



Newsletter

February

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Earlier this winter I read Nurture Shock, a New York Times bestseller in which authors Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman examine several new research studies that question our instinctual parenting practices. While every chapter in the book is interesting, and several chapters relate directly to preschool children, the chapter I found most compelling was the one on children and race titled "Why White Parents Don't Talk About Race."

According to the researchers, parents and teachers find it difficult to point out racial differences to children, often using vague statements like "We're all friends." or "Everybody's equal." These statements require young children to infer that parents are talking about race at an age when making such inferences is outside of their developmental grasp. Others think it's better to say nothing at all because saying something "unavoidably teaches a child a racial construct." (pg. 51) However, many research studies have shown that children are not color blind—when given a deck of cards with different faces on them and asked to choose who they would like to have as a friend, preschool children, especially white children, choose cards with children of their own

race (86% of the time in this study). The researchers emphasize that during 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." (pg. 55)

Several studies point to developmental windows or stages when children's attitudes are most amenable to change. For example, after having been placed in cross-race study groups, first graders were more willing to play in cross-race recess groupings. This was not true for third graders in the same study.

The chapter also explores the benefits of diverse environments and integrated schools on children's attitudes, concluding that it is not enough to merely raise children in a diverse neighborhood or have them attend a diverse school. We need to do more.

Researcher Phyllis Katz believes that parents need to talk to children about race when they are very young. She found that parents are doing a very good job talking to their children about gender and countering boy-girl stereotypes. She believes parents can use the same model to talk to their children about race.

For example, parents say, "Mommies can be doctors just like daddies." They also need to be telling children that doctors can have any skin color. Conversations about race need to be explicit and in terms that young children can understand.

What did I learn from this chapter on race? That as a school we need to not only read stories about children and adults from diverse racial backgrounds but also take the time to talk explicitly to children about race. Our young friends are just forming their ideas about race and now is the time to encourage them to develop open and accepting racial attitudes.

Nurture Shock is thought-provoking reading, with chapters on a wide range of topics (e.g. how lack of sleep may be affecting our children, ways to promote infants' language skills, etc.) A copy of the book is available in the office if you are interested in borrowing it.

Warm regards,
Sharon

Kind Words from a Fairville Family...

To Our Friends at Fairville,

As you know, we are BIG fans of Fairville. And we parents all have our Fairville stories of how Fairville's teachers and staff have enriched the lives of our children. So I have to share our latest with you...

Our 7-year-old, Hollis, a Fairville alum, bought her dad Three Cups of Tea for Christmas. The other night at dinner, he started talking about it, recanting the author's efforts to build a school in Pakistan. Elle, our 3-year-old Firefly, piped up: "We read a book about Pakistan at school." We chuckled, patronizingly, and There went on with his story. Elle interrupted again, agreeing with his statement. "Yes, Dr. Greg did that in our book, too." We were dumbstruck. There hadn't mentioned Dr. Greg by name. We were struck by several thoughts all at once---1. Here There was, impressed enough by a book that he was reading that he wanted to share it with us... and Elle was one step ahead of him. 2. That the book had made a deep enough impression on Elle that she remembered the details (this from the same child whose answer to, "What did you do at school today?" is always, "I don't remember.") 3. Someone at Fairville had shared a book at Meeting that has already made a difference in at least one little 3-year-old's life because it sank in and she was able to use it to make her own contribution to a family dinner discussion.

I could go on and on, but I think my point is clear--- Thank you for all you do everyday to make this world a better place, one book at a time, one child at a time, one family at a time.

Darla Pomeroy

ANNUAL GIVING

At Fairville there are over 75 very good reasons to give to our Annual Giving campaign: the just over 75 young children that we educate each and every day!

Thanks to all who have helped to make our Annual Giving campaign successful thus far. The school relies on your donations to close the gap between tuition charged and the actual cost of operating the school. Here are a few more examples of how we put your Annual Giving dollars to work:

\$150 allows us to buy a new set of curriculum materials for our Science program.

\$50 covers the cost of a teacher workshop in support of our gardening program.

\$12 allows one faculty member to attend a "Cooking with Children" class.

Our ability to secure grants to support the school is tied directly to the percentage of participation we receive from the members of our community. Every gift, large and small, is important to us. Thank you!



Sign along with me...

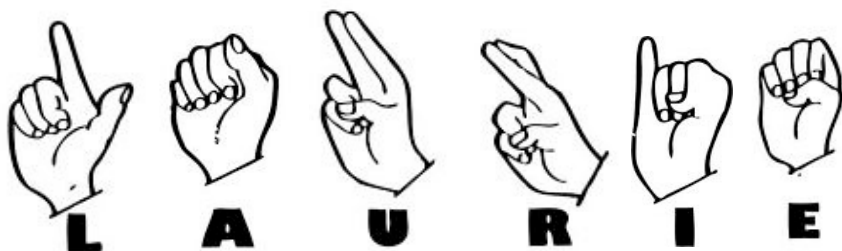
American Sign Language (ASL) is the third most widely used language in the United States. Through the years I've found that children of all ages find sign language fascinating and are excited to give it a try. The children of Fairville have differing degrees of interest and readiness. But, my hope is to give them occasional, light, and fun exposure to the signed vocabulary that relates to the books and songs being shared at Meeting and in the classrooms.

