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Washington FAMILY

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AUGUST 2022

PRIVATE
SCHOOL &
AFTERCARE
GUIDES

Washington
FAMILY 30 YEARS

Jennifer Barnwell,
Montgomery Co.
mom of two,
balances family
with life on
the road
Pg. 27

BACK TO SCHOOL

School Lunch
Memories

Homeschooling
Solutions for All

How to Vacation During
the School Year



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AUGUST 2022



LAURA FARMER



DAVID STUCK

A visit to the pediatrician for preventative care is just as important as a visit when your child is sick. **Pg. 22**

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READERS' RESPONSES

We welcome your feedback — on specific articles, overall themes and anything else related to editorial content. Enter your comments on the Feedback tab of our website: info@washingtonfamily.com.

Please note we reserve the right to edit or refrain from publishing comments we deem inappropriate.

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WE WANT
YOUR
FEEDBACK



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Craig Burke, Publisher

Jeni Mann Tough,
Associate Publisher



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11900 Parklawn Drive, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20852.

EDITORIAL

Lindsay VanAsdalan, Editor
LVanAsdalan@midatlanticmedia.com

Staff Writers

Jesse Berman, Jillian Diamond
Alex Krutchik, Sasha Rogelberg
Heather M. Ross, Jarrad Saffren
Lindsay VanAsdalan

Contributing Writers

Jennifer Rothschild, Elena Epstein,
Megan Conway, Alex Nysmith,
Jennifer Marino-Walters,
Frances Shefter, Esq, Laura Farmer

Contributing Photographer

David Stuck

ADVERTISING

Craig Burke, CEO/Publisher
cburke@midatlanticmedia.com

Sales Consultants

Alan Gurwitz, Pam Kupersmidt
Jodi Lipson, Taylor Orlin
David Pintzow, Sara Priebe
Mary Ramsdale, Sharon Schmuckler
Kim Schofield, Shari Seitz
Sylvia Witaschek

MARKETING

Julia Olaguer
Audience Development Coordinator

BUSINESS

Pattie-Ann Lamp
Accounting Manager
410-902-2300
plamp@midatlanticmedia.com

CIRCULATION

410-902-2300, ext. 1

CREATIVE

Rachel S. Levitan, Art Director
Steve Burke, Graphic Designer
James Meskunas,
Digital Media Manager
Jay Sevidal, Graphic Designer
Frank Wagner, Graphic Designer
Carl Weigel, Graphic Designer

MID-ATLANTIC MEDIA

Craig Burke, CEO/Publisher
cburke@midatlanticmedia.com

Jeni Mann Tough, Associate Publisher
jmann@midatlanticmedia.com



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Wednesday, November 16 at 9:00 AM - In Person

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Preschool - Grade 8 Co-ed, Independent School in Falls Church • Contact us about our Infant and Toddler Program



Lindsay VanAsdalan
Editor
LVanAsdalan@
midatlanticmedia.com

Facebook
@WashingtonFamilyMagazine

Twitter
@FAMILYMagDC

Pinterest
@familymagazine

Instagram
@washingtonfamilymag

Email us
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info@thefamilymagazine.com

Learning is in the Air

The smells of freshly-bound books, sharpened No. 2 pencils and the latest and greatest cafeteria creations are in the air. Though the last days of summer offer time for one more family vacation (16), families everywhere are eager to get back to the classroom.

Three school years touched by COVID-19 might have that effect. A spring semester of uncertainty in 2020 and two years of adjusting to a new normal have forced parents and teachers to become pros at expecting the unexpected. But Washington FAMILY wants to take some of that responsibility off their shoulders with a collection of stories to prepare families for Back to School.

More and more families homeschooling their children in recent years has revealed just how many opportunities there are for learning beyond the classroom. Contributor Megan Conway shares how these can benefit everyone (11).

Get the most out of your well-child pediatric visits ahead of the school year (22) or be ready to discuss learning accommodations at your first IEP meeting (20)

with these helpful guidelines. If you're already wondering, 'what do I pack my child for lunch?', you'll enjoy our dive into school lunch history with expert tips for packing brown-bag lunches (14).

Of course, a return to learning doesn't have to mean no more vacations. Contributor Jennifer Marino Walters shares how she vacations with her family during the school year without much disruption to class time.

Elsewhere in this issue, plan your 2022-2023 school year with our private school/open house, medical and aftercare directories.

As a new editor for Washington FAMILY, I hope this year brings with it stories of progress, perseverance, joy and discovery. I am looking forward to getting to know the DMV's communities even better than I did as a staff writer over the last year. Please don't hesitate to reach out and let me know what people, places, organizations and happenings we should know about!

Lindsay C. VanAsdalan

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HERE'S WHAT WE'RE **LOVING** FOR YOU AND YOUR **FAMILY** THIS MONTH

BY ELENA EPSTEIN,
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL
PARENTING PRODUCT AWARDS

For more product reviews, visit nappaawards.com

ALEKSANDR DURNOV / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS



Preschool Genius

Here's a set of dry-erase activities and games with a genius twist. Discover beautifully illustrated activities that cover core learning outcomes and offer challenges like code-breaking and mapmaking that stimulate open-ended problem solving and creativity. \$27.95, ages 3-6, amazon.com



Numberblocks MathLink Cubes Activity Sets

Use this special edition set to build friendly characters. Through building, children see how numbers work as they master counting, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing through hands-on discovery play. \$24.99, ages 3+, amazon.com



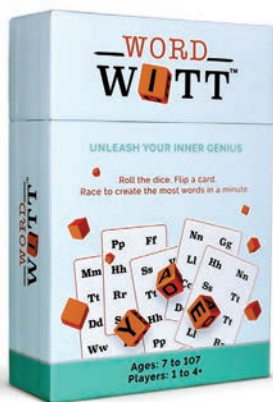
Match Madness

Fire up your neurons. Shift your brain into high gear in this clever game of speed and perception. Players sprint to arrange a set of five blocks so that they match a pattern shown on a card. The first player to succeed grabs the card and a new matching race starts. \$29.99, ages 7+, foxmind.com



Wacom One

This pen display gives your high school or college student new ways to get creative. Easily capture digital ideas, create mind maps, draw diagrams and enhance photos or videos. \$399.95, teens and tweens, wacom.com



WORD WITT

Roll the dice. Flip a card. Race to create the most words in a minute. This quick and fun game helps kids build important academic skills. \$29.95, ages 8+, wordwitt.com

Filmmakers Academy

A networking hub and educational platform for all things filmmaking. Its not only has mentors and masterclass courses that equip members with the knowledge needed to thrive in the industry, but it packs in information about the nuances of the trade. \$396, ages 12+, filmmakersacademy.com



Happi Tummi Happi Wrap

Ease stomach pain, cramps, acid reflux, headaches, body aches, stress and anxiety. This natural relief wrap is a must-have item for every student and family member. \$39.95, teens+, happitummi.com



Squaregles Starter Set

This 105-piece magnetic building set allows kids to create different structures and stories every time they play. Pop pieces in and out of magnetic frames to build, play, redesign and repeat. \$124.99, ages 4-10 years, squaregles.com



Chalk of the Town Flower T-Shirt Kit

Here's a sunny addition for back-to-school time. This craft kit features a soft, yellow cotton T-shirt which incorporates a unique "chalkboard" flower on the front. Let young artists create designs again and again. \$26.95, ages 4-16 years, chalk-of-the-town.com



"A Smart Girl's Guide: Tough Stuff"

Discover this book that helps girls get through tricky times—from bullying to body image issues, friendship stress to family struggles and panic attacks to the COVID-19 pandemic. \$12.99, ages 10+, americangirl.com

{TOP 10}

BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN

Family Events for August

Summer fun still abounds this month with these dynamic events in and around the DMV



THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

FANTASTAGIRL + THE MATH MONSTER

Numbers can be scary to a second-grade superhero who has a way with words. Will she defeat the math monster, or are there far bigger problems they must work together to solve? Select dates Aug. 1-21; Adventure Theatre MTC at Glen Echo Park requires masks for ages 3 and older and COVID-19 vaccination for ages 12 and older. Tickets are \$25. • adventuretheatre-mtc.org



3

AUG. 6, 13 & 20

CALLEVA PIZZA NIGHT ON THE FARM

Gather a family group of 10 or fewer for a night on the farm with fresh salad, pizza and desserts. Come for dinner and stay to explore Calleva Farm in Dickerson, which has agricultural and equine workshops and programs for kids throughout the year. Reservations available (and required) between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$20; calleva.org/pizza-night

AUG. 7

SPRINKLERS, BUBBLES AND RAINBOWS

Children can run and play in a much bigger backyard with Black Hill Nature Programs in Boyds. This event draws on simple pleasures with an old-fashioned playdate featuring sprinklers, bubble wands and splash stations. Don't forget towels and a change of clothes.

Free. • montgomeryparks.org



4

2



THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

CARS AND CONES

Go back in time with your family every Friday this month. See classic cars, bikes and trucks while cooling off with some ice cream, food trucks and oldies music at The Family Room in Laytonsville. Automobiles are weather dependent, but the event is rain or shine. Free • thefamilyroomlaytonsville.com



5

AUG. 8 & 22

CHILDREN'S PLAYTIME SERIES AT CABIN JOHN VILLAGE

Enjoy stories, movement and music for children on second and fourth Mondays from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in Potomac. On second Mondays, expect music and dance, while My Gym Potomac will bring active fun such as bubbles and parachutes on fourth Mondays.

Free. • edens.com/property/cabin-john-village

AUG. 11

COOL CONCERTS FOR KIDS: SONIA DE LOS SANTOS & THE OKEE DOKEE BROTHERS

As part of the Strathmore's summer concert series, this 60-minute show is perfect for an early bedtime. Family artists Sonia De Los Santos and The Okee Dokee Brothers channel North American musical traditions to demonstrate the collective power of singing together and learning from each other.

Free • strathmore.org



AUG. 13

PARKS PLAYHOUSE JUNIOR: THE PUPPET CO.

