

April 2007

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

"Cindy, he's growling when I walk by and that scares me. I need help."

"Nicole, she says that she won't play with me again—ever—if I don't dig in the sand where she wants me to."

"Susan, we have a conflict over here that we need help solving."

"Patty, my eye was bumped."

Two children disagree over who will sit in a chair.

A child cries in frustration and disappointment when other children try to turn a pleasant running game into a much less pleasant competition for best and first.

All of these situations occurred in TCS classrooms or on the playyard in mid-April.

Children of all ages quickly learn that figuring out how to solve problems, with or without direct teacher help, is part of the day at The Children's School. Conflict happens over and over in a child's day at any school—conflicts over materials, relationships, play scenarios, or shared understandings. Children at TCS don't have more conflict than other children, but they do have adults close by who are very interested in and knowledgeable about helping children negotiate these normal bumps in the school day—and who understand the positive role conflict and problem solving play in development and learning.

Conflict is not our only focus in the classroom—far from it. We have curriculum goals to consider and planned experiences to bring our curriculum goals to life—everyday—but it is never far from our minds when we come to work each day that children will experience some sort of conflict and look to us as resources and experts. It's a big responsibility, and it got even bigger recently when we read the research about the behavior problems children who attended early childhood programs (specifically child care) were having in later elementary years.

Did you know?

Lisa Wirtanen (3-4-5s teacher) and Cindy Finch were project co-directors during the 1999-2001 Pathways to Competency project.

They are taking the conflict resolution ideas and teaching materials on the road!

Lisa and Cindy will present at NAEYC's 16th National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development in Pittsburgh PA.

See article in the Director's Corner for more details!

We pay attention to studies about the impact of an early childhood classroom experience on later education successes. And, ultimately, in this situation, the response to the research findings was affirming to TCS practice. As Sue Shellenbarger wrote in the Wall Street Journal on March 29, 2007, "Amid an intensifying government drive for school accountability and testing, some preschool programs may be stressing language and math skills too much, at the expense of interpersonal relations." She went on to define damaging practice as a heavy emphasis on academics, disengaged adults, and classroom stress brought on by "being in large groups." Among the suggestions she made for programs that will support positive experiences for young children today and the best outcome for children over time were: helping children learn to work peaceably with others; taking time to build classroom community; setting up strategies that prevent children from having to compete for materials, turns, or interactions with other children; teachers observing closely and interacting often as children work in a group; parents and teachers taking time to talk with each other; smaller groups with opportunities for children to work alone or rest in the midst of group life; physical playtime; consideration for the needs of individual children; and, even, yoga (thank you, Jodeen)!

In each of the conflict scenarios that I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the response from a TCS teacher was carefully considered and individualized to the children involved and the situation. For some there was an icepack retrieved from the freezer; for others there was a teacher involved in children talking and listening with each other. In at least one, the children handled the entire conflict with teachers observing but not participating in the resolution. (*see ideas for families below.*)

What does this all mean for young children? Why all this attention to interpersonal relationships? What are children learning when all this attention to resolving differences occurs during play? Imagine the honest empowerment of being heard, expressing yourself effectively, trying to really understand another person, being part of a planning process that works, and coming up with new ideas on the spot—and then think of how many ways you can use these experiences in life. That's one way to understand why problem solving makes a difference in early life experiences. It's both a skill set and a foundation, and it's well worth our adult time and energy.

Outside the Walls of TCS: Conflict Resolution, Parenting and the Broader Community

If you've ever supervised a group of children at . . . oh, let's say, the park and tried to help with conflicts that arise, you know that coming to resolution and knowing when the conflict is resolved takes time, energy—and it requires that you make decisions about direction, fairness, protection, restitution, and even, at times, stopping unsafe play that seems to have little redeeming value. A

(continued on page 3)

TCS parent asked me recently how to effectively carry conflict resolution into non-school relationships and play situations. I think the best piece of advice to carry with you into non-school play situations that may involve conflict is this: Everyone has a voice in conflict resolution. Many children will not be accustomed to getting to talk or having to listen to another child, and it will be up to you to make sure that happens.

Other advice for handling conflict among children in non-school settings includes:

- *Sometimes adults have to stop the play to make sure that children are paying attention as they talk and listen with each other.
- *Sometimes adults have to hold a toy while a plan is made about how two children can use the toy in play.
- *Be ready to speak up in unsafe situations, i.e. "I want you to stop kicking. Other children are getting hurt."
- *Being ready to leave a situation that you think is unsafe and probably not worthy of your conflict resolution attention.
- *Consider development when asking children to talk or understand something—very young children often need adults to take an active lead in this.
- *Be open to unusual resolutions that children may come up with—sometimes just starting play anew is a good enough resolution.
- *Help children move on and become re-involved after conflict is resolved.
- *Use your adult voice to define parameters ("you are having a problem that we need to talk about"), assess understanding ("so, do you understand what is not working in this play?"), and create closure ("you've decided to take turns going up first—that works!") for children.
- *Finally, always assess what children are learning through their experience with conflict and conflict resolution.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

**Love gardening?*

**Want to contribute to our school community, but need to set your own schedule?*

There are ways to contribute your time to TCS on a regular, limited or one-time basis.

