



Harmony Family Preschool

September 2019

Newsletter

Welcome!

The newsletters are organized as follows: "whole school" overviews, "pre-school" news, "pre-kindergarten" news, "coming-up", "housekeeping", and a "child-development" ditty. The purposes of the newsletter are to keep you informed of class happenings, upcoming events, and connected to our classroom! Enjoy!

Whole School News:

The first weeks of school have been very exciting! *Everyone* is working hard transitioning from Home Mode to School Mode. It's only been the first four weeks, and already these young people have shared who they are, and how they fit into their families via the "family trees". It has been fun to watch the Harmony tree change as every student has added his or her contribution! They are very proud of their families; and are discovering that we all have one, and they all look different! It is adorable to introduce the children to each other and then ask them to show their new friend their family tree!!

Our new, younger "preschoolers" are taking *everything* in, getting used to the daily schedule, and making huge strides socially and emotionally right now! Our older "preschoolers" are very excited and have amazing confidence this year.

Morning small group times are in full swing. The children are learning how to be "great students". I am most impressed with how quickly our little community is growing together; we have so much wonderfulness to work with! The children are enjoying all centers of the classrooms during free-choice times: painting, coloring, block building, building with small manipulates that exercise those little hand muscles with the pushing and pulling pieces together, the dry sensory table, train table, reading, dress up, obstacle courses, and cooking in the play kitchen. We've also played much "barber shop/hair salon", and fixed all of the furniture with our play tools. "God Bless America" is coming along nicely; we stamp their right hand (not left) with the "Rr" stamp to teach the children the difference between their L and R hand. When we sing our song, they know to put the hand with the Rr stamp over their heart. Our nature walks have given us perfect opportunities to share common experiences, talk while walking, listen to stories, observe the changes autumn is making, walk Ramsey (and Red too), and listen for different sounds. Our nature walks are magical. . . . we hunt for treasures. . . sometimes we find beautiful gem-stone, teeny tiny animals, and native American arrow-heads!! Snack-time is already a very social time! The children are working hard unpacking their belongings, organizing their things, and picking up after themselves.

Just a reminder we must exclude ALL nuts, flax, mustard seeds and all dairy (inclusive of yogurt and cheese). **Please pack only water in the snack bags.**

Our large circle time surprises me. Both classes are combined during this time, and already we are singing, dancing, jumping, speed-bagging, and pounding through the seasons, months, days of the week, number 1, and have begun talking about fire safety! Every day, we are *practicing* to become "GREAT STUDENTS". . . and make incremental, steady PROGRESS! We assign "daily jobs" (a great question to get them to talk about their day, "what was your job today?") Just a suggestion. . . bedtime is when they like to start talkin. . . . maybe scale that bedtime routine back a bit to make more pillow talk time, without losing precious sleep.

We have a "health" lesson each month; and are spending much time learning how to properly wash our hands, blow our nose (into a tissue) and catch coughs/sneezes into our elbows. Proper hand-washing (often) is the single best defense against becoming ill.

Our "social" lessons this month, are reciprocal language, eye contact, and table manners; ie. taking a bite of food, chewing with closed mouths, and not talking with food in the mouth. It is important for children to grow the positive social skill of answering questions, verbally and with eye contact, when another is talking with them. It is not too early to teach these little ones table manners, which will serve them well . . . f o r e v e r. We are practicing at school!

Lastly, we are constantly promoting self-help skills; the children are putting their own coats inside their backpacks when they arrive, and we are teaching them how to put them on via the coat trick,☺ cleaning up after themselves (both in the classroom and after meals). It is a tremendous confidence booster when a child can do for themselves. The organized classroom environment enables the children to achieve self-sufficiency as our expectations are clearly communicated often, their coat hooks are labeled and easily reached, the bins are all labeled with pictures, the trash cans are easily accessible, and the day follows a familiar flow. Here's a youtube video of our coat trick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHS7WONnGwA>

We are enjoying our time with your children!! Our days fly by!! All my best, Miss Holly

Preschool News:

We are off to a truly amazing start! The Harmony Preschoolers are coming to school, wearing their backpacks and saying goodbye to their special people and knocking it out of the park with drop off! And a big THANK YOU to all of you who are also hitting home runs with drop off! Just a helpful hint. . . if your little one is struggling with saying goodbye, we are clearly communicating that it is OK to be sad, but that we are expecting "big kid" great student behavior just the same.. They can, and will, be successful, especially when we jointly convey that they can do it.