Stop by Hadley's Playground for all abilities in Potomac for a special performance of Rapunzel at 10 a.m.—with only puppets! One person from Glen Echo's The Puppet Co. will play all the parts in this classic fairy tale. Ages 4 and older will enjoy this 40-minute show.

Free • montgomeryparks.org



AUG. 14

INTERNATIONAL FOOD & CRAFTS FAIR

Teach your children about many different cultures through this fun family-friendly festival of international music, food and crafts. Join the celebration at Veteran's Place in Silver Spring from 1-7 p.m. on Sunday. Select dates Aug. 1-21; Adventure Theatre MTC at Glen Echo Park requires masks for ages 3 and older and COVID-19 vaccination for ages 12 and older.

Free • silverspringdowntown.com



AUG. 20

YOUNG ARTIST MARKET

Shop local arts, crafts, baked goods and other fun items from young entrepreneurs. La Plata's Joyful Studio is showcasing vendors ages 5 to 17 at an outdoor market with face painting, storytelling, music and family activities.

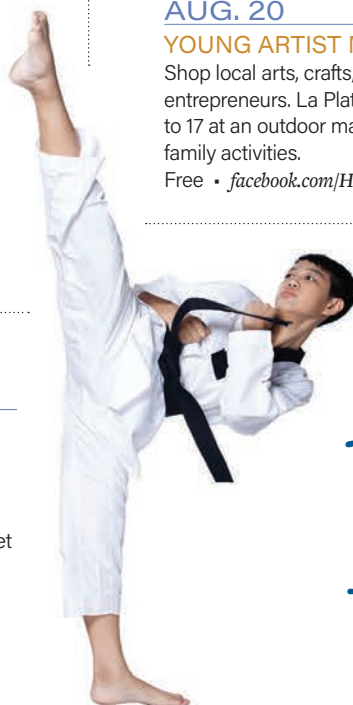
Free • facebook.com/HelloJoyfulStudio

AUG. 27

FREE KIDS MARTIAL ARTS INTRODUCTORY CLASS

Have your child explore martial arts for the first time in this free class at Premier Martial Arts Manassas from 10-11:30 a.m. on Saturday. Participants will receive a free uniform, get to break their first board and earn a white belt.

Free; registration through Eventbrite
premiermartialarts.com/manassas



5 Destinations for Last-Minute Vacations Before School Begins

BY LINDSAY
C. VANASDALAN

School is right around the corner. Take advantage of the sun, sand and outdoors with your family while you still can—and maybe a little learning, too.

Book these last-minute vacations within driving distance of Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia.

Chincoteague Island

On Chincoteague Island, you'll find plenty to entertain younger beachgoers. Visit Maui Jack's Waterpark to cool off or Chincoteague Pony Centre for lessons and rides with the island's ponies.

The Delmarva Discovery Museum in Pocomoke City, Maryland, about a half hour from the island, gives children an opportunity to steer a steamboat, crawl into a wigwam replica, see the inside of a beaver dam, learn about small creatures through a touch pool and partake in a science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) lab.

Glen Echo Park

Glen Echo, Maryland, makes a terrific local getaway for families, with an array of activities available at Glen Echo Park.

The park is home to two award-winning children's theaters—Adventure Theatre MTC and The Puppet Co.—and an aquarium that has private and semi-private marine biology tours with educators and a pirate ship. Invite your young scallywag to search for treasure in the Chesapeake Bay. With many attractions in place for decades, this family destination brings trusted entertainment. Ride the restored 1921 Dentzel Carousel and check out free summer concerts, festivals and special events.

Harpers Ferry

Starting at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy headquarters, weave your way through Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and cross two states along the way. The featured local hike in Harpers Ferry on appalachiantrail.org explores Black and Civil War history and has views of Jefferson Rock—which Thomas Jefferson said were “worth a voyage across the Atlantic.”

Keep an eye out for Baltimore Oriole birds along the C&O Canal. Nearby at the Harpers Ferry Adventure Center, your family can tour the treetops with seven different zip lines and a 100-foot aerial bridge, challenge each other in a high-ropes course or enjoy a lazy day of flat water tubing.

Luray, Virginia

Just under two hours from Washington, D.C., Luray, Virginia brings nature to your family vacation in via the picturesque Skyline Drive through Shenandoah National Park and Luray Caverns, a natural formation with 10-story ceilings you can tour along lighted pathways. These caverns are the largest in the eastern United States. A ticket to these natural wonders also includes several fun attractions, such as the Car & Carriage Caravan Museum, Toy Town Junction and the mid-Atlantic's largest evergreen hedge maze.

Continuing with the nature theme, stop by the Luray Zoo – a rescue zoo with a reptile jungle and petting zoo. This privately owned zoo cares for retired zoo animal ambassadors, zoo animals retired from conservation programs, unwanted pets and confiscated and abused animals.

Williamsburg, Virginia

This Virginia town is more than the home of a former president. Its European-inspired Busch Gardens has been voted the world's most beautiful theme park since 1990 and has family-friendly shows and more than 40 kid-friendly rides and attractions.

Learn about music in Williamsburg at the Virginia Musical Museum or explore history at Colonial Williamsburg. Your kids will get a true-to-life representation of 17th-century English colonists through living outdoor history exhibits at the Jamestown Settlement museum. For some zany fun, check out 350-plus exhibits—including an 8-foot tall Transformer, a web of lasers and 150 flavors of candy—at Ripley's Believe It or Not! ■



HOME-SCHOOLING

What children can gain from at-home learning
after the school day ends

BY MEGAN CONWAY

The U.S. Census Bureau notes that rates of home-schooling as a primary instructional method for school-age children skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, likely due to ever-changing restrictions and familial decisions.

Homeschooling is not realistic as the perfect fit for every family. However, all kids have much to gain from the idea that learning shouldn't be limited to the traditional classroom. Educators and educational specialists see a significant benefit in expanding the definition of schooling to encompass unorthodox and enriching experiences beyond the desk. What teaching techniques can parents tap into to cultivate a curious, educated child?

INTEGRATE THE ARTS

Dr. Mariale Hardiman, co-founder and director of the Johns Hopkins Neuro-Education Initiative, is a major proponent of the arts. Her studies have focused on arts-integrated curricula, in which visual and performing arts are embedded into traditional instruction.

"There was an advantage for arts integration, but a particular advantage for children who do not learn well with traditional instruction," she explains. This advantage applies not only for those with learning disabilities or language barriers, but for all students who don't enjoy learning mainly through reading and writing.

Before her role at Johns

Hopkins, Hardiman was a school principal. As her school's curriculum became more arts-integrated, she notes, "Parents would tell us that when they asked what (their kids) did in school, instead of saying, 'Nothing,' they would say, 'Well, we did this movement activity, and I really learned a lot about how cells divide through this movement.'"

How does this example translate to the home? For parents who want to engage their children after school, it can be as simple as getting them art supplies.

"Put some crayons and a big piece of paper in front of them and ask them to draw, write or anything that will give them a way to recall what they've learned. That can open the door

to further conversations," recommends Hardiman. This recommendation isn't meant to be taken literally. For example, some children would rather sing a song about what they learned. The goal is to introduce a dialogue in which parents allow their children to rehearse knowledge from their memory. "The more we rehearse anything, the more we revisit anything, the deeper it becomes embedded into our memory systems," she concludes.

Arts integration is the second leg of Hardiman's "three-legged stool." She emphasizes the importance of discrete arts classes and exposure to culture, which parents can promote by bringing children to museums, for example.



“The more we rehearse anything, the more we revisit anything, the deeper it becomes embedded into our memory systems.”

—DR. MARIALE HARDIMAN

MAXIMIZE TIME SPENT TOGETHER

Dr. Kristine Calo—associate professor at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and chair of the college’s education programs—notes, “Clearly, families play a pivotal role in their kids’ education. (Parents) can capture where a child’s strengths are, what their needs are ... (and) help to build on the strengths that a child has and help to supplement and support kids where their needs are as well.”

“I think (an) easy thing to do that should be happening with all kids regardless of their age would be reading—and not just to kids who haven’t learned to read yet but read to kids who can read themselves as well,” Calo recommends, noting that this skill helps develop language, literacy skills and more.

Talking to children is just as important. “For families who are really busy and have a lot going on, having an opportunity to be able to talk with kids about what they did during the day—and not just talk at kids but talk with kids—you’re developing their vocabulary” and showing interest in their interests, remarks Calo.

It’s all about maximizing time spent together, she explains. “We know that there’s a lot of power in purposeful, intentional interactions with kids, and that doesn’t have to be the same for every family.” These interactions can include working on math and measurement while having children help cook meals or asking children about their day while driving home from activities and daycare.

LEARN FROM SCHOOLS THEMSELVES

Many schools embrace innovative instruction methods. Even if families are unable to personally enroll their children at these

institutions, they may take inspiration from these schools’ successes.

Mary Anne Duffus is the founder and executive director at Brookfield School in McLean, Virginia, a private, Montessori-based school whose teaching method focuses on children’s independence and natural curiosity. She explains her organization’s dedication to the natural world.

“Through our outdoor curriculum, we teach organic gardening, seasonal studies and nature exploration,” she says. “Our

wonderful when families can learn together. So much of the time parents are at work and kids are in school,” remarks Duffus.

Parents can channel this collaborative learning by embarking on new outdoor adventures with children, allowing everyone in the family to reap the benefits of nature, exercise and learning more about the world around us.

Another educational philosophy permeates the instruction at South Jersey Sudbury School, a Medford, New Jersey, facility basing its teaching methods on the Sudbury Model, which emphasizes the ability of students to self-regulate and let their curiosity drive them forward. This approach manifests as interactive student-led play, democratic decision making in lieu of arbitrary authority, conflict resolution led by a justice committee made up of students and staff, an absence of exams and more. Gavin,* a 2022 graduating senior, describes the benefits of this education in his thesis, stating, “Sudbury nurtured my creativity and free spirit ... removed judgment and apathy and replaced them with acceptance and empathy.” He further noted that the difficult decisions and debates

he participated in as a part of his time at the school have allowed him to learn exactly who he is and what he wants on his terms.

