

JK3

October 17, 2014

Thank you all for scheduling a time to come and meet with us for conferences in the coming weeks. We understand that your time is valuable and meeting with us for 20 minutes in the middle of your day can be tricky to schedule, but we appreciate your efforts. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions, share our observations of what your child's day looks like, and we will gladly clarify those obscure tidbits you may be hearing about at home.

Though we have been in school for only 18 days, the kids are settling in nicely and have all adjusted quickly to our routine and procedures. Many are having interactions with kids they knew from before as well as with kids that they met over the past couple of weeks. Some minglings are occurring in areas where their interests overlap, whether planned or not. Sometimes the social interactions are happening because of certain personalities. They are working independently but are having conversations about each other's plan, or they are gathering in pairs, threes, or more. This means they are investing much of their time and effort in the social dynamics of being with each other or as part of a group. Whether your child is in the midst of group play and is negotiating their way through three or four different ideas, or if your child has not connected with anyone in particular yet and is looking for some encouragement, we will be there to help each find their way in the complex world of friendships. Eventually, we hope with enough facilitating from our end that they begin to manage the social dilemmas on their own. All of this takes practice though. What can you do to enhance your child's social experiences? We will be recommending some playdates to you at your conference. We encourage you to try a few of our suggestions. Not only do playdates allow kids to practice the "how to's" of being with another four or five-year-old, we feel they are a wonderful way for two kids to have a shared experience in the safest environment they know, and hopefully they will bring that connection back into the classroom. We understand that scheduling and time constraints may make this a difficult task. They don't have to be a three-hour affair and planned with one activity after another. It could be as simple as meeting for lunch before school. We understand playdates can be a bit awkward for you too. It means you have to be social too. Some of you are working parents. One solution is getting caregivers together with your kids. If you are wondering about dropping off at someone's house, follow your child's lead. If s/he is running into the home and not even looking back, chances are s/he will be fine without you. If you are wondering whom to call up, start with asking your child. If they are not giving you names, email us and we can recommend some kids. You may be very ambitious and try out each child in the class. Again, we know how hard it is to find the time to get kids together outside of school, but it really does help them become better players and negotiators.

Here's some exciting news, on Tuesday, October 21, we will have our first meeting with JK2! Last week, one of our kids wrote his brother's name on one of our sign-up lists. His brother is in JK2. When the rest of the group found out about the brother in the other class, one classmate chimed, "we should have open classrooms!" For those of you unfamiliar with open classrooms, for part of our afternoon, we invite a class into our room and we are asked into their classroom.

Kids that are interested in exploring the other room will be accompanied with one of us to the second floor classroom. Some may stay for the whole playtime while others may check it out for five minutes and want to return to our room. A teacher will then escort those kids back up to our classroom. Some kids may choose to stay in our classroom the whole time. We feel that all reactions to this new situation are ok. Some kids were quite excited about venturing to new territories while a few expressed some anxiety over meeting new kids and experiencing a different space. After more discussion, explanation, and writing the “big event” on our classroom calendar, most worries dissipated. One child still expressed, “I don’t really want to see them.” So, to ease his anxiety, we showed him the JK2 face page. His response was to look for the boy in our class to show the picture of his brother! Our collaboration with the other JK class broadens their scope of Park West. The idea of other classes is no longer a mystery. Not only are they meeting new faces and reconnecting with old friends, they are also gaining insight to how another classroom works. They will see how similar and/or different their classroom culture is.

Now that we have established our routine in the classroom, we hope to take a few walks with the class in the coming weeks. We will first walk around the block to establish the procedure of walking as a JK class. Then, we may venture to a playground. Depending on the weather and how the group is doing, we may decide to go for a walk at last minute. We will try to let you know when you drop off your child at school or via email in the morning. Because of our impromptu walks, please have your child dressed appropriately for the weather including good walking shoes. If you have any concerns or questions about our outings, please feel free to email us at [parkwest@parkwestcoop.org](mailto:parkwest@parkwestcoop.org) (attn chris and ali).

Here is our official invitation for you to come and be our visitor in JK. We hope you take this opportunity to finally meet those kids you may be hearing about at home. It will also give you a glimpse of what our day is like- what your child does in the gym, how our agenda works during group time, what your child is doing during our free play, and how table time works. Like assisting in your child’s previous class, your child may have different reactions to your visit. He may want to show you every aspect of our room and want to do things only with you. She may completely ignore you and go on about her day as if you weren’t there. All reactions are warranted. Your visiting day will be different for your child. We will go along with how your child may respond to your presence. Also, we understand that your time may be limited, so you have the option to stay for the whole afternoon or you may come for part of our day. Please email Isaac ([parkwest@parkwestcoop.org](mailto:parkwest@parkwestcoop.org)) to notify us what day or days you are considering, and we will then email back with a confirmation of your day. We schedule one visitor per day to instill that it is a unique day for you and your child. Please note that we will stop having visitors in the room beginning May 1<sup>st</sup> just to keep our last month as consistent and routine as possible.

One last thing...

Now that the weather is getting cooler, you may want to bring a change of clothes to swap for the ones you brought in at the beginning of school. We may not look in every child’s bag when they

come to school, so if their clothes are in there bag, please let Sarah know when you drop off so we can make that exchange.

See you soon for conferences!  
ali, sarah, and chris