



Spuyten Duyvil

P R E S C H O O L

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

CALENDAR CHANGE: original school calendar listed Jan. 12 as a half day for staff development. This is being postponed until March. Jan. 12 will be a normal day of school.

Town Meeting Friday, Dec. 22, 9 am

Kindergarten application processDec. 6 until Jan. 19, 2024.....

Winter Break NO SCHOOL Mon, Dec 25 thru Mon, Jan. 1, 2024
Return to school Tues, Jan 2, 2024

DEADLINE FOR FLU SHOT DEC. 31 No return to school without this

Somos Artistas begins Monday, Jan. 8

3K/4K application process Jan. 10 thru March 1, 2024 .

MLK Day NO SCHOOL Monday, Jan. 15

SDP Board Meeting Wed, Jan. 17 7 pm Zoom

Movie Nite for 4K Friday, Jan. 19 6 pm

Dec. 19, 2023

Dear Families,

Several families are already away for the holidays; hopefully this newsletter will reach you wherever you are. Things are very quiet here at school this week. Gives us a chance to reflect on the first chunk of the school year, catch our breath and look ahead to 2024.

FAMILY EVENTS:

Conferences and Goal Reports-

Nearly every family either joined a Zoom or came in to meet with their teachers. If you didn't due to illness, travel or oversight, please reach out in January to set this up. While teachers connect with their families every week, this is a more personal connection and at the core of how we see school/home relationships. All families should have received their child's Goal Sheets, documenting what the teachers shared with you and some concrete next steps.

Family Breakfasts-

Again, nearly every family came in for their class breakfast, pancakes and muffins in tow. It is such a simple event yet always makes a strong impact on everyone. The kids love having their grown-ups in their space and I suspect the adults value you the time just as much.

Town Meeting-

this Friday is the last one of the month so you are all invited to stay for Town Meeting- I have a lot more Wonky Donkey and butt books- not sure what that is- then you need to come in Friday!

4K Movie Nite-

This was so much fun last year- not sure yet what movie we will show; I am taking suggestions now. Parents and child come in their PJs (teachers too!). We sell hot dogs and snacks, cuddle down together under blankets and watch a movie together. If you cannot make it on Jan. 19, there will be another Movie Nite in March.



END-YEAR DONATIONS-

You probably received a letter from our Board of Directors chair Vicki Cuellar reminding you that Spuyten Duyvil is a 501(c)3 so donations are tax deductible- and very much appreciated. Thanks to all the families, current and alums, you have given. Our 118-year old building thanks you too as we replace old wood that let in leaks to the Annex bathroom or plan for

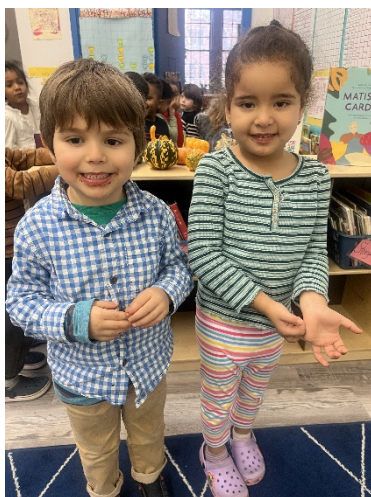
replacement of our gas pipes this Spring to comply with a new Dept of Buildings law. We are registered with Zeffy, a donation platform that can send you a tax letter directly, on Venmo @spuytenduyvil or good ole check or cash, and thank you again.

KINDERGARTEN PROCESS OPEN- There is no more automatic assignment to your neighborhood school.

Every family MUST apply through MySchools for kindergarten. The lottery system is open now through Jan. 19. You cannot assume your child can attend the closest school to you, and you may not want that program. All schools are giving tours now. I am attaching the information I have sent out several times already giving some background on schools we like in Districts 6 and 10, both DOE and Charter.

More explanation about specific class choices at the end of this newsletter.

3K/4K APPLICATIONS will open Jan. 10. Current 3K families only need to put Spuyten Duyvil down as your first choice but be sure to mark Current Student on the application. Of course, if you decide to make another choice for 4K that is up to you but remember that our seats will be filled by families that put SDP first.



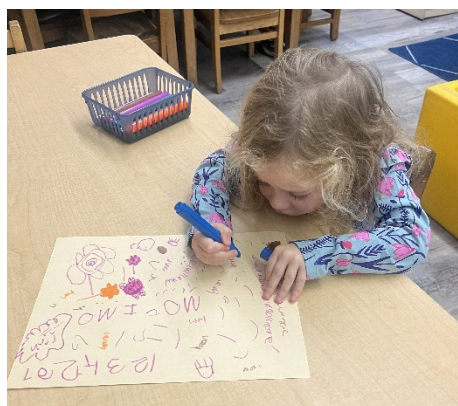
**PATTERN
DAY
in
Margaret
and
Chassity's
class.**

LENDING LIBRARY- Reading Tip for December is to take your child to the library and get them their own library card! Such a powerful big-kid step!

NYC STOPS COMPOST PICK-UP-

Hard as it is to accept, the city decided to save money by cutting the public composting pick up sites, which we were a part of. The 2 bins inside our lower gate have been taken back so please do not leave bags of food scraps there anymore.

Michelle is going to work with parent volunteers to get our own compost bins up and running again. We also have a compost tumbler in the front yard which is very manageable by kids. Once those are all ready our families will be able to leave their food scraps again, but we cannot manage the amount generated by taking from the public in general. Really such a shame. More and more people were using our drop-off bins. Not only is this a great model for our kids in joining together for the common good, but it felt so good taking part for each of us.



