

KNIGHTLY NEWS

WINTER 2005

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UPDATES



IT'S A NEW YEAR and a new issue of the Knightly News, your quarterly update on what's new at the school and on its website (www.knighthallschool.org). This issue includes information and simple ideas for fun and learning through storytelling and cooking with children. We also welcome Carla, ask for your help and spotlight the importance of exercise for children. Don't forget that this publication is meant to be yours, so please let me know if you have any thoughts on what we should include to share with the extended Knight Hall family. You can send ideas to me anytime by email to martha@knighthallschool.org. Thank you.

Martha

I hope your family enjoyed a warm and cheerful holiday season, and that the new year brings you and yours peace, health and much joy!

COMING SOON

Do you have friends and relatives that live far away that would love to see where your children spend much of their time learning and growing? Do you have new neighbors or co-workers that might be interested in a high-quality childcare placement for their children? Well, telling them about Knight Hall is about to get a lot easier. You know the expression that a picture is worth a thousand words... Well, friends and neighbors will be able to take a virtual tour of the school from the comfort of their own home by clicking on the following link: www.knighthallschool.org/virtualtour.htm. Check it out. You may be surprised at how warm and inviting the school looks even without all the children engaged in learning and growing in every room... ■

CONSIDER GIVING

It is a **New Year**. The hectic holiday season is over. Now is the perfect time to consider a **tax-deductible donation to Knight Hall School**. By giving, you do more than just lower your 2005 tax bill and help the school replace aging classroom equipment. Your donation will fund facilities improvements to help teachers display materials in ways that **spark our children's imaginations**. It will help them create

more exciting learning centers, and allow them to **devote more time** to observing and interacting with our children.

So please **give now, as generously as you are able**. Knight Hall School depends on your donations. Tuition just covers the immediate costs of running the school. We rely on your generosity to **support our mission** of creating a stimulating, non-judgmental environment that promotes **self-discovery and learning through play**. Over 82% of tuition goes to staff salaries and benefits alone. Making this the school's highest priority contributes to the low turnover at Knight Hall, and to the **happiness and stability** our children feel here. We count on you to help us in whatever ways you can. Together we take the children farther toward building **a strong foundation for a lifetime of success**. Thank you! We wish you and your entire family a warm and loving new year!

Martha Wylie, *Director* and The Board of Directors: Marlene Smith, *Parent and Chair*; Eve Wemmett, *Director Emeritus*; Wendy Harwin, *Parent and Secretary*; TJ Jones, *Parent and Advisor, Legal Issues*; Dave Kozak, *Parent and Chair, Facilities Committee*; Marlon Lindsay, *Parent and Chair, Fundraising Committee*; Wendy Miller, *Parent and Co-Chair, Events Committee*; Dean Nichols, *Parent and Chair, Finance Committee*; Kathy Scanlon, *Parent and Advisor, Legal Issues*; Ashley Zapata, *Parent and Co-Chair, Events Committee*. ■

STORYTELLING: A POWERFUL LEARNING TOOL

"Narrative is the human way of working through a chaotic world of information."—E.O. Wilson, Biologist

Stories are how we all make sense of things. For children they are even more important. Researchers are finally verifying what parents and educators have long known: storytelling is crucial to child development. It works in many ways to strengthen the neural networks that make all learning possible, and it motivates and invites children to want to read. It also develops children's understanding of plot and sequence which improves



Jo-Ann in action, delighting a rapt audience...

writing and other important academic skills later in life. And the best part is that this powerful educational tool is great fun and requires no special equipment or schooling. Here are just a few ways storytelling helps children learn:

- **Imagination:** Listening to stories prompts children to form images of things that are not present. This is the foundation of imagination and fosters listening and reading comprehension. Without pictures from a book, children are free to imagine on their own marsh reeds in a swamp, for example, even if they have never before seen them. Imagination is the basis of creativity and of problem solving. It is also necessary for healthy development of social skills. Children who lack imagination cannot imagine alternatives to perceived hostility, nor can they imagine a variety of solutions to conflict. In addition, recent research indicates that hearing stories over and over strengthens paths in the brain that allow children to more easily integrate all new learning.
- **Vocabulary:** Children are exposed to new words while listening to stories, and more importantly, they are given

