

Levine Academy ECC News

March 2011

25 Adar 1 5771-25 Adar 11 5771

Important Dates:

<i>Friday March 4</i>	<i>Betty & Debbie's class lead Shabbat</i>
<i>Friday March 11</i>	<i>Beverley & Janet's class lead Shabbat</i>
<i>Sunday March 13</i>	<i>Daylight Savings Time Ends (Spring forward!)</i>
<i>Friday March 18</i>	<i>Beverly & Jodi's class lead Shabbat ECC—8th Grade Purim Celebration</i>
<i>Sunday March 20</i>	<i>PURIM</i>
<i>Friday March 25</i>	<i>Elaine & Amy's class lead Shabbat</i>

A Note from Sheryl...

Dear Parents,

In light of the recent movie *Race to Nowhere*, teachers and parents are once again reminded of the importance of play. Good old fashioned play is quickly becoming an endangered pastime for today's plugged in, over scheduled kids. Worse yet, outdoor play is disappearing from our home life, neighborhoods and our schools. Then we ask the question, Why are our young children exhibiting stress, anxiety, lack of social skills and declining mental health? There is even a term used called (PDK) Play-Deprived Kids!

At Levine Academy Early Childhood Center we continually grapple with expanding curriculum needs and special classes to ensure that we are providing creative ways to educate the "whole child." However, we are also very clear about balancing enough time in our day devoted to play. Children play in many ways. They play independently; sometimes near each other but with each child engaged in his own activity. That is called "parallel play," perhaps using each others' toys or even talking, but not coordinating their play. Towards the 3 year-old-year, the children begin to play cooperatively, organizing roles and scenarios for group play. As the children get older and more mature, they are capable of participating in more cooperative games and play. All kinds of play are valuable and necessary for healthy emotional and social development.

There is a point of too much information for parenting! When I visit the ever increasing shelves of parenting books I find there is everything from the *Tiger Mom*, to books ensuring a high IQ in vitro. I have empathy for you raising your child in a time when good old fashioned cloud-gazing, leaf-kicking and hill-rolling is being replaced by screen time, earplugs, flashcards and tutors!

I'll keep you informed of the next local showing of *Race to Nowhere*. Until then – have fun playing!

Shalom,
Sheryl

Shabbat Shalom

Jewish Studies...

Get your costumes ready! Purim is just around the corner! It's going to be an exciting time at the ECC. We look forward to our Purim Celebration on Friday, March 18! Our Pre-K and three-year-old classes will be leading us in a few Purim songs as part of our celebration. Our Toddler and two-year-old classes will have a mini-Purim Carnival on Wednesday, March, 16. Our 3's and Pre-K children will take part in our annual Buddy Purim Carnival just after our Shabbat/Purim Celebration.

Our Mitzvah Mensch canned food drive will begin this Friday, March 4. Our Mitzvah crib will be located just outside the BIG ROOM doors ready to collect our generous donations. All food will be donated to Jewish Family Service. Take a look at the wonderful posters that the children in Beverly and Jodi's three-year-old class created to remind us to send in our canned food.

The children in Kira and Nadine's three-year-old class will serve as our next Mitzvah Mensch class. They will help collect our Tzedakah money, which we will give to our eighth graders as they prepare to visit the land of Israel. Our Mitzvah leaders will present our donation during Shabbat Services on Friday, March 25! We look forward to learning all about the charities which our Tzedakah will help with.

Alyse Eisenberg

Jewish Studies Coordinator

Counselor's corner...

I had the opportunity to watch the movie "Race to Nowhere" this past Sunday. After viewing the movie two things struck me. One was that we, as parents, are rushing our children and depriving them of a childhood. The illustrated the importance of honoring the child's developmental stage and allowing him or her to master that stage. Experts in the film said that at six months our children need to be putting their feet in their mouth so they can learn where their toes are, and not looking at flashcards which will apparently teach them to read. When we push our kids to learn things before they are ready they miss out on fundamental skills that are the foundations for future learning. Parents are losing focus, and performance rather than critical skills have become what is important.

