

# St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter

October 2021



## From the Director's Chair – by Rita Dai Wang

Well, we are certainly off to an eventful start this school year! Let's hope that things settle down a little. I don't know about you, but I could use a little boredom 😊

**Pizza & Popsicles Social:** Thank you to all the families who joined us Friday evening! It was so nice to get a chance to hang out and chat. We hope you had a chance to reconnect with old friends as well as make new ones! Many thanks to the Gemi family for donating popsicles. Apologies again for running out of pizza 😊

**Nature Center Christening:** You are invited to attend the official "christening" of our Nature Center on Wednesday 10/20 at 10:30. More details to come in a separate email.

**Halloween Parties:** We are looking forward to our Halloween parties at the end of the month. We will end each party with a parade outside, which parents are invited to attend. More details will come home in the next few weeks. There will be no Lunch Bunch on Thursday 10/29.


**Flu Shots:** In this time when we are all worried about coronavirus, please don't forget to protect yourself and your children from the regular flu. Getting the flu shot this year is critical because the flu shares similar symptoms with COVID. Being protected against the flu can avert unnecessary worry, quarantining, and COVID testing. We strongly encourage you to get flu shots for you and your children.

**Childcare during Church Sunday morning:** St. Peter's Church is looking for someone to provide childcare during its Sunday service from approximately 9:30-11:00. If you or anyone you know would be interested in this paid position, let me know.

**St. Peter's T-shirt Sale:** We are sending home flyers for our annual T-shirt sale/fundraiser. We have decided to do tie-dye shirts this year. They are wonderfully vibrant, but due to the extra effort involved in tie-dyeing the material as well as supply chain difficulties, the prices are a little higher than usual. Thanks for understanding!

**St. Peter's Church Stewardship Campaign 10/24:** More details will be coming in a separate email about this event.

## Dates to Remember

- 10/13** Mary's Land Farm field trip – all classes 9:45
- 10/15** Teacher Work Day – no school
- 10/20** Nature Center Christening 10:30
- 10/22** T-shirt orders due
- 10/24** St. Peter's Church Stewardship 9:45
- 10/28** Halloween Party – 2's Parade 11:45 (no Lunch Bunch) 
- 10/29** Halloween Party – 3's/4's Parade 12:45

## Happy Birthday!

- 10/1 Clayton Radcliffe
- 10/3 James Archibald
- 10/7 Ms. Lynn
- 10/12 Sam Busch
- 10/28 Keller Sothoron




## Clarification on Colds

As you are undoubtedly aware, we are seeing a lot of runny noses, congestion, and post-nasal drip coughs these days. Before the pandemic, no one thought twice about having kids in school with colds. Now, however, everything is undergoing much closer scrutiny.

While we would love for everyone to be 100% healthy to come to school, the reality is that kids will get colds. As long as your child only has a clear runny nose, can still breathe while wearing their mask, and is able to fully participate in school, you are welcome to send them to school. If you would prefer to keep them at home to rest, that would be great as well.

If they are tired, can't breathe in their mask, dripping thick yellow/green mucus, coughing, not able to sleep/eat as normal, or not acting like their usual happy selves, then it would be better to let them rest at home until they feel better.

Please let me know of any symptoms your child is experiencing, especially if you are getting them COVID tested. Please also practice blowing noses and washing hands at home. We see a lot of kids who get soap and wash it off immediately before making any bubbles. Thanks! 

Are you trimming any trees in your yard? If so, Can you slice up some TREE COOKIES for our Nature Center? The kids love using them to cook with in the mud kitchen, stack in the sandbox, or roll along the ground. Thanks in advance!



While the pandemic brought us positives like increased family time, it unfortunately had a negative effect on kids' social, emotional, and academic development, especially for kids who were not in school last year. The first article below from "Education Week" does a good job exploring this issue. The second article from "Zero to Three" gives good suggestions for how we can support social emotional growth in our young charges. I know it is geared for kids for 24-36 months, but the tips provided are applicable to kids of all ages. Enjoy the read!