Parents may replicate this enriching system for their children by giving them greater autonomy in making decisions for the family, providing time for unstructured play and encouraging kids to share their thoughts on a multitude of topics. ■

**Last name withheld per parent and guardian’s request*



children’s senses are stimulated by nature with all its colors, sounds, aromas and tactile experiences.” She believes Brookfield’s success lies in its innovation and in staying curious about the student population, including adding programs and specialists as class needs change.

To encourage the spirit of exploration at home, Brookfield hosts an outdoor adventure program that introduces families to learning on the weekends. Participants engage as a community in camping, hiking, ice skating, rock climbing and more. “It’s

2022 Aftercare Directory

BY WF STAFF

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

AIDAN MONTESSORI SCHOOL
2700 27th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008
202-387-2700; aidanschool.org

Nicole Goodman
admissions@aidanschool.org
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

After School & Enrichment Activities

Aidan Montessori School is a co-ed, independent private school for children ages 18 months through grade 6 located in Woodley Park, Washington, D.C. Founded in 1961, Aidan prepares children to learn confidently, think independently and succeed wherever they go.

CHESTERBROOK ACADEMY
chesterbrookacademy.com; 866-267-5685
15 locations throughout the DMV

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MARYLAND

BARRIE SCHOOL

barrie.org/preschool; admission@barrie.org
Ages: 18 months+; 301-576-2800

13500 Layhill Road, Silver Spring, Md.
Beginning at age 18 months, we provide a safe and secure environment that cherishes the uniqueness of each child and integrates a hands-on Montessori approach. Guided by our experienced teachers, children learn independence and build confidence.

THE BETHESDA MONTESSORI SCHOOL

bethesdamontessori.com
admissions@bethesdamontessori.com
301-986-1260

7611 Clarendon Road, Bethesda, Md.
Ages: 3-6

BMS, established in 1983, is located in the heart of Bethesda, offering two years of preschool and a Kindergarten year. Open 8 a.m.-6 p.m., AMI trained teachers, art, French & computer offered, and after school activities.

CHESTERBROOK ACADEMY
chesterbrookacademy.com; 877-959-3746
15 locations throughout the DMV

Ages: Infants - Grade 5

Our preschool and school-age programs combine learning experiences and structured play in a fun, safe and nurturing environment - offering far more than just child care. We have 20 locations in the Washington D.C. area. Call today to schedule a tour!

CRESTVIEW MONTESSORI SCHOOL
crestviewmontessori.com
info@crestviewmontessori.com

Ages: 2-6; 301-910-4728

4728 Western Ave., Bethesda, Md.
Children enter Crestview at age 2 1/2, often as their first school experience, and depart after kindergarten as confident and self-assured young children.

FEYNMAN SCHOOL

feynmanschool.org
info@feynmanschool.org; 301-770-4370

11810 Falls Road, Potomac, Md.

The area's leader in educating academically gifted children, Feynman School features extraordinary programs in science, math, language arts, theater and music designed to maximize your young child's potential while at the same time providing opportunities for unstructured play. We offer both half- and full-day preschool programs.

GEORGETOWN HILL EARLY SCHOOL

georgetownhill.com
14901 Duffie Mill Road, North Potomac, Md.

With a "Play. Learning. Arts. Nurturing." approach to teaching, we've found that children thrive in an educational environment at Georgetown Hill.

ONENESS-FAMILY SCHOOL

onenessfamilymontessorischool.org
Ages 2-Grade 8; 301-652-7751

6701 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, Md.
Oneness-Family School has been providing the very best in Montessori education since 1988. Our unique program focuses on both character and curriculum, offering a diverse international community founded on values within an academically rich environment. This enables us to prepare our students to be the global leaders of tomorrow who can think in creative and dynamic ways for an everchanging world.

SPRING BILINGUAL MONTESSORI ACADEMY

spring-bilingual.org
sbmaoffice@yahoo.com; 301-962-7262

3514 Pylers Mill Road, Kensington, Md.
Founded in 1967, Spring Bilingual Montessori Academy has innovated and refined the concept of integrating a Montessori education with the acquisition of proficiency in a second language. We are open year-round for academic programs and summer camps.

VIRGINIA

A CHILD'S PLACE
achildsplaceinc.com; 703-698-8050

3100 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, Va.

A Child's Place in Fairfax was established in 1981. We take children 8 weeks to 5 years old. Please stop by for a visit.

BROOKSFIELD SCHOOL

brooksfieldschool.org
info@brooksfieldschool.org

Ages: 2-6
703-356-5437

1830 Kirby Road, McLean, Va.

Spanish, organic gardening, art, dance, music, mindfulness and summer camp.

CAMPAGNA EARLY LEARNING CENTER AT ST. JAMES

campagnacenter.org/programs/early-childhood

pshannon@campagnacenter.org
571-982-3924

5140 Fillmore Ave., Alexandria, Va.

CHESTERBROOK ACADEMY

chesterbrookacademy.com; 866-267-5685

15 locations throughout the DMV
Chesterbrook Academy preschools combine learning experiences and structured play in a fun, safe and nurturing environment - offering far more than just child care. Preschool is the first introduction to a lifetime of learning, a journey that should start off on the right foot. We help children discover, explore and learn to their fullest potential.

THE GRIFFIN ACADEMY OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

westminsterschool.com
kleeg@westminsterschool.com

703-340-7268; Ages: 3-4

3819 Gallows Road, Annandale, Va.

The Griffin Academy of Westminster School provides a safe, creative, and loving environment in which children ages 3 and 4 can thrive. The preschool day is structured to have an equal balance of play and structure.

GUIDEPOST MONTESSORI
guidepostmontessori.com/northern-virginia
866-202-8593

24328 Marrwood Drive, Aldie, Va.

42945 Waxpool Road, Ashburn, Va.

4550 Walney Road, Chantilly, Va.

13251 Woodland Park Road, Herndon, Va.

Ages: Infant to elementary

Guidepost Montessori in Loudoun and Fairfax counties is among a growing, worldwide network of schools that offer language immersion for ages infant through elementary.

HOLLY BROOK MONTESSORI SCHOOL

preschoolmontessori.com
info@hollybrookmontessori.com

703-573-7800; Ages: 3-6

2455 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring, Va.

Children learn in an intimate and unpretentious atmosphere, where they respect themselves and others and care for the environment around them. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori.

HUNTER MILL MONTESSORI SCHOOL

preschoolmontessori.com
info@huntermillmontessori.com

703-938-7755; Ages: 2.9-6

2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, Va.

Hunter Mill Montessori School provides an intimate and nurturing environment for 2.75-6 year olds to develop their independence through the Montessori experience. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori.

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF CEDAR LANE
preschoolmontessori.com

info@cedarlanemontessori.com

Ages: 3-6; 703-560-4379

3035 Cedar Ln., Fairfax, Va.

Montessori School of Cedar Lane has been providing over 45 years of Montessori tradition to Northern Virginia. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him.

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

msnv.org; info@msnv.org; 703-992-0255

Valleybrook: 3433 Rose Ln., Falls Church, Va.

At the Montessori School of Northern Virginia, we want the delight of discovery to last a lifetime. MSNV provides authentic Montessori education for children ages 2-12. From preprimary through elementary, our learning environment is designed to directly benefit social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

(THE) MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF MCLEAN

1711 Kirby Road, McLean, VA 22101

703-790-1049; mcleanmontessori.org

Ages: 2-12

Open House: Call to schedule a tour.

Offering preschool and elementary classes, Spanish, French, science, drama, music, physical education, computer, art and summer school. Transportation available.

NYSMITH SCHOOL FOR THE GIFTED

nysmith.com; ebalberde@nysmith.com
703-713-3332; Ages: 3 years-Grade 8.

12625 EDS Drive, Herndon, Va.

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pincrestschool.org
admissions@pincrestschool.org

Ages: 3-4; 703-354-3446

7209 Quiet Cove, Annandale, Va.

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RESTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

restonmontessori.com
office@restonmontessori.com

703-481-2922; Ages: 3 months-Grade 6

1928 Isaac Newton Sq. West, Reston, Va.

Established in 1986, Reston Montessori School is a private, co-educational school for children from 3 months through 6th grade.

SUNSET HILLS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

sunsethillsmontessori.com
office@sunsethillsmontessori.com

703-476-7477; Ages: 18 months-13 years

11180 Ridge Heights Road, Reston, Va.

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School Lunch Memories

BY
LINDSAY C VANASDALAN

Every school cafeteria offers a familiar scene. As lunchboxes open, eyes dart from one child to the next, and then comes the classic question: what 'cha got?



School lunches draw up memories even years later of what was traded, of special items brought from home with a note from mom and dad, of the weird combos only a kid would request, of sandwiches with the crusts cut off and, of course, of what you would buy with your lunch money.

Kelly Simmons built an entire business based off of the cookies she used to buy for lunch.

The owner of Aunt Kelly's Cookies, featured in our sister publication *Baltimore's Child's* Winter 2022 issue, was inspired by Linden's butter crunch cookies—which she grew up buying for 35 cents a pack at her Baltimore City elementary school. In recreating that recipe with her grandmother, Simmons was able to recall memories of the two of them baking together when she was just 5 years old.

There's no doubt food creates strong memories, but what is it about school lunches that forges an even stronger bond?

School Lunch Memories

"It's funny how we all—no matter which school we attended or how long ago that was—have fairly fond memories of school lunch," writes Catherine Toth Fox, a former decade-long newspaper reporter and current editor of *HAWAII Magazine* in her blog,

The Cat Dish.

She fondly remembers the freshly baked bread she would get with almost every lunch—and how she would make trades just to get an extra roll.

Part of the allure of lunchtime could be owed to its social and cultural ties. Everyone can tell when you grew up based on what your mom packed in your lunch. Popular school lunch fads over the years include pizza and PB&J in the 1960s; snack-based items such as Fruit Roll-Ups, Lunchables and Dunkaroos in the 80s and 90s and more organic brands such as Stonyfield Farms in the 2000s.

