



# ∞ The CDS Weekly ∞

## Catching Up on the Coming Weeks

(415) 861-5432  
May 6, 2004

### Words From Rick

#### *Creativity and Survival*

Last Saturday at the Country Fair, the environmental education department of the school passed on to the art department its greatest annual gift: ten pounds of wool. Those who were nearest the sheep-shearing were given a bit of the soft black stuff. A four-year-old girl gave me an inch of it. It is so soft and black. It does, indeed, seem to say: "Do something creative with me."

Creativity—what is that? Is it just about the arts? Are creative people the artists and the scientists are the boring plodders? Where did I even get that notion? Surely there is as much plodding in turning raw wool into yarn as there is in watching cells multiply? Why do so many people avoid science as they get older?

I am asking myself these questions because I saw a headline on the front page of the New York Times on Monday which read: "U.S. Is Losing Its Dominance In the Sciences." The article reports that in the last five years, Europe and Asia have surpassed the United States in the production of patents and published research. It identifies a complex of causes from globalization to a declining interest among young Americans in science careers.

Although, of course, this trend is the result of many factors, perhaps one is that creativity is perceived to be in the domain of art not science. Thinking creatively in a disciplined way is exactly what produces scientific discoveries and the kind of innovation for which the United States has become famous. Yet, the culture of America represented by concepts like "free from the past," "new start," "thinking out of the box," "breaking the mold," "reinventing yourself," sags when it gets to our educational system: public, parochial and even "exclusive private." In the arts (soft, optional subjects) one can be creative, but in the "hard core" subjects being creative might get you a bad grade.

Last month I asked a teacher candidate, "What is the difference between your students and CDS students?"

He replied, "My students only care about the answer; CDS students want to understand. You know what else? My students can't think creatively. They aren't interested in new ideas or different ways of thinking about something, because they might get it wrong and thus get a lower grade." Such is the culture in one of "the best private schools" in the city. The same school culture is represented by the President's "No Child Left Behind" initiative, which is driving teaching in California Public Schools.

And yet there is a large body of research that understanding

### ∞ This Week's Hot Dates ∞



**Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**

9:00 a.m.

Family Farmer Training  
CDS Farm

**Thursday & Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>**

Parent/Teacher Conferences

No School & No Extended Program

### Thank You!

- ▶ Thank you to EVERYONE who helped make the Country Fair a whopping success, especially Sally Nielsen, Amanda Richard, Karen Slovak, Morgan Taggart, and Elizabeth McClellan.
- ▶ Thank you to Betsy Cordes for designing and overseeing the production of our new CDS logo items sold at the Fair (baseball caps, tote bags and water bottles).
- ▶ Thank you to The Nielsen/Keller family for the brand new toaster in the faculty lounge.
- ▶ Thank you to Kathleen Cologne, Sanlin Cory, Emma Donovan, Betsy Cordes, Rebecca Nitzan, and Karen Levesque for all volunteering as parent drivers for the PM program's environmental service project this month.
- ▶ Thank you to Starfish Miles Young's family for donating a scooter for use on the yard.

(read Howard Gardner) and motivation (see Debra Stipek) are critical for increasing knowledge. The Queen of England recently knighted Sir Kenneth Robinson for his research, which shows the centrality of creativity in learning. His definition of intelligence is the ability to apply old knowledge to new situations in novel and constructive ways. Given the changing world we live in, what could have more survival value?

Today as I was writing this, three third grade girls came to my office and proudly presented me with a plastic cup containing money. "We sold perfume at the Country Fair and made fifteen dollars. We would like to donate it to the school."

"This is amazing," I said. "Thank you so much. How did you make the perfume?"

"We mixed flowers with water. It smelled nice."

"But what got you started?" I asked.

"It was an accident." (All great discoveries begin with an accident, right?)

"Last Wednesday in after care we had nothing to do. There was some dirt in a cup of water, so I pushed it away. Then a flower fell in it."

"Then I smelled it, and it smelled good."

"So the next day in class..."

"During free play..."

"Yeah, during free play we got more cups and started mixing in different flowers."