The Fairville Friends School mission statement states that our school is a "... peaceful community of learning whose members seek spiritual and intellectual growth, foster an appreciation of the arts, celebrate cultural, racial and economic diversity...." Experience with language expressed visually, through signed rather than spoken words, supports our goals of intellectual growth and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

More parents than I can count have commented with surprise that their children are teaching them signs at home. One 4-year-old liked to round up her family after dinner for "formal sign language instruction." Parents and sisters were seated as she stood in front of the class to demonstrate signs to her pupils and critique their attempts. This winter, another 4-year-old tried to sign along with me as his teacher read a story. His fingers flew in an effort to keep pace with the story. Many of the children are able to show their thoughtful manners using the signs for "please" and "thank you." The Butterfly and Grasshopper rooms each have a fingerspelling poster that shows the handshape for each letter of the alphabet. I was delighted when the children excitedly showed me the letters in their names.

What a joy it is to watch young faces in earnest concentration and small hands moving through the air to form new and meaningful shapes. Using sign language is difficult and a real challenge. I love to see Fairville children eagerly giving it a try!

Laurie Brewer



Enrichment Class Happenings

A lovely underwater ocean scene is hanging on the wall of the Art room this month. There are a wide variety of sea creatures swimming in it, everything from starfish to sharks. Stop by and take a look!

The Nature class was seen out and about, picking up sticks and helping to tidy our outdoor play yards. The children are noticing signs of spring and enjoying the unusually warm February weather.

Our Young Scientists are still in the midst of a study on Color and Light. They have made multi-color crayons, spent time exploring a light box with Magna-tiles and experimenting with projecting images on the wall with a small projector. They have told stories with shadow puppets and created silhouettes. I enjoy their enthusiasm!

Fun Friday topics:

February 18	Make a Terrarium
February 25	Edible Caterpillars
March 4	Make a Monoprint in Tempera Paint
March 11	Yoga—old and new poses
March 18	Bingo!

You can now join Art, Nature or Science for an 8-week session. New sessions begin the week of March 22nd. You are welcome to drop-in for a Fun Friday class any time.

Events Calendar

Friday, February 18th

Parent Coffee with discussion on Children's Art/Development

Monday, February 21st

Toy Drive and Pennies for Peace End Today

Sunday, February 27th

School Closed-President's Day

Wednesday, March 2nd

Spaghetti Dinner at Kennett Monthly Meeting 5pm-7pm

Open House 9am - invite your friends and neighbors!



In the Classrooms.....

Vicki's and Amy's Ladybugs are becoming experts on Community Helpers. They have bandaged, checked hearts and given shots to everyone who enters the Ladybug classroom. They have also had fun playing inside a large cardboard fire truck, where they practice calling 911 and pretend to put out fires with a plastic hose. They have been learning "Stop, drop and roll" procedures and reading stories about helpful policemen and policewomen.



The Bumblebees have had a busy month, spending quite a bit of time indoors early in the month, then recently getting outdoors a bit more to enjoy the warmer weather. In the classroom they made a train out of shapes and boxes, celebrated Valentine's Day with special works of art, and then began a study of transportation and all things that go: trains, cars, trucks, planes, taxis and bicycles!



The Fireflies are studying some preschool classics this month, beginning with dinosaurs. They learned a "scary" dinosaur song and

shared it with us at Meeting, read a lot of dinosaur books from the library, and even went on a dinosaur dig in their classroom (in a large tub of sand). There are quite a few experts in the classroom and I can rely on them to share accurate dino-facts with me when I stop in for a visit. I can also hear the Fireflies' dinosaur roars when I'm up in my office. Later in the month the class will study trains and have fun with "dress-up" clothes. I look forward to hearing their train whistles float up the stairs!



The Grasshoppers noticed quite a few different footprints in the snow on one of their recent walks outside, so Meaghan decided to turn that interest into a new unit of study. The class will begin by looking at their own and their classmates' shoe prints and then do a little detective work to determine which shoe print belongs to which child. They will use books and their observation skills to try and identify the footprints they see outside, then follow up by reading about the different animals that made those footprints. I can't wait to learn more about their discoveries!

In the Classrooms (continued)...



The Butterfly class has been busy so far this month learning all about Chinese New Year. They have been practicing picking up pompoms with chopsticks (and are becoming quite skilled at it!). Since this year is the Year of the Rabbit, they had a class visit from Oscar. I hear that our resident bunny was very well-behaved in the classroom! The class is also in the process of creating some very fancy dragon masks as part of their Chinese New Year celebration. Since February is President's month, the Butterflies have also been learning about some of the Presidents behind the holiday. They also read stories about Valentine's Day and love and made beautiful heart-shaped collages.

Wish List Items

Magna-tiles building toys
Classroom CD Players

NOTICE: FFS CALENDAR CHANGES

Friday, March 11th—School Open

Thursday, March 24th—School Open

Monday, May 16th—School Closed

Tuesday, May 17th—School Closed

FFS TEACHERS WILL BE ATTENDING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS GATHERING AT BALTIMORE FRIENDS SCHOOL ON MAY 16TH AND 17TH. THERE WILL BE NO SCHOOL THOSE TWO DAYS.

INSTEAD OF CLOSING FOR IN-SERVICE ON FRIDAY, MARCH 11TH, WE WILL BE OPEN FOR CLASSES. INSTEAD OF SCHEDULING CONFERENCES ON THURSDAY, MARCH 24TH, SCHOOL WILL BE OPEN.

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Summer Camp Registration is Underway

Summer camp brochures were sent home with your children this week in order to give our Fairville families the opportunity to sign up while spaces are still available for all sessions.

This year we are offering camp for 8 weeks of the summer, from June 6th to July 29th. Camp runs from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm each weekday. Campers can register for either 3 (TWR) or 5 (M-F) days per week for a cost of \$100 (TWR) or \$150 (M-F) per week. 20% sibling discounts are available.

We look forward to seeing you at camp!

Thank you, everyone, for all of the yummy treats you provided for the staff this month—well-fed teachers are happy teachers! Thanks also for your generosity and support of the Toy Drive and Pennies for Peace!

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