



Imaginary Play in Practice

"Hidden in this incredibly fun activity are all the things we preschool teachers love to see ..."

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There is a small woodland elf exploring the grounds at Pinnacle Presbyterian Preschool. Although the children have never seen the little guy, they are certain he exists. For on tiny sheets of stationery, tucked into small envelopes, the elf writes to the children. They call him "Notty", written short for Nottingham.

Every morning, the children are eager to find Notty's camper, noticing any changes. They excitedly discuss where he might be and what he might be doing. Mail from Notty is often read during small group time, and the children are encouraged to write back to him. The class is drawing pictures, asking the elf questions, and signing their letters to Notty.



"Hidden in this incredibly fun activity are all the things we preschool teachers love to see", explains Shauna Winburn. *"Students are perfecting their grip, beginning to sight-read familiar words, and asking for help in how to spell various new words. Most importantly, they are feeling a meaningful connection to the written word and the power words can convey."* Mary Vedder adds, *"The mystery of Notty sparks the children's imagination and curiosity. They have initiated communication with Notty through letter writing and developed empathy for our make-believe friend."*

The breadth and depth of the children's curiosity has led the class to delve into various areas of the curriculum which are interesting to the children. Kimberly Bianco explains, *"we loved the opportunity to explore geography (Notty reports he visits a cousin in Colorado!), mathematics (discussing how tall we think Notty might be in relation to other creatures and things), and problem solving (hypothesizing where Notty has gone and following clues on the playground to find him)".* The teachers model curiosity by asking the children, *"I wonder how big he is?", "Where did he go?", "Do you think he would like us to make him a garden?"*



Imaginary experiences such as this one provide a way to tap into children's natural desire to play, supporting relationships between the children around a shared experience.

Pinnacle Presbyterian Preschool is accredited by NAEYC and inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.