

December 2007

# *TCS Times*

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

## **From the Director**

By Cindy Finch

Why can't Santa just give them money?

Why can't they go to the ATM and get some money?

If they are hungry they can just go to the grocery store and get some food.

These tough questions and pointed observations from young children have been repeated to me by families over the past month as the holiday season has provided families opportunities for giving and sharing. If your child talks and thinks like the children quoted I hope you will take heart: all young children think this way at one time or another. It is egocentric thought—that certainty that everyone thinks and feels and experiences life like me. Part of growing up and becoming an educated person is losing that singular perspective. The very good news is that families often have first access to their children's wonderings and have opportunity over time to offer alternative ways of seeing the world. It's a powerful role, this role of helping children see the world more broadly, and a satisfying one at that.

More than anything, though, I hope you will feel free to accept your child's point of view. Although, the light-hearted saying goes, children "say the darndest things," a child's comment that conflicts with the political sensitivities of the family can be embarrassing or create in parents an urgency to correct the child. It is a compliment to you that your child is sharing an opinion, asking a question, or checking a perception. You can honor and encourage that good communication by remembering that your child's words reflect a specific level of development and experience—your verbal response is not going to create immediate change in a child's thinking.

However, children benefit from, and are seeking, adult interaction that builds their understanding of complex situations. Therefore, feel free to add some new information as you respond to your child. Simple explanations 'that there are people and families who have and need in different ways from our family and there are things we can do to help them' can be helpful to children. I do have two cautions to pay attention to when sharing information about different needs: fear and parroting. A sensitive young child who learns that some families can't buy groceries may worry—if that can happen to others can it

happen to my family? And, sometimes a child will abandon his/her own wonderings and begin to parrot phrases, without real understanding, that reflect adult explanations. Each of these responses can happen when children sense that something is very important to the adults in their lives. Listen for these responses from your children, and adjust your message if it seems like your explanations are not furthering understanding and development in the positive ways you intend.

However you celebrate as a family, I hope you will show your children through your words and actions what you value. Children may not “get it” in one year, but over an entire childhood you are introducing a way of experiencing the world that will continue far past these early years. If giving outside your family is part of what you value, by all means make that part of what you do during the holidays. Of equal importance, if family togetherness is something you value, pace your time together during the holidays in ways that considers the age, development, and abilities of your child. Remember to turn lots of attention inward to the immediate needs of your family and your young children—build traditions and create memories together.

Finally, a young child’s curiosity, thinking, and playing won’t necessarily coincide with the adult calendar. Children will want to process things that they’ve learned and experienced during this holiday season for a while. Be prepared as a parent for providing the props for play and the opportunities for communication that reflect events and celebrations that you think of as over and done for another year. That’s truly a gift that keeps on giving—adults giving children time, space, and attention to things that matter to young children when it matters most. In turn, we receive one of the greatest gifts that children give us during these early childhood years—that chance to see life’s events through their eyes.

I hope you find much to appreciate and celebrate in these holiday days together. We’ll see you in 2008!

*Take some time to take a look at the attached article by Jane Dunbar, “Holidays with Young Children, part 2.” Jane wrote this short article and offered ideas for celebrating the season in 1981. It continues to speak to each generation of children and families about creating family and child centered experiences during this holiday season. Enjoy!*

## Classroom Holiday News

Editor’s Note—Happy Holidays to all! Two years ago, TCS teachers wrote an article to describe what children experience in their classrooms during this holiday season. This year, the preschool classes have described what children participated in during this busy month. The primary aged classes will be sharing some of their Human Rights/Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations with our community in the January issue of TCS Times. We

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*Over the past week TCS’s Board of Directors mailed Annual Fund letters to alumni and current families. This letter is one important way that we maintain relationships with families whose children have grown up and moved beyond programs offered at The Children’s School. We include current families in this mailing for three reasons: to keep you informed of one of the ways we communicate with our larger community; to give you a chance to participate if you so choose; and, to give you an opportunity to share this giving option with interested extended family members. We know that current families are already giving in so many ways—and we appreciate you and all that you do for TCS!*

wish all of you the very best this year and next! –Nicole

### **2-3s**

We started the season rather quietly in the 2-3s class, doing all the things we normally do at school. Gradually, we began talking about the things we see around us. The children especially enjoyed talking about the Christmas trees at their homes and how they were decorated. The children have had lots of fun singing “Jingle Bells” and playing the bells along with Will, our music teacher. They also made “surprise” ornaments for their parents. Our quiet season at school ended with a bang. The 2-3s shared treats with their families and had a very lively time singing “Jingle Bells” and several other classroom favorite songs at their holiday party.

### **3-4s**

In our classroom things may seem a little backwards. While most classes prepare for holidays in the days and weeks previous to them, we usually wait until after they have occurred. The reason for this is that our children are relatively new to these events. They often do not remember the previous year's festivities, so do not know what to expect for this year. Our philosophy is to bring into the classroom the things that seem important to the children, the things that they are curious and excited about. Our children are usually really excited about the holidays right after they occur, so we are anticipating a lot of gift wrapping, decoration making, and holiday songs come January.

