



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center
1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225
mflcdirector@hotmail.com

A Big Thank-You to...

Cara Williams, who coordinated our welcome coffees, and to the board helpers. *Erin Bignell*, *Kelly Lotter*, *Joelle Schultz*, and *Cara Williams* for painting our downstairs fish room.

Erin Bignell and her dad for replacing the floor in the fish room bathroom. *Leni McCann* and family for their donation of riding toys, helmets and clothing. *Carsten Bareford* and family for their donation of the crazy coupe police car. *Cara Lotter* and family for their donation of a tricycle. *Evan Sirota* and family for the donation of a laminator for our teachers. *Hannah Walker* and family for their donation of a laser printer for the office. *Chelsea Rattay* and family for their donation of an air conditioner for upstairs.

IMPORTANT DATES / INFO

TUITION DUE OCTOBER 1

KIDSTUFF ORDERS and unsold books due October 14.

STAFF MEETING OCT. 18

Early dismissal at 11 a.m.; late arrival at 1 p.m.

JOE CORBI FUNDRAISER

Info to come; orders will be due November 1.

CONFERENCES NOV. 3 & 4

Details will come from each class.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES AND LUNCH

Enrichment classes and Munchin' Lunchin start this month! Contact Jamie Geisler at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

OUTSIDE PLAY

We're outside every day if it's not raining and it's 28 degrees or above. Please be sure your kids are well prepared! And mark all outerwear with names.

SUGGESTIONS WELCOME!

Any concerns or suggestions for Mushroom? Please talk to Joan or drop a note (anonymously is OK) in the stairway mailbox.

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED!

Please return the volunteers form from your parent folder or see Joan.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP MUSHROOM

- Our United Way agency number is 885339.
- Our code for Giant Eagle's Apples for the Students program is 5245. gianteagle.com/schools/apples-for-students
- Save Labels for Education (bin in the stairway).

From the director...

We are off to a great start for the school year! The children are settling in, connecting with their teachers, and making friends. I can tell this by all the smiling faces I see at pickup and dropoff.

I hope that you, as parents, are feeling that this is your "family" school and you are getting used to our school routines. The beginning of the year is a good time to review our educational philosophy about how young children learn. As our parent handbook states, we strive to provide our students with opportunities for "individual growth within a shared environment." Your children will be learning by doing. We present concepts and give the children plenty of opportunities for practice.

There is a lot of fun and learning going on in our classrooms, and the children are also learning that school can be fun!

In our monthly newsletter I will be including a section titled "When I Play I Learn..." It is an informative explanation of what children learn when they play.

It was great to see so many of you at our welcome back coffees! I hope you had the chance to get to know some of the other parents from your child's class. Many parents form lasting friendships at Mushroom. I would like to thank Cara Williams for coordinating this wonderful event.

Unfortunately our family picnic this year was canceled not only once, but twice due to weather. Our family picnic is one of those events that truly brings out the "family" in Mushroom Family Learning Center. We hope to be able to reschedule in the spring.

- *Joan*

Joan Harrison

When I Play I Learn...

When I participate in circle time, I learn...

- to listen, sit still and understand spoken words.
- that my ideas have value to the other children and the teachers.
- new vocabulary words.
- to remember the words of songs and poems I have learned and to put things in proper order (gaining a sense of time).
- the names of the others in a group.
- to cooperate and be considerate of the needs of others.
- to help plan what we will do and when we will need to do it.





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Dropoff and Pickup Notes

Thank you for your diligence in following our parking lot rules and keeping our school families safe. A reminder of the key info:

- Our lot is one way, entering from Washington and exiting onto Sunnyhill.
- Drive slowly and carefully, especially when backing out, and be observant of the cars and people around you.
- Don't leave other children unattended in the vehicle during dropoff or pickup. Stay alert and keep kids close to you when walking in the lot.
- Please be sure that your children are properly secured in the back seat before moving.

Also, if you arrive early, please wait in the foyer until 8:55am/12:25pm. Our teachers are meeting, gathering materials and preparing until then. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding!

From the president of the board...

Hello Mushroom families!

I am so happy to be writing to you as the new president of the board of directors of such a wonderful preschool! This is the fourth year that I can call Mushroom "home" to my boys (Ben is in the AM K-Too and Eli is in the AM Pre-K) and myself. I have seen my boys flourish at this school. So when I was asked to join the board as treasurer and then as president, many of my friends and family asked "How can you take on one more thing?!" but my response was, "How can I not?!" I truly feel like I belong here. Everyone is so nice and welcoming and I can't imagine not being part of this "family." I even call Joan (our director) my second mother as I feel like I can go to her about anything professionally and personally and she has become a wonderful role model to me and my children. I hope you all come to love this Mushroom family as much as I do, if you don't already!



