



# The River Valley Current

March 18, 2014 No. 374

*"Find out where joy resides, and give it a voice far beyond singing. For to miss the joy is to miss all."*  
— Robert Louis Stevenson

## School Calendar

### This Week

<b>Thursday, March 27</b>	Middle School Play – <i>Secret Garden</i>	7:00 pm
<b>Friday, March 28</b>	Middle School Play – <i>Secret Garden</i>	7:00 pm
<b>Saturday, March 29</b>	Middle School Play – <i>Secret Garden</i>	2:00 pm

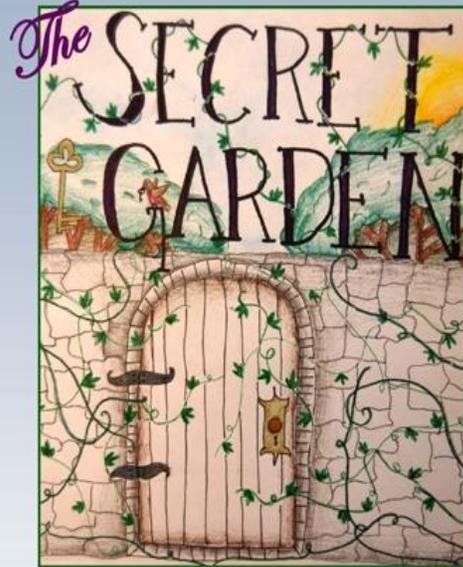
### Looking Ahead

<b>Saturday, April 5</b>	Parent Stage	7:00 pm
<b>Monday, April 7</b>	Tea and Play	10-11:00 am
<b>Thursday, April 10</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> grade Parent Evening	7:00 pm
<b>Tuesday, April 15</b>	Parent Council Meeting - Quakertown	7:00 pm
<b>Thursday, April 17</b>	School Tour 4 <sup>th</sup> grade Class Play	
<b>Friday, April 18</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> grade Class Play	
<b>Mon. &amp; Tues., April 21, 22</b>	No School – Spring Break	
<b>Tues., Wed., &amp; Thurs., April 23, 24, 25</b>	Snow Make-up Days	

#### How to Contact Us

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

~ RIVER VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSICAL ~



THURSDAY, MARCH 27TH & FRIDAY, MARCH 28TH, 7PM  
SATURDAY, MARCH 29TH, 2PM

CALL TO RESERVE A SEAT 610-982-5606

ADULTS \$10, CHILDREN 15 & YOUNGER \$5, FAMILY \$15

### There is still time to order Secret Garden T-shirts!

T-shirts may not be here by Friday, but will definitely arrive next week.

An order form is attached to this week's Current. Please order by Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. Proceeds benefit River Valley Waldorf School.

## Parking Lot Etiquette

Our parking lot is overflowing during morning drop off when Early Childhood and Grade School children are arriving all at once. Please respect the following rules in order to make the traffic more fluid and safer for our children.

#### General

- At no time may cars be parked (even for a minute) in front of the school or in the driveway opposite the entrance to the parking lot.
- If you have a large car or van, please do not park in the driveway across from the school (especially in the back near the circle), it blocks the way for buses and school vans.
- If you have business to take care of at school, please plan to arrive early for afternoon pick-up rather than staying in the morning, whenever possible.
- Carpool, carpool, carpool.

#### With regard to the circle:

- No parking in the circle from 8:30 am - 3:15 pm, students use this area to play.
- Please use the circle to drop off students at the back of the school in the a.m. Unload your child(ren) and drive right out. This is appropriate for grade 4 and up.

## From Administration

### Snow Day Make-Up Calendar Changes

Because of the days of school we missed due to the snow that hit us this winter, we have had to add some school days to the calendar. The following changes have been made:

- Wednesday, April 23rd, Thursday, April 24th, and Friday, April 25th, originally part of the spring break will now be school days.
- June 12th will become a full day instead of a half day and a full day will be added on June 13th.

