



The Kindergarten
at Rosemary Hill
a waldorf nursery school est 1977

Issue 3—18 November 2016

The Kindergartner



Grade R—preparing for 'big school'.

The children are practicing very hard to remember their lines and their (soprano) singing for the upcoming Christmas play and the excitement is building! Do diarise Wednesday, 7 December (and put in a day's leave if you must) and be there on this very special occasion to support your child.

The Grade R's are nearing the end of their time at The Kindergarten. On the last day of school, they will be escorted by their parents when they proceed to the Grade 1 classroom, where they will be met by their new class guardian, Hayley Davis. In this issue of The Kindergartner, we look at the developmental stage of the 5 to 7-year olds.

Some administrative reminders:

- Debbie & Sharné's classes will be performing their Christmas play to the parents on Wednesday, 7 December, the last day of school. After the play, Sharné will hand her Grade R-class and their parents over to Hayley at Class 1.

- School officially closes on Wednesday, 7 December. The Kindergarten's holiday programme will continue until Friday, 15 December. If you intend to let your child attend school during this period, kindly inform Jeanette on 082 495 3579, or Thea in the school office on (012) 802 1175. The Kindergarten will open again on Wednesday, 11 January 2017.

- A friendly reminder to pay your school fees timeously. If your school account is in arrears it impacts on our ability to cover the school's debts.

As always, I would like to encourage you to please send any comments, complaints or queries to info@thekindergarten.co.za You are also welcome to contact me with any suggestions for features or discussions on certain topics that you would like more information on.

Warm greetings,

Zelde.

Rhythm & Routine

Paradise lost or practicing for puberty?

Talk about the terrible two's, or the more feared terrifying three's and parents collectively roll their eyes knowingly. After surviving either one of these stages (albeit with a few battle scars) it should be smooth sailing until they reach their teens. Right?

Pre-schoolers go through an amazing change between the ages of about 5½ and 7 years. This sometimes stormy and intense period is also referred to as the 'first puberty', the first clue as to what type of behaviour you might expect from your child. During this developmental shift your sweet faced young child may transform into a whole different being, like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. Your child may change on all levels of his or her being: intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally.

To guide and support your child through this process, you need to know what changes will be happening before the transformation is complete.

Firstly, your child is growing. Their limbs will stretch; they will lose their 'baby fat' and those sweet dimples on the backs of their hands. They develop actual wrists, a waist and a neck. All this growing means a bigger appetite and they may experience growing pains. Leg aches, joint aches and even tummy aches are common complaints during this stage. They will also start to lose their baby teeth and grow new teeth; an uncomfortable and thrilling process! Even their heart rhythm changes during this transformation. These physical changes may result in your child feeling 'weird', uncomfortable, temperamental and sometimes even in considerable pain.

The physical changes are just one element of this developmental shift. Hold your child with tenderness and compassion, feed them healthy, nutritious food and make sure they get sufficient rest. Their bodies are constantly hard at work!

Until now, all their energy has been focused on developing and building their bodies. Intellectually, a new world is opening to your child. The internal organs are not fully formed at birth. It takes until around the age of seven to complete most of this development. Once this happens, the life forces are freed up to work on developing the feeling realm and the intellect. Your child will suddenly view the world differently; they will understand more. They will see that adults make mistakes and they will have piercing questions about the world.

This can be a painful time at the sense of loss of the magic of early childhood. They used to get lost in self-centred fantasy all the while being very connected to the world and to you. Now they have a more emerging sense of themselves as separate and individual. Exciting and empowering, as well as terrifying! As a parent, you will feel them separating from you and this is a bittersweet time for parents. We want our children to spread their wings, but the separation can be tough. Have the courage to let your child grow into the being they have come here to be.

This new perspective sets the stage for a new round of limit-testing. Everything looks different, so they need to find the boundaries once again. Don't be surprised if they become uncharacteristically bold toying with inappropriate language, arguing, outright refusal, disrespect, running around like a headless chicken or telling white lies. They will find their centre again if you maintain the boundaries with love and empathy. We need to reassure them that we have compassion and understanding for the process they are going through, and that we are here to hold them, to be in charge and to love them unconditionally.

Although their intellect is starting to sprout, they are still not ready for full academic or intellectual explanations. They still relate best to the world through stories and beautiful pictures. Let them linger a while longer in what remains of the magic and wonder of childhood - Grade 1 is just around the corner!

You will start to hear "I'm bored." This is a good sign of school readiness. Let them sit with it and struggle to find their inspiration. If they get too upset, draw them into what you are busy with. Children at this age need real, meaningful work to help organise their energy and motion. Let them help chop vegetables for dinner, set the table, sweep, pull weeds, repair things or whatever you are working on. Your cheerful, purposeful, competent action and energy will guide and ground them. Usually after a little time working with you, they will find their way back into their own world of imagination and play.

Up until now, your child has been a being of pure will. Their will has helped them learn to walk and talk; they have been centred on doing. With the six-year transformation, they shift into the next seven-year stage of being focused on feeling. They will begin to become more sensitive to the words and actions of others. An off-handed remark scarcely noticed a few months ago, now hurts their feelings. Many children will say things like "everyone is mean to me," or "no one likes me." This is an emotional time similar to adolescence. They are developing feelings, empathy and kindness and can be very sensitive. Take these statements with a grain of salt: have compassion for your child, but know that things are almost always not as bad as they feel in that moment. This is an important time to keep the communication flowing with your child's teacher. One day an incident or two can feel like the weight of the world is weighing on their shoulders and the next day, life is beautiful again. Do your best to keep a routine going. If your child says they do not want to come to school, know that this passes once they enter the classroom. Let the teacher know when your child is having a bad morning and ask how it went at the end of the day. Having these new feelings is hard at first. It's a great feat to learn to sort through them, to identify them and to make sense of them. A regular routine is a source of comfort and support.

With this new awareness of emotion, they will see that their actions can also trigger emotions in others. Children learn that they have power. They can make others laugh or pay attention with a single word or action. They experiment with manipulation and exclusion, as well as with being silly or inappropriate. It is our job to help guide this and to steadfastly hold the boundaries, with boundless love. Identify their need, name the emotions and give clear, simple words on how to be kind and appropriate and to do what is right. We find compromises and solutions. Sometimes it is hard. Your child might have to wait or share. But these are crucial lessons to learn for a healthy social environment.

Children at this age also begin to talk about God and infinity. Our children are fascinated by the concept of 'googolplex' - they want to know the highest possible number. What is the most? What is the furthest? The longest? They have amazing philosophical and theological conversations. Their minds are expanding as the world opens up to them.

This is potentially a time of great beauty, development, growth, confusion, sensitivity and change. The best way to guide your child through this, is by treating them with deep compassion, loving firmness and a strong daily routine. Your love and attention will see them through. Let them work, undertake new challenges and be there to embrace them in your arms when they need it. They might waver between going boldly out into the world with a new vision and regressing into being clingy and insecure. They need to be held between form and freedom, just as they will be in adolescence.

You are not alone in this process. Be kind to your 6-year old, and be kind to yourself!