

A Parent's Reflections on the FPP's Parent Participation Requirement

A friend brought me to a Fairfax Presbyterian Preschool (FPP) Open House in January 2003. We attended the open house to decide if preschool was a good fit for our children and families. We learned about the FPP's philosophy, the parent participation requirement, and toured the facility. We observed children in their classrooms and playing in the big room.

When I saw children smiling and laughing, I was sold on FPP despite the ***parent participation requirement***. I thought to myself, "I really like everything about FPP but parent participation." I decided I wanted my child to attend FPP because of the excellent staff qualifications, the low student/teacher ratio, FPP's philosophy, and its facility were the best I observed. I figured I could suffer through the parent participation requirement for my child.

The next year, my child started a 3-day program. After my first experience as the parent helper, I realized how wonderful the parent participation aspect of program was for us. I was not suffering at all, and I was actually having fun! I was gaining a unique insight into the early foundation of my child's education. Over the past two years, I have also realized these additional benefits from FPP's parent participation program:

- ❑ Knowing my child's classmates by more than just their names. By spending time in the classroom, I learned who enjoyed arts & crafts, who enjoyed dress-up, who enjoyed puzzles, who stayed quite during storytime, and who missed mommy the most.
- ❑ Knowing the parents of my child's classmates. As the parent helper, I had more time to know other parents when they were dropping off and picking up their children. An FPP family environment quickly developed. The parents had a common bond to help the children with their preschool experience.
- ❑ Knowing my child's teacher and giving my child's teacher an opportunity to know me. As the parent helper, I observed the teacher and learned about her teaching approach. I have even used some observed FPP teacher techniques on my children at home.
- ❑ Experiencing how my child learns first hand. I experienced what my child was learning by participating in the teacher's lesson plan and her teaching style. I also felt and shared my child's happiness and excitement being a student at FPP.

This year my first child who attended FPP is in Kindergarten. After attending her Kindergarten Open House, I have also discovered another benefit of FPP's parent participation program. Not only did FPP prepare my child well for Kindergarten, it prepared me for Kindergarten. When I went to her classroom to meet her new teacher, I recognized and understood the learning centers of the classroom. I easily identified the circle time area, the calendar and weather graph, the science center, the quiet areas for reading and relaxing, and the writing area. Based on FPP parent training, I am comfortable and at ease with what my child will learn in Kindergarten. I also have a better understanding of what questions and expectations to have for her teachers.

Finally, all my doubts with participating in my child's class are gone. Based on my experience at FPP, I tell anyone asking about preschool what I have learned through FPP's parent participation program. I tell them that while I wasn't crazy about the parent participation concept at first, now I cannot imagine sending my child to a preschool program without it.

I have learned so much from FPP. Thank you!