



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ∞ Issue 4, January 2004

Life in the Slow Lane: On Carpooling

by Angie Davidson, Board President

For me the initial anxiety began to wear off as Alyssa, Michele, Julia and I were driving up Highway 9 on the first day of school. All four of us rode together that first day in case the kids were nervous. We'd left downtown Saratoga and were heading along the curves toward Saratoga Springs when Michele, a veteran carpool mom, said, "Here it comes, girls! The tummy-tickle spot!" Alyssa started giggling right away, but Julia and I had no idea what she meant until we swung down into the huge dip in the road and our stomachs followed a few seconds later. Then we all began to laugh and I felt my tension dissolving. We were really on our way.

It's funny but until I sat down to write, I didn't even realize that I'd been so anxious about carpooling. But as I began to think about it, I remembered my nervousness that day. Would we have the same rules? What if the children had (gasp!) an argument? How would I handle it? What if one child acted rudely to the other mom? What if my child cried when we separated? I wish I'd brought some of these questions up at the first circle meeting because Teacher Jan would have addressed them in her usual calm, reassuring way, and veteran carpool moms could have discussed them too. Maybe I could have put the worries to rest sooner. And undoubtedly I wasn't the only parent in the room with those questions.

Thankfully, my daughter, Julia, allayed my concerns over her possible carpooling or separation fears. I had attempted to "prepare her" for carpooling by telling her what it would be like, riding in Alyssa and Michele's car. "Mom! You mean I'm going to get to see the inside of their car?!?", she responded excitedly. I needn't have worried.

As for the other feared, possible problems ... they have all arisen, in one form or another: not everyone has the same rules; sometimes children do argue (imagine!); sometimes children are disrespectful to adults or hurtful to each other; sometimes they fight over each other's food on the way home; and sometimes they even correct your driving. But, for our family, those incidents have launched wonderful discussions with the parents and children involved (and sometimes hilarious

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Experiencing Childhood

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,
Welcome to 2004 – a brand new year for us to observe and to guide our children who are growing up so quickly right before our eyes. And a new year for us to make sure that our children experience a real childhood during these precious years before encountering the rigorous demands of elementary school. To me a "real childhood" includes the following:

- ☞ Children are given the opportunity to play outside as much as possible.
- ☞ Children have plenty of unstructured time to develop their own special interests and their creativity.



- ☞ Children spend almost no time watching TV or playing computer games. They need freedom for the

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Thank you to all for your contributions to this issue. The next deadline is March 10. Submissions may be e-mailed to Nicole at: nfrees@sbcglobal.net. ☺

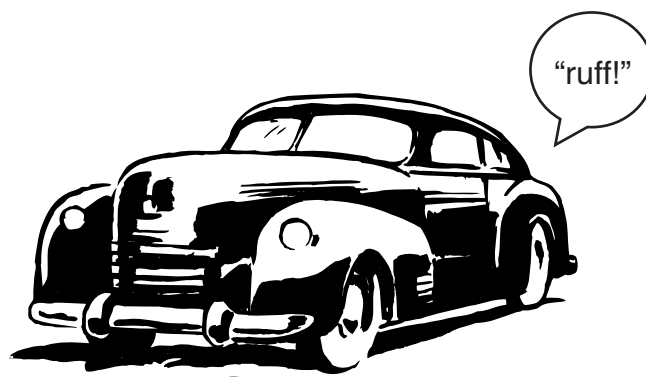
(Life in the Slow Lane, continued)

discussions over the dinner table). The experiences have helped our social growth (mine as well as Julia's), strengthened our relationships, given us insights into other ways of looking at things, made us deal with conflict and clarified what's important and right. It isn't always easy to talk about such issues with someone else, or with their child. But certainly all these situations will reoccur in our children's lives; and what a safe environment Mountain School is in which to begin working on them.

For me carpooling is a natural extension of the Mountain School day, another opportunity to observe our daughter's interactions with other children. Through the carpool experience, I have learned so much, by observing my child in a different environment, and acquiring parenting knowledge from our teachers and carpool partners. One problem arose recently – I had concerns about Julia feeling “left out” of a social group. I chose to write about the situation in my observation and ask for advice. Marie responded with her typical wisdom and helpful, guiding hand, and now I have advice to guide me for times when, undoubtedly, similar issues will arise in the future ... adolescence is just around the corner!