### **4-5s**

We are exploring how our families celebrate. We continue to talk about what is similar and different in our holiday celebrations. To illustrate this we will graph similar traditions and talk about why the differences are special to each family. As our families share their celebrations, we are compiling these into a book illustrated by the children. We will read this book during our holiday party. Another fun activity is decorating our room with paper chains and glitter ornaments. We have also been busy working on a “secret” project for our parents, which we will send home at our holiday party.

### **3-4-5s**

We are beginning to develop some traditions in the 3-4-5s for the winter holiday celebrations. R.'s family came to class and shared their family Channukkah traditions. We played dreidel, ate latkes, and read a story about the 8 day festival of Lights. While sitting at snack B. said "These are delicious" and he was right! Thank you to the M. family. During yoga on Wednesday, Jodeen shared thoughts and ideas about the winter solstice. Children talked about air, water, fire and earth. Thank you Jodeen. The last week of school (2007) M.'s family will come talk to us about their family celebration traditions at Christmas. Thank you to the W. family. Each day at meeting time two children share a piece of how their family celebrates this winter holiday season. It is fun to learn about each other in these ways!

### **All Days**

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*Thank you for checking at the office about observing in classrooms in preparation for enrollment for the 2008-2009 school year. We look forward to sharing with you what we have to offer for your growing child.*

The All Days class has been busy exploring holidays celebrated by families in our room. We have collected stories from parents about each families' celebrations. We took a walk to a child's house to learn about how they celebrate Hanukkah. We have made holiday decorations and gifts for families. We worked on wrapping the gifts to present to families during our holiday celebration. Over the Holiday break, we plan to continue to read stories and sing songs that the children have learned over the last month. Two additional outings the class had over the last month was shopping at the Coop to benefit the TCS Food Drive to help families in Boise that don't have the things [resources] that 'we' have and a neighborhood walk to the Capital Tree.

*Look for classroom news from the 4-5-6s and the Primes in the next TCS Times.*

## Upcoming Parent Support and Education!!!

By Lisa Wirtanen

Parenting can feel so overwhelming at times! We 'write' a new parenting handbook with each child, adding new pages almost everyday. If you are a parent looking for creative ways to parent your child through life's ups and downs, then the Parent Education Committee has something BIG to offer you.

Our one and only Nicole Shaddock (All Days Teacher) will be facilitating an internationally-recognized workshop called "**How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk**", beginning **February 12** at The Children's School. This **six week course** is based on the book of the same title, written by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. Each session will be held on **Tuesday evenings** for two hours from **6-8:00 PM**. Activities will include reading, viewing and discussion of six separate topics. You can learn more about the program at [www.fabermazlish.com](http://www.fabermazlish.com).

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### **Six Week Parent Education Series**

*"How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk"*

*Tuesdays from February 12<sup>th</sup> through March 18<sup>th</sup>*

*6:00-8:00 PM*

P-TCS is sponsoring the event (meaning the workshop is free!) A class-specific workbook will be provided. Participants will need to purchase two books: Liberated Parents, Liberated Children and How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk. Parent Ed will have the books for sale at a discounted price of \$23.00 for the pair. Buy them when you sign up for the class and give yourself time to peruse the texts. Look for the sign-up sheet on the Parent Communication Board in the hallway in early January. Classroom space allows us to offer the course for up to 30 parents!

The dates for the course are:

Tuesday, February 12	Tuesday, Feb.19	Tuesday, Feb. 26
Tuesday, March 4	Tuesday, Mar. 11	Tuesday, Mar. 18

*For more information contact Lisa W. or Nancy C.*

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## Director's Corner

By Cindy Finch

### A Gentle Reminder:

We've notice that some families are beginning to pick up children from class late. We hope you will make the "new year" a time for change if this has become your practice at times. We discourage late pick because of the impact it has on teachers and the school (and consequently charge late fees). Even more importantly, it matters for children that we and they know what to expect at pick-up time. Please always let us know what the pick up plan is for your family so that we may support your child in this important transition. Thank you.

### Accreditation Update:

It's true. Our regional assessor from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) was here on November 26th. We felt prepared, and actually enjoyed being able to show what we know and do in our work with children and families everyday! We are close to completion and anticipate the next step of receiving feedback from NAEYC early in 2008. Stay tuned—we'll let you know what we hear!

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*Thanks to...*

*Fred K. for donations of  
craft paper and snow  
melt.*

### Teacher Day Away:

TCS teachers have been offered a half day off by P-TCS. For teachers who decide to participate, they will be replaced by two parent volunteers who will work along side a TCS faculty member. Our thanks go to P-TCS for ongoing support and generosity.

