



March 17, 2005

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

An Outbreak of Reading

Several preschoolers (Sam, Chase, Aisha, Teddy, Sofia, Nico and Mason) have already been spotted writing poems in the Papa Artie Bower. Last week Elizabeth McClellan sat in the Bower painting words in white letters on grey beach stones the size of preschool hands. Sam came over to see and started to point to all the words he knew—he knew a lot of them. A few days later half a dozen preschoolers searched the Bower looking for words they recognized and helped each other find more words. Elizabeth and the students lined them all up and read aloud a weird, surrealist poem. Mason said, “If you line up words you know, you can say something.” That’s the idea!

I like working in a school that begins with two and three year old children and sends them off to high school ten or eleven years later. Raising kids well is a matter of keeping our eye on the long haul. Many mistakes that adults make with children can be reduced to being nearsighted or not farsighted enough. By focusing on the long haul and maintaining a love of learning, we can make a difference in very special ways when we give ourselves the time.

For best results we need to have the students for a while. We interviewed an AMI trained Montessori teacher yesterday. She was a good candidate; bright, articulate and very capable. However, her training taught her that children have “sensitive periods” for learning certain things. If you miss teaching the right thing at the right time you miss an important opportunity and it’s therefore “gone forever.”

Like so much in this business, this is a partial truth. What she is missing is that we never know when that “sensitive period” will come for each child. For Sam and his friends it came last week. For others it may come years later. When are middle school students going to master algebra? The truth is it could happen anywhere between the ages of 12 and 18, not based on intelligence but on the timing of their cognitive development. That is why we start algebra in sixth grade (and in some ways in kindergarten) and don’t require mastery by any particular time.

Some preschoolers are already beginning to read. Many others are not. The average age at which a child is physiologically ready to read is six-and-a-half but the range is between three and nine. Interestingly enough, all but one of our current kindergarten students are reading words; half of them are reading sentences for meaning. Some of these students will struggle with reading all the way through eighth grade. That is the way it is with all academic skills.

Our job is to create the conditions in which they will read and write when they are ready, and to challenge them appropriately. This is quite different from

Hot Dates

Friday, March 18
10:15-10:30 a.m.

Friday assembly
Starfish class presenting

Saturday, March 19

6 p.m.-12 a.m.

Spring Celebration & Auction
Annunciation Cathedral
245 Valencia Street

Tuesday, March 22

9 a.m.

Class photos by Mugshots



Thank You!

- To the following students for bringing in plants for the pollinator garden: Rigo Martinez, Tyler Di Grande, Sofia Woo, Ava Burton, Daniel Burton, Erin Minus, Kate Zirulnik and Sasha Zirulnik.

accelerating them. First, there is no correlation between early skill mastery and later academic achievement, creativity or any other measure of adult effectiveness. Second, focusing on a narrow range of paper and pencil academic skills represents an anemic notion of what high academic achievement is all about. Finally, trying to accelerate kids can have serious negative side effects.

We never know when a child will be ready to catch fire. Our job is to keep them always on fire about something and be ready to exploit opportunities when they are ready. The Papa Artie Bower is one of our new tools.

The Dirt

Baby Goat Hugs

Last week the kindergarten class went to Slide Ranch on a field trip. Many of us fell in love with the kids (i.e., baby goats) that were born a week ago. One student in particular fell hard for the baby goats. While we were in the goat pen Roland looked up at me and said, "I just really want to hug them." I replied, "Go ahead. Just be really gentle." Roland then proceeded to go around to all the baby goats and give them the most gentle and delicate hugs and kisses possible. It was a special moment to witness and I felt honored to be there.

From the Office

Welcome Terry

We have been meeting many highly qualified candidates interested in teaching here next year. Resumes have been pouring in, as evidenced by numerous teacher visits and overall enthusiasm about CDS.

That said, we would like to welcome our first new hire, Terry Ashkinos. Terry will be joining the middle school team teaching English and humanities. Terry brings with him eight years of experience teaching writing, philosophy and social studies to middle school students, largely in San Francisco. He has taught at Everett Middle School and most recently at Sacred Heart/St. Dominic Intermediate School as the seventh grade teacher. Terry obtained his

master of philosophy at San Francisco State University. His love of writing continues outside the classroom, having developed the middle school newspaper at Everett as well as collaborating with Andre Perry at 826 Valencia and "DIY (Do It Yourself)," a San Francisco literary magazine. Please welcome Terry to the CDS community.

Goodbye Andre

With welcome additions come fond farewells. Andre Perry, our middle school English and humanities teacher, will be attending graduate school in the fall to study creative writing. Andre has been working hard in the past several years; crafting his writing in preparation for attending the graduate program of his choice. Please join us in congratulating Andre in this exciting endeavor. Andre has been a strong force in the development of the middle school and has inspired many future writers. He will be greatly missed.

