

Co-op Community News

From the North Seattle Cooperative Preschool Parent Advisory Council

November 2001

A Metaphor for Family Connection

By Becky Callahan, Parent Educator, NSCC

Recently I reflected on these questions:

1. What piece of clothing do you associate with parenting?
2. What piece of furniture?
3. What sound?
4. What dish cooked?
5. What spot in nature?

I took time on each question except the piece of furniture. I had an immediate response and it was not the rocking chair. It was the kitchen table. Since our kitchen table is a 22-year-old nondescript secondhand item, I was a little surprised at how quickly I responded with this particular metaphor. The questions were fun and resulted in many memorable family times and thoughtful conversations. The next few months will be filled with a variety of celebrations where families will be gathering around a table so I thought this was an opportune time to share reflections on the family kitchen table.

My furniture metaphor brought a few things to mind for me. The first is the vast amount of literature that stresses the importance of mealtime for all families. One estimate is a child spends 6,000 hours at the dinner table before leaving home. Studies also show that children who have regular meals together with their family have better language and reading skills, do better in school, have better nutrition, less likely to be involved in drugs and violence. Statistics show

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Event Calendar



- Nov 5 - PAC meeting (distribution of raffle tickets and Kindergarten folders)
- Nov 10- Veterans Day
- Nov 22-23 - Thanksgiving
- Dec 7 - Scholarship application deadline
- Dec 10 - PAC Meeting
- Dec 24 - Jan 4 - Winter break
- Jan TBA - Parent Education Seminar
- Jan TBA - Parent Coordinator registration meeting
- Jan TBA - Kindergarten Resource seminar
- Jan TBA - Treasurer's workshop
- Jan 14 - PAC meeting
- Jan 21 - Martin Luther King Day
- Feb 1 - Day between semesters - not holiday or vacation
- Feb 11 - PAC meeting (affle tickets due)
- Feb 18 - President's Day
- Feb 18-22 - Midwinter break
- March TBA - In-house registration
- March 8 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- March 11 - PAC meeting (affle drawing)
- March 15 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- April TBA - Open registration
- April TBA - Parent Education seminar
- April 8-12 - Spring break
- April 15 - PAC meeting
- May 17 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- May 20 - PAC meeting
- May 27 - Memorial Day
- June 19 - Last day for students unless inclement weather make up needed

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that half of American families eat together five times or more a week, and another 10% eats meals together only twice a week.

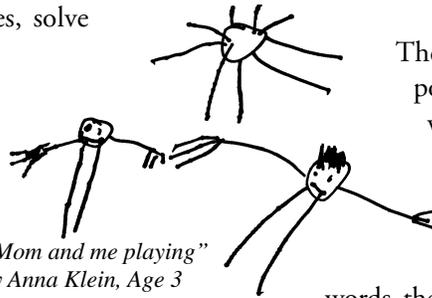
Books, studies and statistics are important parenting resources but more important is the motivation to help us reach our parenting goals. Time spent together among family and friends stays with you for a long time and creates memories that are motivators in our parenting. I often describe motivation toward a parenting goal as intentional parenting. Whether research or memories motivate us, it's worth the effort to intentionally parent with mealtime as a value because it gives reconnection time to the family. It allows us time to focus on each other and share our experiences, communicate our values, political biases, solve problems, ask questions, and teach manners.

When our children were young, I remember the "twilight zone" time, as I called the 4 to 7 p.m. time slot. It was a challenge to include the children in a mealtime because they just wanted to be on the go. As they got older it was even harder to have a mealtime together with all their activities and school events. We just kept adjusting as we went along—making breakfast just as important as dinner, bedtime hot cocoa around the table, and even mini-meals between 6 and 8 p.m. In their teens, we required our daughters to be home with us for Sunday dinner. Some of the favorite questions kitchen table discussion included were: What's new? What fun did you have today? What do you want to share from the newspaper? Anyone have something funny or sad happen today?

