



# On The Mark



## St. Mark's Cooperative Nursery School

100 Hempstead Avenue • Rockville Centre, NY 11570

Phone: 516-536-6295 • Fax: 516-763-5141

[www.stmarksns.com](http://www.stmarksns.com)

April/May/June Issue • 2015/2016 School Year



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### Director's Report

Spring has arrived, and I am almost afraid to believe that winter is over. Although it was a bit chilly, the weather did not deter our families from marching at the St. Patrick's Day parade. We had such a great turn out. Thank you to all who marched, and thank you for all our supporters on the side lines, too.

We are happy to welcome the warm sunshine. We all need to get out and get some fresh air. We wish all the bad germs died away with the cold weather, but there are still some lingering illnesses. The stomach bug has hit us very hard. Please remember to keep your sick children home. You are the ones who make the decisions. Even if your child wants to come to school, he or she will not be able to enjoy the activities if he or she is sick. If a sick child comes to school, we will keep passing the bad germs back and forth between the children and the staff. Be thoughtful and considerate of the other families in your classroom.

I would like to thank Gerard Lavelle and his work crew for putting up the shelves in our sheds. They look great and what a difference when we need to get in there. Thank you so much!

This is the last newsletter for this school year, and I want to thank Kerri and Bob Kaufmann and their staff for the terrific job they did. It is always a treat to read all the great information the newsletter brings.

As always, I want to thank the many families that have worked so hard to help our school run so smoothly this year. We ask a lot of our parents, and the staff and I appreciate all that you do. We all do this for the children. Thank you to the Governing Board. Each of you do your part to keep our school operating. Without all the wonderful parents that give so much, our school would just be an ordinary preschool. This year's board has extremely helpful and went into quick action to help out in any way they could. We are fortunate to have such caring families. I know that you could find other places to send your children and it would be easier on you, but I am very grateful that you have chosen St. Mark's for your children. You and your children will remember your time here for many years to come.

I also must say thank you to my staff. I am very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of women to work with. It is always easier to "leave things be," not to change, but our staff is always striving to be better. They are always interested in the latest workshops and classes offered in the field of early education and health and safety. These women put in many extra hours preparing and planning for the classroom. You as participating parents get to see firsthand how the teachers run their classrooms. A cooperative school is very different from your typical classroom. Parents are able to observe the goings on every minute. You are able to watch your child grow socially, emotionally and cognitively. What a wonderful experience! Having the parents in the classroom is also a wonderful opportunity for our staff to really get to know the families and get a better understanding of the students. I hope all of you will remember your times in the classroom as precious moments. I remember having a new respect for the nursery school staff after my first time participating. Thank you everyone. Thanks to Janet, my right

hand. She always does so much for the school. Janet keeps making improvements that make it easier and easier to operate the office. We are all very grateful for Janet and all she does for everyone.

So have a wonderful summer. It is hard to imagine that I am actually writing that since summer seems so far away. If this is your last year at St. Mark's, please come back to visit. Let us know how you are doing. I have included some articles for you to read and enjoy.

-Shirley



## ***President's Report***



So Long, Farewell...

Well, not quite yet. We still have a few weeks before school lets out and we will relish in it. Take a look back at what we have accomplished, and it will seem like a lifetime has gone by.

At this exact time last year, we were packing ALL of our schools' belongings and getting ready for the move of the (half) century. With the help of countless volunteers, we got it all, right down to the very last box. But aside from all of the material things, most importantly was the irreplaceable teachers and staff and our devoted St. Mark's families that followed us to our new location. Our mantra was, "It's not the four walls that surround us but our teachers and our friends that make up the heart of St. Mark's." In mid-summer 2015, we had bands of families and teachers that came to help us unpack and set up the classrooms. The pressure was on and all eyes were on us to see whether we'd make it. It was a tall order, and the lesson learned... **NEVER underestimate the spirit of the St. Mark's Cooperative.** Our school's spirit is truly tangible.

This school year was a time of transition. But the teachers and staff made it seamless to our students and that was the key to our success. Our children came and acclimated to their new surroundings with wonder and joy because our teachers welcomed them with open arms, love and encouragement. Despite all of the changes that our teachers and staff had to endure behind the scenes, they kept it all together.

An endless amount of planning and consideration from every possible angle was used with the goal of making it as smooth a transition as possible. Though it was not without bumps in the road, we are grateful for the patience and understanding of our families.

For the first time in 18 months, Jeanine and I are able to breathe. We can appreciate all of the spring decorations in the hallways and beam with pride in seeing our children read in their pajamas at Milk and Cookies Night. In our collective effort, we are all now reaping the benefits of our solidarity and the will to ensure that our school's legacy lives on.