Carpooling isn't mandatory, and sometimes the arrangements don't work out. It isn't always easy. It may help in those situations to know you are not the only one and to get support from teachers and other parents. Julia and I have certainly been blessed. We have made wonderful friendships carpooling – friendships that I hope will last a long time – and many other Mountain School parents can say the same. I treasure the other moms and their children and the fun, crazy moments, and I value the lessons learned as we have grown together. I wish you these same blessings.

Please wish me luck. Tomorrow we take the dog with us too! ☺



General Meeting

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4,
7:30 PM

by Jane Krecji
Teacher, Friday 2s

The topic for our general meeting is: How to succeed in Elementary School without Really Trying – Supporting social, emotional, and developmental readiness which leads to academic and lifelong successes.

What is my child really learning in preschool? Is it enough? How important are social skills? What about self-confidence and self-esteem? Does my child need specific skills before entering Kindergarten? If so, which ones? What do the elementary schools really look for in entering students? What is a good foundation for academic success and lifelong learning?

If these are questions you have been asking, our speaker will have some answers for you. Phyllis Vogel, Assistant Superintendent of the Cupertino School District, will share her thoughts based on years of experience in the classroom and as principal of Portal School. Come hear about what skills are expected of children entering elementary school.

After the presentation, a kindergarten teacher and parents of elementary school-age children will join Phyllis in answering your questions and concerns. ☺

(Experiencing Childhood, continued)

concrete experiences appropriate and vital to brain development in young children.

☺ Children are allowed messy projects and messy play in the mud, sand and water because that's what kids really love.

☺ Children are surrounded with books and told stories everyday.

☺ Children participate in family traditions and celebrations of all kinds to add flavor and memories to their lives. They treasure bedtime rituals, family meals, and all the silly and serious ways we provide security for them through such predictable routines.

☺ Children find out that making a mistake is an opportunity for learning. They learn that taking risks, most often physical at this age, and failing and trying again and again is what life is all about.

Take a few moments to think back to your own childhood and make sure that the experiences you remember most fondly are part of your child's life today in some way. If I could go back and change something about the way I parented my children it would be to encourage more risk taking. And I would make sure they knew that life is chock full of mistakes and what is most important is not the mistake but an honest, open and caring response to each of these learning opportunities.

I know that many of you are now beginning to look ahead to our next school year and wondering which class will be best for your child. We encourage you to visit the older classes, by yourself or with your child, to see exactly what takes place. As the children get older each class has more structure while still maintaining large blocks of time for the free choice and self-initiated activities that benefit the children the most. Simply call the head teacher of the class you wish to visit so you can be sure that they will be at the schoolhouse. Handouts are now available in the parents' room with a short description of each of our classes. In addition, talk with the experienced parents in your present classes and with your teachers if you have questions about next year – about class choices, carpooling or any other topic. It is not required to carpool to participate in our school but most parents find it more convenient and enjoy tremendously the friendships they form through their carpool.

Be sure to mark Wednesday, February 4th on your calendars. Our general meeting will include the dynamic assistant superintendent of the Cupertino School district as well as a panel of mountain school parents answering questions about their children's experiences in elementary school, developmentally appropriate education and anything else you wish to ask. The founder of our school, Betty Peck, has written an article in this newsletter about Friedrich Froebel's educational ideas which are similar to our school's philosophy as well. Don't miss it (on page 4).

Love,
Marie

Kindergarten's Foundation

by Betty Peck, LGSONS Founder

Since I began teaching in 1943, I have always searched for great teachers for inspiration. I shall always be indebted to Freidrich Froebel (1782-1852) who gave us the word Kindergarten – this extraordinary man who though trained as a biologist, spent his later years developing ways to teach children in accordance with their own development. The following are some of the key points quoted from his work:

Play is the highest phase of child development.

Each individual must pass preceding phases of human development and culture through self-activity.

Each successive stage depends upon the vigorous, complete development of each and all preceding stages of life.

Children learn by doing.

Children have an intense desire for fables and fairy tales which impart language and reason to speechless things.

Drawing is innate within the child.

Drawing and writing must come before reading.

One does not tell the child in words much more than the child could find for himself without words.

Kindergarten needs a garden to bring them into contact with nature that they might learn from this Great Teacher.

Children can be taught through games in order to come close to all animal life and through song and “movement plays” (singing games) that harmony might be fostered in their lives.

