

January 2006

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

A friend once told me that she thought it was important for her children to get bored in the summer. I was a new parent then and had been a teacher for several years, so my perspective was very different. I couldn't imagine spending time with children without a plan for the day, materials gathered, and my time spent facilitating children's activities. I couldn't understand her point of view, but I've thought about it often over the past 19 years of parenting and, often, in teaching children from other families.

I don't hear children use the word "bored" often, but when I do it catches my ear. It reminds me that young children are in the midst of learning vocabulary for describing feelings. In early stages of learning about feelings, children often describe how they feel as "mad" or "sad." Its not always true that those are their exact emotions, but those are the words they know that communicate feelings. With more experience and with adults in their lives to use more expansive, specific language to describe emotions (their own and children's), children learn a more varied vocabulary to describe something that can't be touched, tasted, or smelled. When I really think about how children become increasingly able to understand and describe private, internal processes, communication development seems pretty amazing!

I wouldn't be surprised if "boring" means very different things to adults and children. For adults it almost certainly means that there is nothing interesting going on and we seek a little more excitement. For children it can mean several things (including the adult understanding of the word), but not excluding: concern about a new situation, especially when confronting something challenging; uncertainty about expectations or roles; request for adult attention or help; or, a request for an idea or entertainment from an outside source. As with all children's descriptions of feelings, I think it is worth our time to try to understand what young children mean when they use a word, especially one that is as charged for adults hearing children use it as this one can be.

In responding to a child's description of something as boring, I think it is important to look at what is ultimately going to be the most helpful next step. Despite the saying, children don't "die of boredom" and the declaration of boredom isn't a crisis. It is often something that doesn't need an adult fix,

although that may be our first inclination. There are times when I have rescued my children from truly boring situations—long extended family dinners with copious amounts of adult conversation or a vacation car ride that gets too long—but most of the time the declaration of “boring” demands a different type of adult support.

Here's what I mean: *if our adult responses become the cure for boredom, we are denying children the opportunity to solve problems.* What I have come to understand over time that what my friend wanted for her children was the creative, expansive thinking and playing that can take place for children when there is not a constant barrage of other people's plans or ideas—and when there is time to think, play, explore, and relate deeply.

What I am proposing for adults responding to children's declarations of boredom is to think of strategies that are supportive and cognitive in nature, rather than rescuing, external, or entertaining. Three educational concepts may be helpful as ways to help get children past times they might be tempted to call boring without you having to become the cure. The first is scaffolding—the bridging of old knowledge to new ideas. When adults see children getting to a saturation point with a material or idea, we can offer the next connected suggestion. “What if we take the hose to the sandbox?” is one type of simple scaffolding suggestions that can help children re-engage with an activity that is running stale. The second suggestion is the mixing of non-congruent materials. An example of this idea is putting rocks, water, and a toothbrush together for exploration and play. There is a whole body of research to show how children's depth of play is impacted by how materials are combined. The third education concept that is helpful to consider is the idea of vertical curriculum. Horizontal curriculum, also important in education, is like a survey course that covers lots of different content. Vertical curriculum is about a single content area taken deeply. This idea's relationship to boredom means that we don't have to think of something totally different to help children get past the doldrums. There is value in helping children take their ideas and experiences to a deeper level.

No matter your child's age, it is helpful for adults to start developing a philosophical attitude about boredom. One way to consider how to respond is to think of your own childhood. For example, I traveled plenty as a child and visited many great historical and natural sites. However, what I remember as some of my most meaningful days are those that involved water, empty pecan shells, and a sunken place in our yard—raw materials that separately don't suggest much. Together they contributed to hours of trial and error in sink and float, dramatic scenarios, and problem solving.

Common materials, time to explore, and adults comfortable in their ability to help children past protests of “boring” can contribute to cognitively challenging and memorable childhood days. I can't think of many more ways we can be helpful to young children and their expanding view of their place in the world.

"The prime purpose of being four is to enjoy being four - the secondary importance is to prepare for being five." Jim Trelease, literacy advocate and author of "The Read-Aloud Handbook"

Auction Update

By Kim Liebich

The TCS Spring Auction will be on March 18th at the Discovery Center. Save the date and reserve your babysitter, you don't want to miss this party. We want this to be a big shin-dig. Let us know if we can send an invite to family or friends on your behalf.