It is humbling to be counted amongst the members of this year's board. Tough decisions were made in tough circumstances but it could not have been done without each other. We thank the board members that challenged the motions at each meeting and we are especially grateful to those who came to the table with solutions. Out of problems and concerns came creative thinking and brilliant ideas. Next year's board will be no different. We wish all the luck to the new board. May the force be with you!

We'd like to thank Ladies Night Out co-chairs, Kristen Barry, Lori Fanuzzi and Heather Price. They stepped up and committed to our school last May when there was the most uncertainty, a true vote of confidence. The success of our Annual Ladies Night Out event was nothing short of a tremendous effort by Kristen, Lori, and

Heather. With a record number of attendees, many of whom were alumni and over 140 baskets, we danced all night and closed down Hempstead Country Club. On behalf of our board and the entire membership, we extend a heartfelt thank you for all of the hard work and time you've invested, not to mention the funds you've raised for the school. A special thanks to DJ Franco who for a second consecutive year at LNO has helped us bring down the house!

Thank you also to VP of Class Reps, Alison Henry who led the charge in coordinating the class representatives and ensured that the important announcements from our school and board meetings were received by all of our families. To our Fundraising co-chairs, Michelle Creegan and Dina Testa, thank you for planning our events throughout the school year. You made our outings a blast and something to look forward to! Our Head Teachers, Pam Morreale, Terry Mara, Sue Hellige, Sharon Batkin, Linda Spessot, Pat Bonacker, Carol Lombardi, and Andrea Mansfield have all made this an incredible year for our families and especially our children who can't wait to get to school every morning.

To our teachers' assistants, Pam Morreale, Maria Petrone, Joan Ferro, Alison Heikkila, Jennifer Bee, Gina Finnerty, Erin Stevenson, Kristina Johnson, and Liz Perri. The support you give day in and day out is deeply appreciated by our teachers as well as our families. School would not be the same without you. Lastly, Janet Schwartz, our office manager who thinks outside of the box is always helpful and there for us when we need her (which is ALL of the time.) The Co-Presidents' job cannot be done without you.

And certainly not least, Shirley Perri who is always the last one standing. You are a true champion. You have literally put your blood, sweat, and tears into this school and no doubt its legacy was molded by you. Your work ethic, honesty, warmth, and grit have kept the candle lit. You have the strength and endurance of a hundred men! No one knows how you do it.

We look forward to celebrating our teachers and staff at our **Annual Teachers Appreciation Dinner, Thursday, May 12th 7pm**. A very special thanks to Chris Kelly of Lynbrook Firehouse (34 Carpenter Ave, Lynbrook) for donating the space to St. Mark's for a second year in a row. It is an intimate evening for us parents to give thanks and show our appreciation to the teachers and staff who make our Special Days extra special and give their 150% to our children every day.

We wish the best of luck to those who are moving onto Kindergarten next year and we look forward to welcoming those who are movin' on up with us again in the fall. It has been a pleasure to serve the Membership as Governing Board Co-Presidents this year.

Thank you,

Jeanine Paulson and Alison Spahn  
Co-Presidents

Please visit our new website

[www.stmarksns.com](http://www.stmarksns.com)

Call the main office for information regarding St. Mark's Nursery School's summer program.

Thank you to the Lynbrook Firehouse for the use of their space for Staff Appreciation Night.



Also a special thanks you to Victoria Morelli, mom to twins, Luca and Sophia Bologna for lending her expertise and services as an architect to provide drawings for our school's outdoor signage. We hope to have this new sign up before Fall 2016. Thanks to Judith Merritts, mom to Gabriella and Dylan Merritts resourcefulness who RVC'S technology department will be donating their time and woodworking skills to making this new sign for our school.

Important Dates:

May 10: Board meeting, 9:15	May 30: School closed	June 6: Joint board meeting
May 12: Staff Appreciation Dinner	May 31: 3s picnics	June 9: Last day of class
May 20: Movie/Gme Night	June 1: Parent orientation meeting	June 10: last day of class

# Teachers' Reports

## Two and Two and a Half Year Olds – “Miss Terry” Mara, “Miss Pam” Morreale, and Jennifer Bee

Finally, spring has arrived! The children are busy observing and investigating the signs of new life as spring begins. These signs include the lifecycles of the butterfly and ladybug, as well as seeds, which will grow into beautiful flowers or vegetables. Pretty pastel colors will be utilized in paints, playdoh and projects.

The children love singing “Old MacDonald’s Farm” and “Five Little Ducks.” *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is one of their favorite stories.