Of course, popularity also varies by area. In Philadelphia, some children were noshing on Italian hoagies, Utz chips, Huggies and butterscotch krimpets for lunch.

"There was creamed dried beef on white toast, and 'Sloppy Joes'... and there were always breaded fish sticks on Fridays," writes Kristina M. Victoreen in her Philly blog.

The Evolution of the School Lunch

The first official school-day lunches came about in the late 19th century. Philadelphia and Boston were the first major U.S. cities to have a school lunch program. Before then, children would often go home for midday meals with their families

Bon Appetit references a Culinary Institute of America food anthropologist who named pickles as the "addictive junk food" of that time period.

Though there was federal support for these meal programs, a big shift occurred in 1946, when President Harry Truman's National School Lunch Act made it a more permanent commitment. The Child Nutrition Act in 1966 added subsidies for low-income families.

The early focus of school lunch programs was on nutrition, but standards relaxed by the 70s, when even candy counted as nutritious under minimum requirements. By the 80s, ketchup was considered a school-approved vegetable and fast food appeared in cafeterias in the 90s.

the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act signed by president Barack Obama in 2010 revamped nutrition standards for the first time in about 30 years, pushing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein.

Apart from health, as early as the 1940s, anthropologist Margaret Mead encouraged food choice and an expansion of cultural options. Since then, schools have gotten rather creative with their choices.

The Washingtonian published an article in 2016 about the best school lunches in town. Holton-Arms School, a private all

girls elementary and high school in Bethesda made the list with catered meals such as Brazilian-style slow-roasted pork, kimchee, and bibimbap.

Turning Kids on to Brown Bag Lunch Again

Getting kids to eat healthy can be a challenge, especially when it comes to packing a lunch from home. It would be easy to just throw in a sugary fruit snack or fan-favorites like chicken nuggets to appease kids and make sure they eat, but Monica Cicchini, a Pediatric Subspecialty Dietitian at Kaiser Permanente, has some

ideas of what parents can —and should —include.

“Children who eat balanced meals perform better in school, feel more energetic, concentrate better, and stay healthy and happy,” she explains.

She shares five tips to help parents ensure their packed lunch is a success:

1. Get your child involved: “Involving your child fosters independence and teaches them about nutrition,” she says. Kids can take an active role in the decision-making process, from which days to bring a lunch vs. buy, healthy food ideas they’d

like to eat at school and even preparing lunches together.

2. Prepare easy snacks ahead of time: “Mornings can be hectic, so pre-preparing grab-and-go lunch items can help reduce the stress and make it easy.” Yogurt, fruit cups, hard-boiled and pre-washed fruit and veggies are all great options. Leaving a bowl of fruit on the counter encourages healthy snacking.

3. Deconstruct your meals: “I find that kids love deconstructed meals. I recommend packing all of their food separately so that kids can combine as they want.” Cicchini recommends one food

they love, one food that they are learning to love and another that is a challenge.

4. Packaging is important: “Having the right packaging can help food taste and look better.” Reusable containers, portioned containers and real utensils go a long way.

5. Make it fun: Hand-on foods kids can dip such as yogurt and apple slices or carrots and hummus, easy snacks like trail mix and finger foods are fun for kids. Use cookie cutters to create shapes. Other creative options are stackable ingredients and breakfast foods for lunch.

What's your favorite school lunch?

Local Spotlight:
Kiddie Academy of
South Riding



Ben W.

“Mr. Carlton makes the best noodles and broccoli. I don't like when mommy makes it, only when Mr. Carlton makes it.”



Sophie K. age 5

“My favorite lunch is chicken sandwiches, oranges and when we get a lot of different veggies.”



Noah C.

“I love when we do breakfast for lunch. My favorite is breakfast tacos because the tacos are yummy, and I can't see the vegetables!”



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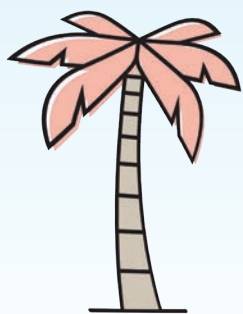
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Why You Should Be Taking School-Year Vacations



BY JENNIFER MARINO WALTERS



More and more families are traveling during the school year. Here's how to minimize the impact—and maximize the benefits—of school-year vacations.

Last January, my family took an epic 11-day vacation to Oahu, Hawaii. We swam, snorkeled, hiked and—most importantly—bonded.

The best part? Our kids, twin boys in fifth grade and a daughter who was in second grade at the time, only missed three and a half days of school. That's because we traveled on a week when Fairfax County Public Schools were closed on Monday for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, had an early release that Thursday, and were closed again on Friday and the following Monday for teacher workdays. When we returned, the kids were able to jump right back into school without having missed much at all.

Not everyone thinks of taking school-year vacations. Here's why they are not only possible, but worth it.

Benefits of School-Year Vacations

There are plenty of benefits to vacationing during the school year. Flights, accommodations, and even rental cars are often much cheaper during off-peak times than over the summer or during school breaks. For many families, that means school-year trips are the only vacations they can afford.

Crowds are also much thinner during off-peak times. Families can relax on emptier beaches, enjoy theme park attractions without waiting in two-hour lines and take road trips without sitting in crazy traffic (and therefore save money on gas), etc.

It's no surprise, then, that more and more families are pulling kids out of school to go on vacations. In an April 2022 survey of more than 3,000 parents by Family Destinations Guide, two thirds of respondents said they believe the benefits of family travel far outweigh the missed school days. Parents also said they'd be willing to pay an average of \$883 to take their kids on vacation during the school year in response to a California school district charging parents daily fines for unexcused absences.

"For my family, traveling during the school year is the only way to travel," says

Eliza Weeks, a Burke, Virginia mom who's pulled her second-grader out of school for short trips to Disney World and Universal Studios. "We save money, we're less stressed and we have fun."

Many teachers and administrators also acknowledge the benefits of school-year vacations. Amy Goodwill, principal of Rocky Run Middle School in Chantilly, Virginia, says, "Travel can provide some outstanding learning opportunities that complement the child's studies. Plus, sometimes families just need a break."

Others are more concerned about longer school-year trips than shorter ones. "Try to plan the vacation so your child only misses one day," says Kyria Joseph, executive director of secondary schools for Baltimore County Public Schools. "More vacation days unintentionally impact school achievement data, leading administrators to spend additional time writing school improvement plans."

Here are some expert tips on what to consider when planning a family vacation during the school year and how to minimize the negative impacts—and maximize the benefits—of the trip.

Planning a School-Year Vacation

- Know that vacation days are considered unexcused absences and will go on your child's record as such. If a child is absent for a certain number of consecutive days, that child will be disenrolled from school and will have to re-enroll. (The exact number of days varies by school district.)
- Time it right. It's tempting to squeeze in one last summer trip after school starts—when it's still hot but beach rentals and hotels have gone way down in price—but Goodwill cautions against it. "It's hard on kids to miss the very beginning of the school year," she says. "Kids need to settle in and acclimate."

Joseph says to also avoid traveling during testing and assessments such as the SAT or ACT and to consider the

child's extracurricular activities. "Avoid planning a vacation during performances for drama students or playoff season for student athletes."

And of course, do as my family did—review the school-year calendar and plan a vacation around teacher workdays and student holidays.

- Consider the child's age and grade level. Elementary-school students will be less affected by absences than middle-school students. Once kids are in high school, Goodwill warns, "They can miss a significant amount of curriculum in only a few days."
- Think about the student's personality and grades. "If the child's academic record is not satisfactory or he or she does not have good organizational skills, parents should reconsider placing additional stress on the child to make up work," Joseph says.
- Discuss travel plans with older kids. Goodwill herself is a mother of three, including two teenagers. "The idea of missing several days of school is a source of anxiety for the teens," she says. So, if you can, involve older kids in trip planning and talk with them about whether they'd even want to miss school.
- Give teachers as much notice as possible. That way, they'll be able to get your child any materials they'll need in advance. If you want to be proactive, check to see if their teachers post classwork on a website such as Schoology. The more work your child can do ahead of time, the less behind he or she will fall during the trip. But be realistic about asking teachers for extra work. Sometimes, they just don't have time to prepare extra assignments for your child to complete before or during the trip.

Maximizing the Learning Potential of a School-Year Vacation

- Allow kids to help plan the trip. This can be a great opportunity to teach children about organization, time management and budgeting.
- Make connections to your child's curriculum. Museums, historic sites, and national parks are all great places to visit. During our Hawaii trip, we visited Pearl Harbor, learned how pineapples and other fruits grow at the Dole Plantation and observed rock formations on a mountain hike—all things my kids had learned about in school and could now see in real life.
- Find learning opportunities wherever you can. Traveling mishaps such as delayed flights, lost luggage, language barriers and more can teach kids flexibility, patience and resilience. Seeing how other cultures live can increase empathy and tolerance. Even a trip to the beach can teach kids about topics such as sea life, ecology and conservation.

Most of all, remember to have fun. The biggest travel benefit of all is the opportunity to spend time together as a family, de-stress and recharge your batteries. School—and work—will be there waiting when you return! ■



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Open House/ Private School Directory

BY WF STAFF

Aidan Montessori School

Nicole Goodman
2700 27th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 387-2700; aidanschool.org
admissions@aidanschool.org
8:00 AM-4:00 PM

After School & Enrichment Activities

Aidan Montessori School is a co-ed, independent private school for children ages 18 months through grade 6 located in Woodley Park, DC. Founded in 1961, Aidan prepares children to learn confidently, think independently, and succeed wherever they go. Open Houses: October 14, November 4 & 16

Basis Independent McLean

mclean.basisindependent.com
mcLean_admissions@basisindependent.com
703-854-1253

8000 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, Va.
Grades: Preschool (age 2) - Grade 12 • Year
Founded: 2016 • Coed • Enrollment: 470 •
Student-Teacher Ratio 8:1 • Entrance Exam •
Foreign Languages: Mandarin, Latin, Spanish,
and French beginning in PK1 • Tuition Range:
\$25,500 - \$30,000 • AP Classes • Enrichment
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Day • Summer Program Students, age 2-grade
12, receive a well-rounded, liberal arts
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(The) Bethesda Montessori School

bethesdamontessori.com

admissions@bethesdamontessori.com

301-986-1260
7611 Clarendon Road, Bethesda, Md.
Ages: 3-6

Open House: Call to schedule a tour.