Here's how you can help:

- Catering connection – we need food for the “all you can eat buffet” It is VEGAS.
- DJ & projector/screen, microphone & speaker equipment
- Items for live auctions - a poker party, margarita party, any kind of party, dinner at your house, dinner at my house, condos...what do you have or what are you good at that you could share for a good cause?
- Items for silent auctions - tickets for a movie, dinner, skiing, golf...anything
- Dress in Elvis or other retro inspired gear so you can look sweet at the party...has anyone seen Elvis? We need to round him up.
- Help in your classroom - class artwork for the note cards & class projects for auction
- Pictures that you have taken at school to be used in a surprise auction item

Please contact Kim Liebich with your suggestions, comments and auction items (leave a note in her box J. Liebich 3-4-5's).

Thanks in advance for your dedication to this event. We are looking forward to a show stopper!!

2-3s News

By Julie Gill

Throughout the school year we've noticed our 2-3s changing and evolving as a group. They entered the classroom this Fall somewhat differently. Most of them were experiencing, for the first time, leaving their families to briefly participate in another group. Wide-eyed initially, they quickly became busy exploring the different play areas in the room.

*“Pull out your glitter sunglasses
Shine your dancing shoes
Grab your money clip...*

It's Vegas Baby!!”

The Auction Committee needs your help with brainstorming ideas.

PRETTY PLEASE!!

*Please contact Kim Liebich.
Leave a note in her school mailbox or email at kimliebich@cableone.net*

Gradually they began to engage in parallel play, sitting side-by-side reading in the Book Area, or pushing wooden trains together on the tracks in the Block Area. They learned their teachers' and friends' names. By mid-October they were all quite at home, bustling about confidently.

And now, we see, in the midst of gray winter, our 2-3s further blossoming with bright, eager enthusiasm. They've mastered the basics of classroom life, and we see them applying their knowledge and abilities in new ways. As we finished snack today, I asked a child if he would put an empty serving bowl into the dishpan. He nodded earnestly and did so, then approached a friend and offered to take his plate for him. A little girl saw a friend stumble and fall on the carpet. She called out to him "Are you Okay?" He nodded, "Yes," with a big smile, and she beamed back at him. We decided to ask the children to help us change the material in the Sensory Table. A large group eagerly gathered; a little girl proclaimed: "I want to help! I want to help!" They diligently scooped the sand into a bucket. A child exclaimed happily "This is hard work!" Another responded "Yeah!" I think they were impressed by their ability to put forth this effort and by what they could all achieve together. They filled one and a half large buckets as a result of their hard work. At playtime, much of their talk is a proud commentary on what they're accomplishing. At the kitchen sink in the House Area: "Look! I'm pouring ...this is full!" At the easel calling joyfully across the room, "Julie, look! I did a lot of painting! Look! Handprints! I made handprints!" Or standing at the sink holding a sponge under running water, intently observing her own little fist, a child quietly states, "Look, I'm squeezing." The children encourage each other too. A little girl tells me, "He helped me, Julie! He found my socks and shoes!" She nods and smiles at her pal and gently pats him on the knee.

The children have spontaneously come together as a group several times. As we've finished Pick Up Time, they've gleefully started playing "Ring-Around-the Rosie"; another day it was "Pop Goes the Weasel." One day several children at the Play Dough Table were patting the dough while two others in the Block Area were pounding on the pegboards in unison. Suddenly the play dough patters picked up the pounding rhythm. We all looked up, surprised. Delightedly a child joined in clanking blocks, two others galloped happily to the beat. All of the children were looking at each other, happy and excited.

As this little group has evolved, we've seen them first as curious and tentative individuals. Later into the fall they had noticeably coalesced as a group. Since then we've seen them growing in their independence and self-help skills, expressing their creativity, and growing in their emerging friendships. We look forward to Spring, while enjoying each day with the 2-3s as they are now.

As a staff we are considering our school's use of peanut butter and other peanut products. We are collecting information; if any of you have information that can help us create informed guidelines for our school, please let the office know, by February 7th.

THANK YOU to everyone who came out and shopped at the Learning Express during the November fundraiser! We earned \$277.94!

Bake Sale Highlights

By Kristin Porter

Many thanks to all the parents who made delicious items and purchased our yummy treats at this year's Holiday Bake Sale! We raised over \$1,550 that will go into the Parents for TCS discretionary account. Also, thanks to all who helped purchase items for packaging and creatively wrapping our goodies.

They are: Chanel Johnson, Margit Donhowe, Carrie Melvin, Elaine Deuer, Christina Carlson, Katie Walther, and past TCS parents Carol Bartylla and Shannon Yochum. Thank you also to those of you who took shifts collecting money and answering questions at sale.

A big thank you goes out to Lisa Fernandez for her hard work on the beautiful gingerbread house. Cindy Finch and several parents purchased the house and donated it to the St. Alphonsus Foundation. They were very pleased with our generosity and were sure the gingerbread house would provide warmth and cheer to all that entered St. Al's over the holidays.