Look for more information in the Director's Corner of this issue of TCS Times or talk with Cindy!

Tape and Band-aids

By Sherri Lauer

Tape and band-aids, two essentials of a well rounded early childhood education. These are easily the most consumed products in the 3-4s class this year (and every year).

The appeal of band-aids is easy to figure out, they magically make injuries disappear. When I was younger, the rule in my home was there had to be blood to have a band-aid. When my children were small, I quickly learned that band-aids had much more power than just keeping the blood from running down your leg. Band-aids made everything feel better, even emotional hurts. I

also discovered that band-aids were an inexpensive educational tool. Those wrappers take a lot of concentration and fine motor practice to open. Then you have to peel off the back and figure out how to put it on the way you want it. Band-aids can also be stuck on other things, doll, walls, paper, clothes, all without any damage! They can also be used to attach things together, one child used a band-aid to make a tow truck by sticking a truck and a car together with it. And unlike stickers, clean-up is easy.

The appeal of tape usually comes from the fact that we try to limit the use of it. We are always saying things like "That piece is big enough". Also it comes in a roll! There is always something exciting about unrolling and taking things apart. And a fact that is largely unknown to adults, tape has many, many uses. As we have discovered in the 3-4s class, tape makes great spider webs, traps for mountain lions, walls for houses, signs, roads, and many other useful items. Besides being a great way to expand your child's imagination, tape requires fine motor skills, and lends itself to the discovery of properties of physics such as weight ratios and force. When a child connects one end of the tape to a small toy horse or car and pulls on it, they quickly learn that the toy will not stay where it was. You can watch as the child tries many different objects before finding one that will hold the tape to her satisfaction. Tape is also very easy and fun to clean up. Ask your child how big of a tape ball she thinks she can make, in no time the mess is gone.

So this Summer or week-end when you need an activity that will keep your child busy and entertained for possibly hours, bring out a box of band-aids or a roll of tape (masking tape works best). The dollar stores are a very inexpensive place to stock up.

***The Language of
Math: A Parent
Education Workshop***

*Presented by Mary
Helen and Taira.*

*Thursday, May 3rd,
12:00-12:50 at the
Smith House.*

*Child care will be
provided from 12:00-
1:00.*

*Please sign up in front
hall.*

4-5s News: Math and Numbers in the Classroom

By Betsy Robinson and Patty Head

The 4/5s have been exploring and learning math and number concepts all year. We integrate these concepts into all areas of the classroom. We started in the fall counting children at meeting at our attendance time. The children learned that we have 14 in our class and every day we count to see how many are here and how many are gone. This allows us to start the concepts of one to one correspondence and basic addition and subtraction. We also have learned to count off with each child calling out their number in sequence (i.e. Lea's 1, Connor's 2 etc.). During our snack time we have number cards that children use to count out the number of crackers or whatever the snack is at each table. We count the number of children and boys and girls at each table. These are a few examples of how we integrate number learning into our day.

As the year progressed we have incorporated more formalized math learning. These opportunities include math games, teacher directed learning, and number writing. Some of these math games include sequencing, board

games, dice games, and card games. Teacher directed activities include books, number recognition, work with unifix cubes, writing numbers, graphing, and counting objects. Currently we are using the flannel board to illustrate addition and subtraction and number symbols (+,-,=) Most recently we have been using bunnies and ducks. We have also played math games with jellybeans and goldfish. This involves a cup, napkin and eating the counting object. We manipulate 10 items from cup to napkin and talk about how many we have in each area and take an item away (eat) one or two at a time talking about how many are left including the concept of zero. This is a fun and engaging game where learning occurs naturally.

Skills we are working on are one to one correspondence up to 10, Sequential counting up to 20 (higher is wonderful), and number – object recognition up to 5. This last task involves looking at a number of objects like 3 spoons and reporting that there are 3. You can play number games with your fingers and common objects at home to practice these skills. We have been excited by the energy and competence that the 4-5s have shown in math and number skills this year. Our world is an exciting place for all learners with opportunities to use math everyday.

