

April/May 2005

TCS Times

*The Children's School/ 208-343-6840
Nicole Shaddock--Editor*

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

On May 23rd at noon I will be leading a discussion on school transitions. If you have an interest in this topic because of a transition your family is experiencing, please join me. We'll talk at The Smith House, and there will be childcare available at the school. (Please help us plan by letting us know you will be coming and whether you'll need childcare. Look for the parent education committee to provide sign-up sheets in the front hall soon).

During May and over the summer months we will be saying goodbye to 44 children who have been in our classes over the past school year. Of that number, 8 children will be attending other preschool programs and the remaining 36 attending Kindergarten or higher elementary grades in other schools. Of the children moving to K-1-2-3 classes, 26 are attending various public schools, 1 moving to a charter school, 1 planning to attend a Catholic school, 7 attending private school, and 1 transitioning to a home school setting. Within our school walls, 42 children will be moving from one class to another in June or September (and, just to make the numbers add up, 23 staying in the same multi-age classroom for another year). In addition we anticipate welcoming 41 new children to TCS classrooms for the 2005-2006 school year. That's a lot of transitioning for young children and their families!

Transition is a challenge and an opportunity. I think some adults approach transition with dread, seeing the challenges more than the opportunity; other adults approach transition with excitement, seeing more of the opportunity than the challenge. In my family, my husband and I anticipate change very differently and, after 25 years of marriage, we can joke about how different our perceptions and reactions often are (and we've been totally unsuccessful at changing each other's deeply embedded perceptions and reactions!). What do you know about how the adults in your family respond to transitions?

It matters because, as is often the case, our adult response affects how we support children during times of transition.

Key to supporting children is acknowledging and understanding feelings about an upcoming transition without imposing our own feelings—of anxiety or excitement—too strongly. Some parents respond to a child's expression of concern about a transition by pointing out all the positive things that go along with the transition, and assuring the child that they'll be ok. Other parents respond by agreeing with a child's expression of concern or fear, and they take a commiserating role with the child. If either of these adult responses sounds like something you've done, you are absolutely on the right track by being encouraging or understanding of your children.

Something I suggest that goes one step beyond these common responses to children's strong feelings is this: help children identify the resources in the new school and within themselves for handling issues that might arise during transition. Rather than simply being reassuring, back up your confidence with details—offer that there will be adults who will be there to help, go by the new school and help your child identify adult resources, talk about how you will be in communication with the new school. And, conversely, rather than sliding right into your child's fear of change, talk with your child about how much confidence you have in his/her ability to adapt to the new school—then honestly talk about the strengths your child takes wherever he/she goes like knowing how to ask for help, sharing ideas and interests in ways that draw people to him/her, etc. Parents can encourage or commiserate AND help a child feel capable in handling change or in getting help in a new situation.

I have absolute confidence in the abilities of the 44 children who are moving from TCS classrooms into new education settings. That doesn't mean that there won't be fluttery stomachs, tears, concern and confusion—that goes with the transition territory. The challenge and the opportunity is in learning that transitions can happen successfully, one step at a time, with the support of caring adults who can help identify the strengths and resources at hand.

Does your family use a lot of printer ink? Bring your empty cartridges to The Children's School! We can redeem them for paper at OFFICE MAX. Thank you for your support!

Do you have some extra time this summer? We are looking for a volunteer(s) to help with watering our flower barrels and boxes. More volunteers means a smaller time commitment for any one person. Please speak to Nancy Cole. Thanks to Nancy for coordinating this volunteer opportunity!

Next Steps

By Cindy Finch

If you are helping your child transition to a school that assesses children's knowledge and growth through testing, TCS can be a resource to you. In many schools K-grade 3 age children take the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) three times a year. For each administration a child is given a 3, for on grade level, a 2, for almost on grade level, or a 1, for below grade level, with the goal being that all children read on grade level by the end of grade three. Schools use the information they gain from the IRI to individualize reading instruction. I've placed parent information pages on the coffee room bulletin board if you have questions about the content of this reading assessment. You can also access information about the IRI at www.sde.state.id.us/iri.

Children in grade 2 and above in elementary schools are also given the Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) twice a year. The ISAT is a computerized test in language, reading, and math on which the questions become more difficult or simpler depending on how the child answers. The number scores correspond to proficiency levels for each grade. A resource for you to learn more about ISAT is www.JKAF.org.

Following your child's participation on any of these measures your child's school will send you a letter to let you know how your child is doing. If you have questions about the administration, scoring, or results of testing, you should always ask your child's teacher or the building principal to help you understand your child's progress.

