



River Valley Current

October 6, 2015 No. 419

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."
- Albert Camus

School Calendar

This Week

Tuesday, October 6

HiS Parent Meeting with Elan Leibner 6:30 pm

Saturday, October 10

Harvest Festival &
Capital Campaign Kickoff 11am – 3pm

Looking Ahead

Monday, October 12

No School – Columbus Day

Tuesday, October 13

5th grade trip to a Hindu Temple

Thursday, October 15

School Tour 9:00 am
Board Meeting 6:30 pm

Monday, October 19

Mushroom Talk w/ David Porter 6:30 pm

Thursday, October 29

Community Meeting 6:30 pm

Friday, October 30

Fall Festival & Open House at Morning Glory

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org

lc@rivervalleyschool.org

bot@rivervalleyschool.org

pc@rivervalleyschool.org

Tonight – An Evening with Elan Leibner

A high school initiative group has been active at the Waldorf School of Princeton for the past three years. In May of this year, the group hired Elan Leibner to spend a year leading the preparations for the opening of a program in September, 2016.

Mr. Leibner will be our guest at a parent evening tonight, **Tuesday, October 6 at 6:30pm** to discuss the high school initiative. His visit comes at a critical time in the biography of this effort, and if there is sufficient interest at RVWS, our families could have major influence on the location of the proposed school. All are welcome.

Harvest Fest and Capital Campaign Kickoff

Celebration THIS Saturday, October 10, 11:30 am

Please join us this Saturday for the Capital Campaign Community Kickoff Event in the time honored River Valley Harvest Festival style. Bring your own picnic or a potluck dish to share and enjoy warm bread from the school bread oven as we celebrate this exciting moment in our school's journey. The event will begin promptly at 11:30 am with a musical performance by the 5th thru 8th grade and several brief presentations from members of our community, followed by lunch and the fellowship of friends and faculty. We will also share our really fun "Buy a Tile" mosaic program, which will support the campaign while beautifying our new space. Won't you please join us this Saturday?

Michaelmas Pictures Inside

Halloween Dance

The Grade 7/8 Halloween Dance will be held at Ottsville Traditional Arts Center on October 30th from 6:30 9:30 PM with DJ Jens.

Community Meeting on Thursday, October 29th at 6:30

The LC and the faculty will be sharing intentions about the future of some of our programs and policies, some important communication dates that are going into our calendar, and some more ideas about the journey of the class teacher. We look forward to sharing these intentions with all of you, and hearing your responses, which will help inform next steps as we work towards implementation and the growth of our school.

Parent Council Corner

Parent Council is excited to announce study sessions with TreeAnne McEnery each month. These study sessions are intended to provide parents with a deeper understanding of Waldorf philosophy. All are welcome to join. Our first study is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14th at 2:00 pm, location to be determined. We will be reading and discussing "Confessions of a Waldorf Parent," by Margaret Gorman. Copies are available on the wall opposite the office and attached to this week's Current.

Parent Council's **next meeting is Wednesday October 21st at 2:00** in the RVWS Garden (weather permitting). If the weather is bad then we will meet at Homestead General Store. Topics to be covered include Back To School Night review, Winter Fair, and the Auction among others. All are welcome!!

From Administration

AFTERNOON GARDEN

Afternoon Garden is the extended day program (1:00pm until 3:20pm) for RVWS early childhood students 3 and up. Registration is monthly and is available each day that your child attends the morning program. October & November registration forms are attached may be found at the end of the Current. Drop-in use is possible at \$25 per day, when space is available. Please contact Cindy Schretlen with any questions (extension 201, or cschretlen@rivervalley.school.org).

From the Business Office

Please turn in all purchase orders for reimbursements/bills not later than Monday night for Tuesday's check run. We appreciate your cooperation, as last minute requests cause backlogs in the office. Thank you.

Box Tops for Education

We collect Box Tops for Education to benefit our school. You will find "Box Tops" on many of the products you use. Each box top is worth at least ten cents.

Participating companies include: General Mills, Cascadian Farms, Pillsbury, Yoplait, Betty Crocker, Huggies, Cottonelle, Kotex, Pepend, Ziploc, Hefty, Kleenex, Scott, Viva, Saran and more. Look for specially marked boxes and drop-off the box tops in the basket in the lobby. If you don't use these products, perhaps a relative or friend does. Thank you for your support.

