

November 2006

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

"I am thankful that . . ."

I remember the November when Matt's mom, Mary, came to visit my TCS classroom to ask children to end this statement. She had very thoughtfully considered the wording to encourage children to think of ideas rather than possessions (although, honestly, there is always a very sincere mix of things, people, and ideas when children talk about being thankful). Most years there is at least one classroom that carries out a similar type of experience with children. Why? We are interested in how children understand the things they experience and create meaning through their understandings—that connection of feeling and thinking that we always seek at TCS.

What are TCS and, specifically, the school director thankful about this season? So much, and here are a few thoughts.

I am thankful that there is a school like TCS for young children—a school, to quote an alumni parent from Megan Jones' video about TCS, that "is based on the real needs of children." I am reminded everyday that not all children have early school experiences like this one—when I read articles like the one in Newsweek this fall about first grade pressures, when I hear speakers like Alfie Kohn talk about current practices in education, and when I receive email newsletters about bubble testing 3 year olds to prepare them for later school environments and experiences (really!). I'm always thankful that children here are able to experience, feel, think, understand, know, try, do, see, choose, be resourceful and resilient, risk, solve, accept, imagine, express, reflect, and respond in classrooms that emphasize these three Rs: real experiences, raw materials, and meaningful relationships.

I am thankful that TCS has the quality of teachers available who are committed to being here because, to quote Susan Gardner, "this really is the place where we can do the right thing for kids."

I am thankful that TCS is part of a caring community—where parents show up at the school on two Saturdays in October to 1) raise money for continued professional development at the school carnival and 2) to winterize the facility and yard (see thank you on page 8); where Board members, parents and

**Parent Education:
Parent/Child Yoga**

Jodeen Revere, TCS's consulting creative movement teacher, will lead two thirty minute classes for parents and children (ages 4-8) to try/experience/learn yoga together.

Classes will be held at TCS on Thursday, December 7, 5:30-6:00 and 6:10-6:40. Child care will be provided for siblings who are not participating with parents in the class specifically children under age 4 or over 8. (No charge to TCS families.)

Space will be limited so sign up in the front hall of the school to participate in the class or reserve a spot for child care. Then join us—with an empty or at least not dinner-fed stomach, comfortable clothes, and bare feet, please—for some stretching and relaxing together.

Extra yoga mats will be available, if you do not already have one!

teachers work together toward making our facility expansion and remodel a possibility; where families and teachers work together to make a school food drive a success (see article on page 9); where parents take a leadership role in bringing a national speaker to Boise and plan a spring party to raise money for TCS family tuition assistance; and, where families take time away from their days to cook or read in classrooms or drive on a school outing to enrich classroom experiences.

I am thankful that TCS has the resources to allow faculty and staff to attend primarily to the needs of children and families. We have, to quote Bob Bailey from the City Clerk's Office, an "environment of abundance." We provide ample materials, activities, qualified faculty members, and we take the time to be thoughtful about how we use these resources to create rich classroom experiences. Further, we have the resources to call repair people when something breaks, have the school professionally cleaned five times a week, the grounds cared for, the parking lot swept, sidewalks cleared of snow, and carpets cleaned quarterly—and, as many of us know from experiences as parents or teachers in other schools, these are not to be taken for granted.

And, finally, I am thankful that I am able to spend my work days surrounded by children—they help us keep perspective and remain humble. I never forget that.

There's another reason we ask children to talk about what they know, feel, and think about things: asking questions helps us to get to know children well and plan appropriate and meaningful curriculum. The technique of asking—of talking and listening—is how we know that children are deeply engaged in relationships, in problem solving, and in learning about themselves, others, and the bigger world.

We do that with adults in our school environment as well. Throughout the school year we strive to talk and listen with families—in your parent-teacher conferences, at the drop-off and pick-up times, and in written communications. We hope you use these times to tell us about your child and family and what's important to you.

