

# Fall Newsletter

Welcome to a new school year at Westminster. With a new playground and outdoor learning space we thought we would start the year off with an issue about the importance of learning through play. Here at Westminster we believe in fostering growth of the whole child. Play has been found to be one of the best methods for children to acquire skills in all areas of development.

TITLE By Gaye Gronlund

As a parent, you want your children to learn all that they can—to grasp math concepts, to be curious about exploring the world, and to learn to read and write. Did you know that you can help your son or daughter academically by playing with them? Play and learning go together!

What kind of play helps children learn the best? Play that really engages children—play that they will focus on and stay with even when problems arise. This kind of play helps children develop their approaches to learning—in other words, the ways they respond to learning situations. Curiosity about the world, initiative and problem solving, and focused attention and persistence are just a few approaches to learning that children develop through play.

In the early years, parents can help children develop the skills to be better students by playing with them. Yes, as they enter kindergarten and the elementary years, children need to have some understanding of letters and numbers. However, if they have not developed solid approaches to learning, they will not be as successful in school settings.

## YOUR ROLE AS YOUR CHILD PLAYS

Playing with your child helps keep your child engaged in the kind of play where learning occurs. Your interest, questions, and comments as you play alongside will help your child use toys productively. And the two of you will have lots of fun together! Most importantly, you will be working toward your child's future success as a student by building important approaches to learning. Play and learning go together!

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK  
AND ONLINE AT  
WECEP.ORG



learning is  
**NOT**  
a spectator  
sport.

so let's  
**PLAY!**

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## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Oct 21-25 WCDC Fall Conferences
- Oct 28 Fall Festival
- Oct 30 & 31 WNSK Halloween Parades
- Oct 31 WCDC Halloween Parade
- Nov 26 & 27 WNSK Thanksgiving Feast
- Nov 27 WCDC Thanksgiving Feast
- Nov 28 & 29 ALL PROGRAMS CLOSED
- Dec 13 Last Day WNSK Enrichment Classes
- Christmas Break WNSK 12/19 -1/3
- Christmas Break WCDC 12/23-1/1

# PLAY

is the work of childhood  
Mr. Rogers



## 5 Essentials to Meaningful Play

Here are five elements essential to meaningful play that create those rich memories we treasure:

### 1. Children make their own decisions.

When children choose how to play for themselves, they experience freedom in making those choices. They also begin to see connections between choice and the consequences or results of that choice. The type of toys or materials parents offer can help their children make more meaningful decisions. Open-ended materials can be used in many ways so children can decide for themselves how to use them. For example, a child can imagine a block to be a fire truck or any number of things. A toy fire truck, on the other hand, is usually used as a fire truck. Foam pieces, little wooden sticks, ribbon scraps, and other reusable resources are all open-ended materials that inspire creative thinking and delight when children use them to make something no one has ever made before.

### 2. Children are intrinsically motivated.

The impulse to play comes from a natural desire to understand the world. This play impulse is as strong as your child's desire for food or sleep.<sup>1</sup> It is this intrinsic motivation that allows a child to regulate her own feelings and desires in order to keep playing. Because children eventually find it more important to be part of play with their friends than to satisfy their own wants and needs at that moment, children learn self-control. And self-control has been shown to lead to success in later years, especially in today's information age, where distractions are part of daily life.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Children become immersed in the moment.

In true play, children are so fully engaged that they lose awareness of their surroundings, time, and space. In this risk-free atmosphere where reality is suspended, children have the security and safety they need to experiment, try new ideas, and investigate the laws of nature. Although they are immersed in their play, children still can recognize reality versus fantasy, something parents often wonder about.

### 4. Play is spontaneous, not scripted.

Often, play is totally unplanned. Other times, play is planned but a child impulsively makes a change. One child changes his mind, or perhaps a toy does not cooperate. This sense of the unknown provides children with opportunities to develop flexibility in their thinking and decision making, which is a vital life skill.

### 5. Play is enjoyable.

Play always has an emotional response attached to it. Without this emotional connection, the experience is simply an activity; it is not PLAY. Enjoyment is the direct result of engaging in play. It is FUN! These five essential elements of play outline why play provides your child with a rich experience. And isn't that what we want for our children, to develop play memories that will become the "good old days"?

