

Friday, October 16, 2009

Dear Parents:

We read Pumpkins Grow for our big and little books. Our Kinderfriends book was Dress Up. These are both great books that your child can read to you. Our Read Aloud Book was In The Big Blue Sea and our Science Link book was What Do You Do, Norbert Wu? The Phonics Library book was Look At Me. The two Word and Picture Books were I See and I See (Breakfast). Our letter of the week was "Mm" for Mimi Mouse. If you have a computer with a connection to the Internet, you can visit the main page of our school web site where there is a link to a new page full of resources about the Alphafriends. You can see pictures of them, download and print out pages and link to the Alphafriend's song to hear it and read the lyrics.

This week was the second of three weeks we are spending studying about Community Helpers. The goals of this unit are to stress the importance of community workers in our neighborhood and to instill an appreciation for the many services these special workers render on a daily basis.

This week, I want to talk about another component of our kindergarten program. An important part of getting ready to read is developing phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate individual letters sounds in words. Our phonemic awareness program was developed to expose young children to the variety of sounds letters make in words and provide them opportunities to manipulate these sounds. We know that if children have phonemic awareness, they are better prepared to begin formal reading instruction. In order for children to learn about phonemic awareness, they must have repeated opportunities to play with language in the context of meaningful activities. One way is through exposure to stories and poems that contain rhyme and alliteration.

The goal of the phonemic awareness activities is to facilitate children's ability to perceive that speech is made up of a series of sounds. It is the opportunities to identify the sounds in words and to produce these sounds, which helps train the children to discriminate among sounds.

Picture Day is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21.

As Halloween approaches, I have been asked to remind parents to NOT send candy to school with your child(ren). Halloween is an exciting time of year for kids, and to help ensure they have a safe holiday there are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics on their web site (<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/octhalloween.htm>), which you read, print, and e-mail to friends and family.

ALL DRESSED UP:

1. Plan costumes that are bright and reflective. Make sure that shoes fit well and that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame.
2. Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and Trick-or-Treat bags for greater visibility.
3. Because masks can limit or block eyesight, consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives. Hats should fit properly to prevent them from sliding over eyes.
4. When shopping for costumes, wigs and accessories look for and purchase those with a label clearly indicating they are flame resistant.
5. If a sword, cane, or stick is a part of your child's costume, make sure it is not sharp or too long. A child may be easily hurt by these accessories if he stumbles or trips.
6. Obtain flashlights with fresh batteries for all children and their escorts.
7. Teach children how to call 9-1-1 (or their local emergency number) if they have an emergency or become lost.

CARVING A NICHE:

1. Small children should never carve pumpkins. Children can draw a face with markers. Then parents can do the cutting.
2. Votive candles are safest for candle-lit pumpkins.
3. Candlelit pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects, and should never be left unattended.

HOME SAFE HOME:

1. To keep homes safe for visiting trick-or-treaters, parents should remove from the porch and front yard anything a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations.
2. Parents should check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs.
3. Wet leaves should be swept from sidewalks and steps.
4. Restrain pets so they do not inadvertently jump on or bite a trick-or-treater.

ON THE TRICK-OR-TREAT TRAIL:

1. A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds.
2. If your older children are going alone, plan and review the route that is acceptable to you. Agree on a specific time when they should return home.
3. Only go to homes with a porch light on and never enter a home or car for a treat.
4. Because pedestrian injuries are the most common injuries to children on Halloween, remind Trick-or-Treaters:
 - Stay in a group and communicate where they will be going.
 - Carry a mobile phone for quick communication.
 - Remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk.
 - If no sidewalk is available, walk at the far edge of the roadway facing traffic.
 - Never cut across yards or use alleys.
 - Only cross the street as a group in established crosswalks (as recognized by local custom). Never cross between parked cars or out driveways.
 - Don't assume the right of way. Motorists may have trouble seeing Trick-or-Treaters. Just because one car stops, doesn't mean others will!
5. Law enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity.

HEALTHY HALLOWEEN:

1. A good meal prior to parties and trick-or-treating will discourage youngsters from filling up on Halloween treats.
2. Consider purchasing non-food treats for those who visit your home, such as coloring books or pens and pencils.
3. Wait until children are home to sort and check treats. Though tampering is rare, a responsible adult should closely examine all treats and throw away any spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items.
4. Try to ration treats for the days following Halloween.