It is amazing to see how the little ones have grown this year and how independent they have become. It is hard to believe that the school year is coming to an end. Thank you for all of your hard work this year. Most importantly, thank you for sharing your most precious gift, your children, with us.

Have a safe and healthy summer.



## Three Year Olds – Sharon Batkin, Terry Mara, Sue Hellige, Linda Spessot, Gina Finnerty, Alison Heikkila, Kristina Johnson, Erin Stevenson

Spring has officially arrived! Children and teachers are excited to be outside on the playground and to enjoy these spring days.

Soon in our classrooms we will watch butterflies' and ladybugs' lifecycles; from larvae to chrysalis and their wonderful transformations! We will learn about other insects' and plants' growing cycles as well as talk about water and air. The children will be doing exciting projects and crafting unique wooden sculptures.

In music we will sing spring songs including, “Hey Mabel,” “Row by Row,” and many more.

In May we have our Rockville Centre Library trip where our children's art work will be exhibited and where we will listen to stories. We also look forward to having our Five Pennies ice cream parlor trip. As the school year winds down we want to take the opportunity to express our gratitude for your help in the classrooms and in our school.

Thank you and have a happy, healthy summer!





## Four Year Old

— Pat Bonacker, Carol Lombardi, Joan Ferro, Pam Morreale and Maria Petrone

Spring has sprung and so have the four year old classes! All of a sudden the children look so ready to spread their wings! We are finishing up our last few units of the year. Mrs. Bonacker's class is completing their dinosaur unit and both of the four year old classes have trips planned to Tanglewood to go on a dinosaur dig! We will be paleontologists that day. All the four year olds are busy working on their "All About Me" books that will be given to the parents at our Celebration of Growth on Thursday, June 9th. Mark your calendars-invitations will follow! We are also walking to the RVC Library this month and we are planning our end of the year picnic as well.



Our classes are following the life cycle of the butterfly and the ladybug this Spring. We will release them when the life cycle is complete and they are ready to join nature!

We teachers think of the children spreading their wings at this time of year. We have had a WONDERFUL year with your children and send them on to their next adventure with our love! We thank you parents for choosing St Mark's and for all your help everyday in our cooperative program. We could not do it without you!

We wish you a wonderful, restful and fun-filled summer! Enjoy each special day with your child. The years go fast. WE WILL MISS YOU ALL

## Kinderprep – Andrea Mansfield

The Kinderprep school year has flown by! The students have accomplished so much in this school year and I am so proud of them. Kinderprep students have learned about many continents and countries including South America, Africa and China. In May they will learn about Mexico's history, land and culture through engaging activities. The students will also enjoy watching ladybug and caterpillars grow while documenting it in their science journals. In June, the students will continue their writing, reading and math skills for preparation for Kindergarten. The Kinderprep curriculum was packed and the students achieved it all!



Now there are so many exciting events in May and June for the students to enjoy. We are so happy to walk to the Rockville Centre library to see St. Mark's artwork on display and listen to the librarian's stories. The students will also experience a field trip to the Frog and Toad play which is a Plaza Theatrical Production in Bellmore. The Kinderprep class will have a well-deserved picnic in May before the school year ends and the Moving Up Ceremony begins! The Kinderprep parents will experience an amazing performance of "Making New Friends" with Mrs. Rissland. The students have practiced and rehearsed for weeks and can't wait for everyone to enjoy! I am very proud of the progress that each student has made and I will miss them all next year!

## Music Notes – *Fran Rissland*

Winter is over and it is a relief to sing about the sun, rain, flowers, birds and butterflies. The Bunny and the Farmer song/game is a big favorite and one that is asked for frequently. All the children line up with their bunny paws up and ready to hop into the farmer's (the classroom teacher) garden. The farmer is not looking when we sing: Here come the bunnies hopping in the sun, eating all the farmer's carrots one by one. Here comes the farmer, ooh you better run, 5,4,3,2,1-RUN! As the farmer (their teachers) steps toward the bunnies you can just imagine the squeals and giggles as they run away. This is a dramatic play activity which has the added advantage of starting off in a major key (happy sound) and developing into a minor key (scary sound). It is unusual in early childhood music and good for little ears to hear.

There are many musical opportunities to count backwards. In September we counted cookies in the bakery shoppe as each one was bought by the children. In January we counted melting snowmen and in March we counted baby ducks that didn't return home when Mother called. But here is a lovely and soothing song counting forward as birds join their friends in a tree.



There was one little bird, who lived in a tree,  
said "I'm so alone and I don't want to be".