We will formally ask you to talk to us about the work we do twice this school year. In this National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation year we will be moving through two parts of accreditation pretty quickly, self-study and self-assessment, and there are family questionnaires that go with each process. We have some options about how to use the self-study questionnaire or whether to even use it—and here is what we've decided will be helpful. As I mentioned in the August 2006 TCS Times, we are revising our parent handbook to provide more written communication to you about our philosophical foundation, procedures, and processes. I want to make sure that I have thought of all the things that need to be included by asking you to reflect—on the self-study questionnaire—on your experience at TCS, what we have communicated to you so far, and what more you need to know.

The NAEYC questionnaire I am asking you to complete in early December is

5 pages long and is formatted in a way that lets you answer questions quickly (yes-no) or take longer (optional comment sections) if you'd like. (The self-assessment questionnaire, in comparison, is a mere 2 pages long. We'll complete it as a school community in March 2007). I consider this accreditation self-study process a great opportunity for our school community to talk and listen to each other in a different way than any of our other communication avenues invite.

So, finally, I am thankful that we will have this chance for adult reflection about TCS, deep engagement in this communication process, and, ultimately, better understanding.

Books, Books, Books

By Nancy Cole

I have a pretty good collection of books on parenting. . . . I'm always looking for ideas to help me navigate the unfamiliar terrain that parenting can sometimes follow, so when the Parent Education Committee started gathering titles that parents within the TCS community would recommend to each other I jumped at the chance to be the 'publisher' of the List. I have not been disappointed. I am, in fact, inspired to add more height to the existing stack of "read me now" books next to my bed.

The List I am referring to is an annotated collection of book titles recommended by current TCS parents and/or staff, arranged in alphabetic order by author and includes the publisher, price and format (hard or soft binding). The annotations were provided by publishers or on-line reviewers.

The parenting list is accompanied by another equally important List: TCS parents' recommendations for their children's favorite books...something you can use to add height to the existing stack of books next to your *child's* bed. This List includes classics (*Goodnight Moon*, anyone?) and modern books from picture books to chapter books. It is organized the same way as the parenting collection, but without the annotation.

Huge thanks are due to all of you who contributed to these booklists. The entire school community benefits from your willingness to spend a few minutes writing down your ideas. Look for the list in your TCS mailbox before December 1st. Additional lists will be posted in the school library, coffee room and on the Parent Board bulletin board. If you would like an electronic version of the list, send me an email at nancol@earthlink.net. Happy Reading!

Some of you are beginning to talk about next year's enrollment.

We will enroll current students into new classes in February. (After currently enrolled students, we will go to siblings, alumni families, and then the waiting list for filling classes). If you are wondering about classes for next year, start taking a look at what we have to offer.

To schedule a classroom observation, see Andrea.

News from the Parents for The Children's School

By Lisa Wirtanen

P-TCS is growing and full of great parents! Thank you to the Class representatives who attended our last meeting! Those of you not able to attend will be contacted shortly regarding the next meeting. **We are doing some fun stuff!**

Have you noticed our new refrigerator?

We purchased it in late October when our routine health department inspection indicated that our old fridge was not keeping food at a consistently cold temperature. We responded quickly to ensure safe storage of food for TCS children and staff. Check it out.

- **TCS Bake Sale** is December 13-14: we hope you can help us by baking and making! Some ideas are: sauces, jams and jellies, assorted cookies or one-of-a-kind treats. This year we will also be featuring goodies for the allergic or food-sensitive, these will be wrapped and decorated with a yellow ribbon.
- Our First Annual **TCS Cook Book project** is gearing up! Hopefully you received a note regarding the invitation to submit your favorite recipes for this creation. Send your recipes to Karendxu@msn.com by December 10. Katie Walther is heading the project, you can drop your recipe in her box too (4-5-6's) Include as much information as possible, name of recipe, how many it feeds and if you want your family name included. Our hope is to produce a family friendly recipe book so please think of recipes in the following categories: School Snacks, Cooking w/Kids, Camping, Cooking For Other Families (New Babies, Illness), Holiday/Entertaining, Bake Sale, Family Friendly Dinners, Food Allergies (i.e. Peanut Free, Wheat Free, Dairy Free recipes) or Healthy Dinners.
- Katie Walther will *also* be coordinating our **volunteer-to-serve project**. You can sign up with her to serve meals to those less fortunate. It will be easy, convenient and we will be a *community giving to the community*.
- TCS Faculty and P-TCS are collaborating in a **EVERYTHING BUT TURKEY FOOD DRIVE**. Look for bins to donate your food after the Turkey-day weekend.
- MARK YOUR CALENDARS! **March 10, 2007-TCS Spring Fling: Prom Revival**. The theme is "the prom you always wanted to attend"...Location is Crane Creek Country Club; the DJ will be spinning tunes from every decade, to meet all of our musical interests. It will be a blast so save the date. Details to come later.

