



# The Center

The Newsletter of The Episcopal Center for Children

Summer Issue

July 2018

## We have had a wonderful

summer with our extended program here at the Center, and everyone looks forward to August and those wonderful days off and time with family and friends. But before you know it, you will be thinking about getting ready for the first day of school.

Heading back to the classroom this fall is exciting, but it can also be a challenging time for families of children coping with special needs. Here are some basic tips to help parents and guardians of our students (and they can be helpful for other students too):

**Tip #1** – Organize your paperwork and review the schedule. Review your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Do you have any new medical or psychological reports that we should know about? Ensure our staff are up to speed on where your child is at now. Make sure you know where your child's classroom is, any transportation plans, and what he or she will need to bring each day.

**Tip #2** – Calm any stress or first day jitters your child may have. Whether it's a new classroom or familiar surroundings, children may be nervous about starting back to school. Talk with your child about their feelings. Assure your child that going back to school will be a good thing.

**Tip #3** – Delay getting new school clothes. You may think a new outfit will help calm first day jitters, but for some children, new clothes may aggravate issues. For children with sensory issues, new clothes may feel itchy, stiff and uncomfortable. If your child needs it, let him or her wear clothes that are comfortable and familiar for the first few days of school.

**Tip #4** – Help your child "picture" going back to school. If you have photos showing him or her at school or with friends or a teacher,

show the photos to your child. If you visit the school before school starts, take a picture of your child in his or her classroom, and show the photo to your child later at home. Some children visually process information and benefit from visual assurances. Create a visual countdown chart at home, so your child can help move the numbers as you count down to the start of the school year.

**Tip #5** – Begin introducing new routines before school starts. Morning and afternoon routines can help your child transition into and out of school each day. You may need to establish an earlier bedtime routine to make sure your child is up on time and ready to go. Start thinking about how you want to approach homework. Talk with your child about when and how homework will be completed.

**Tip #6** – Talk to the school staff about any of your concerns. Open communication with school staff will benefit your child. Speak with school staff if you have noticed something new about your child that may impact their education. Because transitions are hard for many special needs children, clarify with school staff how transitions are handled. Who greets children as they get off the bus? How are transitions between classes or activities handled? Tell your child what to expect.

Thank you for being part of our community of caring. It takes all of us – students, parents, teachers, staff, and supporters – to help our students succeed.



Dodd White  
President & CEO

# Mental Health Check Ups: Helping Everyone

Each year our students are required to visit their doctor or pediatrician for a physical examination or check up. This physical examination is designed to check on each student's health status and oftentimes used to clear a student to attend school.

These exams usually include taking a child's height, weight, immunization update, blood pressure check, perhaps drawing blood, and sometimes an eye exam and hearing test.

Rarely is there an annual requirement for an examination of the mental health status of our children. This is an important examination for all of us, including adults, but especially for our students.

Occasionally, pediatricians and other doctors may ask about a student's mental health status but it is rare that it receives the same attention and thoroughness as one's physical health. Current research would argue that a person's mental health status should require as much, if not more attention.

Unfortunately, many adults are not as comfortable talking about a child's mental and emotional health as we are about their physical health.

Parents and caregivers must become competent and comfortable in communications focused on feelings, interpersonal relationships, traumatic issues such as loss and abandonment, etc. Parents and caregivers are well served to implement effective strategies to help our children express their emotions and feelings in appropriate ways

In recent years, increasing attention has focused on the connections between mind and body.

This summer at ECC, we are continuing our strong tradition of developing the whole child

academically, emotionally, and behaviorally. One of the newest strategies added has been a daily "Check In" and "Check Out" exercise to help each student pay closer attention to his or her [Zones of Regulation](#)<sup>®</sup> and how to manage their ability to be in a zone ready to learn. For example, the green zone can represent feeling happy, calm, focused and ready to learn compared to the red zone where feelings of anger, being terrified, elated, aggressive and out-of-control can interfere with learning and growth.

