

# St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter

January 2026



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

Happy New Year! I hope you and your family had a wonderful holiday!

**Registration:** Before Christmas break, I sent home Registration information for the 2026-2027 school year. You can register directly in Brightwheel or at this link [https://schools.mybrightwheel.com/sign-in?redirect\\_path=/admissions/packet/d0d1dfdc-e951-4328-919c-d238158ec400/fill?school\\_id=b7ced85b-248c-4305-95e9-68cdfd6e63ce](https://schools.mybrightwheel.com/sign-in?redirect_path=/admissions/packet/d0d1dfdc-e951-4328-919c-d238158ec400/fill?school_id=b7ced85b-248c-4305-95e9-68cdfd6e63ce)

Here are the dates registration opens:

- 1/5 St. Peter's Church parishioners
- 1/12 Current families
- 1/19 Former families
- 1/26 General public

Our classes tend to fill up quickly, so I would encourage you to register before registration opens to the general public.

**Referral bonus:** The highest compliment our parents can pay us is the referral of family or friends. The trust that you place in us means a great deal. In appreciation, you will receive a \$50 credit off one month's tuition for every new enrollment as a result of your referral.

**Road to Kindergarten:** If your child is going off to kindergarten next year, HCPSS offers a Road to Kindergarten workshop that may be useful. They will be held on the following dates from 6:30-7:30 (see attached flyer):

- Jan 12, 2026, Centennial HS
- Jan 20, 2026, Guilford Park HS
- Jan 28, 2026, Virtual session

The following resource may also be useful: <https://news.hcpss.org/news-posts/2025/12/road-to-kindergarten-workshops-begin-jan-12-2026/>

**Sign-in change in Brightwheel:** I am removing the required signature for the morning sign-in process in Brightwheel so when school resumes in January, only your 4 digit code will be required. It felt like an additional step that was not necessary.

**Change in lunches:** MSDE is requiring us to refrigerate lunches, so starting on 1/12, please send in your child's lunch in only a labeled bento box or labeled gallon-size ziplock bag. They will fit better in the refrigerator without a lunchbox. I'm not quite sure why we need to do this, as public school kids go all day without needing to refrigerate theirs...

**Try this at home...** The New Year is a perfect time to make new traditions and memories. Remember, it's the little things that mean the most to kids and the ones they will remember. **Make a Memory Jar:** Get a jar and set it in a prominent place in your home. As the year goes by, fill the jar with things you have done together (movie tickets, napkin from a wedding, brochures from places you went, etc.), and write down special events that took place (Johnny took his first steps, Susie made everyone breakfast on her own, the time milk came out of Peter's nose when he laughed so hard, etc.). Fill the jar through the year without peeking. When the year ends, sit down as a family and review these fun events.

## Dates to Remember

- 1/5 School resumes  
1/9 Jump Bunch - 4's (in school field trip)  
1/9 Pajama Day!  
1/10 St. Peter's Church Family Night at the Movies – all families invited (5:30-9:00)  
1/12 Registration for 2026-2027 school yr opens to current families  
1/12 Library Storytime – 3's/4's (in school field trip)  
1/19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day – no school  
1/30 Fun Bus – all classes (in school field trip)

## Happy Birthday!



- 1/18 Maisie  
1/25 Ms. Rita

## DELAYED GRATIFICATION

Have you heard of the Marshmallow Test? It is a famous psychological study done at Stanford in the 60's and 70's that tests a child's self-control and delayed gratification (super important skills that predict success as adults). Read the article below to find out how you can help your kids develop these skills.



## Memory Jar



A New Year Family Tradition  
www.ohsmylittlemister.com

## Family Night at the Movies

**When:** Saturday, January 10, 2026

**Time:** 5:30-leave by 9:00

**Where:** St. Joseph's Hall at St. Peters Episcopal Church

**What:** Dinner of Pizza, Salad Bar, Sodas/water, and ice cream. Popcorn with the movie!

**Movie:** Chicken Little, by Disney

**Deadline for RSVP:** January 4, by email to [Squad@StPetersec.org](mailto:Squad@StPetersec.org) (preferred) or sign up sheet on board by parking lot entrance, church level (one or the other, not both).

Because we need a count to provide food, please list every person attending.

**Cost:** Free will donation at the event



### Other info:

This event is for the whole family. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Children can bring a sleeping bag or blanket, and small pillow for lounging during the movie. All are welcome to wear pajamas to the event, but this is not required. Adults may bring wine or beer, if desired, for their personal consumption. If inclement weather, please refer to [stpetersec.org](http://stpetersec.org) for reschedule information.



# Road to Kindergarten

**Do you have a child who will be 5 years old by September 1, 2026?**

Please join us for an information session about Kindergarten<sup>‡</sup> in the Howard County Public School System.

**At this session you will learn:**

- Expectations for school readiness (and receive a *Ready for Kindergarten* toolkit).
- Details about the HCPSS kindergarten program, website and kindergarten registration process.
- Ways that families and children can be supported during the transition to kindergarten.

