

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

## **From the Director**

By Cindy Finch

Schools should be built around the real needs of children.

If this statement seems obvious, it should be. However, from where I am sitting—as a parent, an educator, and an observer of social and political statements about education—often schools are described in terms of the experiences that are planned for children (curriculum), what the outcome is for children (learning or meeting standards), competition (achieving a test score), or the future (will children be ready for the next opportunity or responsibility). Certainly, I care about all those things, and some of them I care about a lot at times, but what is missing in those narrow and short-sighted definitions of schools is this: children and childhood.

Here's what I want to see in schools that are built around the real needs of children: children actively engaged, attention to all parts of development, and an appreciation of the here and now of childhood.

We have recently hosted an Open House, an event that I've come to enjoy. This year we welcomed 60 current and future families to the school in mid-February for an evening of talking about school philosophy, sharing what we do that works well for young children, and showing carefully planned displays of what happens for children each day in our school.

Part of the focus of the evening was a discussion about how we, as a school faculty, think about children and childhood. No doubt, we want children to spend their time in our classrooms developing tools that will serve them well in the next steps of learning and in relating to a variety of people and situations. However, we do that by focusing our attention on the current needs of children: the need to solve the problem that has come up between peers; the need to figure out, children and teachers together, a question about a topic or idea or material; and, the need to have time to try or repeat or make mistakes and try again—with school materials, with social relationships, and with conceptual developments.

It must be very tempting for schools to define success for their students by narrowly stating what should be known and learned. I recently was told of a

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## 4-5-6s News

By Taira Lee

**Thanks to . . .**

*Joelle Ditter who made sure teachers had a delicious lunch on our February conference days and organized the food and drinks for families who attended our Open House. Thanks, Joelle. Your contribution is appreciated.*

*Parents for TCS classroom representatives (and others you've encouraged to work with you) who have spent hours planning, gathering materials, and working with teachers and children in classrooms while preparing beautiful projects for our March 10th school fundraiser. Your work will make a difference in so many ways at The Children's School.*

Young children are exposed to social studies everyday. Since they were very young infants, they've been trying to make sense of the world around them. Children begin first as they explore their immediate environments and then they eventually are exposed to the larger community and come to see themselves as citizens. This process is also exemplified in a school setting as the children first make meaning of their own classroom experience, then become interested in the school community as a whole, and finally expands into the local neighborhood community. In the 4-5-6s classroom, we've been working to take the children's interests and current understandings of their social world and use those to create a relevant and meaningful approach to teaching social studies to young children. As our focused activity, we've been going on outings into various locations in our neighborhood for the children to sit down and sketch their observations. Thus far, we've sketched The Children's School, St. Joseph's School on Fort Street, and Hollywood Market. In the future, we will also be sketching the Co-Op and the Capitol Building in downtown Boise.

Through the sketching, the children are becoming more aware of the culturally rich neighborhood that exists outside of our school and are learning about the functions of each location that makes up our local community. We want to take an integrated approach to social studies as we work to make it a meaningful experience for the children and foster a greater understanding of the concept of 'neighborhood community.' We've taken the interests of the children, built on what they know, and have provided this hands-on activity that deepens their understanding of the greater social world around them. Many of the children shop at the Co-op with their families or walk to Hollywood Market to get snack supplies for class or even pass by St. Joseph's School each day as they come to The Children's School. It is our job as teachers to use real life experiences to make social studies come alive and have meaning for children by using locations that are integral parts of our daily lives. The evolution of a child's social understanding begins with self and family, the classroom community next, the neighborhood, and then the larger global community. We want children to begin to see what exists outside of just our classroom and we're lucky to have such diversity within close walking distance of our school.

## Special Thanks... and a New Opportunity

By Cindy Finch

Nancy Cole has said this: "The current window boxes will be my last." After 5 years of planting beautiful window boxes, creating interesting things for children to do in the window boxes, involving families in making window box decorations, and establishing watering systems for many of our plants, Nancy

has decided to use her TCS volunteering energy in other ways.

