

Sometimes as parents
we feel as though we
need a field manual.

Unfortunately there is no
one size fits all instructions, and you get
one chance per child, and of course, it is
complicated by many variables to consider
as well, such as gender, temperament,
parenting style and stress. Fortunately,
there are some tried and true guidelines
that are invaluable to all parents.

I constantly remind myself how lucky I am
to be surrounded by the enthusiasm,
innocence and curiosity that come with
being a child. Not only do children grow
from a well rounded preschool program,
but adults grow by watching them. You
cannot work with children and fail to grow
each and every day. Children amaze us as
they strive to understand, comprehend
and experience what life offers.

St. Edward the Confessor Preschool
children are happy, passionate and eager.
How does that happen? As we look to
another aspect of our discussion on the
ten *Spits, Spats & Spurts* of learning for
growing preschool success, I hope to help

you understand the reason we are so
successful with children. We find children
thrive in an environment in which we
encourage them to risk intellectually,
emotionally and physically.

When children move out of their comfort
zone and attempt something new, they
automatically become seekers of
knowledge and learn. Knowledge is an
active pursuit, rather than passive. To
educate means to draw out from one's
own knowledge and experiences and to
make new. There is no better tool for
learning than to try, to fail and to try
again. The author David McCullough
reminds us, "You can only learn to do
things by doing them. You can't learn to
play the piano by reading a book." But
first you have to want to try.

There is always a fine balance between
forcing and encouraging. Exploration
comes naturally to some children who
assertively investigate, push and probe all
possibilities. That child is always looking
for the reaction or outcome of any action.
It is why we have to put child protective
plugs on light sockets. I remember
we once had a young boy who lodged a
bead up his nose. This child never needed

prodding. What about the child who is
reticent and cautious? How do we
encourage without pushing?

I think 3 factors must be in place to
encourage healthy risking that translates
into an "I can do" attitude: opportunity,
confidence and independence. When all
three elements exist, a child will naturally
grow through the experiences that arise.

In the beginning of the year, all of the
children are anxious. Each child has
different ways of expressing the anxiety:
some cry, some just observe, some react
by being physical. It is difficult to leave
the comfort of home and be left with
other adults, surrounded by children from
different backgrounds and experiences.
The classroom is a microcosm of the
greater world. It is a living breathing
force, a conglomerate of the diversity of
each child's experiences and personalities.
It is always after the Christmas break that
the personality of the class takes shape.
An excellent teacher recognizes the
individuality of her class and fosters its
passions.

The preschool offers limitless
opportunities for self expression in a

variety of areas. Too often what is misconstrued as simply play is actually presenting opportunities to express one's comfort areas and eventually attempt tasks that are developmentally appropriate, and yet represent challenges, such as working with art materials that allow creativity, understanding, science and fine motor skills. Gliding paint across a white canvas, making something from nothing; mastery of the brush stroke that becomes a circle and then a symbol representing a sun or flower; seeing blue and yellow become green; and getting better and better at making that circle provides a breadth of experience that needs to be repeated over and over.

Having the opportunity to experiment provides the opportunity to make mistakes. Mistakes are always a part of life. If you don't make mistakes, you are not learning. Making mistakes should be considered second nature to our experiences. It is only through acceptance of mistakes that one keeps trying and builds confidence regardless of how many times one must repeat something to master it. Trying allows us to discover our passions.

It is building that muscle that allows us to get back on the horse. We thrive in an environment that encourages us with warm, caring and trusting relationships that help make us feel safe and secure. When we heap acceptance with encouragement, children develop the confidence needed to try, to make mistakes and try again. Notice I said acceptance, not praise.

Finding our passion boosts our chances at creating a happy and wonderful life. For example, the children are so enthusiastic and excited about the upcoming trip to the zoo. The teachers have laid the groundwork of enthusiasm through careful preparation, using pictures, vocabulary, stories, drama, songs, study of maps and self-initiated activities, such as the diorama the children created in the M-W-F Lion's class or **Grant Garrigan's** recreation of the zoo's map. You need only to look at the expressions of pride to see the confidence there. In addition, all classes have collaboratively planned their own adventure at the zoo.

Building confidence also means allowing mistakes, disappointments and frustrations to become an accepted part



Charlie, Dominic, Lilianna and Evelyn proudly display their zoo "exhibit", including the parking lot.

of life. It is important that we don't shield children from every day stresses where they can build that all important "try again" muscle. Learning this skill at a very young age is most important because as we age, the mistakes, disappointments and frustrations only get larger and larger. Allow children to cut their teeth now. Just

today the M-W-F Teddy Bears came to ask if they could buy a mask for the class when they go to the zoo. They are taking responsibility and building confidence in their choices.