Also, please bring in your used ink cartridges and cellphones. Those too will be redeemed for cash. The collection box is on Robbie's desk.

Thank you for these contributions, every little bit helps!

Mushroom Talk - Tricks & Treats

October 19th @ 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Mushroom expert, David Porter, will present an entertaining talk and photographic tour on, Monday, October 19, titled "Mushroom Tricks and Treats" as part of the RVWS guest speaker series. Porter is an emeritus professor of Mycology at the University of Georgia and now a year-round resident of Brooklin, Maine and a visiting professor at College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor, Maine.

Fascinating and often nasty tricks that mushrooms play on us and other organisms will be described in his photographic tour. These include parasitic attack, lethal toxins, mimicry and bio-luminescence. Treats that we derive from mushrooms will also be presented. The remarkable, and generally overlooked, beauty of mushrooms is perhaps the biggest treat that they offer us. But in the larger picture of things, mushrooms play an essential role as companion organisms to our forest trees, 'treating' them to water and nutrients in the soil. And of course the many treats of foraging for wild edible mushrooms will not be ignored. The evening should prove to be an enlightening and enjoyable tour of many mycological mysteries and marvels.

Bring specimens for identification, if you have mushrooms in question!

A Call for Housing

River Valley has been chosen to host the next session of "Teaching Sensible Science," a training for Waldorf Science teachers from all over the country. There will be approximately 25-30 teachers attending the course and they will all need a place to stay. Below are the dates that we would like to find housing for them. The guests will pay \$30 for a shared room and \$40 for a private room per night to the host. Attendees should have their own transportation so the host would just be responsible for providing a room. Faculty or families of River Valley that are interested can contact Hilary at hmurphy@rivervalley.school.org

The course will be divided into three week-long sessions:

SESSION 1: Friday evening February 12 – Thursday noon February 18, 2016

SESSION 2: Monday evening June 20 – Sunday noon June 26, 2016

SESSION 3: Wednesday evening October 5 – Monday noon October 10, 2016 (Columbus Day weekend in the U.S. and Thanksgiving in Canada)

Directory Correction

Carrie Nordlund and Eve Sheldon (parents of Maybelle in 1st grade) have corrected email addresses for the directory. Carrie's address is: nordlund@ptd.net and Eve's is: eve1sheldon@gmail.com. Please make these updates in your copy.

Lost and Found

Our Lost and Found is overflowing once more. Please take what is yours on Wednesday and Thursday. Friday is take what you can use day, so help yourself. After that, items will be donated.

Come Ski Blue Mountain with your River Valley Friends

RIVER VALLEY SKI CLUB

We will meet on six Friday evenings, from 4 pm to 10 pm starting January 8th through February 12th. Forms and instructions are attached. The deadline for sign up is October 26th. Place forms and payment in the folder on the office door. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. Christine Aherne, cmaherne@epix.net 267-614-5021

Holiday Bazaar

The Holiday Bazaar letter and agreement are attached to this week's Current. Any parents, students or classes who want to get involved need to fill out an application and if new, send photos of their wares. We are now accepting applications.

Also, we have Holiday Bazaar flyers and postcards in the office. Please stop by and take some to help distribute and share!

Van Drivers

Are you interested in driving one of the school vans for field trips or other school events? If so, please contact Lorraine Sharaf (mother of Eve G-5) lorraine.jenkins@comcast.net for information about taking the required training course.

Administration Work Schedule

Cindy Schretlen – every day

Renee Goodyear – Monday all day, Tuesday and Wednesday until 1:30

Robbie Miller – Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Hilary Murphy – Wednesday and Thursday until 1:00

Pamela Hobson – every morning until 10:00

Charlene Chapman– Monday, Tuesday, Thursday until 12:00

James Hagan – Tuesday, Thursday

TreeAnne McEnery – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday until 1:00

Work Day Thank you

We would like to send a big thank you out to all of the 8th grade families who joined us to clean up and beautify the school grounds on Saturday 9/26. Everyone was busily cleaning brush out of overgrown areas and washing windows. And Grandy served a delicious lunch.

Thank you to Brian Willard for providing a trailer, and thank you to the following people for participating in our first work day: Andy Wander, Paul Smith, Josh Holtz, Colin Aherne, Christine Aherne, Will Carpenter, Renell Carpenter and Kira Willey. Also a thank you to the children of these families who pitched in and helped.

