

October 2009

TCS Times

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

The school year has begun and all is well—or is it?

I value the discussions I have with families and learn a lot from talking with you about your family life, your parenting, the joys you share as a family, and the challenges that you face at times. I've recently heard from some families that the start of school has brought some new, different, and sometimes concerning interactions between parents and children. This may be one of those times in your family's life together, or you may find other times more challenging. That's the interesting thing about child development. There are trends and patterns, but the pathway for each child can be so individually timed.

Although it can seem that the beginning of school and the routines that accommodate it should bring a new settling for children, the reality can be quite different. Exciting times—like starting a new school year—call for a balance of sameness, of predictable, regular days. I often hear parents talk about how tired their children are during the first month or two of school. Becoming part of a group takes a lot of energy, energy that your child may not have to participate in other activities. There are new routines to learn at school, new relationships to begin, and new ways to experience your body, mind, and emotions. There can be a lot of comfort for your child of knowing what to expect at home.

Along with the expanding boundaries children experience when they become part of a class, there may come some behavior challenges at home. Tiredness may be part of it. However, when children experience the new successes they have at school—washing hands alone for the first time, reading that first word, digging a deep hole in the sandbox and filling it with water, figuring out how to enter play with other children, learning that teachers can be resources to you, remembering the rules of a game, figuring out how many people are in class if two are gone—there can be an attempt to renegotiate the rules, boundaries, or expectations you have for them at home. Challenging behaviors by children during the early days of school can be a way of communicating, "I'm growing, learning, and changing, and I want you to understand that and adjust—now." Parents have a huge task during these early days of the school year to make decisions about rest and

predictability when that is called for, reasserting family boundaries when that is appropriate, and revising the rules and roles of family life when you are ready.

There are many times in family-life that require parents to both listen to what children say they want and listen to our more mature and experienced perspective of what children need. Parents have the responsibility for providing a structure for the family and having a big-picture view of what we want family life to be and where this family is going. Children cannot do that. Children can have a voice, can negotiate, and can make decisions—but only within the structure parents provide. That's why it is so important that children have some voice, opportunities to negotiate, and some decisions that they can have the final say on—because by controlling the underlying structure of the family, we control much.

If we want our children to know how to do those things—have opinions, make decisions, express themselves— anywhere else in their lives, we need to give them a chance to try it out with us in the safety of our homes and within the security of the parent-child relationship. However, that doesn't mean that everything is negotiable—no parent has enough time and energy to do that all day and into the evening—and children don't need that in order to have a good childhood. Many decisions about family life are unnecessary to negotiate because they are embedded in the structure that you provide. In fact, I believe that children take comfort in knowing that they are listened to and that parents will make the final decision—considering the child's perspective, the needs of other children in the family, the needs of the grown-ups, and lot of other things (like schedules, commitments, and responsibilities)!

However—and this is a big however—family structures should never be impenetrable. Every voice matters in a family and, whether we intend this to be true or not, everyone in the family has a hand in shaping the direction this family is moving as part of our lives together. When we listen to them, children insist that we grow as parents and help us refine the structure of our family life.

I could list guidance techniques, know a bunch of techniques that work, and even thought about doing that in as part of this article—but this is what makes it so hard for me to do that in writing. *Effective discipline is not the application of strategies. It is deeply embedded in your relationship with your child, your knowledge of your individual child, and in what your hopes are for your child over time.* Techniques matter. Techniques of discipline either support or undercut your overall plan for your family. However, those of us who talk with other adults about discipline often leave out the finer points of discipline because guiding young children is never a recipe that can be communicated by one person and followed by another.

Discipline is always an opportunity to teach—and any kind of education takes time, energy, and, sometimes, repetition or coming at a concept from another angle to meet children where they are, who they are, and how they think

Food For Thought:

"Praising children in the service of happiness and self esteem has important benefits but it can become excessive.

Children thrive on praise when it is sincere and connected to specific accomplishments, but they know when they've truly accomplished something. Too much praise connected to tiny accomplishments can make them wonder why adults need to always prop them up."

