

## Apple Group Volunteers:

Thanks for volunteering to help us at preschool! Apple Groups will be scheduled once a month, on Wednesdays, for our PreKindergarten classes. I would like this to be a fun, special time that they will look forward to. With three adults, we will each have a group of four at a time, and move them around from one adult to another. This allows the adult to stay put and have supplies set up at one place, and gives the children a little chance to move around in between 10-12 minute time slots.

Please keep your group together at your table. I will set a timer to rotate the groups all at once. This provides a quieter work atmosphere for everyone to concentrate and hear better, and helps the children to learn that this is a time to settle down, listen and do their best. In my experience, small group time really adds to their listening skills, provides some enriching activities, offers more one-on-one attention and assistance, and helps with their future adjustment to the kindergarten routine.

I will choose the groupings of children, rather than letting the children choose. Each group is identified by colored apple tags, which they need to wear. I make an effort to separate some of the “chattiest” combinations of children, to ensure the most successful experience for everyone. I’m hoping that this will encourage them to save the visiting and socialising for snack or lunch time.

All the other toys and play equipment are closed during Apple Group time. This can be a difficult rule for the children to learn. If you find that someone is wandering or becoming distracted and wanting to go and play, just verbally redirect them by reminding them that there will be time for playing another day or after Apple Groups.

Here’s how it works:

When you choose the project that you will be teaching, you should find a folder with it. The folder should have a class list, pencil, copy of these guidelines, D’Nealian writing sample and Bunny Money. Please check off each child as they complete your activity, so that I will know if someone has missed something that I’ll need to catch up on later.

We’ll start with all the children on the shape carpet playing a guessing game to get everyone settled down and ready to work. This teaches them some easy games which they can play on their own, with minimal adult supervision and gives you parents a few minutes to familiarize yourself with your activity. I will give them some brief instructions, send a group in to join each adult at their table and set a timer for about 10-12 minutes.

If someone in your group finishes your activity before the timer rings, they need to stay with you at your table. Those who finish early may sit quietly and relax, talk with you, work with or help others in their group or quietly go to the art table and choose drawing paper and markers or crayons to bring back to your

table to fill the rest of the time. They know the routine of putting completed drawings into their mailbox or backpacks.

Some of the projects you will be helping with will need to be set aside to dry, some will immediately be put into their mailboxes to go home that day and some will stay at school to be completed another day (class books, projects to display in the classroom, etc.)

Every group is different. You will find that some children quickly finish an activity that the previous group took lots of time with, adding extra details to their work. Offer positive encouragement, demonstrate or help, if needed. Keep instructions simple and direct. If the children are not listening, just stop and explain that you will all need to wait until everyone shows you that they are ready to get started. You might also remind them that I am counting on all of them to do their best and that you only have a few minutes to finish up before going on to the next table.

Please resist the temptation to count out and set each child's supplies in front of them before they arrive at your table. Our job is to give them some general directions, put the supplies out and let them put their own creativity into their project. The last thing I want is for all of them to take home identical projects. I usually avoid having a premade sample project to show them, because I have found that many of them just want to copy mine instead of thinking about how they want to design their own.

The main focus in offering crafts is the creative process and developing their skills (cutting, gluing, coloring etc.) The goal is NOT to make a finished product to take home. So, if they decide not to put any eyes on their owl or they put 10 eyes where you think a beak should go, just remind yourself that they are expanding their creativity! There is no one "right" way to create .

When the timer rings, give each of the children a Bunny Money to put into their pocket on the chart by the computer. Thank them for working with you and show them which table to go to next. We will move the children in a circle, from one adult to another.

It's hard work for four and five year olds to pay attention, concentrate and learn to work with and take directions from new people. So, we may need to vary and balance the activities offered, or stand up and stretch in between or shorten the times.

Just a note on working with your own child. We sometimes tend to expect more from our own children or to want them to be terrific every minute. Just try to keep in mind that all the children have off days, projects they don't care for, and peers they would rather not work with. And, sometimes, distracting or less than perfect behavior is just your child's way of showing you that they want to be noticed along with the others. Sharing a parent's attention with others takes practise too. So, keep this in mind and redirect your child to get back to work as you would any other child.

Whenever there is writing involved in an activity, be sure to use small case letters. Their names need to be written using only one capital letter and the rest lower case letters. Some of the children have been taught at home to write their names using all capitals, but they will need to relearn the “school way” in kindergarten, so now is a good time to start.

Refer to the D’Nealian alphabet in your folder for help in forming the letters correctly. Whenever possible, have the children do the writing, or just start with the child forming the first letter or two and then you can finish it up.

Cutting and writing take practise and lots of small muscle control, which many 4-5 year olds have not developed yet. The children will all be at different stages of expertise with these skills. Be sure that the children are gripping the pencil, crayon or marker correctly. Demonstrate, if needed.

With cutting, remind them that their thumb goes on top, and have them tuck their elbows in to their sides. If they are struggling with cutting, just have them try a little of the straight part and then you can cut the rest, so that they have a feeling of success in doing some of it.

Be sure to ask questions if you are unsure about how to handle something, can’t find your supplies or just need clarification.

Please let me know how it is going, and give any comments or suggestions as we go along. I really appreciate your help with this. Small group activities like this would not be possible without your help! Thank you.

Vicki