BMS, established in 1983, is located in the heart of Bethesda, offering two years of preschool and a Kindergarten year. Open 8 a.m.-6 p.m., AMI trained teachers, art, French & computer offered, and after school activities.

Brookfields School

brookfieldschool.org
sarah@brookfieldschool.org
703-356-5437

1830 Kirby Road, McLean, Va.

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Open House: Call to schedule a tour.

Mindfulness, nutrition, Spanish, dance, music & art, outdoor adventure program, extracurricular activities and summer camp.

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chesterbrookacademy.com
866-267-5685

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Celebree School of Germantown

Montgomery County
20409 Seneca Meadows Prkwy
Germantown, MD 20876
301-540-4600
Celebree.com/Germantown-md/
Ages/Grades: 6 weeks to 12 years
Transportation: Gibbs, Snowden Farm,
Germantown Elementary, Lake Seneca, Waters
Landing, Ronald Menare

Congressional School

congressionalschool.org
gherbst@congressionalschool.org
703-533-1064
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Feynman School

feynman.school.org
admissions@feynman.school.org
301-770-4211
11810 Falls Road, Potomac, Md.
Grades: Preschool-Grade 8
Open House: October 13, November 16
The area's leader in educating academically-gifted children, Feynman School features extraordinary programs in science, math, language arts, theater and music designed to maximize your child's potential.

Glenbrook Cooperative Nursery School

glenbrookschool.org
membership@glenbrookschool.org
301-365-3190
10010 Fernwood Road, Bethesda, Md.
Hours: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Open House: Call to schedule a tour.
At Glenbrook, we nurture our children in the early, formative years so they can define themselves as individuals. We strive for this through spontaneous play in a controlled and time structured environment. We believe that children can feel secure only when they understand and trust a set of limits. Their imagination, curiosity, and interests need time to wander, expand, and develop within these limits. Cooperative nursery schools are administered and maintained by the parents, allowing everyone to grow and learn together. The special nature of Glenbrook is the close working relationship between parents and teachers. Our approach builds a sense of community and togetherness for parents and children.

Holly Brook Montessori School
preschoolmontessori.com
info@hollybrookmontessori.com
703 573-7800

2455 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring, Va., 22027
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Children learn in an intimate and unpretentious atmosphere, where they respect themselves and others and care for the environment around them. We offer a complete educational

and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him. The school provides a program specially suited to the needs of the child and offers individual attention to his whole development.

Hunter Mill Montessori School
preschoolmontessori.com
info@huntermillmontessori.com
703-938-7755

2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, Va., 22124
Tours available by appointment

Hunter Mill Montessori School provides an intimate and nurturing environment for 2.75 - 6 year olds to develop their independence through the Montessori experience. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him. The school provides a program specially suited to the needs of the child and offers individual attention to his whole development.

(The) Montessori School at Goose Creek Preserve
goosecreekmontessori.com
info@goosecreekmontessori.com
571 417-3999

42470 Rosalind Street, Ashburn, Va., 20148
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Montessori School of Cedar Lane

preschoolmontessori.com
info@cedarlanemontessori.com
703-560-4379

3035 Cedar Lane, Fairfax, Va.
Open House: Call to schedule a tour.
Montessori School of Cedar Lane has been providing over 40 years of Montessori tradition to Northern Virginia. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him.

Montessori School of McLean
mcleanmontessori.org
703-790-1049

1711 Kirby Road, McLean, Va.
Ages: 2-12

Open House: Call to schedule a tour.
Preschool and elementary classes. Spanish, French, science, drama, music, P.E., computer, art, summer school, transportation available.

Nysmith School for the Gifted

nysmith.com; ebalberde@nysmith.com

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703-713-3332

13625 EDS Drive, Herndon, Va.
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Open House: Call to schedule a tour.

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Lower School (Age 2-Grade 8):

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PINECREST SCHOOL

pinecrestschool.org

admissions@pinecrestschool.org

703-354-3446

Ages: 3-12

7209 Quiet Cove, Alexandria, Va.

Hours: 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

Please email for more information!

Pinecrest School is a fully accredited progressive school offering small class sizes, hands on curriculum, individualized approach, and a

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RESTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

restonmontessori.com

office@restonmontessori.com

703-481-2922

1928 Isaac Newton Sq., West, Reston, Va.

Hours: 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Open House: Call to schedule a tour.

Established in 1986, Reston Montessori School is a private, coeducational school for children from 3 months through 6th grade. RMS provides academic school day, enrichment programs and before/ after school activities.

(THE) SIENA SCHOOL

1300 Forest Glen Road

Silver Spring, MD 20901

301-244-3600

2705 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA 22124

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info@thesienaschool.org

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springwell.school; info@springwell.school

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How to Prepare for an IEP Meeting

BY FRANCES SHEFTER, ESQ.

Are you overwhelmed by the special education process? Do you feel like you are a part of your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting? Teachers, service providers and other school personnel go through years of school and training.

As a parent, how can you be an equal part of the IEP team? Educating yourself is the first step. Understanding basic timelines, parts of an IEP and being fully prepared for your child's annual IEP review meeting empowers you to be the best advocate for your child.

Timelines

Timelines are part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and are important so that you, the parents, can meaningfully participate in your child's IEP meeting. Parents should receive written notice of the date and purpose of the IEP meeting 10 calendar days before the event. This notice gives you enough time to fully prepare for the meeting. Knowing the purpose of the meeting is also important so that you understand the documents that need to be reviewed and discussed.

You should receive your documents before the IEP meeting within "a reasonable time," meaning enough time to review the documents and prepare for the meeting.

Five days after the meeting, parents should expect to receive finalized documents and a Prior Written Notice (PWN). The PWN explains what happened at the meeting. If the school refuses any parental request, this denial needs to appear in the PWN along with reasons for the denial. Be sure to read the PWN carefully to make sure your disagreements appear. If they do not, contact the school and ask for corrections.

IEP Parts

The draft IEP should be one of the documents parents receive before the IEP meeting. This draft can be between 15 to 30 or more pages and quite overwhelming. Thinking of the IEP as eight parts that build on each other can help parents understand its contents:

1. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), formerly



known as the PLOP section

This section explains how your child is doing with specifics in each identified area. The material should summarize your child's strengths and weaknesses to help the team identify areas for goals.

2. Annual goals

These goals should be individualized, not a reworded Common Core standard. Goals should use your child's strengths and build upon weaknesses. They should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-specific (SMART). Goals focus on your child's needs and aren't limited to those related to your child's disability category.

3. How and when the school will measure your child's goals

If you want updates more than four times a year, pay attention to this section. IDEA requires updates four times a year, but you can ask for progress reports more often. How refers to the way the service provider will collect the data on how your child progresses toward the goal. Will the teacher use informal procedures, formal procedures, checklists, observations or other methods? Make sure you are comfortable with and understand the how and when.

4. Related services, supplementary aids and services

What does your child need to receive an education with neurotypical peers to the maximum extent appropriate? This part includes instructional accommodations, modifications, assessment accommodations and other types of direct services.

5. How will your child not be able to participate with neurotypical peers?

This section refers to the least restrictive environment. Where and when will your child participate with neurotypical peers? This participation could be during electives, some core classes, lunch, and recess or not at all if your child is fully in a self-contained classroom. If your child is in a self-contained classroom, will the class have some activities with neurotypical peers, such as field trips or assemblies?

6. Accommodations for state and district assessments

Some limitations exist, but some common accommodations include extended time, preferential seating or small group or individual testing. What does your child need to even the playing field when taking standardized assessments?

7. Date for the beginning of services and the frequency, location and duration of the services

The start date usually refers to the date of the meeting, and the duration is a year. Frequency and location include how many hours per month or minutes per week the services occur and whether they occur in general education or outside of general education.

8. Postsecondary goals

This part starts with the first IEP that is in effect when your child turns 16 or sometimes younger depending on your state. Here's where the IEP presents goals and supports necessary for your child to transition out of high school,

whether to college or vocational programs. Pay attention to this section. Often, schools outline general goals; however, goals here should be individualized and SMART.

Tips to Prepare for Your Meeting

- Educate yourself. Research your child's disability code and understand its educational implications. Trust your gut. If you know or think your child needs an accommodation, ask for it.
- Read all documents and make sure you understand them. Don't be afraid to ask questions

at the meeting. Understand the acronyms and terms the school uses.

- Review former IEPs, progress reports, comments on report cards and any evaluations. Make sure the goals make sense to you and meet your child's needs as the data indicates. When necessary, collect and provide data. If the school's data does not make sense, ask questions. If accommodations and goals do not match recommendations on the evaluations, ask why.

Remember, you know your child best. Being on the other side of the table might intimidate you, but it is called a team for a

reason. You are an equal member of that team. When necessary, refocus discussions on your child's needs. No one at the table is right or wrong, and the meeting does not have to be adversarial. If you are fully prepared, know what to expect and have data to support your requests. Then you can be the strongest advocate for your child. ■

Frances Shefter, Esq., is an attorney at Shefter Law, PA, based in Maryland. Her firm's focus is special education law, and she strives to assist families to have a Stress-Free IEP experience. Contact her at 301-605-7303 or frances@shefterlaw.com.

IEP RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): <https://sites.ed.gov/idea>

Free PDFs on procedural safeguard summary, acronyms and what to look for in IEP goals, plus more information, is available at shefterlaw.com



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*Deep breath!
Dr. David
Sulkowski of
Bright Oaks
Pediatric Center
listens to the
lungs of Gloria
Farmer.*

Checkup Checklist

How to make the most of your child's wellness visit

BY LAURA FARMER

For some kids, visiting their pediatrician is all about the lollipops.