We have gotten right down to business, are sitting crisscross applesauce on sit-upons, using the two hand rule, and following Harmony Angels words of wisdom " when you come to school remember to be KIND, RESPECTFUL, SAFE, A FIRST TIME LISTENER AND AN OPTIMIST". We are also catching our sneezes and coughs in our elbows, using tissues for our nose germs and washing our hands every chance we get. Your special little people have learned that in September our shape is a circle, our color is red and our number is one. We have spent time getting to know our friends by taking turns saying our names while holding our red circle and now have included a name game using our sign in pictures. We are getting to know the order of the day and growing familiar with the daily

jobs. The last week in September the pre school friends met the blue bear, Blueberry. Blueberry will come home with each student for a short stay so be looking out for him, he can be quite mischievous but lots of fun. And by the way this is just what goes on between 9:00 and 9:30 during our small group time! Be proud of your children, we are! Miss Robin

Pre-K News:

Our new Pre-Kers are off to a fabulous start! I am so impressed with how quickly they have adjusted to being the "big kids" in school! They are all showing me "great student" behavior, (being kind, respectful, safe, a first time listener, an optimists . . . and we've added HARD WORKER!). The children have done a great job of arriving at school cheerfully, unpacking their belongings independently and sitting "criss cross applesauce" so we can get started with our Pre-K work. It is very helpful to have the children arrive **on time** as we do begin with morning work right away. A small suggestion, it is wildly helpful to start teaching your pre-ker to be responsible for their backpack now. . . from bringing it from the house to the car and from the car into school; additionally it is super confidence boosting to let them take care of their belongs. . . . "Morning Work" starts unpacking, signing in, finding their "names" , making estimates of what is inside the "estimating jar", guessing what is in the m y s t e r y can, and answering the question of the week; then we take a movement break and WORK OUT we are learning how to do proper push ups, air squats, burpies, jumping jacks, and yoga!!! Next up, calendar work, and finally, letter work. We break down the calendar as follows: year, season, month, day of the week and date, including "yesterdays, todays and tomorrow"! Please, please, please make the Harmony calendar available to your little one, and quickly practice using it every day. . . this little time spent will support your students classroom learning tremendously. Our preK meeting sounds like a lot, but the kids are doing an excellent job following along and using "the two hand rule" to answer questions. (we are pretty sweaty by the end of our meeting)

We began the month with a review of the school rules and what is expected of them now that they are big "Pre-Kers! We also played The Hide and Seek Name game; they find their own name and take turns spelling it and counting how many letters it has. This helps the children learn each others names. This game is a favorite and we will continue to play it, eventually graduating to finding a friends name and "reading" whose name it is.

We are "practicing" many things. . . as practice always makes progress!! We use scissors every morning, small (1/2 inch long) crayons to reinforce a proper tri-finger grasp; we practice putting on our coats, zipping our coats, and helping the preschoolers learn how to unpack and pack up their snack bags!

We have begun talking about lines. This is the beginning phase of our Handwriting Without Tears curriculum. The children are learning what kind of lines are used to make each letter of the alphabet. This month we talked about straight lines. They learned about straight lines down, straight lines across and slant lines (the fancy name for these are diagonal!). We took turns decorating the classroom with straight red streamers. The children were able to choose which kind

of line they wanted to put up.

We have a Pre-K alphabet tray that holds various items beginning with the letter we are learning about. We have used it for the letters A, B, C, and D this month. We spend an entire week on one letter. We learn about the lines needed to make each letter and what sound each letter makes. For A this month we used small chalkboards and practiced writing the letter A with chalk. For the letter B we used small sponges to paint Big Blue B's, and for C we made clay C's.

We also have a "Question of the Week". . . . I like to use the "letter of the week" in the question; you will see on the September photos a little white board with clothespins. Its pretty self-explanatory, but the children need to find their name, vote, and then we tally up the numbers and compare. . . it seems like a cute activity but actually we are learning some awesome math language/concepts such as "less than", "more than", predicting and adding.

