

January 2009

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

The Children's School doesn't teach academics.

This statement is a myth—it is of unknown authority, used to explain complex ideas, appealing to some out of convenience, and not based on fact. Beginning with this month's article, I plan to discuss the myths that some hold to be true about The Children's School. I can think of several, but am focusing on one; maybe you have some that you will want to mention to me in the coming weeks. It is my hope that this discussion will provide some challenges, some new ways of thinking about the school, and some new language to talk about what children experience in our classrooms.

Let's start with the "doesn't teach academics" statement. A much more accurate statement would be that we don't ONLY teach academics.

There are schools for young children where academic acceleration is the point. Children are directly instructed about what they should know and labeled early when they don't get it (a point of view about education that has been promoted during these "No Child Left Behind" years). The Children's School is not that school—but that doesn't mean that we ignore skills and knowledge in our classrooms.

Our philosophy encourages us to start where children are and then provide materials, support interactions, and plan experiences from which children come to know. Part of what they come to know is academic. Part of how they come to know it is direct instruction (which is simply adults telling children specific bits of knowledge). However, our classrooms will always be about much more, and that is the difference.

Here are two examples, stories told to me by a parent and teachers.

1) One parent whose child had left the school told me this, in referring to this myth about TCS's lack of academic program: "I think the reality of the academic feel in the classrooms is exactly opposite the perception some have of the school." She went on to say that the richness of topics, the depth of discussions, and the engagement of students in academic life was much

more evident at The Children's School than in her child's current classroom—in which her child spent much more of the day experiencing teacher-directed instruction around the development of specific academic skills.

2) Teachers in a class serving very young children described helping children recognize letters in their names as part of the snack routine. At the mid-point in the school year they described to me that, despite persistent reminders, about half the children are still not consistently finding their own names. Does this point to lack of instruction by teachers or learning problems in children? No—in a school that values the role of development and experience in learning, this shows the value of well-timed instruction. Although these children were directly shown letters in their names (instruction) they did not have the experience and the developmental maturity to consistently deal with the abstraction of letters—yet.

We talk about the “project approach” in our classes and promote the value of groups of children studying a topic together, structured by teachers around these questions: what do we know, what do we want to know, and how will we find out? There are lists to write, books to read, props to create, questions to ask of experts, scientific experiments to try, and data to organize and communicate involved in a project. It does create a rich school experience centered on children actively thinking, researching, and finding out.

We also talk about constructivist education at The Children's School—children building knowledge and understanding through interaction with materials and people. What instructive role does the teacher take in this process or is the teacher a passive observer? There are times when TCS teachers are supportive and appreciative of children's discoveries, which is a less active role. However, more importantly and more often, TCS teachers are challenging and descriptive in interacting with children in constructivist activities. Classes are filled with teacher's voices asking “What could you do to make it work?” “Can you think of a way to make it go up?” “What are the rules of your game?” “What props do you need for your role?” and describing “That's doing math—when you interview classmates about pets and tally the results.”

What role does play have in academic learning? Play gives children a chance to deal with abstraction (pretending is a part of thinking abstractly), consolidation (trying out known roles and previously experienced events in play makes the learning deeper for children), and application (using information and skills enriches play).

As a school we will always look at children's successes and challenges through very broad lenses. We will follow the guidelines from our philosophy which teaches us to set up programs which consider how children think and feel—about academics, about friendships, and about themselves. We will vary our instructive methods, including projects, constructivist interactions, and play. As one teacher recently put it, “We will always interact during

*Conversation between 3
year olds calmly playing
next to each other at the
sensory table:*

*"How was your day
tomorrow?"*

"It was good."

"Mine was gooder."

routine activities in ways that stretch children and sometimes we set up special activities to achieve specific goals that we have for children.”

Now, there is a dose of reality to impose on a tired and simplistic myth. In its place I propose a new descriptor: *The Children’s School approaches children’s academic development in thoughtful and multifaceted ways.*

TCS Board of Director Biographies



Board of Directors, 2008-2009 School Year

Susan Park—President

Susan is pleased to be a member of the Board of Directors of TCS after spending seven years as a parent of two happy TCS students. Susan grew up in Boise, graduating from Boise High School in 1980. She earned a BA in English from the University of Colorado and a J.D. from the University of Idaho College of Law. Currently she teaches Legal Studies courses at Boise State University. Susan spends most of her time having fun with her boys. She loves her family and friends, movies and books, travel and skiing, food and wine, and Boise and Payette Lake.

Janet Parsons—Vice President

Janet Parsons is an alumni parent of The Children School. Janet received her BS in Computer Engineering from Michigan State University and MBA courses at Xavier University in Cincinnati. She worked for Fortune 500

The Children’s School of Boise, Inc. is a private non-profit corporation with a Board of Directors. The Board establishes and reviews basic policy for the educational philosophy, enrollment procedures, physical plant, financial health, and future growth of the school. The twelve to fifteen board members are selected from the community by a nominating committee, with most being alumni parents. One voting member is a representative from the Parents for The Children’s School. The Board is balanced by skills in education, law, finance, psychology and community service. A slate of officers is elected annually by the Board. Board members of this working board have committee responsibility and serve a three year term.