Now time to get down to the nitty gritty! First, I am so disappointed that we had to cancel the family picnic not once, but TWICE! Mother Nature did not cooperate and making the call was not easy as it wasn't a certainty that it would rain. I hope you understand that I want to give parents as much notice as I can to allow for rearranging schedules, preparing food, work concerns, etc. I hope that it did not cause any inconvenience.

The next business thing I need to talk about is that dreaded word...fundraising. This year is different than any other in that we have officially divided the responsibility equally among all the families. Please understand that this is a necessary part of our school budget. Our new budget came out and was discussed at the most recent board meeting. We are operating at a loss, even with a specific fundraising amount built into the budget. This is the same as years past, although this year it is much less. And somehow we always come out OK. Last year we came within approximately \$100 of our annual budget and that is amazing! It is because of all of you and your generosity and graciousness that we continue to make it work.

Although you are already aware of what your fundraising portion is for the year, I'd like to quickly recap how it will work. Your yearly contribution will be split in half. The first half is due by November 1 and the second half is due by April 1. You can

either just pay the full amount and not have to worry about participating in any of the fundraisers (guilt-free!). Or you may "work off" some or all of your amount by participating in our fundraisers. We are currently doing the KidStuff book fundraiser and 50% of your total amount sold goes straight to reducing your fundraising fee. So if your fee is \$120, and you sell five books, you already worked off the first half of the year's fee and working on the second half. (And you get a book free for yourself to use!) In October, we will be participating in the Joe Corbi food fundraiser. You will also get 50% of your sales in this fundraiser to go toward your fundraising contribution. In the spring, we will be having a gift card/basket raffle. The best part... we won't be bothering you for those donations! You can choose to buy the raffle tickets and hopefully win some of the wonderful donations from our community businesses. And we will do Joe Corbi again in the spring as well. I hope you find that this approach removes some of the burden and guilt associated with fundraising.

We will also be having a few other minor fundraisers going on throughout the year that are too small to benefit your fundraising responsibility.

The school year is getting off to a wonderful start! If you know anyone looking for a preschool, we do still have some openings in our afternoon classes (Early Learners, Pre-K and K-Too). We have a wonderful group of kids this year! And all of the parents/grandparents/caregivers have been so wonderful in the parking lot and in the building at dropoff. I have enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm this year!

A few last minute mentions...Don't forget that anyone is welcome to attend board meetings. Our October meeting will be held October 18 at 7 p.m. Please email me at bignellfam@yahoo.com for details.

Thank you to all of the staff, students and families for making this year an extra special one for me and I hope you all have a wonderful year as well!

- Erin
Erin Bignell



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HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS
Halloween at preschool is generally mellow and we ask your help to keep it that way. While costumes will be allowed this year (over clothes), please leave masks at home to avoid frightening other children. And, as always, no weapons are allowed in the school. Please refer to your weekly class email for details related to your particular class. Thanks for your understanding, and remember your cameras!

News from the 2s class from Theresa, Debbie and Sheila (for Marlene)...

What a wonderful start to the school year. We are so impressed with how quickly the children have adjusted. What a fantastic group of little learners to be able to separate completely and for the full two hours all before they even completed their second week of school. That's a new record for our little ones. We are extremely proud of them.

September always finds us busy just getting to know each other and learning the boundaries of the room: what is OK to do and what is not. The children in all the classes are busy, busy, busy! We are staying one step ahead of them, planning activities and discovering which ones are favorites. During our



Apple Festival in September we also discovered that the children like to paint. Painting apples for our big tree, the children chose their favorite apple color and focused well on the painting process.

Some children took longer with their masterpieces while others worked quickly to get their ideas onto paper. Our tree is now covered with red, green, yellow and even blue apples! Everyone had a chance to "paint" with glue as well. Sticky fingers were everywhere but the children waited patiently until we went to wash hands. The amount of glue and paint used on our projects always requires extra drying time but when they are ready, they brighten every home décor.

October will find us doing a lot of fall things. We'll explore the colors and falling leaves and create decorations to match the season. We'll be spending time in our gathering circle singing our morning songs. Pat, the cat, will come visit us too. He helps us name our colors.