## Starting School After the Pandemic: Youngest Students Will Need Foundational Skills



By [Sarah D. Sparks](#) — June 21, 2021, Education Week

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/starting-school-after-the-pandemic-youngest-students-will-need-foundational-skills/2021/06>



Young children have been among those hardest hit by academic disruptions during the pandemic, and experts worry that already overwhelmed early-childhood-education teachers will grapple with a rocky transition as those students enter or return to school this fall.

That's the consensus of a new research analysis by 11 university and independent research groups tracking education for children ages 0-8 (roughly preschool through grade 2) during the pandemic. The report collected data from 16 national studies, 45 state studies, and 15 local studies.

"Even in the best of circumstances, early-childhood education is complex and challenging," said Christina Weiland, a co-author of the report and an associate professor and faculty co-director of the Education Policy Initiative at the University of Michigan. "The pandemic increased that complexity, and the stress of early-educators' jobs across all programs has negatively impacted teachers' mental health. All of that is adding up to a current acute crisis, which is, the programs are really struggling to recruit and retain teachers at the same time that parents are expected more and more to be back in work."

As of this spring, researchers also found screen time exploded for often-homebound young children in and out of class. One study of Massachusetts 5- to 7-year-olds found 64 percent watched more television, 47 percent watched more videos on the computer, and 37 percent spent more time playing video games than they had before spring 2020. Additional screen time has been associated with more attention and academic problems, particularly among younger children.

"Some of the necessary changes that had to be done to make in-person learning environments safe for kids were not conducive to learning and social skill development," Weiland said. "And hybrid and remote learning, despite teachers' many and best efforts, was really challenging for kids, families, and teachers themselves. There's also then significantly less learning time and lower-quality instruction."

Students in 2nd grade and below required near-constant supervision and support from adults to both navigate the technology for remote learning and to simply pay attention during live video classes. At

the same time, teachers of in-person classes reported significant disruptions, as children spent more time on things like handwashing, bathroom breaks, and other hygiene-related tasks.

## **Support needed for teachers and parents**

The disruption and format changes were associated with significant stress for preschool and early-grades teachers, according to the report. In Virginia for example, the number of public school preschool teachers reporting depression doubled during the pandemic, from 15 percent to 33 percent; among child-care center teachers, the percentage reporting depression rose from 20 percent to 31 percent. Across multiple studies in Louisiana and other states, a significant majority of administrators reported difficulty hiring and retaining early-childhood educators in the last year.

“I often heard from educators that there were fewer children, but the children they did have were exhibiting on much higher needs,” said Miriam Calderon, the deputy assistant secretary for early learning for the U.S. Department of Education.

The researchers recommended school and district leaders consider additional supports to help bolster new students entering early grades this fall, including:

- Offering tutoring, even for children as young as kindergarten.
- Including early grades in summer programs.
- Hiring assistant teachers to compensate for what is likely to be more disparity in skill levels for incoming preschoolers, kindergartners, and 1st graders.
- Accelerating curriculum to ensure students master foundational skills.
- Partnering with families and continuing virtual systems to help them communicate more easily with educators.

That last recommendation could be particularly important, according to Philip Fisher, the chair and professor of psychology at the University of Oregon, because studies have found both children and parents report having grown closer during the pandemic, particularly if parents helped students with school from home.

“We know that children in many ways are quite resilient and have the ability to withstand challenging times, especially to the extent that they’re involved in supportive and nurturing relationships with adults,” Fisher said. “And when I say with adults, I don’t just mean with a biological mom or dad, but with really anybody in their lives with whom they have meaningful relationships, including providers and early-childhood educators.”

In June 2019, before the pandemic began, the U.S. [Government Accountability Office](#) found every state but Idaho, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming supported at least one state-funded preschool or early-childhood education program, but they varied greatly in the stability of their funding streams. Calderon said states will need more support and direction from the federal government to provide professional development for teachers and more supports for families.

# 24–36 Months: Social-Emotional Development

Zero to Three, Feb 22, 2010

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/241-24-36-months-social-emotional-development>

As two-year-olds, children really begin to play interactively with their peers.



Loving relationships give young children a sense of comfort, safety, confidence, and encouragement. They teach toddlers how to form friendships, communicate emotions, and to deal with challenges. Strong, positive relationships also help children develop trust, empathy, compassion, and a sense of right and wrong.