**Choose a session that is convenient for you.  
No registration required.**

**Child care is available at each session for children ages 2 and older; the session is designed for adults only.**

**Large crowd anticipated; please allow ample time for parking, childcare dropoff, and check in. Doors open at 6 p.m.**



**If Howard County public schools are closed for inclement weather, the session is canceled.**

**All sessions will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m.**

Mon., January 12, 2026 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Centennial High School* 4300 Centennial Lane, Ellicott City, MD 21042
Tues., January 20, 2026 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Guilford Park High School* 8500 Ridgelys Run Road, Jessup, MD 20794
Wed., January 28, 2026 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Virtual Event-Hosted by the Howard County Library

**In the event that in person sessions are cancelled due to snow,  
please join the virtual event on 1/28**

**For more information visit ...**

[www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten/](http://www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten/)



[www.facebook.com/HoCoSchools/](http://www.facebook.com/HoCoSchools/)



@HCPSS

Or call 410-313-5693



\*Korean, Chinese, and Spanish interpreters will be present at these sites.

\*Link to virtual event will be posted on 1/28 at the link above.

<sup>‡</sup>Please note, the session will include information regarding Kindergarten readiness, program components, and registration that is applicable to all HCPSS schools; specific school information and events will be shared by schools after registration is finalized.

**HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

# 5 Easy Ways to Teach Kids Self-Control and Delayed Gratification

by [Sarah Ramirez](#) ([www.afineparent.com](http://www.afineparent.com))

Let's be honest: children sometimes suck at being patient.

I know mine do.

Unfortunately, their lack of patience and self-control can become contagious to us adults, too. I admit that I'm prone to snapping, "Just wait a minute!" when my kids are screaming because I take too long to cut their grapes.

And before I know it, [it becomes this vicious cycle](#)—my children's impatience makes me impatient, which in turn makes them more impatient, until it spirals out of control.

I know I can't indulge them when they whine instead of waiting quietly – like all parents, I do believe in teaching kids about self-control and delayed gratification.

But, the way I sometimes go about it isn't quite right.

Instead of expecting 2- and 3-year-olds to magically acquire self-control skills overnight (that would be cool though, wouldn't it?), I need to model and teach these skills to them.

## Marshmallow Test: The Famous Study in Self-Control and Delayed Gratification

Psychologists have studied why some kids seem to excel at demonstrating self-control and delaying gratification, while others struggle for long time now. Have you heard of the famous ["marshmallow test"](#) conducted by Walter Mischel and a team of researchers at Stanford University in the late 1960's and early 1970's?

One by one, 4-year-old children were presented with a marshmallow and informed that they could either eat a marshmallow now, or wait 15 minutes and receive two marshmallows. Some children gobbled the marshmallow immediately, while others managed to wait the full 15 minutes and receive the reward of a second marshmallow.

The researchers continued to follow up with the children for the next several decades. They found that the 4-year-olds who had successfully waited for 15 minutes differed in significant ways from the children who couldn't wait. Over the years, the children who had "passed" the marshmallow test developed the following characteristics:

- better [emotional coping skills](#)
- higher rates of educational attainment
- higher SAT scores
- lower BMI
- lower divorce rates
- lower [rates of addiction](#)



So, is the lesson that some people are born with better self-control, and that this trait determines their entire life trajectory?

Far from it.

The researchers continued to conduct a lot of variations on the marshmallow test. In some of their studies, more children were able to resist the siren call of the marshmallow — *because the researchers taught them how.*

Walter Mischel concluded that [“preschoolers tended to wait longer when they were given effective strategies.”](#)

**In other words, self-control and delayed gratification are essential life skills — but they can be learned.**

This finding is good news for us parents! It means that we can actually do something positive to teach our kids about delaying gratification.

So what was it that helped kids delay gratification? Based on my reading of the studies, here are the 5 research-tested [strategies](#) that I am trying with my own kids.

## #1 Avoidance



When the researchers [covered the marshmallow](#), the children didn't need special strategies to avoid eating it. They just weren't tempted when they couldn't see it—thus proving the old proverb “out of sight, out of mind.”

So something as simple as hiding temptations from your children's sight—whenever possible—is the most effective way to stop them from becoming overwhelming. Put chips and cookies away in the cupboard if you don't want your children to whine for more. Stop checking Facebook all day on your iPad if you want your kids to limit screen time.

Removing temptation may sound like a cop-out, but as your children get older, you can explain the purpose of this strategy to them so that they can internalize it and start consciously doing it for themselves.

Some of the children in the original study spontaneously adopted this strategy by turning their backs to the marshmallow or covering their eyes—and sure enough, the children who adopted this strategy on their own were able to wait longer. So it's an important skill for kids to learn.

## #2 De-emphasis of Rewards

Parenting experts often tell us to dangle rewards before our children. I'm sure you've heard it before: [“Don't punish bad behavior—just reward good behavior!”](#) When the going gets tough, we're supposed to remind our children of the stickers and M&Ms that they want to earn.

But in the marshmallow test, the researchers found that children were *less* likely to wait when they were encouraged to think about the desirable properties of the reward (such as [“the marshmallows are yummy and chewy”](#)). Obsessing over the marshmallow made children want to eat it.

