

December 2005  
Holiday Issue

# TCS Times

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

## From The Director

By Cindy Finch

As a 25 year old school, we are lucky to have articles from past years that speak to issues families face during the holidays. Jane Dunbar is now retired from teaching, but is remembered for her years of teaching kindergarten at The Children's School, Anser School, and various Boise Public Schools. During her years at The Children's School, Jane created and left with us a short article on holidays with young children. It is a pleasure to reread it and to share it with you.

Holidays with Young Children by Jane Dunbar (1981)

Choices! Choices! Choices! As we head into this holiday time we are, as parents and teachers, bombarded with the need to make decisions that will shape the experience your child has this holiday and the feelings that will color his memories. If our goal is a rich, meaningful, joyful experience for the child, it behooves us, I feel, to take a few moments to look at the season from the point of view of your young child.

First I want to stress "your" young child. If the season's activities are to meet your child's needs, they must be structured according to what you know of your child. An activity that is meaningful and rich for one child may very well be overwhelming, disinteresting, or exhausting to another. There are not set models that work. Each of us, using our knowledge and sensitivities, must build a series of experiences, step by step, continually asking ourselves questions that focus us back to our own child, his needs, his wants, his unique ways of experiencing.

Next I stress your "young child," this time with the emphasis on "young child." It is awing to really think how little experience three, four, and five year olds have with this holiday . . . perhaps two year's memories and even those are hazy. This insight gives us lots of permission not to feel the weight of tradition. The child has had very little "tradition" and I imagine most memory focuses more on those things rich, meaningful and joyous in an activity rather than on the particular activity itself.

With those thoughts in mind, perhaps some of the following questions will be helpful when choosing holiday experiences:

Involvement. Three, four, and five year olds naturally are active and involved participants. How much of a doer can my child be in this activity? Does the project or activity match my child's ability level? (Often those wonderful memories we have of an activity we enjoyed as a child was one that we enjoyed when we were older than our own child and we might do well to save it a year or two).

Pace. What pace does my child prefer? Slow and methodical? Active but brief? Settled and quiet? Several short activities?

Routine. Will an activity disrupt my child's sense of order to the day? Will the disruption delight (add spontaneity)? If one activity fits, will two? Are two brief activities preferable to one long one?

After all this talk about realistically assessing your child's needs, let me balance these thoughts with strong vote for humor. Treat your family to the best releaser of tension there is: laughter shared and fun together as you prepare for the magic of the season. Keep things simple and relaxed. Fill the moments with music and candlelight, laughter, gentle hugs, unexpected smiles. Let home reflect each family member with decorations made and put up by each member. Share tales of childhood traditions from the family grown-up(s), blending the old with the new. It may not all be like out of House Beautiful but it will be meaningful for each of you. That's what the holidays are all about.

*Thanks, Jane, for putting these thoughts on paper almost twenty five years ago. I have referred to them often while parenting young children. See Jane's list of activities, along with other suggestions for this season, in this newsletter. The ideas and activities truly exemplify what we value for young children at TCS: experiences that nurture and stimulate thinking; accommodate and support children's development; and, provide a comfortable, reliable, and predictable environment to help children clarify, order, and make sense of the world.*

## Classroom Holiday News

By TCS Teachers

Note from the editor—

During this holiday season, I thought I would like to share with you some of the ways different classrooms celebrate the season. Some classes contributed a brief overview of what the last weeks looked like in their classrooms. The All Days and Primes classes contributed some thoughts from their students in poetry form and we are happy to share an original poem written by an All Day and Primary graduate with you. Please look for more classroom news from the 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s in the next issue of TCS Times! Thank you and enjoy the holidays however you and your family share this time together! –Nicole

SAVE THE DATE!  
We are throwing a party  
and you are invited!

When: January 26<sup>th</sup>  
Details: TBA

Please plan on attending  
to be a part of the future  
of The Children's School!

### Parent-Toddler Group

The toddler class in December looks much the same as it does at other times during the year. Children are playing in the water table and with playdough, painting at the easels and trying out puzzles.

At a time when routines at home are often disrupted with holiday parties and out-of-town visitors, sugar cookies and late nights, routines and predictability at school can be very comforting to young children. School is a “safe haven” from hectic holiday activities where children can relax and concentrate on the work of play.