In my experience as a parent, it is helpful to know a bit about the testing situation so that you can prepare children for this new experience. In particular, the IRI is given quite early in the school year to individual children by someone other than the child's classroom teacher. If you have looked at the IRI parent pages TCS is able to provide to you, you will have an idea of the types of questions your child will be asked to answer. When my youngest child left TCS for 3rd grade at Longfellow, I told him about the IRI and, as the school year started, we even practiced some of the types of skills I knew he would be asked. My goal was not to teach him skills, but to introduce him to the testing situation. When the teacher took him aside and told him that the IRI was about to happen, he confidently told her, "Oh yeah, my mom told me about that."

No matter how you or I feel about testing, it is a part of many children's school experiences today. Please talk with me or your child's TCS teacher if you have

questions about testing. Although we don't participate in testing at TCS for very deliberate reasons, as educators we know what the children we teach will be asked to participate in at new schools, and we want to support you and them in experiencing success.

Short Notes

By Cindy Finch

*Please always use playyard gates. We've noticed an increase in parents stepping over the fence or lifting children into the playyard, and we want to strongly discourage you from doing this. We work with children from their very first days of school at TCS to understand and respect the boundary of the fence. Even opening the gates or classroom doors is a "teacher job" at TCS—that's how serious we are about playyard boundaries and how children move across them. Thanks for your support.

*The State of Idaho has a new car seat law: children six and under must be properly restrained in a child safety seat. Thank you for helping us on school outings by providing appropriate equipment for transporting your child safely—and legally.

*The State of Idaho is also requiring additional DTaP (5) and MMR (2) immunizations for four year old children enrolled in school. We have information in the office from Health and Welfare in the office. If your child will be four by September 1, 2005, please take note of these state requirements.

*Do you have old business envelopes or business cards that you can no longer use? We need them. They have many uses among children—from writing letters to taking attendance to the office, from making collections to creating games. We promise to give those outdated office supplies new life!

*Recently I had reason to compile stats on our teachers, and I thought you might be interested in them. Of our 17 classroom teachers on staff during the 2004-2005 school year 12 are teachers/master teachers and 5 are assistant teachers. Across teaching levels, one teacher has a master's degree, nine have significant graduate coursework past a bachelor's degree, four have bachelor's degrees, two are working toward AAS or BAS degrees, and one is working toward a BA. Five teachers are or have been state certified.

There will be slight shifts in these stats among the TCS faculty in September. Look for faculty bios in the August issue of TCS Times.

We wish Kelly Laird the very best as she and her family move to Pullman, WA this summer. We'll miss you, Kelly.

Teaching Plan for 2005-2006 School Year*

By Cindy Finch

As of 5-17-05

Toddlers

Mary Griffin

Megan Jones

Sherri Lauer

(discussion facilitator)

2-3s

Julie Gill

Karen Lung

3-4s

Mary Griffin

Sherri Lauer

3-4-5s

Deanna Smith

Mark Zimmermann

4-5s

Patty Head

Betsy Robinson

4-5-6s

Karen Lung

Mark Zimmermann

All Days

Lynn Hanson

Tonya Palsulich

Nicole Shaddock

Primes

Rebecca Crosswhite

(child focused teacher)

Susan Gardner

Mary Helen May

Extended Day Primes

Rebecca Crosswhite (a.m.)

Sarah Jenks (lunch, p.m.)

*Accurate today, but changes occur on occasion;

Teachers in each classroom listed in alphabetical order.

I wonder why . . .

Last month I wrote about some of the social, physical, and cognitive benefits of block play in early childhood classrooms. Now I want to briefly mention the way block play supports literacy or the development of reading skills—through dramatic play, block-specific vocabulary, and the creation of signs.

In the early stages of using blocks young children often carry them, then stack or line them up on the floor. With more experience they connect blocks to build structures. These first three stages of block use are common in our preschool classrooms. Older preschoolers and Primes at TCS take block building a step past the creation of a structure—they create stories to go along with the block building. The act of creating a structure for the purpose of telling a story—a story that has a beginning, middle, and end, as well as characters and a setting—is rich in literacy development for children learning about reading and writing.

Blocks have a specific, abstract (and very mathematical) vocabulary that we use in classrooms to talk about building with children. We refer to blocks as units, doubles, quads, etc., in talking with children, and we teach this vocabulary to children to facilitate the building and communication process. The ability to read successfully is partially dependent on a child's ability to handle abstraction—the abstraction of letters for sounds, words for ideas, stories for places, people, and events. Block-specific vocabulary among children and teachers in the classroom supports children's ability to handle abstraction.

Blocks encourage writing, and writing encourages reading. Look into a classroom where blocks have been left up after children have gone home for the day, and you will almost certainly see writing alongside buildings. Many times the signs say "save" and include the names of the children who have worked together cooperatively. Other times you might see labeling of parts of a building or even a story that describes the purpose of the building. Writing in the block area serves the purpose of describing play that has already happened and planning for play that will occur when children return.

