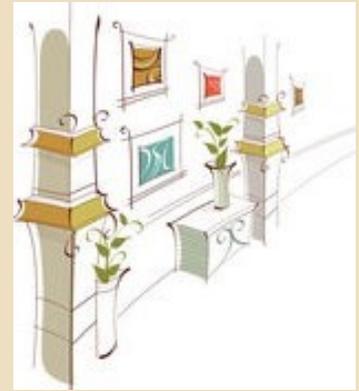


Sense of Wonder

Thursday, May 12th

5:00 - 6:45 pm

Your children, Angelina, and Amy have been busy with a variety of investigations in the studio. We hope you and your family will come and enjoy the exhibit of their explorations. Invitations have been emailed for this final art show of 2016. If you did not receive yours, please let us know.



Earth Day at Children's Garden

Put on those gardening **gloves**, load the **family** and gardening **tools** in the car and head to CGMS **Saturday, May 14th, 9 am to 12 noon**. We need your help weeding and planting our gardens! More information will be available closer to the event.

Parent Orientation
Wednesday, May 18th
6:00 - 7:30 pm

If you have children **entering the Toddler Program** or **transitioning to the Primary Program** you will want to attend this meeting. Teachers will be available to chat with you about how to prepare for and learn what to expect for the 2016-17 school year.



Parent Appreciation Day
Friday, May 27th
10:30 - 11:15 AM and XP Classes
2:30 - 3:15 PM Classes

Our parents and caregivers do so much to support the school and we would like to show our appreciation. Please come and share in fun activities, entertainment, and refreshments with your children and their teachers.

Annual End of School Picnic

Thursday, June 2nd 5 - 7 pm

The Children's Garden community will be gathering at **Congress Park** (8th Avenue and Josephine Street) for the end of school picnic. We are considering having a **food truck** so families can purchase their meals. If you have any recommendations, please pass them along. There is **no rain date** for this event, however there is a shelter.



A big shout out to everyone who donated **books** at the **Unbirthday Party**; the **Jackson** family and the **Boyens** family for caring for Frosting and Cake during Spring Break; **Andy Boian** for the Teacher Appreciation brownies; **Liza Coughlin** for treating the staff to Daz Bog; and all of the parents who provided **lunch** for the staff during **Parent/Teacher conferences**. A very special thanks to **everyone who chaired or served on a committee this year or volunteered in the studio or classroom**. You play a big part in making CGMS such a special place.

Speaking of volunteers...

Start thinking about how you would like to be involved in helping the school next year. A Sign Up Genius email will be sent soon. Volunteering is a great way to get to know our community and to be involved in school activities.