Parent to Parent: Language Resources

By Raine Simplot

Learning a second language takes time and dedication. Many people who did not learn a second language themselves are eager for their children to do so. It is important to be realistic about your child's progress. Unless you speak everyday, you are unlikely to be able to speak in a normal conversation with a native. If you would like for your child to reach a level of proficiency that would allow them to actually communicate and understand spoken language or perhaps watch a movie in their second language which is the true test of proficiency, only an immersion environment or the ability to speak with someone in the home in the target language will get them to that level.

Some parents are frustrated that their children never seem to leave the vocabulary and grammar phase of language acquisition, but unless they have the opportunity to speak everyday, this is where they will always be. That is not so bad. As silly as it may sound, there are more reasons to study a second language than speak that language. Learning another language gives one a great appreciation for ones own language. English is wonderfully elastic. Virtually anything can become a verb or an adjective or noun. It is incredibly rich in descriptive words and very democratic in that it is always changing and evolving.

Although studying foreign languages taught me to love my first language, I cannot tell you how many times I have thanked my stars that I did not have to learn English as a second language. Everything in English seems to be an exception to the rule. Struggling to learn a second language gives children

P-TCS Meeting

Parents for The Children's School (P-TCS) invites all to the final meeting for the 2006-2007 school year.

Please come to our meeting on Friday, May 4th from 1:30-3:00 at 1902 W. Washington Street in Boise's North End, where we will begin thinking about the 2007-2008 school year's activities.

Child care provided.

Please call Lisa Wirtanen with questions at 724-4903.

We hope to see you there!

empathy for all those people who have to learn English. And of course, the cultural exposure that is a by-product of foreign language acquisition is priceless, especially in a homogenous community like Boise.

Below are some resources for the Treasure Valley:

Puentes Language Programs
4720 W. Franklin Road
395-0633
www.puentes.biz

Discovering Languages
1807 S. Kimball Avenue
Caldwell, Idaho 83605
412-8492
www.discoveringlanguages.com

Garabatos Spanish Preschool
1403 W. Boise Avenue
Boise, Avenue 83706
429-8493
www.boisegarabatos.com

Academia de las Americas
219 Murray
376-4717

Berlitz Language Center
3350 Americana
333-7742
info@berlitzidaho.com

Alliance Francaise (Boise Chapter)
President: Mme. Gabrielle Applequist
323-7953

Japanese Society of Idaho
(I was unable to learn anything else about the society)

Websites:

www.multilingualchildren.org

www.multilingualmatters.com

There are also many print magazines in foreign languages that can be read online for free. Idaho has a new Spanish language newspaper (La Prensa Libre) that can be found at many local establishments. And of course The Flicks is well stocked with wonderful foreign language titles.

Accreditation Update

By Cindy Finch

The Children's School has applied for and been accepted to the next level of accreditation—Self Assessment. During this phase, we will survey all families in the school about your experience as a parent here. We are using the NAEYC accreditation family survey, and we are attaching our own TCS

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Enrollment at TCS!

*Summer Programs are
still open for enrollment!
Please see Andrea in
the front office if you
need information on
available options.*

*A few openings are still
available in our Fall
Programs! Please read
enrollment section of
the Director's Corner!*

program survey. We will have to have 50% returned to us—but we'll be setting our aim far higher than that. We want to hear from all of you! Look for family survey results in the next TCS Times. We use your comments to set our sights on program stability, improvements, and innovation.

Another part of the Self-Assessment process is verifying through observation and portfolio collections that we meet national criteria in the following areas:

- 1) Relationships: Creating a Predictable, Consistent, and Harmonious Classroom
- 2) Curriculum: Cognitive Development, Science
- 3) Teaching: Supervising Children
- 4) Assessment: Creating an Assessment Plan
- 5) Health: Promoting and Protecting Children's Health and Controlling Infectious Disease
- 6) Teachers: Assuring Education and Qualifications
- 7) Families: Sharing Information between Staff and Families
- 8) Community Relationships: Accessing Community Resources
- 9) Physical Environment: Outdoor Environmental Design
- 10) Leadership and Management: Leadership

The criteria we are working on during this Self-Assessment phase, represented in the above descriptors, were chosen specifically for TCS. If you are familiar with another program going through accreditation, they will have other criteria to verify during Self-Assessment. Collecting evidence and completing paperwork on these criteria—and the rest of the 400 that make up accreditation requirements—is a major focus for the faculty and staff during these last months of the school year.

All this work will culminate with a visit next fall from a national assessor who will verify that we meet at least 80% of the criteria.

If you have questions about NAEYC Accreditation and the work we are carrying out to maintain our accreditation status (we've been accredited since 1989, but the standards have quadrupled since our last re-accreditation date five years ago), please talk with Cindy. I'm glad to talk about this big project that we have chosen to undertake for our school community.