*--Richard Weissbourd,
Work and Family Life*

*ExchangeEveryDay,
September 16, 2009*

about things. Discipline that grows with a family demands rethinking over time. I encourage you, for now, to think about who your child is and what your hopes are for who your child will become over time. It may not be all you want to know or even need to know, but laying this philosophical foundation is always a first step in parental decision-making and in establishing a family discipline climate.

Thank you for talking with me—it helps me to understand what the people I spend my days with are experiencing and the questions that you have. Our discussions also help me grow personally and professionally, and if we are all learning something in our lives together at The Children’s School—then many things are going very well.

Faculty Biographies: Consultants

Shelley McCarl-Art Consultant Teacher

Shelley began teaching at The Children’s School in 2000. She and her husband Bob, who teaches cultural anthropology at BSU, and their two children, have lived in Boise for 20 years. Shelley received her BFA at the University of South Carolina, and previously worked in graphic design and packaging design. She also teaches art to children and adults through the Boise City Parks & Recreation Community 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.

Lilia Byrd—Spanish Consulting Teacher

Lilia was born in Texas and raised in Nampa. She has a BA in Spanish and has had the pleasure of teaching in Boise for over 25 years, and at TCS since 2002. She believes that learning languages is important for all of us, especially our children. Learning a second language helps us appreciate and respect our cultural differences. Being bilingual or multilingual allows us to expand our social awareness and prepares us for working and living with people from diverse backgrounds. Her focus has been to help students develop conversational Spanish skills much the same way as most of them have learned their first language. Usually when learning a language we learn to speak it, before we learn to read and write it. We’ll spend a lot of time using the language and having fun learning about different cultures that use Spanish as their first language. She is excited to have the opportunity to teach your children and meet you.

Jodeen Revere—Creative Movement Consulting Teacher

Jodeen Revere has been teaching yoga and creative movement at TCS since 2002. Her daughter is a TCS alum. Jodeen has also been involved at TCS as an assistant teacher in the Young 3s, 3-4s, Primes and All Days. She has been a yoga practitioner for 12 years and a teacher for 7. She has studied with teachers such as Shiva Rea, Rodney Yee, Micheline Berry and Sean Corne. Her primary teacher and biggest inspiration is Max Strom. She is also a Thai Massage Therapist and teaches adult yoga classes at The Muse Building. She is an actress as well, who does commercials, voice over,

industrial films and theater. She has worked with Boise Contemporary Theater, Open Door Productions and Idaho Theater for Youth. Jodeen loves her daughter, her cats, watching movies, reading, traveling, dancing and eating chocolate.

Will Martin—Music Consulting Teacher

Will has been singing and teaching most of his life and has shared his talents with TCS since 2003. He earned a B.A. in Vocal Performance at the University of California at Santa Cruz and earned a Master's degree in Music Education from the University of Oregon. He has taught in public schools in Oregon and Washington, mostly as an Elementary General Music teacher. Will was a conductor with the Oregon Children's Choir for 12 years. Over the years, Will has greatly enjoyed collaborating with many teachers on a wide variety of musical and theater projects and performances, and has done many classroom visits and presentations and school assemblies as well. Will has also taught music workshops for Head Start teachers and their students. Will and his wife, Susan have two grown children, and three small grandchildren. Susan and Will served in the Peace Corps in 1995-1996, helping train English teachers in the Philippines. Will loves baseball, hiking, traveling, and swimming. You can often find him at work in his yard, and especially in his vegetable garden. Will is working with the teachers at The Children's School, and greatly appreciates the opportunity to teach, learn from, and share Music with your children.

Bobby Jardine—Bookkeeper

Bobby joined the TCS staff in September 2008 as bookkeeper. He has a BA in Business with an emphasis in Finance from Cal State in San Bernadino, as well as AA degrees in Firefighting and Paramedics. For the past 12 years he has owned his own bookkeeping and tax business, Foothills Bookkeeping and Taxes. Additionally, he has been a Firefighter and Paramedic in Nampa for the past 10 years. Bobby is married to Stacey and they have two boys. He enjoys living and working in the North End.