### 2-3s

We started the season rather quietly in the 2-3s class, doing all the things we normally do at school. Gradually, we began talking about the things we see around us. The children especially enjoyed talking about the Christmas trees at their homes and how they were decorated. The children have had lots of fun singing “Jingle Bells” and playing the bells along with Will, our music teacher. They also made “surprise” ornaments for their parents. Our quiet season at school ended with a bang. The 2-3s shared treats with their families and had a very lively time singing “Jingle Bells” and several other classroom favorite songs at their holiday party.

### 3-4s

In our classroom things may seem a little backwards, while most classes prepare for holidays in the days and weeks previous to them, we usually wait until after they have occurred. The reason for this is that our children are relatively new to these events. They often do not remember the previous year's festivities, so do not know what to expect for this year. Our philosophy is to bring into the classroom the things that seem important to the children, the things that they are curious and excited about. Our children are usually really excited about the holidays right after they occur, so we are anticipating a lot of gift wrapping, decoration making, and holiday songs come January.

### 4-5s

December has been a busy and fun month for the 4-5s class. We have concluded our mini project on restaurants with a focus on food in conjunction with family traditions and recipes. The children have brought stories of their family holiday traditions to share with the class. These stories include information about what foods are important to each family during this special time of year. The 4-5s families shared some of these foods with the class at our holiday party on Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. The class also compiled a recipe book for their families for the “surprise” gift for the holidays. The class enjoyed making decorations out of paper, sequins, glitter, and pine cones to take home. We enjoyed making paper chains to make our room festive.

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*Auction News!  
The Parents for  
TCS Annual  
Auction and  
Fundraiser will be  
held on Saturday,  
March 18<sup>th</sup> at the  
Discovery Center of  
Idaho. Keep  
watching for details  
and opportunities to  
contribute! This  
annual event  
supports our tuition  
assistance fund.  
You don't want to  
miss out on this  
one!*

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**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, 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.*

*Hurry, this offer will expire in mid-January! Some restrictions apply. Please see Cindy or Andrea in the office.*

**Poems by the All Days, Primes and Annelle Congdon, TCS Graduate**  
*I'm Happy for... for the Holidays*

*All Days 2005*

A singing Barbie for a present—Finola

Pillows—Micki

My bedroom—Callay

My mom and brother—Peri

Santa and my dad—Davey

The stars—Edie

Peanut noodles—Dylan

A flower and mom, being around my family—Livvy

Turkeys—Jack

My family and Spongebob—Ellie

Bumblebees and a bush—Ian

Turkey—Wes

Presents and Christmas—Audrey

A haunted house--Cole

Modeling clay and lots more, (I forget the rest)—Olivia

Watching movies with my family for Christmas--Revi

*I am thankful that ....*

*Primes Thanksgiving 2005*

We have turkey! Orion

I'm having Thanksgiving with my cousins. Andrew Peterson

We have food! Brett

I have my parents. Madeleine

I have food, water and friends. Nina

I have transformers and a "Thomas the Tank" engine. Nico

We have Earth and we have God. Sophia

We have harvest, water and family. Sydney

We have turkey. Lea Sherman

My uncle is coming. Cy

God is here and Jesus is here. Emily

We have a tire swing. Tegan

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My mom lets me do so many things - like horseback riding! Sophie  
 We have water and food and God  
 (because God makes food and water). Emma  
 We have food. Leah Davidson  
 I am having turkey. Andrew Meyer  
 It's almost Christmas! Cameron

### *October*

Annelle Virginia Congdon, September 30, 2005

In October the leaves fly down  
 To land upon the ground.  
 And the birds fly south  
 To where it's warm all day  
 And soon come back again.  
 So the leaves do follow  
 And come back again.  
 They look upon the spot  
 They used to lay  
 So still, so quiet,  
 So small in the big world.  
 Nothing made them bigger  
 Nothing made them shrink  
 Until a little child came  
 And went crunch! crunch! crunch!  
 Soon they would be swept away  
 Into a large can  
 And be taken away  
 And be turned into soil.  
 The wind blows the trees  
 With long, skeleton arms  
 And it starts snowing.  
 Snow covers the ground  
 But soon the flowers of spring  
 Will bloom with bright colors.  
 Soon it will become hot

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*Thank you to all who  
 have sent in their ink  
 cartridges and  
 outdated stationary!*

*We have not needed  
 to purchase paper for  
 two months!*

*Just to remind you  
 how you can help--*

1. *Bring us your  
 outdated  
 letterhead and  
 stationery for  
 use in  
 classrooms  
 and office  
 notes.*
2. *Bring in your  
 used printer  
 ink cartridges.  
 We will  
 redeem them  
 at Office Max  
 for reams of  
 paper.*

*Thank you in advance  
 for your support and  
 donations!*

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And children swim in pools,  
 But soon it will be fall  
 And October will return.