Thank you again to Nancy Cole for her work on bringing Alfie Kohn to Boise, and to Jane Lambie and Lisa Fernandez who absolutely ROCKED organizing and carrying out the TCS Carnival! Thank you Katie W. for heading up these new special projects and thank you Lindsay Turner for being our resident food sensitivity expert! **The next P-TCS Meeting will be Thursday, December 7; 9:30-11:00 AM @ 1902 W. Washington Street. See you there!**

TCS Board of Directors Biographies

Susan Smith—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.

Susan Park—Vice President

Susan is very pleased to join the Board of Directors of TCS after spending seven years as a parent of two happy TCS students. 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.

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—Secretary

Dawn has lived in Boise for 12 years with her husband and 2 children, both 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.

Sherry Dyer—Board Member

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.

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 alumni students from The Children's School and is an active community volunteer.

The Board of Directors would like to invite parent participation on several committees.

If you would like to serve on one of the following Board committees alongside Board members and faculty/staff members, please contact the chair or let Cindy know.

*Nominating Committee—
Susan Park, Chair*

*Marketing Committee—
Kim Rene and
Janet Parsons, co-
Chairs*

*Facility Committee—
Bruce Wixson, Chair*

*Fund Development Committee—
Marilyn Locander, Chair*

Help Wanted!

Are you looking for a way to volunteer for TCS?

Have a love of reading and consider yourself an organizer?

If you answered yes to these questions, we have the job for you!

We are looking for a parent or two to help manage the parent library located in the coffee room.

See Andrea in the office if you are interested.

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 was in the All Days for two years and the Primes for two years. "TCS was our second home during that time," said Bonnie. She looks forward to serving on the Board and contributing to the school in as many ways as she can.

Janet Parsons—Board Member

Janet Parsons is an alumni parent of The Children School. Janet received her BS in Computer Engineering from Michigan State University and MBA courses at Xavier University in Cincinnati. She worked for Fortune 500 companies including Ford, GM, and Proctor & Gamble as a computer consultant in her home state of Michigan and then in Ohio. After arriving in Boise in 1997, Janet stayed home mothering her 2 active boys. During that time she was a committed volunteer with the Boise Mom's Club and TCS Parent Board. Janet spent two years as the Business Manager for Foothills School of Arts & Sciences and is currently a real estate consultant with Windermere, Capital Group. Janet and her husband Mark have 2 sons. She enjoys cooking, entertaining and skiing with her family, and can frequently be found in the middle of a remodel.

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, a media and communications business.

Dave Taylor—Board Member

Dave is the Vice President of Finance and International Operations for AIM International, Inc. He brings to the Children's School Board over 23 years of experience in the accounting profession; with 11 of those years as Fiscal Officer for an Idaho not-for-profit. Dave is a Certified Public Accountant. He graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business/Accounting. His professional associations include the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Idaho Society of Certified Public Accountants. Dave resides in Boise with his wife, Judy, and their daughter, a Children's School Alum!

Bruce Wixson—Board Member

Bruce is serving his second term on TCS Board of Directors. He is a therapist in private practice, working with both children and adults. His grown 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.