--(from the TCS Parent Handbook)

companies including Ford, GM, and Proctor & Gamble as a computer consultant in her home state of Michigan and then in Ohio. After arriving in Boise in 1997, Janet stayed home mothering her 2 active boys. During that time she was a committed volunteer with the Boise Mom's Club and TCS Parent Board. Janet spent two years as the Business Manager for Foothills School of Arts & Sciences and is currently a real estate consultant with Windermere, Capital Group. Janet and her husband Mark have 2 sons. She enjoys cooking, entertaining and skiing with her family, and can frequently be found in the middle of a remodel.

The revised TCS Parent Handbooks have arrived.

You should have received one in your school mailbox.

Please make sure you return the front blue cover letter to the office.

Clint Tate—Treasurer

Clint is a lifelong resident of Boise. He owns and operates Enterprise Electric and has been Vice President of Tates Rents, Inc. He received his B.A. from University of Puget Sound and his M.B.A. from Babson College. He has previous experience as a board member for a number of other local non-profit entities. Clint and his wife Alison have two children, a boy and a girl.

Bonnie Noonan—Secretary

Bonnie has been involved with The Children's School in a variety of ways during the 18 years she has lived in Boise. Most importantly her daughter was in the All Days for two years and the Primes for two years. Bonnie teaches Child Care and Development at Boise State University. She has been on the board for four years.

Dawn Christensen—Board Member

Dawn has lived in Boise for 14 years with her husband and 2 children, both TCS alumni. Interestingly she learned about The Children's School while still living in Seattle. She visited the school upon arrival to Boise and knew it was the right place for her family. Professionally she works at St Alphonsus Medical Center as a Physical Therapist. She enjoys the great outdoors and reading.

Dave Taylor—Board Member

Dave brings to the Children's School Board over 25 years of experience in the accounting profession; with 11 of those years as Fiscal Officer for an Idaho not-for-profit. He currently serves as the Deputy Director for Support Services at Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare. Dave is a Certified Public Accountant. He graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business/Accounting. His professional associations include the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Idaho Society of Certified Public Accountants. Dave resides in Boise with his wife, Judy, and their daughter, a Children's School Alum!

Janine Boire—Board Member

Janine has 25 years of experience in informal science education and management of non-profits. Currently she serves as the Executive Director of the Discovery Center of Idaho. She began as a high school intern volunteer at Pacific Science Center in Seattle where she continued to work for 12

years. She served as the founding Director of Explora Science Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which was dedicated to serving the most disenfranchised families in the state. For that work she was awarded a fellowship to Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Janine holds a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Washington and a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Princeton University.

Cindy Haroian—Board Member

A Boise native and alumni parent of TCS, Cindy, and her husband Dundee, have five children who all attended TCS. They are all successful students in the public school system, thanks in part to the structure of learning and socializing they acquired at TCS. Cindy is a stay-at-home mom. She enjoys playing tennis, watching her kids in their various sports activities, cooking/recipe contests, and looks forward to being a part of this Board.

Christine Jayo—Board Member

Christine is an alumni parent of the Children's School and lifelong Boise resident. Christine earned her B.A. in Business Management from the University of Utah and her M.B.A. from Boise State University. She spent the first fifteen years of her career in the finance and banking industries. When her first child entered the pre-school years, Christine's interests and passion turned increasingly towards education. Her work with Invent Now Kids, Inc., a subsidiary of the National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation (NIHFF) began in 2004. The educational programs of the NIHFF encourage problem solving and build confidence and interest in science through discovery, with the goal of inspiring the next generation of inventors. Christine and her husband Richard have one daughter and one son.

Dave Meyer—Board Member

Dave and his wife, Jill, chose Boise as a place to raise their two children 14 years ago. As an alumni parent, Dave is excited to see The Children's School launch the next generation of capable learners and is happy to help the school secure a bright future. Dave has a Ph.D. in Psychology (Organizational Psychology and HRD) from North Carolina State University. He was a founding partner of Galliard Group, a Boise-based consulting firm. He also does consulting work in program evaluation for government and non-profit agencies. He enjoys mountain biking, skiing, and the big city/small town community of friends in Boise.

Holly Paquette—Board Member

Holly is a second generation Idahoan with many ties to The Children's School. She graduated from the University of California-Berkeley with a B.S. in Human Anatomy and Physiology and the University of Montana with an M.S. in Microbiology/Biochemistry. She and her husband, Alain, are the proud parents of two children, who enjoyed their time at TCS immensely. Holly currently works as a Personal Trainer. When not in the gym, she can be found enjoying the great outdoors with her family.

Look for more Board of Directors biographies in the next issue of TCS Times!

