



December 9, 2004

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Strategic Issues

A big strategic question for CDS in the next few years is High School. What's the question? Well, if I invest all this money and energy and love in this little school, will I be disappointed when my child comes out the other end? If my family goes down the CDS road, will it turn out to be a *cul de sac*?

The Programmatic Excellence Strategic Planning Task Force has this matter in its sights. It was immediately apparent that defining the CDS graduate was of strategic importance, and at first it seemed easy to do that. There seems to be broad communal agreement among CDS parents and teachers on what we want our graduates to look like: confident learners who are discovering and developing their creativity and their gifts; students with high intellectual curiosity and the skills and disciplines necessary for pursuing those interests. CDS has fine tuned this by defining academic excellence as the ability to ask and research good questions, to write well, to speak up publicly, to take a stand competently, to solve problems using mathematics and to have the capability of persevering through difficulty.

We know that high schools are looking for students who fit this description. High schools generally also want "nice kids," and CDS is "all over that." CDS students take responsibility for others, are thoughtful, caring, tolerant, appreciative of differences and able to resolve conflicts and collaborate constructively. Many high schools care about the breadth of a student's experience beyond the protected environment of a school, so they want students who have demonstrated that their sense of social responsibility extends out into their community and perhaps even the world. The CDS community is passionate about this, too.

A challenge for the Task Force is to shorten the list of characteristics that one would want in a student without losing important dimensions of our graduates. Also, the above list might very well leave out some important qualities parents and teachers would want to show up in our graduates. But some recent experiences in classrooms have helped me focus on the central issue.

Last week the fourth and fifth graders edited pieces that sixth graders had written. The quality of conversation among these young student editors revealed not only a high level of enthusiasm for the task, but also a surprisingly high level of skill for students of this age.

"Are you sure this is the right verb tense?"
"Wouldn't this word work better here?"

Hot Dates

Friday, December 10

10:15-10:30 a.m.

Friday Assembly
Sixth Grade Presenting

Monday, December 13

3:30 p.m.

Students vs. CDS Faculty
Volleyball game
CDS yard

Thursday, December 16

Sliding Scale Tuition
applications due

Friday, December 17

11 a.m.

Winter Performance
Boys and Girls Club gymnasium

Friday, December 17

Noon Dismissal
No Extended Program



Thank You!

- To everyone who helped make last week's book fairs the most successful week of book-related fundraising in CDS history: Sue Barnett, Joe Becker, Ynze Byl & Tina Smith, Susan Chastain, Kathleen Cologne, Tina Corse, Leslie Edelman, Lisa Eltinge, Tom & Mary Fernald, Anne Funsten, Tacy & Bill Gaede, Bob Hauser, Cathy Hazlewood, Stephanie Holdenried, Suzanne Jachinowski, Amy Kaneko, Hilary Lamar, Debra Levin, Stephanie & Ray McFadden, Georgia McNamara, Lisa Palmer & Bill Lewis, Karen Randig, Marilyn Rogers, Patricia & Siegfried Ruppert, Elizabeth Seirmarco, Gayle Strang, Wini von Ehrenburg, Robin Wander, Cindy Wilson, Kristen Wurz, Lydia Yaffe, Donald Zirulnik and everyone who enthusiastically shopped in support of the CDS library!
- To David Wilson, Constance Laflamme, Darya Soto and Kieran Branch for donating laptop bags.

actually helpful to each other. They experienced themselves as valuable to someone else. I see this kind of activity going on day in and day out at CDS. This is why our students are so competent and disciplined. They have been engaging in work that has meaning to them, and often work that has meaning to others as well.

The task force agreed that confident, engaged, enthusiastic, passionate, compassionate, responsible, respectful, flexible, adaptive, dedicated, creative problem solvers is what we want, but we also felt that something else wasn't being articulated. Perhaps what had not yet been expressed is *degree of difficulty*. It is conceivable that one can have learners who score high on all these measures, but whose engagement has been with simple activities and simple social situations, and that when they move on to high school and beyond their confidence will turn out to be ill-founded.

That Children's Day School students are regularly challenged to a high degree of difficulty somehow has to be brought into the definition of our graduate. Proofreading and analyzing each other's work on their own, analyzing and discussing 1600-1880 art of India, solving linear equations as they analyze the intersection of two "best fit" lines in a science project, assessing their own performance each week in language arts, working on a problem in math that takes a whole period to solve and solving social problems so that everyone is happy are examples of complex tasks. On a daily basis it is understood that children will be challenged to take the next step, work at the next level of difficulty and look critically at what they do.