Mathematics constitutes the needed starting-point guide in the study of the diversity of nature.

The child needs to be led into the unification of all life in all directions beginning in himself, with his neighbor, with society, and with nature and her laws.

Those who take heart in the words of Froebel will be glad to know that his books are available through the Froebel Foundation

www.froebelfoundation.org.

In the late 1800s the first Kindergarten was opened in America by a group of women who knew of Froebel's work. I hold in my hands a beautiful, well-worn book entitled, *Mothers' Portfolio*, written and self published in 1889 by Alice B. Stockman, one of the founding teachers. It is stated in the book that, “the general intelligence of the country is being thoroughly awakened as to the value and beauty of Kindergarten training. Parents and educators are demanding facilities and training for those who are to have charge of the little ones.”

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Upcoming Events

MT. SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 29

As more than a few of us have noted, many people outside the Mountain School community have never even heard of us. It's definitely time to do something about that! On Sunday, Feb. 29th, from 11am to 2pm, we will host an open house for prospective families at the schoolhouse. Several teachers and Mountain School families will be on hand to answer questions, explain our program, give tours of the schoolhouse and discuss our beloved school. We will offer light refreshments and a few sample activities for children, and, of course, the garden and play area will be open. Applications will be available as well. Please invite interested families you may know and help spread the word!

REGISTRATION FEBRUARY 23 TO MARCH 5

The school enrollment process will begin soon. Enrollment forms and information packets will be distributed the week of January 19th. Check your folders! The enrollment period this year will be February 23 to March 5.

AUCTION SATURDAY, MARCH 13

Mark your calendars (and secure babysitting) for our annual auction. It will be held at the Los Gatos Elk's Lodge. Details to Follow.

Questions? Call Mary Matlack
Home: 358-3535 Cell: 499-8569
email: mary@trimbus.com. ☺

Sewing at Mountain School

by Jeanne Dominguez
Mara's Mother, 4/5s Class

I was at the schoolhouse in late November on one of those wonderful, clear, cold-to-the-bone mountain days, the kind where as soon as you step inside, your cheeks tingle and your big red nose starts to run. The children in Mara's class were making quilts and I offered to bring my sewing machine and help (a good excuse to stay indoors where it's toasty warm). I set up my sewing machine on a low table just inside the great room. Sitting in a sturdy straight-backed chair, I made room for each child to sit in front of me and either work the foot pedal or guide the fabric. My friend Molly's little girl, Elly, finished her quilt but was so enthralled with the whole process that she asked me if she could stay and help. She was the self-appointed "pin girl" for a while; as the others sewed their squares together, she carefully took the pins and replaced them in the pincushion (pointy side down). She put herself in charge of bringing the flannel squares from the design wall to the sewing machine, then laying the strips of connected squares out to be sewn together into the quilt top. We carefully spread the finished quilt tops on the floor; backing, batting then the top. Elly crawled around the perimeter of each quilt with me as we folded and pinned the binding up over the "quilt sandwich". When all the children had finished their quilts, Elly still wanted to keep sewing. Hmm,

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A Message from a Pro-Play Parent

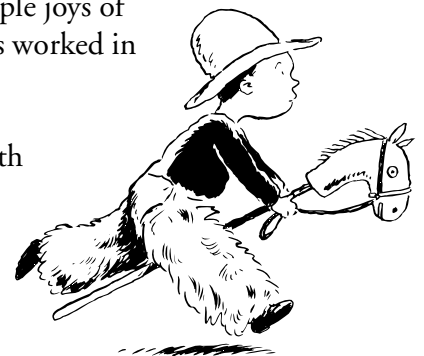
by Claudia Bowen Campbell, Alumna 1990 – 2002

"Let early education be a sort of amusement, you will then better be able to find out the natural bent of the child." (Plato)

It is amazing to me that this could have been written such a long time ago, and yet hold so true even today! Our four children (Briana 16, Cullen 14, Bronwen 8 & Ciara 6) went completely through the Mountain School program for a total of 12 years (3 each) with very satisfying results. They are now obviously in High School, Middle School and Elementary Schools, but have carried with them only happy memories of their days spent splashing in the creek, sliding down the bunny hill and dancing with scarves. They have not suffered from a lack of formal preschool education, but have each in his or her own way, risen to the challenges they face in their present schools, with the skills they honed negotiating in the sand pile and creating in the kitchen at their Nursery School.

