

CO-OP COMMUNITY NEWS

From the Parent Advisory Council
of the North Seattle Community College
Cooperative Preschool Program



March 2006

Keeping Calm

Betty Williams

One of our greatest challenges as parents is remaining calm in stressful times, and helping our children learn to calm themselves. Being a good role model in this area is essential, since children learn much more from what we do than what we tell them to do – much to our dismay at times!!

While none of us can be a perfectly calm role model all the time, it is certainly helpful to focus on what helps us calm ourselves and to teach our children such coping skills. Simply speaking out loud about feeling stressed and how you are working on calming yourself down is a powerful lesson for your child.

I recently attended a wonderful workshop entitled “Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments” by CHEF (Comprehensive Health Education Foundation), which recommended modeling as a key aspect of helping children learn calming skills. I highly recommend their workshop for educators, and have shared the resources from the class with our parent education faculty. For more information on this training or to order the written materials, check the website: www.chef.org

One of the key aspects of this training is the emphasis on benefits of maintaining calm to healthy human functioning. Both our brains and our hearts are impacted by stress, leading to impaired problem-solving abilities when we feel tense, and

serious physical health problems when we suffer from chronic stress. Children are especially vulnerable to long-term health and learning problems when suffering from frequent, intense stress, since their brains and bodies are still developing.

In order for parents and teachers to help children learn to calm themselves, the program suggests starting with teaching them to tune in to their body messages and to practice using relaxation tools that work for the child’s particular temperament. The first step in learning to calm oneself is noticing the signs of stress in the body. This step sounds like an obvious thing, yet it is not something I was taught as a child. I wonder how many of us were?

The next step is helping children learn some relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and simple, age-appropriate activities to release stress from the body. For example, one activity is to shake your body like a wet puppy trying to dry itself. I like the methods used in this program because they are developmentally appropriate for young children and they address different temperaments and learning styles. Activities have been developed in the areas of physical activity, guided imagination, and talking/singing/listening.

The “Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments” written materials include a booklet and “Calming Cards”. The

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2005-2006 Calendar

March

- 3 PAC Scholarship Deadline
- 13 PAC Meeting
- 15 Marja Brandon Lecture
- 13-16 Cross-over Registration
- 25 Open Registration

April

- April 4 Chris McCurry Lecture
- 10-14 Spring Break (no school)
- 17 PAC Meeting

May

- 22 PAC Meeting
- 26 Last Day of School

Why We Wrestle

By Teacher Tom

The last time I participated in tackle football I was probably no more than 10-years-old, yet at least once a week I still play through in my mind the gratifying sensation of a solid collision with another human body. It's always the same collision, in which I've lowered my shoulder into the "belt buckle" of an oncoming rusher; initial impact, followed by driving him to the ground. I don't know any more if this is a specific event from the past or an amalgamation of similar events, but the memory of the sensation is powerful.

I play more basketball these days and even now, some three decades later, one of the best parts is the banging about of bodies in an un-refereed game.

It's definitely not about anger. And while there's no denying the violent and aggressive aspects of competitive body contact, it's not about hurting another person. It's about the sensation itself, the thrill of impact, leverage, and brute competition. In my more philosophical moments, I tell myself it's about a transfer of energy between two bodies, a sudden exchange of momentum, an imparting of energy from one human being to another.

A couple of years ago my 3-5's class was populated with a number of high energy boys who had either no siblings or whose sibs were too young for roughhousing. The result was spontaneous eruptions of wrestling throughout our mornings. I found myself repeating over and over, "Now is not the time for wrestling," until one day it occurred to me that there was never a time for wrestling for most of the kids.

Since then, wrestling has been a part of the Woodland Park 3-5 curriculum. We lay mats on the floor and duct tape others to the walls, creating a sort of wrestling room like one might find in

a high school. I explain that wrestling is not fighting, but rather a sport, then run down the rules:

- No hitting or kicking
- No hands on people's faces, heads, or necks
- No throwing another person down unless you fall with them (a rule made necessary by a child with Aikido skills)
- No jumping or falling on people
- No wrestling off the mats
- Stop the moment someone says, "Stop!"

The result, frankly, is that we reduce wrestling to little more than tight hugging and rolling around on the floor, but it still fills the need.