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How to Tell a Good Story

Telling good stories is an art. Like many art forms, anyone can dabble, and the more you dabble, the better you get. The tips below are compiled from the advice of several expert storytellers:

1. Pick a story you really enjoy. You can start by telling the stories you know best, family stories perhaps, or stories of when your child was younger. Young children especially enjoy listening over and over to stories in which they are the star.
2. Become familiar with the story, whether by reading it or reviewing it several times in your mind, then write a few sentences on the storyline.
3. Close your eyes and visualize each scene and the movement from one to another.
4. Tell the story all the way through without stopping. Do not worry about missteps and mistakes. It takes time to smooth out the telling.
5. Tell the story over and over. Like with any art, practice is essential.
6. Once you can move fluently along the story path, dress it up. Add repetitive words or phrases and rhymes. Include dialog to make the story come alive in the listener's mind. Choose where to invite participation.
7. Make sure the beginning and end are especially strong. A key phrase such as "Once in land far, far away..." or "Once when I was a youngster no bigger than you..." sets the stage and prepares the listener for something wonderful.
8. Don't be afraid to use some words children don't know. Elicit possible meanings of key vocabulary from children. This helps them remember words they learn in context.
9. End your story clearly by slowing and dropping your voice with a key phrase such as "And that's the story of..." or "And that is how I..." Listeners are a step behind the teller, forming images in their minds. Slowing helps them finish the tale with you.
10. Most importantly, have fun with the telling. It's contagious.

context from which to extract meaning. Vocabulary size is one of the most accurate predictors of school success.

- **Communication Skills:** Children enjoy talking about the stories they hear. You may hear them repeat for you stories they have heard at school. Oral communication practice stimulates improvement in all kinds of communication. Children naturally relate the stories they hear to their own experiences, and this prompts them to share their own stories. This helps develop written and oral skills.
- **Critical Thinking:** Stories often expose children to challenges and promote confidence about overcoming them. They teach how to face adversity, and illustrate the benefits of love, compassion, friendship and courage. Stories can be invaluable to children facing real traumas such as divorce, poverty or substance abuse. They also increase tolerance and understanding of differences.

Stories provide a safe way to explore difficult issues. Through stories children develop compassion and a better understanding of the feelings and experiences of others.

For more information:

Talk to our resident expert, Jo-Ann (Blue Room teacher and talented storyteller). She has been a storyteller for over 15 years and belongs to many professional storytelling organizations. She is happy to share tips and ideas. [Click here to contact Jo-Ann.](#)

[Click here](#) for her hand out, *Literature and Storytelling*, which includes ideas on what kinds of stories to tell children of different ages. You might also [click here](#) for her November *Blue Room News* on the benefits of folktales and fairytales.

Jo-Ann also recommends the book *Tell it Again* by Shirley C. Raines. It includes good stories for young children, and a section that outlines the tales to help budding storytellers. ■

COOKING WITH KIDS

Winter is the perfect time for baking. The warmth and delicious smells that come from the oven are at their best when it is dreary, icy and slushy outside. And cooking and baking are excellent activities to enjoy with children of almost any age. Even the youngest Knight Hall youngster can help pour and mix or decorate, and the satisfaction and pride that comes from serving and sharing something they helped make is wonderful. Remember the old commercial? “And I helped!” This is a wonderful time to bring that feeling to your children.