Further, the "Check In Check Out" exercise helps students to focus on a daily attitude of gratitude by identifying what they are grateful for in life. The "Check In" has a focus on each student's daily goal as she or he will need to identify what tools can be used to achieve the identified goal. The daily "Check Out" helps students to assess where they were successful and where improvements are still needed.

Here are two examples of questions you might use at home for yourself to help with mind-body connection:

1. What am I going to do today, this week, this month or this year to create and support a healthy mind for my child and myself?
2. What am I going to do today, this week, this month or this year to support a healthy body for my child and myself?

I hope that you will seriously consider what steps to take on a regular basis to develop healthy mental and physical health habits.

Best wishes towards an ongoing journey for Happy Mental Health Check Ups!

## Summer Orientation Gets Everyone On the Same Page

This year all students participated in a summer orientation. The orientation was a day to set expectations and support consistency throughout the program. Students were required to complete the orientation before joining the summer program. Workshops during orientation reviewed program wide expectations, routines, the ECC pool, self esteem, respectful language, internet safety, and school culture. Workshops had attention-grabbing names like Be YOU-nique, Follow Me on Snapchat, #youdotoomuch, and Bruh.... One of the new routines introduced this summer was classroom check-in and check out. All students will have time at the beginning of the day and end of the day to check in to say what zone they are in and create or reflect on a goal for the day.

## Social Thinking Class: What is it?

Most students have had a social thinking class this summer. Social thinking helps students (and adults!) connect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Social thinking teaches students to observe, and think about the perspective of others, as well as their thoughts and feelings. The occupational therapist and speech language pathologist work on expected and unexpected behaviors, friendships, sharing space effectively with others, learning to work as part of a team, and developing relationships with friends, classmates, and staff.

ECC Voices:

## Meet Jeremy

One of Our Lifeguards

**Q** *How do students refer to you?*

**A** Jeremy

**Q** *Where did you grow up?*

**A** Takoma Park, Maryland

**Q** *What is your favorite children's book?*

**A** The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

**Q** *What are your hobbies?*

**A** Snowboarding

**Q** *How long have you been in the DC area?*

**A** My whole life!

**Q** *What's your favorite ECC dining hall meal so far?*

**A** Meatloaf or chicken wings

**Q** *What is something you want to share with the ECC community about yourself?*

**A** I like cats and I want to travel out of the country soon. I am thinking of going to Europe or somewhere in the Caribbean. I am open to suggestions

Group games are my favorite thing to do in the pool. Any game students can successfully play and have fun during is my favorite game. Here at ECC when students earn a game we often play sharks and minnows with staff as sharks.

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## Center Featured in Magazine Serving Special Needs Community

The Center was featured in an article by Exceptional Parent magazine. "11 Tips for Selecting a School for Your Child with Special Needs" offers advice to help parents and guardians when considering placement options for their child. The story talks with staff members about choices parents face and their concerns. We have posted a link to the story on our website under News/Events. We also made a four-page publication with the copy, that we are using to assist families in the placement process.

Read the original article at <https://www.eparent.com/education/11-tips-for-selecting-a-school-for-your-child-with-special-needs/>

## DoMore24: Thank You to Our Donors!

We raised \$1,569 through DoMore24 this year – the online day of giving for the national capital region. This year's event was held in May, which was a big change. Funds raised will support our playground project. Thank you to all of our donors and supporters.

## The Center Receives a Grant to Explore Its History

We were recently awarded a \$3,000 grant to fund a project that will help us capture and interpret the storied history of the Center. Awarded by The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, the grant provides funds to help with scanning, digitizing, and organizing archival photos. Important input for our grant application came from Susan Stonesifer, the historiographer for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and President of the National Episcopal Historians and Archivists organization. Stay tuned for more information –as we hope to share some of the treasures we find in the newsletter! We hope to use the digitized materials as part of the celebration of the Center's 125th anniversary in 2019.