3-4-5s News: Community Building

By Taira Guerrero

Learn more about Liz Edrich, our Capital Campaign Manager, in the next issue of TCS Times. The campaign is going strong! Contact Liz if you are interested in getting involved!

There are three main ways that we promote community building at The Children's School: between teachers and families, between teachers and children, and among children. As an early childhood program, we strongly value the importance of building relationships and promoting a sense of community at all levels. There are quite a few ways that we work with families to develop a trusting relationship even before children enter the classroom. When families first visit our school, we invite them to observe the classrooms, meet teachers, and we begin gathering information through applications and questionnaires. Once children start their classroom experience, teachers maintain relationships with parents through individual notes, class newsletters, educational handouts, and family-teacher conferences. There are formal ways throughout the school year where teachers have the

opportunity to develop reciprocal relationships with families, such as at the Open House, Potlucks, and daily conversations about children at drop-off and pick-up times. In these ways, we work to create a partnership with families where we can connect about children in an open and supportive way.

As teachers, we plan purposefully at the beginning of the school year to welcome children into the classroom to prepare them for smooth transitions and cultivate a trusting relationship. Home visits are one opportunity to meet children on their turf which ultimately leads to a better understanding of the child and a better understanding of the impact of a child's home environment as it relates to school experiences. We use photos in children's cubbies, create wall displays with pictures of children and their families, and show children's work in the classroom. Our purpose is to build a foundation in our relationships with children where we honor individuality, give interest to a child's uniqueness, and foster autonomy.

Finally, we put significant focus on building classroom community among children. In the classroom, this may look like children having helper jobs, resolving conflict through talking out problems, engaging in group discussions at meeting times, or exchanging ideas at playtime. We build community through identity where children can see themselves reflected in the classroom and can find their photos around the room. As teachers, we carefully think about the types of materials that we set out because children need familiarity. It might be something as simple as a certain puzzle, a favorite book, or a familiar board game. As children experience success with materials or recognize a story at meeting time, they grow more comfortable to share their accomplishments with their classmates. In order for children to truly feel a part of a classroom community, they need to feel a sense of trust at school, as they do at home. We reassure children by making eye contact at their level, listening to their needs, and acknowledging their thoughts and feelings. Every classroom at The Children's School provides children the opportunities for children to safely exchange their ideas with one another in a supportive environment where respect and cooperative learning are valued. We work towards the goal of supporting all children to be valued members of our classroom community where they can share achievements and disappointments, resolve conflict, and to learn to trust one another in a safe place. All of these things happen as they move through daily schedules of meeting times, lunch, small group work, cooking experiences, focused activities and playtime.

As you can see, there are several levels of community building happening in our school throughout the entire year. Significant value is placed on the relationships built between teachers and families, teachers and children, and children and children because we thrive as an interdependent school community.

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YOU'RE DONE!

P-TCS News: Carnival Re-Cap

By Heidi B. and Amy S.

Even though it was a little chilly (Camille L.'s fingers are still defrosting after 3 hours of Face Painting), it was a great turn out! We hope everyone had a great time. We sure did.

This was our first year organizing the Carnival and it was quite an adventure! One thing that was solidified by the experience was what a wonderful and generous community we have here at The Children's School. The success of the Carnival was a group effort and we thank you all for that!

Face Painting with Camille

A thank you and a yippie-yi-yo to all the volunteers and donators. We want to give special thanks to the performers, Keith D., Shikhar S. and Jon S.. What wonderful talent they brought to this event. Also for those who gave a little extra something, like Liz E., Stephanie W., Dyan G. and Sarah O.. That first P-TCS meeting really got us excited, with all the suggestions and continued support. We thank Susan S. for setting a new fashion trend and her cohort, the Cotton Candy machine. A great big thank you to Jane L. for all your help and answering our many questions!! You did an awesome job on the raffle and silent auction. Cindy and Andrea, we thank you kindly for your help and patience. Now that the Carnival is over, you finally have your office back...for now.

Pumpkin Decorating

We are still tallying the amount, but so far, we are pleased to say that the Carnival earned \$4,100 for the TCS Teachers Continuing Education fund. Thus, continuing to provide our children the best possible education.

Thanks again for all your support for another successful Carnival.

