

Getting a new school year started sometimes feels nearly impossible.

From the inertia of a long summer, the engine slowly fires up again and begins moving toward organization. Suddenly there is a flurry of activity, creativity and excitement. We have been working to get it all just right. All the preparation, all the plans that go into the making of a grand school year move forward: scrubbing, polishing, planning, hanging, cleaning, purchasing, moving, thinking, debating, writing, rearranging, praying, practicing and hoping. We want it to be just so, just right. After all, we have an awesome responsibility – laying the foundation for your child’s bright future.



You also have been busy making plans. Since the moment you knew that you would welcome this child into your life, you have been dreaming their future. Will it be a he or she? Will he laugh easily or need coaxing to smile? Will she have red hair like gramps or curls

like mine? Will he play hard at soccer or be content to curl up with a book? Will she be a doctor or compose poetry? What will his life be like if I give him all the love and nurturing and opportunities that I can afford?

And now comes the moment when you begin the journey toward education. Education is the gift of a civilized society, where the hope for the future lies.... (Is it lies or lays? Check that dictionary.) ... where the hope for the future rests with its youth. We have a duty not only to our own dreams but to the future. Our staff is honored to be a part of that process.

Theories on education abound. Parents have many choices: private, public, traditional 3 R’s, Montessori, alternative schools, immersion programs and of course, religious based education. What is the magic key that opens the doors to successful education? To be frank, it is the blind leading the blind, but what parents do choose is more about what they value. Children look to us to shape and make decisions in these early years. Your choice of St. Edward the Confessor Preschool is a powerful first statement for your child. It tells her what you value.

Let me explain what we value so that you may be ever more comfortable in the choice you have made. First of all, we value all of the children. We value the child who is cooperative and helpful. We value the child who misbehaves and must be reminded of the rules about pushing. We value the child who takes the materials she is using and returns them with care and respect. We value the child who just can’t seem to make it to the toilet on time. We value the child who thanks us for a small kindness. We value the child who wiggles and flops during class meeting time. We value the child who makes our hearts smile when he brings us a flower from the garden. We value the child who pours the beans down the sink. We value the child who makes us laugh as she ponders what a mermaid looks like. We value the child who cries for mommy. We value the child that reminds us of our own children, our parents or ourselves in small bodies. We are *All God’s Children*.

A gifted teacher is able to find that core center that makes each child tick and facilitate further growth. How easily the world forgets that these children have just

arrived in this world and are trying to sort it all out. What are the boundaries? How do you make sense of the squiggles and lines that adults value? How do I make a friend? How do I get what I want and learn to accept what I need? These are some of the questions that will be answered in the group dynamic called school.

How does a school go about the business of educating? For the preschooler, learning is taking place in every corner of the classroom and with every interaction as they learn to navigate without parents. The very first work for a preschooler is learning how to form relationships outside the home. Looking into the preschool classroom, you will find various stages of learning how to get along without mom and dad and connect with others.

The very young child learns through watching, observing and trial and error. Learning how to integrate your needs with someone else's is a big step away from the "I" that is a child's universe. It is a process that takes place gradually as the child learns what works and witnesses the modeling of adults and other children. What appears to be just play in a

classroom is actually the laboratory for learning through doing. Each child assumes roles that help them socialize. In any activity or pursuit, be it school or business or social, one must find a way to fit in, to serve or to lead. This is the very beginning of life's call to a purposeful existence in community with others.

We value the natural development of children, an unfolding of potential when given time and support. Development is a word heard frequently in the early years of education. But what does it really mean? First of all, it is not a convenient excuse for what children fail to do. It means that all children develop in their own God given time. It is a positive, not a negative.

In these early years there is great variance in what children are ready to learn. The school and parents in partnership expose the children to the very best that our time and culture have to offer. Books and technology play a role, but it is always more than that. It is conversation; it is trying; it is failing; it is experiencing success; it is example; it is sharing; it is modeling; it is time; it is acceptance.

Aside from deprivation of materials, support and stimulation, the second greatest factor for failure is a lack of confidence. Each child has gifts or strengths that we must uncover and support. Each has special gifts that should be encouraged. The staff will help you discover these in each child. It may be a gift for language, a gift for working with others, a gift for the logical.

Speaking of strengths to develop and explore, let me tell you what we consider our greatest strength or value and that is our religious education program, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Three of our teachers and I recently completed 2 years training for this approach to early childhood faith development. We look forward to helping each child discover their relationship with God through a program carefully constructed and developed. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd helps children embrace the power and beauty of God's unconditional love. The preschool years are a special window of time where a child falls completely and utterly in love with God and the traditions and practices of the

Church. What a special gift we will give them this year!

God sees and knows how full our hearts are when it comes to the children, but He gives the smallest among us the biggest hearts of all. They are so open to everything this world offers. Together, as teachers and parents, we will help each child to grow in their God given potential. From 3 year olds to LINK, we will do our best to build a sturdy foundation of the love of learning that will serve each child through the next step and the next. It all must begin somewhere. When you think of how we are all spinning around the sun at 67,000,000 miles per hour and held in place by gravity, we realize that we must trust a power greater than ourselves and our own dreams.

