

November 2005

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

Last weekend I talked with a former TCS parent in the grocery store about her family's plans for Thanksgiving. She said that she was hosting her extended family for the first time. We ended our conversation with her comment, "Since I'm doing it I can choose the parts I want to do and let go of the rest." So true, not only for Thanksgiving Day, but as a guide for living a good (and manageable) life with young children during the holiday season.

One of the parts of parenting I have enjoyed the most is creating family memories and traditions around holidays. I think holiday planning as a new parent was where I first had the realization that I didn't have to parent the way I was parented. As a young family we could make decisions about what we wanted our children to learn from how we spent holidays together and shape experiences as our children grew up that fit within those broad family values. During busy times sometimes I wish we'd kept it even simpler, but mostly I am happy that there are things our children still expect us to do together during the holiday season—the lighting of the state tree, a rotunda concert, hanging out together in the kitchen to cook, eating soup outdoors at the foodbank's "empty bowls" fundraiser, and driving by special neighborhood lights (oh, how we hope the new owners at 10th and Thatcher keep up the lighted tree trunk tradition!).

As a school faculty we talk throughout the year about holiday celebrations in the classrooms. Around Halloween I was interested in hearing from teachers about the variety of experiences planned in our classrooms—from listening and watching for children's interests and understandings to pumpkin designing and carving, from pajama parties to parades and costume sharing, and from drawing costumes to sorting and categorizing types of costumes. Although our population is "young children," there are many *developmental* differences within the 2-8 year old age range that we serve, even more differences in children's *individual* understanding, and many types of *family traditions*

Preschool Openings!

We still have openings in our 3-4s and 3-4-5s classes for the 2005-2006 school year!

There is a \$300 cash incentive- yes \$300! When you refer a family to the school who signs a contract for their child for this school year. The money can be used for tuition or received as cash.

Some restrictions apply. Please see Cindy or Andrea in the office.

represented in each classroom—and teachers consider them all in the very intentional classroom planning that happens around special events, celebrations, and holidays. All classroom experiences—around celebrations or projects or play—are planned:

- *to nurture and stimulate thinking;
- *to accommodate and support children's development; and,
- *to provide a comfortable, reliable, and predictable environment to help children clarify, order, and make sense of the world.

Choices are abundant this time of year for schools—and for families. Do you feel compelled to do what you see others do during this holiday season? I hope not. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we have the responsibility to provide every experience for our children surrounding the holidays *this year*. If you start to feel overwhelmed by holiday events, your child is likely feeling that way too. Our hope for families during this holiday season is shared family time with an emphasis on *creating meaning* with your children about the holiday through a few simple, shared experiences and on *developing family traditions* that your children learn to associate with this time of year.

TCS Board of Directors Biographies

The following are biographies from our Board of Directors for the 2005-2006 school year. Please take some time to acquaint yourself with those who serve on our Board.

Sherry Dyer—President

Sherry is the Director of Pacific Western Training, a division of Oppenheimer Companies, Inc. Sherry provides consultation, facilitation and training to organizations committed to change and improvement. Sherry is also the Vice President of Human Resources and Organizational Development for Oppenheimer Companies. She is a member of the senior executive team focusing on strategic planning, process improvement and organization and management development.

Susan Smith—Vice President

Susan's present affiliations include the Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation, Boise Y Swim Meet Director and West Family YMCA Advisory Committee. Her past board affiliations include the Beaux Arts Society, Junior League of Boise and Boise High Brave Parent Board.

Susan is the mother of four children, two of who attended The Children's School.

Margie Stoy—Secretary

With a BA and MA in German Linguistics and Literature (University of Iowa), Margie taught for a number of years at the high school and post-secondary levels in Iowa, Montana and Idaho. She served in the Idaho State Department of Education, consulting first on Equal Opportunity issues and then in Instructional Television. The latter led her to Idaho Public Television for a decade. Now retired, she spent the last 13 years of her professional life as Executive Director of the Boise Philharmonic.

Clint Tate—Treasurer

Clint is a lifelong resident of Boise. He has been Vice President of Tates Rents, Inc. He received his B.A. from University of Puget Sound and his M.B.A. from Babson College. Clint also sits on the Boise City Arts Commission and serves as their treasurer. He has previous experience as a board member for a number of other local non-profit entities. Clint and his wife Alison have two children, a boy and a girl.