They have always attended schools in the Saratoga Union School District, which is somewhat known for its emphasis on early academics. While they each have a different learning style – I first discovered this valuable concept at a LGSONS Mini Course or General Meeting years ago – they were all nonetheless able to blend in well with their peers at the kindergarten level and have progressed successfully in the ensuing years. They have all learned to read in or by the first grade, and have done so well in mathematics that they now help me, rather than the other way around! Their report cards document that they are all clearly performing at expected levels; and, in a lot of instances, significantly above. Could it be that allowing them the freedom to just be themselves, to revel in the simple joys of childhood and to learn through play, has worked in their favor?

Our youngest was only just shy of her 5th birthday when she headed off to her first day of Kindergarten and she's never looked back! We feel she gained so much in developing her social skills at the Mountain School, that she was ready, willing and able to take on the playground (so to speak) and to tackle the academic tasks encountered at elementary school with confidence. Our eldest, perhaps inspired by the journal writing in the 4/5s, is now happily immersed in writing and editing at her school newspaper. Our son ran from one activity to another at Saratoga Springs and now does the same on the courts and playing fields of Los Gatos and Saratoga. Our second grader loved to participate in the performances at the Little Red Schoolhouse and still



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(Pro-Play Parent, continued)

today will share with anyone who stops long enough, her “gift” of dance!

My husband and I, in turn, look back on our years as parents in the LGSONS program with something of a sense of wistfulness at a simpler, less harried time in our lives (certainly, nobody was asking us to borrow the car keys then!). In truth, as you all know, having small children can be very wearing too, but the experience of shared community as afforded by the Mountain School is so very rewarding, that it really does make the trying times more understandable, more bearable – yes and perhaps, even more pleasurable.

All six of us have carried away treasures from the Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School: creativity, confidence, communication and community – not to mention the forging of deep friendships for us all! I am grateful for the trove of memories we gathered by observing the children at play for years, and they for the time we carved out for each one. It was a gift we gave to one another. We made the commitment to spend those years together, rather than opting for a more traditional preschool setting, and we are now seeing that the pay-off is going to last a lifetime.

Keep making your own wonderful memories. ♪

(Kindergarten's Foundation, continued)

This historic book holds many inspiring ideas for Kindergarten teachers today who are striving to meet the developmental needs of the young child. Someday I hope it will be reprinted so that all of you can hold it in your hand and heart.

Froebel had a profound understanding and insight into the mystery and wonder in the young child that we must cultivate and protect. The question I am asking, 150 years after Froebel's death, is how can we honor and strengthen this unique heritage inherent in the word he coined: Kindergarten? ♪



You Were Right, Honey

by David Cline
Former Mountain School Dad

Teacher Karyn asked me to write a few paragraphs about what our daughter Jenny learned in LGSONS, though mostly I think she wanted to see me say, “I was wrong” in print.

OK, confession time. In my geekish ignorance, I argued for an academic preschool. I wanted Jenny to go off to kindergarten with a head start. Karyn argued that children learn by playing. Naturally, Jenny went to LGSONS for three years!

Looking back on Jenny's experience at LGSONS, I have some wonderful memories and I'm sure that Jenny and Karyn do too. Jenny learned to love school at LGSONS. I remember her pride in showing me how she could slide down the scary bunny hill, her joy at splashing in the creek and getting muddy, the way she learned to enjoy crawling, creeping, and clucking critters, the beginnings of her appreciation for nature, and her first lessons in how to resolve conflicts (no, you can't push other kids off the slide just because they want to use it too). Some of our first real conversations began with “what did you do in school today?” It was wonderful to see her light up when I asked “whose mom was the cooking mom?” and it was her mom!

I now realize that Jenny learned far more at LGSONS than she ever could have learned in a more academic environment. I'm so glad she had the time to focus on the critical things that children should learn in their preschool years. There are a lot of years of formal schooling, but there are only a few irreplaceable years when children can be kids, exercise their curiosity, and learn how to be open to new experiences. ♪

(Sewing at Mountain School, continued)

we needed a project. We consulted Teacher Marie who suggested we make a new quilt for the dollies, since their old ones were tattered and worn out. Elly carefully selected flannel squares in soft, muted tones and together we stitched them, short seams for the squares, long seams for rows and borders. She learned how to step on the foot pedal with just the right amount of pressure; how to stop just short of a pin and carefully remove it so it wouldn't bend the needle; how to guide the fabric so the seam allowance is uniform; how to wind a bobbin and thread the machine; how to make the presser foot go up and down and how to use the thread cutters at the end of a seam. We stopped periodically to hold up the quilt and check our progress. As we rounded the last corner of a long border seam, she looked up at me, smiled and said softly; "You're cozy."