So he flew far away, over the sea and brought back  
a friend to live in the tree.

There were two little birds... three, four...

There were five little birds who lived in a tree, said "We're  
not alone anymore."

MUSIC ENRICHMENT for September of 2016 will be taking registration soon. Check your child's backpack. It is a great program tailor made for young children developing pitch and rhythm. It introduces them to the many dynamics that make up music and uses a lot of physical movement through music games. The class will take place on Thursdays, from 12:00 to 12:45 and is capped at 12.

THE CD-COME ALONG AND SING A SONG: The children who have the cd absolutely love telling me they sing in the car with me. It is a wonderful way to encourage music in your child. They are available in the office for \$15.00.

Enjoy Spring.



Check Out the *St. Mark's Website* for Current  
School Information & Additional Resources  
[stmarksns.com](http://stmarksns.com)



## Enrichment

### May

RVC Library: 3, 4, and KP classes  
4s trip to Tangelwood  
3s trip to five Pennies

### Reminder:

**The first installment of the 2016/2017 school year is due June 1.**



## SUNSHINE NEWS

The Spoerel Family welcomes  
Wyatt Timothy, 10 lbs, 6 oz.

*Got News to Share? Let Your Class Representative Know!*



# FUNDRAISING

## **St Marks Nursery School Movie Night**

May 20<sup>th</sup>. Join us at the Village Green. Pizza and games begin at 6:00; the movie starts at 8:00.

## **St Marks Yearbook**

Look for information about buying your 2015/2016 edition.

## **Ladies Night Out**

Thanks to everyone who joined us on April 7th for Ladies Night Out. We had a wonderful time and raised more than \$13,000 for the school. A special thanks to our generous sponsors and to our local businesses for their donations. Please thank them when you visit. A special thanks to our DJ.....for donating his services to make our night so enjoyable. This is such a great event! It was our pleasure to run the committee and be able to give back to St Marks Nursery School.

We look forward to being there next year as guests!

Kristen , Lori, and Heather

St. Mark's would like to thank DJ Franco for helping to make Ladies Night Out such a wonderful time.



## Expert Opinions

Last newsletter, we asked the question: *If you could be an animal for one day, which animal would you be?* **Here are your children's answers!**



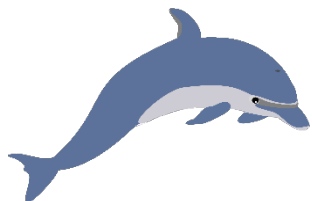
"Cheetah!"

Katie Kaufmann (Mrs. Batkin)

"Cheetah" Lorenzo Baker (Mrs. Spessot)

"Dolphin"

Megan Price (Mrs. Bonacker)

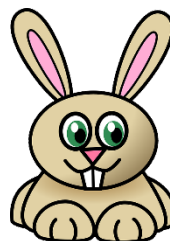


"Macau"

Kate Barry (Mrs. Lombardi)

"Rabbit"

Emma Ferrari (Mrs. Batkin)



"An elephant" Brady Rich (Mrs. Mara)

"Golden Eagle"

Emily Spoerel (Mrs. Batkin)

"Penguin"

Alice Boller (Mrs. Lombardi)



"Dog"

Marty Cooney (Mara's 3's)

# Parent Resource Center

*By Francesca Esposito*

**Coffee Filter Butterfly Craft:** From Red Tent Art

## **Materials:**

Coffee filters

Blue, red, and yellow water colors or food coloring

Pipette

Google eyes

String

Craft sticks

## **Directions:**

1. Begin by mixing each color with water, and then pour each color into a separate glass. Using the pipette, drop colors into coffee filters and watch them turn into greens and oranges and purples.
2. Once dry cut coffee filters in half.
3. Switch two halves around so that circle sides meet in the middle: one semicircle facing up, the other down to create the butterfly wings.
4. Squeeze the middle; prepare a craft stick with glue.
5. Place craft stick on top of wings.
6. Glue googly eyes to craft stick.
7. Place a small piece of string under craft stick to make an antennae.





**Materials:**

6 cupcake liners

Color paper

Scissors

Glue

**Directions:**

Start by cutting the center circle from three cupcake liners. Cutting a material like cupcake liners is more difficult than regular paper due to the thinner material and the texture of the liner. Kids will have to concentrate on cutting the center "line" which is really a fold. This is great **line awareness** work and a great way to work on **visual motor skills**.

Next, have your child snip the other three cupcake liners towards the center of the circle, but stopping at the fold. These liners will become the petals of the flowers and the sun's rays. Cutting and stopping at a point requires **hand-eye coordination** and dexterity in scissor use. They have to be sure to open/shut the scissors effectively to stop at a certain point. Glue the cut-out centers to the middle of the "petal" liners. Cut out stems using the color paper. Glue the liners and the stem to color paper.



