

## NEWSLETTER FOR MARCH, 2015

Dear Parents,

You must have noticed that these days children lead very structured, regimented lives. There is a fixed time, duration and place for every activity. Their daily schedule is so packed that it will put any high profile achiever to shame. Children are rushed and pushed from one activity to another throughout the day. Be it tuitions for toddlers, brain gyms, various sporting activities, singing, dance, activity classes, religious teachings, reading classes – and the list could go on and on.

Surely the intention behind this is quite noble. We as parents want to give the best to our children, and if one has the means and motivation then why not? Moreover, somewhere there is also the feeling that 'had I got all these opportunities and training in my childhood, I could have achieved so much more in life, so let me give my child that little extra which I did not get, so that he is a step ahead of others'.

However the point is that if these activities are undertaken with the aim of giving exposure to the child, and an outlet for its abundant energy and varied talents, it is perfectly fine. In fact in some cases, say for example where both the parents have corporate jobs and the child has no siblings, as a result of which he or she spends most of the time with the attendant, it is much more preferable that the child spends time with his peer group and in various activities, so that he learns to interact with others, enjoys himself and does not feel lonely. But the problem arises when there is 'pressure to perform'; when the children are expected to get returns for the time, energy, money and effort invested in them. Coupled with academic pressure, if the children are also expected to do well at tennis, swimming, guitar or whatever else they are learning, then the pleasure of doing things for their own sake disappears and these activities becomes another stress factor for the child.

Another very important aspect of healthy childhood development is 'Free Play' – something that all of us have indulged in, in our childhood, but which seems to have sadly become extinct today like so many other small pleasures of yesteryears. It is the time when the child is free to play what he likes, in the manner that he wants to and most importantly, **without any agenda in mind**. The whole idea is to give complete vent to one's physical and mental energies. This kind of play is emotionally cathartic, does wonders for creativity and imagination and gives the child a sense of independence with

self control leading to self empowerment and confidence. This could be solitary play, with or without toys or group play. What is important is that the child is in control of his environment and not the other way round. In fact the great educator Maria Montessori has said that a child engrossed in his play world is in a state of meditation, and rapid brain development takes place during that period, especially in case of younger children. She has further elaborated that a child who is thus occupied is learning great powers of concentration and discipline – two things which are most commonly complained about these days regarding children – and it is almost blasphemous to disturb such a child.

So now that exams are over, and the summer vacations are round the corner, let us keep in mind the child's interests and inclinations while planning their schedules and activities, and also remember to give them time for free, spontaneous play where they are adequately supervised but not necessarily guided; most importantly where they need not produce results, whether it is an excellent drawing, playdough or lego models or goals or matches or whatever the case may be! Sometimes we just need to let them be.

As usual you are welcome to send your queries to  
The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata

For appointments, interactions and discussions with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls : 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612 / 033 4040 6629