New Parent Orientation—Don't Miss It!

By Scott Stingley

Last fall my wife and I enrolled our son Jack in the 3-4-5s class. I had a general idea of the teaching philosophies of The Children's School but certainly didn't understand them in detail. After a few weeks in the program, we were invited to a New Parent Orientation meeting. I can't tell you how much this meeting helped me to intimately understand the approach at TCS and how it would help my son's foundation for learning. The discussion with other parents, various teachers and a video that was created for the school were all very detailed in why the TCS approach was best for our children. For all parents that haven't attended this meeting (or even if it has been a few years) I would highly encourage you to attend this meeting. I am sure you will find it to be, as I did, reassuring that your child is in the right place with some very gifted people.

The next New Parent Orientation will be held on Thursday, May 11, 2006. If that date doesn't work for you or you have questions that can't wait until May, let Cindy know. I am happy to schedule another date to meet with families to talk about TCS's philosophy and practice.

Be sure to attend the Open House, Thursday, February 16, 2006 at 6:30 for presentations.

Holiday News: Martin Luther King Day in the 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s

By Mark Zimmermann

Helping very young children understand the complex concepts of freedom, justice, and tolerance is difficult. Nonetheless, as teachers we consider it important to work to find ways to help children begin to understand and explore these concepts. In our classes this year we have tried to talk about the freedoms that directly affect children – the freedom or right to come to school, and the freedom to talk to and be heard. In class discussions we have pondered what it might be like if we could not come to school or were criticized for what we say.

We read books such as [The Story of Ruby Bridges](#) about the first child to enter an all 'white' school in the south during the 1960's. We talk about what it might be like to be told you cannot use a drinking fountain or bathroom simply because your skin is the 'wrong' color.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. tried to get people to talk instead of hit and we express this to children in ways they can relate to – conflicts between themselves and other peers but we also touch on global issues such as war and peace.

While abstract for children, many talk about news programs they have seen on television. While we do not discount the horrors, we focus more with children on the hopes and dreams we can promote.

We read books about famous people such as Dr. King in 'Martin's Big Words,' and Rosa Parks. Then we discuss what it means to "stand up for your rights." We choose to concentrate on African Americans in our country so that the children will be able to think about African Americans they know or will meet.

Will sings songs such as 'If You're All for Freedom, Clap Your Hands,' and he asks children to think deeply about what they can do to help the world as we sing 'What Can One Little Person Do?' and 'This Little Light of Mine.'

All during the school year we promote conflict resolution through encouraging children to talk to each other respectfully. Some children learn quickly to stop physical "violence" as a means for resolving problems, but sometimes changing the way we talk to each other can be more difficult. In addition to learning how to communicate with words we are trying to help them to learn tolerance and respect for one another. We try to model for them the appropriate messages that help them see that being different is OK even if it can be scary at times.

*Thank you to Caroline Grey,
Jack's mom in the All Day
class, for setting up the
newest way to contribute to
TCS while doing your own
shopping!*

*Here's the scoop!
The Children's School is
eligible for the 5% Back to
Schools program from
Office Depot!
Just give them our number
while shopping.
The number is **70029255**.*

*For more information follow
the links at
<http://www.officedepot.com>*

While helping young children understand the concepts of freedom, justice, and tolerance is difficult we know that it is a worthwhile effort. Equality begins inside each of us no matter what age, but it is up to the adults in children's lives to help them in the best ways we can. Fortunately we have each other to talk with and we hope you will join us as we help guide children in developing a deep understanding of these concepts.

Cell Phones

By Cindy Finch

Cell phones are a fact of today's life, and we understand that at TCS. We hope that under most circumstances parents are able to finish cell phone conversations prior to entering the school for pick-up. The transition for children from the school day to family time is one that we hope has your full attention—for reasons of safety, so you can reconnect to your child after a time of separation, and so that you can be available to see and hear of your child's experience during the school day. *If you carry a cell phone in the school please turn it off or place the ringer on vibrate. If you need your phone on in the school and receive a phone call while in a classroom, please go to the coffee room or outdoors to talk.* That way we are all working together to respect children's time and experience at school, and we can meet the professional standard: "The sound of the (classroom) environment is primarily marked by pleasant conversation, spontaneous laughter, and exclamations of excitement . . ." (from NAEYC accreditation standards).