Finally, the development of independence is key to propelling a child to accept responsibility for their choices. The more we cling and worry, the more dangerous life appears to us and the child. The more we hold and bind them to us, the more painful the time for letting go becomes. We need to release them to live their lives more fully. Beginning school is the start. It is the first step in that journey that is completely their own.

Finding Balance

There are so many paradoxes in parenting that it is difficult to find balance.

Some don't even try.

They just plunge ahead ignoring the subtle whispers of wisdom.

Others try half-heartedly, but resort to old methods when they get confused.

But some hear wisdom's quiet voice and make it their own.

They find strength in softness, power in flexibility, perfection in mistakes, success in failure, clarity in confusion, and love in letting go.

- William Martin

clp ♥



Iva (T-Th Lions) searches for that gold at the end of the rainbow.



CLASSROOM CORNERS

As you know, the preschool went green last month. The leprechauns were everywhere – the Activity Room, the classrooms, and I'm sure you hear, even the bathrooms. Those rascally little fellas helped us celebrate St. Patrick's Day in style with green eggs and ham, gold,

thievery and Irish jigs. Our T-Th children were treated to the sounds of **Brendan Harkins** who shared his guitar, voice and Irish bagpipes for Irish songs, such as "When Irish Eyes Are Smilin'" and "The Unicorn Song". His daughter **Julia** was bustin' her buttons with pride. Speaking of music, we added a new song to our school repertoire "We're Going to the Zoo" in Music. We have a great collection of songs to sing on the bus as we head for the Santa Ana Zoo this month.

We went on our first field study to Solomon's Bakery in Lake Forest. Solomon was delighted with the children and excited about showing us the workings of a bakery. It is hard to believe the amount of baked goods that emerge from the small bakery, which he sells throughout Orange County. The children are in the process of creating a special thank you note, expressing their gratitude for his time. We also want to express gratitude to all of the moms and dads who were able to help us by driving and chaperoning.

Drama this month was "Juliet and the Little Monkeys". Casting for monkeys is very easy in preschool. They will be

On Wednesday, April 20 at 8:45 am and 12:45 pm and Thursday, April 21 at 8:45 am, we will be celebrating our Agape Celebration with the children. Agape is a Greek word that pertains to the unconditional love that Christians are called to feel toward their fellow man. We gather to talk about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and reenact the Last Supper. This is a special time for the children and staff, and we ask that parents not attend.



SPRING PARADE

Later in the day on Wednesday, April 20 at 10:30 am and 2:00 pm and Thursday, April 21 at 10:30 am, we will be having a traditional parade. **The children should bring a hat, which can be handmade, funky, fun or beautiful, and bring a stuffed animal to carry.** We invite everyone to come and join us as we share the good news with everyone we meet. This is a free dress day.

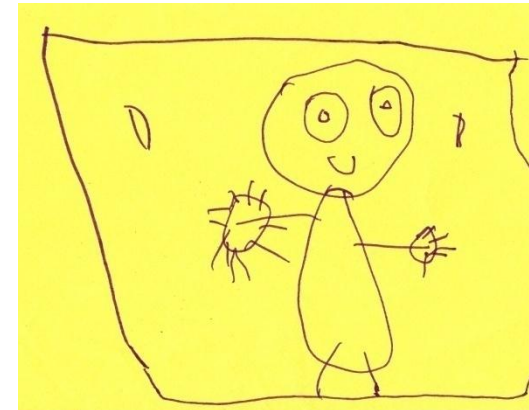


DATES TO REMEMBER

Please make note of the following dates for the April calendar:

- Field Study to the Santa Ana Zoo will take place on Wednesday, April 6 from 12:00 noon – 3:30 pm; Thursday, April 7 and Friday, April 8 from 9:00 am – 12:30 pm. Uniforms required.
- PREP Meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 13 at 1:00 pm in the church meeting room.
- April Birthday Celebrations will take place on Thursday, April 14 and Friday, April 15.
- Summer Registration will take place in the office on Thursday, April 14.
- Agape Celebration will take place on Wednesday, April 20 at 8:45 am and 12:45 pm and Thursday, April 21 at 8:45 am.

- Spring Parade will take place on Wednesday, April 20 at 10:30 am and 2:00 pm and Thursday, April 21 at 10:30 am. This is a free dress day.
- Thursday, April 21 is a half day schedule. All Full Day students and Lunch Bunch will be dismissed at 12:00 noon.
- School will be in recess from Good Friday, April 22 – Friday, April 29 for the spring break.
- School will resume on Monday, May 2.



“Monkey in the Cage” by **Isabella McCann**(T-Th Kitty Kats).