

# St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter



April 2026

## From the Director's Chair- By Rita Dai Wang

**Mystery Reader Month:** Thank you to everyone who came to read this past month! It was so fun to watch the kids try to guess who the Mystery Readers were! Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child develop a lifelong love for reading and learning. Thank you for helping in this most important of endeavors!

**Mary's Go Round Petting Zoo Visit - Monday 4/13 from 10-11:30:** There will be lots of animals for petting (ducks, chicks, rabbits, sheep, etc.) and a pony for rides around the parking lot. All classes are invited, so if you are a 2 year old student, feel free to stop by school anytime between 10-11:30!

**School Pictures:** We will be taking School Pictures in the Nature Center the week of April 20 (weather permitting). Stay tuned for more details soon!

**Balancing Outdoor Play and Screen Time:** One of the benefits of having screens so readily available is that adults can give kids a screen and get some work done. And we all need that! However, this can lead to kids being less able to play by themselves and use their imaginations. One trend the teachers and I have noticed over the years is kids coming to school with shorter attention spans who expect to be entertained. They have less tolerance for being bored and less ability to engage in creative play. Now that the weather is finally warming up, I would like to encourage us all to spend more time outside away from screens. I know I am as guilty of this as anyone! See the attached article for a deeper dive into this topic.

## Dates to Remember

- 4/7 School resumes
- 4/10 Jump Bunch – 4's
- 4/10 Parents' Night Out
- 4/13 Petting Zoo – in school field trip (all classes invited)
- 4/18 St. Peter's Clothing Swap 9:00-11:00
- 4/24 Family Fun Day 5:00-7:30
- 4/20-24 School Pictures



Happy Birthday

- 4/8 Theo
- 4/9 Ms. Sara
- 4/17 Everjie
- 4/20 Hudson Pa.
- 4/21 Aiden S.
- 4/22 Kai
- 4/23 Kenna

## Try this at home!

### Shaving Cream Rain



*Ingredients: regular shaving cream (not gel), food coloring, tall easy to see through glass (jar, cylinder, vase, drinking glass, pitcher, glass bowl), water*

*Directions: Fill your glass 75% full of water. Spray a layer of shaving cream on top of the water until covered. Drop two drops of each color of food coloring on top of the shaving cream. Watch the food coloring make its way slowly down into the water!*

*Add more food coloring as desired.*



# 7 Benefits of Outdoor Play and Less Screen Time

by Ashley Cullins, [biglifejournal.com](http://biglifejournal.com)

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, but kids riding bicycles, throwing a ball, or playing in the yard are nowhere to be found. Where are the children? According to statistics, they are likely watching TV or gaming on devices.

Unfortunately, too much screen time can have a harmful effect on children. Plus, children are missing out on the *incredible benefits* of outdoor play.

## How big is the problem?

The [Kaiser Family Foundation](http://KaiserFamilyFoundation.org) reports children ages 8-18 get an average of **7.5 hours of daily screen time**.

And that's only counting screen time for entertainment, not educational purposes. In one year, that adds up to 114 days spent looking at a screen for fun.

Meanwhile, the average American child spends only **four to seven minutes a day** involved in unstructured play outside. Here we will explain why children should ditch screens for sunshine, plus give you some fun ideas to encourage outdoor play!

# 7 POWER BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR PLAY

## 1 IT INSPIRES CREATIVITY

It encourages exploration and activates children's natural sense of wonder, curiosity, and creativity. It's a vehicle for self-expression and a **foundational skill for managing emotions and solving problems**.



## 2 IT BUILDS CONFIDENCE

Giving children the freedom to create their own games and explore the world (or at least the backyard) fosters a confidence-building **sense of power and independence**.



## 3 IT TEACHES RESPONSIBILITY

Playing outside inspires an appreciation for nature and a responsibility for living things. Children who spend time in nature are more likely to **appreciate and care** for the planet as they grow older.



## 4 IT KEEPS CHILDREN ACTIVE

The concept of "exercise" doesn't always sound fun, but running, jumping, dancing, throwing a ball, or riding a bike are fun ways for children to move their bodies and **stay healthy**.