I recalled our older daughter's reaction (at 18 years old) when I announced we were going to sell some items in a garage sale as a part of our downsizing. When I said the kitchen table was on the list, she immediately said, "no way Mom." In my non listening mode I said, "Why not? It is just too big for us now." She responded to say it was too important to give away and we had to store it for her in our new, (down

sized) home. Obviously she (and later with the added chorus from her 15 year old sister) won us over and it is still our kitchen table. It obviously represents many of the memories they hold important.

It was obvious to me our children had lot of memories stored up for our children around the table. Some were from meal-times, but a lot were the everyday activities we engaged in around the table. A few I can recall are: birthdays, making valentines cards, playing with the warm play-dough as it came out of the pan, making wrapping paper, holiday dinners, building a tent under it, braiding hair, Lego play, making cranberry sauce and memorial candle lighting activities to name a few.



"Mom and me playing"
by Anna Klein, Age 3

The physical arrangement is also an important factor because it is a time where we face and focus on each other. It is a time were asked to do one of the hardest things in parenting: just plain listening to our children and what they are saying with their words, their body language and their silence. The table is a place we continually define and redefine ourselves as a family. It is the sense of being in a group and having a bond in our daily life. Enjoy your future table time!

The rest of my answers were:

- Clothing:** Mr. Roger's Sweater
- Dish:** A camping soup dish of ramen noodles and chicken
- Sound:** The quiet
- Nature Spot:** The bank of a running river

What are your answers to the first questions?



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Preschool Revelations

By Melody Potts, Parent, Meadowbrook 3 - 5's

On the last day of preschool last year I was rushing my son into his clothes and into his car seat, frantically running late, as usual. All of these insecurities about my parenting ability and my own experiences with school were running through my mind. How would I insure that my son liked school and that he did his best? Is he finally through with the biting thing? Am I creating a nervous wreck of this kid by scurrying around late every morning?

I was feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders that day, or at least the heavy responsibility of raising a child. Same thing. Finally I pulled into the parking lot at Meadowbrook, over all of those hideous speed bumps, my old Volvo nearly shaking apart with each one. Luckily there was one parking spot left. I didn't even think about the possibility of not finding parking. "Come on, honey, we're late, we're late." I was feeling a little like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland. Finally, over the bridge, up the ramp and into the classroom. I had such butterflies!

As we walked in and saw Teacher Karen with her companion, Barney the Bear, all of my anxiety seemed to melt away. Here was this very patient, kind and understanding preschool teacher. She spoke slowly and instructed both of us, by name, I might add, what we were supposed to do upon arriving. We had only met her once before, when she came to our house to meet all of her new students. I was so amazed at how calm and patient she seemed to be. Too good to be true, or so I thought.

All year I waited to see if she was going to slip up and lose her cool. I listened as she used her own unique style to redirect the kids when they were misbehaving, quiet them when they were screaming and slow them down when they ran.

As the year went on I found myself using a lot of her techniques and then laughing as I realized Karen's same voice inflections were coming out of my mouth. I didn't expect that I would learn so much from preschool. I only wish I could have started in Karen's class myself, when I was a "pre-3".

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum

By Lauren Tozzi, Teacher, Crown Hill 3-5's

As a community activist, volunteer and teacher of young children, I believe in the power of solutions. I take the saying, "you're either part of the problem or you're part of the solution", very seriously.

In the classroom I put most of my focus and priority on the children's social and emotional development. Good self-esteem, self-worth and self-control are the fundamental building blocks in the developing child.

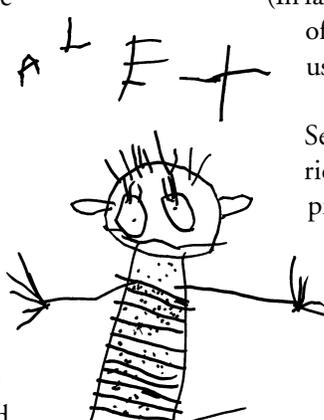
When I completed a Second Step training, five years ago, I knew I had found a program that was revolutionary! I have sung its praises ever since and will for a time to come.