"There have been times when my kids were nervous about getting a shot, but now they associate going to the doctor's with getting a lollipop! They're like, 'I get a shot, then I get a lollipop—worth it!'" says Gabriela Clonan, B.S.N., R.N., C.B.C., a mother of three and nurse from Abingdon, Maryland.

Of course, Clonan knows that lollipops aren't the only reasons to stay up-to-date with her kids' wellness visits.

"There have been times I had concerns, especially when my kids were newborns, and I shared them with the pediatrician at their checkup. It always helped," Clonan says.

Checkup Checklist

According to Dr. David Sulkowski, D.O., a pediatrician with Bright Oaks Pediatric Center in Bel Air, Maryland, your child's annual checkup is important for many reasons.

Vital Signs and Growth

"There are different things we check for at each age. But we always check a child's vitals, and weight, height, and head circumference for babies. Then everything gets plotted on the patient's growth chart. We can get a lot of information about (kids') general health, such their nutrition or if they have an illness, by tracking their growth," explains Sulkowski.

Physical Exam

Another important part of the wellness visit is a head-to-toe examination of the child's body, including their private parts, which can be uncomfortable for some children.

"I recommend that parents prepare kids for this part of the exam beforehand," says Dr. Jennifer Burns, M.D., pediatrician and owner of Urbana Pediatrics in Urbana, Maryland. "We need to have a visual inspection of their whole body to ensure that everything is developing as it should and there are no concerns."

Burns also offers another pro tip for kids who may be especially uncomfortable: wear a bathing suit.

Developmental Milestones

Your child's pediatrician will also assess if your child is meeting developmental milestones, such as learning to talk in the younger years, or doing well in school for older kids.

"We have a very strict list (from the American Academy of Pediatrics) of developmental milestones that we look at for each age. We also spend a lot of time checking on social development and academic performance," Sulkowski says.

Mental Wellness

Checking on a patient's mental health is also important, especially in the adolescent years.

"We do a lot of screening and evaluation for mental health concerns for our older patients," says Sulkowski. "It has always been a big issue, but it seems to have blossomed even more with COVID-19 and isolation, and with the stress of getting back to normal."

Delaware Valley Pediatric Associates in Lawrence, New Jersey, offers patients counseling through the COPE program, a cognitive behavioral therapy program focused on reducing negative or unhelpful thoughts and increasing healthy behaviors.

Education

Pediatricians also make it a point to hear parents' concerns and provide resources and education to support them. They offer anticipatory guidance, which includes a rundown of milestones the child should be meeting in the next few months, and general health education, such as the importance of sleep, exercise, good nutrition and limited screen time.

Vaccines

For many kids, perhaps the most infamous part of the wellness visit is "getting a shot."

"I really don't like needles!" says Macie*, a vivacious sixth grader from Abingdon. "I remember when I was 6 years old, and I literally ran out of the room into the lobby. My mom had to come and pin me down so that they could give me a shot. Now I'm a little more reasonable, but I still don't like getting shots!"

According to Dr. Sulkowski, parents can use a few tricks to help kids like Macie relax before their vaccine.

"There are some kids we can talk through it," says Sulkowski. "Bribing with toys, lollipops or



Say ah! Dr. David Sulkowski of Bright Oaks Pediatric Center examines Gloria Farmer while her sister Camille looks on.

stickers can also be helpful. It's extremely important for children to not miss their scheduled vaccines. This is probably the most important way to keep children safe from a lot of different diseases."

Preparing for Your Child's Checkup

Your child's pediatrician needs to cover a lot of ground during the wellness visit. You can make the most of your time together by preparing ahead of time.

Experts say the following five activities will help you make the most of your visit:

1. Arrive early. Parents often need to attend to insurance forms, wellness assessments and other administrative tasks before the visit.
2. Write down your questions in advance. "If you have specific

questions or concerns, make a list to bring to your visit," advises Burns. "If you have a lot of concerns or 'big concerns,' such as depression, autism, or ADHD, you may want to speak with your pediatrician's office staff prior to the visit so that adequate time is available for the visit."

3. Practice! Younger kids especially love imaginative role play games. Playing doctor is the perfect way to introduce them to what will happen during their well visit.

4. Talk about it. Talk to your kids about what to expect and why each part of the visit is important. Books or cartoons about doctor's visits could be a helpful tool to help them understand.

5. Bring a book, toy or screen. Dr. Susan Henrikson, M.D., a pediatrician with Northern

Virginia Pediatric Associates, advises, "I find some of the kids who are having a hard time, if they have a book or toy or something to distract them from just sitting there, it usually goes better." She adds that bringing a phone to entertain your child can sometimes be helpful, but not always. "I think there are certain cases where showing a video on your phone is OK, such as for an older child who is waiting for a sibling or who is bored," explains Henrikson, "but it is not my favorite for younger children. Parents get distracted trying to find the right video, instead of attending to their child."

Well On Your Way

Finally, regular wellness visits with your child's pediatrician offer the opportunity to build a relationship with a knowledgeable expert who cares about your child.

Henrikson says she gets a lot of joy from seeing her patients develop and grow.

"It can be the little 6-month-(old) baby who's just smiling and drooling all over the place. I love seeing the pride in a parent who wants to show how well their toddler is walking. I love being able to talk to a teenager and know that they feel comfortable to admit stuff to me that they haven't told anyone before," she says. "It can be a really special relationship. ■"

**Last name has been withheld per parent's request*

LAURA FARMER

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2022 Medical Directory

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

PEDIATRICIANS

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202-363-0300

<https://chevychasepediatrics.com/>
5225 Connecticut Ave. N.W. STE 103,
Washington, D.C. 20015

Chevy Chase Pediatrics has served children and families in the Washington, D.C. area for more than 50 years. They can provide care for newborns through adulthood and take pride in being able to take care of the whole child. They currently have COVID-19 vaccines for children ages 5-11. They also offer specialty services such as breastfeeding consultations, school forms and special visits to get acquainted.

CHILDREN'S NATIONAL PEDIATRICIANS & ASSOCIATES FOGGY BOTTOM

202-833-4543

<https://childrensnational.org/primary-care/foggy-bottom>

2021 K St. N.W. Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20006

Their team offers expert care for children at any developmental stage from newborns to young adults. Foggy Bottom offers all the standard pediatrician services including developmental testing and screening. Additionally if your child needs specialty care they are prepared to refer you to the best providers.

FOXHALL PEDIATRICS

202-537-1180

<https://www.foxhallpediatrics.com/>
3301 New Mexico Ave. N.W. #220,
Washington, D.C. 20016

Foxhall Pediatrics has experts for age groups 0 to 6 months, 6 months to 2 years, 2 to 10 years and 11 to 22 years. They have COVID-19 vaccines for children who are 6 months and older.

PULLMAN & ASSOCIATES PEDIATRICS

202-466-4350

<https://www.pandaped.com/>
2440 M St. N.W. Suite #422, Washington,
D.C. 20037

Pullman & Associates – Panda Pediatrics works to achieve their goal of making you and your child comfortable while receiving the highest level of care. They offer the vaccine for children ages 12-18 with proof of age and parental consent. Walk-in hours here are currently suspended and have been replaced with same-day sick appointments, which can be scheduled by calling the office.

SPRING VALLEY PEDIATRICS

202-966-5000

<http://www.springvalleypediatrics.net/>
4850 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Second
Floor, Washington, D.C. 20016

Spring Valley Pediatrics is ready to take care of your child from birth through adulthood. They offer the COVID-19 vaccine to children 6 months and older. Spring Valley Pediatrics has been serving the Washington Metropolitan Area for almost 90 years.

THE MCCUISTON GROUP | WASHINGTON DC PEDIATRICS & LACTATION

202-525-2426

<https://themccuistongroup.com/>
106 Irving St. NW #218, Washington, D.C. 20010

The McCuiston Group aims to provide a nurturing environment for all families. They offer prenatal consults, lactation services, immunizations and assistance with a wide variety of conditions.

DENTISTS

CAPITAL KIDS DENTISTRY

202-545-7200

www.capitalkidsdentistry.com
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D.C. 20016

Capital Kids Dentistry has a least-invasive approach. Their goal is for your child to have the fewest dental needs possible by teaching preventative care like brushing, home care and diet.

CAPITOL HILL PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

202-849-3292

<https://capitolhillpediatric.dentist/>
650 Pennsylvania Ave. SE Ste. 220,
Washington, D.C. 20003

Capitol Hill Pediatric Dentistry offers an experienced dental team and is committed to providing children with excellent dentistry in a comfortable environment. They offer convenient hours and hospital care is available if necessary.

CHILDREN'S CHOICE PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY AND ORTHODONTICS

202-410-0088

<https://www.mychildrenschoice dental.com/>
2013 Bunker Hill Road NE, Washington, D.C. 20018

At Children's Choice Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics they believe that happy leads to healthy and healthy habits lead to long-term oral health. They offer a full range of preventative and treatment solutions from newborns to adolescents, including virtual consultations.

ROSE PARK PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY DC

202-873-9696

<https://www.pediatricdentistryatrosepark.com/>
2440 M St. NW Suite 315, Washington, D.C. 20037

Rose Park Pediatric Dentistry offers a wide range of preventative dentistry including sealants, home care, athletic mouth guards and more. They also offer space maintenance, restorative dentistry, care for anxious patients and some orthodontic treatments.

SMILE VALLEY PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

202-237-2833

<https://www.smilevalleypediatricdentistry.com/>
4910 Massachusetts Ave. NW #311,
Washington, D.C. 20016

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301-896-0890

www.voeyedr.com
4301 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite 125,
Washington, D.C. 20008

Visionary Eye Doctors offers eye care experts and the latest technologies in vision maintenance and improvement.

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

DINOSAUR PHYSICAL THERAPY

202-999-0908

<https://dinopt.com/>
5185 MacArthur Blvd. #220, Washington,
D.C. 20016

Dinosaur PT offers formal evaluations, informal assessments, individual treatment sessions, comprehensive home exercise programs and family training. They are equipped to help your child with their gross motor skills, developmental milestones, strength, balance, coordination, motor planning, gait pattern and endurance.