CDS teachers, therefore, focus beyond general standards established by national and state frameworks toward activities which do more than teach a skill but are limitless, requiring students to bring all their interests and abilities to bear on a problem. How important is it that the problem is of real value to someone else? If it is VERY IMPORTANT, wouldn't it be strategic for us to focus on activities where our students actually experience their value in the world?

It is certainly of strategic importance to make sure that we provide our students with complex learning activities that draw them out into the real world. It is incumbent upon us to make sure that the social challenges our students face are as close to real-world challenges as possible, and that they gain experiences beyond the CDS gates.

"Can you have a paragraph with only two sentences?"

"My buddy has a lot of trouble with verb tense."

"What's a run-on sentence?"

"This part of the story is not needed, I think."

"What happened to the cannibals? They need to *do* something."

"Can you have a penguin pervade something?"

"You can leave out a character who's only mentioned once."

In this activity, not only were the students exhibiting a high level of skill in a real-life situation, they were also

The Dirt

Snail Trails

I was in the garden last week with Dante, Chase and Taylor looking for worms and digging in the dirt. In the midst of our search I looked up and saw one of the most beautiful sights in nature I have ever seen. There were seven baby snails spread out on a huge mallow leaf. What made the leaf so beautiful is that the baby snails had left behind slime trails that shimmered like an early morning winter frost. As a gardener I should probably see the snails as pests to get rid of but as an environmental educator and appreciator of life, nature and beauty, I couldn't help but appreciate the snails for bringing slime trails to the world. Slime trails always amaze me with their beauty and provide great educational opportunities. Thank you snails!

From the Office

Goodbye Mark

As you will see from the attached letter that was received by Kindergarten parents yesterday, teacher Mark Wise will not be with us after the winter break, as he will be returning to Virginia.

Donate Your Laptop Bags

CDS and the David Minus Science Center need ten laptop bags. If you have an old laptop bag that you are not using, please donate it to CDS. You can bring them to Amanda on the third floor.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Parents, please remember to keep the drop-off and pick-up lines moving so people can get to work and morning appointments on time. If you need to talk to teachers, please call, e-mail or drop a note in student lunch boxes. Also, as we enter the rainy season, please stay in the car and keep morning goodbyes short and sweet as car lines tend to get backed up and teachers need to keep things moving.

Events

Winter Performance

Our holiday show needs volunteers who have a van or truck! We need help transporting sets on the morning of Thursday, December 16 at 9 a.m. and Friday, December 17, after the show. We also need volunteers to help set up and break down chairs on Friday, December 17, before and after the performance. If you are interested, please contact Elizabeth at elizabethm@cds-sf.org or Karen at karens@cds-sf.org.

Extended Program News

Winter Vacation Camp

Camp runs from December 27-December 31 and is open from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. The theme of the camp is "Youth in Action," and will include projects, activities and field trips relating to how young people have made differences in their communities throughout history and ways that youth have become leaders. It will be a lot of fun and will include the usual great activities: art, music, time in the farm and garden, group games and freeplay in the yard. The deadline for signing up is Wednesday, December 15. Camps are filling up so sign up soon if you are interested.

Fall Enrichment Classes

All classes have completed their seven week sessions with the exception of the chess and computer classes. Please check the PM bulletin board for details or call Jenna at x15. Registration packets for winter enrichment classes will be sent home right before the holiday vacation.

Go Bulldogs!

The girls basketball team needs a coach!

Beginning immediately after winter break, Mr. Jim needs help coaching the girls basketball team. The basketball season runs for eight weeks and includes one practice session and one game per week. This is a volunteer position. If you are interested, please call Mr. Jim at x19. Help support our girls basketball team today!

Hola Familias de CDS

Hola Familias!

It's been a busy and song-filled week in the Spanish classes. The kindergarten class has been practicing action words such laughing (*reír*), smiling (*sonreír*), and walking (*caminar*). They played Bingo and learned a new song, "Ten Little Fingers", or "*Diez Deditos*".

First graders have been practicing singular and plural nouns such as our very own CDS friends, the mice (*ratones*) and the singular, mouse (*raton*). They also learned a new song, "The Elephant Song," or "*La Elefantes*."

Sixth and seventh graders have been studying indefinite articles and plural forms of many new words.

La frase de la semana:

Dos manitas, diez deditos. Two little hands, ten little fingers.

— Spanish Department

Upcoming Dates

December 20 – December 24

Holiday Vacation
No School
No Camp

December 27 – December 31

Holiday Vacation
No School
Vacation Camp offered

January 3

Classes Resume

January 10

Winter Electives begin

January 17

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
No School
No Extended Program

Children's Day School

333 Dolores Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

415-861-5432 (ph)

415-861-5419 (fax)

www.cds-sf.org

Editor: Mary DeNardo, cdsweekly@cds-sf.org

Submissions due Wednesdays 8:00 a.m.

