



THE MEHER SCHOOLS



# Wednesday Messages

September 18, 2019 • Parent Resource Center: [www.MeherSchoolsParents.org](http://www.MeherSchoolsParents.org)

## Coming Monday: School Photo Opt-In Form (Required)

School photos will be taken the week of October 7–11. If you want your child's individual portrait taken and/or for your child to be included in his or her class photo, you'll need to submit the Opt-In Form we'll be sending via *eNote* on Monday. If we don't receive a form for your child, we'll have to assume you don't want his or her photo taken.

## Maternity Leave for Ivy Summers

Elementary school Co-Principal Ivy Summers will be on maternity leave from late September through the spring. In Ivy's absence, please contact our other co-principal, Vince d'Assis, regarding elementary school matters, or questions or concerns about safety school-wide. (As always, talk to Susie Kohl about topics related to the preschool.)

## Explorations Sign-ups End Friday

Friday is the last day to sign your child up for a class in the year's first Explorations session. Please see the *eNote* we sent September 11, which includes class descriptions and links to the registration site. Be sure to read the note about signing children out when class is over to avoid being charged for aftercare.

## Join the New Saturday Morning Butterfly Garden Team

When Ian Lintermans retired last year after caring for the Butterfly Garden for 15 years, that responsibility fell to our garden teacher, Adrienne Wallace. Adrienne has enlisted the aid of preschool parent David Droppo—and they need your help!

Beginning this week, they'll be meeting from 9 to 11 every other Saturday morning until November 2, or whenever the garden reaches a stable state that can be maintained with once-a-month volunteer attention. Please join them in the garden Saturday morning! You can contact Adrienne at [garden@meherschools.org](mailto:garden@meherschools.org).



## Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

### *Ensuring Your Child's Safety on Playdates*

PARENTS OFTEN ASK ME questions about sending their children on playdates. Understandably, they wonder about allowing their children to go into the home of a family they don't know well, even when the family is a member of the Meher Schools community.

The steady stream of requests to arrange playdates poses special challenges for parents. They want their children to have friends, but ensuring responsible supervision for their children is their highest priority.

Although as teachers we often discuss children's social interests with parents, *we are not in a position to evaluate the safety of situations outside of our school*. As you know, our school cannot protect our students during the hours they are not on our campus. And so it is up to parents to make sure their children are safe, even on playdates with children they have met at our school.

Still, children's independence should be explored, ideally gradually, with parents staying visible and readily available to guide, help, and protect. I know how bewildering this challenge can be. In this mobile age when parents may not have the support of



extended family nearby, making connections with others is important. At the same time, our busy lives in a suburban environment often keep us from getting to know people in our community well. That is why we want to suggest important guidelines for responding to requests for your child to visit or stay in a friend's home.

### *Playdate Guidelines*

Here are some guidelines that, as a parent and as a teacher who has dealt with a wide variety of family social situations, make good sense to me:

- ***Do not allow your child to go alone on a playdate or overnight in a home where you do not know the parents, siblings, and the environment well.*** No matter how delightful the invitation, the reality is you are entrusting your child to this family's care. It makes sense to be certain you are fully aware whom your child will encounter (parents, older brothers and sisters, people who come into the home) during a visit *without you present*. You also need to find out who will be supervising your child while you are away. In other words, you should know the family well and feel unhesitating, comfortable, and certain about your child's safety.

- ***Set up playdates as family social events.*** Start by having a family playdate where members of your family socialize with members of the playdate family. When families get together, children aren't pressured to venture alone into unfamiliar settings. Casual socializing with other parents also allows you to get to know family members, their lifestyles, and their home environments. Establishing careful patterns with your children when they are first exploring independence builds a context for safety in the future. In early adolescence, requests for time away from home multiply. Using thoughtfulness and care now creates a foundation for social guidelines in the future.
- ***Make a plan for communicating with your children when they are away from home.*** Don't feel awkward about calling to speak with children at someone else's home. You can let the host know ahead of time that you will be phoning. Make calling a condition of sending your child on a sleepover. When you do call, check in to see whether your child is happy and whether your help is needed. In addition, teach children how to call you—and encourage them to contact you if they feel uncomfortable.
- ***Check Megan's List online ([www.meganslaw.ca.gov](http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov)).*** Information on the identity and whereabouts of registered sex offenders is available by the individual's name, city, or zip code at this internet site. Megan's List is not intended to further punish child offenders but to provide helpful information so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's activities, such as playdates. In light of this, it is up to parents to learn of known child offenders. You have the ability to protect your children from unsupervised contact with people who have a known history of child sexual abuse. We recommend that you refer to Megan's List periodically. Other valuable information about maintaining child safety is also available at the Megan's List website.

I appreciate your willingness to join us in our ongoing concern for child safety. Thank you for considering this information carefully.

*Susie Kohl is director of the White Pony School and the author of numerous books and articles on parenting and child development.*

**Nurtured Heart Corner**  
Promoting Children's "Inner Wealth"

## Notice What Isn't Happening

It's hard to remember in the heat of the moment that our children are always learning. What they're learning might not be what we want them to learn, so when we give energy to negative behavior, they're gaining our attention. You need to recognize the behavior that you want to change in a moment when it *isn't* happening and give lots of your energy and positivity to that recognition—and not let that moment for learning slide by.

