



## 2017 Kindergarten Goodbyes

By: *Claire Bainer & Liisa Hale*

The thing about a school is that it really is the sum of its parts. A wonderful school can't be wonderful without the friends, families, teachers and staff that make it what it is. A school like this one is a labor of love. One advantage of not being a state or federally funded program is that we can do what we believe are the very best practices in our work with the children. We can insist that children's needs are met and that the world we create for them will be manageable and full of successful experiences because we know how important these experiences are in creating the foundation for a happy childhood. We work so hard for the dream that is BlueSkies for Children. When I say we, I mean all of us, as a community we are here because we know that the care little children get matters 'when we give children what they need to learn develop and thrive they give back through a lifetime of productive citizenship'. This is a quote from lead author Jack P. Shonkoff from the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). While it is a great statement it is definitely not a new statement as similar statements were made by John Dewey (the father of American Education) around 1890. It is getting harder and harder to see this in practice in the little preschools and day care centers around but here it is being lived out at BlueSkies. It happens because the school community agrees that this work is worth doing and because the leadership staff of the school knows how to bring this special kind of teaching forward. We are so grateful to those who started the school and set us up to do the work and we are so grateful for the parents, teachers, staff, and board members who continue to carry it today. It was the dreamers and creators and sustainers who made the school what it is today. By giving of themselves, we all learn and become better at our work.

As summer approaches, we give thanks for all those that have enriched our work in the past school year. Our board this year has shown its commitment and devotion to BlueSkies as we worked on the challenges that come with change, growth and transition. Each year a few board members step off as new members step up. Our wonderful Board President, Murali Naidu, joined the board in 2014 and he has kept us on a clear steady path for which we are very grateful. As many of you know, a gifted board president can really make a huge difference. Murali is changing jobs and moving across the country and we are very sad to see him go. We look forward to working with Aara Amidi-Nouri who will become our new Board President. An alumni parent, Aara joined the board in 2015 and has been in training as Vice President this past year.

We also thank our Board Officers who faithfully serve on the Executive Committee and share the load of planning and preparing for the meetings. Current parent Lisa Freitas joined the board in 2015, and she will take Priya Jagannathan's job as Secretary as Priya steps off the board. An alumni parent, Priya has been working on our board since 2014. Her strong background in early childhood education and organizational systems will be missed! Long time

### Upcoming Events

#### Thursday, June 8

Parent Services  
Committee Meeting  
6:15 - 7:30 pm

#### Friday, June 23

Nursery closes at 12pm  
Hedco open as usual (Baby House, Wobbly Walkers, Todds)

#### Mon, July 3rd and Tues, July 4th

BlueSkies closed in observance of Independence Day

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## Co-Directors Report Cont...

board member and alumni parent Tanya Veverka has been a wonderful treasure these past years. Her thoughtful leadership on the board began in 2010. She embodies such devotion to the school and brings this to the board as a responsible, diligent, hard working member who always has the best interest of the school at heart. Her contributions will be missed. Current parent Bryan Quevedo joined the board in 2016 and has stepped up to fill her shoes as our new Board Treasurer. We can already feel the value he is adding to the board. Alumni parent Avis Kowalewski chairs the Board Development Committee, managing board recruitment and the orientation for new members. Sharing her management skills and her thoughtful insights, Avis has been working in support of the school since 2012.

Baby House Head Teacher, current parent and Assistant Program Director, Christa Edwards, chairs the Board Fundraising committee and has been on the board since 2014. She brings the perspective of parent and teacher and is a valuable board member. We have the pleasure of having Tom Anthony on the board as a member at large since 2015. As an alumni parent and jack of all trades, his experience and knowledge is a valuable addition to the board. Can you believe BlueSkies graduate and current kindergarten teacher, Riana Hensel, joined the board in 2015! We are grateful to reconnect and see her many talents at work in support of our board. In 2014, current parent Soung Bae joined the board and offered her thoughtful guidance. As her last child goes off to kindergarten she will now step off the board.

