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Important Dates:

December 15

Cookie Day at Ms. Donna's
house - 2 Day

December 16

Cookie Day at Ms. Donna's
house - 3 Day

December 16

Holiday Celebration - 4 Day

December 17

Cleaning Day

December 19 - January 2

Winter Recess - NO
SCHOOL

Letter From Ms. Donna

By Donna Schwartze, Director of ICNS and
Mrs. Nowicki, 4 Day Class & Ms. Tanya

In an effort to give parents good, usable information about getting your children ready for Kindergarten (and life), our newsletter article last month defined self-regulation and how self-regulation is so important in your child's development. We also distributed the pamphlet "Helping Children Learn Self-Control" which is a

guide to parents in raising self-disciplined and successful children. In this newsletter is an article - brought to my attention by Lindsey Neal - about the exodus of good teachers from the field because of unreasonable parents and their irresponsible children. Although many of you do not yet have children in the public school system, you will in the future, and this article certainly hit a nerve with me as an educator as well as addressed how parenting styles affect children's attitudes and their self-regulatory development.

Many parents, in their loving concern for their children, try to protect them: from falling down when they are learning to walk, to limiting their play so they won't get hurt, to dressing them if they are frustrated, to answering for them when another adult asks a question, to making excuses for their good or bad behavior. However, this level of protection actually backfires as the child gets older. If a child is always protected and not allowed to try more difficult physical experiences (climbing a tree or riding a bike) they will not learn to carefully place their feet or how to watch for traffic. If a parent always buttons up a shirt, the child is robbed of the opportunity to feel success when he finally learns to button. If a parent always speaks for their child, the child misses the chance to learn about social and conversational expectations. When a child misbehaves and the parent makes excuses for his behavior, the parent is preventing the child from learning about the consequences of his behavior.

In all of these scenarios I am not suggesting that we send our children out to purposefully get hurt, but rather we give them the training, care, education, and support they need to try and fail and then try again. If a child expects that his parents will always make excuses for him, he will never develop a sense of initiative or responsibility.



ICNS President's Letter: "I Love LA.!"

Well, not really. I truly love my life in Orange County. But, having grown up in San Francisco, I do miss the museum diversity that a big city has to offer. When I was a kid, I would take the MUNI bus down to Golden Gate Park by myself on weekends. I loved to look at the artwork at the DeYoung Museum, but my favorite place to go was the Academy of Sciences, which is San Francisco's natural history museum. I especially enjoyed "getting lost" in all the dioramas. So, with the holidays approaching, many of you may be wondering what to do with your active preschoolers during the winter break. So, I thought I would share with you my favorite places to go in Los Angeles.



First off, the **Natural History Museum** has a new dinosaur hall that just opened this summer. It is twice the size of the old exhibit there and includes over twenty dinosaur skeletons including a family group of T. Rex dinosaurs. During our visit, we learned that paleontologists have discovered many T.Rex footprints, but they have not found tracks of the tail on the ground. This has led them to believe that the T. Rex walked and stood with its tail off the ground. So, now all their skeleton displays show the tail suspended. The exhibit also has a lot of interactive displays, which my older son really enjoyed. The museum is reasonably priced and is located in Exposition Park near USC. For more information, go to www.nhm.org.

Also at Exposition Park, you'll find the **California Science Center**. The exhibits include Ecosystems, the Creative World, and the World of Life. Many of their exhibit halls include Discovery Rooms full of hands on exhibits designed just for preschoolers. Being an aerospace engineer, my favorite exhibit hall is Air and Space, where you can fly a 1902 Wright Glider. Admission to this museum is free. For more information, go to www.californiasciencecenter.org.

If you are looking for an outdoor excursion, I highly recommend the **Huntington Library and Gardens** in San Marino. A few years ago, they added a children's garden, which is a lovely, hands-on, interactive garden where kids can explore. There are no signs that say "Keep Off", "Don't Touch". There are a lot of water features, so bring a change of clothes! In addition to the children's garden, there are many other themed gardens along with a lovely art museum and several cafes and restaurants. For more information, go to www.huntington.org.

I've saved the best for last. My most favorite place to visit in Los Angeles is the **Griffith Observatory**. It was built in the 1930's and is just a beautiful structure. They have three fantastic planetarium shows that transport you to another time and place. The planetarium auditorium has been retrofitted with comfortable recliners and the show is narrated live which adds to the mystery of the experience. They only allow children under 5 years old at the first planetarium show of the day, so get there early. In addition to the planetarium show, I love all the exhibits there. They have students from Cal Tech who volunteer their time to explain the exhibits. I really enjoy seeing how enthusiastic the college kids are about such a fascinating topic as space! Finally, you can't miss the breathtaking views of Los Angeles from outside the building. For more information, go to www.griffithobs.org.