Dawn Christensen—Board Member

Dawn has lived in Boise for 12 years with her husband and 2 children. Kyle and Lauren both are TCS alumni. Interestingly she learned about The Children's School while still living in Seattle. She visited the school upon arrival to Boise and knew it was the right place for her family. Professionally she works at St Alphonsus Medical Center as a Physical Therapist. She enjoys the great outdoors and reading.

Lee Dubert—Board Member

Lee's area of specialization is in adolescent literacy and remedial reading. She is the director of BSU's remedial reading clinic. She has been at BSU since 1992. Her Ph.D. is from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has taught at Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa; University of Wisconsin-Madison; Bettendorf Schools, Bettendorf, Iowa; and Northeast Community Schools, Gooselake, Iowa.

Marilyn Locander—Board Member

Marilyn spent her career first in Speech Pathology and later in non-profit fund development. Marilyn is a grandmother of two children in The Children's School and is an active community volunteer.

Let's Do Lunch

You may have heard that we are considering a lunch group option for children in the 3-4s, 4-5s, 3-4-5s, and 4-5-6s classes. It's true—and in fact, we are past considering and well into planning for this to happen one day a week during the winter and spring months. Look for more information in the next issue of TCS Times.

Bonnie Noonan—Board Member

Bonnie has been involved with The Children's School in a variety of ways during the 17 years she has lived in Boise. Most importantly her daughter, Katy (nee Cate, Kate, Katie) was in the All Days for two years and the Primes for two years. "TCS was our second home during that time" from Bonnie. She looks forward to serving on the Board and contributing to the school in as many ways as she can.

Susan Park—Board Member

Susan Park is very pleased to join the Board of Directors of TCS after spending seven years as a parent of two happy TCS students, Aaron and Will. Susan grew up in Boise, graduating from Boise High School in 1980. She earned a BA in English from the University of Colorado, and a J.D. from the University of Idaho College of Law. Currently she teaches Legal Studies courses at Boise State University. Susan spends most of her time having fun with her boys. She loves her family and friends, movies and books, travel and skiing, food and wine, and Boise and Payette Lake.

Kim Rene—P-TCS Representative

Kim is the parent representative on the Board of Directors. She has been involved at TCS as the mother of 3 boys since 2002. She moved to Boise from the San Francisco Bay area, and loves the Idaho outdoors. Kim works with her husband in the family business, Rene Global Associates, an internally based media and communications business.

Bruce Wixson—Board Member

Bruce is beginning his second term on TCS's Board of Directors. He is a therapist in private practice, working with both children and adults. His 24 and 25 year old children attended TCS in the school's early days. In fact, Bruce and his wife, Judy French, have been involved in TCS from the very beginning and are consistently supportive of the work of the school. Bruce received MA degrees in Child Development (University of Northern Colorado) and Counseling (College of Idaho). He worked for Head Start for 10 years in a variety of capacities, from home visitor to state trainer.

Looking Ahead

If you find that next year is on your mind and you want to look around the school at potential next classes for your child, let Cindy or Andrea know.

Our re-enrollment calendar runs from February through April, so there is plenty of time to observe later.

However, following parent-teacher conferences, several teachers mentioned that some families are asking questions about next year now.

Please set up a time to look at options at TCS whenever the time is right for you and your family.

4-5s News

By Betsy Robinson and Patty Head

“btrfli”, “opn”, “clozd” are some new “words” being written by the 4-5s class. The technique is known as invented spelling. It is a method that encourages beginning writers to write the way they think the word or words should be spelled. As teachers, we ask “which letter makes the “???” sound?” or “what do you hear next?” Each child’s approach to composing is different from the next. Some draw first, or write words to tell about their picture. Others draw after writing or do not write at all. Some will speak to a neighbor about what they should write and ask what sound a letter makes. Writing, like speech, is a developmental process. Children go through stages toward mastery in their writing. We believe that writing is too important to waste time waiting for our writers to become perfect spellers.

Parents can encourage their children to write as easily as they encouraged them to speak. All language development, verbal and written begins with providing them with the environment, the modeling, and the questions that guide their own learning. List making, sign-up sheets for activities, and letters to friends and family are highly encouraged in our class and can be adapted for home. Don’t worry about reversals, upside-down letters, or letters all over the page. Children are wonderful imitators and inventors. Focus on the message and the interest in spelling and writing, not the mechanics.