SOMOS ARTISTAS – last year's families will remember our teaming up with Dolores Zorreguieta, local artist and arts instructor. Between us we came up with a weekly visual arts program afterschool with the added twist of being completely **Spanish immersion!** Rather than me try to explain how magical it was to work with Dolores, check out her YouTube videos yourself.

https://youtu.be/aP5ejFfmNY?si=-Uvv5c24gwRkeT_6

Dolores will start Monday afterschool on Jan. 8. All children already in aftercare on Mondays will attend either the 3:00 or 4:00 session for no extra cost. If your child is not already in aftercare and you would like to participate,

the cost will be \$10/week. Just let me know.

GINGERBREAD YOGA – our physical therapist, Jess Santikul, asked me to send these simple yoga moves to our families for a little warm-up activity for your whole family on these cold winter days. Sheets attached. Check them out.

LAST NOTES:

- **FLU SHOTS** – I have already started the nagging so please take note. Dept of Health mandates all children receive this season’s flu shot by Dec. 31. If I don’t have receipt or immunization proof by then, your child will not be allowed into school when we return from winter break on Jan. 2, 2024. Please don’t let that happen, and help us keep everyone safe.
- **URBAN EXPLORERS**- our pre-pre-kindergarten program will start up again Feb. 26. This is for children eligible for 3K next fall (born in 2021). Enrollment qualifies child to apply to our 3K as an existing student. Flyer attached. Spread the word to friends.
- **Mary’s Movement/Dance classes** – is starting up again in January.

Still Available – just come pick it up



This amazing structure is a **hydroponic Farmstand from Lettuce Grow**. We have 2 of them in our Annex and that is really more than we can accommodate. Therefore I am giving away one of them. You need to buy the grow lights from the company that fit in-between the rings. It works very well indoors and is easy to manage. Just plug it in; no separate water source needed. The company is extremely helpful in getting it going. Imagine, strawberries and lettuce growing all winter right in your living room!



Next month- let’s start thinking about summer programming for your child!!

I end this year with renewed wishes for safety, health and peace for our families and our world. See you all again after a well-deserved break.

Sincerely,

ARTICLE OF THE MONTH: Pros and Cons of Gifted Learning Programs in Schools

This is one of my biggest peeves in the education system; It is in the spirit of giving a balanced view of a topic that I chose this overview of Gifted and Talented (known as G&T in NYC), rather than just the criticisms. First some history: until around 2020, there was a paper and pencil multiple choice test 4-year olds could take to qualify them for these selective classes. This was a non verbal, non print test- like following a pattern of shapes or identifying which design did not follow the same rule as the other designs. Families would choose to have their child tested. On the basis of that grade your child might be offered a space in one of these classes. The big questions then, as now, were:

- Where are these classes?
- What is the curriculum? How is it different than the “regular” kg?
- How are teachers chosen for these classes? Is there any different training?
- What happens if a child cannot do the work presented or keep up with the pace or shows any behaviors that interfere with class management?
- What happens to kids who are just as “bright” (knows letters, sounds, number for KG) but the parent didn’t opt in for test? How are those kids accommodated in regular classes?

The only thing that has changed with G&T in New York is that first under Covid, the test was eliminated in favor of teacher recommendation. Then Mayor DiBlasio, rejecting the tracking and racial and class segregation this policy encouraged, eliminated G&T classes with the understanding that all classes need to accommodate all learners. This is the belief system your child has worked under at Spuyten Duyvil. Predictably, the potential G&T parents pushed back; Mayor Adams comes from a very different understanding of access in education and reinstated the program. But last year made admission based on parent recommendation with the teacher then adding thumbs up or thumbs down. That is what the system appears to be this year.

Which brings me back to the bulleted questions above, which have not changed at all. Here are the answers-

- There is no published list of which schools have these classes; they are not widespread throughout the city so you can check off your child and there may be no class near you.
- There is no difference in curriculum. One would hope that open ended projects might fill the space left but not needed to teach letter names but I have yet to see any of that. A class I visited today in a local school had G&T kids doing a worksheet test counting the number of objects and writing the numeral next to the objects. Hardly anyone's idea of enriched content.
- There is no training requirement for G&T teachers. The reality is all teachers are generally following the same prescribed scripts every subject area.
- I asked this question today; the answer was the family is contacted and the child is counseled out of G&T.
- Questions about boredom for any child tell me that all children are being cheated from complex, stimulating learning models. Which brings us back to the school's responsibility of designing engaging classrooms that can adapt to a wide range of learners.

Now I am well aware that this is all easier said than done. Schools are underfunded, some schools are still overcrowded (although the schools I have been visiting around us are notably under-enrolled), kids are coming in with more and more demanding learning needs and the city is less and less able to accommodate them. Bright kids ask questions, can offer a variety of ways to solve problems, show humor and flexibility. Can you imagine if we only offered Chess class to kids that already could write their own name? Not only doesn't that make sense but educators and parents lose a golden opportunity to see the child in a different way. There are many ways to be gifted or talented. Current systems only emphasize verbal-linguistic strengths. For more on this idea look up *Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences*.

There are many ways to expand your child's field of knowledge and challenge them intellectually outside of school, and that includes physical development- swim class, soccer, art, gym, music, playdates outdoors, visits to museum, rides on the subway and following the journey on a real subway map!

I guess you all get my point. Just be a critical consumer of the G&T offer. Don't sell your kid short.