SENSATIONAL KIDS THERAPY

202-244-8089

<http://www.sensationalkids-therapy.com/#>
2113, 4400 Jenifer St. NW #280, Washington,
D.C. 20015

Sensational Kids Therapy offers occupational and physical therapy as well as fine motor kids which are designed to help children improve their writing, drawing, and eye-hand coordination.

TRIUMPH THERAPEUTICS

202-621-9793

www.triumphtherapeutics.com
4900 Massachusetts Ave. NW Suite 340,
Washington, D.C. 20016

Triumph Therapeutics has skilled language therapists and occupational therapists for children and adolescents. They specialize in physical therapy, speech language therapy and occupational therapy for children of all ages as they work with families to reach your growth and wellness goals.

HONEYBEE PEDIATRIC THERAPY

202-546-7529

<https://dchoneybeetherapy.com/>
HoneyBee Pediatric Therapy comes to you. They believe that children learn best in a comfortable environment so they'll meet you where you are, whether that's home, daycare or a community playground. They offer physical, occupational, speech and language therapy and telehealth appointments. ■

Why Children Fake Being Sick and What to Do About It

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

As parents, you hear a lot of talk about how to tell if your child is really faking being sick. But what we really need to be talking about is why your child is faking.

Lindsay Cirincione, Psy.D, director of outpatient operations for the pediatric psychology consult program at the Kennedy Krieger Institute, gives her best advice for parents in this situation.

How to Tell If Your Child Is Faking An Illness

“The first step you should take when you think your child might be faking being sick is to evaluate the existence of the illness,” Cirincione says.

It can be hard to tell if your child is really feeling ill if their complaints are things you can’t measure, such as a headache or a stomach ache. Cirincione says that in this case, parents should look for secondary symptoms—or the absence of secondary symptoms.

Is the child who is complaining of a headache still running around, playing and making lots of noise? Maybe the headache isn’t quite as severe as it was made out to be.

“The important thing to remember is to not get into a power struggle with your child and argue about whether they are telling the truth or not,” Cirincione says.

If your child is faking, it’s more important to understand why they felt like they needed to fake an illness.

Why Children Fake It

The most common reasons children fake being sick fall into two categories: avoidance and attention. They could be avoiding school because of a bully or because they have anxiety about an upcoming test or assignment. They might also be faking an illness because they miss their parents. If they haven’t seen you in a while, they might need attention from you—and that’s normal.



What To Do About It

Teach your child coping strategies such as talking to a guidance counselor, taking deep breaths to calm down or counting to 10.

Talk to their teachers about their academic performance and any overall concerns relating to the classroom. If it seems like your child has difficulty staying in class or keeping up with the classroom’s pace, it might be time to ask the school about testing to see if any undiagnosed disabilities could be a factor.

More importantly, talk to your child to see if they’re feeling worried or upset. Cirincione says to avoid making a big deal about the symptoms themselves because that might encourage the child to use similar tactics to get attention from adults in the future.

“You help the child develop some insight into the meaning of their deception ... and the motivations that may have driven the behavior,” notes Judith A. Libow, PhD, coordinator of psychological services at Children’s Hospital in Oakland, California, in an article on WebMD.

“Tell them, ‘I want to take care of you in that way, too,’” Cirincione advises.

The most important thing to remember

when talking to your child about how and why they’re feeling this way is to remain neutral. Don’t overreact or convey frustration. Children usually have a good reason for faking an illness and rarely have nefarious intent, according to Cirincione.

This year is likely to be the first children are fully back in the classroom after having been home for much of the pandemic. That transition is going to be hard for many children who got used to sharing a space with their families and now have to be away for long periods of time.

You can ease this transition by setting aside a “special time.” This means family time or one-on-one time with your child. For example, it could be a game night, a movie night or time at the park together.

“Treat it like an appointment,” Cirincione says.

Take this time seriously, the same as you would a doctor’s appointment. Talk to your child about it ahead of time, and give them something to look forward to. The unpredictability of the last two years has hurt children’s ability to cope and adjust. A stable, guaranteed time with you will ease their anxiety. “Parents need to understand and remember that mental health is physical health, too,” Cirincione says.

Anxiety can cause physical symptoms like a stomach ache. Parents should also keep an eye on their child’s mental health, or they could be ignoring the cause of their child’s symptoms.

Don’t feel guilty for not understanding or knowing right away why your child is faking an illness. Many children don’t understand themselves. They might just not know what to do or how to express their concerns yet.

If you and your partner disagree on how to handle the situation, try getting more information before discussing it further. Talk to teachers and counselors, and if you still don’t agree, seek advice from a therapist. Getting a neutral third party’s perspective can take away a lot of the difficulty in making sure everyone feels heard and respected. ■



DIY Beach Sensory Bin

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

Create this fun sensory bin with your kids. A sensory bin is a container filled with objects that have different sounds and textures for children to play with and explore. The purpose of a sensory bin is to help kids develop an understanding of textures and feelings in a stimulating, safe way. Sensory bins are often filled with sand, slime, beans or rice as a base with other objects mixed in. Sensory bins are recommended for children who are ages 3 and older. Even adults can enjoy them!

Playing with sensory bins benefits children in many ways. It relieves stress, encourages creativity, improves fine motor skills and helps children develop descriptive language.

How do I use a sensory bin?

You and your child can use a sensory bin by moving around the objects inside with your hands or a small tool like a spoon. Talk to your children about what they're feeling, seeing and hearing. Does this feel soft, squishy or fuzzy? Does it sound like rain? What color is this? Engage them when playing actively with the bin, but remember to let them explore it on their own, too.

How do I make a sensory bin?

What you need to make your sensory bin will depend on your child's individual tastes, but you can make a sensory bin

using only household objects. The contents of a sensory bin may also vary by theme. For example, some sensory bins have a sports theme, a bird theme or a fairy theme. The choice depends on what you and your child like.

Involve your child in making the sensory bin and explain each piece as you're putting it together. For our example, we chose kinetic sand as a base, with buttons, beads and small scrapbooking ornaments as filler.

The purpose of a sensory bin is to help kids develop an understanding of textures and feelings in a stimulating, safe way.

Materials:

- **A container** (plastic with a tight-fitting lid is best)
- **A base** (beans, rice, sand or slime work well)
- **Tactile items** (cotton balls, pompoms, buttons, beads or erasers)
- **Optional: Stickers to decorate the outside of the bin**

Directions:

Step 1: Clear an open and brightly lit area like a kitchen table or island. Place all your items in one spot on the surface.

Tip: If you anticipate having leftover small pieces, get some Tupperware or other small containers ready to keep any mess contained.

Step 2: Pour your filler into the container you picked out for your sensory bin. Spread the filler evenly with your hands or a spoon.

Step 3: Place your tactile items in one type at a time. Talk about what they feel like as you're putting them in.

Tip: For older children, you can add small seashells or dried starfish.

Step 4: Mix your bin thoroughly. Using your hands or a spoon slowly mix the sensory bin until there are no clumps of any one type of item. Some items should be buried and only visible from the sides; others may be poking out at the surface.

Step 5: (Optional) After placing the lid on the bin, allow your children to decorate the outside of the bin as they please with stickers! Stickers add a personal touch and will give your child a sense of ownership over the project.

Tip: Young children should always be supervised when using a sensory bin with small pieces as these items can be a choking hazard. When your child is done playing with the sensory bin, simply fit the lid on tightly and place it in a secure but visible spot for future play. ■

Jennifer Barnwell

BY ALEX KRUTCHIK



Jennifer Barnwell found a career path that combines her love for travel with her financial and analytic skills. As president of Curator Hotel & Resort Collection since 2020, she gets to create new memories and experiences while working with owners and operators of independent hotels.

Curator, which was launched by Pebblebrook Hotel Trust that year, already has more than 90 member properties since its launch.

You can often find Barnwell on the road, but she says it doesn't compare to what—or whom—she has at home: a 5-year-old daughter and an 11-month-old son.

How do you balance your career while being a parent and raising a family?

I tend to be an organized person. I'm really big on planning and just getting things done. I think that's the key for me. I love my job, and I love working. It makes me a happier person. It definitely makes me a better parent. Keeping that in mind, you have to figure everything else out so that you can be successful in your career. But it's also

important for me to be present for my husband and my kids.

You also can't do it without having amazing people to share the responsibility with and rely on, whether that's my husband—who is fantastic and definitely a partner in this—or child care providers.

What is it like to raise a family in the DMV?

We had our first child when we still lived

in downtown Washington (D.C.), and it was manageable. I had moved down from New York City, so I was used to the city life. And it was OK with one child. But we ended up moving to Montgomery County, Maryland, in 2019, and I wasn't sure how it was going to be, just because I felt like a city person. But it has been fantastic for us. We're very lucky in the position that we're in. We have so much more room. It's like all the clichés: We have a yard. We have a bigger house, and we also have this amazing community.

What challenges are there in being a parent, especially when you are so busy?

I think there are sacrifices and tradeoffs you make. There are a few occasions where I'll miss something. My daughter had this amazing parent event at preschool, and I couldn't make it to that because I was on a business trip. Other times I've made tradeoffs where I've pushed off some work so that I could get home at a certain time. Once the kids are in bed, I'll reopen my laptop and work for a couple more hours until 10 p.m.

It may not be every night, but it's somewhat frequent. With small children, there is a very small window between dinnertime and bedtime. I have made that conscious decision to come home sometime between 5 (p.m.) and 6 p.m. so that I can see them before bed, knowing that I still have a lot more to do.

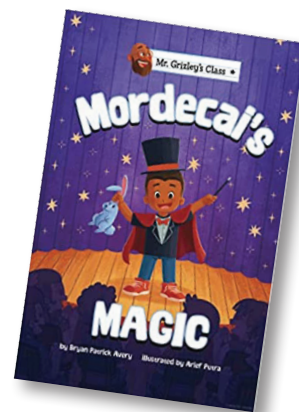
What do you love most about being a parent?

You can't even imagine. I know it's a cliché, but there's this love you feel for this little person when they arrive. When they're babies, they are so cute and cuddly, and you want to take a million pictures of them. But it keeps getting better and better.