When I think of the children, only one word comes to mind – gratitude. The staff and I are so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their lives, to help them build confidence, yearn for discovery, develop imagination and embrace hope. After 22 years at St. Edward the Confessor Preschool, I have had the privilege of seeing many wonderful children grow into adulthood. I also meet many parents of

those children in many places. They all say the same thing. “It went by so fast.”

One day perhaps he will discover the cure for cancer. One day she may travel to the moon. One day he will be a father that reads a story to his 3 year old and passes on the torch of learning. Children are all diamonds in the rough. We need to cut them carefully and reveal their inner beauty. And so once again, we begin with the learning of how to get along with others, the celebrations that create memories and the discovery of new knowledge that keeps our hearts large.



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CLASSROOM CORNERS

During the school year, you will be receiving a letter from each of the teachers detailing the work of the classroom. These will be sent out on Mondays (with the exception of holidays, of course) through email. If you are unable to receive email, please let the teacher know, and we will provide you with a hard copy.

These provide you with information you can use to extend learning outside of the classroom, as well as conversation openers. Otherwise you get the standard reply to the most often asked question “*what did you do today?*” Nothing! Link to LINX, Dinosaur Thunder, the Lion’s Roar, Teddy Bear’s Honey and Kitty Kat Paws are about to roll off the press.



THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

This is my favorite column because I don't even have to write it. Overhearing the wonderful insights and comments that children say out loud makes this a must read each and every month. I love getting them from our families as well. Take a moment to jot down those lines, and you will have it memorialized here.



PARENT ORIENTATION / WELCOME-TO- SCHOOL NIGHT

The year always begins with a coming together of parents and teachers so that we can share with you what we are about and what to expect for the coming

year. The Parent Orientation takes place on Wednesday, September 7 at 7:00 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room (gym). Our theme this year is *All God's Children*. This is a parent only evening.

Welcome-to-School Night follows with individual presentations made in your child's classroom. Hopefully we will be able to answer some of the questions and areas that you find yourself confused about. If you don't get the answers you need, just ask Stacie Pugliese or Maité Cruz in the front office. Our aim is to make this a flawless first experience with school. We welcome you with great excitement about the coming year.

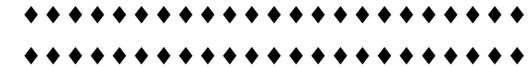


OPEN HOUSE

Now it is time for the children to finally arrive and take a peek at the classrooms that they will be spending their time in this year. We will be hosting an Open House on Thursday, September 8 and Friday, September 9 from 9:00 – 10:00

am. We look forward to meeting our new students and welcome back our returning ones.

LINK and Afternoon families may attend either day.



FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

Going to school when you are only 3, 4 or 5 years old is a very big deal. We know how nervous we feel in new situations and can only imagine the feelings of little ones as they enter a new environment that includes 14 other little people and a couple of adults they don't know. We have found that it is always better to ease children into the demands of the school day until they get their bearings. The first week of school is devoted to getting used to two primary areas, the classroom and the play yard, and the "rules".

By the last week of September, we will be introducing Chapel, which includes a walk

to the church, and other activities, such as Drama, Music, Movement and Puppet Theatre.

The first full day of school begins on Monday, September 13 and Tuesday, September 14. Storytime and Lunch Bunch will begin that day as well. **Please remember to put snacks in a separate container from lunches and label clearly.**



MUD WEEK

The grand icebreaker of the year is our Mud Week. It is a wonderful social event that the children participate in before we settle into the structure of the year. Mud Week will be Monday, September 19 – Friday, September 23. LINK will participate on Wednesday – Friday.

Children should come dressed in bathing suits under their street clothes. They should wear shoes that can be easily removed, such as flip flops and Crocs. We appreciate having the 2 piece bathing suits

for the girls to help with bathroom issues. All children should bring a labeled beach towel. Please label everything so that we can help you locate your child's belongings easily. Prepare yourself for the confusion that occurs with 72 children learning where to place items that belong to them in the right place. We will be getting there throughout the year. We are just learning. This is a free dress week.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU PICNIC

Please join us for our Getting to Know You Picnic that will take place on Thursday, September 22 and Friday, September 23 on the bluff at 11:30 am. LINK will attend on Friday. Afternoon families should meet us on the bluff and sign their children in after lunch. All morning families should pick their children up at the classroom door and sign-out. If you are unable to come, please let the teacher know so that we can make arrangements for your child.

Bring your lunch, blankets, umbrellas and smiles as we get to know you.



