

Director's Corner

March 2017

Dear Fraser Families,

We had a great staff development day on Monday, February 20. This gave the Fraser School staff an opportunity to complete many of the annual trainings that our DHS license mandates that we have. These include Sudden Unexpected Infant Death, Abusive Head Trauma, and Fraser School's Child Care Risk Reduction Plan. Unfortunately, all of these presentations have to be face-to-face and cannot be completed through self-study or online. Fraser's President and CEO, Diane Cross, also presented to the Fraser School staff about the organization's strategic plan and I followed with Fraser School's specific goals for 2017. We also practiced a lock-down and evacuation drill with no children so that the staff could practice. Thank you for your understanding for the importance of these staff development days.

In addition to the various presentations, I asked the staff members for suggestions to increase retention of Fraser School's staff. We have already implemented pay-for-performance raises Fraser-wide so that the top performing staff are rewarded for their efforts. In addition, we have recently added some promotional opportunities by introducing mentor teacher, teacher II, and assistant teacher II positions for those that want to grow within our school. I have shared the staff suggestions with Fraser's HR Department and they will follow-up with listening sessions so that staff members can share additional feedback and clarify their suggestions. One of our primary goals for 2017 is to reduce staff turnover.

I have been informed that our annual report was received and initially accepted to continue our

accreditation through the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). Our certification expires in February 2019 but we have to provide annual updates to maintain our accreditation status.

Finally, I want to share some great news. Fraser School has received a grant from the Edina Rotary Foundation to provide a new musical instrument on the playground. Part of the initial plan of the playground was to have weather-resistant musical instruments in the gazebo. As we prioritized the playground equipment, we decided that it would be easier to add musical instruments later as funds were secured. Now, our plan continues! I will accept the check from the Edina Noon Rotary during March and we hope to have a new musical instrument on the playground by May. Thanks, Edina Rotary Foundation, for your continued generosity!

Thanks for sharing your children with us,

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Program Committee Meeting

On Monday, April 3, Fraser School will hold its next Program Committee Meeting from 5:00-6:00 PM. Each April, the committee focuses on reviewing Fraser School's written curriculum and developmental philosophy. This is a requirement of our continuing accreditation with NECPA (National Early Childhood Program Accreditation).

We would like to have as many parents as possible join us for this meeting. You do not need to be a member of the committee nor do you need to attend any future meetings. If you would like to join us, please let me know by April 3 at 12:00 PM just so I make enough handouts. You can either call me at 612-798-8319 or email me at deedee.stevens-neal@fraser.org. Fraser School staff members are also invited to attend.

Information about Fraser School's developmental philosophy is located in the Fraser School Parent Handbook in the welcome section. We are an inclusive early childhood environment where children with special needs and children with typical needs work, learn, and play together. Our goal is to maintain an approximate ratio of 1/3 children with special needs to about 2/3 children with typical needs.

We follow the theories of social scientist, Lev Vygotsky. He felt that children learn best through social interactions with others that are more expert in a particular skill or topic. Through these interactions, children can achieve and understand more than they could learn on their own. In addition, children of all abilities and ages have these experts through other children or the adults in the classroom. Vygotsky labeled this phenomenon "scaffolding" a child's learning.

In addition to our developmental philosophy, we utilize two written curricula for the ages that we

serve. Our infant and toddler staff members use The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos to guide their learning environment and lesson plans. Our preschool and pre-kindergarten staff members use The Creative Curriculum for Preschool as their guide.

Both curricula are play-based and rely on creating a rich learning environment. Both also guide staff members in using interactions with the children to help scaffold the children's learning. The curricula also stress the importance of both teacher-directed and child-directed learning. They also recommend a balance of quiet and active learning. The curricula address children's growth in four major areas of development: cognitive, physical, language, and social-emotional.

Please join us on Monday, April 3 to further discuss these items and give feedback. I hope to see many of you there.

