

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

From the Director

By Cindy Finch

As a school with a distinctive educational philosophy, we have many visitors in the course of a school year. One of the questions that visitors inevitably ask is some variation of this: "how do you assure that children are ready to go to another school?" Good question, and one that we enjoy talking about.

One of the most interesting things about school readiness is that success in the next school experience is not dependent on children having the exact experience here that they will have in their next classroom. Just as children who have learned to crawl don't need to be rushed toward walking and need to fully experience the many developmental benefits of crawling before exploring their environments as walkers--children who have just tried easel painting or recognizing their names in writing don't need to be moved quickly to producing letters with a pencil or reading other words. There is much education value to developing deeply rather than quickly.

Developing deeply means that children have time to explore with the new skills they develop, rather than being moved quickly on to the next. There is a caution in early childhood teacher development materials that we have to constantly guard against giving children the message that what they can do is ok, but what they can't do yet is what is truly valued by adults. One of the things that we have tried to do consistently in our classrooms at TCS is balance the introduction of skills that children will need in the future with the many skills and experiences that they need today. If you think of the present and the future as a scale, we weight both sides of the scale with experiences for children—but the scale is always tipped toward the here and now.

What makes the difference in any classroom is observant, knowledgeable adults who are constantly thinking about their interactions with children. Is it time to help this child sit with and consolidate a new understanding or skill? Or is it time to build a bridge, scaffold a new idea, or support a child to move to new understandings and skills? There is an important place for both in early childhood classrooms, and we must never undervalue the first for the second, no matter how strong the urge is to move children along.

There is much talk in our culture about getting children ready for schools, but there is too little talk about how to assure that schools are addressing the real

***Continue Your
Relationship with TCS
All Year Long:***

*We still have openings in
our summer programs.*

*Please sign up in the
office.*

***Recent News from
Alumni:***

*B. K. ('93-'00) has been
awarded a \$10,000
scholarship for college.*

*K. M. ('92-'96) is on the
Dean's List at Wesleyan
University.*

*B. O. ('97-'01) was
awarded the Mayor's
Award.*

*E. G.'s ('97-'98) volunteer
work in Africa and the
Dominican Republic was
highlighted in a Heart of
the Treasure Valley article
in the Idaho Statesman.*

*Congratulations to these
TCS Alum!*

needs of children. In these days when children are tested, compared, and educated in goal-driven environments from the very earliest grades, it is even more important for there to be a place where childhood is valued, appreciated, and nurtured—and not rushed through to get to the next place.

At The Children's School each child brings his/her own individual strength to our classrooms, and we are comfortable with there being variation in those strengths and how they are expressed in a classroom. And with these individual contributions to our classroom communities, it is individual strengths, social skills, curiosity, and competence that are the goals we hold dear for all children, the skills other schools know our graduates by, and, interestingly, the skills that strongly correlate with long-term school success.

Our teaching of young children may or may not look like other schools, but it is always intentional and always dually focused on who children are today and where they are headed tomorrow.

Literacy in the Preschool Years

By Sherri Lauer

Most adults remember learning about the alphabet by teachers or parents showing them a letter (most often on a flash card) and telling them the name of that letter and its sound. This most likely happened when they were around five years old. We often get the question "Do you teach letters in the 3-4s class?". The answer is yes we do, everyday! But it might not look like the way you remember it.

At The Children's School we are concerned with children gaining real knowledge and not just acquiring skills like reciting the alphabet. In order for a child to really understand a new concept they must be able to connect the new information to something they already know. That child must also be interested in the information for it to have lasting impact.

When you come into the 3-4s class you will notice that there are pictures of the children with their names printed underneath. The children quickly learn that these are their printed names. Everyday they practice finding their name without their picture by picking up their cup for snack. This is not as easy as it sounds. Each child is expected to recognize their specific pattern of letters in a sea of letters. This takes time and concentration. We also read to the children each day. The children learn that the letters on the page have meaning. As children gain more of an understanding of this, they will dictate stories to the teachers, who write the words on their illustrations. These printed words are very powerful to the children because they are personal and specific to each child. As the children gain fine motor control they will start to write as well. This again begins with their names. Sometimes this starts as an up and down squiggle. This is their way of

saying 'this is my name'. The next step is writing some of the actual letters in their names, often the first letter. Children of this age will often write their names backwards as a mirror image. This is nothing to be concerned with, our eyes see things as a mirror image and our brain reverses it for us. Young children often do not have this brain connection fully developed, and they will write things backwards. Some do this all the time, some just occasionally; there is no need to correct this. Children will do this on their own when the connection is fully developed.

After the children have mastered the letters in their names, they move on to other important words. These words are different for each child, it may be 'mommy or daddy', their last name, their friends names, or words like 'love', 'you', or 'birthday'. Once the children hit this stage of adding words, the excitement is evident and there is no way to stop the exploration of literacy that continues.