The June dates will not affect Early Childhood.

### Waldorf Education is Back in the News

Long Island's Newday newspaper this weekend had a wonderful article about the Garden City Waldorf School. Please go to the link below to read the article:

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/no-tech-approach-at-garden-city-s-waldorf-school-1.7475269#1>

### April Lunch Menu

The lunch menu for April is attached to this week's Current. Please make sure your orders are in by this Friday, March 28th.

### Condolences

Our condolences to Angelique Riling (mother of Ceara, 1st grade) on the loss of her grandfather in Honduras. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

### Van Driver Class

There are a few spaces left in the van driver certification class, being held Saturday, April 19, 9 AM - 3 PM at school (no cost). As a certified van driver, you can minimize the need for parents to drive their own cars on field trips, as well as help out during festivals and other school events. Open to all parents and faculty. Please email Kira Willey at kira@kira.net.

### Grandparents Day

Before you know it May will be here. The birds are already starting to sing and the days are growing longer. If you would like to ensure that your child's grandparents or special friends are invited to this year's Grandparents Day, please share their contact information with us. We will need their name and address. If interested, we can also send the Current weekly as well. Please give information to Robbie at the front desk or email info@rivervalleysschool.org. Thanks!

### Secret Garden Seats

With the middle school play fast approaching, we want to remind everyone what it says in the Parent Handbook about reserved seating:

#### Reserved Seating for Student Performances

The size of the audiences for our assemblies and some of the plays have just about outgrown the size of our auditorium. In an effort to provide an opportunity for everyone to enjoy these wonderful student presentations, we will no longer allow parents or faculty to reserve seats in advance of any performance. Please be aware of the following for reserved seating:

Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium will open not more than 45 minutes prior to show-time. Everyone is welcome to enter and take their seats at that time.

Upon request, the administration will reserve 2 seats per middle school family and middle school faculty member for each performance of the annual middle school play. We will hold the reserved seats in a block. These too, will be able to be occupied first-come, first-served – at the same time as the general admission. The seats reserved by the administration may be used by parents, grandparents, sib-lings – at the discretion of the middle school family or middle school faculty member – but no more than 2 seats per family or person will be set aside.

## From the Faculty

### WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

First Grade: Language Arts

Second Grade: Math

Third Grade: Building/Native American Dwellings

Fourth Grade: Norse Mythology

Fifth Grade: North American Geography

Sixth Grade: Drama

Seventh Grade: Drama

Eighth Grade: Drama

### **Saturday Circus Club**

The River Valley Circus Club meets Saturday mornings from 10:30 to 12:00 in the All-Purpose Room for children in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and up. Parents may participate or drop off their children and leave. Come any week. Suggested donation is \$5 to \$10. Open to those totally new to circus and those with experience. Call Mr. Friedman at 610-847-8749 or just come.

### **WECAN Regional Conference Coming to RVWS**

RVWS is honored to be hosting the Waldorf Early Childhood Teachers Regional Conference this Spring. On April 26th, teachers from numerous Waldorf schools in the Mid-Atlantic states will converge upon our community. If you would like to offer a visitor a place in your home for a small fee (\$20-\$50?) or even for free, please let Melanie in the Star Room know.

## **From the Board**

### **Board Of Trustees Swing Dance and Workshop at Ottsville Traditional Arts Center, 250 Durham Road, Ottsville, PA**

SAVE THE DATE! - Sunday, April 13

at Ottsville Traditional Arts Center, Ottsville PA. Instruction with Peggy Leiby & Ret Turner

Live Music with Nobody's Bizness

Did you buy a ticket at last year's Auction? Great News! If you were unable to purchase tickets at the 2013 Auction, tickets will be available for sale at the door beginning at 4PM for \$25 per person. If you purchased tickets for sale at the auction, Refreshments are Complimentary during our Auction Donor Appreciation Social Hour.

