

Newsletter December 2010

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Dec. 16-Jan. 4th: Winter break
- ◆ Jan. 7: Spaghetti Dinner, 5:30-8:30 p.m.
- ◆ Jan. 15: "Let's Go Play" sledding activity
- ◆ Jan. 17: No school: Martin Luther King Day
- ◆ Jan. 22: Winter clean-up



Message from the President

Holiday greetings!

Here it is December, and with this it means that our little ones are out and about in the cold and snowy weather! We pride ourselves in all the fun that our CCNS children have during this time of year on our great playground. In addition to our regular outside activities, the children enjoy the excitement of sledding and snowboarding down our hill. It is one of the best times of the school year.

With this in mind, we ask that everyone send their child to school prepared for outside fun each day their class is in session. Stuff their little backpacks with snow boots, snow pants/snow bibs, gloves and a hat. It is also important to label everything! This will help ensure a smooth transition from indoors to outside for the children, the co-ops and the teachers.

I would also like to remind everyone about our school policy for outside play during red air quality days.

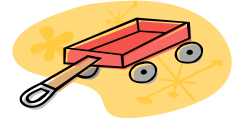


We feel that outside playtime is beneficial for our children, *even on red air quality days*. (There have been occasions that the teachers have decided to keep the children indoors when Salt Lake's air quality is one of the worst in the country.) It is *not* possible for some children to remain indoors while the rest of the class goes outside. If you prefer your child not to play outside on these days, please plan on picking up your child right after snack. Otherwise, all children will go outside with their class.

I wish all of you the very best this holiday season. May each of your families be safe, happy and enjoy the wonder of your little ones during this magical time of year!

Andrea Frampton
CCNS president

Less Commercial Gift Shopping



By Joe Gillespie

The commercialization of the holiday season has been growing for years, and its impact in 2010 can't be denied. Christmas decorations on sale in October, holiday music starting right after Halloween, Black Friday and Cyber Monday are all examples that the holiday season has gone beyond a time of family and celebration, even more so than when we were kids. And that commercialism has manifested itself more than ever in the toys our children receive. Even the most benign TV and movie characters, such as Dora, Thomas the Tank Engine and The Wonder Pets, appear on children's items you'd never think possible. Can all this toy commercialism and character branding be avoided, especially at this time of year? It's tricky, but a mostly character-free Christmas is possible.

Shop at smaller, independent toy stores: Tutoring Toy and Red Balloon are excellent in featuring toys and games you might never find at Wal-Mart or Toys 'r' Us. Game Night Games also carries kids' games from smaller companies such as Gamewright and Out of the Box. You may see an occasional marketed TV character at these stores, but you won't be bombarded with them as you will at Target. And don't just shop at smaller stores at Christmas - take your kids there during the year and let them browse. If they get the idea of a non-character toy before the holiday season, they may ask Santa for it come December.

Look online: Plenty of online retailers sell non-character toys, including [Oompa Toys](#) and [Back to Basics Toys](#).

Non-character toys generally are of better quality: Yes, not buying toys at a big box retailer may cost a little more, but it's a good bet that toy is better made. To sell a toy inexpensively while paying for the licensing of the character, likely, the quality will suffer. One example of this: Compare a Matchbox car from 30 years ago, made of die-cast metal, with one today that is mostly plastic.

Video game characters can be avoided, too: Unlike character toys, some video games with mass-marketed characters are quite good - if they started out as video games (that's why Super Mario games are great while games taken from TV or movie franchises are hit-or-miss). But will that matter to a preschooler?

It may take a little research of stores and online, but you can find video games with no marketed characters that are fun for younger kids and are generally less expensive than games with licensed characters (a great example of this are the Smart Boys/Smart Girls line of Nintendo DS games that are geared toward preschoolers). Yes, the games might not be as in-depth as a Mario or Sonic game, but again, will that matter to a preschooler?

Go retro with board games: Why does Operation need Shrek? Or Candy Land need Dora? Your kids might like the characters now attached to classic games (admittedly, my son loves his R2-D2 version of Trouble), but the original versions of all the games we grew up with still exist. (One word of caution: Many "classic" games aren't manufactured as well as they once were - you'll be surprised how flimsy the cards on Sorry! are, for example. You may find "classic" editions of these classic games that are more expensive but may be of better quality; you will have to judge whether the extra cost is worth it.)

Beware that licensing is creeping into good toys: Legos are still great toys, but practically every licensed character has a Lego set attached to it and Lego has almost branded itself as a marketed character. Thomas the Tank Engine used to be just high-quality trains; now, it's on a myriad of other products (and the trains aren't as high quality, either). Some toy companies have resisted (for example, Playmobil sets are still just Playmobil), but I wouldn't be surprised to see many start to pick up character licenses in an effort to compete.

Some character toys will slip through: Despite your best efforts, it's almost inevitable that your child will receive a couple character toys each holiday, either from relatives or from you. Not all of them are bad, especially the ones that started out as toys and expanded beyond their initial product line, such as Legos, Tech Decks and the aforementioned Matchbox Cars. (We're big Bakugan fans in our house, and the game itself is fun; it's all the other Bakugan merchandise and the TV show that drives me a little batty). And let's face it: If your child likes superheroes or princesses, there aren't many independent alternatives. One or two character-licensed toys, especially ones your child specifically might ask for, won't hurt and may still provide smiles (from your child and you) on Christmas morning.