Accreditation: TCS Written Assessment Plan

By Cindy Finch

Our school-wide assessment processes are ongoing and structured around

- 1) our goals for children (competence, individuality, social relationships, and creativity),
- 2) developmental areas (physical, social/emotional, cognitive, and language),
- 3) content areas (math, science, creative expression, social studies, literacy, health and safety, and technology), and
- 4) approach to learning.

The *Assessment of Children's Progress at The Children's School* is based on observation of activities and experiences within the classroom. Family input to this assessment process is welcomed through daily verbal and written communication. Assessment information is sought formally from families three times during the school year: at the beginning of the school year (through classroom specific questionnaires and/or the school update form) and at each of the two parent-teacher conferences. Through these processes teachers come to understand children's interests and development, and are better able to make decisions about teaching children individually and as part of a group.

Teachers have a variety of more formal assessment instruments available to them, as needed, to assess development and ability within a specific area of development or content.

At times The Children's School and families find it necessary to learn more about a child's abilities and development than is available to us through our school-wide assessment processes. Within the school, teachers have access to consultations and observations with colleagues and consulting specialists. When there is need for further screening or evaluation, families are referred to specific agencies, public school resources, or medical facilities for further assessment. The purpose of these referrals is to assist the child in experiencing success in the school setting.

Assessment information for each child is kept in an individual file in the classroom. Those who have access to children's files, including assessment information, are: the child's teachers, the school director, colleagues and consulting specialists who are involved with assessment interpretations and decisions, and the child's parents. If school assessment information is to be shared more broadly, specific permission will be sought from parents.

Through these fluid and ongoing assessment processes we hope to: know children and families individually; communicate with families; effectively plan curriculum; and, fully support the realization of competence, individuality, social relationships, and creativity for TCS children.

Why "I really like this school!"—by a 4 year old!

We have art and stuff.

We go outside.

We play.

We paint.

We write books.

We make calendars.

We read books.

This top 7 list was dictated to Nicole after seeing all the newsletters we send out every month.

A direct quote—he would like lots of people to know about his school.

Editor's note--I don't think I could have said it much better.

*Thanks !
--Nicole*

Director's Corner

By Cindy Finch

Thanks to...

P-TCS and especially the carnival committee and volunteers who raised \$3885 for TCS teachers to use for continuing education. Through your efforts each teacher received \$35-\$436, depending on years of experience at TCS, to support them in meeting individual professional development goals. We've already had teachers travel to Atlanta for a national conference and sign up for spring classes at BSU. Thanks for making those activities a possibility for teachers! It makes a big difference.

Anne Gregory (Cole in All Day/4-5-6 classes) for pulling together 20 or so parents for the fall work day. We got a lot done on the school grounds, got to know some new people, and, as one parent said getting in his car at the end of the day, "That was really fun." Tori (Anne's daughter, Cole's sister, and a TCS alum) created a great child care experience for children who were there. Thanks to you all.

Joelle Ditter (Dylan in Toddlers) for organizing a great meal for teachers on parent-teacher conference days. We had healthy, homemade food to gather around during breaks. Thanks to all who showed up with a dish of something delicious—it was wonderful in so many ways.

TCS and Recycling Possibilities

You may have noticed that TCS does not currently recycle. Haven't done it in years, actually. And we create a lot of trash in the course of a day. Surely you've noticed the full trashcans in the office/classrooms and overflowing dumpster in the alley.

Recently our local trash company created a possibility for businesses to participate in the city recycling program. For a small monthly fee we'd receive 3 bins—one for paper, one for cans, and one for plastics #1-7. If we choose to participate we'd not only be helping the environment, we'd be teaching children about helping the environment—and that opportunity is appealing to educators!

Here's the catch—we've tried recycling in the past. In our cozy environment, creating collection spots is a challenge. Getting recycling rinsed enough to not attract ants and create odors is a challenge. Transitioning recycling out of the building is a challenge.

We need someone who can help us get past the challenges. Are you a committed recycler who could help us? We need someone who can take a look at our environment and help us create spaces and processes for school wide recycling. If you are an organizing/manager who would enjoy leading your child's school in this new direction, please let Cindy know.