Invented spelling carefully nurtures the passion and emotional interest of our children. It is a wonderful example of the developmental learning style that is emphasized by The Children’s School.

The Importance of Play in Early Childhood

By Taira Lee, BSU Student Teacher

Where did all of the fun go of just being a child? In our fast-paced world and continual pursuit to get ahead, we value performance and achievement at a young age, schedule play dates with other children, and pack our agendas with pre-determined leisure activities. In all, we are under-valuing the most integral component of social, physical, cognitive, and emotional growth in a child’s development. In the midst of our busy schedules and the pressures for academic outcomes, we are losing sight of one of the most important vehicles for children’s learning during these early childhood preschool years - play.

And speaking of writing—

There are two easy ways to help us stay stocked with plenty of paper!

1. *Bring us your outdated letterhead, stationery, etc., we will put your recycled paper to good use.*
2. *Bring in your used printer ink cartridges. We can redeem them at Office Max for reams of paper.*

Thank you in advance for your support and donations!

Mary Clagett Smith, the founder of The Children's School of Boise, said, "Play is children's work." This quote clearly exemplifies how play provides an opportunity for interactions that allow children to experience the world around them and make sense of those explorations in a way that is their own reality. This reality becomes a construction of knowledge that lends itself to success in all realms of learning and development throughout life. Through exploratory play, children are gaining skills in interacting with others, cooperation, sharing, and conflict resolution. They are practicing what they already know in order to gain a sense of competence as well as learning new things and building upon a foundation of prior knowledge. During play, children learn to express and represent their ideas, deal with emotions, and progress in cognitive skills through experiences where they are making their own decisions, actively exploring materials, and merging their interests with valued learning opportunities. Through play, children are enriching their imagination and creativity, not confined within the boundaries of any textbook, but by means of free exploration and interaction with their surroundings. These precious preschool years pass by quickly and children have many years ahead saturated with assessments and testing and class work. Why take away the fun of being a child and the true value of learning now?

"Play is children's work"—Mary Clagett Smith. TCS Founding Director

A Thanksgiving Tradition—TCS Style

By Andrea Laird

Thanksgiving season is here. Every family has their own traditions to celebrate this holiday. The Children's School also has one for staff and children. The day before Thanksgiving we have our traditional "Feast". We serve roasted turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, pumpkin pie with whipped cream, etc. The 2-3s celebrate in their way in their own room. The 3-4s, 3-4-5s and All Days have their Feast in the All Day room. The 4-5s, 4-5-6s and Primes gather in the Primes room for their Feast. We have traditional songs that we sing (you've probably heard some of them at home). Cindy goes to each class in the days before the Feast and sings these special songs with the children. Each class prepares part of the meal to share with the other classes. A fresh turkey is bought the day before so that children get to see it before we cook it: potatoes are peeled, pies baked and stuffing made by children. This is one of the few times that staff and children get to gather as a group. It often remains as one of the best memories of TCS for children. Ask your child to sing "I heard Mr. Turkey Say"..... It's a classic (at least at TCS)

Auction Planning Meeting

By Anne Gregory, P-TCS Co-President

Happy Holidays to All!

It is time to begin thoughts and planning for our annual spring auction. We would like to invite all interested parties to an auction planning get together on Thursday, December 8. We'll be gathering at Margit Donhowe's house around 6:30 PM and anticipate meeting for around an hour to an hour and one half. To be the most productive, we felt that an "adult only" evening would be the best way to kick off the brainstorming and planning for this event. We will have hors d'oeuvres and everyone is encouraged to BYOB.

We hope that you will be able to attend. This occasion has the propensity to be great fun. If you are unable to attend, but want to be part of the process (something we hope all of you do!), please feel free to contact your class representative or any other parent board members.

We look forward to imagining all sorts of possibilities for the auction with you.
See you in December!

Some Evening Classroom Gatherings:

Parent/Toddler Classes and All Days Class

Toddler families—this one's for you!

Parents from the 9:30 and 10:30 toddler classes are invited to an evening potluck November 30 at 6:15 at the school. We'll share food and conversation, and then watch and discuss the video "Mickey Mouse Monopoly." Sherri, Megan, and Mary look forward to this time with you all. This is an adult gathering; sorry, no child care on-site.

All Day families—potluck of favorite holiday foods

All Days Families are invited to an evening potluck of favorite holiday dishes December 5th, 5:30-7:00 in the All Days classroom. We'll have dinner together and perhaps a sing along of some favorite classroom tunes. Please join Nicole, Lynn, Tonya, and Ruthie for a gathering of our daytime community!