TCS Teacher Biography

Shelley McCarl-Art Consultant (*newly updated*)

This will be Shelley's eighth year of teaching at The Children's School. She and her husband Bob, a professor in the Sociology Department at BSU, and their children have lived in Boise for 20 years. Shelley received her BFA at the University of South Carolina, and has previously worked in illustration, graphic design, and packaging design. She also teaches art to both children and adults through the Boise City Parks & Recreation Art Center. In addition to teaching art, Shelley paints in pastel and oil, and her work has been included in a number of national and international shows and publications. This September, her still life of a wasp's nest (brought in by a TCS student for a science display!) was included in the annual Pastel Society of America show in New York City. Recently, she was thrilled to discover that this same painting won 5th place in the still life division of the Pastel Journal's annual magazine competition, the "Pastel 100". Shelley enjoys gardening and reading in her spare time.

Coming Soon!

We will be putting up signs that designate the parking lot in front of the school as a "No Idle Zone". Until then, please remember to turn off your car engine when parked in the parking lot.

Alumni News

Thanks to Jane L. for sending us the following news. The following TCS alumni students have been recognized in the school's Breakfast of Champions program recently: R. L. (2005-2007), B. H. (2005-2008), R. W. (2006-2008), E. S. (2004-2007), B. C. (2003-2007), R. J. (2005-2008) and L. S. (2004-2007). Way to go!

Our TCS alumni students are also a musical bunch: L. M. (2001-2003) plays viola, L. M. (2001-2003) plays cello, and H. H. (1998-2003) plays violin in the 7th grade orchestra; T. G. (2002-2003) sings in the choir as an 8th grader; and B. Y. (1998-2002) plays cello, E. S. (1996-2002) plays bass, and A. W. plays viola in the 9th grade orchestra.

What do you know about TCS alumni students? Let us know!

Primes News: A Grand Old Time

By Susan Gardner

"You're a grand old flag, you're a high-flyin' flag ." You may have heard that coming out of the Primes room lately. A lot. Along with it being a beloved song of our class, oft requested of Will at music time, it just sort of fits all that's been going on. Our national election wandered into the room last fall, and it still has a hold in our classroom!

Remnants of this project can still be seen in the red, white and blue chain hanging from the ceiling, or K.'s inauguration painting posted next

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to her newspaper clippings of our new president, and the stray "I voted" sticker attached to a cupboard. Ah, yes, the world can be our classroom.

Just what was this about? Some of you wondered aloud with raised eyebrow. Well, rest assured it wasn't about partisan politics or patriotism-gone-wild! It started with campaign signs - they were popping up all over the neighborhood. This observation led to discussions about voting in our country; about candidates and how presidents get picked. What is their job, anyway? Mary Helen brought in her absentee ballot and I brought in a story from the polling booth in my neighborhood. I described being able to discuss my opinions freely (legal in the US and encouraged in the Primes room) with someone who was yet undecided the morning of the elections. We tried to emphasize the special role that democracy, a huge word, plays in our country. After Election Day was over, we held our own elections in the Primes. The class lobbied for and voted on a new class project. The "One Person Place" became our voting booth. Rabbits won the race, with dogs being a close second place.

Last Tuesday truly seemed like a grand finale as we gathered for a partial viewing of the inauguration. The Primes watched raptly as images of the gigantic crowd, Joe Biden, Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman and Aretha Franklin filled the screen. And at last, the President elect! As Barack Obama raised his hand to be sworn in, a five-year-old turned to me, "Susan, do you think all the brown-skinned people voted for Obama and that's why he won?" I smiled and asked her what she thought. Before she could answer the child next to her broke in, "I voted for Obama and I don't have brown skin!" They both turned back to the event at hand.

At TCS, children gain experiences and construct meaning for themselves each day. The possibilities for learning are rich and varied. I'm so glad we stopped to ponder what all those yard signs were about one afternoon back in October.

Important Dates

*Thursday, January 29th, **Open House**, Enrollment information for 2009-2010 school year will be available at the Open House for currently enrolled families.

*Friday, January 30th, **No 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s Classes**, Conference preparation

Enrollment information will be mailed to those families who did not attend the Open House.

*Wednesday, February 4th, **No 2-3s, 3-4s, 3-4-5s, 4-5s, 4-5-6s classes. Early Release Primes at noon.** Conference preparation. Only All Days & Prearranged Childcare Open

3-4-5s and 4-5-6s Conferences

*Thursday-Friday, February 5th-6th, **Parent-Teacher Conferences**, Only All Days & Prearranged Childcare Open

*Friday, February 13th, **Tuition Assistance Applications Due**, www.nais.org/financialaid/ss,

TCS school code - #4112

*Monday, February 16th, **Presidents' Day, SCHOOL CLOSED**

*Friday, February 20th, **Intention Forms Due in Office by 1:00pm.** Contracts prepared and mailed. Tuition assistance decisions will be finalized prior to enrollment.