Director's Corner

By Cindy Finch

*Thanks for returning parent handbook signature pages indicating that you've read this newly revised booklet. The **2007 Parent Handbook** was revised with input from parents, teachers, and board members. It is one way that we communicate with you about important policies and procedures—and also school philosophy, purposes, and hopes for children and families within our school community. Our hope is that 100% of our school families will take time to become very familiar with the parent handbook.

TCS faculty and staff adhere to a Code of Ethical Conduct, which commits us in our daily work to:

**Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle*

**Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn*

**Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family*

**Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society*

**Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)*

...(continued on page 8)

**Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues*

**Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect*

(from Code of Ethical Conduct: A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, revised April 2005)

***Summer Programs** continue to enroll. Please let us know if you plan to enroll your child in a part-time or full-time program at TCS this summer (for Primary age children) and for our part-time Preschool classes. Need a reminder about dates and class descriptions? See Andrea for a summer program flyer. We plan to have summer program enrollment finalized by May 14th—so be sure and let us know if TCS is part of your child's summer experience. (Note: The All Day class is fully enrolled for Summer '07 and the '07-'08 school year).

***Family Surveys** are in your boxes this week. 2007 Surveys were distributed in a packet of three—one from TCS, one from our accrediting agency, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and one from Parents for TCS (P-TCS). Return them to the box in the front hall (or mail them to Susan Park) and we'll separate them so results can be compiled, recorded, and reported. Look for results in the next TCS Times. Thanks for your participation in this important part of our school communication.

***Did you know?** Lisa Wirtanen (3-4-5s teacher) and Cindy Finch were project co-directors during the 1999-2001 **Pathways to Competency** project. This Boise community work resulted in the development of the Children and Conflict: An Opportunity for Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom videotape and written teaching materials, which are marketed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (which means that TCS teachers' ideas, images, and teaching strategies are available to teachers throughout the country!). Lisa and Cindy are using the idea and materials in a June 13th presentation at NAEYC's 16th National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development in Pittsburgh PA. The title of their presentation is "Helping teachers help children find voice and listen when problems arise: Conflict resolution as a professional development model" which fits well into the conference focus of "Intentionality in Early Childhood Education." Wish them well as they cross the country to represent The Children's School in Pittsburgh!

***Love those window boxes** when you pull into the parking lot? We are still looking for someone to take over the planning, planting, and maintaining of our window boxes and playyard flower pots. If any part of that work is of interest to you, let Cindy know. School gardening doesn't have to be one person doing everything (although Nancy Cole spoiled us and we loved every season of it for 5 years!). We can split the types of work or the pots among several people—Nancy says she will continue to help with design, for example. If you know your schedule this summer, here's something that will be extremely helpful: 5 or 6 families who will come by the school and water pots on 1 or 2 weekends. We'll need a schedule set up by June 1st. Thanks for making TCS a beautiful place for children—and an asset to our North End neighborhood.

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

***Enrollment season is wrapping up.** In addition to the many returning current students, we have enjoyed talking with families from our waiting list who are excited to join our school community next fall when their children begin school in TCS classes. We are still working through our waiting list to fill the last few openings, but if you know families with a boy who will be 4 by September 1, 2007, girls or boys who will be 5 by February 28, 2008, children who are Kindergarten age and interested in a half-day class, or a K-1-2 aged girl for full day Primes, please tell them to call for information and a tour of the school. The recruitment you do for TCS as you share your experiences with your friends out in the community means so much to us—it's better than any advertising we can buy. So, thanks!

Important Dates

Saturday, April 28th, P-TCS Work Day, 10:00-2:00, See information posted in front hall and near classroom sign in sheet.

Monday, April 30th, Second half of enrollment due. See Andrea in the front office. **Last day to have deposit refunded if enrollment is cancelled.**

Thursday, May 3rd, The Language of Math. Workshop presented by Mary Helen May and Taira Lee at the Smith House, 12:00-12:50.

Friday, May 4th, P-TCS meeting at Lisa Wirtanen's house. 1:30-3:00. See additional information in this issue of *TCS Times*.

Friday, May 18th, All School Picnic at Sunset Park, Look for more information soon.
15 week Lunch Program for 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, and 4-5-6s ends.

Monday, May 21st, Toddler Program ends.

Friday-Saturday, June 1st-2nd, All School Campout at Greyback Gulch, More information is on its way!

Final Class and Rootbeer and Ice Cream Party Dates

Watch for individual classroom news from your child's teachers.

Wednesday, May 23rd, 2-3s

Thursday, May 24th, 3-4s

Friday, May 25th, 3-4-5s and 4-5s

Monday, May 28th, **Memorial Day, SCHOOL CLOSED**

Thursday, May 31st, 4-5-6s

Friday, June 1st, All Days and Primes, **SCHOOL CLOSED AT 12:00**

Monday, June 4th, All Days Resumes and Summer Primary Program Begins