As two-year-olds, children really begin to play interactively with their peers. You will also see a real explosion in pretend play, a critical aspect of children's development. Pretend play builds language, thinking, and social skills when children take on roles and develop their own ideas and stories.

Two-year-olds are also capable of empathy—understanding the feelings of others. You might see a child comfort a peer who is hurt or even cry when he sees another child who is upset. At the same time, toddlers still love to say “No!” and struggle with resolving conflicts with friends. Children develop more advanced social play skills, such as sharing and turn-taking, over time as they near age 3 and beyond. Here is what you might see happening among peers now as they play out a pretend story:

*Josie, a 2 ½ year old, carefully laid the blocks out in a circle. “Anybody want some pizza?” she called out. Tomas, who was almost 3, said he wanted a big piece. “Does this have pepperoni? I don’t like pepperoni.” Josie said it was plain pizza and carefully scooped a block up with a toy spatula and put it on a plate. She tapped a few keys on the toy cash register and said, “That will be \$20.” Tomas touched her hand, pretending to give her money. “Thank you very much,” said Josie.*

## What You Can Do

**Help your toddler understand her feelings.**

Now that toddlers have a firmer grasp of themselves as individuals, they experience more complex feelings like embarrassment and shame. Help your child make sense of her feelings by using words to describe emotions:

*You are feeling sad and jealous that Carly got the cupcake with the butterfly on it. I know that’s hard, but now you can choose the blue cupcake or the green one.*

Teaching children the words for emotions is important because, over time, it gives children the ability to talk about their feelings instead of acting them out.

- **Explore the idea of feelings through play.** Use puppets to create a story about your child's typical frustrations or fears, like having to share toys with a playmate, adjusting to a new baby, or separating from you when a babysitter



comes. Suggest that your child draw a sad picture when he is down, or make angry shapes from play-dough when he is mad. Read books about feelings and talk about the pictures: *Which child looks mad? Which looks afraid?*

- **Be a careful observer.** Watch to see what your child is “telling” you as she plays. For example, if your toddler dresses up in mommy clothes and acts out saying good-bye to her Teddy, she may be struggling with feelings about separations. You can help her work through these big ideas and feelings by playing along and reminding her that, while Teddy misses his mama, he knows his mama always comes back.
- **Help your child express his feelings in age-appropriate ways.** Give your child acceptable ways to share strong feelings. For example, toddlers can rip paper, stomp their feet or throw a foam ball when they are very mad. Help your little one understand there are many healthy, non- hurtful ways of expressing feelings.

### Encourage early friendships.

Children need practice to learn to share, take turns, resolve conflicts, and experience the joy of friendship. Playing together helps children develop all of these important skills. When you provide fun choices for activities, a safe, supportive environment for play, and provide the needed guidance to help children share and resolve conflicts, they will discover the pleasure of early friendships.

- **Offer some play activities that don’t require sharing.** Art projects, making music (where each child has an instrument), sand or water play are all options that can keep conflicts to a minimum.
- **Ask children to imagine how their behavior might affect others:** *I see that you told Greta that she can’t play ball with you. Look at her face now. How do you think she is feeling?*
- **Make a “friend book.”** Take photos of each of your child’s friends. Glue each photo to the top of a page and then list that child’s favorite toy, book, food, game, stuffed animal, etc. Staple together or tie the pages by punching a hole in each page, threading with yarn, and knotting. Read the book to your child so she can delight in hearing about herself and all the children she knows.
- **Help your toddler to see others’ points of view,** which encourages empathy: *Casey is feeling sad because his daddy just said good-bye. Let’s see if he wants to read a book with us.*

### Let your child take the lead in deciding what to play.

Look for ways to help him continue to explore his interests. For example, if your toddler is into trains, line up several kitchen chairs to make a pretend train, read books about trains, and plan a visit your local train station if possible.

- **Comment on or describe what your child is doing.** *You are using so many beautiful colors to make that drawing. Or You are pretending to be the doctor and you’re taking care of the sick doggie.*
- **Get involved in your child’s play by following her lead.** If she is making a pretend picnic, you can help prepare and pack the “food” in a basket. This helps your child learn about the pleasure of interactive play. It also is a chance for you to build on your child’s activities to help her learn. For example, you might ask: What weather is good weather for a picnic? When you are involved in your child’s play, she feels loved, important, and competent.