## ENCOURAGING TODDLERS AT PLAY

Joey is 20 months old. He has a basket full of toys, including rattles, soft plastic blocks, a set of stacking rings, stuffed animals, and cloth and plastic books. Joey's dad often sits down on the floor with Joey and invites him to play with items in the basket. Joey's favorite activity is to dump out all of the toys and put the basket on his head! This is typical toddler play behavior. Joey is curious about the world and is looking at it another way—through the slats in the basket!

Joey loves to shake the rattles to hear the different sounds or to stack two or three blocks and knock them down. His attention to each might be up to five minutes or so, which is just right for his age. He may solve problems as he tries to place the rings on the stacking post or to add more blocks to a tower.

Joey's dad encourages his curiosity. He comments about what he is doing: "I see you are trying to get that last ring on the post, but it just won't fit." Or he asks him questions: "Where did that ball go? Do you see it hiding behind the chair?" He connects his play to learning by responding positively to his interest: "I can tell you like to look through the basket, you silly boy. Does everything look different from under there?" He also encourages him by asking him to keep trying even when he gets frustrated. "Oh, those blocks keep falling down, don't they? Can you try to put just one on top of another gently? Let's see what happens. I'll help you." This encouragement fosters his perseverance, his attention, and his initiative at problem solving, all positive approaches to learning.

## ENCOURAGING PRESCHOOLERS AT PLAY

Alicia is 4 years old. She loves to dress up in her mommy's clothes, jewelry, and shoes and then pretend to go shopping, care for her baby dolls, and cook dinner. Through her pretend play Alicia learns to think abstractly. When she holds a block in her hand and uses it to pretend to talk on the phone, she is using the block as a symbol for something else. That's abstract thinking in action! And, since letters and numbers are abstract because they are symbols of what they represent, pretend play is one way a child develops her understanding of letters and numbers.

Alicia's mom and dad have recognized that supporting her pretend activities keeps her engaged for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. They pretend right along with her, asking her to "bake some cookies" or to "go grocery shopping" for them. They give her paper and crayons so that she can pretend to write grocery lists. They encourage her to count how many items she has placed in her toy shopping cart. They accept her scribbles and letter-like shapes as her writing (just right for 4-year-olds) and help her when the numbers get a little mixed up.

Alicia will work with puzzles for long periods of time, too, especially if her dad joins her. Together, they figure out strategies for putting the pieces together. She may turn the pieces around, trying out different ways until she is successful. She is developing problem solving and persistence as she does so.

# back to school



A NEW playground and tradition kicked off the 2019-2020 school year at WECEP

## A NEW PLAYGROUND

Pastor Jason lead us in song and Pastor Louise lead us in prayer at the ribbon cutting of our new playground.

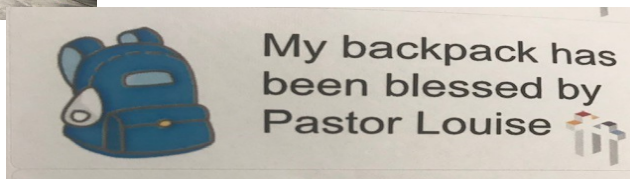
Joan Stephans, Chair of the Rossin Foundation spoke to us about Naomi Circle as we dedicated Naomi's Playground.

The Rossin Foundation provided a grant to WECEP which enabled us to purchase our playground equipment. We are forever grateful!

## A NEW TRADITION

This year Pastor Louise joined us on four occasions to bless the backpacks of our CDC children in Pre School, Pre K and both the AM and PM Sessions of the NSK's Preschool, PreK and Kindergarten classes.

We hope to make this an annual back to school event.



Big body play is the very physical, vigorous, boisterous, and sometimes bone-jarring play style many children love and crave.

### Big body play is...

- When a child throws herself onto a sofa.
- When children wrestle.
- When friends jump off climbing equipment.

**When friends chase each other as they laugh, or race to a finish line.**

### Why is big body play important for children?

Big body play supports children's physical development but it also supports the development of children's social awareness, emotional thinking, and language skills. Research shows that big body play comes naturally to children. Children all over the world play this way, and that is why it's so important that adults, both teachers and family members, understand and support it.

### How does big body play support children's learning?

There are many ways big body play supports and enhances children's learning.

