

June 2008

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

If you read the Friday Update carefully, you might have expected to see this TCS Times in your mailbox several weeks ago. That's what we told you would happen—and we very optimistically meant it. What happened? The rituals and transitions that occur with the end of the school year took priority over producing a newsletter. Now the reviews are written, the root beer parties are completed, the campout behind us, and summer programs are underway—and it's time to put into words some thoughts about the end of the school year.

It is fitting that the work of transitioning from the school year to the summer months took precedence over something more routine like producing a newsletter. Transitions that work well take a lot of energy. And few transitions require as much attention as those that involve helping children with beginning and ending the school year.

In general experiencing a transition with young children requires a slow steady approach. Young children cannot think about or imagine those parts of a change that they have not experienced in the past. Conversely, children who remember a transition in a certain way from the past may resist any variation from what they remember. In either case, children don't need lots of verbal persuasion and convincing that, "everything will be fine." They need, rather, a supportive adult close by. They need some matter-of-fact information that there will be a transition, a few key pieces of information about what they can anticipate, particularly if it helps them to connect their current experience to a past experience. They need an opportunity to talk about their feelings about the transition. And they need for many parts of your lives together to not be in transition—so enjoy some sameness. The dance you are in with your child when you face a transition together will require that you alternately lead and follow.

Play can be one of the best responses to transition, both taking time to play as a family and giving your child plenty of time to play. Think about how your child plays. Play is a primary way for children to create meaning from life's events and feel capable in handling the newness of a situation. For years my youngest child got out the unit blocks and little cars when he wanted to relax. I don't really know what he was thinking about when he played this way. But

because I watched him engage with materials this way for years, I always knew that this type of play was important to him, and that it was critical for me to provide the time and materials for him to play—often.

Part of playing together as a family means spending quality time together. At home it may be gardening, cooking, or, as I hear my neighbors doing often, playing an adult/child baseball game in the backyard. For me it has always been important that some of our family time be away from home. There is something about leaving the routines of everyday life behind and being together—in a car, on a train, in a campground, on a beach, in airports—that is important to me as a parent. At home it is too easy for me to get busy in my grown-up projects and not truly spend time with my children. (At the same time I do remember the relief of getting home where everyone could sleep in their own beds again. It is all such a careful balance, isn't it, with young children!). It is interesting to talk with my children about their memories—so many of them are from our times together away from home (One of our favorites: “Remember that time you couldn't figure out how to put the car in reverse in that parking garage in Inverness and you had to stop that man and ask him?”). In so many ways, building memories together—at home and away—is some of the important work of family life.

“Doesn't Stewart look great?”

Thanks to Jock M. for installing the 4-5s class auction project, Stewart, the painted pig, on the sideyard.

During these summer months I both reflect on the school year that has ended and anticipate the next one. You will find a little of both—looking back and look ahead—in this issue of TCS Times. It has been a wonderful year, and much of this is because of the strength of the community that we have at TCS. So much of what is good here in this small school community comes from our common concern for young children—the teachers and the work that happens in our classrooms, the parents and the actions you take to unite us, the giving that has taken place in so many ways, and adherence to a child-focused philosophy of education. The memories that I have in my mind from this most recent school year are rich and positive—and I hope that is the same for you. We've all worked together to make this year great.

I hope the transitions that you've just experienced as a family are the beginning of a wonderful summer. Enjoy!

Parents for TCS—Recap and Thanks:

The Director's Perspective

By Cindy Finch

It is time to say thanks to a group of volunteers who has led so effectively this past year.

It's been an amazing year for our parent organization, Parents for The Children's School. The officers, chairs, and project leaders in this group have led families throughout the school to an incredibly successful year of fundraising (see Kim R.'s article in the April TCS Times for the P-TCS

president's review of this successful year). As a non-profit corporation, TCS is sustained by the generosity of the families who plan and participate in special—and fun—events each school year. In fact, we depend on the fundraising that occurs through the efforts of P-TCS to support school goals (as a reminder, our goals as a school are listed in your Parent Handbook).

Along with the hard work, I want to say thanks to all involved in the work of P-TCS for making this group a wonderful social network for our families. Part of the experience of being a parent at TCS is the adult relationships that are built; P-TCS—both the process of putting on events and the events themselves—is one of the major ways that families get to know each other. So, thanks, too for creating opportunities for building community among families; our strong community makes a positive difference for children, teachers, and families.