Classroom Gatherings—An important time to build and strengthen our relationships at The Children's School! We hope you can make it!

The Children's School

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.tcsboise.org

Important Dates: In School Calendar

*Thursday-Friday, November 24-25, Thanksgiving Holidays, SCHOOL CLOSED

*Wednesday, November 30, Parents in Toddler Program Potluck

*Monday, December 5, All Day Potluck

*Wednesday-Saturday, December 7-10, NAEYC Conference, Washington, DC (professional development opportunity for teachers), SCHOOL OPEN

*Thursday, December 8, Parent Education, Respectful Toilet Learning

*Wednesday-Thursday, December 14-15, P-TCS Bake Sale

*Thursday-Friday, December 15-16, Classroom Holiday Parties, Families Invited, Please check your child's classroom for details.

2-3s (class meets on Thursday, please see classroom for details)

3-4s (class meets 9:00-10:00 on Friday)

3-4-5s (class meets 8:45-10:00 on Friday)

4-5s, 4-5-6s (classes meet 10:30-12:00 on Friday)

All Days/Primes Early Release 12:00. ONLY ALL DAYS & PREARRANGED PRIMARY CHILD CARE OPEN ON FRIDAY

*Monday-Friday, December 19-23, WINTER HOLIDAYS, ONLY ALL DAYS & PREARRANGED CHILD CARE OPEN

*Monday-Friday, December 26-30, WINTER HOLIDAYS, SCHOOL CLOSED

*Monday, January 2, All Classes Resume

Parent to Parent: Princess Mania

Beyond Clothes and Looks—Alternatives to the Disney Franchise
By Margit Donhowe

Auction Planning!

It's time to start thinking about the spring auction.

Parents for TCS will be having an organizational meeting-complete with food, fun and wine on December 8th. Please see Anne Gregory's article on the previous page.

Oh, by the way, we are still looking for an auction chair, co-chairs or some creative configuration of leadership for this committee. This is always a fun and rewarding event.

Stay tuned!

Several years ago when my daughter was at the height of her princess obsession, I decided it was time to search for some alternatives to the Disney princess narratives. The princesses in Emma's dramatic stories spent most of their time getting ready for parties and any adventure they had involved getting rescued by handsome princes.

I recently discovered that Disney began to market all its existing princesses together as a franchise just 3 years ago. This packaging was an instant success and the franchise quickly went from a 300 million a year enterprise to a whopping 2.5 billion last year. Not only were they scripting my daughter's play scenarios, they were making a lot of money doing it.

Perhaps more disturbing to me is what their executives have to say about their hit characters: "We've gone beyond the dress-up and toys, and begun to look at the brand as a lifestyle, filling out all the other things girls need in life," says Mary Beech, director of franchise management for Disney Consumer Products. 1

"Whether feminists like it or not," says Gary Foster, spokesman for Disney consumer products, "at some point in their lives, most girls want to be a princess." 2

So why do our daughters, despite our best efforts, become so fascinated with princesses? I always thought that it was the attraction of a story with a female protagonist in a world dominated by male heroes. But perhaps it goes deeper than that.

"Transformation is at the core of all the princess fairy tales,' says Maria Tatar, Harvard folklorist and editor of "The Annotated Brothers Grimm.' 'Young women, often poor, sometimes even almost animal-like, end up with all the power in the end. Little kids, even very young ones, can understand who has the power, and that has always been part of the attraction.' Disney, she believes, 'capitalizes on the worst parts of the fairy tales.' By celebrating the ugly duckling scenario of overnight transformation, she says, most of Disney's princess tales reinforce the idea of achieving power through fabulous clothing and great wealth. The problem as she sums it up: 'They don't work for it.'" 1

Here are some princess stories in which the heroines don't rely on great clothes and looks to achieve power. These gals are courageous,

smart and unconventional. Emma and I found all of them at the Boise Public Library. I heard about most of them first in Great Books for Girls: More Than 600 Books to Inspire Today's Girls and Tomorrow's Women by Kathleen Odean. All of the books below are available at powells.com and amazon.com.

Princess Florecita and the Iron Shoes by John Warren Stewig. This is a Spanish story where the princess must wake the sleeping prince. She goes on a long journey to wear out a pair of iron shoes and on the way gets information from the mothers of the West, East, and North winds.

