

Incline Village Nursery School Newsletter

November 2014



Contents

Director's News	1
Family Food Traditions	1
Stars of the Week	2
Assessments	2
November Birthdays	2
Free Smoke Detectors	3
Scholastic Book Orders	3
November Calendar	4
Building Blocks of a Good Pre-K	5

Upcoming Events

Daylight Savings Ends	11/2
Yoga with Naomi	11/10
CrossFit Kids	11/5 & 11/19
Closed for Veteran's Day	11/11
Board Meeting	11/19
Family Food Traditions Potlucks	11/21
Thanksgiving Break	11/26-11/28

Director's News

We have an exciting month ahead of us with lots of fun projects and assessments planned. We'll be spending the first few weeks of November talking about community helpers and what jobs in our community are most important to us. This is a perfect opportunity to start having our parents come to class to talk about your jobs, since many of you ARE community helpers yourselves! If you have a cool job or hobby related to working in our community we would love to have you come make a presentation about what you do. The kids absolutely adore having special visitors come to class and they are totally enamored with all kinds of jobs. Last year we had a pilot, a nurse, a camping gear demo, and more. So.... Would you like to come to class to teach the kids about your profession/hobby? We'd be happy to have you come in any time that fits into your schedule. We can be flexible, so just let me know if you can join us!

In the spirit of the season we will be spending a lot of time in class talking about what it means to be thankful, and how important it is to include giving in our lives. Discovering what our kids are thankful for and what they find meaningful in their lives can be a heart-warming experience for all of us. I'm looking forward to spending a Thankful month with all of you!

Warmly,

Nicole

Family Food Traditions Potlucks

This year we're going to continue a new tradition at IVNS and have a party in each class celebrating our families' food traditions. Each year we talk to the kids about what they're looking forward to eating at the Thanksgiving table, what their favorite smells are, what they like to help cook, and where they enjoy their family meals together. We know that as adults we all have a particular memory of Thanksgiving as a child, and what we loved about our own family's traditions. Many of these traditions are surrounding food – and whether your family celebrates Thanksgiving or not I'm sure that there is a particular dish that you're fond of from your childhood, and that you continue to make for your own children even today. Many families have their own traditional

dishes that they make for their gatherings each and every year. What is that dish in your family? This is where we want you to share it! Now is the time for our children to start creating their own fond memories of their families' traditions and we'd like to bring a bit of that into our classroom. On Friday, November 21st we will have a potluck in each class and invite you all to prepare that special dish that's traditional in your family – and then come in to school to enjoy a potluck together. Look for invitations and sign-up sheets in the coming weeks!



November Stars of the Week

Week of November 2nd: AM Class: Kevin / PM Class: Declan

Week of November 9th: AM Class: Mya / PM Class: Maria

Week of November 16th: AM Class: Tre/ PM Class: Luke

Tuesday: Scarlett

Developmental Assessments

We'll be starting academic and motor assessments with all students the week of November 2nd and will take us about 6 weeks to complete all areas necessary. The state of Nevada requires that all early education providers complete students assessments throughout the year and at least once in full compliance with preschool and pre-K standards currently recommended for the state of Nevada. We have chosen to use the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) for our 2014-15 assessments.

After all assessments are complete we'll offer parent conferences to all interested families and we'll review the results of your child's assessment as well as talk about a plan for the future success of your preschooler.



November Birthdays

Alexandra.....Nov. 6th

FionaNov. 14th

LarkinNov. 20th

Asher.....Nov. 22nd

ZachNov. 30th

Free Smoke Detectors Available

North Lake Tahoe Fire Department has received a grant to supply new smoke detectors to community members who may need to add or replace smoke detectors in their homes. Please check and change the batteries in your smoke detectors this month. If you have older detectors that need to be upgraded you can take them to the fire station in Incline for a free upgrade. If you need to add smoke detectors to your home, you can also pick them up for free at the fire station.

We had a great visit from the fire department last week and students in both classes learned about the danger of matches and lighters, how to crawl low on the ground to stay below smoke, how to dial 911, and how to call for help if there is a fire fighter in their home trying to rescue them during a fire. We talked a lot about how important it is to not hide in a closet or under a piece of furniture during a fire, and not to be scared of a fire fighter with all of their gear, masks & helmet on. Most importantly we talked about finding a safe exit and leaving the house to a safe spot in the yard. Please talk about a safe exit from your home with your child, and practice exiting the house together to a designated family meeting spot. It's SO important that they know what to do if they are ever in a fire emergency in their own environment.

Also - most of our students do not have a land-line telephone in their homes. Being able to dial 911 from a cell phone is not nearly as easy as it seems. Please show & practice with your child how to unlock the home screen, how to find the "calls" area, and how to find the keypad from there. I personally take the security code off of my lock screen because I want my kids to be able to access the telephone to call 911 if they need to. I would not expect a preschooler to be able to remember a passcode in an emergency, so this is something I hope you all consider.

Scholastic Book Orders

Looking for an affordable holiday gift for all the kids on your list? Books are always a great gift idea, and Scholastic offers unbeatable prices on many popular titles. Scholastic book orders are now available online with a percentage of your purchase coming back to our classroom in the form of books!

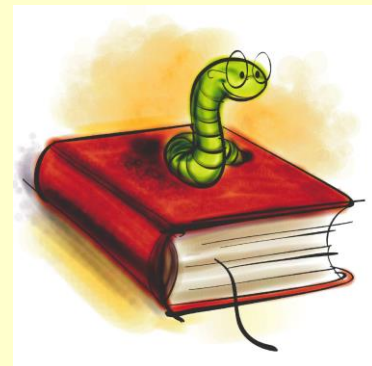
Submit your orders online through the Scholastic Reading Club at:

<https://clubs2.scholastic.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/LogonForm>

Make sure you enter our class activation code if you buy online:

LQHYQ

This way we'll get classroom credit and they'll all ship together. Please make sure your orders are placed by Friday, November 7th at midnight.