So, thanks to our officers . . .

Kim R., President
Karen F., Past President
Suzanne M., Treasurer
Wendy S., Secretary
Holly P., Representative to the TCS Board of Directors
Cindy Finch, Teacher Representative to P-TCS
Kim L., Class Representative Coordinator

And to our chairs . . .

Lisa W. and Ann H., Parent Education
Nancy C. and Karen F., Hospitality
Jane L. and Christine P., Fall Carnival
Kim L., Learning Express Fundraiser
Elaine D., Holiday Bake Sale
Katie W., Spring Auction
Anne G. and Lacy M., TCS Facilities
Amy S., All School Campout

And to our class reps . . .

Amanda C., Teri W., Jigish T., Jerilyn G., Jayne D., Karen F., Treacy L., April G., Jessica S., Liz K., Amy G., Dyan G., Heidi B., Anna N., Christina C., Heather H., Darren S., Amy S., and Kira P..

Even if leadership is not part of your plan for the next year, we know that every family in the school will volunteer, give, attend, or otherwise support the projects of P-TCS—and thereby support the goals of The Children's School.

At the May meeting, nominations were presented and the following officers were elected for the 2008-2009 school year.

Kira P., President
 Kim L., Vice President and Class Representative Coordinator
 Dyan G., Treasurer
 Wendy S., Secretary
 Holly P., Representative to the Board of Directors
 Cindy Finch, Teacher Representative to P-TCS

And the following chairs were enthusiastically accepted . . .

Jane L., Fall Carnival
 Jane L. and Betsy M., Holiday Bake Sale
 April G. and Jessica S., Spring Auction
 Amy S., All School Campout
 Amy S. and Julie M., TCS Facilities
 Kacy B. and Heidi B., Hospitality
 Lisa W. and Ann H., Parent Education

And these class representatives were announced . . .

Amy G., Nina B., Anna N., Jane L., Heidi B., Heather H., Carrie M., Darren S., and Liz E..

There are still ways to be involved, and I hope you will contact a P-TCS officer or call the school office if you want to be a leader in our parent organization. If leadership is not part of your plan for the next year, we know that every family in the school will volunteer, give, attend, or otherwise support the projects of P-TCS—and thereby support the goals of The Children’s School.

How to Talk Class Recap

By Nicole Shadduck

Thank you to all who participated in this year’s “How to Talk” classes based on work from Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. Each class was focused on a different topic and parenting strategies. The participants read two books, Liberated Parents, Liberated Children and How to Talk So Kids Will Listen.... Teaching this class was one of the highlights of the school year for me. The most rewarding part of the experience was being a part of such a supportive community for the giving and sharing of ideas.

As you may have read in a previous TCS Times or heard at the end of the “How to Talk” series, the P-TCS group has approved purchasing the materials for another course authored by Faber and Mazlish. The name of the next series is “Siblings Without Rivalry”. Look for more information from P-TCS in the next school year.

*School matters, but
 literacy starts at home.*

*Teacher have long
 urged parents to read
 aloud to their children,
 But now there is a
 second and perhaps
 more powerful
 message: Talk to your
 kids, too.*

*Mounting research links
 language-rich homes
 with reading success
 and school
 achievement. In fact
 exploratory investigative
 discussions between
 parents and children
 are central to higher
 level literacy while the
 social-emotional bond
 parents have with their
 children can amplify
 learning.*

*Parents remain uniquely
 able to tailor
 explanations that click
 perfectly with their child
 and also provide more
 extensive opportunities
 for rich discussions.*

*Information taken from
 Harvard Education
 Letter article by Laura
 Pappano*

We Say Goodbye to...

Names removed to protect children's privacy.