Younger children gain a lot of information about their bodies through big body play. For example, when a mother kisses or massages her baby's body, her baby learns about where his body ends and the space around him begins. He also learns how different types of touch *feel* and the names for those feelings.

When a toddler jumps into her dad's lap, or she runs to hug a friend, she learns how to control and regulate her body movements. She also learns that she should adapt the intensity of her movements in relation to another person. For example, she might run to hug her friend with less force than she uses to jump into her dad's lap.

When children enjoy big body play they can also build both verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Through big body play, they learn to correctly interpret nonverbal gestures, like when my friend puts her hand up it means I should stop but if she smiles it means I can keep going. Children will apply this skill throughout their lives in different social situations.

When children take turns jumping off a tree stump they practice taking turns.

And, because most children enjoy the play so much, they learn how to compromise. They might let other children go first and be strongest so that the play can continue. Children are also calmer for longer periods of time following very rowdy play. Greater learning is likely during these calm, focused periods.

### Why does this type of play make some parents and other adults nervous?

Even though I have studied and written about this kind of play, sometimes, it still makes me nervous! As parents and teachers, we are very serious about protecting children and keeping them safe. It's difficult to watch children engaged in physically rowdy and vigorous play and not fear that someone is about to be hurt. Often adults see children roughhousing and think they are really fighting so they often err toward caution and shut it down.

### How parents can support big body play:

Supervise play closely. If your child needs help telling a playmate to stop or to do something in a different way, you'll be there to help.

**Talk with your child and set some ground rules for big body play. For example, If your child likes to wrestle, you might set up a Wrestling Zone in your home. Choose an area with enough space to wrestle without bumping into furniture. Make a rule about how long each wrestling bout can last before time is called. You might also have a rule about all wrestling moves being between shoulders and waists, and not around necks or heads.**

### Five things you should know about big body play

1. Big body play looks like fighting, but it isn't fighting.
2. Big body play is rowdy, physical, and usually loud. It rarely turns into real fighting.
3. Big body play is a vital component of children's growth and development. Children all over the world play this way.
4. Big body play gives children sustained moderate-to-vigorous physical exercise. With our current obesity epidemic such a growing concern, it can help children stay fit and healthy.
5. The quickest way to distinguish big body play from real fighting is by looking at the expressions on children's faces. Their big smiles let us know the play is okay.



## NAEYC Message in a Backpack

### Things Every Parent Should Know About Play

Play supports children's learning in so many ways. Make sure your child has time to play to promote cognitive, language and literacy, physical, social, and emotional development.

#### CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH THEIR PLAY

Never underestimate the value of play! While playing, children learn and develop

**Cognitive skills**—like choosing the blocks to build a tower as high as possible

**Language skills**—like learning the vocabulary words they need for different play scenarios

**Literacy skills**—like writing an appointment in a pretend dentist's office

**Physical abilities**—like gluing a collage and running on the playground

**Social skills**—like playing together in a pretend car wash with workers and customers

**Emotional skills**—like waiting for a turn to be a pretend bus driver

**PLAY HELPS CHILDREN GROW STRONG AND HEALTHY. IT ALSO CAN HELP PREVENT CHILD OBESITY THROUGH ITS ACTIVE NATURE**

Play helps children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.

Think about your own outdoor experiences of building forts, sledding in the winter, or playing with other children in the neighborhood. Make sure your children create outdoor memories, too.

Play and learning are not separate activities but are closely connected. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab—play is a child's lab.

Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and play out roles. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and growth in self-esteem.

# MEET THE WECEP MANAGEMENT TEAM



WNSK COORDINATOR

LIZ HESLIN

I joined the Westminster family in 1983 starting in the Child Care Center. Over the years my roles have included group supervisor, assistant to the child care director and Nurse School teacher. I transitioned full time to the Nurse School in 1998 where I taught at the preschool level and with the enrichment classes. In 2017 I left my teaching position to become the WNSK Coordinator.

I live in Hickory with my husband John. I have three grown children; Patrick 26, Caitlin 24, and Matthew 23. We are officially empty nesters so in my now very open schedule I love to read, cook and travel, especially to Charlotte to visit my daughter.

