

March 2008

# TCS Times

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

## **From the Director**

By Cindy Finch

Parenting young children is hard work. I was reminded of this recently. Once was in conversation with friends about parenting issues that have faded from my immediate experience: attachment objects (blankies) left in hotel rooms at the end of a vacation; children who have trouble staying asleep through the night; unsolicited parenting advice from grandparents; and, the challenge of sharing parenting decisions with a partner. Another reminder was the cartoon showing the parent getting up with a hungry baby in the middle of the night, drinking a glass of milk, going back to bed—and leaving the baby sitting in the dark, still hungry. Ah yes... parenting in a sleep deprived state.

Of course, parenting is not just hard work. For every challenge I mentioned there is a very definite flip side. Joking among friends aside--thank goodness for attachment objects, people who provide support and encouragement to us, and, even, those cries in the middle of the night that give us a chance to snuggle or comfort in ways that are different from our daytime parenting. Clearly, the hard work is so worth it, and even the tough times are very often remembered as funny or fun in hindsight.

Sometimes I think we create situations that make parenting harder, and there is no doubt in my mind that popular society gives us messages about childhood that can make our lives with children more stressful. I'm talking about choices we have in scheduling time with children—planning days, vacations, and school years. There is so much pressure on adults to make a child's every minute count. It's that nagging voice in the back of our heads that says that we'd better not miss a single opportunity for enrichment or it might hamper a child's ability to achieve. And that's the challenge for adults—finding the things that we can do that minimize our family and parenting stress while still maximizing children's development.

Certainly it is valuable to provide experiences and opportunities for children, and the choices that we make for our children communicate what we think is important. Maybe it is an appropriate concert or play; for some it may be exposure to sports; or, for others it may be formal experiences in music and language development. What can be so easily lost in the opportunities available for families is this: children need consolidation time. If a little

exposure is good, a lot is definitely not better. Spending a childhood traveling to enrichment activities that require children to process and act on adult verbal instruction without the opportunity to mess around—move, think, talk, dig, build, act out—with the new information, skills, or ideas can't possibly be good for children—or families.

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*"It turns out that all that time spent playing make-believe actually helped children develop a critical cognitive skill called executive function. Executive function has a number of different elements, but a central one is the ability to self-regulate. ...good executive function is a better predictor of success in school than a child's IQ."*  
NPR, 2-22-08.

I hope you have run across our founding director's writing about play. In it Mary Smith writes, "Good, intense play gives children success; complete absorption and intense effort, long attention span, follow-through, excitement, feeling of being in control and able to cope—all qualities we want them to bring with them into their eventual grownup world of effective group living and self-realization." I reflect on these rich and meaningful reasons for play in the lives of children when I read, as I recently did in an ad in the newspaper for another early childhood program, that young children are short-changed by play centered classrooms. I've never seen a child short changed by being able to play, but I have often sensed that we've become far too willing to busy-up children's lives so that there's not much time, space, or energy for it.

I am very thankful to the three parents and two teachers who made sure that I knew there have been discussions on NPR and in the New York Times Magazine about play in the last few weeks. These discussions have focused on play as support for executive function (see sidebar), neurological development, cognitive flexibility, physical strength and balance, social competence, and more. They are deep and interesting discussions, and I've put the article and transcript in the coffee room for those of you who share my interest in this topic.

And all this brings me to a discussion that the TCS faculty had recently as we re-evaluated part of our assessment process. We ask families, no doubt you've noticed, to contribute to our assessment process by talking about what you want for your child this upcoming school year, sharing your goals, helping us assess how the school year is going—and we'll continue to do that in several ways throughout the year. However, we will also be asking you to reflect on your hopes for your child. While goals for children can be more immediate and are often tied to a specific skill or knowledge, we are also interested in that much bigger issue—what do you hope for your child.

In an ideal world the goals we have for children and the way our family's days, school years, and vacations are shaped to achieve those goals will contribute in a very positive and consistent way to the hopes we hold for our children.

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## Primes News: 100 Day in the Primes

By Mary Helen May

*Editor's Note: When I approached the Primary teachers about writing an article for the Holiday news, I was asked, "Can we write about 100 day instead? It is a huge deal in our class." My response was, "Of course." Enjoy a glimpse into a day in the life of a Prime or Primes teacher!*  
--Nicole

This is one of the most anticipated days in the Primes. We start preparing for it from the first day of school as we move "the blob" (a wad of sticky tack) around the number line to keep track of the number of days we have been in school. Counting is a regular part of our morning meetings.

"Counting is the basis for understanding our number system and for almost all the number work in the primary grades. It involves more than just knowing the number names, their sequences, and how to write each numeral. While it may seem simple, counting is actually quite complex and involves the interplay between a number of skills and concepts." (taken from our math curriculum series: *Investigations*)

Counting by rote is usually the first step. However, being able to count by rote to one hundred does not necessarily mean that the child understands the quantity and number relationships involved with having one hundred objects.