## Spring Healthy Treat

Use a string cheese for the flower stems and center of the petals. Then, cut fruit (strawberries work great) for petals and put the flowers on a bed of kiwi – it's the perfect

Spring snack!



# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April

St. Mark's Nursery School  
Shirley Perri

## KID BITS



### An earth-friendly home

Reusing household materials can teach your child to care about the environment. Together, think of ways to throw away less trash. For example, your family could use glasses and dishes instead of plastic cups and paper plates.

### Postcard search

When you visit an aquarium, a zoo, or a museum, make the gift shop your first stop. Let your youngster choose one postcard. As you tour the exhibits, have him look for what's in the picture (electric eel, panda). You'll build his observation skills and keep his attention focused.

### Sun protection

Spring means your little one will probably play outside more often. To protect her skin, use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15—even on cloudy days. Apply it 30 minutes before she goes out, and reapply every two hours or when she gets out of a pool.

### Worth quoting

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

Nelson Mandela

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the boy sprinkle sugar on his pillow?

**A:** So he'd have sweet dreams.



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## The three Cs of friendship

Friends make school, sports, and playtime more fun for your child. They can also boost his self-confidence and improve his social skills. Encourage your youngster to make friends by teaching him the three Cs of friendship.

### Caring

Through words and actions, good friends show that they care about each other. Explain to your child that this can be as simple as smiling and saying hi to a friend at school or giving a compliment ("I like your drawing" or "Nice catch!"). He can also let a classmate know he cares by spending time with him. They might eat lunch together, sit side by side during story hour, or help each other at cleanup time.

### Compassion

Your youngster can strengthen a friendship by showing compassion. Ask him to think about what makes him feel

better when he's unhappy (a high five, a funny joke). Suggest that he try one of those ideas when a friend is extra tired or feeling left out.

### Cooperation

Taking turns and sharing are important skills for making friends. When your child invites a classmate home and they're deciding what to play, teach him to let his guest choose first. Then, it will be his turn to pick what they'll do next. If they are coloring, encourage your youngster to share his favorite crayons. ♥



## A healthy diet

The grocery store is a great place to teach your youngster about healthy eating. Try these suggestions as you shop together:

- Let your child decide which fruits and vegetables she wants. Explain that choosing a variety of colors (red apples, orange carrots, green beans) will give her different vitamins that she needs to stay healthy.
- Point out nutrition labels on dairy products. Tell your youngster that calcium builds strong bones and teeth. Together, look for calcium on the labels of dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- Explain that the healthiest grains are labeled "100% whole." Ask your child to look for the "100" on bread, crackers, and pasta. ♥





## Write away

Homemade books can make your child feel like a "real" author. Follow these steps to build her writing skills:

**1.** Stack three pieces of white paper on a sheet of construction paper. Fold all four sheets in half. Staple along the fold, and show your youngster how the pages open like a book.

**2.** Talk about things your child may want to write about. For instance, she could make a book that gives directions for an activity she likes, such as riding a scooter.



Or she might write a story about her friend's new pet. She could also make a book about a topic (sports) that names a different kind on each page (soccer, baseball).

**3.** Suggest that she start by drawing a picture on every page. Ask questions to prompt her. Examples: "What's the first thing you do to ride a scooter?" "What does the guinea pig eat?" "What are four sports that you like?"

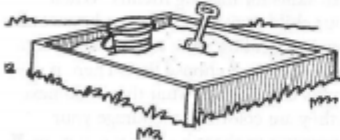
**4.** Help your youngster add words below each picture. You might say, "You know lots of words. How about writing some on your pages that tell about princesses?" ♥

## Q & A

### Switching gears

**Q:** When my daughter Chloe has to stop doing something she likes, she gets upset. How can I help her switch activities more easily?

**A:** Children often find it hard to stop a fun activity. You can make it easier by giving your daughter a heads-up. At the park, you might say, "We have to get your sister in 10 minutes. Do you want to play in the sandbox before we leave?"



Having something to look forward to may also help your youngster. When it's time for bed, you can say, "We'll read a story when you're tucked in."

Another idea is to sing a special song as you change activities. You can sing "We're getting in the car" or "It's time to go to bed" to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell." ♥

### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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## PARENT TO PARENT

### Wants vs. needs

My son Ben went through a phase when he begged for everything he saw. He would "need" a toy just like his friend's or want a game that he saw in a catalog.

