

Graduation News

On May 10th, 2010 we had 63 families graduate from PreSchool Partners. This is a retention rate of 95%! We had lots to celebrate at our graduation, including perfect attendance for the year. Perfect attendance awards for the children went to Kaniyah and Ketavion Scroggins. We were in school over 140 days and they did not miss one day! The parents who received perfect attendance for their participation on Mondays were: Shaveh Curry, LaTonya Grimes, Jillian Houston, Antonian Lee, Betty Moore, LaToya Moore, Princess Moore, Janice Smith, Ray and Shalisha Stewart, Wanda Thomas, and Olivia Todd. We also gave out awards to the families that consistently turned in excellent and creative homework. These prizes went to: Cheryl Jones and her daughter Antonniya, Crystal Smith and her daughter Kiara, Joyetta Parks and her son Cornelius, Jillian Houston and her daughters Madison and Morgan, Kendre Houston and her daughter KayIn, and Jean Washington and her son Devin. Congratulations to all of the families for their hard work and diligent participation this year!

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Parent Council

Every school year we form a Parent Council of 6 parents or guardians (one from each classroom) to represent the parents as a whole. The Parent Council helps to set and enforce policies of the school, as well as hear feedback from the other parents about the program. Some of the responsibilities this year were to help implement a biting policy, get opinions from the other parents to see if we should offer school pictures, and to help plan special events. These parents are leaders that the other parents look up to and feel comfortable talking to about different issues. Many thanks to our wonderful parent council: Cheryl Jones, Maliko Hawkins, Kisha Ashford, Cassandra Givens, Ray Stewart, and Olivia Todd.



An Outreach Project of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Conjunction with Norwood and Whatley Elementary Schools.

PreSchool Partners

Coming together to take children further



May 2010 / Volume 11 / Issue 1

Letter From the Director...

I'm often asked why PreSchool Partners is so effective in preparing families for kindergarten and what sets us apart from other programs. I think one reason is that we have such high expectations for our parents and their children. We expect great things from them and they consistently meet or exceed these expectations. PreSchool Partners requires a parent or guardian to attend school every Monday morning with their child. I am always asked how we get the parents to show up and the answer is simple – it's what's expected of them. The parents know when they register their child that parental involvement is a requirement – it is not an option. This is a huge commitment for our families, but they want the best possible education for their children so they are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to ensure their children's future success in school. I would like to think that if my children had been eligible to attend PreSchool Partners that I would have been the kind of committed parent who devotes every Monday morning to their education like the wonderful families I have the privilege to work with every week.

I believe another reason for our success is our exceptional staff. The teachers at PreSchool Partners truly love teaching and instill a love of learning in their students. Our teachers are the most devoted and enthusiastic people who genuinely care about each and every student and their potential. I can assure you that they are not in it for the money! Being a small non-profit, we can't compete with the city or county schools pay scale, but our teachers are worth their weight in gold and we are so fortunate that they have chosen to work at PreSchool Partners!

I can state with confidence that PreSchool Partners fulfills its mission of preparing at risk preschool children and their families for kindergarten. I see it everyday and with every passing year. I hear from former families constantly about the success their children are having in school. A former student who is now in the first grade came to the school last week to pick up her brother who is in one of our four year old classes. I asked her how school was going and if she was making all A's and B's. Anissa quickly corrected me saying, "I'm making all A's, Miss Lella!" Well, I guess she told me! I have an entire file full of outstanding report cards from our graduates full of A's and B's. Our former students are winning math derbies and spelling bees. Their parents are the presidents of their PTAS and remain active participants in their children's education. You'll even read in this newsletter about one former PreSchool Partners student who is headed off to college. In short, PreSchool Partners is more than the finest preschool in our city, more than a place to bring families together. PreSchool Partners is a place of great expectations, a place where children, teachers and parents exceed these each year! Thanks to all who make this special place possible.

Lella Carl

What Our Parents Are Saying

When asked to name one positive thing that has happened as a result of being enrolled in PreSchool Partners, some of our parents' responses were:

"My son is learning how to interact with other children. He tells me what day it is everyday and what yesterday was, plus what tomorrow will be. He loves coming to school and tries to get me to take him on the weekends!"

"I give my kids more time instead of doing things without them. I've learned that being there for them is very important."

What Our Schools Are Saying

"Every student I have ever taught who has graduated from the PreSchool Partners program has been ready for kindergarten. I wish all of the children entering kindergarten could have this wonderful preparation. It makes such a difference."

Norwood Elementary Kindergarten Teacher

"Let me take the opportunity to thank Preschool Partners for preparing students to enter kindergarten. As Principal, I noticed how well the children interact and socialize with others. Also, parents are more equipped to participate and support their child's progression through future grades.

