

## **Dear Yellow Class 2009-2010 Parents,**

Welcome to the Yellow class! We are thrilled that we get to journey through this school year with your child. This letter provides an introduction to the teachers, the Yellow classroom, and some of our expectations.

### **Teacher Introductions**

This is Patti's fourth year as a teacher at St. Mark's and her third year teaching this age group. St. Mark's has had a profoundly positive impact on her life (not to mention her parenting skills) and she's excited to be back for the new school year. Patti's children both went to St. Mark's.

Kathy has two daughters and is their Girl Scout leader. She loves to scrapbook and is getting into cooking. This is her first year working at St. Mark's and she's looking forward to meeting all your wonderful children.

### **Classroom Details**

Cubbies: Our room is lucky enough to have cubbies above the changing table. We will label them with the children's names. You may be sharing a cubby with someone else, so you may want to enclose your items in a labeled bag. In your cubby please put diapers and wipes, if necessary. We will try to let you know when we're low on supplies, but feel free to check on your cubby yourself periodically.

Buckets: Include in your child's bucket on a daily basis the following: a weather-appropriate change of clothes, boots (rain or snow) if necessary, a hat, and mittens if called for. During the winter months pack mittens instead of gloves. It is very difficult to get gloves on 20 small hands in a reasonable amount of time. Take your bucket home each night. We share our hooks with another class and multiple buckets do not fit well on the hooks.

Mailboxes: Please check your mailbox each day when you drop off and pick up your child. Your mailbox is located to the right of our classroom door. We would like to use e-mail as much as possible to cut down on paper. Let us know if you are unlikely to check your e-mail regularly.

Sippy Cups: If you feel your child needs a sippy cup during snack, leave it in the bucket. Paper cups are provided, so sippy cups are not really necessary. Make sure your sippy cup is labeled with your child's name. We will have a permanent marker available for labeling if you forget.

Potty Learning: We don't mind diapers! We are happy to assist you with whatever technique you choose for potty learning, but we don't require it. At school children are very busy and distracted. It's a tough environment in which to learn to control bodily functions. If you decide to go with underwear, be prepared for accidents. We will keep an eye on our potty learners, but they don't always give us obvious signs that it's time to go.

Toys From Home: Comfort items may be brought from home if your child is willing to share them in the classroom or can keep them in his or her bucket. However, there is nothing worse than finding out a lovey was left at school and it's already bedtime, so try to leave toys at home if you can.

Sunscreen: Apply sunscreen before you come to the classroom on days when you feel it's necessary. Our part of the playground is mostly shady, but the sun is still strong for the first part of the year and again in the spring.

Snack: When it's your turn to bring snack, bring something with a fruit/vegetable, whole grain cracker/bread/cereal, or cheese. Remember that this is a snack, not a meal. The less processed the food, the better. There are examples in your handbook. We'd be happy to help you cook with the children if you'd like. Let us know if you're bringing a cooking activity so we can have everything set up before the children arrive. For birthdays it's fine to bring a festive but healthy option to celebrate your little one's special day.

Clothing: We don't care what your child looks like upon arrival. As long as he/she is dressed in clothes that can get messy and are safe, we're happy. They WILL get messy in our classroom! They'll even get wet occasionally. Children need to be physically involved in their environment and sometimes that calls for mess. We will not intentionally get a child messy, but know that it will happen. If it's going to rain, make sure your child has rain gear. A gentle rain is a learning opportunity, not a reason to be stuck inside. (And no, we won't take anyone out if it's thundering!) In the winter, bring snow gear. We will go outside if the wind chill is above 22°F. Our playground often stays damp for a day or so after a good rain, so boots or old shoes are a must if you don't want their usual sneakers getting dirty. We recommend closed-toed shoes. Sandals are frustrating to young children because they have to stop and ask for help in removing mulch and sand. If your child insists on wearing sandals, have them wear socks underneath. Croc-type shoes are not safe for the school environment, so leave them at home or put them in your child's bucket as a backup pair of shoes.

Conferences: There are two formal opportunities for you to meet with us. The group conferences occur in the fall and include all the parents of the children in the class. For that meeting, be prepared by thinking of your child's likes, dislikes, fears, and what comforts him or her so you can share them with the group. The fall meeting benefits the whole class and will help you be a more effective parent helper. Shortly after the winter break we have individual conferences where we focus on only your child. If we have concerns we will bring them up at the first opportunity rather than wait for a conference. We hope you will do the same.

## **Our Routine**

Arrival: As you enter the room, help your child wash his or her hands before helping them to get settled. We will begin either in our classroom or in room 26 (a.k.a. the Big Room). We'll leave a note on the gate if you're to meet us in the Big Room after washing hands.

Exploration: Most of the morning is spent exploring the room and the activities that have been set up. Our music teacher will stop by most days for a short time.

Group Experience: Before snack we sometimes do an activity as a group. Often this time will be used for books, songs, walks, or other things we can do together. No one will be forced to participate but they will be asked to play quietly and away from the tables while the parent helper is preparing them for snack.

Snack: Snack is a community experience, but no one will be forced to eat snack. We will encourage everyone to try everything and we will teach the children to clean up their area when they are finished.

Outside: On nice days we will try to leave the door open for much of class time so that children can go in or out as they like. On days that require more preparation we will go together after snack.

Departure: You'll probably find us outside. Be certain you make contact with one of us before you take your child. **We will call you** if we don't see how your child left school. It is very important that you arrive on time for pick-up. The children notice when other parents are arriving and become anxious when their adult has not yet arrived. If you wish to observe your child at play, come a few minutes early.

## **Our Philosophy**

We think of ourselves as the facilitators of the preschool environment. We reflect upon each child's current developmental stage and provide opportunities to extend their learning through appropriate materials, interaction with adults, and interaction with other children. While you will not see us give direct instruction in academic subjects, you will see us using the richest language possible when talking about the classroom activities. This year your child will have varying sensory experiences through all five senses, exposure to print media and storytelling, exposure to music, art, dancing, fine and gross motor activities, and the loving care of adults who are non-family members.

One thing that happens in nursery school is the early socialization of children. We show them by example and gentle discussion how to resolve conflicts and get along with others. At this age children are very ego-centric. It may take hundreds of repetitions before they begin to show that they've heard what we're telling them. Physical altercations occasionally occur and we will do our best to teach the children that there is a better way to get what they want. We ask for your patience and support. For more details about how we gently guide the children we highly recommend the "10 Steps to Positive Discipline" class that St. Mark's periodically offers to parents free of charge. If you have any concerns about a child's behavior please discuss it with us.

Finally, please contact us to discuss your needs and those of your families. If you have some constructive criticism, bring that on as well! We are reflective about our time at nursery school and your input makes us better teachers.

Wishing you well,

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