

## HOMEWORK: Can it be Fun?

School and homework go hand and hand, but it is no big secret that homework can feel like drudgery. In fact to some kids it is a tuna noodle casserole standing in the way of the dessert of play. Yet, as trite as it sounds, in homework, as with every act of learning, practice really does make a difference, in academic success as well as in cultivating a sense of self that is capable, curious and self-directed.

### So how can homework become more fun?

A grant from **School's Out Washington** earlier this year helped Kids Co. at Graham Hill explore this question. The outcome was the creation and launch of Family Homework Night, a program designed to coach parents in the mysterious art of engaging in the academic lives of their children. Fun and relaxing events, Family Homework Nights offered parents an evening free from cooking (dinner was on us!) and one-on-one coaching time with Kids Co. staff trained in facilitating homework programs for children. Families were introduced to fun learning games, such as "smath," were given time to become familiar with the computer learning programs used by Seattle Public Schools, and were given a set of tips to make homework a positive experience for everyone (see inset box).

Every Kids Co. site offers children homework support four days a week for 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the age of the child. The spring 2010 survey of Kids Co. parents indicated that this feature of the care our staff provides is among the most important to them. Among the comments we received was "keep up the good work," "expand the homework time," and "enhance family involvement." Maintaining an exceptionally supportive environment that helps children be academically successful is one of Kids Co. best practices commitments, and we will continue to find new and innovative ways to engage children—and their parents—in the amazing world of learning.

FUN?



## Welcome Back!

It is the start of another school year and another year of learning. Exciting? We think so.

Those of us in child care are pleased to see the relationship between school time and out-of-school time is becoming more readily understood. Often inaccurately referred to as "daycare" (we care for kids, not days), child care programs are now being acknowledged as pivotal in helping students achieve academic and social mastery in the complex environment of the 21st century.

There is a new buzz phrase emerging to describe child care programming that feels right: expanded learning opportunities (ELO). It is a phrase recognizing the importance of child care in learning integration and connection beyond school. 21st century benchmarks for student success, now expanded well beyond "the 3 Rs," include the development of skills, such as effective communication; the ability to cultivate and maintain healthy relationships; the ability to solve intricate problems; and the establishment of a strong sense of self, all of which are fundamental in high quality child care curricula. It is nice to see child care programming being recognized as an important player in integrated education.

The Harvard Family Research Project recently authored an intriguing report about ELOs that we have posted on our website ([www.kidscompany.org/sharing/articles](http://www.kidscompany.org/sharing/articles)). I encourage you to read it.

Fall tidings,

**Susan R. Brown**  
Kids Co. President and CEO



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Debe Thomas, Kids Co. on Mercer Island

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# Tips for Making Homework a Positive Experience

- \* **Maintain a gently positive attitude**—Monitor your own emotions. Strive for an attitude that is emotionally present and not extreme on either end of the emotional spectrum, not too “gungho” or too “oh man...” Strive for the middle ground.
- \* **Focus on the development of time management skills**—Set a daily schedule with an established time limit that is not near bedtime. Encourage your child to focus on the most difficult homework first so that as they progress, their homework gets easier.
- \* **Watch for signs of frustration**—Learning is not just an intellectual experience, it is an emotional experience, too. Be aware when challenging emotions such as frustration get triggered, because they can become permanently associated with homework. Instead, consider offering your child a time out to recharge and after a period of rest take another look at the problem.
- \* **Provide guidance, not answers**—Resist the temptation to give your child the answers. Working it out themselves will help them cultivate a sense of self that is capable, confident, and self-directed. Simply offer your guiding presence as your child makes his or her way through questions.
- \* **Reward your child for a job well done**—Know how your child likes to be acknowledged for a job well done and do it. Make it simple and do not go overboard. Simple affirmations that reflect your observations work the best.



# DONATE



and Be Automatically Entered to Win a Date Night Package for Two!!!



Kids Co. and **Intiman Theatre** have teamed up to create the increasingly popular, **Date Night**, a highly affordable evening of theater, wine reception, and child care. Parents and kids love it!