“Studies show that children who play with unit blocks in early childhood do better in Algebra in middle school . . . Math knowledge and dispositions are not created in a vacuum. Math is about manipulating things: objects, shapes, concepts, and relationships . . . we must provide a myriad of opportunities for young children to have direct, concrete experiences in the real world . . . Seeing snow accumulate day after day is a real way to understanding increase in quantity. Carrying a large boulder teaches about mass; swinging on a rope about force, angles, and speed.”
Exchange Everyday,
June 2, 2008

The Campout at Grayback Gulch was a lot of fun for the 100 people who came! Do you have photos? We'd love to see them—
newsletter@tcsboise.org

Alumni News

By Cindy Finch

We send congratulations to TCS Alumni at a local high school who recently received awards: J. C., M. S., K. M. and L. H.. The awards these four students received ranged from Presidential Scholar Candidates, National Merit Commended Students and Finalists, Physics Student of the Year, French Student of the Year, Idaho Mathematics Exam Awards, Humanities/Social Studies Award, and Senior Mentor Award. Congratulations J., M., K. and L.!

Congratulations go also to these students at a local junior high: B. O., A. S., and M. S., who were elected to positions in student leadership by their peers; and, C. N., who recently broke city and school records at the City Track Meet. Way to go B., A., M., and C..

We heard from a local elementary school source that S. S. was awarded for his citizenship at the end of the school year. We're not surprised, S.!

If you know TCS alumni students, please let us know where they are and what they are doing. We love to hear from and about our former students!

Director's Corner

By Cindy Finch

Survey Update

I hope you stopped by to take a look at the 07-08 Parent Survey tallies which were in the hall for the last few weeks of school. If you missed a chance to read how our school community answered questions posed on the survey, please let me know.

I want to say a strong thanks to the families who took the time to complete a survey. Results are tallied by classroom and for the whole school. Everyone at TCS—teachers, administrators, and board members—find it helpful to read how you assess your experience here. We received 93 completed surveys, an impressive 81% return rate.

Rarely in the tallies do the positive answers fall below the high 80s (out of 93 returned). There are many strongly positive raves about the teachers and the curriculum, and many anecdotes about how individual children have responded to and grown through classrooms experiences. We appreciate your supportive comments.

There were also recommendations for some fine-tuning. Specifically we are looking at a few areas of our program (Spanish program opportunities and goals, number of outings offered, small group opportunities, lunch and snack options), and communication opportunities and processes (about curriculum, specific to an individual child, about school and classroom events). There were several who mentioned the need for facility enhancements—and most all who mentioned this acknowledged that plans are in place to address these concerns.

Next steps: We'll be continuing to study your comments and use them in developing our annual program improvement plans. We'll let you know how we address your ideas for improvement after teachers meet in August and board members meet in September. Look for more information in a fall issue of TCS Times.

Notes about Toileting (from 2008-2009 Parent Handbook)

Toilet learning is anticipated to be in-progress during the year children participate in the Parent-Toddler and 2-3s programs, with some children just beginning the process and some moving to independence.

However, when children begin to participate in our part-time or full-day preschool programs, we assume that children are able to manage toileting independently. We understand that accidents happen and that some children

Photos removed to protect children's privacy.

Spring Sing—

Children sing in celebration of the earth on April 18th. This long-held tradition combines several groups of children on the playyard to sing—and even dance with Will Martin leading the way.

The Children's School

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We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.tcsboise.org

need adult support in a group setting; however, our classroom arrangements and staffing patterns for preschool children do not accommodate as much emphasis on toilet learning as we are able to provide in the parent-toddler and 2-3s programs.

Please consider that supporting your children in toilet learning is part of your planning for preschool. If you need ideas: talk with a parent-toddler or 2-3s teacher, consult a resource in our parent education library, or plan to attend our annual toilet-learning workshop. Readiness signs may be subtle in some children, and parents approach this task with appropriate thought and concern. Helping children master this important self-help skill is well worth the time and energy—for you and your child.

Important Dates

*Monday, June 2nd, Summer Primes begins, All Days continue

*Friday, July 4th, Independence Day, **SCHOOL CLOSED**

*Friday, August 15th, Summer Programs End

*Monday-Friday, August 18th-22nd, **SCHOOL CLOSED** for Professional Development and Facility Maintenance and Cleaning

*Monday, August 25th, Primes and 4-5-6s begin, All Days resume

*Tuesday, September 2nd, All other classes begin (except Parent-Toddler which begins October 6th)

**Please check your contracts for summer class dates if you have enrolled in any of our part time programs offered during the summer months.*

**Look for the next issue of TCS Times in August 2008*