

Summer News and Information

June 2009

Summer quarter is well underway and all the children seem to be enjoying their new rooms and playmates. The staff worked really hard over break to get the classroom environments ready for the children. Through their efforts each classroom was beautifully transformed to accommodate each group of children. Watching children make new discoveries in their environments is always wonderful to see. This is especially true of the school age children coming to the Poly Trekker program. Seeing them freely move about the yards, get involved in dramatic play with peers and engage in creative activities is heartwarming. The Center is truly a place where children can just be children and learning happens naturally through a well thought out environment and the strategic planning of the teachers. In this light, I have attached an article that you might find interesting about the positive effect of a quality program on children's future school success.

We hope you will join us from time to time this summer and experience part of your child's day in the program. Once you are here may not want to leave. Also, if you would like to share a special talent, interest or hobby please let your teachers know. They would love to have you get involved.

Garden Help

Speaking of getting involved, we are looking for a few parents who would be interested in helping in our gardens. We have all kinds of planters in addition to our large garden in yard 6/7 that take time and care to keep them going. If you would love to help out regularly (i.e. maybe once every other week) please let me know. The teachers appreciate the support, and it's a wonderful opportunity to get to know the children as you work in these spaces.

Parent Groups Starting

Parent groups are starting again this summer on Tuesdays at 12:10 and Wednesdays at 9:10. The first group begins this Wednesday morning, July 1st. The Tuesday group starts next week on July 7th. Meetings last an hour to an hour and a half. You can leave when you need to. This is a great way to meet new parents, share common issues and ask questions regarding parenting (and receive parent service hours too!). All parents welcome. Feel free to bring your lunch during the noon meetings. We will meet every other week with each group. Below are the dates:

Tuesdays 12:10 Dates: July 7, 21, August 4, 18

Wednesdays 9:10 Dates: July 1, 15, 29, August 12 (possibly August 19 since I will be on vacation on the 26th)

Summer Hours

This summer we close at 5:30 pm. Please make sure you are leaving the building at this time and not coming in the door. We realize it takes a few minutes to gather your child(ren) so please factor this time into your pick up routine. You are always welcome to come early and spend time in the classroom. If you are visiting with other parents at the end of the day we appreciate it if you would ask them to meet you out front to carry on your conversation if the time is near closing. Also, this is a reminder that late fees will be applied after 5:30 pm. More information about our late fees policy and charges can be found in our Parent Handbook on the ASI Website: www.asi.calpoly.edu. Click on Children's Center tab and then on Parent Resources where you will find the Parent Handbook.

The Center is Closed this Friday, July 3 to celebrate the 4th of July

Yours,

Patty

Opinion: Preschool is a key to boosting graduation rates

~~~~~By Charles Weis  
Special to the Mercury News

This month, the graduating class of 2009 accepted their high school diplomas at commencement ceremonies across the county. Unfortunately, too many youths missed out on this milestone: The California Department of Education recently reported that 1 in 5 high school students drops out.

The good news is that we know how to put our kids - and with them, our families, communities and economy - on the path to success. A new report by the RAND Corp. underscores what I have seen in almost four decades of working in education: We must start early.

The report finds the achievement gap is evident well before kindergarten. High-quality early childhood education exposes kids to experiences that can help close the gap by developing important social skills, such as making friends and showing persistence in finishing tasks, as well as building critical pre-literacy and pre-math skills.

Without this foundation, many children find it hard to catch up. The RAND report finds that children who start out behind tend to stay behind, and the children who could benefit most - Latinos, African-Americans, English learners and low-income children - are the least likely to be in preschool. Only about half of low-income children are in preschool compared with 80 percent of children whose parents make more than \$100,000.

The report cites rigorous evaluations that show high- quality early childhood programs can increase high school graduation rates significantly. They can also raise performance on academic achievement tests and reduce special education and grade repetition.

As a commissioner on the county's Juvenile Justice Systems Collaborative, I know we must also start looking to preschool as a crime-prevention strategy that reinforces respect and responsibility for others, teaches how to resolve conflicts and reduces behavior problems that can spiral out of control.

We should also heed economists who have found that getting things right at first is easier and costs less than trying to fix them later. My work on the board of Joint Venture Silicon Valley has shown me that nothing is more critical to long-term economic growth than a well-educated local workforce.

Unfortunately, the RAND report concludes that California's early care and education system is complex, fragmented and not set up to provide high- quality programs to the kids who need it most. But we can change this. The recommendations confirm the policy path California is taking and provide guidance for building a stronger, more efficient system.

At the Santa Clara County Office of Education, we are strongly committed to making high-quality preschool available to all parents who want it for their children. We recently launched an initiative to develop a master plan for that goal.

The office provides Head Start services to more than 2,000 preschool children in Santa Clara and San Benito counties, through federal funding. We also support First 5 Santa Clara County's "Power of Preschool" program, which helps children in the San Jose Unified, Alum Rock, Franklin McKinley, Gilroy Unified and Morgan Hill Unified school districts.

Working together, we can ensure more children have the opportunity to receive the strong start early childhood education provides. If we want our graduates to meet the demands of the global economy, we must support the next generation of innovators coming into our public education system.

CHARLES WEIS is Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools. He wrote this article for the Mercury News.