## Some Holiday Activities for Families with Young Children

By Jane Dunbar (1981)

\*Frosting cookies: These cookies are the ones that Grandma or a loving (child-oriented) neighbor receives with delight. Emphasis here is on the process, not the product. Special candies and sparkles to decorate gingerbread men with eyes, nose, mouth, etc. can be fun.

\*Collage cards: Provide trays of special holiday materials, paper, and a glue bottle that is manageable. Your child can sign her name, if that is a skill she has developed. You may do the addressing with the child but she will love the walk to the mailbox to send it off (the sense of closure that comes from mailing them right after completion can be marvelous for a child—if it fits!).

\*Paintings as gifts: Using a school painting or one done at home, the child can choose a ribbon to roll it with or may help you pick out a matting and frame. Perhaps she can tell you about her picture and you can write down her words to enclose with the gift.

\*Playdough: Children love to make playdough and can do much of this themselves. Put a ball of red or green playdough into a baggy, tie it with a ribbon and you've made a wonderful gift for a friend.

### Playdough Recipe

Bring to a boil: 1 cup water  
 3 Tbsp. oil  
 1 oz. Food coloring

Remove from heat.

Stir in and mix well: 2 cups flour  
 ¼ cup salt  
 1 Tbsp. alum

Cool slightly, knead like bread to make smooth.

\*Snowflakes: Show your child (*older preschoolers or primary age children*) how to fold white paper and cut the folded edges. These are fun to add to the tree, to decorate a mirror, or hang from a string to float on midwinter breezes near a door or window.

\*Dictated stories: A story can come spontaneously from your child or can be prompted by an interesting picture you child draws, a carpentry project, a collage. These stories make fun gifts and can be read back at a special family time.

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*For more great ideas,  
 your child's teachers  
 and fellow parents in  
 our programs are also  
 fabulous resources!  
 Another big thank you  
 to Jane Dunbar for  
 putting all of this  
 information in one place  
 for many years to come!*

\*Drawn pictures: Children capture the magic and wonder of the holiday season in their art. Pictures can also be drawn (*by older children*) to go with traditional stories or songs about the holiday your family celebrates.

\*Taped songs: Songs sung by your child and taped for gifts or for memories. (“I sounded like that? That’s not me!!”).

\*Community trees: Take time to look at the ornaments on the City (Grove) or State (Capitol steps) trees. Lie under the tree and look up. How do you think this tree got here? Where did it come from? How old do you think this tree might be? How many people do you think decorated it? How long would it take?

## Come Join a Book Club at TCS:

Geared for Parents

By Jill Galanter

Parenting can be a Challenge.

- How can we help our children learn the values they will need as adults?
- How can we teach—rather than punish—our children when they misbehave?

The TCS Book Club will be reading and discussing “Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason” by Alfie Kohn

This thought provoking book proposes treating your children respectfully to earn their cooperation. Regardless of your parenting philosophy, this book provides a useful springboard for stimulating conversation with other TCS parents.

The Book club will meet once per month from 12-1pm beginning in January. It is conveniently held at The Smith House on the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and Thatcher. Childcare will be provided at TCS.

Information about this ongoing event and a copy of the introduction to “Unconditional Parenting” has been placed in your box. If you’re interested, please sign up and let us know if you would like us to purchase a book for you.

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*Please check out the Parent Library located in the coffee room at the school for many great parenting resources!*

## The Children's School

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We're on the Web!  
See us at:  
[www.tcsboise.org](http://www.tcsboise.org)

Sarah Jenks's work toward an AAS in Child Care and Development (to build on her CDA and BFA—whew, Sarah!) will take her into the noon hour on M-W-F this next semester. Instead of eating lunch with Primes, she will turn her attention to our new Tuesday and Thursday lunch programs for preschool/kindergarten age children.