**3 - 4pm** Complimentary Refreshments and Libations for Auction Donors

**4 - 5pm** Instruction with Peggy Leiby & Ret Turner

**5 - 7pm** Swing Dance

Tickets at the door \$25pp

Refreshments will be available for purchase between 4 & 7

## **From Parent Council**

### **Parent Stage - The Best Night Out in Bucks County!**

**Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Hard on the heels of spring, Parent Stage is around the corner, the evening of April 5th. Parent Stage is a free evening celebration created by and for parents, to appreciate how hard we all work in support of our children's magnificent education. We enjoy each other's company and also the myriad performing talents of our peers. Come relax and hang out with friends you otherwise only see in harried hallway moments.

Free. Potluck. Adults only. Get your babysitter now. The sign-up deadline for performers is March 20. So -- you know who you are -- let us know you want to perform. Any dancers, actors, funny people out there?

Contacts: Michelle Berrong (michelle@smorgasb.org or [c] 617-501-7517), Kira Willey (kira@kira.net or 610-392-7016) Kevin O'Hara (kevinoharaphilly@gmail.com or 215-847-4706)

### **Volunteer Stage Manager Needed for Parent Stage**

Duties include:

- Keep performance flowing smoothly (schedule, flow, etc)
- Confirm that next performers are prepared and ready backstage
- Confirm that stage is set for each performers needs
- Maintain communication with MC, sound, lights, and performers

Please contact Rich Kroth (rich@kroths.com) if you are able to "perform" these duties.

## Mayfaire

Mayfaire is our spring festival and is open to the wider community. Its success relies on the resources and the helping hands of the RVWS community!

"May Day brings with it the promise of rebirth - the renewed life of the soul. May Day brings promise: to the farmer, the promise of kind weather; to the young people weaving the pattern of creation around the Maypole, the eternal promise of the future."

Mayfaire Committee meetings are held every **Wednesday at 2:00**. Come and join us!

Your Mayfaire Committee: Tracy Fly, Kymm Phibbs, Jennifer Saltmarsh, Jill McMullen and Clare Brunell

## Pocket Fairy Items

Each RVWS family is asked to make/provide items for the Pocket Fairy. The Pocket Fairy is usually an upper grade school student wearing a specially made cape with many small pockets. In each pocket is hidden a treasure, usually very small and simple and a child can use their tickets to 'purchase' a pocket to try. They get to keep the treasure they find hidden in the pocket. RVWS families are asked to make **20 items per family** (not per student!) for this event. The small children really do love this activity!

Some examples might be:

painted rock

shell

bead on a string,

felt cutout of a butterfly or something small

felted acorn or ladybug

small beaded bracelet

Having a little girl I am sometimes at a loss for items for boys so please use your imagination/creativity to come up with your own Pocket Fairy ideas! These will be collected the week or two before the festival.

## Next Parent Council Meeting

The date for the next Parent Council meeting has changed to April 15.

In our ongoing effort to bring PC meetings 'closer to home,' our April meeting will be held at Beckers Corner, 110 Old Bethlehem Rd, Quakertown, PA 18951 (<http://goo.gl/maps/vuMeu>). If you have suggestions for future meeting locations, please contact us at [PC@RiverValleySchool.org](mailto:PC@RiverValleySchool.org).

## From the Community

### Babysitter Available

My name is Marcella Harvi. I am in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 13 years old. I have taken the American Red Cross babysitters course. I am available for babysitting or mother's helper work on most weekdays and some weekends. I charge \$5 an hour for 1 child and \$1 per additional child per hour. You can reach me at 203-343-2500.