We are thrilled to have alumni parent Maggie Greenblatt, current parent Megan Horl, and soon to be alumni parent Brooke Abola, who all joined the board in 2016 as members at large. The board does not meet over the summer months, but emails will fly and committee projects continue to move forward.

We are excited to welcome three new board members this fall, all coming from outside the BlueSkies family. We welcome Julie Nicholson, Early Childhood Education (ECE) professor and Deputy Program Director of West Ed; Drew Giles, Director of Quality, Enhancement and Professional Development for Early Learning at Oakland Unified School District; and Tanya Harris, Principal of Otis Elementary School in Alameda. We are so grateful for all our board members and thank their families who spare them to help us make the school a wonderful place for all. We also give a shout out to current parent Doug Park, who chairs our Audit Committee as a non-Board member.



Years ago one of my ECE teachers said “you can tell which children are thinking about going off to kindergarten. The boys are on the jungle gym playing fire fighters and burning down the school (if they can’t go here, no one can). The girls are crawling around playing baby (showing everyone that they are clearly not old enough to go to kindergarten!)” We may not see these exact behaviors but we do catch the drift as our big five year olds spread their wings to fly off to a new school. BlueSkies is truly a second home for children who have been coming here since they were tiny, going off to a new school must seem unimaginable. We take comfort in knowing that while they must go off to kindergarten, they are ready and eager to try their wings. And while we will miss each other, they are nicely filled up with stable foundations and happy hearts, and they know as we all do that love never goes away—it just starts up as it left off, and becomes more. It is not uncommon for us to get a wedding photo or a prom picture of friends from the Playroom, Homeroom and Schoolroom days acting as best men or bridesmaids at each other’s weddings, and attending prom together as well as birthday parties. When relationships are meaningful they often last a life time.

This year we say goodbye to Molly who is off to Kaiser School; we’ll miss her and know we’ll still see her now and then when she comes to pick up little brother Isaac, so we don’t have to say farewell to her parents Rachael and Julie yet. Cecile will follow her big brother Oliver to Redwood Day School, and we will miss her and are grateful that we are only saying a partial bye bye to this wonderful family, as her mother Brooke will continue on as a valued board member. We are counting on her to bring her family around now and then so we will continue to see them. Mali is also going to Redwood Day School and luckily little brother, Liam, will be at BlueSkies for a few more years, so we’ll miss Mali and still get to see her

## Co-Directors Reports Cont...

with her family now and then. Ruby will go to Sequoia Elementary, and we are glad her little sister, Frances, will be at BlueSkies, so we don't really have to say goodbye but can continue to enjoy having her parents in our school community a little longer!

Sean is going to Thornhill Elementary, and while we'll miss him and his parents, Darin and Elizabeth, we hope they will come by for a visit now and then. We are going to miss Caden and his mother, Kathy, as he heads off to Aurora School, and promise to keep in touch with this family. Safiatu is heading off to Redwood Day School and luckily we don't have to say goodbye as her baby sister, Kadiatu, will keep us seeing Safiatu and her parents, Amadu and Kelly.

Kieran will go to Hillcrest and we say farewell to him and his kind and thoughtful parents, Gordon and Jennie. It has been a pleasure having this family at our school and we will miss them and always appreciate their contributions to our school community. Lucia and her family have moved to Mexico City and we say goodbye to this family, parents Ben and Elizabeth and little sister Emilia, we miss you! Please drop us a line now and then and let us know how you are doing! Stella is off to Piedmont Elementary school and we are pleased to note that little sister, Sydney, will be here a bit longer allowing us to enjoy Bemi and Stacy's many contributions to the school community a while longer.

Lucy will follow her two big brothers to Hillcrest Elementary, and with a truly heavy heart we say good bye to her parents Doug and Alex who have been coming to BlueSkies for 11 years and, almost from the start, have been helping us and building the school community. We are so grateful to them in so many ways and we will miss them. Quinn follows her sister Fiona to Crocker Highlands, and we will miss seeing the girls and their parents, Jack and Zoe. We

hope they will gather up the girls and come back and visit us sometime. Leo is off to Sequoia and we will miss him and his parents, Kyra and Alex, who gave so generously of their time in planning and supporting the Auction.