The reason I say this is that preschool gives us a running start to prevent future dropouts. I strongly believe that this is the foundation to build a solid academic base. On behalf of Norwood Elementary, the students, parents, teachers, and support staff, I would like to express my appreciation to PreSchool Partners continued success."

Errol M. Watts, Norwood Elementary School Principal

"Unlike the typical preschool program, PreSchool Partners provides services for both parent and child. This program combines education and community services into a united effort whose goal is to enhance the lives of participating families. I applaud the work of PreSchool Partners and look forward to its continued success."

Jan McShan, Birmingham City Schools Early Childhood Specialist

Former PreSchool Partners Student Wins College Scholarship

In May 1997, Cynthia Taylor and her daughter, Elysia, graduated from PreSchool Partners. Elysia, who is known by the nickname of Angel, is now a senior at Carver High School. Angel maintains a B average and her favorite subject is English. She loves to write poetry and aspires to one day write a novel. Angel is a member of the Book Club, the Debate Club, the choir, and the band as well as being in the Society of High School Scholars. Angel plays trumpet in the band and is second alto in the choir. The choir at Carver High School has won many choral competitions and they consistently score superior ratings. Last year, the Carver High School Choir was number one in the nation!

Also, Angel is a member of and helped form Chosen Generation Ministries, which is a choir of community youth ages 18-24. Chosen Generation Ministries has traveled to Atlanta and Baton Rouge to sing behind well known gospel

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PreSchool Partners

OUR MISSION

To equip families of at risk preschool children with the skills necessary to achieve school readiness.

Questions about PreSchool Partners?
Suggestions regarding contributions?

Recommendations for program improvements?
Contact Lella Carl, PreSchool Partners Director at 951-5151

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PreSchool Partners

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groups such as Mary, Mary, Kevin Lemons and the Higher Calling, and Ricky Dillard.

Angel will graduate on May 18th and has several choices for college. She has already received a full scholarship to Stillman College for band, but she is still considering her options. Angel has been invited to audition for choral scholarships to Jacksonville State and the University of South Alabama. Angel plans on studying nursing at college because she loves visiting hospitals and helping people. She has completed the nursing program Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA). When Angel worked with her mother with assisted living, it solidified her choice of nursing as her career. There is no doubt that Angel's future is bright!

Cynthia has continued to stay involved in Angel's education after their graduation from PreSchool Partners. She still volunteers at the schools – including at Norwood even though she no longer has a child attending school there! Cynthia is the Band Booster President and the Title One Parent Leader. Cynthia stressed the importance of staying involved, stating, "when teachers see parents are concerned for their children, they put forth the effort to help make sure the child goes to the next level. A parent's presence does make a difference!"

Angel expressed her gratitude for PreSchool Partners "because that's where her education began!" Good luck, Angel – we are so proud of you and all of your accomplishments!

Eagle Scout

PreSchool Partners was fortunate to have Jonathan Jetmundsen choose our school to be the recipient of his Eagle Scout Project. Jonathan organized and implemented the building of three picnic tables and two benches for our school. We are thrilled with this wonderful addition! Each class now has their own picnic table and the teachers have benches to sit on to oversee all the fun during our picnics. Jonathan recruited fellow scouts to help with the project and he supervised every aspect of it. Congratulations to Jonathan for a job well done and for attaining the prestigious Eagle Scout rank!



The Wheels on the Bus!

One thing that many people don't know is that PreSchool Partners provides daily bus transportation to and from school for our students. We contract with STS (School Transportation Solutions) in providing this service. Our bus picks up and drops off at our two target schools. Providing bus transportation for our students is an expensive part of our budget, second only to salaries, but it is of vital importance since so many of our families do not have reliable transportation. By offering bus service, we are able to ensure more consistent attendance for our students. Consistent attendance is imperative in order for a child to be successful in school. After all, a child can't learn if he can't get to school.

We are so proud of the bus that STS uses for our transportation needs. It has "PreSchool Partners" emblazoned on the side and is kept in pristine shape – nothing but the best for our children! We are also proud that we are way ahead of the curve by providing a school bus with child safety restraints. We even have a camera on board so we can monitor the children and further ensure their safety. The children are taught to buckle and unbuckle themselves and they love to ride the bus! Our bus driver, Miss Sheri, and our bus monitor, Miss Lola, make sure that the children are strapped in properly for the ride to and from school. And as you might imagine, "The Wheels on the Bus" is one of the most popular songs we sing at school!



Health Fair News

Every year, PreSchool Partners provides health screenings for all the students in the program. These screenings are so important in helping the families find any problems their child may have and then seek treatment for any deficiencies found. By detecting these problems early, the family is able to seek earlier intervention than if the problem had gone undiagnosed.