*Seeking an Avid
Recycler!*

*We need someone who
can take a look at our
environment and help
us create spaces and
processes for school
wide recycling.*

*Talk with Cindy if you'd
like to help.*

Feed Ourselves, Feed Others

Does it ever seem like we time things opposite of what you'd expect? Sometimes we do so because it makes sense to children. In this case, we are having a school food drive right after the school feast and Thanksgiving Day. We have chosen this timing because young children have limited experiences and memories of holidays. By choosing a date for giving food to other families after children have experienced meals that emphasize sharing, abundance, and community, we are building on children's recent understandings.

Our school food drive is November 27-December 5. The non-perishable food we gather will be taken to the Idaho Food Bank. You are invited to participate as a family and talk with your children about the purpose of sharing food in this way with other families. We anticipate that there will be discussions in classes of older children about this community project, and we look forward to the focus this work will bring to our school during the holiday season.

Thanks for participating!

Feast 2006: A Collaboration

Article by Andrea Laird

Poem by The All Day Class

The Holiday Season has arrived! TCS celebrated Thanksgiving with a series of feasts. The day before Thanksgiving we had our traditional "Feast". We served roasted turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, pumpkin pie with whipped cream, etc. The 2-3s and 3-4s celebrated in their own ways in their individual rooms. The 3-4-5s and All Days had their Feast in the All Day room. The 4-5s, 4-5-6s and Primes gathered 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 prepared part of the meal to share with the other classes. A fresh turkey was bought the day before so that children saw it before we cooked it: potatoes were peeled, pies baked and stuffing made by children. This is one of the few times that staff and children 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)!

I am thankful for...

--my dad's stuffing. He makes the best! —L.

--turkeys.—C.

--my family celebrating with a turkey.—O.

--for making Art with Shelley.—E.

--turkeys!—M.

--food.—A.

--my dad.—J.

--my mommy.—A.

If you are interested in donating through TCS, there are boxes in the front hall for food collection. There is information posted around the school or drop by the office if you have a question!

**PHOTOS
REMOVED TO
PROTECT THE
PRIVACY OF
CHILDREN**

The Turkey
Shoppers

Away they go...

Eating, yum!

The Children's School

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

--when people play with me.—F.
--my mommy.—G.
--my nut tree in my backyard.—O.
--my pretty costumes.—S.
--my sister, Abby.—T.
--my backpack.—I.
--turkey I can eat.—W.
--my apple tree at my house.—C.

Please visit the All Days book area to see the complete book complete with the authors' illustrations! Happy Holidays!

The 3-4-5s and All Days singing with Will et al.

Important Dates

Friday, December 1st, 9:30-10:30. Parenting Young Children: A Discussion with Carla Jensen and Cindy Finch (this discussion group will continue in the winter/spring months, so look for dates in next month's TCS Times).

Thursday, December 7th, P-TCS meeting, 9:30-11:00, See article on page 4 for more information.

Thursday, December 7th, Parent Education/Yoga Evening, See sidebar article on page 2 for more information,

Friday, December 8th, 7 week Lunch Group ends for 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, 4-5-6s

Wednesday-Thursday, December 13-14 P-TCS Bake Sale

Holiday Party Schedule and School Closure Dates

Thursday, December 14th, 2-3s Classroom Holiday Party, Families Invited

Friday, December 15th, Classroom Holiday Parties, Families Invited

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

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

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

All Days (regular class time)

Primes **Early Release 12:00**

Only All Days & Prearranged Primary Child Care Open After Noon

Monday-Friday, December 18th-22nd, **WINTER HOLIDAY, School Closed, Only All Days & Prearranged Primary Child Care Open**

Monday, December 25th-Monday, January 1st, **WINTER HOLIDAY, SCHOOL CLOSED**

Tuesday, January 2nd, All Days and Prearranged Primary Child Care Open

Wednesday, January 3rd, All Classes Resume