Next time you have a chance to watch children use blocks, stop and experience the richness of this curriculum material for children, a basic and essential part of TCS classrooms.

TCS SPRING FUNRAISER FINAL REPORT

By Kim Liebich – 2005 Chair

This year's fundraiser for Tuition Assistance was held Saturday, April 23rd. Our goal for this event was to have great attendance, to have fun, and to make some money in support of tuition assistance. This was accomplished with the help of some fabulous donors & some great participants. Thanks so much to those of you who were able to attend and make it such a great event. Below is a list of folks that provided support, not listed among them are the parents and teachers who spent a huge amount of time getting our class projects ready. A big thank you is owed to them as well. I'm pretty sure I forgot to list some folks...it really seemed like there was a whole village of support. Nice team work to all of you! It was fun!

THE AUCTION COMMITTEE & SET-UP CREW:

Jennie Worsley – great graphics & cool ideas
Treacy Liebich – all night & day brainstorming
Charla Cooper – science kit, save-a-penny
Jamie Cooper – clever wording
Pam Solon – editor & brainstormer
Ali Hayden – beverage guru & hand holding
Katie Walther – décor & keep'n it simple
Tani Theiler – class project organizing
Stacie Gombert – nice new face
Janine Boire – great ideas & DCI organization
Ben Shedd – Great host for the night of
Kim Coster – “the collector”
Betsy Montgomery – always there, behind the scenes!
Nancy Cole – forever overachieving
Cindy Finch - historian
Nancy Jones – moral support
Annie Langston – close out slave
Carol Bartylla – finishing touches
Andrea Laird – “I don't know let's ask Andrea”

GENEROUS CURRENT FAMILIES & ALUMNI:

Shara & Jon Mortimer & Mortimer's Restaurant– Fabulous Food & Service
Dodds & Ali Hayden with Hayden Beverage – Fabulous Beverage & Service
Clint & Alison Tate & Tate's Party Rents - Extreme Discount on Rentals & just cool
Cascade Outfitters & Mike & Angela Sherman
The Wetherley Family
Mike & Lisa Curtin (and thanks for the lab coats)
Adam Husney & Kristin Barstead
Stewart Gallery
Carrick & Jaquie Brewster – Northside Dental
Scott Family
Margit Donhowe & Mitch Long
Gary Gettman & Ashley Brogdon
David & Lesa Blackmer
Jon & Vicky Swerdolff
Pete & Stacie Gombert
Jodeen Revere
Courtney Robinson
Betsy Robinson

Mary Griffin
Mary Helen May
Susan Gardner
Red Letter Day - Carmen Hormaechea
Snake River Farms - Jay & Tani Theiler
David McIwain
Robert & Elaine Duerr
Kim & Torry McAlvain
Christine & Richard Jayo
Cheryl Menolia

GENEROUS VENDORS – PLEASE REMEMBER TO THANK THEM WHEN YOU VISIT THEIR STORES:

A Adventure Limousine
Airgas Dry Ice
Albertson's
Asiago's Downtown
Bandana's Running & Walking
Blue Sky Bagels
Boise Art Museum
Boise Blue Art Supply – use of the easles!!
Egyptian Theatre
Eyes of World Imports
Fireweed Ventures, INC – TCBY Jim Mowbray
Flying M Coffeehouse
Fred Meyers
Gem State Gymnastics
Goody's
Hot Yoga
Idaho IceWorld
Idaho Steelheads Hockey Club
Jon Ball Photography
Michael & Tamara Hill
Mosaic Gallery Wine Bar
Parrilla Grill
Richards & Taste - Erik McLaughlin
Roaring Springs
Robert J. Dry
Smoky Davis
Table Rock Printing – Extreme Printing
The Children's Store
The Flicks
Wal-Mart
Whitetail Club
WinCo Foods
Wings Center

The Children's School

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We are on the web:

www.tcsboise.org



Looking for 3-4 year olds!!

Know preschoolers? Know parents who have talked about enrolling a child in TCS classes but haven't gotten around to it yet?

Please help us spread the word--we have openings for 3 and 4 year olds in part-day classes starting in September. Help us connect to families in the Boise area we don't know or who don't know us.

Contact Cindy or Andrea in the office if you have questions.

Important Dates In May

16	Monday	Toddler Program ends	
19	Thursday	2-3s Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
20	Friday	3-4s Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
21	Saturday	All School Campout – Grayback Gulch	
25	Wednesday	3-4-5s Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
		4-5s Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
26	Thursday	4-5-6s Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
27	Friday	Primary Class ends Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
		All Day Class Families Invited	Rootbeer Party
School Closed at 12:00 for Building Maintenance and Summer Program Preparation			
30	Monday	Memorial Day	SCHOOL CLOSED
31	Tuesday	Summer Primes begins and All Days Continue	