HOUNSFIELD HEIGHTS BRIAR HILL COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL

TIPS & TRICKS FOR A *TERRIFIC* SPECIAL HELPER DAY!

As our playschool is parent-child cooperative, parent involvement is a crucial part of running the school. We appreciate that it can be very difficult to arrange work schedules, or childcare for siblings, but please know that your involvement in the classroom is a huge benefit to all! We see the children beam with pride and love when they have the opportunity to introduce you as their special person. Parents are occasionally surprised at how their child acts during the day. Their children may become very shy, or even silly during their time in the spot light - as the Calendar & Weather Child, & Show & Tell Host. As their teachers, we take cues from the children, and encourage them to do as much or as little as they can handle. These circumstances really keep us on our toes, and make us decide in the moment whether to provide a prompt, a redirect, or a distraction. But when your child's next helper day comes along, you may see that they've reached another step in their development! In fact, as the year continues, your child will probably be asking when their next helper day is! To assist in making the most of these special days, please take time to review the information below.

What should you do during free play?

PLAY! There are many opportunities for both the parent helper and teacher to play games and read stories to children, as well as engage in dramatic play. We don't want you to miss your chance to interact with your child and their play buddies. You can really learn a lot about your own child, and in the process, get to know the little friends your child talks about. Get down on your hands and knees, build a tower (only up to a child's shoulders of course), put on a puppet show or dig into some play dough!

- If you are helping in the morning class, one teacher will work at the craft table while the other will float among centres to play and work with various children.

Please take the time to float through centres, or help with the optional craft table.

- If you are helping in the afternoon class, you will find that you are at the craft table more often and might rotate with the teacher if she is needed elsewhere. The teachers time at the craft table is valuable because we can do informal assessment and facilitate skill development.

How can you help the children?

You can help the children by role modelling, following their lead in play, and encouraging them to think and problem solve. If it is safe, then let the child do, or at least try to do, before helping. Let them ask for help. We all know adults can cut, glue, and build a puzzle, so please let the children learn to do it.

Crafts and Art Projects

Our program values the efforts and process that a child puts into creating something that belongs to them, whether it is a craft item or a piece of art. For this reason, we ask that you give assistance only as required. Rather than printing a child's name, help them spell it. Or help them with the sequencing of the project. Do not be concerned if a child's creation does not look like the example we provide. As the year progresses, we encourage the children to try to print their own name, starting with the first letter or two. We use the tracing method. We print the upper case letter with a yellow highlighter and the child traces over top (not dot to dot). We use all uppercase letters because they are easier to learn to print. If they aren't feeling ready for this, we ask the child to tell us their letters so we can scribe for them OR do hand over hand. You will find that some children do reversals. It is common for their whole name to be reversed rather than the letters in isolation. Don't worry about this. The craft/writing table is all about trying. There are other opportunities where we can help them practice printing their letters, and learning to print left to right.

Clean up Time

Please help the children tidy up. Encourage and direct them. The role of clean-up time has many benefits for the children including working as a team and feeling a sense of accomplishment. It is not a race, and reminders are needed on how to help and where things go. The playschool rule: If you played, you help tidy up!

Conflicts in the Classroom

Just like in the adult world, we don't always get along with our friends, family members or co-workers. Parent helpers often feel uncomfortable with the question of discipline. As teachers, we really do not have eyes in the back of our head, but we do have super hero hearing! If we notice a fuss, we try not to step in immediately. This of course depends upon the situation, and the particular children involved. Quite often, we will wait and observe how things unfold. Many times, the children just need an adult presence to help them work things out. However, if it seems intervention and problem solving are needed - we will use a "time in" - one of the teachers takes the children involved to the story carpet to discuss the situation. During the "time in", we help the children recognize the facial expression, body language and emotional state of the other child. Awareness of the other child's reaction to this conflict can assist the children in accepting responsibility for their actions. During our "time in", we may ask the children the following questions: Please look at your friend, how do you think they are feeling?

- Why do you think they are feeling that way?
- What is Cheeky's first rule? Cheeky's first rule is everyone has fun.
- Are you helping your friend to have fun?
- What happened?
- What do you think we could do different next time?
- Please ask your friend what you can do to make him/her feel better.

This last part puts the upset child back in control of the situation. Some children ask for an apology, some want a hug, some say, "please don't do that anymore", and some ask to play. We find that following through on a child's specific request becomes much more meaningful than "sorry" to both children.

Children are able to forgive and forget quickly, so typically there is no need to go further. Things usually get handled. A cliché, we know, but "what happens at playschool…stays at playschool" can often describe conflict resolution in the classroom. However, we will always let you know about recurring situations, or cases where a child has been injured. If your child ever comes home and feels that things have not been resolved, please let us know and we will revisit the issue. Sometimes children will mention something days later and we will then be happy to problem solve with you. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any concerns.

Snack Time

Snack time is a civilized time at playschool. You will hear us refer to “restaurant style”. Restaurant style specifically means to use your manners rather than shouting at the server. The parent helper can go around, offering each child the snack. We respect the child (ren) and do not decide what food to place on their napkin. We let them decide but of course, we can still encourage them. Once the child decides they are finished, they are expected to clean up after themselves, wash up, and head to the carpet to read books.

And Lastly…

We appreciate the time parents devote to being a participant in their child’s playschool experience. We want our helpers to feel a welcome part of the classroom activities. Our hope is that parents will enjoy their time interacting with their child and their classmates. We will NOT think parents are ‘slacking off’ if they’re playing with the children. We believe parents can learn many things about their child, and child development, through participation. Please join in at gym time, sing along with us, build and create alongside the children. We ask that you allow each child to create and explore, and even make mistakes for themselves. We celebrate each child and their unique gifts and potential!

Have fun with the children - and talk to them! Preschoolers are delightful conversationalists, and most children welcome an opportunity to share their ideas. Of course, we must also remember there will also be some children who are shy, and happier to play alongside you, without conversation.

If you would like to share a special interest, hobby or even read a story to the group on your child’s special helper day, just let us know a day or two ahead and we can plan for it.

Thank you for all you do!
We look forward to your Parent Helper Day in the weeks ahead!