### Spring 2008 Lunch Programs

It is time for families to begin to consider spring lunch programs for children. We have, at parent and teacher requests, switched the 3-4s and 3-4-5s lunch day for this semester from what was on the school calendar—3-4-5s lunch will be on Friday and 3-4s will be on Thursday. We are looking for an enrollment

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## The Children's School

1015 N. 8th St.  
Boise, ID 83702

PHONE:  
208-343-6840

FAX:  
208-429-8153

E-MAIL:  
info@tcsboise.org

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

average of ten children in each program option, but are able to enroll entire classes because of the way we have structured this experience for children this school year. Please sign up in the office if you choose this option for your child. We will bill your tuition account the month following enrollment.

4-5s lunch, T and W, 11:30-1:00, January 15-April 30. Cost for one day, \$280, and for both days, \$500. Betsy Robinson and Patty Head, teachers.

3-4s lunch, TH, 11:30-12:00, February 14-April 10. Cost, \$80. Mary Griffin and Sherri Lauer, teachers.

3-4-5s lunch, F, 11:15-12:45, February 15-April 11. Cost, \$160. Patty Head and Betsy Robinson, teachers.

A few notes about lunch program participation:

\*There will be no lunch programs the weeks of February 4<sup>th</sup> (Parent-Teacher Conferences) and March 24<sup>th</sup> (Spring Break).

\*We are a no peanut and peanut butter school for lunches and snacks.

\*We prefer to keep children with their classes for lunch programs. If we do not have high enough enrollment for any one class we may decide to take one of the following actions: we may decide to cancel the program for the semester or we may make the decision to combine classes. Whenever there is a change by the school in lunch program offerings after enrollment has occurred, we will give families the option to continue participation or not.

## Important Dates

\*Tuesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, P-TCS Meeting, 1:15-3:00

\*Tuesday-Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, 4-5s lunch program begins

\*Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, **SCHOOL CLOSED**

\*Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, Open House, Enrollment information for the 2008-2009 school year will be available at the Open House for currently enrolled families

\*Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, Conference Preparation, **No 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s Classes**

Enrollment information will be mailed to those families who did not attend the Open House. Tuition Assistance Applications, [www.nais.org/financialaid/sss](http://www.nais.org/financialaid/sss), TCS School Code - #4112

\*Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, Conference Preparation and Parent/Teacher Conferences for 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s. **No 2-3s, 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, and 4-5-6s classes. Early Release for Primes at Noon**

\*Thursday-Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, Parent/Teacher Conferences, **Only All Days class and Prearranged Primary Child Care Open**

## **Holidays with Young Children, part 2**

By Jane Dunbar (1981)

*Thanks, Jane, for putting these thoughts on paper almost twenty-five years ago. I have referred to them often while parenting young children. The ideas and activities truly exemplify what we value for young children at TCS: experiences that nurture and stimulate thinking; accommodate and support children's development; and, provide a comfortable, reliable, and predictable environment to help children clarify, order, and make sense of the world!—Cindy Finch*

Choices! Choices! Choices! As we head into this holiday time we are, as parents and teachers, bombarded with the need to make decisions that will shape the experience your child has this holiday and the feelings that will color his memories. If our goal is a rich, meaningful, joyful experience for the child, it behooves us, I feel, to take a few moments to look at the season from the point of view of your young child. First I want to stress "your" young child. If the season's activities are to meet your child's needs, they must be structured according to what you know of your child. An activity that is meaningful and rich for one child may very well be overwhelming, disinteresting, or exhausting to another. There are not set models that work. Each of us, using our knowledge and sensitivities, must build a series of experiences, step by step, continually asking ourselves questions that focus us back to our own child, his needs, his wants, his unique ways of experiencing.

Next I stress your "young child," this time with the emphasis on "young child." It is awing to really think how little experience three, four, and five year olds have with this holiday... perhaps two year's memories and even those are hazy. This insight gives us lots of permission not to feel the weight of tradition. The child has had very little "tradition" and I imagine most memory focuses more on those things rich, meaningful and joyous in an activity rather than on the particular activity itself. With those thoughts in mind, perhaps some of the following questions will be helpful when choosing holiday experiences:

**Involvement.** Three, four, and five year olds naturally are active and involved participants. How much of a doer can my child be in this activity? Does the project or activity match my child's ability level? (Often those wonderful memories we have of an activity we enjoyed as a child was one that we enjoyed when we were older than our own child and we might do well to save it a year or two).

**Pace.** What pace does my child prefer? Slow and methodical? Active but brief? Settled and quiet? Several short activities?

**Routine.** Will an activity disrupt my child's sense of order to the day? Will the disruption delight (add spontaneity)? If one activity fits, will two? Are two brief activities preferable to one long one?

After all this talk about realistically assessing your child's needs, let me balance these thoughts with strong vote for humor. Treat your family to the best releaser of tension there is: laughter shared and fun together as you prepare for the magic of the season. Keep things simple and relaxed. Fill the moments with music and candlelight, laughter, gentle hugs, unexpected smiles. Let home reflect each family member with decorations made and put up by each member. Share tales of childhood traditions from the family grown-up(s), blending the old with the new. It may not all be like out of House Beautiful but it will be meaningful for each of you. That's what the holidays are all about.