ROOM MOM / DAD MEETINGS

We bless our Room Moms / Dads because you help us run the school so much more efficiently and smoothly. If you have already signed up, thank you. If you were hesitant, please come and talk to us. We will allay any fears you may have. **YOU ARE ESSENTIAL TO A GREAT YEAR.**

There will be a required meeting on Thursday, September 15 at 8:30 am or 12:30 pm or Friday, September 16 at 8:30 am. You may attend any date or time that is convenient. Children are welcome. We will discuss responsibilities and expectations at that time. I look forward to meeting with you and thank you in advance for your help. *The meeting will be held in the Church Meeting Room.*



VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

On Thursday, September 22 at 8:30 am or 1:00 pm or Friday, September 23 at 8:30 am, we will be holding a brief meeting for anyone wishing to volunteer in the classroom. Teachers are so appreciative of adults who can offer another set of hands in the classroom. At that time, we will discuss the requirements.

You may attend any time or day that works with your schedule. Children are welcome. *The meeting will take place in the Parish Room.* If you are a returning family and have attended this meeting in the past, are fingerprinted and safe environment trained, you do not have to attend this meeting.



FUNDRAISERS

We have 2 major fundraisers for the preschool: Precious Memories Photo Fundraiser and the Golf Tournament and Dinner Dance. Your financial participation is important to help us provide the lowest possible tuition to families and maintain a quality program that meets the needs of the children. *Every family is also required to donate 2 hours of time to help make each fundraiser a success. Many hands make light work. Time may be behind the scenes or on the day of the event. There are many options. You may select which fundraiser is more convenient.*

The Precious Memories Photo Fundraiser is an opportunity to create an heirloom photo of your family, children, grandparents, et. al. It includes a sitting and 1 8X10 portrait for \$50 by **Laura Schmitt Photography**. You may choose between 4 locations. These include San Clemente Pier on Saturday, September 17; Pines Park on Sunday, September 25 (pets included on this one!); Aliso Creek Beach on Saturday, October 1; and Mission San

Juan on Saturday, October 15. The Mission requires an additional \$15 entrance fee that you will pay at the gate. Sign-ups are available in the office. Checks should be made out to St. Edward the Confessor Preschool. **Hilary Heilig** is our chairperson. If you have questions, please contact Hilary at 949-885-6217.

Our second fundraiser is the 1st Annual St. Edward the Confessor Preschool & School Golf Tournament and Dinner Dance. This is actually the 8th golf tournament, but the first year that we will combine with the school to make this a great success. This will take place on Friday, November 4 at Arroyo Trabuco Golf Club. This is an extremely important fundraiser for the preschool and is labor intensive. Kathy and Robert Hancock are cochairmen of this labor intensive effort. We are still in need of committee members and donors. If you can help with this event, please contact Kathy at

Kathy.Hancock@impaccompanies.com. Information regarding the tournament will be forthcoming in the next couple of weeks. Registration for golfers begins on Monday, September 19. Ball Drop tickets go on sale on Monday, September 26. We

look forward to sharing great times on the golf course, on the dance floor and wonderful opportunities with the silent auction. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

A mandatory meeting for Room Moms / Dads will take place on Wednesday, September 21 in the Parish Room. Children are welcome.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Please make note of the following dates to the September calendar:

1. Parent Orientation and Welcome – to – School Night takes place on Wednesday, September 7 at 7:00 pm in the Multi Purpose Room.
2. The Open House for children will take place on Thursday, September 8 and Friday, September 9 from 9:00 – 10:00 in the classroom.

3. The first day of school will be Monday, September 12 and Tuesday, September 13. Storytime and Lunch Bunch will begin as well.
4. Room Mom / Dad meetings will take place on Thursday, September 15 at 8:30 am and 12:30 pm or Friday, September, 16 at 8:30 in the Parish Room.
5. Precious Memories Photo Fundraiser takes place on Saturday, September 17 at San Clemente Pier.
6. 1st Annual St. Edward Preschool and School Golf Tournament and Dinner Dance registration begins Monday, September 19.
7. Mud Week will take place on Monday, September 19 – Friday, September 23. LINK will participate Wednesday – Friday. This is free dress.
8. Mandatory Room Mom / Dad meeting for the Golf Tournament / Dinner Dance will take place on Wednesday, September 21 at 2:00 pm in the Church Meeting Room.
9. Room Volunteer meeting will take place on Thursday, September 22

- at 8:30 am and 1:00 pm or Friday, September 23 at 8:30 am in Parish Room.
10. The Getting to Know You Picnic will take place on the bluff on Thursday, September 22 and Friday, September 23 at 11:30 am on the bluff. LINK will attend on Friday.
11. Precious Memories Photo Fundraiser takes place on Sunday, September 25 at Pines Park.
12. Ball Drop Tickets for the Golf Tournament go on sale on Monday, September 26.
13. Transitions will begin on Monday, September 26 and Tuesday, September 27, including Chapel, Drama, Music, Movement and Puppet Theatre.
14. August / September Birthday celebrations will take place on Thursday, September 29 and Friday, September 30 at snack time.