One-to-one correspondence is usually the next stage. A child must understand that one number stands for one object. This stage develops over time as a child counts many objects, beginning with small groups and progressing to larger quantities. Kid Count at morning meeting helps develop this skill as children call out their number. Throughout our day children are asked to count different objects. On 100 day it was a cooperative building containing one hundred blocks created by four children.

Keeping track of what has been counted comes next. When a child is first developing one-to-one correspondence they often get confused and count an object more than once or lose track of what is left. They need to develop strategies for keeping track and organizing the objects. Actually touching the object helps, as does pushing the one that has been counting off to the side, making it obvious what is left. When taking a vote or counting at meeting we often use tally marks to keep track and encourage children to do the same.

Connecting numbers to quantities means that when the child has finished counting objects one-to-one they understand that the final number represents the number of objects they have.

Conservation means that a child understands that the number always stands for the same amount, no matter if you have 100 grains of rice or 100 tubas. This can be a difficult developmental stage as most children equate the size of an object with more. Another example is when teaching money; a child will

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*We received this note recently from Heidi B.'s mom who was here while Heidi gave birth to C. and recovered.*

*To the parents and teachers of The Children's School of Boise,*

*Thanks to all of you who made my mornings easy and pleasant when I took T. and Z. to and fro. Your friendliness was delightful and I missed my encounters with you when Heidi was back driving.*

*Thank you all and kind regards,*

*Jane B., Sydney Australia*

often pick a nickel over a dime just because it is bigger.

And finally, we come to counting by groups. We strongly emphasize this skill on 100 day. Grouping by 5's or 10's incorporates all of the above skills. They use one-to-one correspondence, develop strategies for keeping track, connect the number they are counting to a quantity, understand that even though 100 M and M's looks different than 100 Legos it still is the same quantity, and that by grouping, it is much easier to accurately count the objects.

Now to the fun part: the schedule of activities for 100 day in the primes. The children had been anticipating this day for so long, excitement was high. A few days before, we brainstormed ideas with them as to how to celebrate. We read the book, The Night Before 100 Day by Natasha Wing. Then incorporated both their ideas and teacher directed activities into our day.

We started morning meeting passing around 2 \$100 bills. A child had brought 100 pennies, which led to a discussion of money and it's value. We then brought out 10 dimes and a \$1 bill. Then figured out how many \$1 bills in the \$100 bill. Next came the Roman numeral that represents 100. Did you know that it is a C and thus the slang for the \$100 bill being called a C note? For kid count that morning, one of the children proposed a "super challenge"; counting by 50's! So we had to figure out what number we would end up on if all 17 children were present. Finally we did 100 exercises, which were done in groups of ten, letting the children pick which exercises to perform.

The children were so into counting that some of them continued to do it at outside time. They proudly exclaimed that they had kicked the football 100 times. By afternoon outside time it had reached 300!

At reading break apart our groups started a class book about what they would do with 100 dollars. Ideas ranged from saving it for a bigger ticket item to buying 100 Pokemon cards because they are beautiful.

Picture book was One Hundred Hungry Ants by Elinor J. Pinczes. The ants end up being late to a picnic because they stop to change groupings.

During project time the children had partners and they counted the items they had brought from home. Here is where we really were able to observe how well they understood one-to-one correspondence, how they were able to keep track and use grouping as a strategy. We also compared the size of the items brought: sunflower seeds vs. small toys. It all still ended up being 100 items.

Then came the grand finale! Eating cake with one hundred toothpicks topped with miniature marshmallows. (A child inspired idea.) But before we could indulge came the hardest part of the day, 100 seconds of SILENCE! What a great day. It was well worth waiting 100 days for.

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*The Children's School has convened a group of parents, past parents, Board members, and administrators to study the potential for a capital campaign. We anticipate research and initial planning through late spring. If you have questions please contact Cindy Finch ([director@tcsboise.org](mailto:director@tcsboise.org)), Holly Paquette ([rosetta1@gmail.com](mailto:rosetta1@gmail.com)) or Susan Park ([supark3@cableone.net](mailto:supark3@cableone.net)).*

## Auction News

By Katie Walther

We are finally Off to the Races.... The Children's School Auction is here this Saturday at 6pm!

\*You really need to be there to experience this year's auction. Lot's of hardwork has gone into planning this event by a bunch of great parent & teacher volunteers! Join us to find out what all the hype is about.

\*It's not too late, RSVP either to [karendxu@msn.com](mailto:karendxu@msn.com) or drop your invite in the envelope on Andrea's door.

\*Doors open at 6pm & we kick off with the silent auction & cocktails. Come early for the best selection, things go quick! Hint, we are giving you a chance to windowshop. We will be putting programs in your boxes with a list of silent and live auction items, look over the list before the event. Dinner will be served and the live auction starts at 8pm. Don't miss this year's fabulous truffle raffle. For dessert we will be selling authentic Kentucky Bourbon balls & a chance to win fabulous prizes.