Enrollment and Scholarships

By Cindy Finch

It is time to plan for the 2006-2007 school year! Enrollment packets will be mailed to current families' homes in early February. You have until 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 28th to communicate your intention to enroll your child in a class at TCS for the upcoming school year. Please come by the office if something in our enrollment process is not clear, to schedule a time to observe in a classroom, or to talk over the specific needs of your child and family. Parent-teacher conferences, February 9th and 10th, as well as the Open House, February 16th, are planned opportunities to consider your child's needs and the class options available at TCS.

We will be continuing our long tradition of providing partial scholarships to families for whom the cost of full tuition limits enrollment opportunities. Families will need to apply for funds. These funds are available to the school to award for tuition assistance through the hard work and generous donations from the Spring 2005 auction. The process for applying for a scholarship has

Kid Quotes!

"You're not a grown up until you can do a cartwheel without your mom's help!"—age 6

"You can't go to bed until it's blue outside, but I take my nap when it's yellow outside."—age 3

Preschool Openings!

While looking at enrollment for the next school year, we are continuing to enroll children in our 3-4s and 3-4-5s classes for the 2005-2006 school year!

The Children's School

1015 N. 8th St.
Boise, ID 83702

PHONE:
208-343-6840

FAX:
208-429-8153

E-MAIL:
info@tcsboise.org

We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.tcsboise.org

After the discussion about new babies, one parent commented to me, "This is so helpful. I wonder why more people don't take advantage of this resource." We are thankful to Carla for providing her time and expertise to us.

Thanks to...

We would like to extend our thanks to some key people for their extensive work with the new climber in the sideyard! We can't wait to see what it brings to the children in our classrooms.

Thanks to Angela Sherman and her employees at Cascade Outfitters for their help with shipping, unpacking and delivery! We were able to save half the cost of shipping.

Thanks to Tim Foley and his colleague, Smitty, for digging the holes.

Thanks to Dewey Dolin, David Moore, Drew Halvorson, Ben Shedd, Gary Gettman, Nancy Cole, Mark Zimmermann, and Evan Smith (TCS alum) for four days (so far) of work to get the new climber installed.

In School and Community Calendar

Wednesday, February 1st, Enrollment Information for '06-'07 school year mailed.

Wednesday, February 8th, Parent/Teacher Conference Preparation, **2-3s, 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, 4-5-6s classes are closed. Early Release at noon for Primes. Only Prearranged Primary Child Care and All Day class are open.**

Thursday-Friday, February 9th-10th, Parent/Teacher Conferences, **Only All Day Class & Prearranged Primary Child Care Open; All other classes closed**

Monday, February 13th, Parent/Teacher Conferences, **3-4-5s are closed**

Thursday, February 16th, Open House and "Look Ahead to Next Year" Evening, 6:30 P.M.

Monday, February 20th, Presidents' Day Holiday, **SCHOOL CLOSED**

Tuesday, February 28th, Intention Forms Due in Office by 10:00 AM. Contracts prepared and mailed by March 6.

changed this year, so please be sure to read the "How to Apply for a Scholarship" page of your enrollment packet.

We look forward to welcoming you back to The Children's School for the 2006-2007 school year.

Being At School, part 2

By Cindy Finch

The new climber on the side yard is almost finished! It will be a great addition for the outdoor play options at TCS!

We know that the side yard is a part of the school that families often use for a transition point from the school for short periods of time after class. As we all adjust to this new piece of school equipment, I am asking that you work with us on supervising children in this area. You may want to refer to the "Being At School" article from the August issue of TCS Times if you find that you have questions about your child's use of this equipment or any part of the school facility.

Do you know these guidelines we have for children on the playyard?

- *Children need to keep one foot on the ground when they are beside the fence.
- *Opening the gate is always a "grown-up" job.
- *Climbing in the crabapple tree is for three children at a time; children need to be able to get themselves into the tree rather than being lifted by an adult.
- *Children can never be left on the playyard without adult supervision.

Thank you for working with us to introduce this new playyard climber to our school community in a safe and consistent way.

A New and Important Resource

By Cindy Finch

Carla Jensen, PhD, is a consulting psychoanalyst who has made her time available to us three times a month. Recently she was available to families to talk about the experience of bringing a new baby into the family. She is available to continue that conversation with parents; please let me know if this topic is of interest to you and I will make sure we schedule more time for Carla to spend with you.

On Friday, February 24th at 9:30, we plan to offer the same opportunity to families experiencing a separation or divorce. If you have questions for Carla, especially concerning your child's experience with this family change, please put this date on your calendar.

Late Day Extra Charges-

As a reminder, the fee for late day is \$6.00 an hour or portion of an hour. Two hours (or one and a portion of an hour) is \$12.00. This policy can be found in the handbook and on the tuition schedule.