Below is the calendar of the upcoming work days. Please note that some changes have been made from the school calendar. Please RSVP to Mary K. Till (mtill@rivervalleysschool.org), to let us know if you will attend. This way we can plan what projects can be undertaken. Mary K. Till and Lynne Allbaugh - Building and Grounds

2015-2016 Work Days

November 7- 6th grade and 7th grade

December 13 - 5th grade

January 23 - 4th grade

February 27 - 3rd grade

March 12 - 2nd grade

April 23 - 1st grade

May 14 - Early Childhood

Thank you

Thank you very much to Eve Sheldon for volunteering to help us update the emergency phone call list. We will all be safer because of you.

7TH AND 8TH GRADE FAMILIES, THINKING ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL?

In addition to their local public high schools, many RVWS graduates have or are currently attending (& thriving at) the following independent high schools. If you're not sure what direction is right for your family, or know already that you would like your child to attend an independent high school, the following will be of interest to you as you explore your options!

KIMBERTON WALDORF SCHOOL

Discover the High School

Visit our High School classrooms, meet and interact with faculty, and learn more about the crowning years of a Waldorf Education. The event will begin in the High School Library. Monday, November 9th, 2015 from 7:00 to 9:30 pm

Open House

A comprehensive overview of Waldorf Education and the programs offered at Kimberton Waldorf School. Families should attend an open house as early in their process as possible. Tour the campus; meet faculty, students, parents, and alumni; view samples of student work; participate in panel discussions; and gain an understanding of Waldorf Education through inspiring faculty and student presentations. Complimentary childcare is available for younger children. Sunday, October 25, 2015 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

GEORGE SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 2:00 p.m.

The program will begin promptly at 2:00 p.m.

Meet teachers and students and take a close look into what George School offers for students who value academic rigor, enjoy collaboration and creativity, relish athletic and artistic pursuits, and appreciate the ideals of service, social justice, and diversity.

Please check in at the George School Meetinghouse a few minutes prior to 2:00 p.m. Parking is available at the Fitness and Athletic Center on Farm Drive, across from the Meetinghouse. If you have any questions, please call us at 215.579.6547.

MORAVIAN ACADEMY

Upper School Open House 10-24-2015, 9am - 12noon

4313 Green Pond Rd, Bethlehem, PA 18020

(610) 868-4744

HIGH MOWING SCHOOL (Waldorf Boarding & Day School)

222 Isaac Frye Hwy, Wilton, NH 03086, (603) 654-2391

Admissions Open House 10-17-2015, 1pm – 4pm

SOLEBURY SCHOOL

Open House, Sunday, October 18, 2015, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Prospective students and families are invited to get acquainted with Solebury School, a college preparatory boarding and day school for students in grades 7-12, located in New Hope, PA. Solebury has an average class size of under 11. You will find that this, combined with the warm and accepting environment that is palpable from the second you walk on campus, makes Solebury a place where students not only excel, but where they thrive. A full slate of Honors and AP courses, as well as extensive electives in every subject gives students the opportunity for both breadth and depth in every subject.

Come see the whole school in action as you tour the campus — see classes debating, teams practicing, artists creating and groups rehearsing. Learn what makes a Solebury education unique. Call 215-862-5261 to register.

From the Faculty

What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – Language Arts

Second Grade – Math

Third Grade – Arithmetic

Fourth Grade – Trip to PEEC

Fifth Grade – Ancient India

Sixth Grade – Classical Greece and Rome

Seventh Grade – Late Middle Ages/Early Renaissance

Eighth Grade – European Revolutions

Winter Coat Drive

Watch this space for more information about our 1st Annual Martinmas Winter Coat Drive. October 20-November 20

A Request from the Garden

Dear Friends, If anyone is cleaning out their garage, or visiting a garage sale and would like to donate to the garden...We could use hand pruners and rakes! Thank You So much!

Looking for a sitter!!!

The MacDonald children (Oliver and Edierose) need a friend to pick them up on Thursdays at 3:20 and either bring them home or keep them until around 6:30 when Molly gets out of her faculty meeting. Please call Molly at 610-349-3536

Weekly Garden Get-Together

Would you like to know what your children are learning in the garden? Are you interested in Biodynamics, Permaculture or Organic gardening? Melissa Goldstein, the gardening teacher, will be in the garden on Wednesdays, starting September 23rd between the hours of 1-3. She would be delighted to meet you! Be aware that she may hand you a pair of gloves and have you pull a weed or two.