My little girl is turning into a real little person, and she says the most hilarious things sometimes. It shows me she's really growing up, but she's also paying attention to everything I say. I think the most rewarding part is it enriches your life and brings a new dynamic to your life that you didn't expect, and you couldn't have prepared yourself for it. ■



Get Back to School with Books



12 Books To Help Kids Foster a Love for Learning

BY JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD, COLLECTION ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN, ARLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Summer is winding down—time to turn our minds to the leaves changing colors and cooler weather. As the start of school draws near, these books will fill your backpack with stories about first days, tips for making the most of your school year and more.

PICTURE BOOKS

"The Incredible Shrinking Lunchroom"

by Michal Babay,
illustrated by Paula Cohen

In this school-based version of the Yiddish folktale "It Could Always Be Worse," the students at Parley Elementary need some help finding room in the lunchroom. When they ask the principal for help, she moves in all the science projects, which adds to the overcrowding. Soon she's moving in even more items, including all class pets and sports practices. Luckily, the principal has a plan to make everyone appreciate the lunchroom and make the space they need.

"The Queen of Kindergarten"

by Derrick Barnes, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

MJ has clear goals for her first day of school: to wear her crown all day and do her queenly duties of brightening every room and being caring, kind and helpful. She has ample opportunities to fulfill her duties as the day goes on in ways that all students can easily emulate.

"Puppy Bus"

written and illustrated by
Drew Brockington

An unnamed child has moved to town and gets on the bus for the first day at a new school. Once he arrives, it's obvious that he took the wrong bus to the wrong school. This school is full of dogs! All the

students and teachers and staff are dogs. The food pyramid is a pile of bones, and the bathroom stall contains a fire hydrant. Luckily, he and the other students are still able to find things in common and have a good time.

TRANSITIONAL READERS

"Mordecai's Magic"

by Bryan Patrick Avery,
illustrated by Arief Putra

A new student joins Mr. Grizley's class. There's a school assembly first thing, so Mordecai barely has a chance to introduce himself to everyone before they must go to the auditorium. Unfortunately, the magician who was supposed to perform for the students canceled at the last minute. Luckily, Mordecai has a backpack full of magic tricks. Just because he's new doesn't mean he can't save the day!

"When the Schools Shut Down: A Young Girl's Story of Virginia's 'Lost Generation' and the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Decision"

by Yolanda Gladden with Tamara Pizzoli, illustrated by Keisha Morris
Instead of desegregating schools, some areas closed the public schools instead of admitting Black students. Virginia's Prince Edward County was one such area. When author Yolanda Gladden was ready to start school in 1959, a school for her to attend didn't exist. Instead, the Black community set up schools in local churches, teaching basic school

subjects as well as Black history, setting up a good foundation for Yolanda and other students to be ready to start school when the public schools eventually reopened and desegregated in 1964.

"School Day!"

by Candice Ransom,
illustrated by Ashley Evans

Two siblings look forward to the first day of school. The older sister is starting third grade, and she's able to show her brother all the ropes on his first day of kindergarten. She knows who the teachers are, where to go, and everything he needs to have a great first day.

MIDDLE-GRADE READERS

"Alice Austen Lived Here"

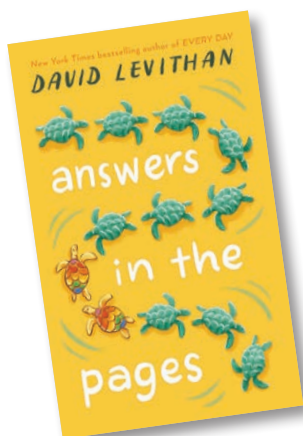
by Alex Gino

Sam does not like his history teacher's take on history. When a contest to determine a new local history statue leads to a class project, Sam and his best friend TJ try to find someone the history teacher wouldn't talk about. The two focus on real-life turn-of-the-century lesbian photographer Alice Austen. In connecting more with local, queer history, they must challenge their teacher's assumptions about who is important in this feel-good, thoughtful read.

"Answers in the Pages"

by David Levithan

When Donovan's teacher assigns "The Adventurers" to read, Donovan leaves it on the



kitchen counter, where his mother finds it. A single sentence at the end indicates that the male protagonists might be in love, which prompts Donovan's mother to call the principal to complain. The battle over the book quickly becomes public and divides the community, with Donovan caught in the middle between his mother, his friends and a reading assignment he barely got a chance to start.

"Middle School – Safety Goggles Advised: Exploring the Weird Stuff from Gossip to Grades, Cliques to Crushes, and Popularity to Peer Pressure"

by Jessica Speer, illustrated by Lesley Irgart

With choose-your-own-adventure scenarios, quizzes, real-life examples and stories from other middle schoolers, this survival guide is everything students need to survive the good, bad, ugly and just plain weird life of middle school.

TEENS

"6 Super Skills for Executive Functioning: Tools to Help Teens Improve Focus, Stay Organized and Reach Their Goals"

by Lara Honos-Webb, PhD

Clinical psychologist and ADHD expert Lara Honos-Webb explores the six skills teens can use to help them manage stress and stay on top of their commitments and responsibilities. She blends research and real-life examples to explain the skills and their applications to daily life. With an emphasis on positive self-talk and journaling, Honos-Webb offers helpful tips and advice to all teens.

"Nothing More to Tell"

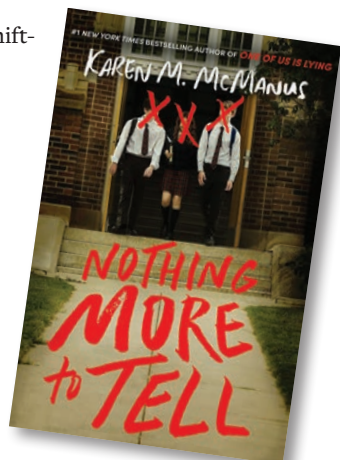
by Karen M. McManus

Four years ago, the body of Brynn's favorite teacher was discovered in the woods behind her prep school's campus. Her family moved away, but now Brynn's back. As part of her internship with a true crime podcast, she wants to solve the murder. Her ex- best friend was one of the students who found the body, but everything he told the police was a lie. When Brynn starts looking into what happened, those aren't the only secrets about to come to light. McManus's writing is full of red herrings, twists and shifting viewpoints, resulting in her best book yet.

"The Chandler Legacies"

by Adbi Nazemian

The Circle is Professor Douglas' writing workshop at the elite Chandler Academy. In 1999, the five students admitted come from different backgrounds, but they form a found family in the workshop. Taking the school's motto ("the truth will set you free") to heart, they start to explore the darker sides of their boarding school, such as bullying, assault, homophobia and racism. They hope to make Chandler a better place for all of its students. ■



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Education Across the Generations

BY ALEX NYSMITH

Many kids have fond memories of their grandmother coming to visit, baking cakes for birthdays or babysitting when their parents went away. I certainly have my share of these recollections, but I recall from an early age that my grandmother was also an incredibly creative and curious person. She taught me many things but, most importantly, she inspired me to follow my passions, which have led me right back to where it all began at The Nysmith School for the Gifted.

Carole or Grandmother—she was not one for nicknames—had taught for years in Fairfax County’s Gifted and Talented program. She loved working with children but recognized how academically advanced students would become bored with the static nature of the curriculum. She took a risk in 1984 and opened Nysmith School for students in kindergarten through second grade.

Much like a teacher’s prepared lessons don’t always go as planned, Carole’s vision for the school didn’t materialize without its share of surprises. I remember over lunch one day when she told me the story of how the Upper School (fourth through eighth grades) was created; both of us ended up laughing at the audacity of it. The second-grade children loved the program and being with Carole and the others so much that their parents essentially “refused” to leave the school and forced her to open a third grade. It didn’t stop at third grade; before long, she added a fourth grade, then fifth, and before you knew it, Nysmith was a K-8 school. It was the quintessential supply and demand—in reverse order.

It is surreal being back at the school where it all began for me. Many of the teachers with whom I spent many hours of my childhood learning from and being inspired by are now my teaching colleagues. I remember as



a child thinking how different they were, yet now I realize we are actually incredibly similar. All of us are curious, motivated, love to learn and excited to share that knowledge with some awesome children. We genuinely enjoy coming to school every day because we don’t see teaching as work; instead it is a passion and a purpose we were meant to pursue.

Growing up, I remember spending countless hours at the school, watching how both my grandmother and my father (now Head of School) worked together in tandem. I would marvel at how easily they seemed to deal with each and every situation and how much they loved doing what they did. And I began to understand what a special place it was, although truth be told, I’m not sure anyone truly appreciates how great an experience it is until they have some perspective with which to view it.

I walk down the hallways and it is quite a bizarre feeling for me. Everything’s the

same and yet so different. The kids are still just kids—laughing, smiling and sharing stories. They still settle things with the tried-and-true rock, paper, scissors method. The students walk quickly to their Algebra 2, Trig or computer classes, although those programs are far different today than they were in my day. Rather than “just” coding, students are now programming robots and doing 3D printing. Their lessons and experiments in math and science classes are way beyond what I remember doing. As much as things are different from my time here, the core experience has not changed. Nysmith is still very much about nurturing yet challenging children to reach their potential in a nonstressful environment. It’s instilling a love of learning, keeping them thinking and making each class as engaging and fun as possible. That philosophy hasn’t changed—and it never will.

Carole’s mission and values were at the core of my childhood—and the foundation for the school for all these years. They have led us to constantly adjust how we teach to meet the needs of our students.

As with the unprecedented times that we live in, life changes, and so do our students. In my few years as a teacher here at Nysmith, I have not found one graduating class to be identical to the other. Each has its own personality and disparate interests. Education and the methods of teaching must adapt to the students who now sit in the chairs in front of me and my fellow teachers. And I’m happy—and proud—to say that is something at which Nysmith excels. ■

Alex Nysmith is the grandson of Carole Nysmith, founder of The Nysmith School for the Gifted in Herndon, Virginia. Learn more by visiting nysmith.com.



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