



∞ The CDS Weekly ∞

Catching Up on the Coming Weeks

(415) 861-5432
October 30, 2003

Halloween At CDS

*Elementary/Middle School Parade,
Noon Dismissal & No Extended Care*

Halloween is gearing up to be a blast this year. All parents are invited to attend the Elementary and Middle School Parade, which will begin in the yard at 11:20 a.m. The regular Friday all-school assembly has been canceled. If you plan to come for the parade, we encourage you to consider public transportation or leave yourself plenty of time to park on the street. As usual, there is no parking in the CDS parking lot.

After the parade, parents will be invited to follow their kids back to their classrooms for photos and celebration. Like normal, before leaving CDS, **ALL parents must sign their children out with their teachers.** New this year for noon dismissal days, to provide an easy pick-up process for parents who are not coming to the parade, we will also be offering our standard drive-through pick-up at the double-doors (**please note - this is a new procedure for noon dismissal at CDS.** **On noon dismissal days, there is NO EXTENDED CARE. All children must be picked up at the times shown below.** In an attempt to allay a massive traffic jam at noon, drive through pick-up will be staggered. Preschool and kindergarten children who have not already left, will be available for pick-up at the double-doors at 12:00. Elementary and middle school students in grades 1-6 will be available for pick-up at the double-doors at 12:15. Happy Halloween!

The Retreat to Kate Moses Kamiya's Ranch

I was the first one up Saturday morning. I was even up before the sun, and in Gold Calaveras County, I guess even the birds keep quiet until after sunrise. Writing first thing in the morning with a cup of coffee at my right hand is one of my rituals, and if I can have a tasty baked item at my left hand, it definitely helps the words flow. So I made the coffee, and in puttering around the large kitchen whose counters were piled high with food, I happened upon a pie covered in plastic, and written on the plastic was: "Love, Hunter Biel-Clark."

After thirty-six years of working for children, fortune has plopped me down in the middle of an educator's Nirvana. Look at this!!! Here I am in a handmade log house, big enough to hold the whole faculty. It appears I am on the edge of an apple orchard ringed by the spiky tips of evergreens silhouetted against the pale pre-dawn sky. The faculty is sleeping, and from what they were saying last night in the midst of their frivolity I'm guessing that I won't see many of them before brunch at 11. But soon I expect one of the parents who have come here to wait on us hand and foot for an entire weekend to appear and to begin making breakfast for the early risers like me.

∞ This Week's Hot Dates ∞



Friday, October 31st

Halloween; Noon Dismissal
No Assembly

11:20 a.m.: Elementary/Middle School
Halloween Parade

12:00 p.m.: Drive-through dismissal for
Preschool and Kindergarten

12:15 p.m.: Drive-through dismissal for
Elementary and Middle School
(grades 1-6)

Parents welcome!

Monday, November 3rd

Professional Day; No School
(No Extended Program)

Thursday, November 6th

7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Admission Open House (All grades)

Thank You!

- ▶ To Kate Moses and the Kamiya family for the use of their ranch for the faculty retreat.
- ▶ To all the wonderful cooks and bakers in the Teddy Bear and 2nd grade classes who made sure the faculty was well-fed at their retreat.
- ▶ To Laura Pliska, Marianne Evans and Kate Moses for giving up their weekend and thoroughly spoiling the faculty with their gracious service, and to their husbands and children for generously sharing them with us!
- ▶ To Jennifer Durand for our first CDS yoga class on Monday afternoon and for allowing the teachers and staff to feel so relaxed at the end of their day.
- ▶ To the following Leaping Lizard parents for chaperoning a trip to Clancy's Pumpkin Patch: Karen Axel, Anshu Chatterjee, Marie Cross, Mary Fernald, Kim Hammond, Kristin Henry, Diana & Sam Hunt, Suzanne Jachinowski, Bill Littmann, Laura Moon, Manuela Mischke-Reeds and John Voss.
- ▶ To the Gigiolio/Debs family for taking down the old greenhouse in the garden last weekend.
- ▶ To the following parents for helping out with recent tours: Jo Biel, Sanlin Cory, Steve Donovan, Tracy Kirkham, Debra Levin, Amanda Newstetter, Darcy Provo and Kristen Wurz. And especially to Jo, Amanda and Steve for doing a preschool tour on their own at the last minute when I (Aimee Giles) was called to jury duty.
- ▶ To Nancy Myers for providing the Leaping Lizards with "sugar skulls" the kids decorated to celebrate the Day Of The Dead.