I explained to Ben that *needs* are necessary things, such as a safe place to live and clothes to keep him warm. *Wants* are nice to have but not required. To help him understand, we walked around the house pointing out needs (jacket, blanket) and wants (stuffed animals, blocks). Ben was surprised to learn that he had many more wants than needs.

The next time Ben said he needed to watch a TV show, I reminded him of our conversation. He said, "Oh, yeah, I mean I want to watch it." He's also doing a little better about not asking me to buy things. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### My shoe store

Playing shoe store is fun and educational. Here's how to help your little one set up shop in your living room.

Let your youngster get several pairs of shoes from each family member's closet. Suggest that he pick different kinds (boots, sandals, sneakers). He can practice classifying—an important math and science skill—by brainstorming several ways to arrange them. For instance, he could sort them according to color (brown, black, white), size (smallest to

largest), season (summer, winter), or purpose (sports, dress).

Once his store is set up, he can work on language skills. Ask him what a salesperson might say to a customer. ("May I help you?" "What kind of shoes are you looking for today?") He can pretend to be the clerk and help family members choose and try on shoes.

Note: Be sure he puts everyone's shoes back when he "closes" his shop! ♥



# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May

St. Mark's Nursery School  
Shirley Perri

## KID BITS



### Sense of humor

Knock-knock jokes let your youngster take part in the joke-telling action. Tell her a few of your favorites, or look for some online. Then, encourage her to make up her own. She'll discover how much fun language can be while you laugh together.

### School hours

If your child will switch from half- to full-day school in the fall, you can use summer to help him prepare. Throughout the day, point to the clock, and talk about different times. Examples: "It's 11:30. That's probably when you'll eat lunch in school," or "It's 3:30. That's what time you'll get home."

### Frozen first aid

Summertime activities can lead to the occasional scraped knee. Have your youngster make a "boo-boo cloth." She can place a clean, damp washcloth in a plastic zipper bag and store it in the freezer. The cold cloth will soothe the sting and help her bounce back and keep playing.

### Worth quoting

"To see the summer sky is poetry."  
Emily Dickinson

### Just for fun

**Q:** What is the first thing you do when you jump in a swimming pool?

**A:** Get wet!



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## All-day summer learning

Keep the learning going all summer! Here are ways to fit learning opportunities into your child's daily routine.

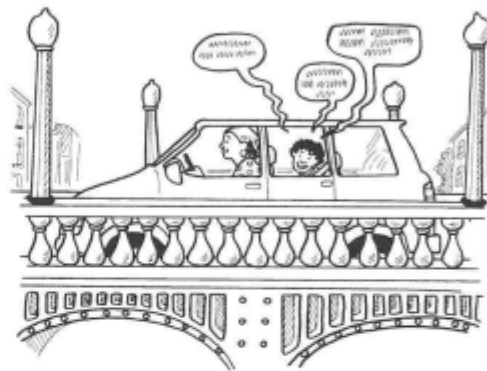
### Riding in the car

Let your youngster be the "tour guide" when you drive around town or go on a trip. He can point out places and describe them. ("Now we're driving over a bridge. We take the bridge to cross the river.") He'll become more observant as he

notices details, and he'll practice speaking and using descriptive language.

### Taking a bath

Playing with shapes and patterns strengthens early math skills. In the bathtub, your child can use washable markers to draw shapes on the sides of the tub. Or cut sheets of colored craft foam into different shapes (circles, squares, triangles). Have him dip the shapes in the water and



stick them on the tub walls to make patterns and pictures.

### Going to bed

Try this twist on story time. Ask your youngster to "read" a wordless picture book to you. (Your librarian can help you find one.) Or your child can invent a new story to go with the pictures in a book that has words. Using illustrations to make up stories and read books will boost his reading comprehension. ♥

## Tame the TV

It might be tempting for your youngster to spend more time in front of the TV during the summer. But instead of turning on the tube, try these suggestions:

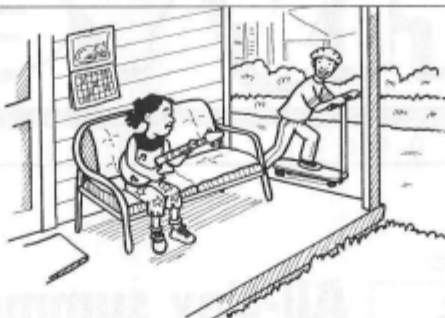
- Ask her to draw pictures of "unplugged" activities (play a board game, put on a puppet show, paint a mural) and glue them on poster board. She can lay the poster on the floor and toss a penny onto it to decide what to do.
- Have an "outdoors only" day. Stay outside all day—where the TV is out of sight. Your child might play with toys on a patio table, or she could take a nature walk and share a picnic lunch with you.
- Take turns hosting play dates with friends or cousins. Let your youngster plan a game or craft when it's her turn to host. ♥



## Getting along with siblings

"She's touching me!" "He touched me first!" Too much togetherness can lead to bickering between siblings. Cut down on squabbles with ideas like these.