Andrés is going to Melrose Academy and we say goodbye to him and his community-minded parents, Johnny and Mickey. We thank them for their help and know we will miss them! Niamh is off to Redwood Day School and, luckily, baby Rory will be with us a bit longer as we will miss her and her wonderful parents, Katrina and Michael. Roen follows her brother Reese to Maya Lin Elementary in Alameda. We sadly say goodbye to Soung and David, we will miss them. Eero is off to Glenwood Elementary following his big sister Io, so we say goodbye to this wonderful family and thank them for all they have contributed to the school. Lara and Mitch, we will miss you all. Mito is going to give TK at Montclair a try, and we say farewell to him and his kind parents, Homero and Monica. We will miss them and wish them the very best. Freja will attend TK at Sequoia and we are so pleased that her baby brother, Conrad, will continue at BlueSkies, so it is farewell but not goodbye to Erich and Ceinwyn. We look forward to catching a glimpse of Freja now and then when she comes along to pick up or drop off Conrad.

We hope all the BlueSkies parents leaving the school know that we will miss seeing them and appreciate the insights, growth and wisdom they have brought to the school. We will miss them all and we will miss the children we have had the pleasure to know and guide along the way – be sure to come back and visit us or send a picture or an email. It is always wonderful to see old friends again.



## Summertime Fun

Each summer we create a unique experience for the Nursery School children so they have a “summer time” even though they are in the same school with their same friends and the same teachers following the same routines. We know the consistency gives freedom in its safe, predictable way, and the enrichment we create by bringing in new skills, changing around the classrooms, opening the gates, and letting ages mix is just enough to make a special summer experience for the wonderful children here at BlueSkies.

Summer time has a different feel from the rest of the year for all of us, and we want the children to experience that restful and relaxed time playing in the sprinklers and digging rivers in the yards and swinging in the hammock, with juice popsicles to enjoy in the afternoons. Stories in the yards and rest time under the trees. The teachers will move the classroom furniture around so things will feel new and different. Children will move freely from classroom to classroom and will play in mixed age groups. As the oldest children slowly peel off for kindergarten, the younger groups gradually move up into the next classroom, eventually eating lunch and napping there. Doll house play will expand to include store and beauty parlor play and art will be outside and on the fences, and block areas include big and small blocks at the same time.

Children going off to kindergarten will have a morning TK experience, practicing raising hands and doing some teacher directed activities, perhaps keeping a journal, and making graphs and charts- as we eliminate rest time and switch to reading chapter story books for rest time. The children will practice making their own sandwich lunch, packing it in a bag and eating it in different places around the school. All exercises to get ready for the big change that kindergarten will be while still having plenty of time in the afternoon to play and be creative.

This summer, we will augment the usual BlueSkies fun in the Homeroom and Schoolroom groups with some special activities. We will clear out the Copenhagen classroom and once again bring a dance class to the children one day a week. Bonnie and her music will continue through the summer. Bonnie’s music will be on Thursday mornings and dancing in the afternoon on Wednesdays. The children will go in small groups to the Copenhagen classroom with their teachers for dancing and singing. From the end of June to the end of August, we will bring some special enrichment into the children’s summer time while supporting their transitions to the next classroom, all the while bringing the easy days of summer to BlueSkies.

## 2017-18 Fees

The Board of Directors has adopted a budget for the coming year which includes a fee increase that is in line with those from previous years. The Board works hard to keep fee growth at a minimum—ensuring that fees keep pace with rising costs while minimizing the chances of a large future increase. In order for BlueSkies to keep pace with rising costs, this year’s increase will be 2.5% - 4.8% for children under 3 years, and 3.2% - 4.4% for children over 3 years, depending on hours enrolled.

The 2017-18 Fee Schedule is coming soon, keep an eye out for it in the sign in binder. New fees go into effect September 1st.

## Reduced Fee Applications: Due June 30th!

June is the month to complete an application for reduced fees during the 2017-18 contract year, if you feel you will need assistance to continue your child’s enrollment.

