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# ***TCS Times***

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

## **From the Director**

By Cindy Finch

How many times have you heard this phrase? Children are resilient.

It is a true statement, and many of us have our own stories of how a child endured some misadventure, bounced back after a disappointment or otherwise resolved some hardship. But what I wonder is this—do we sometimes use this phrase as an excuse? Are there some common things that young children experience that they shouldn't have to endure?

If this seems a dismal topic for the last month of the school year—and a very good school year it has been from my vantage point—I have to explain that it comes from a desire to talk about how adults can help children with transitions. I will get to that. Promise.

As I traveled to take a short hike with my family on Mother's Day, I saw these two scenes. A mom struggled to get her young child into a car seat using one hand while the other hand was holding a cell phone she was talking on, and another mom taking her kids out for a stroller walk while deep in cell phone conversation (maybe they were each calling their moms!). While not wanting to read too much into what I was seeing for very brief moments, these parent/child scenes did make me think about young children and what they need for optimal development. Optimal development—cognitive, social, emotional, and language—demands that adults be with children in the moment. Engaged adults are available to talk with (and listen to) children about what they are doing, what they are seeing, and what they are feeling. No one can be on 100% of the time (nor is it ultimately helpful for children to develop the idea that they are entitled to 100% of their parent's attention), but many daily experiences—routine and special—for young children deserve our real, honest, full-on attention.

I was at a baby shower recently and noticed some troubling trends in must-have infant merchandise. That is—CDs and DVDs for babies, complete with great descriptions of all the advantages children will have if they experience these materials in infancy and young childhood. All the younger moms there talked about which ones their little ones love and what their children have learned from watching and listening to these media. Obviously these experiences are part of our culture now, and children will increasingly be

exposed to media in the name of education. But is it real learning? I just don't believe it. True learning for young children requires multiple modalities of active engagement—physical, emotional, social, thinking, as well as auditory and visual.

I know I sound anti-technology, but I'm not. I am, however, very much an advocate for meaningful relationships and interactions as a strong foundation for children's lives. Technology can play a supportive, but not a primary, educational role for young children.

Strong adult-child relationships help when the going gets rough—like the transition many children experience between classes or schools this time of year. Key to supporting children is acknowledging and understanding feelings about an upcoming transition. Some parents respond to a child's expression of concern about a transition by pointing out all the positive things that go along with the transition, and assuring the child that they'll be ok. Other parents respond by agreeing with a child's expression of concern or fear, and they take commiserating role with the child. If either of these adult responses sounds like something you've done, you are absolutely on the right track by being encouraging or understanding of your children.

Something I suggest that goes one step beyond these common responses to children's strong feelings is this: help children identify the resources in the new school or class and within themselves for handling issues that might arise during transition. Rather than simply being reassuring, back up your confidence with details—offer that there will be adults who will be there to help, go to the new school or classroom and help your child identify adult resources, talk about how you will be in communication with the new school or classroom. And, conversely, rather than sliding right into your child's fear of change, talk with your child about how much confidence you have in his/her ability to adapt to the new school or classroom—then honestly talk about the strengths your child takes wherever he/she goes like knowing how to ask for help, sharing ideas and interests in ways that draw people to him/her, etc. Parents can encourage or commiserate AND help a child feel capable in handling change or in getting help in a new situation.

Resilient, yes. But, central to resilience is strong relationships with parents/teachers who help children make sense of their experiences, put a name to their feelings, and help identify resources to handle problems or transitions that come up in every life. That kind of relationship doesn't just happen. Adults are responsible for being very, very available and ensuring that a young child has the foundational relationships and experiences that make resiliency possible.