Changes in the Third Grade

Ellie Graham has joined the third grade team, replacing Annile Alexander who will remain at CDS as a substitute teacher. Ellie has a BA in elementary education from The Catholic University of America and a multi-subject California teaching credential. She brings with her several years of teaching experience in the Bay Area and in Washington D.C., in addition to experience as a youth mentor and swimming coach. Please welcome Ellie to the CDS community.

Administrative Changes

Candy recently told Rick she wants to return to the classroom at CDS. She has been doing a great job as Assistant Head of School, as you all know. However, this is the right move for her, so it has to be the right move for the school. Please join us in supporting her in this upcoming transition.

Staffing changes are inevitable and while it may feel unsettling, please know that we have the best interests of the children in mind and we will keep you updated on changes accordingly. For now, we know that Candy will be teaching here next year; though we don't yet know which class she will be part of, and (as is the case every year) we do not expect to have all teaching assignments settled until this summer. Please feel free to introduce yourselves to any teacher or administrator candidate visiting school this spring, and thank you for your patience and support during this process. We are looking forward to a great 2005-06 school year.

Events

Spring Celebration & Auction

Saturday, March 19, 2005

6 p.m.-12 a.m.

Annunciation Cathedral

245 Valencia Street

The Spring Celebration & Auction is this Saturday, March 19!

Remember to sign up for childcare. Childcare will take place at CDS from 5:45 p.m.-midnight and will be \$5 an hour per child. Call Rose at x10 to sign up.

By now you should have received the wonderful auction program which contains everything you need to know about the silent auction, raffle, live auction, dinner and dancing. Please let Emma know (415-861-4283) if you haven't received your auction program.

For your convenience you can also view the auction program online at www.cds-sf.org/life_at_cds/springauction.html.

The silent auction begins at 6 p.m. and you may want to arrive on time to take advantage of the champagne and hors d'oeuvres and the "first come, first serve" items.

Have you decided on which live auction item you will choose if your raffle ticket is drawn? Buy your raffle tickets at school this week; only a few more are available for \$100 each.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday!

Extended Program News

Winter Enrichment Classes

All winter enrichment classes have ended. Please be on the lookout for the next round of class offerings, which will be sent home in student backpacks the week of March 21.

PM Program Special Events

Students from Marshall Elementary will be spending the afternoon at CDS on Friday, March 18. This is part of an ongoing partnership started by Michael Gast with Marshall's after school program.

Summer Camp

Everyone should have received summer camp registration packets by now. If not, they are available at the front desk. Enrollment has begun and is open to non-CDS families. If you are interested in having your child participate, please register soon. Spaces are limited and are filling up.

Spring Vacation Camp

The spring vacation camp will run from March 28-April 1. Please sign up as soon as possible if you'd like your child to participate. The theme for the camp is *Urban Wildlife* and teachers have many fun projects planned. Unlike previous sessions, exceptions will not be made for late sign-ups. The camp is filling up and space is limited.

PTTA Update

CDS E-Group

The CDS community is a great resource and e-mail makes it easy to communicate with one other. The CDS e-group is like an in-house Craigslist. If you have something to sell, need a recommendation for a babysitter, dentist, piano teacher, etc., want to announce an event outside of school or have an apartment to rent, you'll be able to communicate this information easily by just typing a message and pressing "send." This is a great opportunity to reach out to the hundreds of people who make up the CDS community, live in your neighborhood and know your kids. This group is open to the entire CDS community (teachers, administrators, parents) and is exclusively about life outside of school.

To join, simply send a blank e-mail to cdscommunity-subscribe@yahoo.com.

Go Bulldogs!

The first annual faculty vs. the 6th and 7th grade boys and girls basketball team turned into a thrilling game with the faculty winning by a mere two points, 42-40. Many thanks to all who participated in this great game. The next faculty vs. student match up will be a whiffle ball game in June. Start practicing your swing today!

Hola Familias de CDS

Hola Familias!

This week the kindergarten and first grade classes have been studying rules and terms related to safety in Spanish. The next time you are crossing the street on the way to school you might say, *Antes de cruzar esperar a ver la luz verde.* (Before crossing, wait for the green light.) Both classes have also been working on decorating piñatas.

Ms. Gladys' sixth and seventh grades classes have been studying the *partes del cuerpo* (parts of the body), such as *ojo* (eyes) and *pierna* (leg). In addition, they have been studying numbers from ten to one thousand:

10, *dies*

100, *cien*

1000, *mil*

La frase de la semana: The phrase of the week:

Las reglas de seguridad. The rules for safety.

— Spanish Department

Upcoming Dates

March 28-April 1

Spring vacation

No school

Spring vacation camp offered

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