I am privileged to have spent the last 36 years in this wonderful environment surrounded by countless beautiful children and their families. I am actually now meeting the second generation of families. In addition, I am blessed to have been able to work with many incredible women who have

WCDC COORDINATOR



BRITTANY REINHEIMER

I am excited to have recently celebrated my one year mark with Westminster! I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology from the University of Pittsburgh. I have led and worked as a member of teams of educators of adults with intellectual developmental disabilities. For the past eight years, however, my true passion and profession has been working with children of all ages. My primary mission as Coordinator is to facilitate the consistent academic, social, and emotional growth of every child entrusted to our care. A major part of fulfilling that mission is empowering our amazing staff in ways that will increase your child's potential in the early stages of their lives. I am an explorer in both my profession and my personal life, I love to travel and seek new knowledge information wherever I go. I look forward to seeing you around this school year and am excited to be spending time with your favorite little ones!

## WECEP MANAGEMENT TEAM

***Michele Charmello-Scanlan***

Executive Director

412 835 2122

Charmello@westminster-church.org

***Tiffany Underwood***

Administrative Assistant

412 835 9450

underwood@westminster-church.org

***Liz Heslin***

WNSK Coordinator

412 835 2906

Heslin@westminster-church.org

***Brittany Reinheimer***

WCDC Coordinator

412 835 9450

Reinheimer@westminster-church.org

## WELCOME NEW WECEP STAFF

Kendal Allsop– CDC Intern,  
Bethel Park High school

Dominique Eckley– CDC Intern,  
Bethel Park High school

Deirdre Mannix– CDC Aide

Bonnie Buehler– CDC PreK Teacher

Megan Mathias– CDC Intern  
Bethel Park High school

Tiffany Underwood–Administrative  
Assistant

Jennifer Nestler– Bookkeeper



## TIFFANY UNDERWOOD – ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

family. My 2 sons are now a senior in high school and a sophomore in college. Time really does fly!

> I am excited to be back at Westminster! I am enjoying helping out in the office and getting a chance to pop into the classrooms to help the teachers and get some playtime in with the kids also!

> Please stop into the office and introduce yourself! I'm looking forward to meeting all of you!

> Tiffany

Hi everyone!

> I'm Tiffany Underwood and I am the new administrative assistant for the Westminster Nursery School & Daycare Center.

> I taught preschool here at Westminster for 6 years, then took some time off to stay at home with my

## CURRICULUM SPECIALIST– LANE COLBURN

Hello everyone! My name is Lane Colburn. I teach kindergarten in the nursery school and I am the curriculum specialist. I have a BA in International Relations and Politics from Ursinus College and a MS in Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum from Drexel University as well as a PA Instructional I certificate in the areas of Prekindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.



My husband's work brought us to Pittsburgh from State College in the summer of 2016. Prior to coming to Westminster, I worked for Penn State University at one of their in house child-care centers and lab schools, the Bennett Family Center. I taught a mixed age preschool class of children ages three to five

years old. I love that working in the field of early childhood education allows me the opportunity to help children lay a strong social emotional and academic foundation upon which they will continue to build for the rest of their lives.

I was lucky enough to spend the majority of my childhood living in Honolulu, Hawaii. My family moved to Northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C., when I was 13. College brought me to Pennsylvania. My husband, daughter, and I currently reside in South Park with our 2 dogs, Archer and Henry. In my free time I enjoy crocheting, cooking, reading, and running with my daughter.

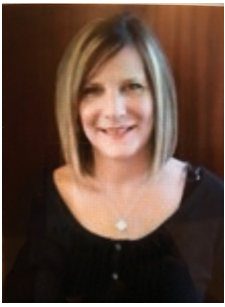
The WCDC has fully implemented The **Creative Curriculum**®. The **Creative Curriculum**® is a comprehensive, research-based **curriculum** that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, **creativity**, and lifelong critical thinking skills.

### Preschool /Pre K Information:

<http://jccsy.org/docs/The%20Parent%27s%20Guide%20to%20Creative%20Curriculum.pdf>

### Infant/ Toddler Information:

<http://jccsy.org/docs/The%20Parent%20guide%20for%20infants%20toddlers%20twos.pdf>



## MICHELE CHARMELLO-SCANLAN—EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello and welcome to another exciting year at Westminster! We are delighted you and your children have joined us this year in one or more of our WECEP programs. Allow me to introduce myself to those of you who I have not had the pleasure to meet just yet.

