

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year!

The summer flew by so quickly, and it's hard to believe that another school year has begun. It is our sincerest hope that your summer was filled with fun, fond memories, and magical new experiences.

As we move through September, I am pleased to say that all three classes are settling in very nicely. The beginning of the year can be challenging, as children need to make the move away from home and into school. This can be overwhelming at times, even for our "seasoned veterans" who are making the move to new classrooms and teachers. Easing into these new experiences gradually gives children time to acclimate without it being too much for them to navigate at once.

As you have no doubt read in your child's classroom newsletter, at the beginning of the school year we focus mainly on routines, making meaningful connections to teachers and friends, and managing children's big feelings. As children develop trusting relationships with the adults in the room, the teachers become both facilitators and an emotional support system that assists them in forming relationships with their classmates.

We are very fortunate to have student teachers from Lehman College in each classroom as an added layer of support for our youngest learners. Not only are they working with our children in the classrooms, but they are learning from their host teachers as well. Hands-on learning is for everyone, not just young children. We have been collaborating with Lehman College as a professional development site for many years, and it's exciting for us to be able to train future teachers in what developmentally appropriate practice is.

Curriculum at the beginning of the year runs concurrently throughout all three classrooms. Rules and routines, developing positive and trusting relationships, and making new friends are themes that are most important in September. After that, colors are a basic theme, with each class learning about colors and color mixing in their own unique way. As we move further into fall, the classes will begin using the community as a teaching tool, with trips to the local farmers' market and other fun activities. Stay tuned for more information on these experiences from your child's teacher.

On a more somber note, our beloved train in the Train Park had to be dismantled, as the ravages of time had taken their toll on it. As much as we love it, it was no longer safe for the children to play on, which led us to make this sad decision. It was loved by children in the community for years, and it will be sorely missed.

There is a silver lining, however. Our Parent Board is actively researching a new train to put in its place for future generations to enjoy. We can't have a Train Park without a train, and the Train Park is so synonymous with the Amalgamated community that having a new train is a must. We will keep you informed as to what is going on and when the new train will be put in place.

One of the new things that our young learners are navigating is school lunch. The DOE requires us to provide a nutritious lunch for all of our children, and we actively encourage our children to try what's being served. Some meals are met with enthusiasm, others less so. Rest assured that our food vendor supplies us well, and we never let children go hungry.

Here is an interesting little piece about preschoolers and nutrition. The article is from 2019, but the tips are timeless.

<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=preschooler-nutrition-90-P02273>

A word about birthday parties: We love celebrating children's birthdays in school, but here are a few tips to help you make the right decision on what to send in.

Keep it simple. For preschoolers, a cupcake is all that's needed. Each classroom has a special birthday story that they read with the birthday child and finishing up with a cupcake and "happy birthday" makes that child feel very special, indeed.

Mini cupcakes are a better choice than full size. Full size cupcakes with frosting on top are very high in sugar, and in fact, most children don't finish them, and they end up in the trash. Mini cupcakes are just the right size for a young child, without being overwhelming.

Goody bags are not necessary and often cause a distraction in the classroom as children want to remove the contents.

Remember, we are a nut-free school, so please read ingredients carefully before you purchase!

We are having so much fun in school, and we can't wait to see what October brings!

Happy Parenting,

Andrea