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***We have 4 openings left in the school for the 2007-2008 school year!***

*Please help us fill the openings that remain in the 4-5-6s (3 openings) and Primes (1 girl preferred) by sending your friends our way.*

*Your strong and supportive voices in the community make a big difference to us as we complete this enrollment process.*

## Parent-Toddler Class—The Parent Perspective

By Cindy Finch

We focus our attention so intensely on children's experiences at TCS that, sometimes, it is hard to remember that we have a school program specifically for parents. It's that group of parents we see in the coffee room on Monday morning talking (and laughing), huddled around the observation window watching their children in the adjoining classroom, and joining with children and teachers to play and sing the goodbye song on the playyard. I recently asked them to reflect on their experiences in this class. Over the two groups meeting together for the past year, their comments fell into three categories: 1) they appreciate the relationships that have formed for themselves; 2) they appreciate the resources they've had access to over the year—the parenting book, Becoming the Parent You Want To Be and, especially, the discussion facilitator, Sherri's, knowledge—many can describe how the content of the discussion has impacted their parenting; and, 3) they appreciate the introduction to the preschool classroom for their child.

Here are some of their comments (paraphrased):

I feel an attachment to the other parents in this group.

We're all going through the same stuff.

I've enjoyed it as much as my child.

There were things in the discussion I wouldn't have thought of.

When I'm frustrated—one of those days when everything goes wrong—I take a deep breath and find myself being more calm.

This is like Parenting 101.

This group gives me different perspectives on common issues.

I think this group gives my child a chance to try out first friendships.

It is great to see kids in a group—its different than when they are with me.

The goodbye song says it all—the children start crying when it's time to go.

I've enjoyed seeing the conflict resolution philosophy in action—Mary and Julie's teaching is a testament to how the school does it.

I appreciate the perspective on parenting problems today and the anticipation of where we are headed as parents in later years.

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*"If you care, kids will succeed. That's what is so special about this school. Everyone here cares."—Overheard in Parent Toddler Group (paraphrased)*

This is our coffee klatch.

I wish it had been more time in school—for the kids. At home we hear about “my school” so often and how special the teachers and kids are.

Finally, in the course of talking, this question came up: “Is everyone around for the summer?” Plans for continuing the playing and discussing in a more informal setting began to take shape. And that’s our hope with this program—relationships, resources, and community for families, now—and the future.

*(My thanks to the parents who attended the parent-toddler class on May 13<sup>th</sup> and shared their thoughts with me. It was fun to be a part of your discussion—especially as a former parent in this class, 11 and 18 years ago, who still experiences the pleasures of the relationships formed in those early days of parenting. I wish the same for you all! Cindy Finch)*

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***Taking a trip to Council, Idaho this year?***

*The All Days quilt is on display in the Council Quilt Show, June 9<sup>th</sup> through July 7<sup>th</sup>. The show is being held at the Council Senior Center.*

## **Parent to Parent: “Stranger Danger”; Keeping Our Children Safe When They’re Not With Us**

By Julie Gill

*(This is the last in this year's series of articles from the parent education committee of the Parent's for The Children's School organization.)*

I first started thinking about this topic while taking classes in Elementary Education long before I was a parent. I was struck by comments made by other students, who were parents, on the topic of “Stranger Danger”. Several of them described how emphatically and graphically they had warned their children about strangers. I wasn’t sure of what I would want to tell my own children, but I was certain that I didn’t want to frighten them, and that I did want them to think of the world and the people in it as basically good. Besides, I knew from my teaching experience at Head Start, that children who are told not to trust strangers can’t define a stranger in any kind of useful way. Most children who tried, described a stranger as a threatening and unpleasant man. Any person who appeared pleasant in any way was not considered a stranger. Children need information that is appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Several years later, working at The Children's School, I read some of David Elkind's work. I found Mr. Elkind's attitude regarding educating young children about “Stranger Danger” appealing in its simplicity. He said that the job of keeping very young children safe is the job of the adults; that young children can’t be responsible for keeping themselves safe from the dangers of the world. I remembered this when I became a parent. If our children weren't with me, they were cared for by a family member or trusted friend or teacher. I didn't tell my children not to talk to strangers. I speak to strangers all the

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time; the checker at the grocery store, the librarian, another mother at the park. When our oldest child entered public school I was faced with the dilemma many parents have to deal with when their children are much younger. What do you do when you no longer have complete control of your child's safety? I want my children to face the world with joy, curiosity, kindness, and confidence. I don't want to pass the fears of their mother on to my children.