### *Preschool/kindergarten news:*

Here are the much anticipated plans for lunch for children enrolled in four of our half-day programs. We will have lunch groups for children enrolled in the **3-4-5s and 4-5-6s** classes (Tuesdays; 11:15-12:45; Deanna Smith and Sarah Jenks, teachers) and **3-4s and 4-5s** classes (Thursdays; 11:30-1:00; Betsy Robinson, Patty Head, alternating weeks, and Sarah Jenks, teachers). Each group is open to 14 children from either the morning or the afternoon classes. Lunch groups will begin January 16<sup>th</sup> and continue until May 11<sup>th</sup> (taking the weeks of February 6<sup>th</sup> off for conferences and March 27<sup>th</sup> off for Spring Break), for a total of 15 opportunities to eat at school!

Lunch at school for preschool/kindergarten children will require preregistration in the office. You can register for the entire 15 week program (\$150; payable in advance) or, if there is space, you can sign up for one day at \$12 (also due in advance). We will register on a first-come, first-serve basis, with priority given to those enrolling for the entire 15 week period.

As for all our lunches at school—children bring a home-packed lunch, food chosen with love by mom and dad!

## Important Dates—In School Calendar

Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Classes Resume

Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, **School Closed**

## Toy Recommendations

By Cindy Finch

If shopping for toys is part of your holiday tradition, you might find the following lists interesting. The lists were developed by a group of early childhood educators called TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Environments). Diane Levin, our fall speaker, is a founding member. She teaches at Wheelock College and has been a resource to us during our conflict resolution material development. I have put a copy of the entire TRUCE newsletter on the coffee room bulletin board, if you want more specific information.

Toys have enhanced play value when they . . .

- \*Can be used in many ways.
- \*Allow children to determine play direction.
- \*Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development.
- \*Are not linked to video games, TV or movies.
- \*Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play.
- \*Will stand the test of time and continue to be part of play as children develop new interests and skills.
- \*Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions among children.
- \*Help children develop skills important for further learning and sense of mastery.

Toys have limited play value when they . . .

- \*Can only be used in one way.
- \*Encourage everyone to play the same way as determined by the toy designer.
- \*Appeal primarily to a single age or level of development.
- \*Will probably sit on a shelf after the first "fun" half hour.
- \*Will channel children into imitating scripts they see on TV or movie screens.
- \*Do special high tech actions for the child instead of encouraging the child's exploration and mastery.
- \*Lure children into watching the TV program or other media linked to the toy.
- \*Promote violence and stereotypes, which can lead to disrespectful and aggressive behavior.

## Goodbye Taira

By Cindy Finch

Taira Lee has moved on to her next student teaching experience. We miss her, but we know she will come by for visits. I thought you might be interested in hearing what her supervising teacher, Mary Olsen, from BSU's Early

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To visit the TRUCE  
website, go to

[www.truceteachers.org](http://www.truceteachers.org)

Childhood Studies, said to me (via email) about Taira and her experience here.

*“Taira showed the most amazing growth personally and professionally. We (BSU/ ECS faculty) all commented that we saw a change in her. She is more confident and has spent the last eight weeks doing some really honest, deep reflection into her attitudes, biases, and what she knows are best practices. Mark played a huge part in making that all possible. He was a true mentor. Thanks for allowing us to be part of your program.”*

## Meet Carla Jensen

By Cindy Finch

We have an important new resource person at our school. Carla Jensen, PhD, is a private practice psychologist in Boise. We have known her as a community resource for several years, and for the remainder of this school year she has offered us some of her time on-site. Her role will be to support teachers in their understanding of the emotional components of children’s behaviors and in fine-tuning teaching to more effectively meet the needs of children in our classrooms. She has also offered to work with parents in small group education sessions around specific topics related to parenting. Her time with us will typically be on some Friday mornings.

The teachers met with Carla at our December staff meeting as a way to enrich our relationship with her and to explore ways to work together. We have found her to be informative and have valuable insights to us in our work with children. The school has long sought this type of professional resource relationship from the community, and we are thankful for Carla’s generosity with us.

Carla grew up in Idaho and even graduated from a local high school! She spent much of her adult years in Denver, Milwaukee, and Chicago working toward degrees and certifications—and then working professionally as a therapist, administrator, and faculty member. I hope you will take some time to say hello to Carla and welcome her to the school. I think we will all find her to be a valuable resource to our school community.

## Lunch at School

By Cindy Finch

*Primes news:*

Rebecca Crosswhite will become the Primes lunch teacher beginning after the holidays. Rebecca began her teaching at TCS in 2001 in this position, and brings a wealth of knowledge and interest to her work with Primes.

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### **Lunch Time!**

*The lunch program for 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, and 4-5-6s will be available in January! Keep reading for details!*