Lastly, this is a song the pre-k children will be learning this month. It is super helpful, if it is available for them to hear it at home whenever possible:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=SE-ljfAmZis>

I am proud of how well the Pre-Kindergarten children have done this month. They are a lovely little group, I am enjoying them so much!

Miss Holly

Coming Up:

As the season changes to Autumn, we'll point out its effects on the trees outside (even the Harmony tree will gradually change with the season). The first half of October our curriculum will be all about fire safety and fire fighters; the last two weeks will be about Halloween safety! Please note the Halloween dress up party days on the October calendar!!! **This year our Halloween Party days are on the Wednesday October 30th and Thursday October 31st.** We need 4 parent volunteers for each Halloween party day to take their own group around the classrooms and practice "good manners trick or treating".

For the party; we request that the children arrive to school already dressed up in their costume. Do not fret if they do not want to wear a costume, just bring it with them, as they may choose to wear it after seeing their friends dressed up. . . . and if they don't, NO BIG DEAL, Halloween isn't for everybody!

If you know the costume will not fit in your students backpack, please send a clearly labeled and handled shopping bag for us to put the costume away. Simple, easy to put on costumes make our party days run much more efficiently, as it is hard when a teacher is constantly withdrawn from the fun, having to adjust or "manage" complicated wardrobes. Please leave costume accessories at home (i.e. Wands, handbags, swords . . . these items are very easily lost/broken).

The teachers and I have been observing and absorbing the classroom activities; and taking time to find common ground and connect with each little person.

Over time, we will get to know your children and prepare a formal observation report in both January and May. We look at each Childs interrelated areas of development: social, emotional, physical, and cognitive. The goal is to assess each individual child and utilize parts of the curriculum

that will specifically help that child grow their confidence and self-esteem. Each child is unique, and therefore experiences an individual development process. Children can be very much ahead of their chronological age in one area of development, but may be lagging in another. To nurture a child into a well rounded and balanced individual, it is especially important for caregivers to support the whole child; working with the Childs strengths and mindfully supporting/challenging any weaknesses. It is also significant to mention that even though the child development process is unique to each and every person, it is very much sequential with an ebb and flow type characteristic. There is more information regarding child development in the "child ditty" portion of this and future newsletters.



House Keeping



-**Halloween Party Dress Up Days:** Wednesday, October 30th AND Thursday October 31st.

-**SCHOOL PICTURES:** Abbeyknoll Photography will be taking school photos on October 23rd and 24th.

-**OPEN HOUSE:** Please save the date: Thursday, October 17th. This night is very short and sweet; and simply an opportunity for your child to show you, and their siblings, his/her school. The times are 5:30-6:00 and 6:30-7:00. The staggered times are necessary to accommodate all of our families. I must inform you that if it rains that night, we will need to reschedule to Tuesday, October 22nd.

-**REMINDING:** We have a new email address:

HARMONYPRESCHOOL@YAHOO.COM.

I am still checking the old address: holly@harmonypreschool.org, but not as frequently and soon not at all.

-Thank you! For the generous donations of paper towels and hand soap!!! We use up a tremendous amount of paper towels and hand soap, it is greatly appreciated when these items are donated. Thank you!!!!

-DAIRY, TREENUT, PEANUT FREE, FLAXSEED, MUSTARD SEED: Please triple check the ingredient list of your child's snack!! Please update anyone who may be preparing your little ones snack of our food safety restrictions. Thank you for your support in keeping our population safe!

-Birthday Books!! We will acknowledge each child's birthday with a song at circle meeting and a book choice from the "Birthday Book Box". Party favors are not welcome, I feel strongly about each birthday being uniformly celebrated while at Harmony. Thank you in advance for your support.

-Communication: Please add Harmonypreschool.org to your "favorites" list for easy access. This is the primary method of school-to-home communication. I send emails as infrequently, as possible; but like to remind you of upcoming events/new website postings.