Anyone who makes a contribution to Kids Co. from September 1st to October 31st will be automatically entered in a drawing to receive a Date Night package for two, valued at \$150, for the November 6th performance of **The Scarlett Letter**. Winners will be notified on Monday, November 1st.

**There will be two Date Night package winners!** Donate online at [www.kidscompany.org/sharing/ways-to-share-and-support](http://www.kidscompany.org/sharing/ways-to-share-and-support) today and enter to win!

**Note:** The \$150 fair market value of this package is considered a donor benefit.

## Building Blocks of Kids Co.

**\$30** provides a day of care for one child

**\$150** provides a week of care for one child

**\$800** provides a month of care for one child

# Scuttlebutt of the very best kind...



Thomas Ko, Director, Graham Hill

**CONGRATULATIONS** are in order for Kids Co. on Mercer Island program director Debe Thomas and her husband Rob, who are expecting their first child in December—a baby girl!

**A BIG HEARTY WELCOME** for our new Kids Co. at Graham Hill program director, Thomas Ko. Thomas arrived in the midst of the summer day camp session and right from the get-go his graciously thoughtful presence made him many friends. Welcome Thomas!

**WE ALSO WELCOME** two new board members into our fold: Virginia Anderson and Jonathan Tingstad. Virginia and Jonathan both have/had daughters that attend Kids Co. at John Hay, and were impressed with the care. Virginia is a well-known Seattle Community leader who was formerly the head of Seattle Center and the Safeco Foundation; Jonathan is the CFO of Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. Welcome Virginia and Jonathan!



Irene Yamamoto + Jonathan Tingstad

**A SHOUT OUT** to Patick Russell, assistant director of Kids Co. at John Hay, and his team of volunteers—Richard MacDonald, Garrison Schauer, and Mark Nakagarawa for giving the center a brand new paint job. Looks beautiful, guys!

**SPECIAL KUDOS** to our Kids Co. at South Shore team who at the invitation of the South Shore School administration and South Shore parents are managing all of the school's after school programs. This is a huge affirmation of Kids Co. by the school's community and a significant expansion of our programs.

**SPEAKING OF EXPANSION**, Kids Co. at Adams, Kids Co. at TOPS, and Kids Co. at South Shore are dialing it up. All three sites are rolling out new programs this fall to serve more children.

**FINALLY. WE OFFER A "STANDING O"** for retiring Kids Co. Board member Irene Yamamoto. Irene has served on Kids Co.'s board for eleven years. We thank her for her generous service over these years and hope she stays in touch!



Virginia Anderson

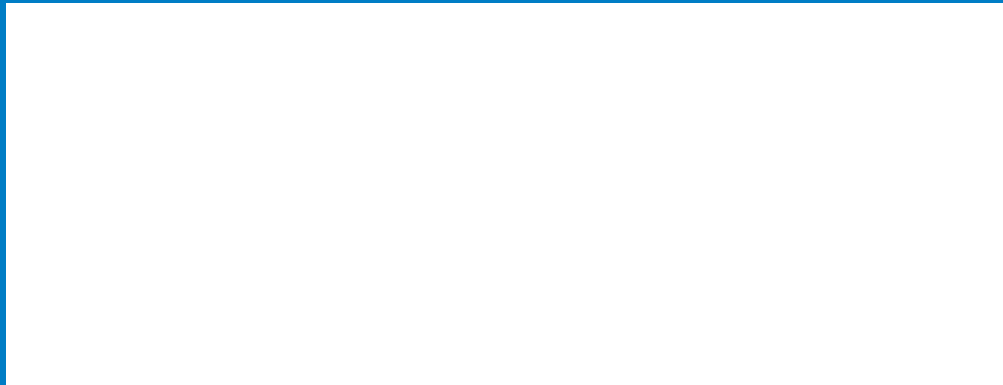
## Kids Co. Adds a New Site!

At the end of August, Kids Co. was informed that its bid to manage the child care at the newly re-opened **McDonald Elementary in north Seattle** was successful. Kids Co. at McDonald will officially open in December, and for two years will operate out of the Lincoln Building while McDonald Elementary is being remodeled.

**kids**

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# KIDS CO. READER

**We made friends. We had fun.**  
**This was the best summer camp ever...until next year!**

