

Los Niños News ©

December 2014

Soup 'n Santa!

Let's Get Stoned!

Holiday Parties are coming and this year again we will be making our regionally famous *Stone Soup*. Based on a timeless fable, it's a story of food and sharing and celebration most fitting the Holidays. The director/chef will prepare the soup on site the day of the Party and all you have to do is send:

with your child to school that day and then come back for the last half-hour of the session to enjoy some soup and good cheer. 3TW, if you do send extra, don't worry it will be shared with our neighbors at the Catholic Worker (160 Kelly).

We have also invited Santa Claus to join us!! This could be another great photo-op at Los Niños Nursery School!

The TTh Party will be Dec. 18.
The MWF Parties will be Dec. 19.

F.A.Q.s

Q. What are some great gift ideas for young children?

A. We don't like to interfere too much with your parenting/gifting style...but since you asked...we strongly encourage parents to shy away from the use of, once, trashy, senseless, tied-to-some-silly-movie-toys available at such places as Junk-R-U's. And make no mistake about it: violence toys depict violent behaviors. It is so easy to buy good, quality playthings.

There are even stores at the shopping centers now selling toys

for bright kids like yours. School supplies are a great idea. We order them from Discount School Supply or online.

Q. When is the Winter Recess?

A. It begins (i.e. no school) Monday 12/23 and we'll be back on Monday 1/6/14.

Q. Are there any good new movies for young children out there?

A. I really don't think so...be very skeptical. Children are easily frightened and there is *nothing funny about scaring young children*. Special effects and animation doesn't necessarily make it a good film for children and there is plenty of evidence that *debilitating fears* are indeed not good for our children.

Furthermore, a recent study from Ohio State University found that: The level of gun violence in the top-selling PG-13 movies has been rising, and it now exceeds that in the most popular R-rated films.

Q. Are there any good books out there for young children?

A. Wow, good question! There are scant few bad books for young children, trust your judgment, good illustrations, simple story, traditional favorite...if you like it and want to read it with your child..., wrap it up or load it onto your Kindle.

Q. What about software?

A. Most ECE professionals agree with Steve Jobs who famously said that computers et al are

expensive "flash cards" for young children and don't warrant a big investment of our time or money.

A comprehensive new study by Joshua Angrist of MIT found "...a consistently negative relationship between the use of computers as teaching aides in math and language performance". A wonderful book by Todd Oppenheimer, *The Flickering Mind*, makes a compelling argument that, "youngsters have a chance to become confident masters of the tools of their day to better address the problems of tomorrow. Alternatively, they can also become victims of commercial novelties and narrow measures of ability, underscored by misplaced faith in standardized testing. Computers and their attendant technologies did not cause all of these problems, but they are quietly accelerating them."

Please just let your children go out and play!

Q. What do you think about Barbie?

A. From the Campaign For A Commercial Free Childhood: "Help the Girl Scouts teach your daughter she can be anything... as long as she looks like Barbie!" The Barbie Loves Girl Scouts doll, brought to you by a \$2 million dollar payoff from Mattel to Girl Scouts of the USA, features Barbie's trademarked impossibly thin body, pink capris and high-heeled hiking boots. Girl Scout Barbie is the perfect toy to teach your daughter the soul-crushing truth that everything is

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for sale—including the nation’s largest leadership organization for girls.” I never liked Barbie.

This Just In!

From a recent SF Chronicle headline:

“Preschoolers at play show science skills”

Friend of Los Niños at U.C. Berkeley, Dr. Alison Gopnik is still trying to persuade the public that children are learning when they play. To quote from the article: “When kids incessantly ask ‘Why?’, mess around in the dirt and run their hands over everything within reach, they’re not just being kids. It turns out they’re also being scientists”.

Golly, we at LNNS have known this all along. She also suggests that “...direct teaching can backfire. It leads to a narrowing of what children are thinking about, instead of an extension or broadening of it.” Or, as it says on our website: *At Los Niños we affirm the promise of what children can learn...rather than the limitations of what they can be taught.*

Comments on Literacy

Literacy is reading and writing. Literacy is an exponential process of skills* acquisition, not an isolated academic experience. We believe that children do *learn to read*, just as they acquire spoken language(s), often without a Teacher.

The long held notion, declared to his day by many, that a teacher in the 2nd grade *teaches children to read* is simply a fallacy and more

importantly a misunderstanding, by the pedagogy, of the way children learn. And unfortunately it shifts emphasis and recognition from the acquisitive child to the often intrusive pedant. That the confluence of a panoply of skills* often occurs for the child around the ages of 7 or 8 is true and explains the layman’s perception that... now the child is “reading”. At Los Niños, we like the way your children become literate!

*Sight recognition (memorization), context inference, phonetics, utilizing visual clues (in the case of picture books) and rote.

Let Me Tell You A Story

Recently I attended a lecture by Kevin Kumashiro, the new Dean of The School of Ed. at USF. He began his wonderful talk by saying: “I want to tell you a story...” We were all riveted.

My mother, Mary Ann Whiting, was for many years the Children’s Librarian and Storyteller at the Menlo Park Library. For the first twenty years of LNNS she would visit and tell stories to the children about twice a month. She always began, “Let me tell you a story”. We were all riveted. Human beings are hard-wired to listen carefully to the “Elders of the Tribe” tell stories, we have a very strong *Oral Tradition* and what they said was essential to the history, traditions and survival of the tribe. So when that little white-haired woman with the wonderful voice began to tell a story, had we offered the option of a video or other screen-time, it was no contest!

Don’t hesitate to tell stories to your children about anything. A walk in the forest with your own father when you were young, has already stood the test of time. And remember, start with, “*let me tell you a story*”.

And Keep On Talking!

Researchers at the U. of Chicago have found that “Preschool children who hear their parents describe the size and shape of objects and then use those words themselves perform better on tests of their spatial skills”. We know from many other studies and our own curriculum at LNNS that “spatial thinking is an important predictor of STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) achievement and careers”.

Kindergarten Registration

Begins late January 2015. Visit your local school with Birth Certificate and Immunization Record. Suggestion: Ask to visit some classrooms before the “Roundup” meetings... this is an important decision and you want as much subjective information as possible. I believe strongly that since these are your public schools and that you pay for them, you should feel free to **visit anytime** with an appointment.

Happy Holidays to All

&

A Happy New Year!