



# Newsletter

## January

### 2012



#### Praising Children

Last week three of our teachers went to a Chester County Intermediate Unit workshop on effective praise. While they received some tips on when and how to offer praise, and learned some strategies for determining when children benefit from praise, they felt that the workshop leaders were recommending some methods that might encourage children to adopt competitive, “praise-seeking” behaviors. For example, statements like, “Let me see who is working the hardest!” struck a sour chord with our teachers and felt counter to our school philosophy. While we want children to value hard work and effort, we don’t want them to become judgmental or competitive or to make comparisons between their work and that of their peers.

As I began thinking about ways to support children and help them feel good about themselves and their accomplishments, I decided it was time to reread two of my favorite articles on the subject of praise: Alfie Kohn’s “Five Reasons to Stop Saying “Good Job!” and “How Not to Talk to Your Kids—the Inverse Power of Praise” by Po Bronson.

Kohn writes that offering verbal praise for tasks like cleaning up or not spilling food is very much like offering a tangible reward—it’s a way of doing something to children to get them to comply with our wishes. Kohn says this is very different from working with kids – for example, having a conversation with them about what their role is in making a classroom/ household function smoothly. Too much praise, according to Kohn, can also create “praise junkies”– children who measure their worth in terms of what will lead us to smile or make a positive comment rather than learning to form their own judgments of a job well done. It is pleasurable for children to decide on their own when they’ve done something well rather than having us tell them how to feel. Saying “good job!” too often can undermine independence, pleasure, interest and even interfere with how well children actually complete tasks. Kohn recommends that we offer children unconditional support for who they are rather than for what they do, that we replace “doing to” strategies like praise with “working with” strategies like bringing kids in on the process of making decisions. You can read more at [www.alfiekohn.org/parenting/gj.htm](http://www.alfiekohn.org/parenting/gj.htm).

## Praising Children, continued.....

In Po Bronson's article, he cites several research studies that demonstrate how praising children for the wrong things (e.g. for being "smart") can backfire. The studies have determined that in order for praise to be effective, it needs to be both specific and sincere. It needs to be based on a real skill or talent that a child has; if it is not and a child finds it meritless, they may begin to discount praise without regard to its sincerity. Like Kohn, Bronson believes that excessive praise distorts motivation. Children do things merely to hear the praise and lose sight of any intrinsic enjoyment they may have received from the activity. Read more at [nymag.com/news/features/27840/](http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/).

What can we say when children do something impressive? Bronson reminds us to praise children for their efforts (e.g. "I noticed that you finished all of your homework without asking to take a break.") Kohn offers us three things to consider: saying nothing, saying what we saw ("You put your shoes on all by yourself!"), or asking questions ("How did you figure out how to draw a tree?"). According to Kohn, this doesn't mean that compliments and expressions of delight are harmful. Our goal should be to help children gain a sense of control over their lives rather than having them look to us for approval. This is a worthwhile goal for those of us who are raising or working with young children, one we should keep foremost in our minds.

Warm regards,

Sharon

### Wish List Items

Children's Magnifying Glasses 4" or larger

Translucent construction materials for the light table

Washable Dry Erase Markers

### ANNUAL GIVING

We are thankful for the families, Board members and members of the broader community who have supported the school by donating to our Annual Giving fund. All independent schools rely on donations to close the gap between tuition charged and the actual cost of operating the school. Here are some examples of how we put Annual Giving dollars to work:

\$70 covers the cost of one week of music with Bill for all classes.

\$50 buys Oscar hay, kibble and litter for one month.

\$150 buys ten new hardcover books for our school library.

\$200 covers the cost of art supplies for approximately one month of school.

\$50 covers the cost of seeds and plants for a spring planting in the children's garden.

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!

## Doing What I Love....

When I left my job in November 2010 to renovate my house I wasn't sure that I would go back into teaching. I thought that I wanted to go into the culinary field or perhaps even gardening. I could be a florist, or a chef or maybe an interior/floral/butcher/landscape designer. I wanted to do something exciting. I wanted to do something that I would love.

The first time I visited Fairville Friends I wasn't sure what to expect or perhaps I didn't have any expectations. I drove forty-five minutes to get here, stepped out of my car, looked around and felt an overwhelming sense of...peace. I walked inside and met Taryn and Sharon and was caught off guard by their kindness and warmth. I knew right away that this was where I wanted to be.

Most schools are not surrounded by apple orchards, and acres of green grass with horses. Most schools also do not have chefs that create delicious vegetarian meals everyday. I am not only lucky enough to teach in such a serene campus but I also have the world's best classroom. My Inchworm class is filled with extremely caring, smart, fun boys and my afternoon Ladybug class is just as wonderful. All of the families that I work with are beyond supportive. To top it all off, I work with a group of intelligent, funny, friendly woman who feel passionately about what they do.

I am so excited to get up for work every Tuesday and Thursday. Where else in the world could I teach the perfect class, have opportunities to garden, be surrounded by tasty food and great people? I love my job and not many people are lucky enough to say the same.

Elaiza Burrows  
Inchworm Teacher

## Summer Camp Registration is Coming Soon!

In the middle of the winter, it's hard to believe that the sun and fun of Summer Camp is only a few months away!

