

December 2009

# TCS Times

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

## From the Director

By Cindy Finch

It is a festive season at The Children's School. There is a kind of buzz in classrooms, as children and teachers experience together the different ways that families celebrate. There is also the excitement among children of creating something special for other people (you!). Although we professionally acknowledge the egocentricity of young children, this season reminds us of all the ways that children have learned to express positive feelings toward others—like the boy, busy preparing something to give away, who announced to his teacher, “I know what I want to say and I know how to write it. It's ‘I love you.’”

Take a look at the attached article—“Holidays with Young Children.” Jane Dunbar wrote it in the very early days of the school, and we love dusting it off for publication each year. It is a classic. (I appreciated it as a parent of young children. Her careful message gave me the confidence to spend one of my favorite Christmas Eve days at the Boise Zoo with my children when the holiday must-do list became just too stressful for us). What we really love about Jane's article is that it is so developmentally sound—it acknowledges the excitement of the season and considers the needs of very young children during these holidays. Enjoy.

I love traditions and sharing them with children. One of the things I have loved most about parenting is having the freedom to create tradition that fits for my family and helping tradition evolve to remain meaningful as our family grows up together. Simple traditions help children anticipate, enjoy, and understand some complex social and religious events. Sometimes a child's understanding is pretty simple and egocentric—like my oldest son wondering when the next “candy holiday” would happen. In his preschool world every special day involved getting candy. Over time he probably still anticipated sweets, but also learned to love and anticipate the gathering of extended family, the shared cooking experiences, the drives to see lights, the sights and sounds unique to a season—the deeper social and emotional connections that come from traditions.

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.

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*One of our favorite resources to share with families is this guide for buying toys for children.*

*We hope you find this helpful.*

<http://www.truceteachers.org/guides.html>

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. Recently a teacher mentioned that one of the favorite play themes in the class is Halloween. In our adult world we are several "special days" past Halloween—in children's worlds they are still processing, considering, and synthesizing what they learned and experienced on that day 6 weeks ago! That is how education works for young children. 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 events through their eyes.

I hope you find much to appreciate and celebrate in these holiday days together. We'll see you in 2010!

## TCS Board of Directors Biographies

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*Do you have questions about the school's Capital Campaign?*

*Expect to see and hear much more about this exciting effort in January.*

*If you can't wait, please contact Liz Edrich at [lizedrich@aol.com](mailto:lizedrich@aol.com)*

### Susan Park—President

Susan is pleased to be in her sixth year as a member of the Board of Directors of TCS after spending seven years as a parent of two happy TCS students, who are now in 5th and 8th grade. 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 enjoys 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 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

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TCS Parent Board. Janet spent two years as the Business Manager for Foothills School of Arts & Sciences and is currently a real estate professional with Keller Williams Realty. 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.

#### Clint Tate—Treasurer

Clint is a lifelong resident of Boise. He is President of Enterprise Electric, Inc., an electrical contracting company and director 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 20 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 Early Childhood Education at College of Western Idaho. 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.

#### 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. Her daughter is an alumna of TCS.

#### 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)

*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)

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.

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***Did you know?***

*There are 38 adults paying attention to the school experience of 110 children at TCS.*

*These adults include classroom teachers, consultant teachers, board of directors and administrative staff.*

*Thank you all for your commitment and dedication to the school, to early education, to young children—and to our current 110 students!*

*Your efforts make a difference.*

**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.

**Anne Gregory—Board Member**

Anne is the parent of two children who attended The Children's School. Anne received her B.A. in elementary education from Purdue University, her M.A. in adult and higher education from The University of Texas San Antonio, and a Ph.D. in early and emergent literacy from Purdue University. Currently, she teaches literacy courses for pre-service and in-service educators at Boise State University.

**Deanna Smith—Board Member**

Deanna is the parent of two TCS alum. After 10 years as an active parent volunteer at TCS Deanna became a substitute teacher and then an assistant teacher for two years. She left teaching to pursue her passion in community work at Idaho Smart Growth where she works as a community organizer and administrator. Deanna has served on various other non-profit boards and currently serves on her neighborhood association board as Past President. Outside of work Deanna enjoys walking and biking in the Boise foothills with their family dog Olive. She loves doing anything outdoors - camping, hiking, backpacking, canoeing, whitewater rafting and skiing although she and her family have not found as much time in recent years to get out as much as she would like.

**Theresa Willerup—P-TCS Liaison**

Theresa returned to Boise in 2007, after spending 8 years overseas living in England and Denmark. Theresa graduated from Kuna High School in 1988, received her BS in Computer Science from the University of Idaho, and her MBA from the University of the West of England, in Bristol, England in 2001. She is now employed at PakSense, Inc. as the director of business development. Theresa and her husband Frederik are the proud parents of two boys and a girl.

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## 2009-2010 Board of Directors




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Look for board of directors biographies on our website.

[www.tcsboise.org](http://www.tcsboise.org)

## Waiting Lists and Enrollment: How Does It All Work?

By Cindy Finch

While I remain primarily focused on today and the current experience of children and families here now, you might have noticed in last month's TCS Times that I have begun to shift a portion of my thinking to re-enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year (because enrollment materials will be in your hands by the end of January 2010!). Last month we inserted some reminders about toilet learning expectations for families of preschoolers and a reassurance that current families always have enrollment priority.

