



# River Valley Current

November 1, 2016 No. 458

*Tis "the witching time of night", / Orbed is the moon and bright,  
And the stars they glisten, glisten, / Seeming with bright eyes to listen —  
John Keats*

## School Calendar

### This Week

- Thursday, November 3**  
*6<sup>th</sup> grade field trip to Ringing Rocks*
- Saturday, November 5**  
*5<sup>th</sup> grade Workday*

### Looking Ahead

- Wednesday, November 9**  
*Parent Council Meeting* 2:00 pm
- Friday, November 11**  
*Lantern Walk – EC, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grades*
- Saturday, November 12**  
*Holiday Bazaar* 10:00 am-5:00 pm
- Tuesday, November 15**  
*8<sup>th</sup> grade to the Franklin Institute*
- Thursday, November 17**  
*EC Parent Enrichment Evening  
Board Meeting* 6:30 pm
- Monday & Tuesday, November 21 & 22**  
*No School – Parent-Teacher Conferences*
- Wednesday-Friday, November 23-25**  
*No School – Thanksgiving Break*
- Friday, December 2**  
*Spiral of Light – in-school celebration*
- Wednesday, December 7**  
*School Tour* 9:00-11:00 am
- Friday, December 9**  
*Early Dismissal – Winter Fair set-up* 1:00 pm
- Saturday, December 10**  
*Winter Fair*

### How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org  
lc@rivervalleyschool.org  
bot@rivervalleyschool.org  
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

## Lantern Walk – November 11<sup>th</sup>

On Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, Early Childhood, First and Second grade children will be celebrating Martinmas with an annual Lantern Walk.

Celebrating St. Martin's Day (Martinmas), or Laternelaufen, is a tradition preserved in Waldorf schools everywhere. Tied to the legend of St. Martin, a French soldier who gave half his coat to warm a beggar in need, the event includes walking through the school grounds along a path lit by luminaries, singing songs and carrying lanterns the children have made in school.

The Lantern Walk is hushed (aside from the singing), and reverent, but not at all somber. It is a beautiful procession of lights at dusk symbolizing the turn of the season and the carrying of inner light into the darker months of the year.

## Martinmas Coat Drive

As part of River Valley's celebration of the legend of Saint Martin we will once again be sponsoring our Annual Martinmas Coat Drive.

Please consider donating your gently used coats and jackets. Our music teacher Carol Diven is organizing the drive through the not-for-profit organization, One Warm Coat, The coats received will benefit Community Services for Children in Quakertown (<http://www.cscinc.org>).

New or gently used women's, men's and children's – **especially sizes 0-5T** - coats are all welcome and needed!

**A drop box will be located in the school lobby from November 1 - November 18 to receive your generous donations!**

Thank you Carol for once again organizing this wonderful way for RVWS to support to our greater community!

## RVWS Holiday Bazaar and Cafe November 12<sup>th</sup> 10am-5pm

Join us for our annual tradition- River Valley Waldorf School's Holiday Bazaar and Cafe! Artisan handcrafts, festive music, and delicious food by NellieRae's!

Vendors include: Nancy Albin \* Catherine Lent Designs \* The Jersey Broomshire \* World Upcycle \* Lucy and Judith Meskill Marie's Soap Company \* Mason J.A.R. Apparel \* Jennifer Kovach \* Erin Lutz \* Tavish Becker \* Theresa Mustafa \* Mad Lavender Farm \* Cloud Nine Organics \* Maya Adams-Smith \* Fly Family \* Clare Wargaski-Brunell \* Zohra Mekki \* Reimaginary Friends \* Hilltop Herbals \* Sharon Thompson \* Mertel the Turtle Fabric Arts and more!

**Next Parent Council meeting is on  
Wednesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm**

Please come if you can.