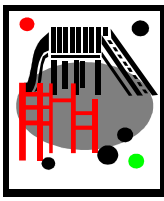
We are having a lot of fun getting to know all the children's personalities. Each and every child brought with them the wonderful and unique gift of themselves to their class. We are delighted to be a part of helping them to grow and develop this year.

News from the 3s class from Jamie, Betsy and Liz...

As a child, I loved the first day of school. I remember picking out my outfit several days before the actual start of school. I still do that! I remember getting that excited feeling inside the pit of my stomach in anticipation. I still get that! I loved seeing who was going to be in my classroom and the teachers I would meet. I still love that! Of course the roles have changed but the feelings are still the same.

On the first day of school, 18 little children walked into our lives. The anticipation of the unknown could be seen on their faces. Some of the children ran into the classroom while others took their time. There were some who gravitated toward other children while some stood close to their teachers. In a matter of two weeks the children are making friends and becoming comfortable in our classroom. We work hard during the first month establishing a simple routine, learning the names and faces of our teachers and friends, and learning classroom rules.

Our theme for the month of September was, "Getting to Know Ourselves and Our School." We start each morning creating two different art projects. We read stories that relate to our theme. We sing songs, say hello to our friends and work in small groups. We love going outside and eating snack. One of our favorite times of the day is our learning centers. We tell the children it is play time but we are really learning. We learn math concepts while putting a sorting puzzle together. We practice strengthening our fine motor skills while coloring a picture. We learn social skills and patience while playing in the sandbox. We learn spatial relationships and counting while playing with the blocks. We also learn how to work within a group when we put a puzzle together. Every activity we do in the three-year-old class relates to some type of learning. Remember, let's keep it our little secret!



Our theme for October will be, "Fall into the Senses." We will use our five senses to explore the different tastes, smells and sights that are associated with fall. We will go to the pumpkin patch, bake tasty treats and even celebrate Halloween. We look forward to learning with our class this year, excited for the growth that will occur, and can't wait to get to know your children even better.



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News from the 3/4s class from Liz, Brian and Sheila (for Marlene)...

While separating is a process unique to each and every child, the children are getting more comfortable with the classroom and our routine all the time. We are really enjoying getting to know them!

The first week we focused on getting to know each other, learning classroom rules and routines, and becoming comfortable in the classroom. The book *Yellowbelly and Plum Go to School* was a big hit. We also worked on following directions and got outside as much as we could. The week finished up with the introduction of Mushroom Mouse, who lives at school and takes care of things while we're away.

The following week we continued with "All About Me: Getting to Know My School and Myself." Talking Turtle helped us learn when it's our turn to talk and when it's time to listen. A big goal for the first month is for the children to learn each other's names and we did some activities to help with that. We had some great snacks and even got to see two deer have a flower snack right outside our window! There was lots of play time and lots of art time. This group loves to paint!



In October we will explore the wonders of the beautiful fall season. A feast for the senses, this time of year brings the smell of apple pie baking, the sound of leaves crunching, the sight of Halloween costumes, the feel of squishy pumpkin guts, the taste of a crisp apple and so much more. We will celebrate with a trip to Simmons Farm on October 11 and our Halloween Party on October 27.

News from the 4s class from Cathy, Melanie and Kim...

We had a GREAT beginning of the school year. Your little ones are so happy, busy, loving, kind, fun to be with and good friends to all. Thanks for sharing them with us.

October's theme is changing seasons. This is also the month that we start the alphabet — one letter a week. We will do projects, cooking, poems, songs, finger plays and so much

Illness: When to Keep Your Child Home

While fever is a good indication of sickness, it is not the only one. If your child is "not himself," has vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours, has a green nasal discharge, or is tired and irritable, something more than a cold is likely to blame. In addition to potentially infecting others, children are also less resistant to other germs when ill. If you have any doubts, it's best to have the child stay home. Of course, a big way to help prevent illness is to make sure children wash their hands upon entering the classroom every day.

more. Your children are building on skills they already have and will become more comfortable with new skills.

We will not only be covering the letter of the week but also embrace the season of fall. Lots of orange, glitter (Sorry!), scary songs (Not really!), a field trip to Trax Farms (Wednesday, October 12) and finally the day when, if you wish, your child can dress in a costume. I will remind you of all of these events by way of your weekly news. There will be a sign-up sheet for Trax in the beginning of October in our room. The snack calendar is also on our board (thank you so much for signing up). And there is a reminder of what the letter is for each week just in case you need it! Thanks for a great start.