Saying Goodbye...Again

By Susan Gardner

We were having one of those enjoyable conversations we teachers get on Auction Night – the classroom is miles away and a parent and I were sharing updates on our families. Well, talking about my then senior-in-high-school daughter, more specifically. **Me:** How can I possibly take her there (Connecticut), her freshman orientation is our first week of school at TCS – it's the end of August?! **Parent:** You have to take her; it's her *first* year in college! They have to let you do it. I know, if Cindy says no, I'll write you a note (a doctor's note that is). We laughed, went on with the evening ... and then I went home to seriously consider my options.

My daughter started TCS as a toddler well over a decade ago. I remember being shocked then fascinated the morning she let me leave the toddler room to join other parents in the coffee room. I confess I felt

slightly dismissed as she moved on to explore the room without me. It was the first time her growing independence didn't feel so good. I adjusted. During those years K. attended, TCS became a wonderful community for our family and I cried the day we left. It wasn't until first grade while attending her neighborhood school that she and I had some heart-wrenching separations. I will be forever grateful to my friend Michelle (a former TCS mom), who gently but firmly held my crying child as I got in my car and drove off to work. In a matter of weeks those separations eased, but I've never forgotten how difficult that was, and how unsure and guilty I felt. These vivid memories keep me empathic when I witness the world crumbling for a child, just as their parent moves toward the door to leave the classroom.

For me, saying good-bye during emotional times continues to be a learning experience. Those situations have a way of morphing into unplanned dramas; never the scene I anticipate. Isn't that life, though? It turned out I didn't need a doctor's excuse this fall. Of course, Cindy said I could take the time I needed and fly K. to freshman orientation week. My co-teacher Mary Helen agreed (I love this place). I packed a copy of "Saying Good-bye" into my suitcase. This is a popular hand-out posted by our classroom door at the beginning of each school year. I had a sense there would be something in it for me, and I was right. Each section had wisdom for not only dealing with young children, but young adults as well. The following are some observations/ruminations from a former TCS parent (me) as she delivers her child to a college campus, far from home, then says good-bye. Again.

Prepare Your Child (because *one of you should be prepared*): This is the section that suggests we let our child choose their clothes and that they pack a favorite "home toy". My daughter and I had four suitcases between us, fifty pounds each. The Primes class can tell me that my child had 200 pounds worth of clothing and home toys. That should do it.

In the Room (now the dorm):

K. had much to settle into. We took our time that first day. She met her roommate, filled out a mountain of forms, unloaded her boxes and I tried to stand back. Many of the moving in chores she preferred to do herself. I noticed that the first thing up on her wall was a poster of Monument Valley – picturing vast desert and huge rock formations. "I am a Westerner!" it seemed to holler. My "reassuring presence" may have been essential that first day, but my influence was fading fast.

Saying Good-bye (when you don't really want to): This was probably the most helpful part of the article for me. In *my plan*, K. and I would spend Day 2 together. I would finish organizing her closet to be just so, and then we'd enjoy dinner together while I gave her last-minute growing up instructions. Ha! She let me down gently, informing me that she had other plans; a tour of the library for starts. My departure was coming way ahead of schedule. I then found myself wanting to hold on – prolong the saying good-bye. I think this is the hardest part to finesse, letting go and

If you would like a new copy of "Saying Goodbye", please check out the coffee room.

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saying good-bye while our hearts feel like they're breaking. An important message from that article came back to me at this moment to support us both. "*Prolonged goodbyes arouse anxiety*". I knew I had to let her let me go. I took a deep breath and stopped fussing with her closet. We said a tearful good-bye in front of the library. As she headed up the stairs to this beautiful old building I heard a final, "Bye, Mom!" She slipped through the door without turning back and was gone. I then thought to myself with a sigh, that it doesn't get any better than this.

K.'s been gone for over a month now. She's enjoying school so much we don't hear from her a lot. Mary Helen has mentored me through parenting a teen-ager for a while now. One suggestion she gave me upon returning home was to let Katie call us first. That was a long first week. On Sunday my husband and I were driving home from an outing, "Oh, a text from K.!" he says. "Open it – READ it!" I say (I'm driving). "*My debit card won't work!*" I smile and think to myself that our work is never really finished. And I'm thankful for that.

