

CHAMBLEE METHODIST KINDERGARTEN

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October 2018

Dear Parents,

Welcome to October! The tears and uncertainties of September have given way to smiles and eager anticipation of what awaits us in the classroom each day. Thanks to your support and encouragement, our school year has gotten off to a great start.

October will prove to be a busy month of activities and learning. The fire truck will visit our school for Fire Safety month, every class will have individual school pictures and our 3's, 4's, and 5's classes will host "Donuts for Dads." The church will host the annual Fall Festival and Trunk of Treats to which everyone is invited.

As we celebrate the arrival of autumn, we'll also be getting ready for Halloween, introducing many of the traditional symbols in an entertaining, non-threatening way by focusing on the fun of pretending, something all children do many times each day. We'll have classroom parties (and we thank all parents who are helping with the preparations!); we may carve jack-o-lanterns with circle eyes and triangle noses; and we may make a friendly ghost or two. But the children know it's all make-believe fun. We hope you'll agree with our staff and kindergarten committee that even a church school, with proper emphasis, can retain some of the wonderful traditions of Halloween, Santa, the Easter Bunny, etc. If you are a "party parent" for this first party, please be sure to check with the teacher regarding your plans. If your child's class has any students with food allergies, please be sure you know who those students are so that they will only be served the approved snack. Only the party parents are asked to attend the parties, but everyone will be invited to the end-of-the-year parties.

With Gratitude,

UPCOMING CALENDAR EVENT

Monday, October 15	Fire Truck visits CMK to learn about fire safety
Thursday, October 18	<u>School Closed – CMK teacher workday</u>
Saturday, October 20	CFUMC Fall Festival, 1- 4 pm
Tues, Wed, October 23, 24	CMK Individual School photos
Wednesday, October 24	CFUMC Trunk of Treats and Hot Dog Dinner, 6 pm
Thursday, October 25	Chapel in the church sanctuary, 9:15 am
Tues, Wed October 30 -31	Halloween Parties
Tuesday, November 6	<u>School Closed for Election Day</u>
Wednesday, November 7	Chapel, 9:15 am; <i>Time Out for Tea</i> until 11:00 am
Thursday, November 15	Chapel in the church sanctuary, 9:15 am
Thursday, November 15	School closes at noon, NO lunch bunch , staff meeting

CHAPEL and Time Out for Tea

All Chapel times start at 9:15 in Fellowship Hall. After carpool, park your car and come into the building through the breezeway beside the PMO playground. It doesn't matter whether you're dressed for the office, for the gym, or for grocery shopping, you are always welcome. Children sit together with their classes, and we'll have a section of church pews set up for parents. We love having our CMK family together to sing, pray, and listen for God's word.

Also, please join other parents after chapel for *Time Out for Tea*, a special time for parents to gather for fellowship. *Time Out for Tea* will meet after each Wednesday chapel in room 200. Younger siblings are welcome to be a part of this event.

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Fall Festival - The annual Fall Festival sponsored by Chamblee First United Methodist Church is on Saturday, October 20. This event is open to all families in the community to come and join in the fun. Hay rides, inflatables, a cake walk, food and drinks will be available for all to enjoy. There is a new Artisan's market this year so plan to do some early holiday shopping. Be sure to find Mrs. O'Keefe and say Hi!

Donuts for Dads - Children in our 3, 4, and 5 year classes are hosting "Donuts for Dads" in October. This special happening is early in the morning before our school day usually begins to make it convenient for those on their way to work. Please know that if a dad is unavailable, a grandpa, uncle, or other favorite relative or friend is welcome to attend.

Fire Truck visit - Since October is Fire Safety month local firefighters will visit our school on Monday, October 15. The firefighters will talk to the children about fire safety, what to do in case of a fire and give the children the opportunity to see inside a fire truck. We look forward to learning about these very important community helpers.

School Pictures - On October 23-24 Kristin Boyer, our photographer, will take individual photographs of the children. We're planning to take the photos outdoors if possible, so the photos will be more casual rather than formal portraits. The proofs will be available on the photographer's website after all photos are taken (we'll let you know the date) so you may order if you wish. Each teacher will announce the day for your child's class.

Trunk Of Treats - On Wednesday, October 24, Chamblee First United Methodist Church will host a community Halloween event called Trunk of Treats after Wednesday night supper. The church is providing a FREE Hot Dog Dinner for all participants so bring the entire family. This year the church would like to invite the parents of PMO and CMK to participate by decorating a car trunk and handing out goodies. It is sure to be a fun evening with costumes, treats, and even prizes for the best-decorated trunks. Be sure to find Mrs. O'Keefe and say Hi!