## 5 IT IMPROVES PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Exposure to sunshine helps children's bodies produce Vitamin D, which is **important for the immune system and bone development**.



## 6 IT REDUCES STRESS AND ANXIETY

Fresh air and green spaces create a **natural calming effect** in the body. Outdoor play promotes beneficial "feel-good" hormones like oxytocin and serotonin.



## 7 IT CREATES OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALIZE

Unstructured play with other children is **essential to developing children's social skills**. It teaches them how to make friends, navigate conflicts, share, and treat other people with kindness.



# 7 Powerful Benefits of Outdoor Play

*Playing outside inspires creativity, builds confidence, and teaches responsibility. And the benefits of playing outside don't stop there—here are seven important reasons to limit screen time and encourage outdoor play.*

## 1. It Inspires Creativity

As outdoor play has decreased, creativity scores (measured by the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking) have steadily declined since 1990. The most significant decrease is seen in kindergarteners through third graders.

Boosting creativity is important because it's a vehicle for self-expression and a foundational skill for managing emotions and solving problems. It also promotes language, literacy, and social development.

Playing outside encourages exploration and activates children's natural sense of wonder, curiosity, and creativity. During unstructured play, children invent their own games. They figure things out, solve problems, and keep themselves entertained with inventive approaches to the world.

## 2. It Builds Confidence

Giving children the freedom to create their own games and explore the world (or at least the backyard) fosters a confidence-building sense of power and independence.

During their exploration of the outdoors, children try new things and take risks. Allowing children to take risks (within reason), ultimately helps build their confidence. Either they discover a new talent, or they experience a taste of failure and realize it's not such a big deal after all.

Dr. Colleen Morgan, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist that specializes in cognitive behavioral therapist, explains, "A child needs to feel competence and confidence in their world. When I work with a family in therapy with a child who is spending a great deal of time on screens, we often see a decrease in self-confidence because the child is being shown examples of other children that can do things better than they can. When a child stops watching others on screens and instead goes outside to interact with peers or the natural world, they have numerous opportunities to build confidence in themselves."

## 3. It Teaches Responsibility

Playing outside inspires an appreciation for nature and responsibility for living things. Children can learn about watering plants, picking up trash, or being gentle with flowers (e.g., not stomping them or pulling them up by the roots). Children who spend time in nature are more likely to appreciate and care for the planet as they grow older.

Responsibility in one area translates to responsibility in other areas too. Children's individual actions have an impact on nature, and they have an impact on other people. This understanding encourages children to take responsibility for their choices and think about the effect their decisions have on those around them.

## 4. It Keeps Children Active

Of course, another benefit of outdoor play is keeping children active. The concept of "exercise" doesn't always sound fun, but running, jumping, dancing, throwing a ball, or riding a bike are fun ways for children to move their bodies and stay healthy. This results in lower BMI and better overall health (e.g., lower risk for issues like diabetes, asthma, and cardiovascular disease).

Physical activity also provides an outlet for children's energy, sharpening their focus and enhancing sleep. Additionally, it helps children improve their motor skills and muscle strength.

## 5. It Improves Physical and Mental Health

Exposure to sunshine helps children's bodies produce Vitamin D, which is important for the immune system and bone development. Vitamin D also contributes to restful sleep and improved mood.

Getting some sunshine every day is great for physical and mental health!

## 6. It Reduces Stress and Anxiety

While screens can increase stress and anxiety, outdoor play has been shown to reduce it. Numerous studies have linked excessive screen time for children to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. For example, a [study](#) in the *Journal of Preventative Medicine* found children ages 2-17 who spend 7+ hours a day on a screen are twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety or depression as children who spend just one hour on a screen.

Other effects documented in the study included decreased emotional stability, increased distractibility, and more difficulty making friends and finishing tasks—all compelling reasons to limit screen time.

Dr. Morgan notes, "When a child is interacting with a screen, the feedback is instantaneous, making them expect instant gratification in the real world. I often see increased levels of impatience, frustration, anger and distress in a child when the world does not move at the same speed as a screen." By contrast, fresh air and green spaces create a natural calming effect in the body. Outdoor play promotes beneficial "feel-good" hormones like oxytocin and serotonin.

