



Parent Newsletter

Accommodations in the Preschool Classroom

As a parent of children in the public school system, I am keenly aware of the ways in which those schools make accommodations for students in the classroom who need extra support because of diagnosed emotional, cognitive, behavioral, or physical challenges. Even if you don't have children who are old enough to be in elementary school yet, you surely can imagine what some of these challenges are and what the accommodations may look like. These accommodations might include a child with ADHD being allowed to sit close to the teacher in each class so as to aid their attention; students who use computers for all of their note taking and assignments because their fine motor skills are so poor that it made handwriting impossibly slow and next to impossible to read; students with a degenerative muscular disease who use a walker are allowed to utilize the elevator to move between floors; or students who suffer from anxiety allowed to leave the classroom at will to go to the nurse's station whenever they are feeling overwhelmed and need to collect themselves. These are but a few examples of ordinary accommodations that are made every day in schools.

Making accommodations allows students the best possible chance of succeeding in school by helping to mitigate the challenges that they face. Some of the accommo-

dations are not noticeable by the other children in the classroom, but some are quite obvious to all in the classroom just as the need for those accommodations might be obvious to everyone in the classroom. Some accommodations, such as being placed next to the teacher in the classroom, are not obvious to the other students in the classroom. Others, like being able to leave the classroom at will or using the elevator, are noticeable to the other students and are outside of the norm of usual practice in the classroom. Children aren't normally allowed to use the elevator. This is reserved for staff members. While it is the norm for children to use laptops in the classroom now, it was not always the case so the students who were allowed to use the laptop to aid their writing were doing something different than other students in the room.

Elementary age students are old enough that they understand, almost intuitively, that accommodations are being made to support a student who isn't able to succeed as easily without the accommodation. They understand that while one student is able to leave the classroom at will, they are unable to do so. They know that while they may not use the elevator, another classmate may be allowed to do so. They accept those differences in standards from student to student because they have the cogni-

tive and emotional skills to do so.

Children of preschool age also have emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical challenges. Preschool teachers are masters at making accommodations in the classroom for different learning styles and for other emotional, cognitive, behavioral, or physical challenges. Visual schedules, developed for children whose auditory processing is slow or whose receptive speech skills are behind, are regularly used in the preschool classroom. Fidget toys may be utilized at circle time by everyone but they help anyone who needs assistance focusing. Some children use special seats, chairs with backs, that provide extra physical support. These are useful for children with low muscle tone whose core isn't developed well enough to allow them to focus. Children who have sensitivity to sounds or who suffer from anxiety may be a fire marshall during a fire drill to ease their fears by giving them some control over the process and by getting one-on-one attention from an adult. In classes with children on the autism spectrum the teachers are diligent about preparing children for any out of routine events that are expected during the day because those children find out of routine events to be anxiety producing. Prepping the class means that those children will have a better chance of (continued on page 3)

Upcoming Events:

- April 4: Easter chapel for TTH 2's classes at 9:30am
- April 5: Easter chapel for all other classes at 10:30am
- April 7: Last day of class before Easter break
- April 10-17: Easter Break
- April 18: School resumes
- April 18: Staff meeting at 12:30pm
- April 20: Tiny Chefs visit TTH 2's classes
- April 21: Tiny Chefs visit Doves, Cardinals and Blue Jays classes
- April 24: Tiny Chefs visit Sparrow, Robins and Buntings classes
- April 26: Tiny Chefs visit pre-K classes
- May 1-5 Teacher Appreciation Week
- May 8 & 9: Vision/Hearing Screening for pre-K students
- May 11-12: Pastries with Parents for all 2's classes
- May 19: Art Show for 3's classes

April Book Recommendations

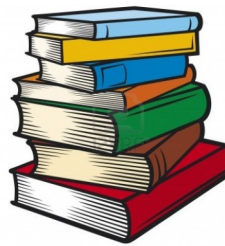
Forgive and Let Go!: A book about forgiveness (Being the Best Me Series) by Cheri Meiners, M.Ed. Because we are emphasizing the virtue of forgiveness at the preschool during the month of April, I am recommending this book. It is a really good book for preschool aged children because it goes through different scenarios in which a child might get mad. It walks children through the decision about how to react when someone does something to you that you don't like. The book teaches that it is always our choice how to react. The author shows that it is good to forgive not only because it is kind to do so, but also because it allows us to feel better and to

move on. That is certainly a valuable lesson for any of us.

DW the Picky Eater by Marc Brown. This month each preschool class except the Hummingbirds will enjoy a morning of cooking with *Tiny Chefs*. It is always fun to see which of our students will try the dishes that they have just helped to create. Many won't. If you have a picky eater at home you will appreciate the situation Marc Brown describes. I appreciated the patient, clever parents in the book. Oh that I could be that patient or clever!

