

Parents as Teachers

Reflections from the Coordinator

PAT Families,

At this time of year, there can be so many things for different people. What is supposed to be a time with family and friends, filled with joy, can also be fraught with unmet expectations, disappointment, or a time of grieving. For many parents with young children, the holidays may feel overwhelming. I want to offer you some encouragement that you are not alone in this. My wish, for us all, is that we focus on simple things, that we listen to our bodies and souls, and make this month a time to nourish that which is important to us. Let's give ourselves grace to let some things go if necessary. One thing everyone who receives this newsletter has in common is that you have at least one young child in your home. I would encourage you to make the focus of your holiday celebrations centered around quality-focused time together. Whether it's reading books together, making food or treats, or simply driving around listening to music to look at holiday lights, make a point to stay in the present and enjoy the people in your life. It is also a great time of year to model giving and serving to your young children. Consider including your child in shopping for gifts for loved ones, baking cookies for neighbors, or other random acts of kindness.

Another great reminder is that predictable routines help kids feel safe. The more you can do to maintain their sleep and eating routines as close to normal as possible, the more they will be able to enjoy the season. If you find your child acting out more than normal and having big feelings spill over, it might be a signal that they are feeling overtired or overwhelmed from life feeling unpredictable or over scheduled.

One great tool you can keep handy this month is your I Love You Ritual ring. These simple songs and rhymes are a great way to have a moment of connection with your child. The 4 components of eye contact, touch, playfulness, and presence are *Joy Juice* for your child's brain. They are a quick way to fill your child's cup during a busy season. A favorite in our program is "Round and Round the Garden". You can click [HERE](#) to see a demo.

As always, we are so grateful to walk this parenting journey alongside you.
Warmly,

Michelle Kelly

Program Coordinator
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JANUARY PLAYGROUPS

BV PAT is excited to welcome families back to our playroom. In-person playgroups offer many benefits including connecting with other families, new activities for children to explore and children learning to interact with each other.

In order to help facilitate connections between children and families, we run playgroups in 2-4 week sessions. In January, families have the opportunity to sign up for a group that will meet weekly at the same time for 4 weeks. You can choose to sign up for a group with children that are similar age to your child (Baby Play, 1-Year-Olds or 2-Year-Olds) or you can choose our multiage group (birth to 36 months) if you have more than one child or would like you child to be around children of all ages.

JANUARY PLAYGROUP SIGN UP WILL BE EMAILED ON DECEMBER 16th
Please note that the sender will show from Mandi Hjortshoj

Each group will be limited to 10-18 children.

- Only one adult per child may attend. A nanny or grandparent is welcome to bring child in place of parent if necessary.
- No siblings are allowed in the Baby Play, 1-Year-Old or 2-Year-Old playgroups. Siblings under 36 months of age are allowed to attend the multiage playgroups, evening and Saturday playgroups. Non-walking/crawling babies are an exception.
- All adults must show a valid state issued photo ID or passport to enter any BV building. Please plan to bring ID with you every time you come to playgroup or you will not be allowed to attend.
- Strollers and car seats are not allowed in the playroom, please plan to wear or carry your baby while in the playroom when not on the floor playing.
- If a session is full please add your name to the waiting list. Waiting list families will receive priority registration for the next month.
- If you miss two sessions in a row, your spot will be given to the next family on the waiting list.
- Please stay home if you or your child is ill.

January Playgroups

Baby Play for non-walkers (4-12 months) - Tuesdays 9:15-10am: 1/6, 1/13, 1/20, 1/27
Thursdays 12:15-1pm: 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29

Playgroup for 1-Year-Olds (12-23 months) - Wednesdays 10:15-11am: 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29
Thursdays 9:15-10am: 1/9, 1/16, 1/23, 1/30

Playgroup for 2-Year-Olds (24-36 months) - Tuesdays 10:15-11am: 1/7, 1/14, 1/21, 1/28
Wednesdays 9:15-10am: 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29

Playgroup for 1's and 2's (0-36 months) - Thursdays 10:15-11am: 1/9, 1/16, 1/23, 1/30
This is a playgroup for children 0 to 36 months of age and/or families with more than one child under 36 months

Evening Playgroup (0-36 months) - Wednesday 1/7: 6-6:45pm

Saturday Playgroup (0-36 months) - Saturday 1/24: 9:15-10am

Virtual Pizza Class (rec. 24-36 months) - Thursday 1/8: 4:30-5:30pm



Virtual Cooking Class

Are you looking for something fun you can easily prepare with your child in the kitchen? If so, find your aprons and chef hats and join parent educators, Ms. Becky and Ms. Amy, for an online fun-filled evening in the kitchen. In January we will be making PIZZA! You will be sent a list of simple ingredients and supplies prior to class that you will need to have prepared and ready to use during our time together. We will follow the steps of a recipe to make our own pizzas using ingredients you and your child can choose together. As the pizza bakes we will listen to the book “Hi, Pizza Man!” by Virginia Walter. This is a fun story about what happens when a hungry toddler welcomes a parade of imagined pizza-deliverers including a kitty, dog and so on until the actual doorbell rings. Kids will enjoy reading along and guessing who arrives next. Two sessions of this interactive online class will be hosted on Thursday, January 8th (4:30pm or 5:30pm). Age recommendation is 24-36 months but all family members are welcome to join! Registration is required, sign up will be sent out Dec. 16th.



A Word about Home Visits

Now that winter is approaching, we ask that if you or a family member is under the weather, please reach out to your parent educator before your home visit to move to a virtual. Also, we try very hard to keep the playroom germ-free and safe for all children. Please help us by placing any toys your child has mouthed in the provided tub so they can be sanitized. We request that if your child is ill, has had a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within the last 24 hours, or has colored nasal discharge, you refrain from a home visit or using the playroom that day.

In addition, please remember to have a path shoveled for your parent educator’s home visit. If you are scheduling an evening visit, please turn on an outside light. Safety is our priority. We appreciate your help. Thank you!





November Fundraiser Success

WOW and THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Blue Valley Food Pantry and PAT, we would like to express our gratitude for a VERY successful Food/Supply Drive. The donations were so well-received and will help out many families this holiday season.



Giving doesn't have to stop at the end of November. The Blue Valley Pantry accepts donations throughout the year.

NOTE: They do accept opened diaper packages. If your child has grown out of a size, they would be happy to take any extra left-over unopened or opened packages you may have.

Blue Valley Early Childhood PTA

This time of year we turn our focus towards what we are grateful for and who we love. One of our more important roles as a PTA is to show appreciation to our educators and staff. If you're looking for a way to say "thank you" please consider a donation to the PTA. You do not need to be a member to donate. You can donate [here at this link](#); please mark your donation for Staff Appreciation. This month the PTA is excited to invite you to join us for more playgroups and a special music time! If you don't want to miss out on the fun, sign up [here](#) to become a



December Office Hours

Our office and play center at Hilltop Learning Center will be closed from Monday, December 22nd through January 5th 2026. All emails and voicemails will be returned on Monday, January 5th. Enjoy your winter break and stay safe!