So if you want your child to wait patiently for a reward, don't emphasize the reward that your child is waiting for. For instance, the next time you're at the grocery store, don't tell your children, “If you're quiet, you can have a piece of delicious candy when we're done.” Thinking about candy

will make them want to grab all the candy they can well before they make it to the checkout line! Try a different strategy in a situation where you can't give the reward right away.

### #3 Positive Distraction

Children waited longer when the researchers told them to “think fun thoughts.”

Some of the children decided to “just sing a song” or “go to outer space.” Others distracted themselves by thinking of a different food—for instance, if they were trying not to eat a marshmallow, they talked about pretzels. In [one version of the test](#), some children were given a Slinky to play with while they waited—and the majority of children with a Slinky successfully waited 15 minutes.



In [another version](#), the researchers tried to distract the children by instructing them to think negative thoughts—for instance, to think about falling down and hurting themselves.

The children in this condition were terrible at waiting for the reward. The stress of the negative thoughts apparently led them to console themselves with the marshmallow. Thus, trying to distract children by reminding them of [punishment or other negative consequences may backfire](#).

*The lesson? Distraction can work, but it should be fun rather than stressful.*

### #4 Abstraction

Children waited longer when instructed to think of the marshmallow in an abstract way—for instance, as a picture, or as a cloud. Walter Mischel theorized that abstraction helped the children to [“cool”](#) their desires for the snack by emphasizing intellectual strategies over “hot” emotional reactions.

If your children focus on a temptation that you can't hide or avoid, encourage them to consider the object's abstract properties rather than its tempting properties. For instance, if they're staring at the TV set, pleading for you to turn it on, ask them what shape it is and lead them on a scavenger hunt for similar shapes in the house. Or tell them to imagine it as a magic picture frame and ask what pictures they “see” in it.

But remember that the children in the original study were around 4.5 years old. This strategy probably works best with children age 4 and up, not with 18-month-olds who haven't developed abstract thought yet.

### #5 Self-directed Speech



Although researchers didn't specifically instruct them in this strategy, some of the children chose to engage in self-directed speech in order to help themselves wait. They repeated phrases to themselves like “I have to wait, so I can get two marshmallows.” Engaging in [self-directed speech](#) correlated with longer wait times.

Parents should therefore teach phrases that are easy to repeat and that remind children to control their impulses. For instance, if you don't want your child to beg for endless amounts of cookies, tell her in advance that

she'll only get one, and ask her to repeat the phrase "just one cookie" before you give it to her. Then, if she finds the limit to be stressful, she can repeat "just one cookie" to herself.

As you can see, these strategies aren't particularly difficult to understand. They're just as straightforward as teaching our children their ABCs—and may be even more fundamental to their academic success. If Mischel and his researchers were able to teach some kids to apply these strategies in a single 15-minute session, surely we can succeed with our own children.

The important part is to be consistent in applying them. Another psychologist who studies [self-control](#) has compared it to a muscle—which means that it can strengthen with exercise.

By helping our children apply their best self-control strategies to delay gratification in everyday situations, we help them to develop better self-control overall.

## The 2-Minute Action Plan for Fine Parents

- Examine your children's self-control issues. When do your children experience difficulties with being patient or delaying gratification? Create a plan using one or more of these strategies (avoidance, de-emphasis of rewards, distraction, abstraction, or self-directed speech) to mitigate these difficult situations for them.
- Examine your own self-control issues. Children ultimately learn best from imitating their parents, [not from nagging or commands](#). So modeling these strategies yourself is a great way to teach them to your children.
- In which areas do you have problems with self-control? Invent a plan using one or more of these strategies to help yourself! Let's say you routinely find yourself glued to your phone at the park, even though you've made resolutions to run around with the kids and get some exercise. Maybe you could invent a phrase to remind yourself to get off the phone ("two minutes, and then I put the phone away"). Plan to repeat the phrase to yourself and even teach the kids to remind you of it. You might develop a back-up plan using a different strategy in case the first one fails. If a self-directed phrase doesn't help you step away from the phone, you could plan to leave it at home or at the bottom of your purse (out of sight, out of mind).

## The Ongoing Action Plan for Fine Parents

- Over the next week, implement your strategies for improving self-control both in your children and in yourself. Which strategies seem to work best for your children? Which ones work best for you?
- Some strategies might completely backfire—and that's ok. For instance, I've learned that distraction doesn't work for my 2-year-old son. If I try to distract him with a toy when he's fixated on some forbidden item, he screams and throws the unwanted toy in my face. Over time, however, children may become developmentally ready for more sophisticated strategies, so keep an open mind and reevaluate strategies later that didn't seem to work at first. I'll try distraction again when my son is older, but right now it's not going to be my "go-to strategy" when I really want him to behave.
- Discern which strategies are most effective and practice those ones the most. My 2-year-old benefits most from avoidance, especially removing him to a different room, so I find myself doing this several times a day (or sometimes several times an hour, on a rough day). I hope that as we continue to implement these strategies, those rough days will eventually become few and far between.