

March 2006

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

I recently registered my youngest child for junior high classes—a true milestone in our family. One thing I noticed in the junior high orientation is the description by the school administrators that there is a push-down from high school. There are evidently higher curricular expectations for junior high than the last time I had a child there and more of the junior high work ends up on high school transcripts—which are then used by colleges for admissions and scholarship consideration! Did you face that kind of pressure in junior high school? I know I didn't.

I left that gathering at the junior high feeling the same way I feel about my work with young children: What are we doing to childhood? What's the big rush to move children into more maturity—or at least more mature situations—at an earlier age? Is this working for children? Is this best for children—and is it really best for our culture for the long-run? Are we “burning our children out” for no good reason? What's with all the high-stakes experiences children are forced to deal with at younger and younger ages? What role does development play in education, if this is the type of experience children are increasingly facing?

For a faculty who has devoted our professional lives to human development and early childhood education, these are real questions and concerning issues at The Children's School. As committed as we are to the value of developmental programs, we are challenged by the current push-down from the bigger education world in both our preschool and primary classes. We evaluate our practice often, both in terms of our commitment to what's right for young children in schools and our awareness of what children face in the next classroom, the next school.

If we have a push-down trend at TCS it is concern about children being older in a class—staying for a second or third year in a multi-age class. There is parental concern that if a child is the oldest or stays in a multi-age classroom for both the younger and older year they will be under-challenged. As a school faculty we see things differently. We value a child's second year in a multi-age class as an opportunity for that child to consolidate understandings, contribute to group life in a more mature way, and feel strong and capable. We are concerned about children who move from one multi-age class to another multi-age class, always in the role of the youngest—that they may

struggle (often in private) to understand complicated social relationships, to contribute to group discussions at class meetings, and to feel competent and connected to the social and academic expectations of the class.

Those who know me as a parent know that I have high expectations for my children. The challenge for me is to set my expectations for my children with full knowledge of their abilities and interests, and full understanding of their developmental levels. I also have learned to understand and value that my children are learning so much outside the teacher and instructional relationship—something educators call the invisible curriculum at schools. Part of the invisible curriculum at TCS is how a child's developmental level intersects with the school's experiences, opportunities, and activities. As much as any of us as parents try to manage children's school experiences, there are some things that happen without adult planning and strategizing, and these learnings can be of immense value. When my youngest son was a 2nd grader at TCS he worked hard to develop a relationship with a child I'll call C. C was two years younger in their K-1-2 class, but a smart and challenging classmate to my son. For a while what I heard about school was the daily frustrating C story. Over time—and with adult support at home and school—C became a very good friend and, more importantly, a very positive challenge to my son. Those lessons in listening to another person's ideas, finding satisfaction in cooperation rather than leadership, persistence, completion, learning to speak up, negotiate, and compromise, and learning to look for something positive in a frustrating situation were some of the most important of the year.

*Shelley McCarl, our art consulting teacher, is featured in this month's issue of **The Pastel Journal**. She has received an Honorable Mention for one of her works of art. Congratulations! We are lucky to have her in our school community!*

Readiness rarely means that children need to do now what they will be expected to do later. Early childhood programs that start to look like schools for older children do children a great disservice. My most recent brush with education research confirmed this: children who attended elementary-looking early childhood programs and children who attended child-centered programs achieve the same academically by third grade. However, the children from child centered programs showed, in addition, strength in social and emotional development far into early adulthood. (Further confirmation of the ability of graduates from a child centered program comes from a teacher who noticed in the paper that four of the six Boise high school students competing in a math and science decathlon attended The Children's School or St. Michael's preschool).

At The Children's School our firm belief in the important role of development in education helps us sharpen our practice today with an eye on programs our children will face later. We do this without imitating the experience, the classroom structures, and the teaching methods of the later educational systems many children face. And, most importantly, we do this without catching children in the philosophical gap between TCS and other schools—after all we are concerned for children's competence, creativity, social relationships, and individuality in the next education setting, as well as our own.

Parent/Toddler News: My Version of the Three R's

By Megan Jones

Last week I spoke briefly about the programs for two and three year olds at the TCS Open House. Although TCS offers two programs for two year olds and several for three, four, five year olds, as well as programs for primary aged children through second grade, the basic beliefs and practice for each age group are the same.