No matter how you spend winter break, I hope you enjoy the time being together with your children. They grow up so fast! Remember, there is no school on Monday January 2. School resumes on Tuesday January 3.

-Carmela

What Teachers Really Want to Tell Parents

By Ron Clark, Special to CNN



Teacher Ron Clark is pictured with his students.

Editor's note: Ron Clark, author of "The End of Molasses Classes: Getting Our Kids Unstuck - 101 Extraordinary Solutions for Parents and Teachers," has been named "American Teacher of the Year" by Disney and was Oprah Winfrey's pick as her "Phenomenal Man." He founded The Ron Clark Academy, which educators from around the world have visited to learn.

(CNN) -- This summer, I met a principal who was recently named as the administrator of the year in her state. She was loved and adored by all, but she told me she was leaving

the profession. I screamed, "You can't leave us," and she quite bluntly replied, "Look, if I get an offer to lead a school system of orphans, I will be all over it, but I just can't deal with parents anymore; they are killing us."

Unfortunately, this sentiment seems to be becoming more and more prevalent. Today, new teachers remain in our profession an average of just 4.5 years, and many of them list "issues with parents" as one of their reasons for throwing in the towel. Word is spreading, and the more negativity teachers receive from parents, the harder it becomes to recruit the best and the brightest out of colleges.

So, what can we do to stem the tide? What do teachers really need parents to understand?

For starters, we are educators, not nannies. We are educated professionals who work with kids every day and often see your child in a different light than you do. If we give you advice, don't fight it. Take it, and digest it in the same way you would consider advice from a doctor or lawyer. I have become used to some parents who just don't want to hear anything negative about their child, but sometimes if you're willing to take early warning advice to heart, it can help you head off an issue that could become much greater in the future.

Trust us. At times when I tell parents that their child has been a behavior problem, I can almost see the hairs rise on their backs. They are ready to fight and defend their child, and it is exhausting. One of my biggest pet peeves is when I tell a mom something her son did and she turns, looks at him and asks, "Is that true?" Well, of course it's true. I just told you. And please don't ask whether a classmate can confirm what happened or whether another teacher might have been present. It only demeans teachers and weakens the partnership between teacher and parent.

Please quit with all the excuses.

And if you really want to help your children be successful, stop making excuses for them. I was talking with a parent and her son about his summer reading assignments. He told me he hadn't started, and I let him know I was extremely disappointed because school starts in two weeks.

His mother chimed in and told me that it had been a horrible summer for them because of family issues they'd been through in July. I said I was so sorry, but I couldn't help but point out that the assignments were given in May. She quickly added that she was allowing her child some "fun time" during the summer before getting back to work in July and that it wasn't his fault the work wasn't complete.

(Cont'd page 4)

What Teachers Really Want to Tell Parents, *continued*

And parents, you know, it's OK for your child to get in trouble sometimes. It builds character and teaches life lessons. As teachers, we are vexed by those parents who stand in the way of those lessons; we call them helicopter parents because they want to swoop in and save their child every time something goes wrong. If we give a child a 79 on a project, then that is what the child deserves. Don't set up a time to meet with me to negotiate extra credit for an 80. It's a 79, regardless of whether you think it should be a B+.

This one may be hard to accept, but you shouldn't assume that because your child makes straight A's that he/she is getting a good education. The truth is, a lot of times it's the bad teachers who give the easiest grades, because they know by giving good grades everyone will leave them alone. Parents will say, "My child has a great teacher! He made all A's this year!"

Wow. Come on now. In all honesty, it's usually the best teachers who are giving the lowest grades, because they are raising expectations. Yet, when your children receive low scores you want to complain and head to the principal's office. Please, take a step back and get a good look at the landscape.

Finally, deal with negative situations in a professional manner.

If your child said something happened in the classroom that concerns you, ask to meet with the teacher and approach the situation by saying, "I wanted to let you know something my child said took place in your class, because I know that children can exaggerate and that there are always two sides to every story. I was hoping you could shed some light for me." If you aren't happy with the result, then take your concerns to the principal, but above all else, never talk negatively about a teacher in front of your child. If he knows you don't respect her, he won't either, and that will lead to a whole host of new problems.

We know you love your children. We love them, too. We just ask -- and beg of you -- to trust us, support us and work with the system, not against it. We need you to have our backs, and we need you to give us the respect we deserve. Lift us up and make us feel appreciated, and we will work even harder to give your child the best education possible. That's a teacher's promise, from me to you.