But look at this kitchen piled high with food. You can hardly move in here for all the food. And where did that food come from? From Hunter and his parents and his classmates and his classmates' parents and the second graders and their parents—with LOVE.

And I know that when we get back to school on Monday it won't be any different. One of Hunter's classmates will come up to me and tell me about an insect she discovered, or the cool thing he did over the weekend, or a sixth grader will tell me that they found the hawk's nest I have been looking for in the bay laurel tree and that Ms. Morgan says it's not a redtail hawk, and a parent will tell me that her mother has died...it just doesn't stop. Thank God.

The faculty retreat to Kate Moses Kamiya's ranch was intended to be one of pure frivolity. (If play is good for children, maybe it is also good for adults, and if playing together builds community, then it is a good thing to do.) But what did we talk about Saturday night? Children. Children and pedagogy, pedagogy and children. We said a lot of silly things, and the laughter didn't abate until after midnight, but it seems that one passion we all have in common is children. I guess we all came to the right place for the right reason.

THANK YOU, PARENTS, FOR SUPPORTING US!!!!!!
—Rick Ackerly, Head of School

Words From Rick *Messin' with Their Heads*

This morning on the way to school, I was seen out on Dolores Street by a kindergartener and her Dad. Then, a few minutes later when she came in the gate, she looked at me funny and said: "I thought you were out there?"

"I am ubiquitous," I said.

She looked at me long and hard with a frown on her face.

"Are you ubiquitous?" I asked, and she looked at her Dad who laughingly said: "Can you be everywhere at once?"

She just shrugged it off as if to say, "Whatever. I can see that you two are in your own little world."

There is no evidence that this silly conversation had any value whatsoever, other than a little fun first thing in the morning, but neither did it do any harm. It is possible to do harm by using big words or adult concepts in a way that feels like a put down to them. But complexity is not the enemy. In fact, the human brain thrives on complexity. The research is conclusive that brains raised in complex environments develop more complex dendritic structures than brains raised in simple environments.

Most curriculum designers, textbook writers and publishers act as if we have to ramp kids up to higher levels of understanding bit by imperceptible bit so they almost don't know what's happening to them. One of the operating theories behind this approach to curriculum is that we don't want kids to fail. If we don't want them to fail, then we need to protect them from challenges that are "beyond them."

This is a simplistic, adult-centered approach to learning, and it has very little to do with education. One thing I learned a long

time ago is that children rise to every occasion, and if it is beyond them, they decide it is beyond them and simply drop it for the time being. Why do I have this instinct to mess up a child's thinking? Because I feel that people don't learn very well if they have everything all neat and tidy in their heads.

Last year, as a guest presenter in the Teddy Bear room, I brought in an oak branch with a ball of mistletoe growing out of it. They had been studying trees since the first week of school. They started by collecting palm seeds. (They counted two thousand, one hundred and seventy eight even though the curriculum calls for children to be able to count to a hundred by the time they graduate from kindergarten.) While looking at the oak branch, they began by noting their observations just like all good scientists.

"There are two kinds of leaves on this branch."

"There are two kinds of branches."

"Look, this branch is growing out of that branch."

I introduced the word "parasite." Most curriculum developers would say that parasite should be learned at a much "higher" grade level (if at all).

Children's Day School completely disagrees. We think that parasite can be introduced to three-year-olds and returned to year after year with exciting results. There is no guarantee that any child will fully understand the concept of parasites before he or she graduates, but there is the possibility that some child will become an expert in it. We certainly don't believe in talking down to children, because we have seen over and over again how children rise to every occasion.

Most curriculum insults children. It is condescending to lead children to knowledge like a horse, one little apple at a time. Children of all ages learn ten-times more and understand it, too, when teachers engage them in an infinitely fruitful subject. Here, we lead and guide them through whole orchards at a time, listening to them and asking them deeper and deeper questions like:

"Why is Maya's bread a different color than Anya's bread?"

"Where did this egg sac come from and why is our spider so much smaller than it was yesterday?"

"Is our spider a boy or a girl?"

"How do you know?"

Children have a natural attraction to language, and their brains do not enjoy or need oversimplification. They are especially attracted to new and complicated words (antidisestablishmentarianism). That it is naturally fun for them is a sign that it is potentially fruitful rather than frivolous. This year, as part of our school-wide food project, the preschoolers will be studying bread. Who knows where it will lead them, but we do know they will learn a whole lot of stuff, unless we tell them that at the end they will be tested on what we decided ahead of time is "the most important stuff."