I talked about how strong the philosophy is, based on over a century of thoughtful research about how children learn best--through play, relationships and freely exploring their environment.

The parent/toddler class is often the first school experience for both the parent and child. It is designed to help the child learn about school routine, expectations, relationships, etc. The goal for parents is very similar. Parents learn about the school, discuss parenting issues, watch their child in a group setting, and begin to build relationships.

The most important components to the toddler class I see as the "Three Rs." Respect, Respond and Repeat. Mary and I strive to respect each child—just as they are. Toddlers often go through stages some adults find "terrible." We respect each developmental stage and where each child is. The range of social/emotional, language and physical development of this age group is so wide! One day my husband and I think our two year old is a genius and the next moment we think he needs professional help! Respecting each of your child's developmental stages can be challenging. In the classroom, it's a pleasure.

Responding to children is important because we always want them to feel "heard." When a child requests brown play dough, we try our best to comply. If a child isn't interested in using the materials we set out in the way we were thinking, we support them in "their" way. In a 1 1/2 hour class, once a week, we don't hear too many preferences but when we do, we try to respond.

Repeating is what we do a lot! Play dough, week after week is important because we know it is comforting for some children, it is good for fine motor development, and is often a means of supporting social interactions. Repeating sometimes means reading the same requested book over and over at circle time. It is important we continue to comply because children are starting to memorize it and that is one of the first steps toward reading. We always want to support children in loving a book! Singing the same songs every week helps with language development and feelings of mastery as they begin to learn the words. They begin to notice that they are a part of group doing the same thing at the same time!

**RECYCLE YOUR
PRINTER INK
CARTRIDGES
HERE!**

Thanks to all of you who have brought in your used ink cartridges! We receive a ream of paper from Office Max for each cartridge redeemed!

We have not needed to purchase paper all year! Kudos to you!

Many of the materials children begin to use in the toddler class are ones they will use in different ways for the next few years at TCS. TCS believes repeated use with basic materials is an important way for children to begin to “master” them. Cutting, drawing, pasting, gluing, building, serving “food” and painting are a few things children begin to do when they are two years old and hopefully are still doing at eight.

**Thank you TCS
Families!**

*In case you were
wondering...*

**Generous donations
from families through
Parents for TCS have
funded:*

*-Partial scholarships for
4 children to attend TCS*

*-Continuing education
for 4 teachers to attend
local conferences, 4 to
take BSU coursework,*

*and 1 to attend a
national conference*

-The new awnings

**Private donations
directly to TCS have
funded:*

*-The new side-yard
climber*

*-The loft in the 8th Street
classroom*

*-The new musical
instruments that Will
uses in his teaching
(glockenspiels and
xylophones)*

Auction News: Heading to Vegas?

By Kim Liebich

Got your sitter lined up? Picking out your outfit? We *know* you're ready to party!! The count down is on and only a only a few days remain before the **Annual Children's School FunRaiser, Saturday, March 18th 6:00 p.m. at the Discovery Center.**

What to WEAR?

Did you get off the tourist bus or did you arrive in a Lamborghini? Are you a showgirl, a groupie, or “Slick Daddy”? Come as you like...but don't bring your fanny pack...all you need is a credit card or check.

What to EXPECT?

It's Vegas Baby...we've got just about everything except the pumped Oxygen. The night is LOADED with Gaming activities...

- Start safe with a “Swizzle”. It's our twisted version of a raffle...everybody wins!
- Browse the “buffet” of silent auction items.
- Drop by the TCS Campaign Booth to vote for your favorite TCS renovation design and pledge your support to make it all happen.
- Get your picture taken in the Chapel of Love.
- Stuff yourself at the all-you-can-eat buffet, compliments of Goodwood Barbecue Company.
- Have a truffle and maybe win a snowboard...now we're gambling!

BUT, that's just for starters...now on to the MAIN EVENT...**The Live Auction**...the joint will be jumpin' and it won't end there! Slip into your stilettos and get ready to “Dice & Dance” because this years auction has it ALL...

The Lounge, the DJ, the gaming tables and more *chances to win*... PLUS, if you're really lucky...you could be gambling at your own after-hours high roller table complete with cocktail waitress and more (this opportunity open to the highest bidders in the silent auction). This event is NOT TO BE MISSED!