From the Board

SAVE THIS DATE!

Saturday, June 4th, 2016

~ COUNTRY FORMAL AUCTION ~

The Auction Team is already diligently working on this year's exciting event. We want you there with us so be sure to mark your calendars right now. This Auction event will not disappoint! Think delicious BBQ along with additional Nelli Rae's creations - yum! Oh, and throw in some great music, free beer & wine, great auction items and Ron Ferguson burning up the MIC! Hmmmmm, sounds like a party NOT to be missed... So, see you then!

Auction Team: Erica Nichols, Clare Wargaski, Tracy Fly, Ron Ferguson, Kristyn Lederer, Kathy Betz, Rich Kroth, Tracy Euler and Paul Ritchie. We are always looking for dynamic folks to help us out! Come join the fun! Next meeting: Thursday, October 22nd, 6:30 at The Ship Inn in Milford

Class Fundraisers

MASSIVE YARD SALE

Please help the 8th grade class fulfill their fundraising needs for the end-of-the-year class trip. This great multi-family yard sale will take place on 10/24 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Willard's property located at 255 Island Road, Kintnersville, PA. It's right down the street from Trauger's Farm.

But wait there's more ...

Besides shopping there's more that you can do to help out. Do you have a cluttered attic, basement or garage? We'll take your clutter! Please donate your unwanted treasures to the 8th grade. You can just drop off the goods on Saturday/Sunday 10/10 - 10/11 9am - 5pm or Saturday/Sunday 10/17 - 10/18 9am – 5pm. If those dates don't work then you can always reach out to Louanne Willard for a time that's more convenient for you. Also, the 8th grade is opening up the sale to anyone who wants to sell their more valuable stuff. All they ask is for you to bring your goods, your own table and to donate 20% of your proceeds to the class. If you want to reserve a spot then please let Louanne know in advance. The sale will be advertised not only in the Current and through email blasts but will be in 4 to 5 local papers as well.

See you then!

Your Fabulous 8th Grade

"Savoring the Seasons" Cookbook / Local Directory in its Final Stages

Last Call for Information. New!! Place an Ad!!

Mrs. Atkinson's class is busy completing our seasonal cookbook & directory. THANK YOU to the many RVWS parents, teachers and administrators for sharing their recipes and recommendations! Please be aware that this is YOUR FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO FORWARD YOUR BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS to include in the directory. We wish to include ALL of our favorite things to do, along with ALL of our favorite, talented people whose businesses we'd love to support (artists, small businesses, physicians, contractors, electricians, therapists, acupuncturists, home cleaners, etc.). PLEASE DON'T DELAY! We must receive the following information by Monday, October 19th: name, business name (if applicable), brief description of skills/services offered (1-2 sentences), website (if applicable), phone number, address (if applicable). Should you NOT want to be included in the directory, please let us know as well, otherwise we are doing our best to include everyone that has been recommended to us.

In addition, we are offering Ad Space. Here is an opportunity to enable a recommended business to promote themselves and provide additional information about their services. The promotional space is very reasonably priced and as this resource will be referred to again and again, it is a GREAT value! Prices are as follows: 1/3 page - \$35, 1/2 page - \$50, Full Page \$100. Details in attachment!

Planning your child's birthday party?

Let the energetic, fun-loving eighth graders help — and help them raise the funds they need for their class trip! We'll make your child's party one they won't soon forget! Now booking dates for October, November, and December— please see attached form for more information. Limited dates available so email Renell Carpenter (renell@rcn.com) or Kira Willey (kira@kira.net) to reserve your party now!

From the Community

Offices Available at Brick House

8826 Rte 611. Ottsville/Revere, PA (Above Nelli Rae's Kitchen)

Available immediately, 3 offices and waiting room, art studio, therapy, classes, conferences, business office, ample parking, rent whole space or personal office. CALL 610-570-7408.