—Rick Ackerly, Head of School

Making Sure

As some of you know, last week on a field trip to Golden Gate Park, a child was locked into a classmate's father's car. Because she could not figure out how to unlock the safety-latched doors, she remained in the car for far too long until she was discovered. Here's how it happened. The second grade had completed the academic part of a field trip visit to the Academy of Sciences, and gone to the nearby playground. Erin was in the far back row of a SUV and was the last in line to get out. However, she noticed that her shoes were untied and crouched down to tie them, which made her disappear from the view of the adults who were standing outside the vehicle. After the line of kids getting out of the car appeared to end, somebody closed the door and the driver dad locked it from outside with his key fob. When she looked up from tying her shoes, she was alone and locked in the car. Because the class was spread out over a large playground it took a while before the adults realized that someone was lost.

The faculty took this as an opportunity to examine our policies and procedures. Two main things for us all to focus on are:

- 1) Teachers need to have more check points to make sure everyone is accounted for: before we drive off, after we get out of the cars, checking for seatbelts, etc.
- 2) Drivers need to come for the whole trip, and no switching of kids from car to car during the trip because each driver needs to know who they are responsible for for the whole trip.

We appreciate your willingness to help us with the driving on field trips. Rest assured that we will be tightening things up.

We can't afford to have mistakes.

—Rick Ackerly, Head of School

Good News From the Board

Five Seems to be Our Lucky Number

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that we have completed the refinancing of our campus with a 5-year mortgage at the Far East National Bank, and Rick Ackerly has agreed to a 5-year contract as Head of School. With the refinancing, we have replaced a short-term \$2.3 million loan, with balloon principal repayments, which was used to purchase the campus from the Sisters of Notre Dame du Namur in 2001. We now have a \$2.15 million, 5-year conventional mortgage at prime + 1.5% and principal repayments computed on a 20-year amortization schedule. In August, the fair market value of our campus was appraised at \$3.4 million.

As many of you know, Rick Ackerly was initially hired in July 2002 to be Head of School on an interim basis, while we engaged in a search for a permanent Head. In October 2002, the Board decided that our search for a permanent Head needed to go no further than our own back yard and we offered the position to Rick. At the start of this school year, the Board offered Rick a 5-year contract, which he has accepted. We now have a stable financial and leadership platform from which to continue to grow this unique and wonderful school.

—Tracy Kirkham, CDS Board President

Children in Action

Remembering Old Friends

I saw Camille Willhite outside the preschool bathrooms and said, "Hi Camille, it's so good to see you back here at CDS" (She's a Teddy Bear who has returned to CDS). She turned to me and said, "It's good to see you again, too".

Perhaps she was just being polite...but it really felt like she meant it.

—Amanda Coggin, Assistant to the Head

Teachers in Action

Making New Friends

In June, I spent an hour or so at the SPCA, with approximately 50 other adults, with the hope of bringing Amelia the chicken home to CDS. Amelia, you may remember, was found tangled in electrical wires after having been tied to 100 helium balloons for her first flight. PG&E workers rescued her and the SPCA was offering her to a good home. Why not us?

Alas, Amelia was not to join the CDS community but was, apparently, destined to provide us with an opportunity. With me in the SPCA waiting room (in addition to CDS parent Amanda Richard who supported me in my quest) was a fellow educator, Gene Harris, the Environmental Education Teacher for the California School for the Deaf in Fremont. As the new "head farmer" of his school's state-of-the-art organic farm and garden program, he was hoping to take Amelia home to roost in their brand new, student-built aviary. As our conversation progressed, we discovered that our schools shared strikingly similar philosophies and that we shared an excitement for "hands-on" educational experiences. I left the SPCA waiting room without a chicken for our farm, but with an invitation to visit Gene for a tour of his farm and garden at the California School for the Deaf.

Many phone calls and e-mail missives later, Morgan Taggart and I were able to take that tour this past week. We were awed by a computerized irrigation system of which any Napa vineyard would be envious; an observational pond with a filtration system run by solar panels built by the students; a complete weather station monitored by students from which they send daily data to local news stations; and, a greenhouse complete with a "tropical" room which soon will house butterfly reproduction viewing stations in addition to exotic orchids! Most recently, they grew a record-breaking pumpkin, a 700-pounder that the children loved and nurtured all summer in order to come in 33rd in a field of 77 in the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival, making California School for the Deaf the first school ever to enter that pumpkin festival. Gene managed to obtain seeds from the growers of the top five pumpkins (a precious commodity not easily obtained). He has offered to share them with CDS, provided that we promise to try to produce a pumpkin that will be entered in next year's

local pumpkin contests.