Pam S., mother of two TCS alums, recommended, "Protecting the Gift", by Gavin de Becker. De Becker writes about how important it is for parents to follow their instincts. As parents our first responsibility is to our children, and, as parents, we have the final say in any issue. Sometimes we make decisions regarding our children's safety that place us apart from others. I was liberated by the idea of simply prefacing a statement with, "I've decided..." You may have a bad feeling about a situation, and you may not be able to put your finger on what it is that makes you uncomfortable, but your determination regarding your child's safety is the bottom line, and you don't owe anyone an explanation if you don't want to give one. You are entitled to say, "I've decided..." Different parents have different levels of comfort in any situation. Pay attention to what your instincts tell you. Another helpful and straightforward piece of advice I found in this book is to teach your child that if he or she is ever lost or needs help, to find a woman who is a mother, to look for a woman with children. A mother will not ignore or walk away from a child in distress, and she will help the child find his or her mother. Different parents have different levels of comfort in any situation. Pay attention to what your instincts tell you.

I also talked with friends at The Children's School who are teachers. I was reminded of important rules that we use regularly. My children always have to ask me before they can go anywhere with anyone. At school, they've learned also, that they are entitled to tell someone to "Stop it!" or to say "No!" and to expect to be listened to. They've learned at The Children's School to ask an adult for help if they need it.

When I left my dear little two-year-old happily playing in the 2-3s class, I realized with a pang that he was entering a part of his life without me. Now I've become accustomed to leaving him at our neighborhood public school every morning, where, in some ways he has to fend for himself. I know all I can about the schools my children attend, and make sure that I'm a known presence there. But I know that I can't be in control of every variable. I've been heartened to see that my son has internalized a sense of respect and compassion for others, and that although things are done differently at our neighborhood public school, the foundation of his early years has helped him to find his way, to ask for help when he needs a hand, and to help others when he can.

It helps me to categorize the various aspects of these issues in my own experience. One part has to do with the bittersweet progress, the inevitability of my children growing up, and away from me in some ways. Another part is

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*Thanks to all the  
contributing Parent to  
Parent authors for the  
2006-2007 school year.*

*We all benefit from your  
perspectives!*

**Thank you:**

*Megan Jones (G. in the All Days) for watering planters and window boxes this summer. We are still hoping to find help, especially for one or two weekends during the summer months. We will also be looking for someone who wants to help us transition our planter boxes from spring plantings to summer. Hot days are ahead and those pansies won't last too much longer. Love to create beauty? Here's a great opportunity. Let Cindy know.*

*All the families who attended our spring workday. We got much done, and we had fun doing it. Especially thanks to the Gregory and Sherman families for organizing the day and to T. for spending all day providing child care for the workers!*

my sense that something doesn't feel safe. I have a responsibility to control those safety elements that I can, and to increase my knowledge, not with gratuitously frightening stories, but with sensible information that I can apply to our lives. The third part is about what I've tried to teach my children; to stand up for themselves, to expect to be respected when they say, "No", to ask for help when they need it. Building a strong inner core in my children's lives will serve them as their independence continues to grow, and as they become fully autonomous beings in the world.

I know I'll continue to learn about keeping my children safe, but I try to be at peace with the balance of what I can know and control, and of what I can't. Just as when I helped my son learn to ride his bike. I made sure he wore his helmet, gave him a few pointers, and then ran alongside of him. When it seemed like the right time, I let go, and with my heart in my throat, I proudly watched him wobble down the sidewalk.