"Yeah. First we tried dried dandelions..."

"Then pink flowers from the hawthorne tree..."

"Then lavender, then honeysuckle..."

"Lavender and honeysuckle were the best..."

"We tried mixing everything together..."

"That was the best..."

"No, 'Purple Pleasure' was the best..."

"Yeah. That was the best mixture."

"We started using paper cups..."

"Then for the Fair we brought in different containers..."

"Yeah, we had all kinds..."

"Yeah. We sold a lot of stuff."

Was this science? community service? economics? fundraising? staving off boredom? or just play? All of the above, of course. It is a model of collaborative creativity, and what we need for our civilization to survive. Our vision of the school's role is to create opportunities like this and add academic rigor.

I often say that the culture of a school is the delivery system of education. This is a good example. There is fifteen dollars sitting on my desk because some students had a fun learning experience which is the result of everything: the program, the teachers, the parents, play, our environment, the habit of taking initiative, and so much more including one of our best communal rituals: Country Fair.

For education to be successful the community needs to see the students as engines of creativity rather than empty vessels to be filled with correct information. The same thing is necessary for the survival of human society. Creating is what humans do.

## The Dirt

### *Reflections on Earth Day*

A few weeks ago I was struggling to develop a meaningful celebration for Earth Day. I didn't want it to be an isolated event, where we talk about the environment and the earth for one day. I talked with teachers in the hopes of finding activities and conversations that would be integrated to other projects already going on in their classes.

The second grade conducted a transportation survey to see how students at CDS get to school as part of their study of cities. First grade did a trash pickup around the neighborhood. Ms. Paula's class tallied the paper recycling totals for the year and presented them at assembly. We have recycled over 785 pounds of paper this year! The kids gained new insights through their work on Earth Day, but I realized that at CDS environmental responsibility and respect for the earth is an intimate connection between child and place that is in a constant state of evolution.

When Ms. Elizabeth and I were talking about Earth Day she said, "Every day is Earth Day at CDS." She's right. Isolated activities on one day during the year can't build these complex relationships among people and their environment. I had a conversation with a student right after Earth Day that made me realize how dedicated we are as a community of learners to developing these relationships. I was walking down the hall during dismissal a couple of weeks ago when Noah, a second grader, stopped me suddenly,

"Ms. Morgan! I HAVE to tell you something!"

"What is it Noah?"

"I was in the garden during recess, and I know I was in there without a teacher, but I saw some preschoolers picking up ladybugs and holding as many in their hands as they could."

"What is wrong with that?" I asked.

"I told them they were disturbing their habitat and that the ladybugs would leave. They won't come back because they will see humans as predators. They didn't listen to me," he said, very disappointed.

We talked about a couple different ways that we could help the preschoolers understand his concerns. What struck me most about this conversation was that as a second grader, Noah understood how a person's actions have consequences on those around them and how we must try to educate those around us even if they don't listen. That is what Earth Day is all about and it isn't something we can teach in one day.

—Morgan Taggart, Environmental, Education Resource Teacher

## Calling All Family Farmers

### *Family Farmer Training*

Do you dream of getting up at the crack of dawn on a Saturday to come to school and feed some bleating sheep and clucking hens? Make that dream a reality and come to the family farmer training at CDS on Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. and learn how to care for the sheep, the chickens and the garden. The training will provide you with all of the information, skills and confidence you'll need to care for the farm and garden on the weekends. At the end of the training you'll sign up for the dates you want from May through September. Everyone is welcome

to attend. Please call me if you have any questions about the training or the responsibilities of a family farmer. Hope to see you there!

### *The Sheep are Looking for their Keys*

The sheep are nervous that no one will be tending their weekend hay requirements; they caught wind of the scarcity of farm keys in these parts. Please see that the keys make their way back to the CDS front desk. Thanks again for doing farm duty.