This year, one mother whose daughter had failed the vision screening, came into the office in tears. She was so grateful for these screenings because she had no idea that her child had a vision problem. The mother expressed that they would not have found out about this problem if it weren't for PreSchool Partners. Her daughter was fitted with glasses and started seeing the world in a whole new and much clearer way!

This year's health screening results were:

Speech Screening Results:21% failed
Hearing Screening Results:6% failed
Vision Screening Results:15% failed
Dental Screening Results:22% failed

All of the children received follow up testing and treatment for the problems found during the screenings. PreSchool Partners would like to thank Hayley Young, our speech therapist, for giving the speech screenings and Julie Woodruff of the Sparks Clinic for providing the hearing screenings. We would also like to thank Pre-school Peepers, a UAB program, and Dr. Kathy Hoar for providing the vision and dental screenings at no cost to PreSchool Partners. This is just another way in which PreSchool Partners helps our students to get the best possible start in kindergarten!



Children's Curriculum

Laughter and PreSchool Partners go hand in hand. Whether that laughter is coming from the playground, classrooms, picnic area or the teachers' workroom it is clear that PSP is a happy place. This year, as always, when the teachers meet for their weekly planning meetings they seek out fun activities for the children to reiterate the concepts being taught. As early childhood educators we know that children learn best through play and by interacting with their environment. The teachers are always finding new activities that create hands on experiences for the children.

Increasing the background knowledge our students have will help them not only as they enter kindergarten, but as they progress in school. That is why our theme days are so important. This year I was thrilled to learn that most of our four year olds who were with us in the three year old classes last year remembered our special days. During the week as we explored Thanksgiving, the circus, and the Wild West our children were able to recall the fun they had last year and were able to discuss the topic using their prior knowledge. It was obvious that they had met the teachers' learning objectives and developed a sense of ownership over those themes.

Silliness is an important element of an early childhood classroom as well. The ten foot long snakes that hang from the ceilings of our four year old classrooms are examples of this. The children entered their classrooms one morning to find brown paper covering the tables with crayons scattered all around. They were asked to color or draw all over the paper. The teachers then became silly magicians who turned the colored paper into very a long snake. The children squealed in delight as the snakes were hung in the classrooms. They couldn't wait for visitors to stop by so they could scare them with their snake surprise! This too will hopefully become a lasting memory for the children.

As the end of the year draws near the laughter is bittersweet for the teachers. They know that their class comedians will only be around a little longer before heading to kindergarten. This realization leads to even more fun. The teachers create fun filled days in order to make every moment count. The learning does not stop and neither does the laughter. *Christi Trucks - Assistant Director*

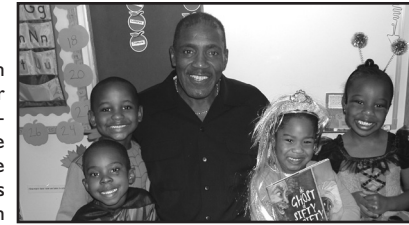
Volunteer Spotlight

PreSchool Partners is so fortunate to have been partners with the Junior League of Birmingham for over 10 years. The Junior League provides vital financial support as well as volunteer support to the school. Some of the positions that Junior League volunteers hold are field trip coordinators, enrichment volunteers, "Families Reading Together" instructors, art volunteers, and health fair coordinators. We would like to thank all of the wonderful Junior League volunteers who help to support and enrich our program: Sally Bussman, Laura Canterbury, Lindsay Cutshall, Amy Dobbins, Jennifer Gray, Caroline Huffaker, Lindsay Hussey, Barrow Kettig, Megan Kincaid, Erin McElroy, Ana Moore, Chris Newell, Mary Screws, Christy Spence, Erin Teague, Kennedy Walker, Susannah Wessel, and Lisa Williams.

We have many other dedicated volunteers who also work tirelessly to help make our school the best it can be! These volunteers help tutor children who are having trouble with their skills, provide breakfast snacks for the families, help with special events like our Tea Party celebrating the letter "T," read to the children, help with our fundraisers, and take pictures of special events.

