



∞ The CDS Weekly ∞

Catching Up on the Coming Weeks

(415) 861-5432
January 22, 2004

Words From Rick

Strengthening the Reality-Testing Mechanism

For reasons I am still in the process of trying to grasp, my wife Victoria, who reads only great literature, likes to watch *American Idol*. She is very clear about the reasons she enjoys it. I, on the other hand, feel somewhat vague about why I hate it. I did watch it last night and did find it interesting—to a point. It's a fascinating phenomenon to watch young Americans come forward by the thousands to take a shot at being a singing star. What's being portrayed now in the early stages of the selection process, is a few kids who have potential, and a large number who have no apparent performance talent at all—some who are apparently tone deaf, some with no sense of rhythm. The judges can be very disrespectful, even humiliating, as they deliver their admittedly accurate verdicts.

What is most amazing of all is how many of the truly bad performers argue back. They seem to believe that all they have to do to be good is to believe they are good, and to advocate for themselves.

It's just a show. It's just entertainment (for those who find it entertaining). We all know (I hope) that reality TV is not reality, right? Nonetheless last night's show did make me aware of a theme in American culture, a theme that infiltrates American education sometimes; that is, the over-reliance on the power of positive thinking. We often find both parents and teachers talking and acting as if their job is to build a "positive self-image" in the child. We find teachers not wanting to say an answer is wrong and parents not wanting to say, "No," for fear of hurting a child's self-esteem.

This Wednesday evening at parent education night, one thing "CDS teachers know that parents can use at home" is that our job is not to "build a child's positive self-image." In the first place, our job is not to "build," but to create the conditions in which the child can build. Secondly, the goal is not a *positive* self-image, but an *accurate* self-image.

How did young people who can't match a pitch or carry a tune ever get so out of touch with reality that they think they can be star singers? I am not suggesting that someone should have told them that they can't sing. I am saying that various people in their environment should have created the conditions in which they develop and discover an accurate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

To be sure, in music class Ms. Emilie acts as if all of her students can learn music, and she would never tell a child that they can't sing, or that they have a "tin ear." Generalizations and labels are bad for at least two reasons. First, they are static. They ignore the reality that things can change. A slow reader

∞ This Week's Hot Dates ∞



Monday, January 26th

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Knit and Spin Club
Art studio

Monday, January 26th

4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Black and White Baaall and Auction Planning Meeting
Faculty Lounge

Thank You!

- ▶ To Susi Alexander for donating an Amazon.com gift certificate to the library.
- ▶ To Lisa Eltinge for donating three kids' riding trucks and bikes to the yard.
- ▶ To Susi Alexander, Tina Corse, Sanlin Cory, Lisa Eltinge, Inna Kish, Elizabeth McClellan, Candy Mabry, Sally Nielsen, Amanda Richard, and Paula Symonds for writing personal notes to former parents for the Development Department.
- ▶ To William Opdyke for the generous gift to the Starfish Classroom for extra art supplies.

today could be a good reader when they are older. Second, they are rarely accurate; specifics and fact-based stories are much more accurate and useful.

Uri Bronfenbrenner, Professor Emeritus at Cornell and one of the world's leading authorities on the family used to say: "It is no secret what children need. They need two things: 1) they need an adult who is irrationally involved with the child in activities of ever-increasing complexity, and (2) they need an adult who is rationally involved with the child in activities of ever-increasing complexity." In other words, children need adults who are crazy about them, *and* adults who help them see the world accurately. It is good to be positive, but just as important to be accurate.

One way of looking at our job as educators is to see our work as strengthening the child's reality-testing mechanism. Therefore, the skills of telling the truth in love are among the disciplines of a good educator and parent. Praise is over-rated. It is often not delivered in pure love, but mixed with a fear of failure, and it is almost always inaccurate feedback. There are basically two parts to the job: 1) Trust the child's reality-testing

mechanism. Believe in it and count on it. (2) Feed it accurate data. I have found that children respond better than you think. It is as if children are saying to themselves: "Just tell me the truth, Dad. I can take it."

One of the nice things about being at CDS is that this community has, by and large, been doing that all along. That is one of the delightful things about our children. By the time they are in 5th and 6th grade, they are pretty accurate about and comfortable with who they are.