## Save the Date! Winter Fair!! Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 11-4

Winter Fair is a beautiful festival celebrating the coming of King Winter. It is a time of magic and celebration for children of all ages - a time to get together with friends and loved ones before the deep freeze and great snows of King Winter set in and we turn towards the coziness and warmth of our hearth and homes.

The success of the festival depends on the creativity and cooperation of River Valley's parent body. Each class hosts an activity and works to make the magic of Winter Fair happen for our children. Your Festival Coordinator will shortly let you know your activity so that you may begin preparations.

Secret Garden is one of the most magical places at the festival and one the children look forward to with anticipation. Many count on this beautifully prepared activity for the gifts they present their loved ones. Each family at RVWS is asked to make 20 Secret Garden items to aid this feeling of awe and wonder.

These items can be small and homemade. A list of potential items can be found in the Parent Handbook. Also Mary K Till, our handwork teacher, usually has craft workshops for parents to come and make some treasures for Secret Garden (dates and times will be found in the Current).

In addition, parents will be asked to bake one batch of gingerbread cookies for our Gingerbread Tea House, which greets our children with warm tea and a sweet snack after visiting King Winter.

Recipe and instructions will be forthcoming.

Please contact this year's Winter Fair committee with any questions you may have.  
Brenda Schaufele, Stephanie Smith, Paul Smith and Ron Ferguson.

## From Administration

### DID YOU KNOW??

River Valley offers a lovely parent/child class especially for infants? Cricket on the Hearth is geared especially for newborns to pre-walkers together with their parent or caregiver. A short session is beginning December 9<sup>th</sup> and finishes the end of January. Class will meet 6 times (due to holiday break), so it's the perfect opportunity to see what it's like!

Cricket on the Hearth meets Fridays from 9 until 10:30am in the Sun Room and is led by Early Childhood Teacher, Molly MacDonald. This class would be a lovely shower, or new baby gift! See Molly, or Cindy Schretlen with any questions. A registration form is attached to this week's CURRENT.

### SCHOOL TOUR TOMORROW

Wednesday, 11/2/2016 9:00 – 11:00am  
Adults-only, babes in arms welcome. RSVP by phone or [info@rivervalley.school.org](mailto:info@rivervalley.school.org)

If you have never been through the school while classes are in session, now is your chance! Please let your friends, family and acquaintances know about this opportunity.

If this one will not work, watch the calendar – we have one every month. You can also schedule an individual tour with Cindy at any time.

### Fundraising Update for Waldorf School in Haiti hit by Hurricane Matthew

Thank you for your overwhelming response to the call to help rebuild L'ecole du Village (The Village School), which was directly in Matthew's path and suffered catastrophic damage. The Village School fundraising campaign has raised over \$12,500 in just over one week! The first funds have already been wired to the school and rebuilding will commence soon.

If you want to help, or know someone who does, just go to this link to visit The Village School's page on gofundme: <https://www.gofundme.com/roof-for-lecole-du-village-haiti-2ugjebus>

### Sunbridge College Fall Open Days

If you are thinking about becoming a Waldorf teacher, there are two opportunities to visit Sunbridge College in Chestnut Ridge, NY and learn more about their programs.

Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup> – Waldorf Elementary School Teacher Training  
Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup> – Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training

Visit [www.sunbridge.edu](http://www.sunbridge.edu) for more information.

### **After-school Capoeira at River Valley for Grade 5-8**

Starting next month River Valley Waldorf School will be hosting a new after school program, Capoeira, taught by renowned Contra-Mestra Gata Brava (Leigh Robertson) from New Hope's Morro Verde. The artform of Capoeira combines elements of dance, acrobatics and music, all within the context of Brazilian culture. It traces its origins back to the 1600's when West African slaves in Brazil developed it as a mean of resisting oppression. I encourage you to visit Gata's website <http://www.newhopecapoeira.com/> and get acquainted with Gata's background and Capoeira in general.

