

## THIS 1960 ESSAY WAS THE PREFACE TO THE ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL COOKBOOK PUBLISHED IN 1999

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When I first attended St. Paul's Church just before 1960, two church members had been using the classroom space as a site for a playgroup for their children. They left to take teaching jobs and sent their children to private kindergartens. It gave me an idea how I could put my training at Eliot-Pearson Children's Center at Tufts University to use ... **begin a nursery school!**

I began with two teachers talented in art and music, and myself. There were three classes of eight children who came to school three mornings a week.

Many of you know of Mrs. Ginny Bramhall's gift for doing active creative music with children. Mrs. Helen Whittus had the same gift with art activities, making wonderful projects out of free materials. The best part of the job for me was having a class of my own. But I did have to be free and available to help the teachers and keep all the parents informed about all the things that go on in a good nursery school. Much of that was done during the evening and on weekends!

At the beginning, the classrooms were bare, with no equipment, no furniture and very distressed wooden floors. One of my first purchases was a floor covering, and then slowly the tables and a few little maple chairs were added each year. The Tuition was \$15 per month, so I was patient and persistent in adding the best materials as I could afford them. I took great pleasure in "shopping" from the catalogs of quality suppliers like "Creative Playthings" and "Hammetts". A kind friend made all the benches that you see today, and we used doors to which "leg" hardware was added for tables. I remember having the legs give way and using a stack of prayer books to prop up the table more than once! A set of unit building blocks were a necessity and the first storybook I bought was "Good Night Moon".

The Big Room was not built until many years later but we always planned to keep up with the children's energy. They were kept moving with activities to choose in each small room, and then there was a lively music session and getting outdoors to play every day. It seems another consistent ingredient all through the years has been the ever-changing, multi-colored *playdough* in the "Playdough Room". So many conversations & imaginative ideas are shared around that comfortable table along with the cookie cutters and hammers. We share this recipe with you as an introduction to our collection in this book.

Cooking with the children has always been an important part of the curriculum. It's fun to work with beginning cooks and help them to learn good habits while measuring, counting, comparing, stirring, etc. Exploring fruits and vegetable in raw form, dried form and cooking them provides not only knowledge but a stimulating sensory experience through vision, touch, smell, sound and taste. As you will read, the children often described the experience too, in their own words. Food is a nice present to give someone (many years it was a tasty bit of Cranberry-Orange relish or a mini pumpkin bread). Popping corn is a never-ending delight both to the children and visitors who come in the door.

We are very pleased to take part in this cookbook creation. It is a reflection of the wonderful support we have received from the parents of children who have come to St. Paul's Weekday Nursery School. The school has grown much in size and materials (the books alone now number in the hundreds) and a generation or two of children have painted at the easels. I have seen my original philosophy hold steady and true. Each member of the staff, now under the direction of Mrs. Beth Taylor, makes sure that St. Paul's is a caring, happy environment for a child's first school experience. May it continue.

#### PLAYDOUGH

- 2 CUPS OF FLOUR
- 1 CUP OF SALT
- 2 TSP. CREAM OF TARTAR
- 2 CUPS OF WATER
- 4 TBLS. OIL
- A FEW DROPS OF FOOD COLORING

Heat the water on the stove until very hot, almost boiling. Add the salt, cream of tartar, oil, food coloring and slowly all the flour. As the mix cools and can be worked by hand, continue to mix and knead it together until the dough is even and smooth. Between uses it keeps best in the refrigerator.