## **Parents for TCS—The Director's Perspective**

By Cindy Finch

As another school year winds down for children, our fundraising group, Parents for The Children's School, isn't taking much of a break. This very hard-working and extremely successful group of TCS families is looking to next year as they review this year's events, balance the books and close out the year financially, nominate and elect officers for the upcoming school year, and begin looking toward that first event—the Carnival—and all the other events of the year that bring important resources to our school!

Thank you to current year leaders as you complete your term of office:

Karen Fournier, President  
 Lisa Wirtanen, Vice-President  
 Kim Liebich, Treasurer  
 Kim Rene, Secretary  
 Kim Rene, Representative to the Board of Directors  
 Katie Walther, Class Representative Coordinator  
 Nancy Cole, Parent Education Chair  
 Joelle Ditter, Hospitality Chair  
 Jane Lambie and Lisa Fernandez, Carnival Chairs  
 Kim Liebich, Learning Express Fundraiser Chair  
 Karen Fournier, Holiday Bake Sale Chair  
 Karen Fournier, Spring Fundraiser Chair  
 Katie Walther, Cook Book Chair  
 Anne Gregory, TCS Facility Chair  
 Amy Snow, All School Campout Chair

This group of people has accomplished much—the school is grateful for all your efforts (and the knowledge and skill you bring to them) and we all benefit

from your successes!

Current officers served as the nominating committee to fill leadership positions for the upcoming school year. Looking ahead—those nominated and elected at the May 4<sup>th</sup> membership meeting at Lisa Wirtanen's home to serve for the 2007-2008 school year are:

Kim Rene, President  
 Karen Fournier, Past President  
 Suzanne Metzgar, Treasurer  
 Wendy Sand, Secretary  
 Holly Paquette, Representative to the Board of Directors  
 Kim Liebich, Class Representative Coordinator  
 Lisa Wirtanen and Ann Hendry, Parent Education Chairs  
 Nancy Cole, Hospitality Chair  
 Jane Lambie and Christine Picazo, Fall Carnival Chairs  
 Kim Liebich, Learning Express Fundraiser Chair  
 Elaine Duerr, Holiday Bake Sale Chair  
 Katie Walther, Spring Auction Chair  
 Anne Gregory and Lacy Mentz, TCS Facilities Chairs  
 Amy Snow, All School Campout Chair

Class Representatives for the 2007-2008 school year are:

Toddler Class (9:00)—Amanda Corrdry and Teri Waldmann  
 Toddler Class (10:30)—Stacy Slattery and Jerilyn Grizzaffi  
 2-3s—Karen Fournier and Treacy Liebich  
 3-4s—April Gwin and Jessica Sachse  
 4-5s—Liz Keating and Amy Gustavel  
 3-4-5s—Dyan Goulet and Heidi Bode  
 4-5-6s—Anna Nyman and Jeanette McCown  
 All Days—Amy Snow and Kira Pfisterer  
 Primes—Heather Hensley and Darren Sand

Many of the committees represented by the chairs and events listed above will be looking for committee members and specific task volunteers, so if you missed out on one of the positions named here, there is still an opportunity to be involved. We hope you will find a way to be involved. There are benefits to the school, certainly, but also benefits to you from being involved at this level. Parents who work on P-TCS committees or events find the work **meaningful**, the purpose **worthwhile**, and the relationships **fulfilling**.

Check the bulletin board in the hall for more information, and, by all means, join us! Together, we anticipate a great year.

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*Parents who work on P-TCS committees or events find the work **meaningful**, the purpose **worthwhile**, and the relationships **fulfilling**.*

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***Check out the last page of this TCS Times to find out what this dynamic group provided to TCS-families and teachers-over the last school year!***

## Family Surveys ... and Next Steps

By Cindy Finch

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*Thank you for returning surveys at a very high rate: **77% overall.***

*We are very pleased that you made the time to reflect on your experience at The Children's School and took this opportunity to communicate with us in a formal way.*

I've posted the results of our school developed survey on the front hall (school) bulletin board (the one organized around our 6 Goals for the School). Please take a look at the "whole school" results. Many of you found much to be positive about—the teachers and the experiences they plan and provide for children are among the most memorable. Other thoughtful comments concerned our school community—ideas for communicating philosophy and market the school, and support for school diversity stand out. The TCS faculty, staff, and board will use your comments in making program improvements. Thanks for participating in this process.