I found myself thinking of that morning often during the next few days. What a gift it was for me, a blessing – that I could sit along side a child and share this experience with her! To be there as she took off in this new direction, tackled this new skill. To watch her master not just the mechanical aspect of working the machine, but experience the intangible part of it – the "cozy" part of it. Working on a project with someone you trust, their hands there to guide but not interfere; offering choices but not directing your vision; creating something beautiful and useful from a bag of fabric scraps. I sat with her as she immersed herself in all the wonderful sensory expe-

riences – the soft, warm flannel, pointy pins, the smushy feel of the pin cushion, the whirl of the sewing machine, the hiss and warmth of the steam as we pressed the seam allowances, watching the colors and textures come together as the project took shape. And finally standing back and looking at it all with a satisfied sigh.

I sew all the time now; quilting is my passion. That warm, happy, creatively charged feeling Elly and I shared that day is very familiar to me. It dawned on me this week that sewing with my own daughter and the friends at Mountain School is really just a way for me to carry it on, to pass along this wonderful gift, the gift of closeness, a connection born in creativity, that my mother has shared with me. I can call up that feeling simply by closing my eyes. I am in our living room, the furniture moved to the periphery to accommodate mother's sewing machine. Her Pfaff (top of the line!) is housed in a beautiful mahogany cabinet, with delicate brass handles on the tiny drawers. It is opened, unfolded, in the middle of the room. She is bent over it, concentrating, yards and yards of fabric surrounding her, her hair pulled back, wisps escaping the pins and framing her face with fluff. I'm Mara's age, sitting cross-legged on the floor practicing my hem-pinning skills. Sometimes she's making draperies for the giant wall of windows in our living room, sometimes a new slipcover for the sofa, sometimes a duvet to bring new life to a worn out feather comforter. But, always, she is surrounded by piles

of wonderful, colorful fabric and the music of the motor as she sews.

I have that sewing machine in my home now; it's in my daughter's room. The cabinet bears the scars of over 45 years of useful life, but the machine itself still runs like a dream (kinda like me). A couple of the brass handles are missing from the cabinet, and one of the drawers sticks persistently. The original instruction manual is tucked in the bottom drawer, a short, even fringe carefully clipped along the bottom edge (that's another story...). Mara's basket of dress-up clothes sits on top of the cabinet, the shallow drawers are filled with carefully sorted and folded dolly clothes and shoes. She frequently gathers her baby doll, a quilt and a favorite book and crawls into the cubby beneath it to "read" and just be still. I like to think it has a sort of creative aura about it, that machine; a blending of my mother's essence and my own, our love and visions of beautiful things made by hand. Mara and I sew together now on my Viking (also top of the line – we Howse-mans understand the importance of good tools), or on the child-sized machine Tia Kathleen gave her. One day, when she's ready, I'll take the Pfaff to the front room, push back all the furniture, give her my pin cushion and together we'll use Grandma's machine to create something amazing and wonderful and colorful. New draperies, maybe, or even a quilt. ∞

The Wandering Latke Mom

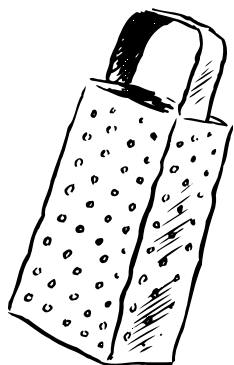
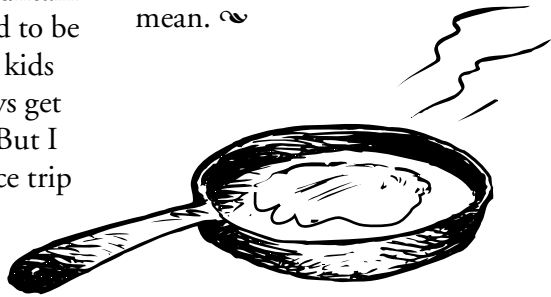
by Debra Brender, Teacher in 4/5's

I know it's that time of the year when I find myself stocking up on potatoes, onions and oil. The difference between Mt. School and Elementary School is that when I was a parent at Mountain School I always volunteered to be Latke Mom. Now that my kids are in public school I always get chosen to be Latke Mom. But I don't mind, in fact it's a nice trip down memory lane from my days as a mom at Mountain School.