-Incident Reports: These are reports to keep you posted on a negative choice that your child has made that we believe you should be made aware of. . . . but ONLY aware of. . . know that we take advantage of every teachable moment, discipline as necessary and would never expect you to dredge up a school "happening" only to "re-discipline" them for it *again*. . . mother to mother, if my son or daughter made that choice I'd be grateful to be aware. (and believe me, I've gotten plenty of these types of communications about my own children. . . and always found it helpful . . . it isn't easy to hear/read, and equally hard to deliver these messages)

-Labeling: It is MOST helpful if all snack bags, lunch boxes and backpacks are labeled on the OUTSIDE of the container for easy identifying!! It's a huge

time saver and truly helps out with classroom organization. Also please remember to label your child's coat, hat, and everything else they may bring to school.

-KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK on pick up and drop off! It is very important to be ON TIME for both pick up and drop off! Pre-K drop off is 8:45, Preschool drop off is 9:00. Please do your best to be on time, as it is the safest practice to keep the traffic flowing in the same direction. If you find yourself arriving late, please yield to the cars exiting the driveway while you wait on Main Street, or pull to the fenced side at the end of the driveway and please let the others pass. Thank you for your effort. If you need to pick up your child *during school*, and find the door locked; please ring both door bells as we very rarely hear door knockers. If you call the school, and we don't answer, please don't fret. . . we never interrupt our play to answer the phone, but will check for messages as soon as we are free. On the phone note. . . . please communicate to whomever is picking up your little one that we will not release any child whose pick up person is on their phone . . . your children deserve 100% of that persons attention and we will wait until that person gets off the phone to make sure your son or daughter gets it.

-ABSENCES: Please email TO THE NEW ADDRESS: harmoniypreschool@yahoo.com and or leave a message on the school line 781-871-5156, thank you.

-BACKPACKS: Reminding you to check the backpack fairly often for art and work sent home.

-Reminder: tuition is due on the first of the **PRIOR** month! I greatly appreciate your attention here, as book-keeping is time consuming and a drag.



Child Development Ditty 101:



I typically add a child development ditty to the end of each newsletter. My hope is that you'll find the information helpful or at least get a chuckle from it.

Here, I'll start the year by talking about the interrelatedness of the 5 primary areas, and the PROCESS, of development. Each child grows at their own unique pace, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically (and we break a child's physical self into two parts gross motor development (large muscle groups) and fine motor development (small muscle groups, typically just the hands). Children, in general, meet up at the same "developmental" place, around the third grade.

There are many contributing factors as to how/why a child develops, the primary ones being: **heredity, environment, general health, opportunity, and nutrition**. I like to mention **expectations** as a contribution developmental factor as well. I find it interesting to think about whether or not we are expecting enough or possibly too much from our children socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively as they age. . . . and how we have to incrementally and continually raise our expectations over time.

Each "growing up" process is unique. No child experiences the same rate and path of development; therefore there is a large range of TYPICAL chronological benchmarks. All areas of development are important. Children are going to have strengths and weaknesses; and both strengths and weaknesses need to be supported. I'll provide more information on each area of development as the year progresses; my aim here is to communicate that all areas of development are both inter-related, important, and follow a sequential process (however, childhood is when development occurs most rapidly, *and where we establish our life habits*)

Please visit the "parent info" link of the website, I have loaded a "what type of learner are you worksheet", a "your learning strengths worksheet", and a Howard Gardner's "More than one way to learn". I found these three readings very interesting for two reasons: 1. it was fun to think about what type of learner these worksheets "labeled" me, (visual/naturalist), and 2. To think about the possible types of learners my own children are; it *affects* the way I *choose* to communicate with each one of them! These sheets look dated, but I have yet to find pertinent, updated versions!! Have fun with it; I hope you find it useful!

I'll also attach a link from the Harvard School of Public Health, for their description of "kids healthy eating plate"; (minimizing/eliminating "processed" food, antibiotics, and pesticides from our children's diets will benefit their health today, tomorrow, and forever)

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-eating-plate/>

and another interesting read on ways sugar affects children:

<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2014/08/17/4-shocking-ways-sugar-affects-your-kids-health.html>

aaaaannndddd lastly, here's a recipe for breakfast. . . I LOVE "egg muffins", I usually hide some baby spinach in these too.. . . (I skip the spices detailed here and my kids eat these 3, 4, 5 muffins at a time. . . .) These cook up nicely on Sundays, and keep in the fridge for a few days, it's a quick protein/fat packed breakfast for those growing bodies. Good luck!

<https://www.healthcorps.org/sausage-egg-muffin-cups/>