Free Piano

Spinnet, needs tuning, no bench. 610-346-7108

Moving Through Childhood

A workshop with Jaimen McMillan, Director, Spacial Dynamics Institute

November 13-14, 2015 at Kimberton Waldorf School

Friday, November 13, 7:30-9:00 pm, Saturday,

November 14, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Workshop Fee: \$125 (early bird \$100 before November 1st), Friday lecture only, \$20

Learn how parents and teachers can best support healthy development through movement. "Play rises above other activities. It is the creation of space in which new activities can take place...a world of untold possibilities."

For more information: info@spacialdynamics.com, 518-695-6377, www.spacialdynamics.com

Open House

SuperNatural Salon & Spa

Thursday, October 22nd from 6-9 pm

SuperNatural strives to use only eco-conscious, natural and organic products while providing the utmost quality of services for your natural beauty and your super being. We are here to help bring forth the light that is already within you in the most soothing and sacred ways.

Stop by, enjoy refreshments and take a look around!

121 Delaware Road, Riegelsville, PA 18077, 610-749-2051, www.supernaturalsalon.com

1st Annual Riegelsville Brewfest

Join us along the Delaware River!

Benefits the Riegelsville Public Library

Beer, food, music, raffles

Saturday, October 17th from 4-8 PM at Mueller's General Store and Restaurant, 200 S. Delaware Drive, Easton, PA. Admission includes samples from several PA craft breweries, hors d' oeuvres from Mueller's Kitchen, live music by PA's own The Price is Rice, raffles, quoits and more!

Tickets: \$25.00, in limited quantity. Available at Mueller's, at the Library (615 Easton Road), or by calling (610) 749-2357. Ages 21 and over.

Come out and support the Riegelsville Public Library!

FALL FESTIVAL @ OTAC

Fun Fall Events at the Ottsville Traditional Arts Center. Concerts, dances, lessons and jams Oh My! All family friendly. Stay tuned for special student jam and pot luck evenings as well as some off campus RVWS school community events. Check us out!

Worksong Workshop with Bennett Konesni

6-8 pm on Wednesday, October 14th, \$10 suggested donation

Bennett is co-founder of Sylvester Manor, a 243-acre educational farm on Shelter Island, NY. His roles there include teaching worksongs to the farm crew and directing the annual fall Plant & Sing, which brings the community to the farm to complete two week's worth of garlic shucking and planting in a single morning, all while singing worksongs. His passion is making music that transforms labor into something between work and play. He envisions a world in which farmers, cooks, and eaters once again sing in fields, kitchens, and at the table.

This is for anyone who loves to sing!

Please check out worksongs.org to hear a variety of songs from many cultures

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center, 250 Durham Rd, Ottsville PA

Find out more at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com

Look forward to seeing you.

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center Events

OCTOBER

Wed. Oct. 14 Song Workshop with Bennett Konesni

6:00 - 8:00 pm • \$10 suggested donation

Sun. Oct. 18 Old World Charm School in Concert

1:00-3:00 pm • \$10 adults \$8 kids under 12

Sat. Oct. 24 Scandi Workshops with Lydia & Andrea

3:00 - 7:00 pm \$25 for both workshops and light dinner

Melody instruments workshop • \$15 Slängpolska dance workshop • \$15

NOVEMBER

Sun. Nov. 22 Family Contradance with Coracree

3:30 pm beginners' workshop & caller **Melissa Taggart**

4:00-7:00 pm dance • \$10 adults \$8 kids free under 6yrs.

Every Wednesday

Open Jam with Richard Finch

6:00-8:00 pm • \$5 suggested donation

More at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com • 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville Pa.

German Tutoring Available

Peter Ray is offering German tutoring to six year olds through adult at Buckingham Meetinghouse in Lahaska. A German teacher on and off for the past 50 years, he studied at the University of Göttingen, holds a Ph.D. from Penn, and was Head of a special needs school in New Hampshire for 15 years.

His tutoring program centers on speaking and understanding elementary German; singing kids', holiday, and folk songs; playing games in German; and learning about Europe in general and the German speaking world in particular. Kids also can also try on Lederhosen and learn the Schuhplattler dance, an interest that evolved recently into a Facebook page and website (Schuhplattler Kids). The cost is \$15 per student per hour, with a minimum of three students who are at roughly the same level (but not necessarily the same age). For further information, contact peter.ray@comcast.net, or info@schuhplattlerkids.org.

Art in the Library

There are several art classes being taught at the Riegelsville Library in the coming weeks.