Fall Work Day!

Wonder what a work day at TCS means? It certainly means getting things done—and if you like to putter around with little and big projects, this is a not-to-miss day for you. But, more importantly, a work day provides an opportunity to get to know other families in the school. Many good, enduring relationships among parents have started while working on activities together.

I keep a to-do list going all the time and we'll get a surprising number of them done on this fall's work day.

Join me in hoping for good weather on October 24th! Look for more information from Keith D. and Jeff S., P-TCS Facility co-chairs, and plan to join us.

Important Dates

*Saturday, October 24th, Fall Work Day, 10-2. See article for more information!

*Monday, October 26th, Parents for TCS meeting, 7:00 p.m. See Friday Update for location.

*Friday, October 30th, No 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s Classes, Conference Preparation

*Wednesday, November 4th, Parent-Teacher Conference Preparation **Only All Days and Prearranged Childcare Open**, No 2-3s, 3-4s, 4-5s, 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s, and Primes close at noon. 3-4-5s, 4-5-6s and All Days Conferences

*Thursday-Friday, November 5th-6th, Parent -Teacher Conferences, **Only All Days and Prearranged Child Care Open**

Holidays with Young Children, part 1

By Cindy Finch

Many families begin to consider the role of special events, celebrations, and holidays in children's lives this time of year. Here are some thoughts about Halloween, our school approach to holidays, and some ideas for creating meaning with children around holiday celebrations.

Halloween at school

It may appear that we minimize celebrations and holidays in our classrooms. However, we have talked as a staff about the insertion of Halloween into classroom activities and have determined that many aspects of this time of year enrich children's experiences at school. For example, pumpkins are prevalent in stores and gardens, reflect a real harvest going on in our community, and can be made into both food and decorations in the classroom. Instead of bringing many commercially produced things into the classroom, children begin to create masks or costume pieces and wall/window decorations as part of their day at school and as a way to play with the powerful emotions that may occur during holiday seasons. Some classes will do special things with children around this and other holidays; other classes will have regular days for children as a way to counteract the excitement outside the school walls that children are experiencing. In both cases, teacher's decisions about daily classroom experiences will reflect their understanding of the individual children and families involved in the class.

All of our decisions about what to do in the classroom around holidays are filtered through the school framework. TCS classroom experiences are planned:

- *to nurture and stimulate thinking;
- *to accommodate and support children's development; and,
- *to provide a comfortable, reliable, and predictable environment to help children clarify, order, and make sense of the world.

Halloween at home

What do you know about your child and his/her enjoyment of this Halloween season? For some children Halloween is the best holiday of the whole year. It involves pretending and dressing-up—activities young children are drawn to in daily life. It involves some playing around with scary ideas. Most young children have some fears. For some children playing with fear makes it more manageable and feels good. For others it is easy to go too far with scary images, stories, and sounds. Either response is reasonable and appropriate in young children. Many children will be uncertain about whether the scary images, sounds, and stories so prevalent this time of year are real or not, a reflection of how young children try to make sense of new or abstract information. An understanding of how your child experiences, with joy or dread, this season will help you make decisions about family celebrations.

Do you feel compelled to do what you see others do during this holiday season? I hope not. At TCS we hope families will create ways to celebrate holidays, including Halloween, that **considers the age of your children** (young children may find trick or treating fun—but may not be able to do it with more than one immediate neighbor; costumes can be elaborate or very, very, very simple) and **reflect the things you value for your children** (if you hate the candy overeating but love the pumpkin carving, put your emphasis on what you love about the holiday and don't worry about trying to do it all).

The fall and winter holidays can be a busy time for parents of young children. It is easy to fall into the trap (I know I have at times) of thinking that we have the responsibility to provide every experience for our children this year. If you start to feel overwhelmed by holidays, your child is probably feeling that way too. The holiday season can be a joy to share with young children, especially when the emphasis is on **creating meaning** with your children about the holiday through a few simple, shared experiences and on **developing family traditions** that your children learn to associate with this time of year.