The survey developed by the National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC; our accrediting agency) was a new one for us. It also gives us a place to start in thinking through our processes of communicating. Here are some details of what your responses showed:

*100% of respondents* said yes to these statements (n/a answers counted as "yes" in percentages):

- \*I have a good relationship with my child's teacher and other staff.
- \*The teacher takes good care of my child, helps my child learn to get along with others, and is a good teacher.
- \*I receive information (about program mission, philosophy, rules and expectations, procedures for drop-off and emergencies, and exposure to contagious illnesses) in a language that I understand.
- \*I am told about my child's progress in language in understand and in ways that are respectful to me and my family.
- \*I am provided a translator when needed.
- \*Staff work with me to meet my child's nutritional needs and document for me what my child eats each day (for children with special nutritional needs).

*95% or higher of respondents* said yes to these statements (n/a=yes and don't know=no in percentages):

- \*The teacher often shares information about things happening in the program and wants to know about things my child is doing at home.
  - \*I talk with a teacher about my child at least once a week.
  - \*I have received information at enrollment and/or throughout the year about the program and my child's classroom, including information about: program mission and philosophy; rules and expectations; procedures for drop-off and pickup and handling emergencies; when my child may be exposed to contagious diseases and what I should do to protect my child.
  - \*The teacher and I discuss the language used to teach my child.
  - \*I am invited to take part in classroom activities and events.
  - \*The teacher and program work with me to meet my child's individual or special needs and help me get other resources within the community when needed.
  - \*I am always welcome at the program and am invited to participate by helping
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to plan events, being involved in decisions about the program, and taking on leadership roles.

\*I believe the program administrator is an effective leader.

\*I generally feel respected by the program staff and that my contributions are valued.

90% or higher of respondents said yes to these statements (again, n/a=yes; don't know=no):

\*The teacher asks about things that are important to our family and uses this information to help my child grow and learn.

\*I am comfortable with what my child is learning and how my child's progress is measured. I have the opportunity to discuss what is learned and how it is measured.

\*I receive written reports about my child at least twice a year.

\*The program helps me get to know other families in the program and encourages us to support each other.

\*The program staff helps me learn about community events and resources that can help my child and family.

\*I have been or will be included in program improvement efforts including a yearly program evaluation.

There are the questions and percentages that fell below 90% in positive responses:

\*When I disagree with how a teacher works with my child, I feel comfortable letting the teacher know and working together to find a solution that works for both of us. (83% yes; 8% no; 9% don't know. Six respondents marked this not applicable although this was not an answer option for this question; these surveys had to be counted as not answered for this question.)

\*I know how the program makes sure that information about my child and his or her progress is kept confidential. (77% yes; 11% no; and 12% don't know)

\*The program gives me information to help my child make a smooth transition to kindergarten or first grade. (80% yes, 25 answers were not applicable and these figures were entered into the yes percentages; 8% no; 12% don't know)

\*When program evaluations are completed, I receive information about the findings. (69% yes; 2% no; 29% don't know)

As a school faculty, staff, and board, we will be reviewing these results, our processes, and our ways of communicating with you based on these results. Thank you, again, for giving us this opportunity to know how you feel about your family's involvement at TCS, your child's experience in our classrooms, and how we can improve. Look for more information as the new school year begins—especially on those four questions where positive responses fell below 90%. We appreciate the opportunity to improve.