**Get their input.** Point out that summer will be more fun if they get along. Then, brainstorm ways to make that happen. For instance, they might agree not to take each other's special toys, like a particular doll or stuffed animal.



**Create a schedule for shared toys.** Avoid arguments about whose turn it is to play the toy guitar or ride the scooter. Your youngsters can write their names or initials on alternating days on the calendar. The one whose initials appear on a given day gets the first pick.

**Make sure they have some time apart each day.** Some-

times, planning separate activities for your children is the easiest way to keep the peace. They might play in separate rooms or with different toys for a while.

**Tip:** When your youngsters do argue, stay out of it if possible. As long as they aren't hurting each other, give them time to work things out on their own so they learn to resolve conflicts. ♥

### ACTIVITY CORNER

### Calendar journal

Encourage your child to practice writing by filling a calendar with short, sweet memories of summer.

**Materials:** white drawing paper, ruler, pencil, crayons



1. For each calendar page (June, July, August), your youngster can draw a grid with 7 columns and 6 rows. Help him write a day of the week at the top of each column and number the boxes with the dates.
2. Each night before bed, let your child write a memory in that day's square. *Example:* "Today we played in the sandbox at the park." Prompt him if he seems stuck: "Where did we go?" "What did we see?" Have him decorate the squares with drawings, stickers, and stamps.
3. At the end of the summer, read his calendar together, and enjoy the memories. ♥

#### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.  
Resources for Educators,  
a division of CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
540.636-4280 • [rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com](mailto:rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com)  
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### Q & A

#### A late bloomer?

**Q:** My daughter seems to have more trouble with schoolwork than other kids her age. I'm worried she may be falling behind. What should I do?

**A:** First, remember that every child learns at her own pace. To find out if your daughter is on track, schedule an end-of-year meeting with her teacher to discuss your concerns.

During the conference, see if the teacher is worried about your youngster's progress. Also, talk about areas where you notice her struggling, and ask for ways you could help her at home. For example, if she has a hard time writing numbers, the teacher might suggest simple games to help her form them correctly.

If the teacher thinks your daughter needs extra help, she can tell you about resources that are available. ♥



### PARENT TO PARENT

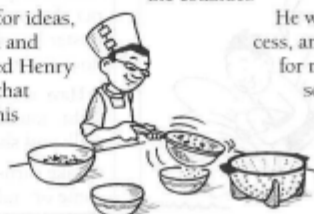
#### Problem-solving fun

My son's class recently made paper "thinking caps" to wear during problem-solving activities. Henry liked his hat so much that he wanted to wear it and solve problems at home.

While we were looking for ideas, my older daughter came in and noticed the hat. She showed Henry a problem-solving activity that she remembered doing at his age. She helped him mix beans, rice, and salt in a bowl. Then, she got a colander, a strainer, and

two more bowls, and asked her brother to separate the three foods. It took a few tries, but Henry eventually figured out that the salt would go through the strainer and the rice would go through the colander.

He was proud of his success, and he keeps asking for more problems to solve. Now when we run into a dilemma, we ask Henry to put on his thinking cap and help us figure it out! ♥



# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May

St. Mark's Nursery School  
Shirley Perri

## KID BITS

### Beginning writing

Help your youngster begin to spell while he's still learning the alphabet. How? Suggest that he write down the sounds he hears in words. At first, he may write only the first and last letters ("fd" for "friend"). But as he practices, he will spell more and more words correctly.

### A toy time-out

If your kids are arguing over a toy, try giving them a "toy time-out." Tell them that no one plays with the toy until the disagreement is settled. In the meantime, they have to play with something they can share more easily, such as a box of crayons.

### Lace it up

Simple "sewing" can improve your child's fine-motor coordination. Cut several shapes from cardboard. Using a single-hole punch, make small holes, about an inch apart, around the edges of each shape. Give your youngster some yarn or a shoelace, and show her how to thread it through the holes.

### Worth quoting

"What is now proved was once only imagined." William Blake

### Just for fun

**Q:** Where is the ocean the deepest?

**A:** At the bottom!



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## Making decisions

As children grow older, they have to make more choices for themselves. Starting early will give your youngster practice with simple decisions—before the more serious ones come along.

