

September 2013

## **Welcome to The Kingdom of Kindergarten**

### **Where Work Is Play And Play Is Work!**

Have you ever engaged in an activity for pleasure that demands a lot of work? Maybe backpacking or learning a new language...or dancing! On the surface our play-based Kindergarten program may appear to be “just play.” This is a big year in your child’s “school life,” and they are working very hard at their play...and growing immensely in the process.

As you know, I have been teaching Kindergarten/Grade One for many years. I treasure the honour of working with you and your children. In the beginning there are so many questions and concerns and, through these, we lay the foundation of working together as a team to nurture your child’s development in this early educational experience.

In order to facilitate a positive experience for us all, I am writing this letter to address some questions you may already have. In fact, the idea for writing such a letter came to me from one of your “buddy parents,” which illustrates what a positive role your involvement can have in our school.

#### **First Two Weeks of School (Transition):**

We begin the Kindergarten year with a **gradual entry** for several reasons. The full day program is quite demanding for little ones, especially after what for some is a leisurely summer lifestyle. Beginning school is a big experience for children of all ages and especially so for Kindergarten. In our program attachment to educators and maintaining attachment with parents is nurtured and this process takes time for shared experiences. Even though the days are short, this is an important time for building relationships and for acclimatizing to the school environment. Mostly we will be spending time “playing” together as the medium for building these relationships and for learning to communicate respectfully together even through conflict. We will spend as much time as possible outdoors and gradually establish our daily routines and responsibilities. You parents are welcome to stay and be involved as much as works for you and your family. I understand that many of you need to get to work and, even while we encourage involvement, we want to be as supportive as possible of each individual family’s needs. A large part of what makes our program work is the community we create. Often you parents become friends and your children feel safe with their friends’ parents. This helps greatly to ensure

that each child feels emotionally safe, even when their own parent has to get to work on a “sensitive” morning.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences & Communication:**

We have pre-arranged parent-teacher meetings in October, but feel free to contact me anytime via email: [heidi@pacificspiritschool.org](mailto:heidi@pacificspiritschool.org). It’s nice for me to touch base with you in the mornings and I quite enjoy seeing you all. That said, mornings are not a good time for me to enter into an involved conversation, as I need to focus on the whole class. However, simply requesting a conference in the mornings is fine. As well, I will contact you by phone during the day if I have concerns for your child. You can also text me for urgent needs during the day at: 604-805-4447.

The purpose of our October conferences is to share information about your child’s needs and experience thus far at school. It’s helpful for me as an educator to meet with you before we get too far along in the school year, but after I’ve had some time to get to know your child a bit. You can expect this conference to be a time for us to swap stories, address concerns if need be and just generally share some “grown-up” time together! I find your insight into your children’s needs immensely valuable in my work. I’ve also noticed that as I get to know you and your family better, your child feels safer with me and flourishes better at school. Sometimes it almost seems like magic!

**Shoes:** Apparently several of you have had questions regarding indoor/outdoor/gym shoes. Why so many? Are they all necessary? Here’s the scoop: we go outside every day regardless of the weather. As the children come directly into the classroom from the playground, mud can be a real problem. Add to this that we are required to have children wear shoes indoors and requested to have children wear shoes that are not used outdoors for gym class. Therefore, children need shoes for **indoors or indoor/outdoor** in nice weather. Some children prefer an indoor only shoe that slips on and off, like crocks or slippers. Additionally each child needs **gym shoes, rain boots, rain jacket** and a **full change of clothes**.

I hope this letter is helpful in addressing some of your questions and concerns as we embark on our Kindergarten year and I am grateful to your “buddy parents” in tipping me off to your needs and inspiring this letter.

I am grateful to you for allowing me the honour of being your child’s Kindergarten Teacher. It is a true joy in my life and a responsibility that I hold dearly.

Sincerely,

Heidi Anderson