Thank you, Nancy, for all you've done for us and the aesthetics of the school landscaping. Thanks too for involving children in many parts of caring for our school plants—you have contributed so much.

Nancy's departure from this area of TCS life makes us wonder if designing, planting, and caring for plants is of interest for another family. Can TCS staff do this work—yes, and we have. However, we have been impressed with the level of creativity that parents (Nancy and, before her, Amy Rustad) bring to this work, and we are not sure that we will give it the same level of attention that our planters and window boxes are accustomed to having—consistently! The window boxes and planters around the school really do contribute to the welcoming presence of TCS for our families and our neighborhood.

If you would like to learn more about gardening at TCS, let me know. It won't be long before we will be ready for spring flowers. And, in case you are wondering about this part: there is even monthly gardening money budgeted to keep our window boxes and planters beautiful. And I'll bet we could arrange a "training" conversation or two between Nancy and a new parent volunteer.

I hope you will join me in telling Nancy how much we appreciate her expertise and creativity with plants over the past few years. And let me know if you want to pick up where she has left off, giving the planters your own creative spin, of course.

## Alumni News

By Cindy Finch

Ben (1993-2000) is a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at North Jr. High. We were recently on the same Chicago-Boise flight. He and his parents were returning from Tennessee where he had taken first place (big trophy and all) in a national storytelling contest. His mom, Molly, said, "You know Ben's storytelling skills were nurtured at The Children's School."

Nigel (2002-2003) is a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Adams School. When I saw him recently he had just finished playing a basketball game. In addition to enjoying all kinds of sports, Nigel is a writer—a love he developed at The Children's School, according to his mom, Fernanda.

We received an email from Cy (2004-2006), a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at Eagle Hills Elementary, with a photo of him sitting in front of the sphinx shaped McCall ice sculpture. Cy's interest in Egypt and all things Egyptian was fostered in TCS classrooms during project work, his parents, Christy and Drew, report.

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*Taira Lee, Betsy Robinson, Patty Head, and Cindy Finch attended an evening workshop on February 8<sup>th</sup> on working with blocks in the classroom.*

*We were able to explore different types of blocks, hear about research on block play and development, learn how math skills are supported through teacher interactions during block play, and consider adaptations for children with special needs.*

*This workshop was part of the Blockfest activities over the past month sponsored by University of Idaho's Parents as Teachers project.*

Max (2006), a 1<sup>st</sup> grader at Garden City Community School, sent a poem TCS's way recently:

Christmas joy everywhere,  
Snowflakes falling through the air.  
Toys we bring to share.  
We bring presents, toys and good to share.  
As joy fills the air.

Karen Young wrote recently about her three TCS alum. Her son (1987-1993) is 21 and an accounting student at Trinity University in San Antonio TX, hoping to complete his MBA before returning to the Northwest. Her oldest daughter (1991-1995) is 18, a graduate of Boise High School, and is currently on a year long Rotary Club Exchange in Salvador, Brazil—learning the language and much more. When she returns she will attend the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. Her youngest daughter (1992-1996) is 17 and a junior at Boise High. Her mom reports that she is a good student and a dedicated athlete—and not quite ready to think about college.

As always—if you know any TCS alum and are able to help us find out what they are up to, let me know. Our TCS alumni range in age from still very young to 30-somethings—and we love to hear from them all.

## The Prom Comes to TCS

By Cindy Finch

I have to admit it—I skipped my high school prom for something (at the time, totally legal) I thought was more fun. In fact I was not alone in my disdain of the institution of the prom. It was 1974, close to the end of the Vietnam War and Nixon's presidency, and my generation was still a bit anti-establishment. We were good, smart, college-bound kids, but we absolutely wouldn't do something just because it had always been done and we especially wouldn't have been caught blindly following the plans of our high school teachers or parents.

