



# Spuyten Duyvil

## P R E S C H O O L

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### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Scholastic Book Fair- in school ..... week of Nov. 28- Dec. 2
- Family Conferences ..... week of Nov. 28- Dec. 7
- Wellness Workshop for Adults ..... Wed, Dec. 7 6:30 – 8 pm
- Family Breakfasts/Lunch ..... Wed. Dec. 14- Fri. Dec. 16
- Holiday Craft Fair ..... Thurs – Fri, Dec. 15-16, 3-6 pm
- Winter Vacation ..... Mon, Dec. 26 thru Mon, Jan 2 Return to school Tues, Jan. 3
- Spuyten Duyvil Board of Directors Mtg. .... Monday, Jan. 9 6:30 pm
- Kindergarten Application process with Dept of Ed ..... deadline Jan. 13, 2017

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS -- Friday, January 13, 2017 HALF DAY SCHOOL for staff PD noon dismissal**

November 30, 2016

Dear Families,

Now that we have mostly digested Thanksgiving, the December whirlwind begins! I have had the pleasure of visiting with many parents I don't generally see as families come in for Conferences with their teachers. That has certainly been nice. Some people I haven't seen since they toured the school a year ago!



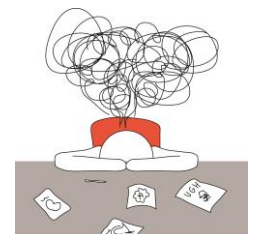
If you have not yet signed up for a Family Conference, please do so right away- or your teachers will be calling you to do so! We are not saving any bad news to report at these meetings, but rather share with you our experiences with your child over the past few months, along with relying on you as a resource to better understanding how we can make your child's time here even more productive. If at all possible, try to bring your child with you for the conference. This is an early step in supporting your child as an independent learner responsible for his/her own learning.

Your trip to class also gives you the chance to visit our Book Fair upstairs. The UPK kids are enjoying spying favorite characters as they go back and forth through the set-up all day. The school gets a nice kick-back from Scholastic also. Even after the fair is boxed up on Friday you can order online at [www.scholastic.com/bf/spuytenduyvil](http://www.scholastic.com/bf/spuytenduyvil) through Dec. 9. The books will be delivered to the school. I am not sending home any monthly reading club flyers this month, but you are always welcome to order online for that as well.

### WELLNESS WORKSHOP:



## "Unraveling the Mystery of Self-Care for Parents"



With everything parents have to handle in the next few weeks, wouldn't you like a little break designed just for you? Alena Gerst, licensed psychotherapist and yoga instructor, will be holding a series of 4 relaxation sessions in our Annex designed for just all our stiff necks and 3 am panic attacks, or even if you just would like a little "me time." This is not something we can provide through our normal school budget, so we have to charge a small fee for participating. The first session on Dec. 7, 6:30-8 will be \$5 as an introductory offer. The other dates will be \$15 or all 3 for \$40.

Either sign up on the list in the cubby room or let me know by this Friday. Feel free to invite other friends. It would be a shame to cancel this opportunity for lack of participation, but if we don't get at least 10 people signed up by then I will have to. Adult beverage provided also!

**HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR:** Another new event for Spuyten Duyvil in connecting with the larger community. We have 6 vendors signed up with their quality items to sell to our families and neighbors through pick up times on Dec. 15 and 16. Here are a few samples of what you will find for sale. We hope that success will bring more vendors next year. Please stop by the Annex on these days.



..... and more!

**FAMILY BREAKFAST/LUNCH:** While we don't celebrate religious holidays at school, we do love getting together as a community with a shared common value- our children. Look for the notice giving more information about these class Pot Lucks in mid-December.

### **KINDERGARTEN CHOICES:**

The DOE process opens today. Every family is receiving either a Manhattan or Bronx guide to kindergartens at your conference. Application can be made in person at the appropriate district office, on the phone or online. The information you need is all in that guide or on the DOE website. It is critical that every family applies through this process regardless of whether you have a sibling already at the school, live across the street, think you will have moved by next fall. All enrollments to Kg is handled this way now. If you did not get my description of various area schools last month, just ask and I can give you another one. I can also give you your child's DOE ID# when you are ready to apply.



### **COOL CULTURE:**

Museum passes have all been given out. They are good through next October so get out there and get cultured!! If you gave me your application after early September, your pass will arrive in a later batch. There are Recommendation stickers on the Cool Culture bulletin board downstairs. Please fill one out for our Cool Culture Express Train- this way other families can get solid suggestions of places to go themselves.

**LENDING LIBRARY:** UPK classes have begun to borrow books every week. Your blue (Grazia) or red (Margaret) bags need to come back each week so your child can choose another set. There is also a monthly Literacy Tip in the bag for suggestions on how to read with your child to emphasize specific pre-reading concepts and skills.



**END YEAR APPEAL** – Every non profit is sending emails and reminders about the value of their work and hoping you will send tax deductible donations before Dec. 31. I am afraid we are no different- well, we are a little different in that your child is the direct beneficiary of the donation you make! Our enriched playground and expanded meeting rooms and front yard planting areas are a direct result of the investment the school has made over the past few years to provide the fullest and most well-rounded preschool experience for all our kids. Whatever donation you can make now will go a long way to help us keep these high standards for other children in the future. In advance, thank you.

### **THIS & THAT:**

- **COMPOST-** Tuesday is Botanical Garden collection day on the 231 St. corner. We collect in school also.
- **SPONSOR-A-PLANT** – Even though our plantings are entering the dormant winter phase, we are still collecting donations to support that landscaping project.
- **NURSERY FAMILIES-** be sure to check your child's mailbag every week- that is how we get notices and forms to you.