They have the confidence to speak right up, and the humility to take criticism. This is the dynamism that encourages them to strive toward ever higher goals— even to work on their weaknesses— so that they can achieve something they want.

Hooray! The Knit and Spin Club Resumes

Join an enthusiastic group of knitters as we dust off our needles and get back to work. Beginners are welcome to participate as we knit, crochet and spin yarn together on Monday evening, January 26th, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the art studio. A fun way to connect with your CDS community!

Extended Program News

February Break Camp

The theme for this year's February break camp is, *Where We Live*. Sign-up packets started going home in backpacks early this week. The camp will run from Tuesday, February 17th – Friday, February 20th and is open to all. If you do not receive a packet by next Monday, please pick one up at the front desk or call Jenna at extension 15.

Winter Electives

Electives began last week on January 12th and they are off to a great start. Please check the roster posted at the front doors if you need to double-check on your child's elective day, time or location.

Afternoon Art:

Students in the after-school program have been doing lots of amazing art projects. Please stop by the bulletin board across the hall from the Leaping Lizard room to see some of their creative work on display.

The PM Program is Open to All:

Thanks to those of you who have helped spread the word about CDS opening its programs. Please continue to let people know that we've opened up the Break Week camps, Elective/Enrichment Classes, and PM Program to children who don't attend CDS during the regular school year. For more information call Jenna at 861-5432 x 15.

—Jenna Stephens, Extended Program Coordinator

Class Photos and One Last Retake Day

By now, those of you who ordered them should have received your child's individual school portraits as well as their class portrait. If not, please contact Amanda at x12.

We have scheduled yet another Photo Retake Day on **Thursday, February 26th** for those wanting retakes or still

missing portraits due to the technical difficulties. **The Starfish and Leaping Lizard group photo will also be retaken on that day.**

Thank you for your patience.

—Amanda Coggin, Assistant to the Head, x12

Binoculars...Anyone?

Got a pair of old binoculars sitting in the closet that you never use? The Environmental Education Program at CDS would love to take them off your hands. As many of you know, we have a couple of hawks that have taken up residence in the neighborhood. The kids love looking at the hawks, especially when they can get a closer view. Please donate your binoculars at the front desk. Thanks!

Hola Padres!

Here are *la frase de la semana*. They are *verbos de accion*, action verbs:

Baila, dance.

Baila con los manos. Dance with the hands

Baila con los pies. Dance with the feet.

Levantate, stand up.

Sientate, sit down.

Please spend a little time this week going over these new words and phrases with your children. Gracias y hasta pronto.

—Consuelo Aparicio-Cercos, Spanish Department

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

2004 Black and White Baaall and Auction Date Change

At the request of Annunciation Cathedral, the Black and White Baaall and Auction will be held two weeks earlier than our current calendar reflects—on Saturday, March 20th, from 7:00 to midnight. The Baaall and Auction is already gearing up to be a banner event. We hope everyone will find a way to get involved in this fun and fabulous community effort.

Baaall and Auction Planning Meeting

Mark your calendars for the next annual baaall and auction planning meeting. The meeting will take place in the teachers' lounge on Monday, January 26th, from 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. We need volunteers for a wide range of tasks including: decorations, food and wine, graphics, data entry, soliciting for auction items, ticket sales, check out, and much more. There is a job for everyone who is interested. If you have any questions about this meeting, please contact Robin Wander at (415) 286-2689 or robinw@post.harvard.edu.

Friday Morning Coffee

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

Help us reduce our paper usage by receiving the *Weekly* via
email. Please email us at cdsweekly@cds-sf.org and give us
your email address. 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



Monday, January 26th

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Knit and Spin Club
Art studio

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4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Black and White Baaall and Auction Planning Meeting
Faculty Lounge

Friday, February 6th

Re-enrollment contracts mailed to all families.

Monday, February 9th

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

State of the School Night, Part II
Location TBA

Friday, February 13th

Re-enrollment contracts due.

Thursday, February 26th

Last Photo Retake Day

How to Submit to *The CDS Weekly*.

Submissions are to be received **no later than 8:00 am**
Wednesday. Please email them to [cgsweekly@cds-sf.org](mailto:cdsweekly@cds-sf.org).