So, I'm from an anti-prom generation working with a school that is throwing a prom as our major fundraiser of the year. Will I go this time? You bet.

The spring fundraiser—sometimes a pretty traditional auction, sometimes a theme type party (remember Vegas, baby?)—is one of the most generous gifts our school community gives to . . . our school community. Some of the money raised is used for the immediate purchase of materials or facility improvements; some money is put away for future plans. But a large part of the money raised at the spring fundraiser has, over the years, been used to fund tuition assistance.

Why tuition assistance? One of the founding realities of The Children's

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### Stop the presses . . .

*Jodeen Revere, TCS creative movement consulting teacher, is proud mom of a TCS alum (1999-2004). Lily, currently a fourth grader at Foothills School, recently placed first in the games category for her age in an invention convention. She will take her game, Seed and Mushrooms, to the state competition this spring.*

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### Why Tuition Assistance?

*One of the founding realities of The Children's School was that it was going to be expensive to keep classes small, hire well qualified teachers, and purchase sturdy, long-lasting materials and equipment—and that the resulting high tuition could exclude some families.*

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School was that it was going to be expensive to keep classes small, hire well qualified teachers, and purchase sturdy, long-lasting materials and equipment—and that the resulting high tuition could exclude some families. Therefore, a firmly held principle was established during the school's infancy—that a scholarship fund would provide assistance for families who value this type of education for their young children but find the full cost of tuition prohibitive.

I have watched in amazement—for more than 20 years—as parent volunteers (led by Karen Fournier, Mati's mom, this year) put together a fun event that raises enough money in one night to fund our scholarship program for one year. This is a type of work that I've never been particularly drawn to, and I have respect for those who do it with knowledge and confidence—and actually seem to have a good time in the process.

So, I'll leave anti-prom Cindy home this year. I have a date, I'm working on the dress, and I look forward to sharing this prom night with you, TCS families. We'll have some fun and do lots of good for our school community, all in one evening. See you there.

## Handwashing

By Nicole Shaddock

Some statistics from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention:

\*It has been estimated that proper **hand-washing** could eliminate close to half of all cases of foodborne illness.

\*Women wash their hands more often than men (74% versus 61%).

\*A study of 305 school children found that youngsters who washed their hands 4 times a day had 24% fewer sick days due to respiratory illness and 51% fewer days due to upset stomach.

One of the best preventative measures to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands. To effectively wash hands, you need just a couple of items. You might call this a recipe for hand washing. You need water, soap (liquid, preferred, antibacterial is not necessary), a disposable towel and a minute of time. In order to fight these germs and viruses we need to scrub hands, front and back and in between for 10-15 seconds and dry hands completely. Children should be reminded to wash their hands after blowing noses, sneezing or coughing into their hands, using the bathroom and before eating. An added thought, have your children wash hands when coming to school and when arriving home from school. I like to think of this pattern as "breaking the germ cycle".

For more information, see [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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### *Where in the world is Rebecca Crosswhite?*

*We recently received a note from Rebecca, currently away from TCS for the semester to fulfill BSU student teaching requirements. She said, "I'm teaching at Linder Elementary in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. I've been thinking about you . . . ." She went on to say that she appreciated learning good ways to talk with children at TCS. Rebecca will be back at work this summer—and she'll be at the Prom Revival on March 10<sup>th</sup>!*

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*Children at TCS have been experiencing a variety of illnesses. We are working hard at handwashing and communication when learning of diagnosed communicable illnesses. Please make sure you are diligent about keeping your child home at the first sign of an illness.*

*Our health policy requires that sick children stay home after the last occurrence of fever, diarrhea or vomiting.*

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**Enrollment Notes:**

*We have received all the intention forms from current families—thank you. Over the next week we will get contracts into the hands of returning families. Along with contracts we will be sending you information on payment options for the 07-08 school year, a health form (new this year to help us meet accreditation requirements), and your update form for the next school year.*