Morgan and I ended our visit with a carload full of plants from Gene Harris' program and hearts full of hope for the new relationship we are forging with this sister institution. We look forward to bringing all that the School for the Deaf faculty has learned to our Farm and Garden Program here at CDS, and to sharing our excitement with the students of both schools via field trips and e-mail.

If you are interested in helping us to nurture this new relationship between the CDS and California School for the Deaf environmental education programs by helping to grow a very large pumpkin in our very own CDS garden, please contact Candy Mabry or Morgan Taggart for more information.
—Candy Mabry, Teddy Bear Head Teacher

Early Drop-off Is Now Available On a Drop-In Basis

Have an early meeting or conference call? Maybe you would like to squeeze an early workout in? If so, you can now drop your child off early any school day of the week on a drop-in basis. No notification is necessary.

Early care is available Monday through Friday in the Teddy Bear room from 7:30-8:00 a.m. The cost for drop-in is \$10.00. If you prefer, you may sign up for the whole month at \$60.00, or if you know what your schedule looks like already, you can sign up for the whole school year at \$500.00. See you in the morning!!!

Sign-up for November Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are being held from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, November 20th and 21st. (Reminder that there is no school on these days). Sign up sheets to schedule a conference with your child's' teacher will be posted on the bulletin board just inside the front door of school starting November 3rd. You must come into the school to sign up for a conference. Conferences will be 30 minutes in length and sign-up will be on a first come-first served basis. Thanks!

Speech Screening

Barbara Rockman, licensed Speech Pathologist, is offering her services to CDS families again for preschool through 2nd grade. A detailed letter describing the speech screening with a permission slip is attached to this Weekly. **Please note that the deadline for turning in permission slips is next Friday, November 7th. The cost is \$30/ child (per screening). Please make your check payable to Barbara Rockman and turn it into the envelope at the front desk.** The dates for the actual screenings are as follows:

- ♦ Monday, November 10th: 9:00 a.m-12:00p.m
- ♦ Tuesday, November 11th: 9:00 a.m-12:00p.m
- ♦ Wednesday November 12th: 10:30a.m-12:00p.m

Extended Program News

Upcoming PM Closures: There will be no PM program available on the following days:

- **Friday, October 31st because of Halloween.**
- **Monday, November 3rd because of the faculty professional day**

Electives Update: Electives classes are now well underway and they are going great! Students and teachers have been having an excellent time in the afternoons, working on special projects, learning new skills, and having fun!

Exciting Neighborhood News: The CDS PM elementary classes, 1st grade through 6th grade will have a special opportunity this winter to spend one afternoon each week at the Boys and Girls club with their afternoon class. This is an exciting partnership developing between CDS and the well-established club, offering students a chance to make new friends, participate in special activities, and play fun games off campus in a safe and well-supervised new environment. More information will be sent home as we get closer to making this new program a reality.

Reminder: Your child must have an extended program contract on file to participate in **any** PM program activities, including electives. If you haven't yet filled out a PM Contract, please pick one up from the front desk as soon as possible and return it to Jenna or Laurance. Also, when you sign your child out at the end of the day, check the electives box so you are not overcharged. If you don't see your name on the sign out sheet, please write it in at the bottom of the page. Thank you!

Late sign-up charges: If you sign up AFTER 10:00 a.m. on the day your child needs to stay late in the PM program, you will be charged the Emergency Drop In rate of \$12.50/hr. Avoid extra charges by letting us know your afternoon needs with as much advance notice possible!

Events in review: We had the pleasure of having instructors from the Coyote Point Museum do a hands-on workshop with the 3rd-6th graders earlier this month. Students who participated had a great time learning about the Endangered Species Act, habitat loss, and wildlife preservation through fun games and cool activities. Thanks for participating in the PM Program!

Help Spread the News

Starting in December, the break week camps and electives will be open to children who do not attend CDS during the regular school day. Please pass the word on to friends, neighbors, and extended family members. Let Jenna know if you'd like extra registration materials to hand out as well.