I have been the Executive Director at WECEP since 2015. I was born and raised in New Jersey not far from Manhattan so no offense when I say New York Pizza is the best. I earned BS in Early Childhood Education from Lock Haven University, a MA in Special Education from New Jersey City University and a post master's certification in Leadership from Cornell University. I moved to the Pittsburgh region in 2015.

I have a large extended family living primarily in New Jersey, New York, Virginia and North Carolina. My immediate family includes my parents Mike and Clara and sister Lisa. I live with my husband Joe and share our home with our kittens, Jagger, Sebastian, Anastasia, Linus and our dog, Charlie. I enjoy spending time with Joe's daughters who all attend school close by Alexandra ( Duquesne), Elise ( Pitt) and Kara (The Children's Institute ). My favorite place to be when not at work is the beach. A few of my favorite pass times are reading, listening to music and watching college basketball.

I am thankful to have the opportunity to work with such amazing people here at Westminster. I look forward to another wonderful year.

*“There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind.” Mr. Rogers*

## WECEP STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Prior to working at Westminster, I taught Kindergarten through Sixth Grade for twenty plus years. I also have four years experience tutoring, as well as teaching Pre- K for four years.

I have a husband, two children, and a dog. I love watching my son play high school hockey or shopping with my daughter when she is home from college. My favorite place to vacation is at the beach. I enjoy sitting by a fire and watching a good movie. My favorite ice cream is Cherry Quist from the Penn State Creamery.

My name is Mrs. Bonnie Buehler and I have had the privilege of being a Pre- K Teacher at Westminster Child Development Center since August 19, 2019. I am excited to be a part of this wonderful program and having the opportunity to work with you and your child, guiding them through this important developmental stage in their lives.

I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.



## A Scout Study

Scout is our mascot.

He is one inquisitive Westie!

Our Creative Curriculum uses the term Study when we are exploring and learning new things. Scout would like to study many things and needs your help.

Look for Scout Studies and how you can be a part of them here.

### Scout Study #1

Scout would like to learn about graphing.

With the holidays coming up Scout thought it would be great to graph flavors of holiday pies.

Tell Scout the flavor of your favorite pie.

Email Scout at:  
[wnsk@westminster-church.org](mailto:wnsk@westminster-church.org)

## WECEP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shana Cadman

Miranda Rapport

Allison Cummings

Lindsay Senge

John DeSimone, Co -Chair

Jodee Stevens

Douglas Hall

Kim Tilghman

Brent Losee

Karen Williams

**FALL FESTIVAL—MONDAY, OCTOBER 28 4:30-7:30**

Help support our school while having fall fun!

Join us for dinner and a show then trick or treat with us

Dinner provided by Giovanni's of Dormont from 4:30-6pm

6pm – Inky's Black Cat Blues A Purrfectly Pawsome Puppet Production

6:45-7:30 Trick or Treating inside and Trunk or Treating in the  
playground parking lot

Tickets on line at [WECEP.org](http://WECEP.org) beginning 10/14

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you have or know some one with free time during the day ?

We are looking for volunteers to help answer the phones and assist with light office work in the Nursery School & Kindergarten and Child Development Center during our busiest times of the day:

8:30am to 11:30 am , 12pm to 1:30pm, 4:30pm to 6pm

If interested please contact Michele at 412 835 2122 or via email at

[Charmello@westminster-church.org](mailto:Charmello@westminster-church.org)

## Join Our Team

The WCDC is looking to hire full time classroom teachers for the infant and toddler prep classrooms( ages 3 months– 24 months).

Hours Monday– Friday 9:30am-6pm

Benefits include paid time off , paid holidays, paid planning time

choice of employer contributions to health insurance/ retirement account

Employee Discount on tuition

Minimum requirements : HS Diploma & 2 years of experience working with children

**If interested please email resume to:**

**[Charmello@westminster-church.org](mailto:Charmello@westminster-church.org)**

## Save The Date

**Friday, December 13th 4:30 pm**  
**Fellowship Hall**

Sarris Christmas Candy Fundraiser

Order Forms Due 11/13

Candy will be delivered to the school 12/9



# WESTMINSTER

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

WE Learn.



WE Love.



WE Grow.