Halloween Parties - If bringing a costume to school for the Halloween party is part of your child's class plans, please follow these guidelines: wear regular clothes and shoes to school since playground and other activities go on as usual; do not bring masks, swords, guns or other weapons; choose positive characters instead of violent action characters; and put the costume in a bag with your child's name on it inside the tote bag. Thank you for helping make this time safe and comfortable for everyone. Individual teachers may send home other suggestions too.

Occupational Therapy Screenings - On November 5th and 8th, Chamblee Methodist Kindergarten will offer OT screenings for all children in our program. This program is optional and will cost \$40.00. A child can benefit from the screenings if parents and/or teachers have concerns regarding the child's overall development. More information will be sent home later this month about this service and how to give your permission for your child to be screened if you are interested in this service.

Speech and Language Screenings - On November 27th and 28th, we will have speech and language screenings, an optional service that costs \$25. This service is offered to CMK families by a licensed speech - language pathologist to determine the child's age appropriateness in the area of receptive language, expressive language, articulation, social/interpersonal skills, fluency and voice. This screening is an inexpensive way to gain more information about your child's language development. This screening might also involve classroom observation time to evaluate the child's expressive and receptive language as well as the child's articulation and vocal fluency when interacting with the teacher and peers. An information form regarding this screening will be coming home soon. Please talk with your child's teacher or call Mellie if you have any questions or concerns.

OTHER INFORMATION

Veritas Classical School – Chamblee First United Methodist Church has partnered with Veritas Classical School by allowing their students to use CFUMC one day per week for classes. On Wednesdays we have 4 classrooms of children in grades 1- 8 in our building. These students have been very courteous and polite to our younger students and have done a great job modeling good school behavior. Veritas students wear a uniform and all the teachers have a nametag so that we recognize the members of their school. The Veritas administrator is here each week making sure that they are not impeding any part of our program.

Safety and Security – Please remember that when you visit our school during the day you will need to sign in at the main desk of the church in the atrium area and put on a nametag. The side doors to the church will be locked so you will need to come into the building from the back main entrance doorway.

Kindergarten Committee - As you know from your school handbook, Chamblee Methodist Kindergarten is governed by the Kindergarten Committee. Currently serving on the Committee are: Ann Hammond (chairperson, church member, former parent), Liesa Nichols (church member and former parent), Emily Jameson (church member, former parent, current PMO teacher), Sarah Carter (current parent, church member), Lisa Harlan (current parent, church member), Jennifer Hodges (current parent), Kate Robinson (current parent), Kim Hood (current PMO parent, church member), Chris Tench (Director of Children's Ministries for the church), and Mellie O'Keefe (director). The senior co - pastor, Ms. Emily Bagwell and Mr. Eric Lee, and the church financial administrator, Kathy Brannon, also sit in occasionally to offer advice.

Playground Reminders – We are so happy that so many of our families are able to use our playgrounds during times other than when in school. The church and the school maintain the playgrounds happily so that they are available to the entire community. Please remember to clean up the playground when you leave by picking up any trash, closing the sandbox and putting the sand toys back in the bin and closing it. Also, since the trash does not get emptied every day, please take dirty diapers with you instead of leaving them in the trash cans. We love to see our friends using our playgrounds!

Speaking of playgrounds.....this article appeared in the AJC in August. We thought it might give parents some insight into the benefits of playing outside. Enjoy!

Doctor's orders: Let children just play

Children learn skills when they aren't told what to do, doctor says.

By Melissa Healy Los Angeles Times AJC TOP HEALTH STORY YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH

Imagine a drug that could enhance a child's creativity, critical thinking and resilience. Imagine that this drug were simple to make, safe to take, and could be had for free.

The nation's leading pediatricians say this miracle compound exists. In a new clinical report, they are urging doctors to prescribe it liberally to the children in their care.

What is this wonder drug? Play.

"This may seem old-fashioned, but there are skills to be learned when kids aren't told what to do," said Dr. Michael Yogman, a Harvard Medical School pediatrician who led the drafting of the call to arms. Whether it's rough-and-tumble physical play, outdoor play or social or pretend play, kids derive important lessons from the chance to make things up as they go, he said.

The advice, issued Monday by the American Academy of Pediatrics, may come as a shock to some parents. After spending years fretting over which toys to buy, which apps to download and which skill building programs to send their kids to after school, letting them simply play - or better yet, playing with them - could seem like a step backward.

The pediatricians insist that it's not. The academy's guidance does not include specific recommendations for the dosing of play. Instead, it asks doctors to advise parents before their babies turn 2 that play is essential to healthy development. It also advocates for the restoration of play in schools.

"Play is not frivolous," the academy's report declares. It nurtures children's ingenuity, cooperation and problem-solving skills all of which are critical for a 21st-century workforce. It lays the neural groundwork that helps us "pursue goals and ignore distractions." When parents engage in play with their children, it deepens relationships and builds a bulwark against the toxic effects of all lands of stress, including poverty, the academy says.