"The truth is, a lot of times it's the bad teachers who give the easiest grades, because they know by giving good grades everyone will leave them alone."

-Ron Clark



Easy Peasy Chicken Tortilla Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cans chicken broth
- 1 can black beans (rinsed)
- 1 can corn (or equivalent frozen corn)
- 1 tub Pico de Gallo Salsa
- 1-2 cans chunk chicken breast

Toppings make it even more yummy: squeeze in some lime, sprinkle crushed tortilla chips, shredded cheese, avocado, cilantro or sour cream.

Making a Difference in Children's Lives

By Mrs. Bushra, Parent & Me



I joined ICNS as a parent about 12 years ago. I loved the co-op environment from day one. I had never thought of becoming a teacher until I worked with little children as a parent helper. I realized that this was a profession in which I could make a difference in young children's lives, and that it was one of the most rewarding careers out there.

After completing my ECE certificate in 2009, I started working at ICNS as a "Parent & Me" teacher. I believe that parents are a child's first and most important teachers. I engage parents in classroom activities, make the class fun

through creative use of music and movement and provide opportunities for toddlers to explore, ask questions and use their imagination.

This year I am very fortunate to have an opportunity to assist Mrs. Nowicki with the pre-K class. I am thoroughly enjoying my experience. During my free time I enjoy listening to music, reading and trying new recipes.

*"I realized that this was a profession in which I could make a difference in young children's lives, and that it was one of the most rewarding careers out there."
-Bushra Usman*

Letter from Ms. Donna *(continued from pg 1)*

This point of view is difficult to hear and execute because we never want to see our children suffer. We don't want to see hurt feelings, broken hearts, bad grades, or any kind of failure because we know how it feels. We have all experienced loss, and surprisingly, we have all recovered and learned from our experiences! That's what life is all about. Think about some of your most meaningful learning and how it came from mistakes, challenges, and failures along with developing your character and determination.

So let your children suffer the consequences of their actions; let them fall and get up, let them struggle with their shoes and socks while you give them words of patient encouragement, let them hear a taunt and stand up to an aggressor, and let them discover that they are capable of learning. This discovery of capability helps children develop their self-esteem, their sense of responsibility, and their self-regulation. Do not be thieves of your child's development, but encouraging, supporting, loving parents.

We want to wish all of our fabulous families the merriest of holidays. We hope Santa brings you all your wishes and you share the magic, joy, and happiness of the season with your children. Happy New Year to all!

With thanks for your continued hard work and support,

Ms Donna & Mrs. Nowicki

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Events: In and Around Irvine



The Legend of the Snoopy House

Well, if you've lived in Orange County for awhile, you know about the big Christmas tree at Fashion Island, and the train at Irvine Regional Park. You may ride the reindeer'd carousel at South Coast Plaza and stand in line to sit in Santa's lap. But have you

heard about The Snoopy House in east side Costa Mesa???

A tradition started more than 40 years ago at a home in Costa Mesa nicknamed "The Snoopy House" because of its elaborate, hand-built Charlie Brown-themed decorations and moving characters. Sitting humbly in a quiet residential neighborhood, more than 80,000 people visited the display last year.

Jim Jordan's (the homeowner & creator) face lights up as he talks about his holiday display but he feared the celebration would end after the house was foreclosed by the bank. "When we lost the home, I was absolutely devastated, not that we lost the home, not that we lost our retirement, not that we lost the equity, but that I wouldn't be able to bring this to the citizens of Costa Mesa, the children," Jordan said. The support from the community and the drive to save the Snoopy House stunned the 59-year-old remodeling contractor. "To have the people, the community, come around me and tell me how bad they felt for me, it was just, it's been very heart-warming," Jordan said.

"This was a 44-year-old tradition that is very special to Costa Mesa so we just had to do what we could do to help," said Costa Mesa CEO Tom Hatch. So the display is going up in front of city hall. The city put out a call for volunteers this week to help Jordan put together the decorations that include a giant doll house, faux ice skating rink and photo booth for Christmas memories. Santa Claus also will be on hand next week for pictures.

"Jim Jordan has put the Christmas spirit in a lot of people in the city of Costa Mesa. We have people that came here when they were kids that are now bringing their kids," says a longtime Costa Mesa resident.

The Christmas display will open to the public at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec 13th and remain open from 5 to 10 nightly through Dec. 23. The Snoopy House's new home will be at the Costa Mesa City Hall, 77 Fair Drive Costa Mesa 92626