What time to get there?

You WANT to get there early for a fun-filled evening of school support.

Doors open at 6:00 p.m. But whatever happens, just BE THERE – it won't be as fun without you. Please come and join the party! If you have to miss the event, pledge your support anyway with cash contributions to our Capital Campaign Fund, Discretionary Fund, or Tuition Assistance. There are so many ways for you to help!

It's the Annual Children's School FunRaiser, Saturday, March 18th - 6:00 p.m. at the Discovery Center. Please contact KimLiebich@cableone.net or 343-6840 with questions.

It's going to be a show stopper!! Vegas Style!!

Alumni Update: The Children's School

By Megan Lundquist, Eighth Grader at Anser School

Tricycle racing, jump rope skipping, and loud games of tag. That basically sums up the play ground at the pre-school I attended. I was at The Children's School from the age of three through first grade. It was the place where I built my first friendships, learned to read, and discovered my own creativity.

On my first day of school I hung back and watched the other kids run and scream and play, too shy to join their games. I was like this until just before snack time when Maile walked up to me. She asked me a couple of questions about myself and asked if I would sit next to her at the snack table. I said yes, grateful for a friend, and sat down to munch on a graham cracker next to her. At playtime, Maile, several other girls and I played a game we called "Lost Princesses." After eleven years Maile and I are still close friends. That day I learned that welcoming the new kid is a great foundation for everlasting friendships. Throughout my years at The Children's School, the teachers modeled and encouraged the kindness and understanding that I encountered in Maile. We were never sentenced to time-outs because of a disagreement with a classmate or something like that. Instead, teacher would squat down and help us talk through the dilemma. In this way, I discovered how to solve my own problems without hitting or adults dishing out punishments. We also learned about friendship through including others. During "Outside Time" or in the block area, no one was ever left out.

The first book I could read was Go, Dog, Go! I would trip over the alien sounding words day after day, snuggled into a corner of the classroom. I read and re-read that book until I could slowly and steadily recite each word. After many laborious hours of sounding out words I learned to read. This inspired how I love to read.

"The movement for standards-based education has had a powerful impact on policy and practice. But it has done little to address the primary mission of schools—the preparation of the young for success in childhood, adolescence, and adult life. To function adequately across the life span, children and youth need formative experiences that aid their growth and development along the physical, social-interactive, social-emotional, moral-ethical, linguistic, and cognitive pathways. Indeed, academic learning is not an isolated capacity, but an aspect of development. The two are inextricably linked and mutually facilitative."—James Comer, Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale University

Do you shop at Office Depot?

You can 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 www.officedepot.com

The best places in the classroom were the block area and the art table. The block area was lined with shelves that held, what had seemed to me, an infinite number of wooden blocks, all different shapes. Kids would rush urgently around the construction site, gathering squares and arches to add to their ever growing buildings. I moved from building up towers just to know them down to planning building elaborate palaces for the plastic dogs and cats I liked to play with. The art table was always overflowing with scraps of different types papers, markers, crayons, glue, pencils, scissors, hole punches and the like. I graduated from scribbling random colors on a sheet of paper to creating pirate adventures and huge mansions for my stick people. It was young artists's dream to have their collage, marble painting, or drawing hung of the paint flecked classroom wall.

Spending all those years at The Children's School taught me about compassion in friendships, founded my love of reading, and fostered my creativity. If it weren't for this type of environment I would not be the same person I am today.

Auction Memories

By Cindy Finch

(revised from articles printed in March 2002 and 2004)

It was the Spring of 1986 when a group of TCS families and friends gathered at the Bushnell home on Main Street for the first TCS Auction. My husband and I were there. It would be my last year at the school as a teacher (for 11 years), as we were expecting our first child the next September. The crowd was smaller and a little more subdued (or was the crowd as lively as ever and I was subdued by pregnancy?).

Over the years we have returned almost every year to the auction. Sometimes we only knew a few people. Sometimes we were parents in the school, as our children moved through the classrooms. Sometimes we left empty handed, when the bidding did not go our way or skyrocketed away from our family budget. More often we have taken something away, a cherished piece of art and gift certificates to favorite shops or restaurants. One of our favorite purchases remains to this day the huge basket of toothbrushes, dental floss, and toothpaste donated by a dentist/parent. We didn't have to buy oral hygiene products for years—really.