### March happenings at Yoga Loka

#### 3/25- Tuesdays

11:45 am-12:45 pm - Yoga Sutras for 5 weeks

#### 3/30- Sunday

4:00-5:30 pm - Restore and Renew with Carole

For more information see the website at [www.Yoga-Loka.com](http://www.Yoga-Loka.com)

### Missing

We are missing a fountain pen. It is solid black, not the wood type most children have at school. If you come across it, we would love to get it back. Thanks! Cyndi 267-994-5589

### House Needed

The Sessegolo family is looking for a house to rent in the Upper Black Eddy, Kintnersville, Riegelsville area. Our moving date has to be before the end of May. Please let us know of any information at 610-751-4600. Beverly Sessegolo.

### Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

#### Contrawaltz

#### with Run of the Mill String Band and Peggy Leiby

Friday, April 11th 6:00PM-10:30PM

6-7PM Waltz Workshop with Peggy Leiby (\$7)

7-7:30PM Contra Beginners workshop

7:30-10:30PM Contradance with Run of the Mill String Band (\$9)

\$13 combined ticket to both events!

#### Wednesday Jams/Song Swaps

6 pm community potluck

6:30 - 8ish tunes and songs

\$5 donation or bring a dish to share!

March 26th with Daniel Hawkins

March 19th with Jane Rothfield

We meet to share a meal and traditional music in a collaborative, judgement-free setting. All are welcome, even if you've never sung or been to a jam session before! If you want to come extra-prepared, check out our website, where we post learning materials including sheet music, videos, and recordings ahead of time.

At the Ottsville Traditional Arts Center, 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville, PA 18972

Learn more at [ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com](http://ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com)

### There's No Planet B

Lafayette College Sustainability Event - Open to Students In 4th through 6th Grade  
Saturday, March 29, 2014, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Lafayette College Acopian Engineering Center  
Learn more about Sustainability at a full day event for students in fourth through sixth grade, hosted by the Lafayette College Society of Environmental Engineers and Scientists (SEES). Students will participate in interactive, hands-on sustainability themed activities run by Lafayette students and faculty. Space is limited and students will be accepted on a rolling basis so apply today! Registration will close on Friday, March 21, 2014. For more information or to register, please contact Rebecca Citrin by email

### Healing Ceremonies

Sabine Rahman/Saharra White Wolf (her spiritual name) invites you to join her spirit guided ceremonies in Clinton, NJ.

~Children/Family Full Moon Fire Ceremonies (next one on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm)

Both ceremonies are free of charge. It is a way to show gratitude for everything we have. As you attend these ceremonies, healing takes place not only for yourself, but also for Mother Earth and her children.

For more information on upcoming events, please join Awakya on Meetup.com and RSVP for events you are able to attend.

### Homeopathic Remedies Workshop with Karen Maleski

Managing Colds & Flus: A look at allergy relief. Learn which remedies works best for you. Nip it in the bud! With herbs that offer antibiotic & antiviral properties.

Wednesday March 26, 7 – 8:30 pm.

Location : BRICK HOUSE-home of Nelli-Rae's Kitchen & Therapeutic/ Educational Support, 8826 Easton Rd Ottsville, PA 18942 RSVP 610-982-9074. Cost of lecture is \$20.00. There is a \$5.00 discount, for prepayment.

As always, questions on any topic will be entertained at the end of the session.

### Summer Courses at the Center for Anthroposophy

We are delighted to announce the schedule of Renewal Courses for 2014. Please share these unique opportunities with the people in your lives who may be interested. At the Center for Anthroposophy we are so looking forward to the transformative short week(s) spent at our campus at High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire.

For more information and the list of courses please go to our website: [www.centerforanthroposophy.org](http://www.centerforanthroposophy.org)

### 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Watershed Greenup

Saturday April 5, 9am to 4pm

Hosted by the Springtown Fire Company  
Roadside Trash Pickup in Springfield, Durham and Lower Saucon Townships. Trash Supplies and Disposal Provided by PennDOT.

Coffee and Donuts for Breakfast, Homemade Chili Lunch provided free for all workers.

For more information, to pick a roadway, or to register yourself or your group, please contact Scott Douglas at 610-346-1604

### **Concert in the Round**

By the Lenape Chamber Ensemble. Saturday, April 12, 10-11am (For Children 4-12).