October 6th and 13th – Painting the Still Life in Oil with George Thompson – 6-9 pm, for beginners, ages 16-adult
Sat., October 17th – Collage in a Box, a fun workshop for kids with Emily Thompson, 10 am-12 noon, ages 7 & older
October 22nd and 29th – Still Life Painting in Pastel with Susan Ketcham – 10 am-1 pm. all levels, age 15-adult
The workshops are held in the Community Room at Riegelsville Borough Hall, 615 Easton Road.
For more information or to sign up for workshops and our mailing list, please contact the Riegelsville Library, 610-749-2357 or Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com

Looking for a good home

Affectionate 10 yr old, black cat. Good mouser, completely trained, loves to be outdoors in nice weather. Owners have moved to a pet-less abode, need to find a loving home for our baby, 'Emiliano.' Great company for all ages.

Contact Laura Birdsall 610-310-5819

Natural Childcare in Springtown, PA

(20 minutes West from River Valley WS)
Tuesday through Friday 9 am to 1 pm
For a small group of 2-5 year olds, seasonal songs and rhythmic games, free play, story telling, nature walks in our big yard, organic bread making and butter churning, which we eat for snack along with organic veggies and fruit, all provided. \$30 per day. Please contact schooner0506@gmail.com or call 610-442-8095

Help Needed

Looking for a reliable painter and/or contractor for some exterior house work and some window glazing or replacement. Need help as soon as someone is available.

Contact Kevin O'Hara via email at kevinoharaphilly@gmail.com, or by phone at 215-847-4706.

Speech Therapy at RVWS

Jane Stuart (mother of Eden-3rd, Daphne-1st and Coco-Star Rm.) will be offering speech therapy services at RVWS, weekly during the school day. Children with speech or language needs can be seen individually or in pairs. If interested or if you have questions, contact Jane at (562)208-5048, or jane@mtwservices.com

Palisades Youth Basketball Signups

PYBA is offering the following programs for boys and girls: an in-house program for 1st and 2nd graders AND competitive teams for 3rd grade and above. There will be in-person signups at PALMS on Wednesday, September 30th, 6-8pm and Saturday, October 10th, 9-11 am. The cost is \$115 for first registrant and \$85 for each additional sibling. In house program is only \$25 per child.

Boys in grades 5 & 6 are encouraged to attend tryouts for a more competitive team (Junior Cadets). Those who don't make the team will of course still have a PYBA team to play on. Tryouts will be on Sunday, 10/18 and 10/25 in the HS purple gym. Times are not set yet but will be distributed via email to those interested.

You can also sign up online at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/149cy0zJobeyC81dnvgQvODF6GYTJhDPfyB0SGJCj8J4/viewform?c=0&w=1>

Homepage: www.palisadesyouthbasketball.com

Del Val 4-H Ag Club

Do you love agriculture and want to have some fun? Do you want to learn more about agriculture careers? Join the DelVal 4-H Club

Where: Feldman Building, Room 114

Delaware Valley College, 700 East Butler Ave. Doylestown, PA. 18901

When: 10:00-11:30AM. Rain or Shine!

Who: Must be 12-18 years old.

Hosted by: DVC's Ag Education students and Education Club!

Why: Gain valuable experience to help expand your knowledge about your 4-H projects!

For more info or to register, please contact Bucks County Extension Office 215.345.3283

Michaelmas Celebration!



From the New York Times

Fidgeting May Benefit Children With A.D.H.D.

By Gretchen Reynolds

Instead of telling children with hyperactivity and attention problems to sit still, perhaps we should encourage them to wriggle at will, according to a new study of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or A.D.H.D. The study, in *Child Neuropsychology*, found that children with A.D.H.D. concentrate much better when they fidget than when they don't.

Hyperactivity is, of course, one of the defining symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. It is in the disorder's name and is usually the first symptom that parents, teachers and others notice. Most of us may be unable to gauge precisely how well a child concentrates. But we can tell if he or she can — or cannot — stay still.

But the relationship between hyperactivity and children's concentration problems has been less clear. Does their hyperactivity intensify the attention deficit? Are the two problems — hyperactivity and attention deficits — unrelated except that they happen to occur together? Or could hyperactivity play some other role in the thinking and behavior of children with attention problems, possibly even a beneficial one?