Butterfly, Butterfly: A Book of Colors by Petr Horacek. This is a beautifully illustrated look into a spring garden which is abuzz with insects. This is a perfect book for April when we raise insects at the preschool.

National Geographic Readers: Caterpillar to Butterfly by Laura Marsh. This non-fiction book explains the wonderful transformation from caterpillar to butterfly in terms accurate but at the age level a preschooler can understand. A perfect book for spring.



EpiPen Recall

The maker of EpiPens has recalled their EpiPen and EpiPen Jr. products due to two failures of the auto-injector mechanism. If you or someone in your family relies on an EpiPen, then it is crucial for you to go to the link, <https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ucm550173.htm> to check whether your injector is part of the recall. Should your child have an EpiPen at CCUMC, please stop by to get

Go to: <https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ucm550173.htm> for more information.

the lot number and date of manufacturer to check whether those are effected as well.



Summer Camp Openings Available

There are still a few openings for summer camp both in our pre-K camp and our science camp. Carrie Engel, the teacher of the science camp, will be focusing on

Nature & Gardening. The kids will be planting and doing nature exploration outside as well as fun activities inside. Ask the children who are currently in our Nature

& Gardening mini-session who will tell you that Ms. Carrie knows a lot about gardening. Contact the preschool office for more details.

Accommodations in the Preschool Classroom (continued from the front page)

reacting without anxiety when something out of the norm occurs. The list goes on and on. Many of these accommodations are not even noticeable to the children in the classroom or any parents who might be visiting. They are, seemingly, just part of the normal routine of the day. Because these accommodations are so routine, parents in the classroom and the other children are often unaware of the reasons behind these accommodations.

However, there are some children whose challenges are more obvious. Imagine some of the following scenarios. A child who calls out questions or inappropriate comments in the middle of circle time. Another, suffering from emotional dysregulation, throws toys when frustrated and calls the teacher "Stupid." A child, suffering from severe separation anxiety, cries all day and cannot engage in the normal tasks of the classroom. Or the child who leaves the classroom and hides when she is anxious.

Many of the behaviors described above could happen in the course of a normal day to children who do not suffer from any ongoing challenges. Instead, they describe behaviors that could occur as bumps in the road during the normal course of development. Because of this reason many of the challenges that will require accommodation in elementary school do not get formally diagnosed until a child is of elementary school age. It is sometimes difficult to tease out whether a preschool age child is immature or going through the normal difficulties associated with growth and development or whether it is a challenge

that will persist and need ongoing support.

The process of figuring that out can be lengthy—several years in many cases—and somewhat frustrating as the teachers, parents and diagnosticians work together to figure out if there is something to diagnose and, if so, what that "something" is.

Whether they are indicators of something larger or not, those behaviors described above indicate that those students need further support from the teachers. Sometimes that support can be in the form of an accommodation that is out of the ordinary. For example, students who cannot stay still at circle time are sometimes allowed to leave the circle. Students who are anxious may be allowed to have a special lovey that attends school with them. While teachers try to minimize their visibility, the support, like the behaviors, are noticeable to everyone in the classroom.



These accommodations can be confusing to preschoolers. They expect all stu-

dents to be held to the same standards. If my neighbor gets to walk around during circle time, why can't I do the same thing? Why does she get to take her stuffed animal to the playground when I'm asked to leave mine in my backpack? Why can't I call out at circle time when she does? This can be a tricky space for the preschool teacher, but a wonderful space in which to teach compassion.

It is at this time when we can help our little ones learn about the fact that we are all different, that we all face challenges, and that we can help each other to meet those challenges to the best of our abilities. It is amazing what these teachable moments bring out in the other students as well as the student who needs the extra support. One student volunteered to be the "buddy" for another child who suffered from severe separation anxiety. She made the student feel welcomed and looked out for her when she showed up on the playground in the morning which was a scary time for her. This student played a big part in the success of the other student's transition into school. I've seen students find a lovey that has gone missing to help an anxious classmate. I've heard students telling frustrated classmates that "it will be okay". And for the student on the receiving end of such compassion there is the feeling of being understood and loved even when our behavior is not exactly what we wish it might be.

Showing Hospitality on the Playground

Each spring at roughly the same time I begin getting complaints from parents of children in our 2's and 3's classes about children in the pre-K classes. These complaints all stem from incidences on the playground after the school day is over. These incidences are nearly identical. They involve a pre-K student telling a younger student that he or she may not play on certain areas of the playground, wherever the pre-K student is currently playing. Or, in other ways not being welcoming to the

younger student. It is all about the pre-K student asserting his/her power over the younger student. Since this occurs every spring, I'm sure that there is a developmental reason for it. Unfortunately, it isn't okay.

Please remind your older students that they need to use their power for the good. As the older students they have a special responsibility to welcome the younger students. All are welcome on

the CCUMC playground no matter the age or the class they inhabit. Thank you for your assistance in keeping our playground a welcoming place.