Featuring music by Mozart, Schedel and Elgar for flute, violin, viola, cello & piano. Refreshments and Instrument Demonstrations!

At Delaware Valley College Student Center, 700 East Butler Ave (at State St. exit, off Rte. 611)

Children \$2.00 – Adults Free. For more info, please call 610.294.9361

### **The Hummingbird's Tour (an end of life comedy) Bucks County Playhouse - April 16 to 20, 2014**

1970, Northern California. Three aging siblings are thrown into a comic philosophical frenzy by an unexpected guest bearing unsettling mystical predictions. This "end of life comedy" takes a playful look at life, more life, and life after life with wit and more than a few surprises... with a talented ensemble cast from NYC and LA, written by Margaret Dulaney Balitsaris and directed by John Augustine.

Wed, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2:30; Thurs, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 & 7:00; Fri, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:00; Sat, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 & 7:00; Sun, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2:30

Ticket prices - \$40, \$25 for those 25 and younger (purchased in person at the Box Office)  
BOX OFFICE (215)862-2121. Call soon for best seats.

*All proceeds from ticket sales will go to support the Haitian microfinance institution Fonkoze, committed to lifting Haiti's rural poor out of poverty since 1994.*

### **Teen Reading Group**

NOTICE TO TEENS - JOIN US!

For anyone ages 12-18 who likes to READ! It's a book discussion/reading group/chat session where we read new books before they are published.

At the Riegelsville Public Library, 615 Easton Road (Route 611)

Tuesdays - April 1st, May 13th, June 3rd, July 8th at 6PM  
Sign up at Riegelsville Public Library page or call 610-749-2357

Read and chat about books! IT'S FUN!

### **Backyard Stewardship Workshop**

A roadmap to backyard design and stewardship  
Any homeowner, gardener, teacher or land owners who is interested in helping the environment can benefit from this training about restoring ecology to backyards and other properties. Attendees will: Learn how to assess properties using Google Earth and other tools. Use the 15-step design process to implement change. Learn about native plants and how to create curb appeal. How sustainable landscaping can help you and others save money! Identify 10-15 birds and what they need in a backyard to thrive. And much, much more!

Class 1: Classroom setting, includes companion textbook on CD, notebook, and light morning fare. Please bring a lunch!

Class 2: Includes 1-2 backyard site visits will full assessment demonstration and practice, date and location to be determined.

Cost: \$55. Saturday, April 12, 9:30 am—2:30 pm, American Native Nursery, 2191 Hillcrest Road Quakertown PA 18951. To register, email: [ssaffier@audubon.org](mailto:ssaffier@audubon.org) 610.666.5593 x112

Presented by Audubon Pennsylvania in cooperation with Bird Town Springfield, western Montco Bird Towns, Conservation Strategies LLC, and American Native Nursery.

### **Palisades Tennis Camps**

2014 BCTA PROGRAMS IN DURHAM TOWNSHIP

In Partnership with the Palisades Community School Learn Practice & Play implements the games-based approach to teaching tennis using age and skill appropriate equipment and methods-the fast and fun way to learn tennis and/or improve your game. Emphasis is on fun, fitness and play. Free loaner racquets are available. Beginner/Intermediate group size is limited.

FOR BCTA PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND TO REGISTER LOG ONTO: [www.buckscountytennis.usta.com](http://www.buckscountytennis.usta.com) or email [buckscountytet](mailto:buckscountytet) or call 215-322-7020.

Palisades High School Tennis Courts, 139 Thomas Free Drive, Kintnersville, PA 18930

REGISTRATION CLOSES FOUR DAYS BEFORE START OF PROGRAM. ADDITIONAL \$3 ADMINISTRATIVE FEE PER PARTICIPANT FOR MAIL-IN REGISTRATION. RECEIVE A \$10 DISCOUNT PER PARTICIPANT BY SIGNING UP FOR THREE OR MORE FIVE-WEEK SEASONS AT ONE TIME!