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***Please always use  
playyard gates.***

*On occasion we've noticed parents stepping over the fence or lifting children into the playyard, and we want to strongly discourage you from doing this. We work with children from their very first days of school at TCS to understand and respect the boundary of the fence. Even opening the gates or classroom doors is a "teacher job" at TCS—that's how serious we are about playyard boundaries and how children move across them.*

*Thanks for following our lead on this important school safety issue.*

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## **Goodbye to...**

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Names removed to protect children's privacy.

*Among those we say  
goodbye to this year are  
several 8 year olds who  
stayed at TCS as long  
as they could:*

*Children's names  
removed to protect their  
privacy.*

*We wish all transitioning  
students a fond  
farewell, but for these  
children who have  
stayed at the school  
through our concluding  
program, we say an  
extra thanks and good  
luck in your new school!*

## Alumni News

By Cindy Finch

We heard from Jon S. recently who told us about his three TCS alumni children. **J.** (1980-1981) is 30 now. He has a degree in Spanish from Middlebury College (where he played soccer) and a law degree from the University of Montana. He currently lives in Denver. **A.** (1983-1986) is 27. After playing football during college at Middlebury, Andy served in the Army for two years as a Humvee mechanic. He lives in Boise now. **N.** (1986-1991) is 23 and a recent graduate of the University of Redlands (and also a football player). After some travel in Europe he has just started a job in Phoenix.

We heard recently from Mark M. that M. (1990-1995) is finishing her freshman year at the University of Colorado where she participated on the rowing team and made straight A's! "Her years at TCS continue to serve her well," Mark writes.

Our congratulations to TCS alumni who were recently elected to officer positions at a local junior high school.

We recently heard that T. G. (2002-2003) was accepted into accelerated language arts at a local junior high school.

E. W. (1990-1992) is an Environmental Studies major at Brown University. She has a summer internship at US PIRG in Washington D.C.

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*Do you know any TCS alumni that you can tell us about? We love to know what's happening with "our children."*

## The Children's School

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

## Fundraising: Our Thanks for the 2006-2007 School Year

By Cindy Finch

Proceeds from the Fall Carnival equaled almost \$4,000. As part of a long-held tradition, carnival money goes to continuing professional development accounts for each teacher (specific amounts for teachers depend on length of employment). With the help of these funds, teachers are able to meet annual professional development goals, set through our review process as part of an overall teacher development plan at TCS. An individual teacher may choose to collect funds for several years to accommodate more expensive options—like a several credit class at BSU or a national conference attendance requiring travel. *Over the past year TCS teacher development funds paid for: four BSU classes (and books for one teacher taking a class); registration fees for two of the teachers who attended the NAEYC national conference in Atlanta; one teacher to renew a state teaching certificate; and three teachers to attend a local early childhood conference.*

Proceeds from the Spring Fundraiser (the Prom this year) are divided in several ways, but especially to fund our Tuition Assistance program. Money from this year's spring fundraiser will be allocated by the Board of Directors to be spent during the 2008-2009 school year. *Nineteen thousand dollars from the 2006 spring fundraiser (Vegas, Baby) was allocated to fund tuition assistance for six children to attend TCS classes during the 2007-2008 school year.*

## Teacher Plan, 2007-2008

(teachers listed in alphabetical order; subject to change)

### Parent-Toddler

Julie Gill  
Megan Jones, discussion facilitator/teacher  
\_\_\_\_\_, discussion facilitator/teacher

### 2-3s

Julie Gill  
Tonya Palsulich

### 3-4s

Mary Griffin  
Sherri Lauer

### 4-5s

Patty Head  
Betsy Robinson

### 3-4-5s

Taira Lee  
Lisa Wirtanen

### 4-5-6s

Taira Lee  
Mark Zimmermann

### All Day

Ruthee Fuentes  
Lynn Hanson  
Tonya Palsulich  
Nicole Shaddock

### Primary

Susan Gardner  
Mary Helen May

### Extended Day Primes

David Rodenstein