Holiday Crafts

By Tracy Golden

Looking for fun, easy, simple crafts to do with your young children? Here are three ideas to try out this holiday season.

Hanukkah Handprint Menorah

Trace both of your children's hands on blue construction paper. Cut each handprint out and paste them onto a piece of white construction paper with the fingers pointing upward and the thumbs overlapping. Using yellow and orange markers, create a "flame" over the top of each finger (nine in all, with the overlapping thumbs creating just one "candle"). Along the top, bottom or sides of the white construction paper, write "Happy Hanukkah".

Gummy Trees

Purchase a small Styrofoam cone from a craft store such as Michaels that resembles a Christmas tree. Select some type of gummy candy, such as gummy Life Savers, gum drops, Gummi Bears, etc. Using toothpicks, have your children pierce the gummy candy and attach them to the Styrofoam. The end result is a decorated, edible tree that will delight your kids and appeal to their tummies, too.

Pine Cone Bird Feeders

Collect several large pine cones. Attach a string to one end of the pine cone so it can later be hung from a tree. Roll the pine cone (with string already attached) in sesame butter. Then, roll the pine cone in a bowl of birdseed. Hang outside on a tree limb that you can see through a window, and watch the birds come feed themselves on this delightful homemade treat.

Enjoy!



Spaghetti Dinner set for Jan. 7

Mark your calendars for the return of the CCNS Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser, scheduled for Friday, Jan. 7 in the church's Elliott Hall. The dinner, donated by The Old Spaghetti Factory, is for families and runs from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids. The evening will include a raffle and bingo.



Early Literacy through Poetry

By Wendy Wilde

As many of our CCNS kids are heading off to kindergarten next year, much emphasis is on getting them ready for this big step. One of the biggest preparations parents can help with is early literacy. Having your child ready to read is the best way to send your child off to kindergarten. For most children, learning to read is a fun and an exciting experience, but for the others, difficulty in reading can be associated with both present and future difficulties in school, and children who do not learn to read well in the first and second grades are likely to struggle with reading throughout their lives.

There are many ways to facilitate early literacy, but one of the most beautiful and fun is poetry. Poetry is also a wonderful path for children who do not show an interest in reading or are challenged in their connection with letters and words. With its rhythmic verses and rhymes and song like texture, poetry can facilitate an easier introduction and connection to sounds, words, ideas and story structure than more traditional reading. Poetry is often magical and silly and complex, all within the same poem; this dense fabric of thoughts and words can hold attention and provoke interest in language and how we use it and how it can be manipulated to be funny, scary, adventuresome, and so on.

For the abstract thinkers, reading poetry can be instrumental in helping ground broad and unfocused thinkers, because poetry often works in imagery rather than linear thought. Giving the more challenged reader a tangible way to put abstract thoughts together to make a story, idea, magical environment or, perhaps most importantly, an emotion. It gives this kind of child a story in which big words, which are often exciting and have big ideas or thoughts behind them, are used prominently and are not surrounded by tangents, or other plot points. It can really open a child up to a more creative way of directing thoughts and understanding the components of story.

Perhaps the greatest attribute of reading poetry to the reluctant reader is length. Most children's poetry is short, giving the reader a complete story – beginning, middle and end – within a few lines up to rarely more than a page. This length gives the whole story in a snapshot, but can leave the child with many new words and ideas they then carry throughout their day. Returning to the poem gives it greater depth and new understandings, all while remaining within same concise length.

Reading should open worlds to our children, and poetry is one of the fastest, if not most beautiful, ways in which to illustrate this. Reading Shel Silverstein's poetry to a child will show him/her worlds that reach far and wide, often wacky and sometimes dark. Reading Emily Dickinson's poetry takes what is right underfoot and brings a new depth of understand and magic and eyes to what we miss in the everyday moments of life for adults; but to children, it states the obvious in concise language and palpable imagery. Calef Brown is a wonderful poet who illustrates how poetry doesn't have to make conventional sense yet still be magically understandable.

These are just a few examples; there are thousands more. One great way to start for parents that have little experience with poetry themselves: Scholastic Books offers a *Poetry for Young People* series that compiles the best poetry for kids from some of our most gifted poets, as well as, several compilations of *The Best Poetry for Children*. Look for these titles online next time you order books. Poetry can make a strong reader soar and it can bring a timid reader to life.



Around Town

Compiled by Rosemary Quatralo

Free Christmas Carol Sing-along



EnergySolutions Arena

Dec. 20, 7 p.m.

Experience the sights and sounds of the season at this free event. This is your chance to sing all of your holiday favorites with friends and family.

Free Admission to Tracy Aviary



Through Dec. 31

Bring one new unwrapped toy to the Aviary and receive one free admission ticket. All toys will be donated to Toys for Tots.

Salt Lake City Firefighters clothing/blanket drive



Salt Lake City's firefighters are collecting new or gently used coats and blankets to help the needy. Bring donations to any fire station. While you are there, ask for a tour; the firemen are always willing to show the kids around.

Free skiing at Alta



The bunny hill and tow rope are free all day long. A great place for new skiers to practice. At 3 p.m. every day, the Sunnyside lift is free – no pass needed.



4A Field Trips
The Zoo and Fishing
Photos by Mark Ban





4B
Playing at
School
Photos by
Susan
Mooney



2B
Field Trip
to the
Aquarium

Photos by
Benedicte
Monsen