Those questions intrigued Julie Schweitzer, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the MIND Institute at the University of California, Davis, and her colleagues.

Past studies had suggested that children with A.D.H.D. concentrate better and improve academically if they are physically active during the school day. But that research had focused primarily on how to re-channel the children's hyperactivity.

Dr. Schweitzer, who treats many children with A.D.H.D., had begun to wonder whether that emphasis was misplaced. Perhaps experiments should look into why the children were so hyperactive in the first place.

To find out, she and her colleagues gathered 26 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 17 who had a diagnosis of A.D.H.D.; the researchers independently confirmed the diagnosis. Then they recruited an additional 18 children without A.D.H.D.

All of the children visited the group's lab and were outfitted with an unobtrusive activity monitor on one ankle that could track how often and how intensely the children bobbed their leg, which is a good marker of fidgeting.

Then the scientists had the children complete a simple computerized test of attention and cognitive control, during which they had to note the direction an arrow was pointing and push a key showing that direction. The arrow in question was flanked by other arrows, which sometimes pointed in the same direction as the primary arrow and sometimes did not.

The children were told to respond as quickly as possible to the test, punching the proper key as soon as the arrows appeared on screen. Then they repeated that same test more than 200 times in rapid succession, while the arrows shifted directions and each child's ability to concentrate was sorely strained.

Afterward, the scientists compared the accuracy of the children's responses during each of the more than 200 trials with the corresponding data from the activity monitors. In effect, they were examining how much and how intensely each child fidgeted every time they punched the key to indicate the arrow's direction.

They found that the more intensely that the children with A.D.H.D. wiggled and fidgeted — the more ferociously they bobbed their legs — the more accurate their answers were. When these children were relatively still, their responses were much more likely to be wrong, indicating that they had had trouble concentrating then.

Meanwhile, fidgeting had played no discernible role, positive or negative, in the performance of the children without A.D.H.D., most of whom didn't fidget much anyway.

These results suggest that hyperactivity is fundamentally beneficial for children with attention deficits, Dr. Schweitzer said, and probably developed to help them cope with their inability otherwise to focus.

"Hyperactivity appears to be a mechanism for cognitive self-regulation," she said. In other words, children with A.D.H.D. may be hyperactive because the physical restlessness helps them to sharpen their mental control.

Dr. Schweitzer speculated that this constant movement probably increases mental arousal for children with A.D.H.D., much as stimulant drugs do. (Most of the children with A.D.H.D. in this experiment were taking such medications.) Of course, this was a small, short-term study, involving only one type of cognitive test.

But its message seems straightforward, if unsettling, for weary parents and teachers who must deal with hyperactive children: let them squirm and fidget and bounce and jiggle and generally maintain that constant, disconcerting restiveness, if you want them also to be better able to concentrate.

The accommodations can be fairly discrete. Maybe install elastic bands beneath children's desks, Dr. Schweitzer suggested, so that they can pull and play with them in a way that shouldn't bother other children. Or use yoga balls as chairs, so the children can bounce. Even encouraging them to stand more often may help.

"I know it's difficult to accommodate hyperactivity," Dr. Schweitzer said, but it may really help children whose fidgeting bodies seem to contribute to calmer, more focused brains.

8th Grade Party Package!

The 8th grade class is ready and excited to create a personalized and memorable birthday party for your child. We do the work, you sit back and enjoy! Options include henna parties, soccer parties, dress-up parties, face-painting parties....what kind of party would your child like?

PARTY PACKAGE INCLUDES:

3-hour party plus set-up and clean-up

Cupcakes or cake

Personalized birthday crown

Two or three organized games

Your choice of one: face painting, jumprope machine, or henna

Several 8th grade "hosts" plus two 8th grade parents

And of course...a birthday song!

Cost is \$250 for the first 15 kids, more than that is an additional cost of \$35 per 10 children. Now reserving party dates for October, November and December.

Reservations will be first come, first served as dates are limited.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Phone# _____

Child's Name: _____ Child's current age and birthdate: _____

Location of party: _____

Three possible dates for party: _____

Anything we should know about your child to make this day super special?

Deposit due with registration form: \$50

Balance on party day: \$200

You will be contacted shortly to confirm a party date, plan activities and other details.

We look forward to helping create a wonderful celebration for your child!

Renell Carpenter (renell@rcn.com) and Kira Willey (kira@kira.net)