—Jenna Stephens, Extended Program Coordinator, x15

Holiday Wrap and Greens
Order Deadline is Tomorrow (Friday)!!
All Profits Go To Staff Holiday Bonuses!!

Wondering how you are going to wrap your gifts this holiday season or for the rest of the year? Then stock up on Sally Foster gift-wrap and never think about it again. Have gift-wrap already? Then brighten your home with greens or buy a wreath for a friend or sell some to your family, co-workers and neighbors. All proceeds from wrap and green orders go toward holiday bonuses for all CDS faculty and staff.

There is a box by Martha's desk to drop off your completed orders. **The due date for all orders is tomorrow, Friday, October 31, 2003.**

Out-of-town families can also order wrap by visiting www.SallyFoster.com. They must list our city, state, our school name and account # 357069. If possible, please do your shopping with a check, as email orders take up to four months for us to receive payment.

Look for the wrap display at school for larger sample pieces. You may talk to Tina Corse during morning drop-off about wrap. All checks need to be made out to CDS and included in your wrap and/or green orders to school.

Call with any questions to:

Wrap: Tina Corse 824-6290; tjcorse@comcast.net

Greens: Emma Donovan 861-4283; ed@globeconsultants.com

4th Annual CDS Holiday Book Fair

Is it possible to have a great time, support our school library *and* cross items off of your holiday shopping list? On December 10th it is. Come to the CDS Book Fair to purchase books, enjoy terrific conversation, sip wine and munch hors d'oeuvres. Twenty percent of *all* sales – books purchased for the CDS library AND gift books for your family and friends – will go toward the library's book fund.

When you buy one or more titles for the library from a table of pre-selected, teacher-approved books, these books will help to support classroom work and build the library collection, which is available to every child at CDS.

Choosing gift books for your family and friends will be easier and more fun this year, thanks to the "CDS Recommends" books we're highlighting at the book fair. There's sure to be something for everyone on your list in our wide-ranging selection of titles personally recommended by our parents, faculty, staff and students. "CDS Recommends" titles – everything from cookbooks to poetry, novels to art books -- will be displayed on special tables, with placards giving short descriptions and the recommenders' names.

More details about the book fair - including special guest authors, childcare, parking, and additional ways to support the library – will be coming in the following weeks. So mark your calendar for the CDS Holiday Book Fair now:

4th Annual CDS Holiday Book Fair
Wednesday December 10, 6-9pm
A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books
601 Van Ness Avenue, Opera Plaza

If you would like to volunteer to help with the book fair, please contact Sally Nielsen at sn@hausrath.com or (415) 861-4575.

CDS Parent-Teacher-Trustee- Administrator Association: PTTA Update

Please join us for another fun and informative PTTA meeting this Tuesday, November 4th at 4:30 p.m. in the faculty lounge. As always, childcare during the meeting is free; just sign up with Martha by 10:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. Agenda topics for the meeting will include:

- ◆ Classroom liaisons and all-school communications
- ◆ Book fair update/Kate Moses
- ◆ CDS emergency plan
- ◆ Annual fund/phonathon status report
- ◆ Upcoming events

We would also like to hear from one and all regarding which back-to-school events and programs have worked well for parents this fall, and which things could use improvement. Thanks as always for your continued participation and enthusiasm. If there are other topics you would like to see addressed at this meeting, please let me or one of the other PTTA officers know. Thank you!

Friday Morning Coffee

Suffering from separation anxiety...from fellow adults? Try to schedule a few free minutes into your Friday morning to join other parents for hot coffee and grown up conversation outside in the yard after drop off, 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

PTTA Questions or Ideas?

Contact Marion Quinones at 701-1957 or MQuinones@fbm.com.

Do You Prefer *The Weekly* by Email?

If you would like to help us reduce our paper usage and receive the *CDS Weekly* via email, please drop us a quick email at cdsweekly@cds-sf.org and give us your email address. Also, let us know the name and class of the child your hard copy usually goes home with so we can remove him or her from the classroom distribution list. Thanks!

Upcoming on the CDS Calendar



Friday, October 31st

Halloween; Noon Dismissal

No Assembly

11:20 a.m.: Elementary/Middle School

Halloween Parade

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Friday, November 7th

5:00 p.m.

CDS Sibling Applications Due

How to Submit to *The CDS Weekly*:
Submissions are to be received **no later than Wednesday at
8:00 am**. Please email them to cdsweekly@cds-sf.org.