# INFORM

The official AWSNA newsletter for our school communities

Dear Waldorf Community,  
Great news from two of our Canadian member schools: Sunrise Waldorf School, located just outside of Duncan, BC, and Nelson Waldorf School, located in Nelson, BC, were named the highest-ranking schools in the latest Fraser Institute rankings of British Columbia elementary schools.

Welcome to spring and sending warm regards,

*Beverly, David,  
and Melanie*



## SENATE AFFIRMS PARENTAL CHOICE

AWSNA continues to be active in working to maintain freedom and independence in education. We are pleased by this announcement from The Council for American Private Education (AWSNA has been represented on the board for many years): “The U. S. Senate approved a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, which . . . helps parents pay for the child care setting of their choice, whether public, private, or religious. The bill includes language proposed by the CAPE community that affirms the use of child care certificates, which are provided directly to parents for use in whatever program meets their child's needs: faith-based, Montessori, Waldorf, or any other public or private program.”

You can find out details about the amendment by visiting CAPE's Web site.

## NEW HOME FOR ALABAMA WALDORF SCHOOL

Alabama Waldorf School is excited to announce a 1970's-era church building has been recently acquired, and the school is working toward raising \$1,500,000 to refurbish the buildings and land, as well as to create a maintenance and endowment fund. The school hopes to occupy the new space in the Fall of 2015. Congratulations and good luck, Alabama Waldorf School

## SCREEN-FREE WEEK

On May 5—11 children around the world celebrate Screen-Free Week (formerly TV-Turnoff) by turning off entertainment screen media (TVs, computers, video games) and turning on the world around them. AWSNA has endorsed Screen-Free Week for many years and we hope our school communities will join us again this year.

As we know, encouraging children to actively play with peers and spend quality time with their families makes a significant difference in children's lives. For more information please visit [www.screenfree.org](http://www.screenfree.org).





(junior Samantha Pierce, sophomore Fiona Ahearne, and seniors Carlin Tindall and Lily Tupper). The boys also prevailed by wide margins, snagging four of the top seven spots in the freestyle race, led by sophomore Forrest McCurdy, freshman Tucker Pierce, junior Graham Roeber, and senior John Burgess. Another junior, Zach Neveu, finished eighth and tenth, respectively, in the two races. Merriconeag's Nordic ski program is beginning to draw statewide attention. One clue to the teams' successes might have to do with facilities, or lack of them. The elementary school has no gymnasium, so from the early grades onward, the children have p.e. classes outdoors and on skis during those often harsh Maine winter days!

## Merriconeag Nordic Skiers Retain Title at Maine State Championships

Despite a high school population of under 50 students, Merriconeag Waldorf High School's boys' and girls' Nordic ski teams repeated as state champions in the 2014 Maine State Class C Championships held the week of February 17. For the girls, it was their fourth consecutive state title. In what was widely expected to be a rebuilding year, the teams nevertheless dominated the classic and skate races. In both events, the girls took four of the top seven places.



### AWSNA RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR YOU:

We've compiled the best forms from member schools that you can use as templates to create your own. They're in the "Affiliated School Resources" page of [www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org](http://www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org).

To get the latest on **Waldorf Education in North America** sign up to receive the **e-news** on [www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org](http://www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org); also please 'like' us on **Facebook** at <https://www.facebook.com/AssociationOfWaldorfSchoolsOfNorthAmerica>.

You can also support **AWSNA** on-line: [www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org](http://www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org).

Thank you for your commitment to **Waldorf Education!**

**We look forward to serving our member schools!**

**Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.**

#### Leader of Administration

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ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF  
SCHOOLS OF NORTH AMERICA™

## The Disturbing Transformation of Kindergarten

MARCH 6, 2014 | DIANE MARIE

One of the most distressing characteristics of education reformers is that they are hyper-focused on how students perform, but they ignore how students learn. Nowhere is this misplaced emphasis more apparent, and more damaging, than in kindergarten.