How to Shape & Manage Your Young Child's Behavior

This article is reprinted from healthychildren.org, the website of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Helping shape your children's behavior is a key part of being a parent. It can be difficult as well as rewarding. While at times it can be challenging, a few key principles can help.

Modeling Behavior

Children learn by watching everyone around them, especially their parents. When you use manners and good coping strategies, you teach your children to do the same.

- **Point out sharing among adults.** Children often feel that they are the only ones who have to "use your manners," "share," and "take turns." So when adults share, point it out to your children. For example: "Daddy is

sharing his drink with Mommy. Good job sharing, Daddy!"

- **Model good ways to calm down.** Teach your children how to calm down when they are upset or frustrated. For example, if you are frustrated about sitting in traffic, you might say: *"Mommy is really frustrated right now. Please help me calm down by taking 10 deep breaths with me."*
- **Teach children to say how they feel.** If you are really frustrated, you might want to say, *"You are driving me crazy right now."* Instead, try to express your actual feelings: *"Mommy is really frustrated right now."* This teaches children to say what they feel instead of making critical or hurtful statements. Then help your children do this when they are upset. For example: *"It looks like you are feeling sad."*

If your guess about how they are feeling is not accurate, allow your children to correct you.

Behavior + Attention = More Behavior

If you are like most people, you'll leave your children alone if they are behaving well, but when your children are misbehaving, you'll direct your attention to them. This tends to backfire. The attention around the misbehavior actually increases the misbehavior as a way to get more attention from us!

The best way to improve behavior is to **give children a lot of attention when they are doing something you like and remove your attention when they are doing something you do not like.**

An easy way to increase good behaviors is by describing their behaviors and praising them when they make a real effort. For example:

- *"Good job listening the first time!"*
- *"Good job using your inside voice."*

It can be hard to get in the habit of doing this, but it gets easier and easier as you do it.

The Attention Meter

When children get enough positive attention from you, they don't need to act out to get attention. Remember to fill your children up with plenty of love and affection throughout the day, every day. A very easy way to do this is to spend quality time with them. Playing with your children for just 5 minutes will go a long way, especially right after getting home from work or after an errand. When playing with your children, let them pick the toy and lead the play. It's tempting to tell your children what to do or ask a lot of questions, but it is best not to do that. Try instead to just describe what your children are doing (*"You are working so hard to build a tall tower"* or *"You are stacking those blocks"*) and give praise: *"Great job sitting so still while we are playing."*

Another way is to give attention to children for good behavior, yet not distract them while they are behaving, is to gently touch them in a loving way; for example, simply touch their shoulder or back. It is recommended you give children 50 to 100 brief loving touches every day.

You can decrease bad behaviors by ignoring them, but this only works if you are giving your children lots of attention for their good behaviors. The simplest way to do this is through planned ignoring. Ignoring means **not talking to, looking at, or touching** your children when they are behaving badly. The **key to ignoring** is making sure to give your children positive attention as soon as the bad behavior stops, like saying:

- *"You are quiet now; it looks like you are ready to play."*

It is important to not ignore unsafe behaviors that need immediate attention from you.

Upcoming events

> Program Committee Meeting

April 3, 2017
5:00-6:00 PM

> No School

April 5-6, 2017
Parent/Teacher Conferences

> No School

April 7, 2017
Spring Break

> Fraser Walk for Autism

April 8, 2017
7:00-10:00 AM

Upcoming events

> Family Fun Night

May 18, 2017
6:30-7:30 PM

> No School

May 25-26, 2017
Staff Development Days

> No School

May 28, 2017
Memorial Day

> No School

July 4, 2017
Independence Day

2017 Fraser Walk for Autism

Show your support for Fraser families affected by autism! Grab your walking shoes and join us at Mall of America on Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 7-10am for the Fraser Walk for Autism. This fun-filled morning features a sensory friendly walk route filled with activities, games, prizes and therapy animals.

Sign-up as a team or individual and earn some amazing incentive prizes. Register online at www.fraser.org/Events/Fraser-Walk-For-Autism.



Saturday
April 8, 2017
Mall of America