Some of these volunteers included Robert Gilmore and Preston and Marie Goldfarb. Mr. Gilmore visited the school for our Halloween party and read some books in his most scary and spooky voice. The children were entranced by his reading! The Goldfarbs visited the school when we were studying the letter "S." Mr. Goldfarb is the soccer coach at Birmingham-Southern and he brought along some soccer balls and gave the four year old classes some lessons on how to play. While the four's were playing soccer, Mrs. Goldfarb made "S" cookies with the three year old classes. A good time was had by all! We would like to thank all of our valuable volunteers:

Mary Ballard
Greg Bergquist
Jennifer Boylan
Nancy Burton
Warren Cain
Teresa Callahan
Doug Carter
Jeanie Centeno
Shelley Clark
Katherine Coyne
Ro, Laura, Morgan, Chase & Kendall Crumbaugh
Francie Deaton
Lane DeWine
Rob Dickinson
John Douglass
Henry Drake
Patsy Dreher
Kaye Emack
Richard Force
Robert Gilmore



Marie & Preston Goldfarb
Jennifer Gray
Sharon Hydinger
Hunter Keller
Richard Keller
Mary Louise King
Carrie Law
Caroline Little
Chad McCowan
Mariellan & Billy Morris
Andin Mullis
Leslie and Holden Naff
Ruth Pearson
Ellen Powell
Lisa Rutherford
Matt, Annie, & Maddie Sheffield
Susan Waggoner
Jeanette Watford
Diane Weatherford
Rich, Copeland, and Betsy Webster

If you are interested in volunteering at PreSchool Partners, please call Lella Carl at 951-5151.

Getting Ready for Kindergarten

At PreSchool Partners, our mission is to equip families of at risk preschool children with the skills necessary to achieve school readiness. We are preparing both the children and their parents for kindergarten by teaching them the skills necessary for success in school. For the children, there are four main areas of development that we test to determine school readiness. These areas are health and physical development, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, and language development, communication, and general knowledge. Each area has several components. For example, some skills under the heading of health and physical development include using a pencil or crayon to draw or write letters, being able to bounce a ball, and using tools to color, cut, and paste. Under the heading of social and emotional development, skills include being able to follow simple 2-3 step directions and being able to work, play, and share in small groups. Examples of approaches to learning are that the child is curious and asks questions and can stay with a teacher directed activity for at least 10 minutes. Skills in the area of language development, communication, and general knowledge include being able to recognize his/her name, showing awareness of the connection between letters and sounds, and speaking in complete sentences. Though all children develop and learn differently, this readiness guide shows what skills children need to be successful in school. We are very proud that this year's kindergarten readiness test results show that 91% of our students are ready for kindergarten!

While there is so much more to being ready for kindergarten than recognizing letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, we do test the students' knowledge of these skills. Children who are entering kindergarten are only expected to know some letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, but we test our students to see who has mastered these skills. The results for the 2009-10 school year showed the following results:

Skills	Beginning of the Year	End of the Year	Increase
Letter Recognition	12% knew most	45% knew most	33%
Number Recognition	9% knew most	55% knew most	46%
Shape Recognition	24% knew most	88% knew most	64%
Color Recognition	70% knew most	94% knew most	24%
Writes Name	12% could	88% could	76%

*80% means most

Preparation for kindergarten for the parents includes getting their child to school on time, learning to communicate effectively with teachers, and setting aside time each day to work with their child. Parent evaluations for the 2009-2010 school year showed these results:

100% of parents reported that they read to their children more often now
100% of parents stated that they had more reading materials in their home now
100% of parents were pleased with their child's teacher
100% of parents thought there was good communication between parents and teachers
100% of parents reported that their child felt safe and was happy at PreSchool Partners
100% reported that they made sure their child got plenty of sleep and had their physical needs met
100% of parents let their child know that learning is important and that they want them to do well

We are so proud of our families and their effort to make sure the entire family is ready for kindergarten and success in school.

Authors of *Same Kind of Different As Me* Help Support PreSchool Partners

PreSchool Partners had its first ever Book Fair at Barnes and Noble at the Summit on January 23, 2010. It was a very successful book fair and was greatly enhanced by Ron Hall and Denver Moore signing copies of their book, Same Kind of Different as Me. Mr. Hall and Mr. Moore were in town for the Claypool Lecture Series. On Friday, January 22 a sell-out crowd of nearly 2700 people packed the Wright Center at Samford University for Saint Luke's 2010 Claypool Lecture. The lecture on Friday night was the highlight of an action-packed weekend for both men, including radio appearances on The Rick & Bubba Show and The Paul Finebaum Show, as well as book signings at Books-A-Million and Barnes & Noble. The money raised from the lecture went to benefit outreach ministries in our community and around the country - a net total of more than \$40,000!

On Saturday, people flocked to Barnes and Noble to meet Ron Hall and Denver Moore and buy copies of their books. PreSchool Partners received a percentage of every book sold that weekend, as long as the purchaser mentioned PreSchool Partners. The authors have quite a fan club as was evidenced by the crowds that Saturday. PreSchool Partners is so proud and thankful that Mr. Hall and Mr. Moore shared their time and talent to benefit our program.