*Check your school calendar for enrollment dates this spring.*

*(continued from page 1)*

state governor in another state whose idea it is to test college students and tie university funding to how well college students do on these standardized tests. Maybe it is the next step in assuring accountability for publicly funded education systems, but I feel incredibly saddened by the idea. It seems to be another step toward fitting students—and knowledge—into a box. I can't imagine that society will be well served in the long run by the teach and test focus in far too many parts of the educational system. Further, there is evidence, mentioned in a recent [Newsweek](#) article, that children are becoming burned out on reading by 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The reasons are partly reasoned to be that teachers spend so much time on the mechanics of reading in the early grades—mechanics that are of such importance because of the prevalence of testing—that children don't build a conceptual base for understanding what they are reading in those later elementary grades.

At The Children's School, with the young children we spend our days, weeks, and years with, we focus our attention broadly. We plan our time with children to meet the needs of the full range of development: cognitive, creative, physical, social, and emotional. In fact, our philosophical base, developmental-interaction theory, leads us to think of educational experiences in such a way that our focus cannot be focused on one area of development to the exclusion of another area. It is the intersection of these areas of development that define the point of learning in TCS classrooms.

When teachers teach this way—appreciating the here and now of childhood, seeing children as whole people, helping children think and feel about things, and working with children and development in planning classroom experiences—schools are addressing the needs of young children. It's deeply satisfying for children, families . . . and teachers.

And maybe that's why, at the end of the evening when families had gone home from the Open House, the couch in the coffee room was filled with teachers watching computer slide shows of children who are or have been at TCS, and talking about children we've had the pleasure to know and teach over the years. What an honor to be able to share our classrooms and our lives with children and families. It's what we do here—everyday.

## **March 10<sup>th</sup>: Dresses, Tuxes, Jeans, and P.Js**

By Lisa Wirtanen

I HATED PROM!!!

Or maybe it was just my entire junior year at high school that I wasn't so crazy about. And besides two or three weddings since prom, I haven't been caught

*"...I haven't been caught dead or alive in anything even closely resembling my prom dress...so what do I wear March 10<sup>th</sup>?"*

## The Children's School

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

dead or alive in anything even closely resembling my prom dress...so what do I wear March 10<sup>th</sup>?

ANYTHING GOES!!

I know friends who are dressing up as goth prom-ers, tye-dye '60's prom-ers, holey jeans and t-shirt promers, let's get an up-doo and wear stilettos prom-ers, let's just get dressed up period prom-ers, or "I think I'll wear my pajamas 'cause prom is an allnighter, isn't it?" prom-ers.

This event is to raise funds for The Children's School, specifically the tuition assistance program, and to HAVE FUN together as a community.

Come AS YOU ARE-AND-ANYTHING GOES--please just come out and support the school!

## Important Dates

\*Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, Parenting and Conflict Resolution Lunch Series, 12:00-1:00, Mary Smith House, Child Care Provided As Needed, See information in front hall.

\*Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Parenting and Conflict Resolution Lunch Series 12:00-1:00, Mary Smith House, Child Care Provided As Needed, See information in front hall.

\*Friday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, **Contracts for 2007-2008 school year due in office by 2:00 PM with first half of deposit**

\*Monday-Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, **SPRING BREAK, All Day Class and Prearranged Primary Child Care Open, All other classes closed**

\*April-TBA, Earth Day-Spring Sing, **Children and Staff Only**

\*Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Classes Resume

\*Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, P-TCS Meeting, 1:30-3:00, Lisa's home, 819 N. 17<sup>th</sup> St.

\*Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, **Second half of enrollment fee, \*\*Last day to have deposit refunded if enrollment is cancelled\*\***. Teaching plan for 2007-2008 school year posted in front hall-subject to change.

\*Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, P-TCS Meeting, 1:30-3:00, Lisa Wirtanen's home, 1902 Washington St.