Classes will be offered every Monday from 3:30 to 4:30 pm for students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up and will begin as soon as we have 12 students enrolled. The cost will be \$15 per class. We will begin with a 4-week trial period, the registration form for which is attached to this week's Current. If you have any questions, please contact Euclides at: [esantiago@rivervalleysschool.org](mailto:esantiago@rivervalleysschool.org)

### **Waldorf School of Princeton Welcomes Kim John Payne**

#### **Loving Limits in a Digital Age: Not Anti-Screen but Pro-Connection to Nature and People**

On Monday, November 28, 7 p.m. Waldorf School of Princeton is delighted to host Kim John Payne, author of *Simplicity Parenting* and *The Soul of Discipline*, for a public lecture that resonates this season and all year round!

"Loving Limits in a Digital Age: Not Anti-Screen but Pro-Connection to Nature and People" offers parents resources for navigating some of the greatest challenges facing our society today: How to maintain loving limits, warm, firm and calm discipline and strong family connections in a world where increasingly "screens are supreme." How to build focus, grit and good judgment so that our kids do not become overwhelmed with media-driven images but can shape their own self-esteem, hopes and dreams. How to encourage respect when negative images of adults pervade pop culture. Fitting in with friends ("Won't my kids be disadvantaged if I limit screen media?"). Aloneness vs. Loneliness: Helping kids know the difference. The alluring world of no boundaries that screen use develops and how this makes discipline difficult. A consultant and trainer to over 110 U.S. independent and public schools, Kim John Payne, M.ED, has been a school counselor, adult educator, researcher, education and a private family counselor for thirty years.

Tickets are \$10 online / \$15 at the door; sales begin Tuesday, October 11, through Eventbrite.  
Waldorf School of Princeton, 1062 Cherry Hill Road, Princeton, NJ

### **High School Open Houses**

Beginning in October many high schools in our area and beyond are holding Open Houses. Here is a list for parents and students who are interested.

**Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts** Open House: Tuesdays, Nov. 15, and Jan. 5 at 5:45 pm. The program begins promptly at 6:30 pm.

**Mercersburg Academy** Admission Office cordially invites you to attend our Open House event on Monday, December 12 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**Bethlehem Catholic High School New Student Open House** Sunday, Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> 2-4pm - Students in 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grades and their Parents/Guardians, Tour the Campus, Meet the Faculty & Administration, Visit with Students & meet Coaches, Raffle drawings. 2017-18 Early Bird Online Application & Enrollment Fee, \$25 Application Fee & \$50 Enrollment Fee (\$150 savings). Apply & Enroll Online at [www.becahi.org](http://www.becahi.org) before November 9  
Questions? Contact Mr. Joseph Henrich, Director of Admissions 610-866-0791 ext313, [jhenrich@becahi.org](mailto:jhenrich@becahi.org)

**Bucks Learning Cooperative - Open House:** Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:00-8:30pm, Langhorne, PA Hear from teen members, parents and staff mentor/teachers what it is like to be part of a self-directed learning cooperative. Tour our center. [info@BucksLearningCooperative.org](mailto:info@BucksLearningCooperative.org) 215-512-0707

## **From the Faculty**

### **What the Children are Learning:**

First Grade – Language Arts

Second Grade – Math

Third Grade – Math

Fourth Grade – Local Geography

Fifth Grade – Botany

Sixth Grade – European Geography

Seventh Grade – Physics

Eighth Grade – Geometry

## From the Community

### HELPING HANDS FOR HIRE

Do you need a hand with something?  
I enjoy the following:

Cleaning ("green"); sorting and organizing (even the messes!); Care-taking: land, home, people, animals; companionship; nourishing cooking/meal preparation; shopping; gardening and yard work (hand-based); personal assistant/helper; event preparation; and, I'm up for trying something not on this list too.