\*We will have Taxis available for those interested in getting a ride home. The Turf club is out in Garden City, so make arrangements to get dropped off and we will have a safe ride waiting for you!

\*Volunteers: for those setting up we will be meeting at the Smith house Friday March 7th @ 9am, to collect and transport auction items. We will be out at The Turf Club most of the day, come join us anytime! We will also need some help on Saturday. Contact [katiawalther@cableone.net](mailto:katiawalther@cableone.net) if you are interested in helping. It is not too late if you would like to sign up to help with the event!

\*Directions- I will email directions to everybody this week.

\*Something Special: Don't leave the auction without purchasing a "TCS School Year Video" created by Betsy Robinson's very talented son Seth. The DVD contains video captured from every class at TCS and promises to be priceless.

\*Something New: This year each classroom teacher created a "wish list" containing items for their specific classrooms that went above the normal year's budget. Here's a chance to enhance your child's classroom. Just stop by the "wish Board" featured in the silent auction.

Can't wait to see everyone there!



TCS Auction

Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>

6:00 PM

Les Boise Turf Club

We'll see you there!

## Yes, TCS is Off to the Races—This Week

By Cindy Finch

One of my favorite Saturday nights of the school year is coming up, and I hope you are there.

March 8<sup>th</sup> is the date of the 2008 TCS spring fundraiser—is it already on your calendar? It's on mine and has been all school year. I doubt I'll be dressed for the races (although I'd love to have Julia Robert's brown and white polka dot dress and big white hat from Pretty Woman—ok that was polo but surely you get my point). I've heard some teachers and parents talking about dusting off hats—big hats, and you can bet Andrea will twist the theme to fit her style—those are reasons enough to come to the race track with TCS families, faculty, and staff.

The spring fundraiser—sometimes a pretty traditional auction, sometimes a theme type party (remember Vegas, baby in 2006 and the Prom in 2007?)—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 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 (this year led by Katie W.) put together a fun event that raises enough money in one night to fund our scholarship program for one year. I have great respect for those who do it with knowledge and confidence—and actually seem to have a good time in the process.

How did this event come about as a way to fund tuition assistance? It was the Spring of 1986 when a group of TCS families and friends gathered at the Bushnell home on Main Street for the first TCS Auction. My husband and I were there. It would be my last year at the school as a teacher (for 11 years), as we were expecting our first child the next September. The crowd was smaller and a little more subdued (or was the crowd as lively as ever and I was subdued by pregnancy?).

Over the years we have returned almost every year to the auction. Sometimes we only knew a few people. Sometimes we were parents in the

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*Interested in summer classes at TCS? Look for information later this month about what we will be offering and how to get your child enrolled for some summer fun, TCS-style.*

## The Children's School

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

school, as our children moved through the classrooms. Sometimes we left empty handed, when the bidding did not go our way or skyrocketed away from our family budget. More often we have taken something away, a cherished piece of art and gift certificates to favorite shops or restaurants. One of our favorite purchases remains to this day the huge basket of toothbrushes, dental floss, and toothpaste donated by a dentist/parent. We didn't have to buy oral hygiene products for years—really.

The focus for my family, and the reason we've returned year after year, is that TCS remains a place we want to support—a special place where our children started their education, a place we've developed important adult and family relationships that have remained strong for years, and a place and an education we value for all children, today and tomorrow.

Dress for the races—whatever that means to you and know that it can be anything from dressy to casual—and please join us on Saturday for this important evening for The Children's School community. See you there.

## Accreditation News

By Cindy Finch

Here's the big news from our site visit by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) our accrediting agency. In a random review of a selection of the 400 criteria divided among the 10 standards of program quality (which included a check of 8 children's files, 5 personnel files, the observation of 3 classrooms and corresponding portfolios, and review of many of our policies/procedures and staff and family questionnaires) TCS was found to meet more than 99% of the criteria. This is a HUGE accomplishment for TEACHERS (oh, what a lot of work and a big commitment for this crowd!) and our entire school community. And, in the spirit of continuous improvement, four very small recommendations were made within these four standards: curriculum, physical environment, assessment, and working with families. The faculty and staff of the school are working together to create a plan for moving forward with this feedback—but mostly we are celebrating this great success! Thank you for your support and participation in this important process.

## Important Dates:

\*Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, Annual Spring Fundraiser, Please see articles on page 5 and 6.

\*Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, P-TCS meeting 1:30-3:00 (see Friday Update for details)

**\*Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, Contracts for 2008-2009 school year due in office by 2:00 PM with enrollment deposit**

**\*Monday-Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, Spring Break, Only All Days and Prearranged Primary Child Care Open, All other classes closed**

\*Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, All Classes Resume

\*April P-TCS meeting, TBA (see Friday update for date and location)

**\*Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, Last day to have deposit refunded if enrollment is cancelled.** Teaching plan for the 2008-2009 school year is posted in front hall-subject to change.