This year we are offering camp for 8 weeks of the summer, from June 4th to July 27th. Camp runs from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm each weekday. Campers can register for either 3 (TWTh) or 5 (M-F) days per week for a cost of \$125 (TWTh) or \$175 (M-F) per week. 20% sibling discounts are available; register for 3 weeks, get \$25 of each additional week.

Camp registration is limited to 40 campers per week. Brochures and registration forms will be available in February. Sign up early for the weeks that best match your summer schedule!

## Why Do We Use First Names at Fairville?

I am sure you have noticed that all members of our school community are addressed by their first name—and you may be wondering why. Traditionally Quakers don't use honorifics like Mr. or Mrs. or Sir when speaking or writing to someone. Quakers believe that the light is present in all people, whether they are children or adults, and that all people have an equal capacity to communicate with God. At Fairville we respect that tradition. In a Quaker school setting, not referring to teachers by titles such as Miss, Ms., Mrs. or Mr. shows respect for the equality of all members of our school community. When children call teachers by their first names it also helps us to create the warm, nurturing and home-like atmosphere we wish to provide for young children.

## Events Calendar

January 27th	Preschool Registration forms for 2012-2013 school year due today
February 3rd	Kindergarten Registration Forms for 2012-2013 school year due today
February 7th	Morning Coffee on Parenting with Harriet Heath, Ph.D. 9:15 am
February 10th	Faculty Inservice–School Closed
February 14th/15th	Fairville Pajama Days–wear your favorite PJ's to school!
February 20th	President's Day–School Closed

## In the Classrooms.....



Vicki and Liza's Ladybugs learned all about birds this month. They read about a wide variety of birds, everything from owls to penguins. Little "penguins" were seen walking around the classroom holding eggs between their feet! The Ladybugs also sang bird songs, painted with feathers and strung Cheerios on pipe cleaners to feed the birds. At the end of the month they began a unit on Community Helpers.

Elaiza and Meaghan's Ladybugs love using the Mystery Box. During January the box contained playdough, a stuffed ladybug, a banana, a blanket, and a baby bottle. The item in the box provides a clue about the day's activities. For example, when the banana was in the box the class baked banana muffins and when the bottle was in the box the class practiced feeding and caring for babies (using dolls). It's fun watching the Ladybugs play—they are growing up so fast!



The Bumblebees spent this month talking about winter weather and hibernation. They read books about animals in winter and made a bear cave in their classroom. A favorite stuffed bear from each child's home was invited to come to school to join the children in the bear cave. Lots of pattern, number and color matching activities were part of this study and, of course, the Bumblebee room was filled with many, many books about bears!



The Fireflies are studying winter weather and wintertime fun: they are painting with ice, experimenting with freezing and thawing, and wishing that they could be outside playing and sledding in the snow! They are reading winter stories and drawing lots of winter weather scenes. They have also been playing games this month, which requires them to listen to and follow directions, take turns and play fair.



The Inchworms enjoyed using the Wiki sticks and hole punches they received from the parents—thank you! The class worked together to assemble the new easel in their classroom. Then they got busy using it for painting and drawing activities! The Inchworms worked on problem solving activities this month and played a variety of table games (including alphabet bingo). They also had Show and Tell this month; they drew pictures and dictated sentences about the items they brought in to share with their friends.



The Grasshoppers were fascinated by the men who came to Fairville to trim our trees. They drew pictures of the ropes, harnesses and machinery used by the workers and made "Be Careful!" signs to hold up to the windows. This led the Grasshoppers into a study of tools and machines.

## In the Classrooms (continued)...



....continued. They spent time drawing and investigating a variety of tools last week and will continue to explore this topic this week by figuring out how a Jack-in-the-Box works. Later they will attempt to take one apart. Andrea is also working with the Grasshoppers in small groups on phonemic awareness and other early literacy and math skills. The children enjoy playing games, reading books and working with manipulatives to practice these skills.



For the past three weeks the Butterfly room has looked very much like a dinosaur museum. The children played with dinosaur puzzles and games, listened to and perused dinosaur books, played with dinosaur figures, worked on a dig, and made dinosaur eggs out of paper mache' and dinosaur skeletons out of different shapes of pasta. The class created a dinosaur book, too! But by far my favorite activity to observe (and even participate in) was pulling apart owl pellets and then identifying the bones that were found inside. The children worked carefully on this activity and were good at matching the tiny bones to the pictures on the chart. We learned that the owls ate rodents, voles and birds—some children even found skulls inside their pellets. It was very exciting!

## News from the Kitchen...

This month Judy introduced the children to some kitchen chemistry. They made a non-Newtonian fluid using glue, water and borax. The substance is gooey and doesn't react the way the children expected it would! It was interesting to watch these young scientists experiment with and explore this new substance.



## Clothing Reminder

Parents, please remember that durable and simple play clothing is the best mode of dress for a happy preschool experience. We request that school clothing be chosen with respect for our school philosophy and Quaker values. Please avoid military or pop-culture themed clothing (e.g. cartoon, Hello Kitty or Disney character wear) and clothing that contains inappropriate sayings or logos.

It's also important to remember that we play outdoors in all kinds of weather: hats, boots, warm coats and mittens are all essential items in order for children to enjoy a day of work and play at Fairville.

Thank you for your cooperation!



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