Mapmaker's Daughter by M.C. Helldorfer. The mapmaker's daughter longs for adventure and ends up going off to save the prince who was captured by a witch. She does not return with him to get married. Instead, she leaves on another adventure.

Young Guinevere by Robert D. San Souci. Guinevere explores the mythical forest near her father's castle and eventually saves her father's kingdom by making a dangerous journey through it to bring reinforcements.

Brave Margaret: An Irish Adventure by Robert D. San Souci. Margaret lives by herself on a remote Irish island tending her cows. She barter her cow for a trip with a crew of adventurers that lands on her beach. After an encounter with a sea serpent she must face a witch and an ogre to save her man.

Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munch. The princess saves the prince from a fiery dragon by using her wits and some resourceful clothing (paper bag) after her fabulous clothing is burned up. Turns out the prince was really into her great clothes and is appalled by her choice of attire. The princess promptly dumps him and runs off into the sunset on her own.

Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave by Marianna Meyer. This is a beautifully illustrated book but the depictions of Baba Yaga are quite scary for young children. It is a Russian variation of the Cinderella theme. The crabby stepmother and stepsisters send Vasilisa to get fire from the scary Baba Yaga but she perseveres due to her bravery and the help of a doll her mother gave her.

Sarah Borden, mother of Alexa in the 4-5-6s, suggests:

Do Princesses Wear Hiking Boots? By Carmela LaVigna Coyle. This is an enjoyable picture book about a young girl's search for identity. She wonders if princesses do ordinary things like wear hiking boots or drink sparkling punch, or are at all like herself. Whimsical color illustrations by

For more great book selections, please see Lynn Hanson, All Days teacher and school librarian!

Mike Gordon add a special vibrancy to this delightful and recommended "easy reader" tale.

Nancy Cole, mother of Dylan in the 4-5-6s, suggests these books with strong female characters appropriate for Primes aged children:
[The Misadventures of Maude March](#) by Audrey Coulombis. A western about two sisters who are feisty, spunky and hilarious.
[The Penderwicks : A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy](#) by [Jeanne Birdsall](#)
 The Molly Moon books

1. "A Nation of Little Princesses" by Christopher Healy
<http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2004/11/24/princesses/>

2. "The Princess Principle" by Mary McNamara
<http://www.freewmexican.com/artsfeatures/3568.html#>

Parent Education: Respectful Toilet Learning

Presented by Megan Jones

On December 8th at 12:00, Megan Jones will share thoughts on approaches to toilet learning. Join Megan in the Smith house (9th and Thatcher) with a brown bag lunch, if you'd like (drinks and cookies provided). Child care available in the school at 11:50; bring a sack lunch for your child. Sign ups for attending and to reserve a child care spot will be available in the front hall after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Reprinted for publication in TCS Times—



WE WANT YOU...
TO BE PART OF THE FUTURE OF
THE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL OF BOISE
 (and ...we'd like to invite you to a party in January)

Dear TCS Families,

A committee has been formed by the Board of Directors of The Children's School to research a plan of action for the future of TCS. This effort will incorporate planning on both a near term remodeling of our existing school building; and a longer term strategic plan to expand

TCS enrollment and potentially new construction.

TCS is about all of you, the families and students, and we need your ideas. Last year, a handful of submissions were made via a survey. We have retained this input and will be working with that as well. However, it's important that we engage as many people as possible to tap the knowledge, resources, and concerns of parents, so that TCS will evolve to everyone's satisfaction.

In January, TCS plans to convene a school wide event (complete with food and wine), at which we will outline plans for the remodel (including architectural drafts on options for the school building) and suggestions for TCS's future growth, related to the ages of children served. In order for that event to be conclusive, we urge your involvement NOW.

Please send your comments, ideas, concerns and feedback to:

Facility Committee Chairman,
Bruce Wixson; frnwxn@msn.com or tel: 208 362 2892
or
Richard René; richard@reneglobal.com; tel; 208 433 9740

We also invite you and encourage you to attend Facility Committee meetings, (ask Bruce for specifics on day/time) where the rationales, options and cost considerations are being worked through in the coming months.

The goal is to secure an energy and focus to reach a conclusion and committed plan early in 2006. Together we will take the extraordinary experience of The Children's School and advance it to even greater impact on our children's development and the greater community.



*Facility Committee
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