A new University of Virginia study found that kindergarten changed in disturbing ways from 1999-2006. There was a marked decline in exposure to social studies, science, music, art and physical education and an increased emphasis on reading instruction. Teachers reported spending as much time on reading as all other subjects combined.

The time spent in child-selected activity dropped by more than one-third. Direct instruction and testing increased. Moreover, more teachers reported holding all children to the same standard.

How can teachers hold all children to the same standards when they are not all the same? They learn differently, mature at different stages – they just are not all the same especially at the age of 4-6.

Is this drastic shift in kindergarten the result of a transformation in the way children learn? No! A 2011 nationwide study by the Gesell Institute for Child Development found that the ages at which children reach developmental milestones have not changed in 100 years.

For example, the average child cannot perceive an oblique line in a triangle until age 5 ½. This skill is a prerequisite to recognizing, understanding and writing certain letters. The key to understanding concepts such as subtraction and addition is “number conservation.” A child may be able to count five objects separately but not understand that together they make the number five. The average child does not conserve enough numbers to understand subtraction and addition until 5½ or 6.

If we teach reading, writing, subtraction and addition before children are ready, they might memorize these skills, but will they will not learn or understand them. And it will not help their achievement later on.

Child development experts understand that children must learn what their brains are ready to absorb. Kindergarten is supposed to set the stage for learning academic content when they are older. If they are going to push our kindergarten children to move faster, what does that say for the push for “educating” Pre-K?

Play is essential in kindergarten – in fact in any child under the age of 5. Through play, children build literacy skills they need to be successful readers. By speaking to each other in socio-dramatic play, children use the language they heard adults read to them or say. This process enables children to find the meaning in those words.

There is a wide range of acceptable developmental levels in kindergarten; so a fluid classroom enables teachers to observe where each child is and adjust the curriculum accordingly.

Two major studies confirmed the value of play vs. teaching reading skills to young children. Both compared children who learned to read at 5 with those who learned at 7 and spent their early years in play-based activities. Those who read at 5 had no advantage. Those who learned to read later had better comprehension by age 11, because their early play experiences improved their language development.

Yet current educational policy banishes play in favor of direct instruction of inappropriate academic content and testing; practices that are ineffective for young children.

***(Continued on next page)***

The No Child Left Behind Law played a major role in changing kindergarten. Upper-grade curricula were pushed down in a mistaken belief that by learning reading skills earlier, children would fare better on standardized tests. Subjects not tested by NCLB were de-emphasized. Lawmakers insisted that standardized tests assess reading at earlier ages, even though standardized tests are invalid for children under 8.

These changes have the harshest effect on our most vulnerable children. The UVA study found that in schools with the highest percentage of children of color and children eligible for free-and-reduced-priced lunch, teachers had the most demanding expectations for student performance.

To make matters worse, the drafters of the Common Core ignored the research on child development. In 2010, 500 child development experts warned the drafters that the standards called for exactly the kind of damaging practices that inhibit learning: direct instruction, inappropriate academic content and testing.

These warnings went unheeded.

Consequently, the Common Core exacerbates the developmentally inappropriate practices on the rise since NCLB. Teachers report having to post the standards in the room before every scripted lesson, as if 5-year-olds can read or care what they say. They time children adding and subtracting, and train them to ask formulaic questions about an "author's message." All children are trained in the exact same skill at the same time. One teacher lamented that "there is no more time for play." Another wrote "these so-called educational leaders have no idea how children learn."

It may satisfy politicians to see children perform inappropriately difficult tasks like trained circus animals. However, if we want our youngest to actually learn, we will demand the return of developmentally appropriate kindergarten.

Wendy Lecker – she is a columnist for Hearst Connecticut Media Group and is senior attorney for the Campaign for Fiscal Equity project at the Education Law Center.