(In fact, so does the United States Department of Education.) Second Step is also being used in Germany, Japan and Sweden.

Second Step is a violence prevention curriculum designed to help children learn pro-social skills and reduce impulsive-aggressive behavior. To reach this end the curriculum is built upon the following goals:

- 1) **EMPATHY:** To increase children's ability to identify other's feelings as well as their own, take other's perspectives and respond empathetically to others.
- 2) **PROBLEM SOLVING:** To decrease impulsive and aggressive behavior by applying a problem-solving strategy to social conflicts and practicing behavioral social skills.
- 3) **ANGER MANAGEMENT:** To decrease angry behavior in children through recognizing angry feelings and using anger reduction techniques.

There is a curriculum kit that contains a number of components. Each lesson consists of photographs accompanied by stories with discussion questions. There are also take-home letters to parents, songs and puppets.



"Self-portrait" by Alex Upenieks, Age 3



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Second Step helps children learn to define problems and identify emotions. They learn to come up with solutions and ideas to the problems—then they agree to choose and use those ideas/solutions.

One of the main goals of this program is to help children become healthy and independent problem-solvers. By learning to positively affect their environment children experience growth in self-esteem and a readiness for academic learning. Pro-social children also have emotional responses—pride, happiness, security, feeling loved—which further encourages appropriate behavior.



John Jackman, Age 3

I can't think of greater gifts that we can give our children—to learn non-violent solutions to problems, to gain high self-esteem and self-control. I have seen aggressive behavior decrease ten-fold and positive pro-social behavior prevail. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "If we are to have true peace in the world, it must begin with the children."

Lastly, I would encourage all 3-5 programs to take teacher training and to invest in and use this curriculum. While it is a bit pricey (\$250-300) in the long run it is priceless!

For more information, contact: *Committee for Children*
2203 Airport Way South, Ste. 500 Seattle, WA 98134
206-343-1223 800-634-4449
Website: www.cfchildren.org



Precious Little

By Jessie Schutzenhofer, Parent,
Woodland Park 3-5's

Just before Tuesday, September 11, I had begun the difficult task of retrieving myself from a very numb place. I had come to realize that I no longer had a belief system that was anything less than mundane and logic-bound. The magical thinking of my youth was gone. While I recog-

nized this my feet were set on the path back to a deeper place within...and then this devastating and unimaginable thing happened to us all. In the surreal days since then many feelings have washed over me in momentary tides. Sorrow, grief and confusion, and happiness. Happiness? Yes happiness. Along with my newly found depth of feeling comes an immense sense of gratitude for my life.

My life might feel so desperate at a time like this, but for this wonderfilled little person to whom I must attend every day. When I find myself beginning to brood or mope she invariably comes crashing into my thoughts. Although I worry about the world into which we have brought her, I am so happy that she's here. She keeps me in the here and now, planted firmly. I know that my priority at any given time is as small and beautiful as whatever is immediately before me.



Co-op Openings

These co-ops had significant openings as of October 5. There may be some changes. The PAC website has full listings: <http://nscdux.sccd.ctc.edu/~parented/>

Toddlers

- Ingraham.....6
364-9015 - Toni Thomas
- Northgate p.m.....5
524-6736 - Jill Colley
- Olympic Toddler.....2
527-8087 - Amy Kelsey

Pre-3's

- Crown Hill.....2
783-3916 - Charlotte Hollebeke
- Northgate (2-5's).....7
782-9591 - Joan Leppek

3 to 5's

- Ingraham.....12
365-9068 - Susie Vickers
- Crown Hill p.m.....2
784-4501 - Amy Gannar
- Sandhurst.....2
368-8777 - Lorinda Strellnaver-Gadwill

Scholarships are available through the Parent Advisory Council .