The first time we tried it, the predictable gang of boys took to the mats in a frenzy. Within seconds our resident The Hulk found himself on his back, a boy whose fierce and powerful role-playing typically dominated our mornings. Our eyes locked for a moment and in his I read a small panic that said, This isn't quite what I bargained for. The reality didn't live up to the fantasy: that boy never set foot on the wrestling mats again. His imaginative play was still full of tough guy characters, but that's where it stayed from then on.

That the more assertive boys were drawn to wrestling was not a surprise. What I hadn't anticipated was the number of our girls who enthusiastically leapt into the fray.

Parent educator and teacher Chris David once explained differences between boys and girls by asking me to think of their brains as architectural structures. Boys tend to have brains comprised of many little rooms. If a

boy is playing in one "room" and the subject of rules comes up, adults need to understand that the typical boy must leave the room in which he's playing and go down the hall to find the room that houses the rules. Girls, on the other hand, tend to have brains made up of one large room. The rules and their play are in the same room so it's far easier (and quicker) for them to apply the former to the latter.

Applying this metaphor to wrestling, it's no wonder that girls rarely engage in wrestling during times that are "not the time for wrestling," while the boys sometimes forget. When wrestling is officially sanctioned however – at least in the little laboratory of our preschool – the girls are as game as the boys.

Wrestling days are demanding for me in that I take it upon myself to serve as referee, constantly reminding wrestlers of the rules. We've had a few minor injuries, but nothing a little rubbing didn't cure. Our hyper-vigilance, in fact, probably makes wrestling one of the safest large motor activities we do. And there is surprisingly little rule breaking. Maybe wrestling and its rules are so intimately entwined that they can be kept together in the same room.

Competitive physical contact is a human urge that has little to do with gender, anger, violence or aggression. It's a way to measure oneself and to learn about one's own body and the bodies of others. It's a way to learn about strength, quickness, and leverage.

At the same time it bears within it the seeds of violence and aggression, if coupled with simple rules, it becomes a powerful, visceral way to learn about self-control, gentleness and empathy.

That's why we wrestle.



Keeping Calm

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booklet is an overview of the program, including why calming skills are so valuable, the process & activities to use with children ages 3-7 years old, and a bibliography of resources. The "Calming Cards" provide detailed descriptions of activities to teach children to use to help them learn to calm themselves. Check out the CHEF website for information about how to order the materials, if you are interested.

One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the ability to calm themselves. Think about how you calm yourself, observe your child's own coping skills, and plan to build on these so your child(ren) will develop strong skills for keeping calm. I personally believe this world would be a much more peaceful, rational place if all our children learned these skills.



North Seattle Cooperative Preschools
Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
Invites you to a Discussion with

Christopher McCurry

Playmates to Friends: Tips for social success in the transition from preschool to grade school

Tuesday, April 4, 2006 7-8:30pm

Faith Lutheran Church - Social Hall
8208 18th Avenue NE - Seattle, WA 98115

This lecture is free and open to the public

"Playmates to Friends..."

Spend an engaging evening learning how to help your preschooler prepare for the social demands and opportunities of elementary school. Chris will illustrate for parents the social skills needed by children to be successful in elementary school and give them guidance on how to help their children develop those skills. This evening is a must for parents of preschoolers and early elementary school!

Christopher McCurry

Christopher McCurry is a clinical child psychologist in private practice at Associates in Behavior and Child Development (ABCD, Inc.) in Seattle. He specializes in helping anxious, socially awkward kids who may or may not be underachieving in school. Chris received his Master's in Developmental Psychology from San Francisco State University and his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology is from the University of Nevada, Reno. He is also an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Washington in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry. Most importantly he is the proud father of an 11 year-old boy.

No RSVP required, but for more information, please call 789-6975

NSCC Co-op Preschool Openings for 2005-06*

	Co-op	Openings	Contact	Phone
Toddlers	Northgate	13	Yoon Kang-O'Higgins	729-5918
Pre-3s	Northwest	6	Karla Gore	697-8294
3-5s	Crown Hill AM	2	Angie Kilkenny	789-6165
	Crown Hill PM	2	Jennifer Chamberlin	782-5384
	Sandhurst	5	Katy Ryan	522-3680
	Victory Heights PM	6	Theresa Venice	306-8907
	Wallingford 3-4's	2	Wyly Astley	240-1656
	Wallingford 4-5's	1	Lisa Drake	632-9817
Fives	Meadowbrook	7	Debbie Fields	985-9446
Web Link	To view current listings and for descriptions of each co-op, please go to our web site at: northseattlecoops.org *current as of 11-18-05			

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