This month I have been reminded by a thoughtful and concerned parent that there are questions about how our waiting lists work at TCS. Many of you who will read this have already enrolled a child in the school, as had the parent who talked with me. So why does this matter to you? We rely on you to talk about the school to your friends, and if you can't explain our waiting list process clearly and comfortably, it can be confusing to potential families—and maybe even to you. We don't want confusion to be something that comes to people's minds when they think of The Children's School!

Therefore, here are the "myths about waiting lists at The Children's School" as I understand them:

"There's no point getting on the waiting at The Children's School. It is so long that there is no way to get in!"

"The Children's School doesn't have long waiting lists; otherwise, they wouldn't have openings in classes some years."

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*We understand realities—if we don't get your child in the school at a young age it is likely that you are committed and involved in another school.*

“If you don’t get your baby on the waiting list at The Children’s School within a few months of birth, you might as well forget being able to get a spot. And if your baby is born in the wrong month, the whole class will be filled by families whose babies were born earlier because they had access to the waiting list earlier. And if your baby is the wrong gender from what they need, you’ll never get in.”

“If you are a family moving to town with a preschool age child, forget The Children’s School. You are too late to get a good spot on the waiting list.”

So, let’s talk about waiting lists.

Schools have varying ways of handling waiting lists. One former parent, in talking with me about another school they were considering after leaving TCS, said, “At least your process at The Children’s School seems democratic. Everyone has a chance to get a spot. That’s not true everywhere.” I take great pride in that statement and in that parent’s assessment of our process. I hope you have experienced or will experience the same feeling here as that family did.

Some schools have a screening process for children and families in addition to having a waiting list. The Children’s School does not. We have a strong anti-discrimination policy that is stated in the fourth paragraph of our Parent Handbook.

Some schools collect many names—so many that it can be discouraging to get on that list. The Children’s School does not. We have an application completion and fee process, and that ensures that getting a child on the waiting list is a deliberate, active process. It also keeps our lists shorter. It’s an elaborate balance—having enough names on the list to fill our classes without having so many that we frustrate families who passionately want this school experience for their young children.

We actively manage waiting lists for different ages. We roll families to lists for the next class. We move families to the bottom of the list if they tell us “no” twice to an opportunity to enroll—or if they don’t call us back when we’ve called with an opportunity to enroll. However, this “roll down” does not eliminate a family from enrollment. We have at least one child in the school now that had been moved to the bottom of the list previously.

There are some years when the lists are longer and there are children who we are unable to enroll. And there are years, like the one we are in now, where we have a waiting list, but we have had enrollment opportunities declined by families on the list. In fact, this current school year we talked with three families from the waiting list for every one we enrolled. That’s unusual, but understandable during tougher economic times. For many families with whom we talked regarding enrollment this school year, family circumstances had changed since placing a child’s name on the list. That’s a reality that we expect to happen sometimes.

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*Interested in helping  
keep our school  
beautiful?*

*We are looking for  
someone to plant and  
maintain window boxes  
and planters.*

*You can work as a  
volunteer or we can  
provide a small stipend.*

*Please let Cindy know if  
you would like more  
information.*

*A big thank you to  
Sarah O’Dell who has  
worked on this project  
over the last two years!*

## The Children's School

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

Age and gender balance do matter to us. We are not just trying to “sell spots” in the school; we are trying to create optimal early education experiences for young children. Therefore, we do skip around on waiting lists in order to attempt to maintain balance in all classes. Even within this attempt to maintain gender and age balance we follow the application date guidelines.

We do give priority to certain groups: current families, siblings of current families, and alumni families. It matters to us that we are able to serve entire families when we have served one child from that family.

Many years—and certainly this year—families who move to Boise with preschoolers are able to enroll children. This year we have six children in the school whose families recently relocated to Boise. Additionally, we have 24 students that are new to the school. Of these 30 “new” children, five are from alumni families—meaning that they are siblings, children, or grandchildren of previous TCS families!

One thing that I have to acknowledge that is true for our enrollment process is that we rarely have mid-year enrollment opportunities. I didn't say never, because there is, on average, one mid-year enrollment that takes place each school year.

Each of these waiting list and enrollment processes exist to support the close community feel and the stable classroom experiences that we want for children. We want enrollment—from the application stage to the contract-signing stage—to be inviting and intentional. By managing potential enrollment opportunities carefully, we are looking to the classroom experience and family experience that we think serves children and parents best.

It is always our goal to enroll children on the waiting list. It is never our goal to have long lists just for the purpose of having lots of names. We want families to choose this program for their child—and then we want to be able to offer them a spot in the school.

Please let me know if you have other questions about waiting lists, enrollment, or any area of school operations. As always—thanks for giving me an opportunity to understand your perspective and experience.

## Important Dates

\*SCHOOL CLOSED DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>-JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup> (EXCEPT FOR ALL DAYS AND PREARRANGED CHILD CARE DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup> THROUGH DECEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>)

\*Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, All Classes Resume following the Winter Holiday Break

\*Tuesday-Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 3-4-5s and 4-5s Lunch Programs begin. [Register in the Office prior to this date](#)

\*Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. SCHOOL CLOSED

\*Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, Parents for TCS meeting, 7:00 p.m., Look for more information soon

\*Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, Open House. Enrollment information for 10-11 school year will be available at the Open House for currently enrolled families.

\*Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, No 3-4-5s and 4-5-6s Classes for conference preparation. 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

## **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.