—Morgan Taggart, Environmental Education Resource Teacher

## Parent/Teacher Conferences Thursday & Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>

Parent/Teacher conferences are coming up in a couple of weeks on Thursday & Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. **There is no school or extended program on those days.** There will be childcare in the yard during your scheduled conference time. Your child's teachers will be in touch with you to let you know their sign-up process. If you have any questions, contact your teacher directly by email. Reminder that teachers' email addresses are their first name and last name initial@cds-sf.org (example: [brittanym@cds-sf.org](mailto:brittanym@cds-sf.org))

## Seeking Volunteer Front Desk Helpers

Want to be in-the-know on CDS happenings? Interested in connecting with other school parents? Consider volunteering at the front desk for an hour and a half on Wednesday afternoons. That way, Martha can attend the weekly staff meeting. Let Martha know by email: [marthap@cds-sf.org](mailto:marthap@cds-sf.org) if you can help.

## Parking Reminder

Please remember NOT to park in the CDS lot. Lately, several parents who have been bringing their children in late have been parking in the fire lane by the double doors. This blocks the city garbage trucks from being able to access our garbage pick-up. If you are arriving late to school, please remember to park on the street and walk your child in to school.

## Speech Pathologists Visit in May

Parents who'd like their child(ren) to be screened for speech- and language-related issues may sign up for an appointment with two pathologists scheduled to visit CDS in May. Dr. Barbara Rockman and Julie Manyak will be at CDS to screen those in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or younger May 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. The schedule is:

- **Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>** (Teddy Bears, Leaping Lizards and Starfish from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
- **Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>** (Kindergarten I and Kindergarten II) from 9 to 10:30 a.m.)
- **Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup>** (1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.)

If you'd like your child to be tested, please complete the attached permission slip and return it to Martha at the front desk **with your \$30 check (per child) payable to Dr.**

## **Barbara Rockman by Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**

The importance of early identification and treatment of speech and language delays is well recognized, Dr. Rockman points out. Participants will receive a copy of the screening results, and she will be available to talk with parents by phone to answer any questions they may have. Also, she will provide information about follow-up options, if appropriate.

## Earn Extra Funds for CDS Through Summer Vacation

Looking for an educational workbook and a fun *Learning Company* CD for your children for summer break? Then look for the Summer Vacation workbooks and CDs that are going home with students today. After previewing these CDs and workbooks, you can either return them or purchase them to use over the summer. How does this benefit CDS? If you purchase the CD/workbook, all proceeds will go to CDS. If you have any questions you can contact Tina Corse at: [tjcorse@comcast.net](mailto:tjcorse@comcast.net)

## Extended Program News

*Summer Camp is Quickly Approaching!*

Summer camps at CDS are filling up for both preschool-K and elementary-middle school. If you would like your child to attend any part of the summer camp at CDS, please let me know so that I can reserve a spot for you. The first deadline with 50% of tuition due is on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The teachers and camp offerings are truly incredible this year, so don't miss out!

*PM Program Spring Community Service Project:  
WE NEED PARENT DRIVER VOLUNTEERS!*

In May, after-school participants will have the opportunity to work with the organization "Literacy for Environmental Justice" doing wetlands and habitat restoration work at the beautiful Heron's Head Wildlife Area located on the bay.

Dates are:

Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-5:30 p.m.

If you can help, please call Jenna at extension 15.

## Book Drive for Notre Dame Plaza

Need to make room in your house for more books? The seniors at Notre Dame Plaza would love some reading material. Please consider donating your gently used books or even buying a new one. They have residents whose native languages are Chinese, Spanish and Russian as well as English, so books in those languages would be especially appreciated. There will be a box by Martha's desk for the rest of the year. Please place your book donations in the box or leave them with a staff member at drop-off.

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

*Friday Morning Coffee*

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 (415) 701-1957 or [MQuinones@fbm.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 – Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>**

ERB Testing Week  
(3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades)

**Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>**

Step-Up Day

**Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>**

Spring Electives End

**Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup>**

Middle School Picnic **CANCELLED**

**Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>**

Memorial Day Observed

No School

No Extended Program

**Friday, June 11<sup>th</sup>**

Last Day of School

Noon Dismissal

No Extended Program

How to Submit to *The CDS Weekly*.

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