News from the Pre-K morning class from Jane, Debbie and Brian...

Our school year started a little early with our "Meet Your Classmates & Pizza" evening at E² Toys to Try! Brian and I were delighted to meet so many of you and thank our creative MFLC board for trying that new activity. It was hugely successful!

We are happy with the way the first few weeks of school have been going with this group. We are working extremely hard on keeping our hands in our own space, listening to both our teachers and our peers, following directions, and using our words. We constantly use this language with your children at school and encourage you to do likewise at home. With 18 children to get along and stay safe, this can sometimes be a challenge. That is why it is our job to create the learning, playful environment that keeps each child happy, cooperative, engaged, and even challenged!

The children enjoyed our "Me, Myself, and School" unit and just *love* being the helper of the day. Our field trip to the Upper St. Clair log house, library, and playground was a huge success. Didn't you just love those pretzel log houses we made the next day?



October's theme will be "Fall into Nature: Apples, Trees, Scarecrows, and Halloween!" Remember that we will travel to Simmons Farm on October 12 and that



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Mushroom Wish List ~ If you or someone you know may be able to donate, please let Joan know!

Little Tykes Ride-on Fire Truck
 Clothes — boys and girls underwear, socks and pants

we will wear our Halloween costumes over our clothes to school on the 31st!

So sorry our family picnic did not happen — the weather simply did not cooperate — and thank you so very, very much for your extremely generous snacks!

News from the Pre-K afternoon class from Cathy and Melanie...

We are small, but we are MIGHTY! What a great group of children; so creative and imaginative. The afternoon group is always ready to go when they come to school.



The month of October will find us getting ready for our trek toward kindergarten. We will start the alphabet with one letter a week and all of our projects, sharing, the snack we eat, songs, poems etc. will relate to that and, of course, the season we are

in: fall! We will have a field trip to Trax Farms Wednesday, October 12. A sign-up sheet will be in our room at the beginning of October.

Get ready for lots of orange, red, yellow...and glitter! The Mushroom Monster will take the place of Willabee-Wallabee saying good-bye to your child. Can't wait!!! This year we can dress up in our Halloween costumes on the 31st. Details will follow in our weekly news. Your children are working on many skills, both academically and socially; it's a process and they all seem really ready to take on the challenge, and so are we!!! We love spending our time with them.

News from the K-Too class from Marilyn...

In September our classes got to know each other and their new teacher. We have a fun and comforting daily routine now. Ask your children about their jobs: calendar helper, recycle helper, line leader, snack (cup, napkin, preparer, and clean up) helpers, hand wash helper, and "hip and lip." They were delighted to have a snack where food was passed with serving utensils. Requests for more were preceded by their friends' names. "Please" and "thank you" were required! We all enjoy

the familiarity we have, the coziness of our room, and the new big kid responsibilities.

It is "me" month for K-Too. Since it is fall, the children made a class pumpkin patch. Each child made a pumpkin, vine, and four leaves with their handwritten words describing what they liked to do or liked about themselves. Please stop by to see our patch of sunny K-Too faces. I was happy to hear that many of the children had heard in their kindergarten classes some of the books I planned to read, like Kevin Henke's *Owen*. This enabled me to read some of the author's other classics like *Sheila Rae, the Brave* and *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*. Mr. Henke's books specialize in children's self-esteem, sense of responsibility, and feelings.

We also started full scale portraits of ourselves, which I hope will grace the walls of your homes. We weighed and measured each other and wrote in our journals about ourselves. The children are excited about their journals. It makes them feel very grown-up to have their own place for thoughts and drawings. Feel free to look in your child's journal any time. We should finish the "me" unit sometime in early October. This unit allows children to express what they know about themselves which helps them develop a solid sense of self. This leads to confidence in their abilities and, later, achievement.



This month will be dedicated to the changing seasons. We will study trees. Many children don't know why trees lose their leaves, what function leaves fill for trees, and the internal skeleton of a tree. We will explore all of these questions and any others the children come up with. The children will find their way to the answers through science experiments, observations, and research. Our tree unit will culminate in a field trip to the Regional Environmental Education Center, in Upper St. Clair, in late October during class time. The children must be accompanied by a parent, but if you can't make it, sending your child with another parent has been done frequently in the past. Of course, we will celebrate Halloween with songs, art, and writing.