In the pediatricians' view, essentially every life skill that's valued in adults can be built up with play.

“Collaboration, negotiation, conflict resolution, self-advocacy, decision-making, a sense of agency, creativity, leadership, and increased physical activity are just some of the skills and benefits children gain through play,” they wrote.

The pediatricians’ appeal comes as American kids are being squeezed by escalating academic demands at school, the relentless encroachment of digital media, and parents who either load up their schedules with organized activities or who are themselves too busy or stressed to play.

The trends have been a long time coming. Between 1981 and 1997, detailed time-use studies showed that the time children spent at play declined by 25 percent. Since the adoption of sweeping education reforms in 2001, public schools have steadily increased the amount of time devoted to preparing for standardized tests. The focus on academic “skills and drills” has cut deeply into recess and other time for free play.

By 2009, a study of Los Angeles kindergarten classrooms found that 5-year-olds were so burdened with academic requirements that they were down to an average of just 19 minutes per day of “choice time,” when they were permitted to play freely with blocks, toys or other children. One in 4 Los Angeles teachers reported there was no time at all for “free play.”

Increased academic pressures have left 30 percent of U.S. kindergarten classes without any recess. Such findings prompted the American Academy of Pediatrics to issue a policy statement in 2013 on the “crucial role of recess in school.”

Pediatricians aren’t the only ones who have noticed.

In a report titled “Crisis in the Kindergarten,” a consortium of educators, health professionals and child advocates called the loss of play in early childhood “a tragedy, both for the children themselves and for our nation and world.” Kids in play-based kindergartens “end up equally good or better at reading and other intellectual skills, and they are more likely to become well-adjusted healthy people,” the Alliance for Childhood said in 2009.

Indeed, new research demonstrates why playing with blocks might have been time better spent, Yogman said. The trial assessed the effectiveness of an early mathematics intervention aimed at preschoolers. The results showed almost no gains in math achievement.

Another playtime thief: the growing proportion of kids’ time spent in front of screens and digital devices, even among preschoolers.

Last year, Common Sense Media reported that children up through age 8 spent an average of two hours and 19 minutes in front of screens each day, including an average of 42 minutes a day for those under 2.

This escalation of digital use comes with rising risks of obesity, sleep deprivation and cognitive, language and social-emotional delays, the American Academy of Pediatrics warned in 2016.

Yogman acknowledged that many digital games and screen-based activities can nurture some of the same areas that kids get through free play: problem-solving, spatial skills and persistence.

But in young kids, especially, they are often crowding out games of make-believe, not to mention face-to-face time with peers and parents, Yogman said.

“I respect that parents have busy lives and it’s easy to hand a child an iPhone,” he said. “But there’s a cost to that. For young children, it’s much too passive. And kids really learn better when they’re actively engaged and have to really discover things.”



CURRICULUM NEWS

Through the class parents' meetings in September and class information sent home by our teachers, you are getting information about our curriculum that may also include why we do many of the activities we do. Almost every classroom activity has as its basis some underlying skill or experience that is an important part of each child's development. So, for example, doing a puzzle is more than just fitting pieces together to form a picture---it's exercising fine motor muscles, improving hand-eye coordination, focusing on spatial relationships, and enhancing cognitive development---all of which are important pre-reading, pre-math, and pre-writing skills. If the puzzle happens to be a big floor puzzle, then assembling it with classmates also promotes the social skills of cooperation, teamwork, and sharing. Every center in our classrooms contains lots of choices for activities, and the teachers work hard at creating variety in the centers and in the daily activities so that every child is stimulated and challenged.

Our pre-k and 5k students are also getting started with our handwriting curriculum. We use a program called "Handwriting Without Tears" to provide developmentally-based instruction using multi-sensory aids and methods appropriate for children of all ability levels. Our staff members have attended a workshop to learn all about the HWT method, which teaches handwriting as an automatic and natural skill for children. Originally developed by occupational therapists, HWT is very effective for children with various levels of fine-motor skills. It instills correct habits from the beginning, resulting in fewer letter reversals, and is "lefty" friendly as well. We have noticed a difference in the writing skills of our 5k students who have had this instruction in pre-k, compared with students from prior years before we began this program.

THANKSGIVING PREPARATIONS

Although it seems a bit soon to mention Thanksgiving, we do want you to know that the church will kick off the annual Food Basket Drive at the Fall Festival in October. For over 30 years, the church has led a community-based food drive, usually providing food baskets for over 200 families. Recipients are usually identified through the neighborhood public schools. Our school always participates by having students bring canned goods or other non-perishables at our two November Chapels; we will remind you of that in our next newsletter. Parent participation is welcomed; if you would like to help with donations,

organization, sorting, or deliveries, we will let you know how to get involved.

PARENT INFORMATION