Here's another difference: at Mt. School the kids really know how to cook! And they're only two, three, four or five years old! Today in my son's 1st grade class one of the little boys who couldn't get enough of the peeling, grating, frying and eating asked the following question, "Why do we cook?" He was in awe of the entire process and although I don't know him or his family well enough to know exactly what he meant by this question, I fear that in his household nobody cooks! Maybe they live on fast and/or packaged foods. Scary. For *many* this was their first time peeling a vegetable, using a grater, measuring salt, breaking an egg and flipping a

pancake. One child didn't believe us when we told him the skillet was hot and promptly stuck his finger straight into the oil only to find out for himself. I will never underestimate the

knowledge gained at our beloved Mountain School. Why is this article called "The Wandering Latke"? Because for the rest of the day as I wander about doing my daily chores I have that wonderful everlasting latke aroma wafting along with me. If you've ever had the honor of being Latke Mom, you know what I mean. ☺



Thank You!

by Laura Snyder, Teacher 3/4s

Dear parents,

The school staff wishes to thank you for your most generous gifts over the holidays. Our wish list is coming true with wonderful materials for the school. The children have enjoyed giving, and receiving, your contributions. Although it is difficult to mention each specific item that has been donated, we would like to acknowledge several gifts: a new popcorn popper, spin art

machines, Brio train sets, flashlights, magnets, dress up clothes, aprons, and puzzles. All of the new materials are

of wonderful quality and should last for years. We thank you so very much for caring for our school and the quality of play your children will have with some updated materials. The sign up poster is still available in the parents' room if you are wondering what else has been given or items still wished for.

Again, the teachers gratefully acknowledge your generosity and commitment to our school home and family. You are what makes our school great. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you very much.

Love,
Your Teachers ☺



Insurance Updates

As you receive your new insurance cards and renewals, please send a photocopy of the new declaration page to:

Laurie Hastings
5143 Shady Avenue
San Jose 95129
Questions call: 408-257-2561. ☺

Letter from First Grade

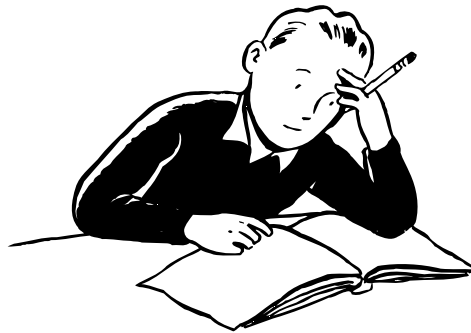
by Lilo Campeau
Former Mountain School Mom

What does First Grade look like to the parent of a Mountain School alumnus? The view from here is encouraging. I can report that the transition to Kindergarten was smooth. Aidan was placed in the classroom of Kindergarten partners Eileen Perkins and Lee Hemstreet, who are each past parents at Mountain School as well. The environment was stimulating and the academics couched in the study of the world around them, beginning with the physical world, then expanding to surprisingly abstract plains as soon and as often as the individual child showed himself curious. At Stanford University where I received my Masters in Education, we called that a “developmental classroom”.

I am grateful that Aidan spent his first three “academic” years stimulated by the focus on play and exploration at Mountain School. My step-daughter Kathleen (15) attended a private elementary school for gifted children called the Nueva School. While she was a student there, I was able to work as a parent volunteer in their reading program, referred to by the students as Lit Club. I was able to witness and participate in Nueva’s developmental program, which featured achievement through exploration, stimulation and open-ended assignments. In subsequent years I was able to work at Mountain School and Kathleen was able to visit her lit-

tle brother’s “pre-school”. I agreed with her assessment that Mountain School felt just like Nueva; this made sense, given the schools’ overlapping philosophy regarding optimum learning conditions.