Available on an as-needed basis many weekdays 9:30-2:30. Sliding scale (pay what you can) or baseline hourly rate. Email [bowersbetara@gmail.com](mailto:bowersbetara@gmail.com)  
Phone/Text: 908-674-2772 (Tara Bowers, mother of Alice, grade 3)

### Home for Rent?

The Lederers (Kristyn, Zane, Annika & Ridge) are searching for a new home. If you or someone you know has a 3+ bedroom rental available before November 30, please contact Kristyn @ 267-471-2751. We have two indoor cats we would love to bring with us, if possible. We would definitely prefer to be near Quakertown but will consider other areas as well. Thank you!

### Peter and the Starcatcher at Solebury School

November 3-5, 7:30 pm, November 6, 3 pm  
Students \$5, Adults \$10

Purchase tickets at: [www.ticketleap.com/solebury](http://www.ticketleap.com/solebury)

The cast includes RVWS alumni Dominique Wander, Teva Skovronek, Ava Smith and Bianca Sessegolo. On the tech crew are Safwa Ozair and Kathryn Warner.

### Lenape Chamber Ensemble Baroque Fest

Featuring music by J.S. Bach and Handel  
Friday, November 11, 8:15 pm, Upper Tincum Lutheran Church, 188 Upper Tincum Church Road, Upper Black Eddy, PA 18972

Sunday, November 13, 3 pm, Delaware Valley University Life Sciences Auditorium, 700 Butler Avenue at State Street and Rt. 611, Doylestown, PA 18901  
Adults \$18, Students and Seniors \$15, Children \$5

For information: 610-294-9361 or [www.lenapechamberensemble.org](http://www.lenapechamberensemble.org)

### Pipersville Free Library Book Sale

November 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> 2016

Sale held at Christ Lutheran Church, 353 E Dark Hollow Road, Pipersville, PA

Thursday, Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7-9pm (Pre-sale event, \$10 at the door, live music & snacks), Friday, Nov 4<sup>th</sup>, 10am-7pm  
Saturday, Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 9am- 3pm

For more info, call 215-766-7880. *Accepting donations at library thru 10/30. No encyclopedias, textbooks or magazines please.*

### Purely Farm's Thanksgiving Turkey

Purely Farm is taking reservations for their famed Thanksgiving Turkeys. These wonderful birds are raised by the Michini Family themselves and offer legendary flavor and an exciting alternative to the antibiotic pumped, factory farmed conventional turkeys that are sadly pushed onto so many Americans' tables. Purely Turkey is organically fed, pasture-raised, and amazingly fresh. How fresh you ask??? Any fresher you'd take home the gobble! All turkeys will be processed less than a week before Thanksgiving and available for pick up at 4 convenient locations as well as on their farm in Ottsville. Get your order in while supplies last!

In addition to whole turkeys Purely Farm will also offer a variety of turkey cuts that can either add a little extra meat to your meal or help feed a smaller gathering. As always Purely Farm will also have a full spread of their yummy pasture-raised meats, turkey bone broth and pork and lamb sausages available when you purchase your turkey. One stop shopping of pasture-raised meats at it's best, let Purely Farm help make this Thanksgiving Feast a truly memorable meal!

An order form is attached to this week's Current.

### Children's WOOLIES free to a good home

A wonderful "second skin" to promote warmth. Two Hocosa wool/silk blend under shirts (size approx 140), two Ruskovilla (under) leggings (140), two wool (under)leggings (probably around 100/110). All gently worn. Free to a good home. First come. Email [bowersbetara@gmail.com](mailto:bowersbetara@gmail.com) or call 908-674-2772 and I will leave them for you in the appropriate spot at school.

### Lenape Chamber Ensemble Concert in the Round

For children ages 4-12, featuring music by Bach and Handel for oboe, recorder, violin, viola, cello, bass, bassoon and harpsichord.

Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 10-11 am at Delaware Valley University Life Sciences Auditorium, 700 Butler Avenue at State Street and Rt. 611, Doylestown, PA 18901.  
Children: \$2, Adults Free. For more information call: 610-294-9361

## Myeong Shim Gum Do 明心劍道

Zen sword - meditation - mind training - clear mind, clear action

Shim Gum Do is an original Zen Art that integrates the practice and principles of Zen Buddhist meditation with the "action meditation" of martial art practice. The sword practice of Shim Gum Do comprises 330 forms, choreographed sequences of blocking and attacking movements. Each form is unique and generates a specific energy and a beautiful, athletic physical expression. The practice of Shim Gum Do emphasizes attaining a clear mind, clear thinking, and clear action.

Classes: Wednesday 4:30-6 pm 85 Sherman Rd, Ottsville, PA 610-297-1175 and Sunday 4:30-6 Dig! Yoga Lambertville, NJ. Very affordable! Fees vary slightly with location

Peter J. Ryan, Sabom Nim, M.Sc. is a certified instructor in this remarkable martial art who has deep experience with all ages and all types of learners. Group and individual instruction. 12 years study with Great Zen Master Chang Sik Kim. Each class will consist of individual and group instruction in Zen Sword and meditation, as well as guidance for creating a strong spiritual practice at home and at work.

Peter is a third degree black belt in Zen Sword and one of three certified American teachers of the martial art Shim Gum Do. This remarkable practice helps bring body, mind, and spirit together in unique and surprising ways that bring the student to "clear mind and clear action." Peter is a psychotherapist and an experienced and well-regarded teacher, who studies closely with the master. In 1998, he co-founded Tinicum Art and Science, the very first high school in the United States based upon the practice of mindfulness, and has served as principal and lead teacher there for many years. TAS closed this past June, and Peter launched a more ambitious successor, The Lotus School of Liberal Arts, which opened in September.

## AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP

I asked an unanswerable question. "What would it be like to be one of the 65 million people, many of whom are children, who lost their homes or were forced to leave their homes to flee from war, violence, or persecution?" After years of 'turning off the bad news' I began to investigate the global refugee situation. To see such a degree of suffering, brutality and struggle to simply live, daily, was unbearable, for me. It motivated me to give what I could to some of the organizations trying to help and to keep a space in my awareness and heart open to the experiences of others. I wanted to share that opportunity with our community.

Two organizations that are helping:

### Doctors Without Borders (MSF)

<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>

### Save the Children

[http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGlpl4E/b.6115947/k.B143/Official\\_USA\\_Site.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGlpl4E/b.6115947/k.B143/Official_USA_Site.htm)

No amount is too small. Very small amounts can add up and go quite a long way. If you would like to give but do not want to do the 'official business' feel free to pass funds to me and I will send it directly to MSF, or if you prefer, Save the Children. Thank you for reading, Tara Bowers (Alice's mom, 3rd grade)

## Yellowberry Holiday Bazaar Booth

Peyton Kovach, 6th grade, will be selling Yellowberry at the Holiday Bazaar. Check out this company - their mission is to empower girls and young women, inspire them to be comfortable with their own bodies, and to celebrate youth.

<https://www.yellowberrycompany.com/>

## At Yoga Loka

### Yin Yoga Workshop with Sally Miller

Sunday 11/13, 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Awaken a new level of flexibility with this 2-hour journey through your inner-most self. Yin Yoga uses long-held, passive yoga postures to atune and clear the body. Workshop also includes meditation and time for Q&A.

### Stress Relief & Deep Relaxation with TRE & Yoga Nidra with Gail Seckrettar

Thursdays 6:30pm - 7:45pm. Begins 11/3,10,17

Help lessen the pre-holiday stress in this 3-session series. TRE (Tension/Trauma Releasing Exercises) is a self-regulation technique that allows you to release deep muscular patterns of tension stored in your body. Complete your stress release with the guided, deep relaxation meditation practice of Yoga Nidra.