Here are some ways you can promote good decision-making skills.

### Talk it out

Help your youngster weigh the pros and cons of each option. Seeing both sides will make it easier for her to choose. *Example:* If she's trying to decide whether to spend her allowance on a snack or stickers, you might offer ideas such as "Candy tastes good, but doesn't last long," and "Stickers are fun to play with, but cost more."

### Think it over

Try asking your child questions that will encourage him to think through the decisions he makes. For example, if he's throwing a ball in the living room, ask him to consider why throwing the ball inside isn't a good idea. (He might break

something.) What would be a better choice? (Rolling the ball on the floor or taking it outside.)

### Give it a chance

Encourage your youngster to give her decisions a try before changing her mind. For instance, if she wants to take gymnastics but is ready to quit after the first practice, persuade her to attend a few more classes. That way, she'll have the experience and knowledge she needs to make an informed decision. She may find that her first choice was the right one after all. ♥



### Poetry fun

Exploring poetry with your youngster will help her appreciate language and boost her vocabulary. Get started with these ideas:

■ Check out an anthology of children's poems at the library. Have your child open the book and point to a poem. Then, read the poem together. Try *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein or *The New Kid on the Block* by Jack Prelutsky.

■ Help your youngster write a poem. Write the following sentence on a sheet of paper: "I see \_\_\_\_, I hear \_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_, I smell \_\_\_\_, I taste \_\_\_\_." Challenge him to create his own poem by filling in the blanks with a word or phrase to go with each of his five senses. ♥



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## Get creative!

Providing your child with opportunities to use her imagination promotes her thinking and social skills, as well as creativity. Try these tips to inspire your youngster:

- Put on a puppet show. Make a puppet by drawing a face on a small paper plate and gluing it to the bottom flap of an unopened paper lunch bag. Show your youngster how to place her hand in the flap of the bag to make the puppet "talk."



- Play charades. Write simple actions on slips of paper. Examples: play baseball, wash your hair, make a sandwich. Let your child choose a slip and perform the action for the rest of the family to guess. Encourage him to come up with charades of his own.

- Use literature. Read a fairy tale, and have your youngster pretend she's a character in the story. For

example, she could be Little Red Riding Hood and take a picnic lunch to her grandmother's house. For added fun, give your child red fabric to use as a cape and a basket to carry her lunch. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Magazine collage

Do you have a stack of magazines taking up space in your basement? Dig them out and help your youngster practice grouping and critical thinking by making collages.

Have your child choose a theme and look for objects in the magazines that relate to it. Brainstorm ideas by asking him questions, such as "What do you want to do this summer?" If he says, "Go to the beach," he could cut out pictures of umbrellas, swimsuits, boats, and seafood. Then, have him glue or tape them on a piece of heavy paper. Other theme ideas include living things, objects made of metal, or things that are blue.

**Tip:** Your youngster can practice writing by labeling the objects after he glues them on. ♥



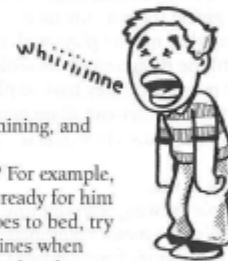
### Q & A Wiping out whining

**Q:** My son whines whenever he wants something. When I tell him to stop, it gets worse. What can I do?

**A:** Start by figuring out what triggers your child's whining, and then try to prevent it.

Does he whine when he's hungry, tired, or bored? For example, if he seems to whine right after school, have a snack ready for him when he gets home. If he starts whining before he goes to bed, try moving bedtime up by half an hour. If he usually whines when you're shopping, give him some encouragement beforehand: "We'll only shop for a short while. I know you'll be able to use a nice voice in the store."

Finally, try ignoring your youngster's whining. By taking away his audience, you may also take away his motivation to whine. ♥



### PARENT TO PARENT

## Summer playdates

Inviting my daughter's friends over for playdates during the summer is a great way to help them stay in touch. However, the fun can sometimes turn to chaos. I've discovered several things that help playdates go more smoothly.

I always have an activity planned. Sometimes I'll put out art supplies, like construction paper, markers, scissors, and glue. I remind the kids of

the rules up front, such as cleaning up each activity before beginning a new one.

I've also learned that it's better for my child to have one friend over at a time. When there is an odd number of children, someone always seems to get left out.

Finally, I keep the playdates short—all kids tend to get cranky after a couple of hours, no matter how much fun they have together. ♥



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Resources for Educators,  
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601  
(540) 723-0322 • [rfecustomer@aspenpubl.com](mailto:rfecustomer@aspenpubl.com)  
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