Cooking provides many opportunities to explore math and science together, as you measure ingredients, observe them change as they are mixed and if you have a window and a light in your oven as they are baked. Here are some favorite recipes, and ideas for where to go for more on making cooking and baking learning activities in your home. Happy eating!—*Martha*

Thumbprint Cookies

Children love making these classic cookies. Sticking their thumbs into warm cookie dough and filling their thumbprints with sweet fillings is almost as thrilling as sharing (and eating) the finished product! In shaping and squishing the dough and assembling the “jewel” encrusted cookies, your child will practice valuable math and reading skills of measuring, and following step-by-step instructions.

Ingredients:

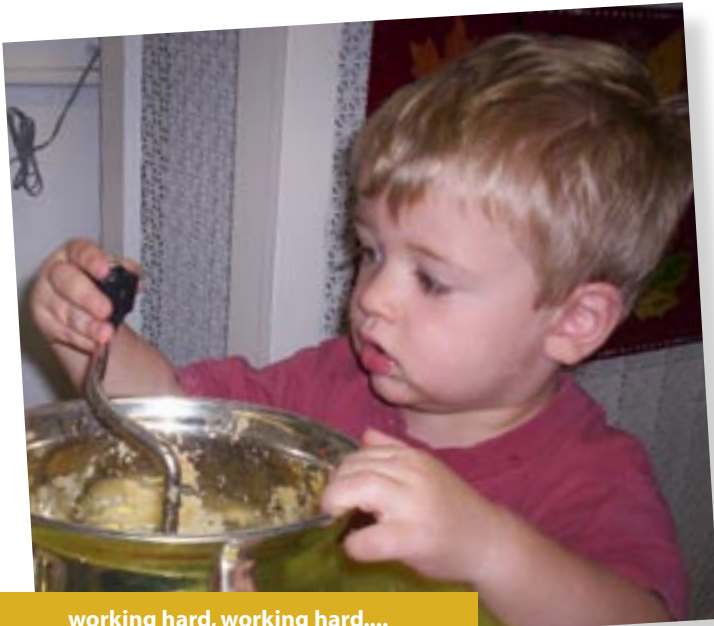
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup softened butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1¼ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- a variety of fillings: e.g. strawberry jam, blueberry preserves, pumpkin pie filling and/or lemon curd

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees
- Smash the sugar and butter together with a fork
- Beat in the vanilla, eggs, flour, baking powder and salt.
- Roll the dough into a ball, then chill the dough for ½ hour.
- Pinch off pieces of dough and roll into 1-inch balls
- Place the dough balls on a lightly greased and floured cookie sheet and bake for 5 minutes
- Remove the cookies from the oven, let cool briefly, then make a thumbprint in each one
- Put cookies back in oven and continue baking until done, about 8 minutes
- When the cookies are cool, fill the thumbprints with a bit of jelly, jam, pumpkin pie filling or lemon curd

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COOKING WITH KIDS...



working hard, working hard....

Tie-Dye Cookies

This is another treat that allows children to practice math skills by dividing the dough, and to experiment with color and mixing. The best part is that children can observe and test (taste) their experiments in a short time span.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup of butter, softened
- ½ cup confectioner's sugar
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- red, yellow, blue, green food coloring

Directions:

- Mix butter, confectioner's sugar and vanilla until creamy.
- Slowly mix in flour.
- Divide dough into 4 balls.
- Add one color to each ball and mix until well-blended.
- Divide each ball in half, so you have 8 balls.
- Roll each ball between your palms to make 8 thin logs.
- Roll all the logs together to make one thicker log about 8 inches in length. If too soft, place in the refrigerator for a few minutes.
- Slice the log into ¼ inch slices.
- Place on an ungreased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 350° for 10 minutes.

For more ideas for enjoying cooking and learning with children visit:

Adventures in Cooking

This article on the About.com site offers advice on how to introduce children to baking. It also includes links to many other related articles.