For more information and to register visit [www.Yoga-Loka.com](http://www.Yoga-Loka.com)

## Self-Directed Education Seminar

Info Session: Do you know a teen who is bored or frustrated with school? Are you looking for a welcoming community? Find out about self-directed learning, an alternative to traditional school. November 3rd, 7:00-8:00pm, Flemington, NJ

Presentation: Speaker Will Richardson, best selling educational author and former teacher, will give a talk on why self-directed education is critical for young people and why it is needed now more than ever. November 9th, 7:30-8:30pm, Lawrenceville, NJ

Hosted by Princeton, Bucks & Raritan Learning Cooperatives - Personalized Learning Communities for Teens. [www.LearningCooperatives.org](http://www.LearningCooperatives.org) All events are free and open to the public. Teens welcome.

Contact MaryBeth Healy 908-672-3455

From Atlantic Magazine

## Why Young Kids Learn Through Movement

Children acquire knowledge by acting and then reflecting on their experiences, but such opportunities are increasingly rare in school.

By LARA N. DOTSON-RENTA

One of my children is spinning in a circle, creating a narrative about a princess as she twirls. The other is building a rocket ship out of a discarded box, attaching propellers made of cardboard and jumping in and out of her makeshift launcher. It is a snow day, and I've decided to let them design their own activities as I clean up and prepare a meal. My toddler becomes the spinning princess, imagining her character's feelings and reactions. What seems like a simple story involves sequencing, character development, and empathy for the brave princess stuck in her tower. The rocket ship my first grader is working on needs a pilot and someone to devise the dimensions and scale of its frame; it also needs a story to go with it. She switches between roles and perspectives, between modes of thinking and tinkering.

This kind of experiential learning, in which children acquire knowledge by doing and via reflection on their experiences, is full of movement, imagination, and self-directed play. Yet such learning is increasingly rare in early-childhood classrooms in the U.S, where many young children spend their days sitting at tables and completing worksheets. Kindergarten and preschool in the U.S. have become more and more academic, rigorously structuring kids' time, emphasizing assessment, drawing a firm line between "work" and "play"—and restricting kids' physical movement. A study from the University of Virginia released earlier this year found that, compared to 1998, children today are spending far less time on self-directed learning—moving freely and doing activities that they themselves chose—and measurably more time in a passive learning environment.

With so few years under their belts, my 3- and 6-year-old daughters are still learning to inhabit their bodies. They are learning how to maneuver themselves physically, how to orient themselves in space. As Vanessa Durand, a pediatrician at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, says, freedom of movement is necessary for children to meet their developmental milestones: "Children learn by experiencing their world using all of their senses. The restriction of movement, especially at a young age, impedes the experiential learning process."

Movement allows children to connect concepts to action and to learn through trial and error. "If you walk into a good kindergarten class, everyone is moving. The teacher is moving. There are structured activities, but generally it is about purposeful movement," comments Nancy Carlsson-Paige, a professor emerita of early-childhood education at Lesley University and the author of *Taking Back Childhood*, describing the ideal classroom setup. In the classroom culture she advocates for, "[Kids] are getting materials for an activity, they are going back and deciding what else they need for what they want to create, seeing how the shape of a block in relation to another block works, whether they need more, does it balance, does it need to be higher, is it symmetrical. All of these math concepts are unfolding while kids are actively building and moving."

Research has shown time and again that children need opportunities to move in class. Memory and movement are linked, and the body is a tool of learning, not a roadblock to or a detour away from it. Any parent who has brought home a kindergartener after school, bursting with untapped energy yet often carrying homework to complete after a seven-hour day, can reasonably deduce why children today have trouble keeping still in their seats. Many children are getting 20-minute breaks, or none at all. (In Florida, parents whose children have no recess have been campaigning to legislate recess into the curriculum.) Recess, now a more frequent topic of research studies, has been found to have "important educational and developmental implications." Schools that have sought to integrate more movement and free play, such as short 15-minute recess periods throughout the day, have seen gains in student attention span and instructional time. As Carlsson-Paige points out, "Recess is not a separate thing in early-childhood education."