Had I not had a background in Education, I could have fallen into the same predicament many parents do, relying only on tests



to judge whether or not my child is succeeding in school. I could have enrolled him in an “academic pre-school”, and eventually placed him in one of the many private schools that boast high scores on standardized tests. These schools place a priority on drill work and test preparation, which may be appropriate approaches if the ultimate educational goal is a high test score. However, if the overall goal is high achievement in life, reaching one’s broader potential, or perhaps even fashioning a balanced, happy life, a primary focus on drill work and test preparation may not be the most efficient way to train the mind. For this understanding I thank the School of Education at Stanford, and the Nueva School.

I am also thrilled with Aidan’s gradual preparation for Kindergarten at Mountain School,

where the development of the brain and of the rest of the body are at the heart of each curricular decision. Again, if I had not been exposed to other “developmental” models, preschools that “stress academics” and often also require the two and three year olds to learn to sit silently in a desk for long stretches of time, might have seemed a good choice – if only to teach our energetic son to contain himself in a classroom setting. But because I’d been familiarized with studies and scientific discoveries about the way the body works at different ages, I knew that sitting still in a desk is not something for which children are biologically equipped at two or three years of age (even though they may be drilled to comply with sufficient behavioral modification). How did Mountain School do it? Mountain School teachers paid attention to the needs of each developmental stage, and factored those needs into the gradual increase of structure within each class. *Did they do it?* How is Aidan’s behavior in a classroom environment? (Our favorite adjective for him at home has always been “irrepressible”.) Answer: On the front lawn of school one day, after the academic day was over, Aidan’s first grade teacher, Mrs. Brown, turned to me as Aidan ran screaming past her in his pursuit of a rowdy friend. “I’ve never seen Aidan be wild like that,” she commented. I looked at her dumbstruck; Aidan is nothing if not boisterous at home. I was also aware that she was saying this to me on an afternoon in December; she’d had a long time to get to know him. “Are you being sar-

(Continued on page 10)

(Letter from First Grade, continued)

castic?" I giggled, trying not to sound defensive. "No, I'm not. In class he sort of fits the stereotype of the model student. No, really, he sits quietly in his desk, he raises his hand, [his comments are] always on topic ..." Then it occurred to me that Mountain School had paid off again. The teachers and the curriculum there had not only engaged him and stimulated him, but had also set him up for success. By taking into account Aidan's developmental needs and gently raising the bar as he moved forward in age, Mountain School as a whole had established a meaningful connection between my son and learning. Mountain School had moved with him towards each next natural developmental stage, always with a sensitivity for his reasonable expectations and limits. I am grateful to Mountain School for nurturing Aidan's hunger for knowledge and his personal connection to learning, while preparing him to succeed in a traditional classroom setting. ☺

Little Red Schoolhouse Shirts for Sale

by Lani Takano

LGSONS is proud to be offering alumni parent Lily Soetarman's watercolor rendition of our little red schoolhouse on a white, long-sleeved shirt. This will be a limited edition, one time sale. Adult and children sizes will be available. Look for details coming soon in the parents' room and over e-mail! ☺

Hot Buttered Pretzels

MAKES 8



Submitted by Cici Teter, Teacher in 3/4s Class

Here is a recipe for pretzels that we all loved so much in class this week. It's also available at marthastewart.com. Thank you to Kristin Mitchell for sharing this recipe with us!

- 2 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour, + more for work surface
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 ¼ teaspoons regular instant yeast
- About 1 cup warm water
- Pretzel salt
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Vegetable cooking spray

1. Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper; set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk to combine flour, salt, sugar, and yeast. Slowly add water. The quantity you add will be determined by the humidity in the air. Transfer dough to a lightly-floured work surface. Knead until soft and smooth, about 5 minutes.
2. Dust the dough with flour, and place in a plastic bag. Seal the bag, leaving room for the dough to expand. Let rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.
3. Spray work surface with cooking spray. Transfer rested dough to work surface. Divide dough into 8 equal pieces, about 2 ½ ounces each. Roll each piece into a long thin rope, 28 to 30 inches long. Twist each rope into a pretzel. Dip each pretzel in warm water. Place on prepared baking sheets. Sprinkle lightly with pretzel salt. Let rest, uncovered, for 10 minutes.
4. Bake until golden brown, 8 to 9 minutes. Remove from oven, and brush thoroughly with melted butter. Continue to brush until you have used all of the butter. Serve warm, or reheat in a warm oven.

Note: These recipes have been adapted from "The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion: The All Purpose Baking Cookbook" by King Arthur Flour. ☺