"When a child steps away from the screen and has other experiences outdoors, they restructure their expectations, and then anxiety and many negative emotions will decrease. This has been a successful therapeutic intervention for numerous children I have worked with," says Dr. Morgan.

## 7. It Creates Opportunities to Socialize

Unstructured play with other children is essential to developing children's social skills. It teaches them how to make friends, navigate conflicts, share, and treat other people with kindness.

Only interacting with other children in the classroom or in structured activities like playing on a [sports team](#) does not give children the opportunity to learn important social skills in context.

## 8. Ideas for Getting Children Outdoors

As we strive to limit screen time, it helps to give children motivation to play outside. Of course, you don't *always* need a planned activity. In fact, unstructured time outdoors can maximize the benefits of outdoor play listed above.

But if you're struggling to get your children excited about going outside, these ideas may help!

- [Draw with sidewalk chalk](#)
- [Make an obstacle course](#)
- [Go on a scavenger hunt](#)
- [Form a family band](#)
- [Paint or do other messy arts and crafts](#)
- [Ride bikes/scooters/rollerblades](#)
- [Play freeze tag or Red Light, Green Light](#)
- [Bird watch or go on a bug hunt](#)
- [Have a water balloon fight](#)
- [Play ball](#)

- Plant flowers or a garden and take care of it together
- Blow bubbles
- Play with shaving cream or have a silly string fight
- Prepare a picnic lunch and enjoy it together
- Fly kites
- Make a bird feeder
- Decorate rocks
- Play with modeling clay or slime
- Take photos for a scrapbook or photo journal
- Build cardboard forts, castles, or fairy houses
- Pretend your yard is a jungle, forest, or undiscovered land and go exploring
- Play classic games like soccer, volleyball, kickball, baseball, basketball, or invent your own

*These are just a few ideas to get you started. There are plenty of creative activities and fun games that can encourage children to step away from the screens. What are your favorite ways to play outdoors with your children?*

*Whatever your children like to do outside, they'll reap the benefits of outdoor play for their physical and mental health. They'll also reduce the harmful impact of too much screen time. So, shut down the devices, slather on the sunscreen, and head outdoors.*



**St. Peter's Preschool**

# CLOTHING SWAP

**SAT, APRIL 18TH**

RAIN DATE: SAT, APRIL 25TH

**9AM-11AM**

Current & former St. Peter's families: Clear out your child's closet and pick up anything they'll need for the future!

No donation of items is required to participate, so please come "shop" even if you cannot contribute! All items remaining after the event will be donated to ShareBaby in Baltimore.

**\$5 entry fee**  
includes coffee,  
snacks, & as  
many items as  
you'd like!

**Clothing (newborn-Youth XL)**

**Shoes (newborn-Youth 7)**

**Hats, mittens, gloves, socks, etc.**

**New & opened boxes of diapers**

**Interested in volunteering?**  
Contact:  
[kendall.dougherty@yahoo.com](mailto:kendall.dougherty@yahoo.com)

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Bring your items to  
preschool drop-off  
April 13-17.

St. Peter's Preschool  
3695 Rogers Avenue  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

**PLEASE JOIN US!**

**ST. PETER'S PRESCHOOL**

# **Family Fun Day**

**5:00 -  
7:30PM**

**FRIDAY  
APRIL 24**

**WHO: ALL CURRENT  
AND FORMER  
ST. PETER'S STUDENTS  
AND FAMILIES**

**WHERE: ST. PETER'S  
PARKING LOT AND  
PLAYGROUND**

**BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY AND ENJOY A SPECIAL EVENING  
CONNECTING WITH OUR WONDERFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY!  
KID FITNESS AND DANCE EVENTS, LIVE MUSIC, LOCAL  
VENDORS AND MORE!**

**CATALYST HOT DOG FOOD TRUCK WILL BE  
JOINING US AND PROVIDING FOOD FOR  
PURCHASE!**