<http://baking.about.com/cs/familybaking/a/cookingadventur.htm>

WicWorks

This link leads to a wonderful list of simple, quick, kid-friendly recipes for meals, snacks and desserts.

http://www.wicworks.ca.gov/education/nutrition/kidsRecipes/cooking_recipes.htm

Kids in the Kitchen

More ideas for age-appropriate cooking and recipes.

http://www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fc46_cook.kids.html

KidsRCooking

This site includes a tremendous list of recipes for making various play materials—all kinds of bubble mixtures, play doughs and goops for a variety of purposes.

<http://www.kidsrcooking.com/>

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS ISSUE?

What else would you like to see in *The Knightly News*? Is there a particular topic you keep meaning to ask your child's teacher about? Do you wonder what meals work the best for kids in the yellow room, or how you can help your child develop small motor skills without making writing a chore? You are probably not the only one. Please let me know and I will gather information from the KHS staff for you and publish the information here for the benefit of the whole KHS community. Drop me a note in the morning, give me a call at 232-9015, or email me at martha@knighthallschool.org, and thank you for your ideas and feedback!—*Martha*

NEW LINKS TO EXPLORE

Have you browsed through any of the links on the Resources pages yet (www.knighthallschool.org/links.htm)? Look there first, next time you are looking for good parenting advice, what to do ideas, or information about books for or about children!

Below are some of the latest links to give you a taste of what's there. Check out our website at www.knighthallschool.org/links.htm to get to the complete list. If your favorite family site is not there, please email wendy@knighthallschool.org and let us know so we can include it.

Best Children's Museums

http://www.child.com/living_in_style/family_travel/top10_museums.jsp

Click here for the results of Child magazine's survey of the best places for learning and fun around the country. Go beyond the top 10 to read about the 50 best and to learn about what is available on their websites and more.

Association of Children's Museums

<http://www.childreasmuseums.org>

This Web site has information about children's museums throughout the world. Simply click on a location on the map and you'll find a link to the closest children's museum. You can also find out which museums are members of the ACM and offer free admission with your Science Center of Connecticut (here in West Hartford) membership.

Kids in Mind

<http://www.kids-in-mind.com/>

Kids-in-mind.com aims to provide parents and other adults objective and complete information about a film's content so that they can decide, based on their own value system, whether they should watch a movie with or without their kids. The site gives each movie ratings in 3 easy to understand categories, sex/nudity, violence/gore and profanity, and then summarizes the situations from the movie in each category.

WELCOME BACK, CARLA!

Knight Hall School is pleased to welcome Carla Pena back to the classrooms! The children have missed her friendly smile and calm manner. Carla first started working as a floater at Knight Hall School in 1999, when she was a sophomore in high school! Now she is a student at St. Joseph College, studying social work. Carla has agreed to fill in Monday through Friday from 3 to 5:30 pm in the Blue Room after Jo-Ann leaves. We are very happy to have someone the children already know and love for that busy time. Thank you, Carla!

KNIGHT HALL EMPHASIZES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

According to the journal *Pediatrics*, obesity among children 3–5 is on the rise, and lack of physical activity is a principle cause. A recent University of South Carolina study found that many children get less than half the recommended 2–5 hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity at school. And the problem isn't just the health risks related to obesity: "Children learn by moving and physically exploring their environment," said Dr. Russ Pate, a USC researcher and former president of the American College of Sports Medicine. "Physical activity also is valuable in a social context as they learn to play together. There are a lot of reasons why children need to be active, and obesity prevention is only one aspect."

This has always been key to the Knight Hall philosophy. Since the beginning, Knight Hall teachers have emphasized physical activity as an important part of the learning curriculum. The outdoors is most conducive to this type of activity, so parents are urged to provide their children with appropriate clothing at school for going outside in any weather. These days that includes warm, waterproof boots, coat, snow pants, mittens, and most importantly a snug hat. In the spring and fall rain gear, including rain boots are important, and summer gear includes sunscreen, a hat, towel and a change of dry clothes for after water play. But even when outside play is impossible because of severe temperatures or other weather conditions, KHS teachers plan carefully to ensure children get plenty of opportunities for active play in the classrooms and shared area.