Ben Mardell, a professor of early-childhood education at Lesley University and the project director of the Pedagogy of Play initiative at Harvard's Project Zero, observes that even when adults do incorporate play into learning, they often do so in a way that restricts free movement and agency. "The idea that there should be formal instruction makes it no longer play," says Mardell.

(Continued on next page.)

"In play the player is choosing to participate, choosing a goal, and directing and formulating the rules. When there is an adult telling the kids, 'This is what we are supposed to do,' many of the important developmental benefits of play get lost."

The role of play has been established not just as a part of learning, but as a foundation for healthy social and emotional function. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has published widely circulated position papers on the need for developmentally appropriate teaching practices and for reversing the "unacceptable trends in kindergarten entry and placement" that have been prompted largely by policy makers' demand for more stringent educational standards and more testing. Some teachers are enacting changes, seeking ways to bring movement back into the classroom. Lani Rosen-Gallagher, a former first-grade teacher for New York City public schools and now a children's yoga instructor, explains the shift in thinking: "I would have [my students] get out of their seats every 15 minutes and take a Warrior Pose or Lion's Breath, and then I could get 15 more minutes of work out of them." This kind of movement, she said, also gives children space to develop self-awareness and self-regulation, to get to know themselves as thinking individuals by connecting with the body.

Play-based preschools and progressive schools (often with open room plans, mixed-age groups, and an emphasis on creativity and independence) are seeing increased popularity. Enrichment programs engaging children in movement with intention (yoga, meditation, martial arts) are also gaining traction.

These kinds of methods seek to give children back some of the agency their young minds and bodies crave, as less play and mobility lead to an uptick in anxiety in ever-younger students and even, according to Durand, a growing number of cases of children who need to see occupational therapists. Mindfulness practices such as guided breath and yoga can help mitigate the core symptoms of ADHD in children, (an increasingly common diagnosis), while the arts encourage self-expression and motor-skill development.

Emily Cross, a professor in the School of Psychology at the United Kingdom's Bangor University, explains the impact of movement on memory and learning: New neuroscience research, she said in an email, shows that active learning—"where the learner is doing, moving, acting, and interacting"—can change the way the brain works and can accelerate kids' learning process. While passive learning may be easier to administer, she added, it doesn't favor brain activity. Cross, whose research focuses on pre-teens and young adults, said she's found "very clear evidence that when learners are actively engaged with moving their own bodies to music, in time with avatars on the screen, their performance is vastly superior to when they're asked to engage in passive learning ... [There are] striking changes in brain activity when we combine dance and music in the learning context." In other words, people absorb a newly acquired skill-set better while doing, engaging their bodies rather than simply observing.

These research findings echo the observations and methodologies of educators who promote active learning. As Sara Gannon, the director and teacher at Bethesda Nursery School, a highly regarded play-based preschool in New Haven, Connecticut, that favors experiential learning over direct instruction, in an email notes: "Unfortunately, there has been so much focus on forcing the academics, and young children are being asked to do what they are just not ready to do ... Of course, we do teach letters and sounds, numbers and quantities—but through experiences and within a context. That means, hands-on: counting the number of acorns a child found on the playground, building with unit blocks, sounding out a child's name as they learn to write it, looking at traffic signs on a walk." Yet while such developmentally oriented programs may benefit children, for now they're unlikely to become widespread given the current focus on assessment and school readiness, particularly in underserved communities.

As my girls continued creating their own activity stations and imaginary worlds, the contrast between how children operate versus what is often expected of them was apparent. It would be unwise and impractical to pretend that children do not need any structure, or that academic skills are unimportant in school. Yet it is necessary to recognize that the early-childhood classroom has been significantly altered by increasingly rigorous academic standards in ways that rarely align with how young children learn.