### Support older toddlers’ developing skills.

Toddlers learn best when you let them play, explore, and follow their interests. They develop new skills when you give them just enough help so that they can master a challenge without becoming overly frustrated. For example, if you see your 30-month-old trying to build a block tower which keeps falling, you may suggest he build on the hard floor instead of the carpet. You might also suggest that he build a strong base, and help guide his hand to set the blocks once the tower gets tall. Here are some steps to helping toddlers become good problem- solvers.

- **Empathize with your child’s frustration.** You are working so hard to get your mittens on! It takes time to figure it out.
- **Ask your child if she knows what may be causing the problem.**
- **Offer your observations**—for example, has she forgotten to poke her thumb into the thumb space of the mitten?
- **Ask if she has any ideas about how to get it on correctly.**
- **Ask if she wants suggestions** — *How about putting your thumb in first and then your hand?*
- **Provide the support she needs to be successful**— for example, helping her position her fingers to get them in correctly.
- **Praise the process, not just the result:** *You are really trying to figure this out and sticking with it. That’s great!* This helps children learn persistence and lets them know that trying hard is just as important as succeeding.

## Help your child learn to resolve conflict in healthy, appropriate ways.

At this age it is very typical for toddlers to still struggle with sharing, turn-taking, and following rules. This is because they have not yet mastered self-control. You help them learn these important new skills when you calmly take them through the process of resolving a conflict. You will probably have to go through these steps many, many times before they are able to do it themselves.

- **Keep it simple.** Explain what happened in as few words as possible. Talk in a calm, not-angry voice.
- **Go over what happened** to make sure your child understands: *You pushed Justin because you wanted the broom back.*
- **Point out the consequences of the child's behavior:** *After you pushed Justin, he started to cry. It hurt. He felt sad and mad.*
- **Brainstorm better choice(s) your child can make next time.** Older 2- year-olds may be able to offer some ideas on their own. Others will need suggestions, like using their words or asking for help from an adult. Most toddlers will need help to carry out these strategies.

## Use language to describe feelings and experiences.

While you often hear adults asking toddlers to “use your words”, toddlers often they lack the words they need to describe their feelings. By helping your child name her feelings and practice ways to manage their emotions, she learns over time how to do it herself.

- **Put your child's feelings into words.** *When your brother took your paintbrush, you felt really angry.* Share your own feelings as well: *I am so frustrated that I can't find my keys.*
- **Read books about feelings.** Ask your local librarian for suggestions for children's books that talk about feelings. Some ideas include: *My Many- Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss, *Lots of Feelings* by Shelly Rotner, and *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr.

## Explain your reasons for limits and requests.

As toddlers approach age three, most use and understand language well enough to handle simple explanations. Point out how rules benefit your child: “When you help me by putting your lunch plate on the counter, I finish cleaning up quicker and then we can read an extra story.” “When you share toys, it means that everybody gets a chance to play.”

- **Talk about rules and limits in language that your child can understand.** *You may not hit. Hitting hurts. When you are mad, you can jump up and down or stomp your feet or come to me for a hug.*
- **Show your child the benefits involved in cooperating.** Natural consequences help children understand the cause and effect involved in a rule, request or limit. For example, the natural consequence of throwing a toy truck is having it put away for a little while. But natural consequences can be positive too! Remind your child, “If you cooperate with getting your jackets on, then we'll have more time at the park.” Strategies like this help children learn the rules and to make good choices over time.

## Look for ways to make your home culture part of your child's everyday routines.

A child's culture is an important part of who he is. The connection he has to his culture shapes his identity and self-esteem in healthy and positive ways.

- **Teach your child's caregivers** the words your family uses for important people (mother, father, grandparents) and things (bottle, blanket, pacifier, etc.).
- **Choose books and music that reflect your home culture.** These are often available at your public library for no charge and will quickly become a beloved part of your child's daily routines—bedtime, bath-time, or just driving in the car.