Secondly, the movie highlighted detrimental effects of the lack of free time and play time. Children today have so many choices, from soccer to yoga to chess club. These activities are great and provide children with important skills. However, there has to be a balance between activities and free time.

Free time and, yes, even boredom are very important for children. Children's self-esteem comes from imagination and taking risks. If they are always in structured activities when do they have time to imagine or take a risk? Children understand the world through play. It is their medium of communication and is crucial for their well-being. A child who has had an illness can understand and make sense of the hospital experience by playing doctor. Two girls can learn conflict resolution by deciding who gets to be the mommy and who gets to be the daughter.

As adults we understand and make sense of our world by talking to friends or spouses, and processing our experiences. When children imagine and play with friends they are learning these important skills for future relationships, conflicts, abstract thinking, jobs, and the list goes on. If a child's day, week, month is filled with activities and homework, they are missing out on these vital life skills. Additionally, the focus is on the end result; the grade on the test and not the process or what they learned. We need to teach our children how to think critically not just how to pass a test. The emphasis should be on the whole child, a love for learning, and not a grade. In addition, the movie highlighted the extreme dangers of stress that this lifestyle is causing our children. When it comes to relaxing they no longer know how.

As parents we need to advocate for our children in their schools with regard to homework. We need to understand the value of unstructured time by limiting activities, outside lessons, and electronic media. We need to understand the role of simple toys and good books play in opening a child's imagination, and understand that being at home with mom and dad provides a sense of security and safety. Finally, we need to look at the whole child and not just their accomplishments or test performances.

Counselor's Corner is part of our school mental health program, a partnership between Levine Academy and Jewish Family Service. If you have any questions, ideas or concerns please contact me at 972-248-3032 ext. 144. Or email me at ablum@levineacademy.org.

Sincerely,

Andy Blum, LCSW

ATTENTION PARENTS...

As cold and flu season is upon us the following guidelines should be observed when deciding whether or not to stay home or bring your child to school:

- All children should be **fever free for 24 hours** before returning to school.
- Please inform the office if your child has a **contagious disease** such as pink eye, RSV, Strep throat, Fifth's disease, etc. Admittance to school will not be allowed until the child is no longer contagious as determined by a pediatrician.
- Any drainage from eyes or ears can indicate an infection which should probably be checked out by your pediatrician.
- Any green or discolored discharge from the nose may be an infection which should be checked out by your pediatrician.
- A worsening or lingering cough can be serious and should be seen by your pediatrician.
- Children who are well enough to come to school are generally well enough to play outdoors. Parents are asked to avoid having their child 'kept in.' It is possible, however, to be seated outdoors to avoid strenuous activity following an illness.
- Children who become ill while at school will be kept with the teachers, nurse, or office staff until the parent or guardian can be contacted. If we cannot reach the parent or guardian we will contact the people on your Emergency List.

Please know that we view each child individually and know that circumstances may occur in which usual guidelines are inappropriate. If your child seems uncomfortable at home then she will most likely be uncomfortable at school and may benefit by staying home an extra day.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



What Every Parent Needs to Know

with

Jeff McKissach

of Defense by Design

Mr. McKissach is a member of the North Texas Crime Commission with 23 years experience in teaching "must know" safety tips to adults and children.

7 p.m. Thursday, March 10, 2011

Jewish Family Service

5402 Arapaho Road

(one block east of the Dallas North Tollway)

No Charge

Come learn:

- › The six steps predators use to seduce a child
- › The most common "lures" used to entrap children
- › How to educate young children without causing undue fear
- › How to better utilize our parental instincts to keep our children safe..

Please RSVP to Heather Behr at hbehr@JFSdallas.org or 972.437.9950.

Presented by

Jewish Family Service's School Mental Health Program

with School Counselors:

Heather Behr (Akiba Academy & Yavneh) . Andy Blum (Levine Academy)

Suzie Hacker (Akiba Academy, Anshai Torah, Beth Torah, JCC, & Temple Emanu-El)

Jeff Tepper (Torah Day School)



Jewish Family Service

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