### **ARTICLE FOR THE MONTH: *Screen Time for Children and Brain Development***

Most of our families will be celebrating gift-giving holidays later in Dec. and everyone wants to show their children how much they love them with extravagant gestures for their birthdays- these days that often means an electronic game or some version of a computer, whether iPad or other tablet, video game player or even supposed "educational" apps like Leap Frog. By enrolling at Spuyten Duyvil you have already made a choice to limit your child's exposure to these devices, choosing instead an interactive, socially stimulating learning experience. It is a choice for us not to have any electronic tools in our school.

This article gives some of the scientific information about brain development that has come out as a result of the extended screen time many children have been exposed to. The damage begins with the youngest child using the parent's phone as a busy distraction on the bus, or sitting in the shopping cart or in the carseat. While we all know how important a break can be for the parent from time to time, it is equally important that adults are aware of what the costs of that silence are for your child's development.

At school your children love playing with MagnaTiles. That is the brand name for this material; there are less costly brands available that are just as good- not only will your child never tire of making and remaking original structures, but the adults will find themselves drawn in as well, providing another benefit of any good open-ended toy- something adults and children can do together. Other strong recommendations that never get old, break or get used up are legoes and wooden trains and tracks.

Hope to see most of you over the different events over the next month,

Sincerely,



## Kids are getting too much screen time – and it’s affecting their development

by [DAVID KATES](#) | August 23, 2016



Here’s a question for parents: how much time do your kids spend using electronic devices? If it’s a lot, you might be finding it hard to turn them away from those tiny screens. But it’s probably what you need to do.

Let’s admit it: we’re mesmerized by these devices. We’re glued to our phones. We’ll pick them up reflexively whenever there’s a pause in a conversation. Some of us won’t hesitate to check status updates, tweets and game scores between bites at the dinner table. The recent Pokemon Go! craze is driving hordes of people to distraction (and occasionally onto city streets). And for parents who feel stressed out and exhausted most of the time, it’s easy to just hand our restless kids a tablet with a bunch of easily accessible educational apps while we go and relax.

If it all seems too good to be true, however, that’s because it is. Some researchers are now reporting on the consequences of our children’s digital habits – and they don’t like what they see. According to neurotherapist and doctor of psychology Mari Swingle, we’re starting to notice changes in early learning and development as a result of our increased reliance on interactive technology.

“When we get i-tech in the cradle, there is a noticeable decrease in infant-caretaker interaction,” says Swingle, author of the new book, [“i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming and Social Media Are Changing Our Brains, Our Behaviour and the Evolution of Our Species”](#) (New Society Publishers, 2016).

“All human systems – brain-wiring – is through touch, visualization and voice prosody (non-phonetic elements of speech, such as intonation, tone, stress and rhythm). And what we’re noticing is that when we put the devices in the cradle and when parents and young caregivers are on their devices, there is a notable reduction in all of this that’s affecting attachment.”

The consequences of reduced attachment and impeded social interaction are wide-ranging and troubling to researchers like Swingle, particularly as problems have begun to present themselves among toddlers.

“What we’re seeing with this group is that they’re attaching to objects instead of peers and parents,” she says. “They don’t respond to parental calls as much. When we talk about straight discipline and obedience, they’re not responding to parents as much. They tantrum without their devices. They don’t know how to self-occupy or play – and play is learning at that age.”

A lot of the problem, Swingle says, stems from the fact that when a child is staring at a screen, they tend to block out the physical environment around them. It means, for instance, that they’re not learning as much language from their parents or

siblings because they're disengaged from the conversations going on around them. They're not getting the usual back-and-forth that they would get from, for instance, story time, when there's typically a dialogue going on between parent and child over the subject matter. And that, in turn, means they're missing out on the broader contexts that normally would help them to understand what they're reading, not to mention to expand their vocabularies or learn some of the nuances of vocal inflection and tone. Learning from an interactive app thus occurs in a way that is less organic and more compartmentalized.

But this isn't simply a problem for toddlers and young kids. Swingle notes that the negative effects on social interaction and development are playing out in different ways across all age groups. Many teenagers, for instance, will forego in-person conversations and instead connect with their peers via social media or text messaging, sometimes even when they're sitting in the same room. This is hardly a new or shocking revelation, but Swingle suggests it's affecting their social development in profound ways.

"What's happening is that teenagers are communicating through their devices, but they're not learning adult social skills," she says. "And we're finding these polarizing behaviors in terms of sexuality, where these kids are incredibly brazen on their phones and texting, SnapChat, all of that. But then they're very, very awkward person-to-person, unless the relationship has been objectified or the interpersonal risk has been taken out."

Certainly the evidence Swingle cites in her book doesn't bode well for the future of human social behaviour or intellectual development. But the technology isn't going anywhere; if anything, it's only likely to become more inescapable in our daily lives.

If that's a given, what should we do about it? Swingle says she wouldn't be opposed to an outright ban on electronic devices for children under six. But drastic measures aside, the key will be to consider more closely the positives and negatives of allowing kids so much screen time. While some applications can be a useful teaching tool, the problems arise when technology begins to take on the role of "electronic babysitter" – where parents, who are admittedly stressed out and overworked about 110 per cent of the time, habitually allow their kids use these devices as a substitute for quality parent-child time.

It's hardly a minor issue. Kids need that time to interact and build strong relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, extended family and neighbors. A smartphone app might provide entertainment, a basic lesson, or even some temporary relief to a parent in need of a break. But it can't take over a parent's job as chief educator. It can't substitute for real social and emotional connections, or supplant our kids' fundamental need to get out and play. It can't address the full spectrum of needs that our kids demand in order to become fully-functioning human beings.