

# DECEMBER 2019



## Play Centers at West Towson Elementary School

6914 North Charles Street

Towson, Maryland 21204

410.494.7134 ~ [www.playcenters.org](http://www.playcenters.org)

Hours of Operation: 7:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. / 3:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.



This organization and its materials are not affiliated with, sponsored by, or endorsed by Baltimore County Public Schools, the Superintendent, or this Baltimore County public school or office.

### FROM DIANE MELLOTT, CEO/COO

Temperatures continue to remind us that winter is almost here and, with it, the possibility of inclement weather of one sort or another. Please take a moment to get your plan set up in the event of early school closings or in the event the BCPS Superintendent cancels afternoon and evening programs, even if schools do not dismiss early on those days. The BCPS Offices of Purchasing and Facilities have remained extremely firm that after school child care providers are not permitted, by BCPS Contract, to provide child care at those times. This includes all Providers, in all Baltimore County Public Schools. Please be proactive with your child's teacher and school administration by letting them know, in writing, what emergency procedure your child should follow in the event that an unscheduled, emergency early school closing, or the cancellation of afternoon and evening activities, should occur.

Please be reminded that there are numerous sources of information and alerts regarding such closings. Play Centers sends emergency alerts to all individuals signed up for those alerts through our website ([www.playcenters.org](http://www.playcenters.org)). Click on *Menu*, then *Parent Resources*, then *Stay Connected*. Please note that while the sign-up areas for email and for text alerts are on the same page, they are separate processes because they utilize separate programs. If you want both types of alerts, please complete both processes. There are also emergency alert systems and phone Apps offered by various local television stations, and, of course, school emergency notifications are posted on both the [www.bcps.org](http://www.bcps.org) website and the BCPS Now App. (IMPORTANT NOTE regarding the Hereford Zone: Please be aware that there are sometimes closures and other notifications that specifically affect only those BCPS schools in the Hereford Zone of Baltimore County, since the weather and road conditions are different at that end of the County!)

Take time now to get set-up for all of your preferred notification systems, communicate with your school as to the emergency plan your child should follow, and talk to your child so he/she knows what to expect should a closing/cancellation occur. Planning and practicing with your child should alleviate most of the stress associated with these unexpected emergencies.

We wish for you and yours a peaceful holiday season filled with family and fun as well as a joyous and bountiful Happy New Year!

### FROM THE DIRECTOR

Will Meister

*Everyone have a safe and happy winter break!*

### THEMES

Holidays Around the World  
Ice, Ice Baby  
Polar Express

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Patrick Owen  
Colton  
Marley

### FROM ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE (AR)

Questions about your account ?  
Questions about Military Subsidy or the MSDE Scholarship?  
Please contact the  
AR Coordinator / Subsidy Specialist, at 410.296.4880, ext. 111.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

December 23 thru January 1  
Holiday/ Winter Break  
School and Play Centers are **CLOSED!**

School re-opens Thursday, January 2

Play Centers' Administrative Office will be closed  
December 24 - January 1.

Our Office will re-open Thursday, January 2.

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## ❧ PARENTS' CORNER ❧

### How to Teach Children About Cultural Awareness and Diversity (an excerpt)

By: Christy Tirrell-Corbin

Have you ever had an embarrassing moment where your child (maybe quite loudly) asked you about some characteristic of another person? For example, "Mommy, why does that woman look like that?" The typical parental reaction is to attempt to quiet the child and move on as quickly as possible. As adults we've been taught not to ask such questions (at least not out loud). In contrast, children are not yet conditioned to refrain from sharing what they think or asking what they want to know.

Earlier on than most people realize, children become aware of and intrigued by the difference in the way people look and behave. In fact, Phyllis A. Katz, while a professor at the University of Colorado, found babies as young as six-months of age stared significantly longer at photographs of adults who were of a different color than their parents. The research evidence clearly indicates that children notice differences in race, ability, family composition and a multitude of other factors. Their questions are attempts to make sense of those observations so they can make sense of their own world.

As a parent, I know that children tend to ask the most challenging questions at the most inconvenient times. Rather than trying to quiet your child (which implies there is something wrong with the other person or with asking questions) take these opportunities to help your child understand and respect differences and similarities among those in your community. Provide brief, objective responses to their questions. For example, if your child comments about the difference in a person's skin color tell her, "His skin color is white because his biological parents had white skin." If your child asks you why a person is in a wheelchair tell him, "There is a medical reason why she is unable to walk by herself, so she uses the wheelchair to get from one place to another."

By helping your child understand and respect similarities and differences you will also help your child to understand who he is in the context of your race, ethnic group, culture, religion, language and familial history. In so doing, you will provide your child with personally meaningful information and also introduce concepts from anthropology, history, religion, geography, etc.

Use these tips to spark your children's curiosity about who they (and others) are in their world:

**I love you/我愛你/Te quiero.** Teaching your children words in the native language(s) of your family is a personal way to introduce them to different cultures, as well as family history... Moreover, since many classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, consider teaching your child key phrases, such as "[thank you](#)" in a language represented in her classroom, which not only models respect for diversity but could allow her to forge new friendships. There are an abundance of apps that translate and speak words in different languages that can support this effort.

**Celebrating others.** Children's books are wonderful resources for helping your child develop a sense of his or her own identity, as well as an understanding of those who are different in terms of race, family composition, religious beliefs and ability...

**Exposure to other cultures brings personal meaning.** While children's books open children's eyes to differences, actual experiences have the most profound influence on what children think and believe. Here are more hands-on activities you can try:

- Encourage cross-racial/ethnic/religious/ability friendships.
- Expose your children to foods from different cultures, like classic pork and cabbage dumplings or kimchi.
- Attend different events/festivals that celebrate a particular ethnic group, holiday or personal accomplishment, like the Special Olympics, the Chinese New Year or Holi, the Hindu festival of colors.
- Whether big or small, children's or history museums house an abundance of artifacts from different cultures and countries. Since museums can be overwhelming for young children it helps to talk with your child about what you will see, what she wants to learn and then focus on that part of the museum (especially if the museum is large)...
- **The most powerful role model.** While all of the activities listed above have been found to promote cultural awareness and respect, no activity is as powerful as the role model of a child's parent(s). Children become culturally sensitive and respectful when they see adults who are culturally sensitive and respectful, and who take a stand against bias, racism or insensitivity. Lastly, it is important for adults to take a "strengths based" perspective when talking with children about those who are different from the child. This perspective focuses on the positive characteristics of a person and her abilities, what that person is able to do or does (as compared to what he cannot) and how differences make our world a better place. By helping your child understand and respect similarities and differences, you help him realize he is a wonderfully unique person among many other wonderfully unique people on this earth.