The application form is available here: <http://www.blueskies4children.org/scholarship> (we are no longer using the FAST system). The completed form, plus all income documentation such as tax forms, must be submitted by the end of the day June 30 to receive top priority for consideration.

## Staff out in June

The following staff will be out this month:

Liisa: June 1-12  
Ameena: June 12 - 16  
Michelle: June 12 - 20  
Alice: June 9 - July 5  
Claire: June 26 - 30  
Rosalia: June 19 - 28  
Geraldine: June 19 - 26  
Kierra: June 23 - 27

:) Mimi returns June 12th! :)



## Snapshot in the Schoolroom

In the oldest group, three girls are building in the big block area. Silky cloth is spread over the blocks and art work adorns the structures, they have built a “house” and a “car”. The car has sparkly cloth over the seats, a steering wheel and in the back seat a box for the baby’s car seat. These earnest mothers are busy with their chores cooking, scolding, packing, driving and caring for... as they play they talk and discuss what is going on and what they are doing. “Well, my baby needs a haircut” says Bret, “So I’m going to the store”. “I’ll come too and get some soda, we are all out!” says Gay. “Get me a La Croix, it’s my dad’s favorite,” says Ruth. “I can drive,” says Bret. “Now where did I put my keys!” she comments pawing through her toy purse. “Wait,” says Gay, “I’m getting Sweetie buckled into her car seat”.

Cayenne wanders over and stands watching without much interest. She sits down in the “car” and says “Bret, you can be Princess Peach Blossom, I’ll be Violet Rose the flying horse and Gay you can be Queen Dimple. Ruby you can be Queenie Pink and Blue. This block is in the wrong place, I can move it so our Castle is taller.” The three girls look at her and yell “GO AWAY! We don’t want to play with you, Cayenne”. Cayenne starts to cry “you hurt my feelings, Bret! I made up the game so it’s my rules!” In two steps the teacher is there, “Wow, Cayenne you sound upset”. Cayenne gets louder “They said GO AWAY, they hurt my feelings. I want to play, too.” “Oh I see, you want to play and the girls said go away?” Sobbing, Cayenne shakes her head yes and quiets. Now Ruth speaks up, stepping toward the teacher. “We don’t want to play with her. She is too bossy. She makes us do what she says and not what we want.” Cayenne starts to cry again. “Wait a minute, Cayenne”, says the teacher. “It sounds like the girls are telling you something – Tell her again, Ruth. Ruth repeats her comments while the other girls nod in agreement. “Oh I see,” says the teacher, “it seems like they think you are telling them what to do and they don’t like that. Did you know they don’t like it when you tell them what to do?” Cayenne shakes her head no. “Cayenne, can you remember not to tell them what to do?” Cayenne says “YES!” “What do you think, Ruth,” says the teacher “if Cayenne says she won’t tell you what to do, can she play?” “Sure” says Ruth, “she can be the baby-sitter. We are going to the store.” “And to get a haircut,” says Bret, “get in”.

This is a good example of how teachers facilitate social competence. Teachers have long known that children who wait and watch and pay attention to what the other children are doing before they enter play have more social success. In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Dr. Daniel Goleman suggests that this type of emotional intelligence is a key indicator of both academic and professional success. Knowing how to get along with people is a life skill that serves us in every stage and walk of life. What we are seeing in this observation is not only Cayenne’s social immaturity, it is also a good example of the difference between the early childhood definition of egocentric behavior and the adult definition. When Cayenne joined the girls, she knew she wanted to play with them and she knew what she wanted to do. She likes her idea so she was sure the other girls would like it too. She was not interested in what they were already doing so gave it no thought. When working young children and their immature brains, Early Childhood teachers know egocentrism as the inability to differentiate between self and others. More specifically, it is the inability to understand that another person might have their own thoughts and ideas that are different from the thoughts they are having. The definition for adult egocentrism is that the egocentric adult believes they are always the center of everything and everyone’s attention. In this snapshot, Cayenne’s teacher is helping her to notice what the other children are doing to better achieve her own goals (playing with her friends) and guiding her toward the shift from the early childhood egocentrism and expand her awareness and understanding of other people.