You can help make the auction happen this year. I have watched in amazement for years as different groups of parents pull this event together. This year is no different—Kim Liebich and Karen Fournier, auction co-chairs, and their dedicated committee have big plans for the evening of March 18th. With those big plans there are many little jobs that could use a few extra hands this week. At the recent auction committee meeting I heard several: sweeping the Discovery Center of Idaho (DCI) as it closes for business and is

transformed into the setting for our Vegas-themed evening, making coffee available to the crowd later in the evening, moving furniture into place for the various displays and areas, checking bathrooms to assure they are ready for us, moving auction items from storage to the DCI, various print and assembly jobs, and the creation of pieces and props for games (it is Vegas after all). If you don't know how to get involved, please let me know and I will assure that your energy and enthusiasm are garnered for auction preparations. Also, there is a sign-up on the hall wall with these and, very likely, other opportunities.

I hope to see you at the Auction this Saturday, March 18th. You'll find me there making bidding decisions, early in the evening with my husband at my side (later in the evening he will head to the airport to pick up that 1986 baby coming home from college for Spring Break). The focus for my family, and the reason we've returned year after year, is that TCS remains a place we want to support—a special place where our children started their education, a place we've developed important adult and family relationships that have remained strong for years, and a place and an education we value for all children, today and tomorrow.

TCS Office News

By Cindy Finch

*At the February Board of Directors meeting the Board confirmed the school's immunization policy for the 2006-2007 school year, committee chair, Clint Tate reports. The Children's School will continue to enroll students who are under-immunized. As required by state regulations, parents of under-immunized children are required to submit a signed copy of the "State of Idaho Certificate of Exemption." See your TCS Parent Handbook for a complete reading of the school's policy concerning immunization. Further, The Children's School will provide to parents of under-immunized children an information hand-out created by the school while advises parents: 1) that TCS is concerned about the health of its students; 2) about the risk of under-immunizing their children; 3) that during an outbreak within the school of a disease with a required State of Idaho immunization an under-immunized child will be removed from classes at TCS; and, 4) that during an outbreak in the community of a disease with a required State of Idaho immunization and upon the advice of the Central District Health Department an under-immunized child may be removed from classes at TCS.

*During April we will be asking families to reflect on the current school year and your child's experience at school by completing a parent survey. Look for surveys soon after Spring Break.

*We have had improved coffee service at TCS for the past year due to a generous donation from current family. If you are a coffee drinker and would like to continue this service, your donations are welcomed and invited. Our coffee service cost about \$50 a month and is an expense we've not budgeted for in our current budget. The past donation came with a comment, "Coffee's important. If nothing more it is an employee benefit!" Consider it a gift for your favorite coffee drinking teacher.

Child quote!

"I have a question mark coming out of my head."—A 3 year old with a question for his teacher.

The Children's School

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

*Do you shop at Albertson's? If so TCS can receive money as a community partner each time you shop. Last quarter we received \$200 from this program. Go to the www.albertson.com website to enroll. I believe you'll need TCS's fax number to enroll—according to a recent enrollee—and it is 429-8153.

*There have been questions about teaching plans for the 2006-2007 school year. As noted on your school year calendar, I plan to post it by April 28th, the date the second half of your enrollment deposit is due. There is interest in having it posted earlier; I have heard those requests and am working hard to create a complete plan to post as soon as possible and include it in a future edition of TCS Times.

Important Dates...

*Saturday, March 18th, Parents for TCS Auction and Fundraiser

*Friday, March 24th, Contracts for 2006-2007 school year due in office by 2:00 PM with first half of deposit

* Monday-Friday, March 27th-31st, Spring Break, **All Days Class and prearranged Primary Child Care Open; All other classes closed**

*Monday, April 3rd, Classes Resume

*Thursday, April 20th, Earth Day-Spring Sing, Children and Staff

*Friday, April 28th, Second half of enrollment fee due. **Last Day to have deposit refunded if enrollment is cancelled. **Teaching plan for '06-'07 school year posted in front hall—subject to change.

The Children's School
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