November 2014 Classroom Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Letter: E Theme: Community Helpers	3	4 Election Day	5 CrossFit Kids 2:00	6 Alex's Birthday	7 Scholastic Book orders due	8
9 Letter: F Theme: Hibernation & Nocturnal Animals	10 Yoga with Naomi @ 10:30 & 2:00	11 Veteran's Day CLOSED	12	13	14 Fiona's Birthday	15
16 Letter: G Theme: Giving Thanks/Being Grateful	17 Baking pumpkin cookies	18	19 CrossFit Kids @ 2:00 Board Mtg. @ 3:45	20 Larkin's Birthday	21 Family Food Traditions Potlucks @ 10:45 & 2:45	22 Asher's Birthday
23 Theme: Thanksgiving	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving	28	29
30 Zach's Birthday						

CLOSED for Thanksgiving

The Building Blocks of a Good Pre-K

By Shael Polakow-Suransky and Nancy Nagar
Printed: New York Times, Op-Ed; October 22, 2014

With the introduction of universal pre-K in New York City, we have created a new entry point into our public school system. This raises a key question: What do we want our children's first experiences in school to be? What does a good education look like for 4-year-olds?

This summer, Bank Street College of Education led training for 4,000 of New York's pre-K teachers, including both veterans and hundreds of people who started teaching pre-K for the first time last month. Worried teachers talked about how the pressure to achieve good outcomes on the third-grade state exams has been trickling down to early childhood classrooms in the form of work sheets, skill drills and other developmentally inappropriate methods.

The problem is real, and it is not unique to New York City. Earlier this year, Daphna Bassok and Anna Rorem, educational policy researchers at the University of Virginia, found strong evidence that current kindergarten classrooms rely too heavily on teacher-directed instruction. Their study, ["Is Kindergarten the New First Grade?"](#) revealed that the focus on narrow academic skills crowded out time for play, exploration and social interaction. In a 2009 report for the Alliance for Childhood, ["Crisis in the Kindergarten."](#) Edward Miller and Joan Almon reported that kindergarten teachers felt that prescriptive curricular demands and pressure from principals led them to prioritize academic skill-building over play.

This is a false choice. We do not need to pick between play and academic rigor.

While grown-ups recognize that pretending helps children find their way into the world, many adults think of play as separate from formal learning. The reality is quite different. As they play, children develop vital cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills. They make discoveries, build knowledge, experiment with literacy and math and learn to self-regulate and interact with others in socially appropriate ways. Play is also fun and interesting, which makes school a place where children look forward to spending their time. It is so deeply formative for children that it must be at the core of our early childhood curriculum.

What does purposeful play look like? When you step into an exemplary pre-K classroom, you see a room organized by a caring, responsive teacher who understands child development. Activity centers are stocked with materials that invite exploration, fire the imagination, require initiative and prompt collaboration. The room hums.

In the block area, two girls build a bridge, talking to each other about how to make sure it doesn't collapse and taking care not to bump into the buildings of children next to them. In an area with materials for make-believe, children enact an elaborate family scenario after resolving who will be the mommy, who will be the grandpa and who will be the puppy. Another group peers through a magnifying glass to examine a collection of pine cones and acorns. On the rug, children lie on their stomachs turning the pages of books they have selected, while at the easel a boy dips his brush into red paint and swoops the paint mostly onto his paper.

The teacher observes and comments. She shifts from group to group, talking with children about their work ("I see that you made a big red circle."); helping children resolve a conflict ("You both want to be the mommy. What should we do?"); posing an open-ended question to stimulate exploration and problem-solving ("What do you notice when you use the magnifying glass that is different from when you use your eyes?"); and guiding children to manage themselves ("When you finish your snack, what activity would you like to choose?").

Barbara Biber, one of Bank Street's early theorists, argued that play develops precisely the skills — and, just as important, the disposition — children need to be successful throughout their lives. The child "projects his own pattern of the world into the play," she wrote, "and in so doing brings the real world closer to himself. He is building the feeling that the world is his to understand, to interpret, to puzzle about, to make over. For the future we need citizens in whom these attitudes are deeply ingrained."

Earlier in the 20th century, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky made the related argument that children's thinking develops through activity-based learning and social interactions with adults and peers. When teachers base their curriculums on Dr. Vygotsky's ideas, there are significant benefits for children's capacity to think, to plan and to sustain their attention on difficult tasks.

Play has long-lasting benefits. What is referred to as self-regulation in preschool becomes resiliency in high school. The University of Pennsylvania psychologist Angela Duckworth has found that this trait, which she famously calls grit, can make or break students, especially low-income students. Over the past three years, the New York City Department of Education developed a framework to support the core behavioral elements that drive college and career readiness. Many of them — persistence, planning, the ability to communicate and the capacity to collaborate — have their roots in early childhood.

Next fall, there will be more students in pre-K in New York City than there are in the entire school system of Atlanta or Seattle. To his credit, Mayor Bill de Blasio has not only pushed for expanding access but has also insisted on improving quality and put real money into training and materials. This is a strong start. But we still need to help parents, administrators and policy makers see what the children themselves know intuitively: Classrooms that pulse with meaningful play are our smartest investment.

Shael Polakow-Suransky, who served as senior deputy chancellor of the New York City Department of Education from 2011-14, is the president of Bank Street College, where Nancy Nagar is a professor of education and child development.