Parents for The Children's School

By Cindy Finch

Our great tradition of parent involvement continues at The Children's School through our parent group, Parents for The Children's School (P-TCS). We've already had successful events (the Fall Carnival, the Holiday Bake Sale, the Children's Art Note Cards and more) and we have the Game Night Spring Fundraiser coming up April 24th.

As a reminder, money raised by P-TCS funds teacher continuing education, parent education, and tuition assistance—all important goals for the school that make TCS the school and school community that we are!

This is the time of year where we begin to look ahead to transitioning some of the leadership positions to new parents for the 2010-2011 school year. Give your level of involvement with this group some serious thought as we complete this school year. Your time and talent will make a difference!

Here are some opportunities to get involved:

- *Chair or co-Chair the Fall 2010 Carnival!
- *Work with a committee of parents and board members as we plan to celebrate the school's 30th anniversary!
- *Consider becoming an officer or a committee chair (or co-chair with a friend)

Questions? Cindy can help connect you to a person who can answer your questions.

Thanks for all you do for The Children's School!

Interested in advertising in the TCS Times?

We will be including information about our ad rates in our next issue.

Habitat: A Natural Place for Healthier Pets (a business and vet clinic owned by one of our families) will be sharing more information with you, by advertising with us next month.

Our Spring Work Day will be on Saturday, May 15th.

Help us prepare to remodel and maintain our playyard areas and the 9th St. House.

It's a great way to meet new people and do meaningful work alongside friends, while helping the school.

Coming Soon—The TCS Auction Takes over the Linen Building for Fun and Games

By Cindy Finch

One of my favorite Saturday nights of the school year is coming up, and I hope you are there. April 24th is the date of the 2010 TCS spring fundraiser—is it already on your calendar? It's on mine and it is an event that means a lot to our school community.

The spring fundraiser is one of the most generous gifts our school community gives to . . . our school community. Ninety percent of the money raised at the spring fundraiser will be used—as it has for almost 25 years—to fund tuition assistance. (The other 10% will be used in a way to benefit the school; to be determined by P-TCS officers and members).

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 Camille L. , A.'s mom and Liz W., mother to C. , C. and G.) 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 a 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 then it is now (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 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.

Each year the Tuition Assistance Committee—consisting of representatives from the TCS Board of Directors—meets to award tuition assistance.

For the 2009-2010 school year nine children attend TCS with the support of tuition assistance, about 8% of our total student population. The total amount awarded was \$25,000, raised at the 2008 Spring Auction.

(Last year's auction money will fund next year's tuition assistance awards!) Each award ranged from 10-50% of the total tuition cost.

(Applications are processed through www.nais.org and a report assessing each applicant's capacity to pay tuition is sent to TCS, where the final award decision is made).

Thank you Parents for The Children's School, P-TCS auction chairs, TCS families who give so generously, and founders of TCS for making and continuing tuition assistance as a priority for our school community.

The Children's School

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

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 a date night downtown—whatever that means to you and know that it can be anything from dressy to casual—and please join us on April 24th for this important evening for The Children's School community. See you there.

Capital Campaign Update

By Henry W.

My name is Henry and I am a parent of two boys at The Children's School. I am also proud to be the Chair of the Capital Campaign. I would like to provide an update regarding progress we have made to date and outline goals we are planning to achieve this Spring.

Hopefully you read the exciting news that a remodel on the existing building will start this summer with the \$400K already raised made possible by 100% support of the Board and Staff and over half of current family support! In order to complete the plans for remodeling the school we need to raise a total of \$1,000,000. Be on the lookout for information in your in box regarding a relaunch event next month that will involve cupcakes and ping pong balls (that is all I am allowed to say)! Our goal is to hit 100% current family support to assist us with our alumni and foundation campaign. Please know that this is a grassroots campaign and that EVERY DOLLAR HELPS.

I sincerely hope that you share my passion to provide a facility that reflects the quality of the education provided to our children and the children that will benefit for the next several generations. With the school's 30th Anniversary this year we have a unique opportunity to provide a gift to the school to build on the seven founding families original gift in 1980. Thanks for reading this message and I would love to address any questions you may have directly via email, phone or you can find me roaming the narrow hallways before and after school!

Important Dates

*Monday, April 5th, All Classes Resume Following Spring Break

*Friday, April 23rd, Earth Day--Spring Sing, Children and Staff Event

***Saturday, April 24th, P-TCS Annual Spring Fundraiser.**

*Monday, April 26th, Parents for TCS meeting, 7:00 p.m. See Friday Updates for meeting location and details.

*Tuesday-Friday, April 27th-30th, 3-4s, 4-5s and 3-4-5s Lunch Programs end

*Saturday, May 15th, Spring Work Day, MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW. Details are on the way.