



January 5, 2006

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Getting In

The eighth grade high school shopping expeditions this fall produced many fun stories. During one particular visit, one of our eighth graders participated in a ninth grade algebra class. He participated so intelligently and actively in his work group that it prompted one freshman to say to his classmate, "Watch out, dude. This guy is only an eighth grader."

This fall I was greeted on the street by a friend who is the Head of one of the more popular high schools. He asked, "Who is that Susan person?" (Names have been changed).

"What do you mean?" I replied.

"This eighth grader came up to me as I was standing in line with my family to see a movie and said, 'Hi. I'm Susan Sharp. I go to Children's Day School and I went to your open house and I LOVE your school. I really want to go there.'"

My friend, and many other colleagues and admission directors, have been very impressed by our students; much of what they are impressed by is their self-confidence. "Getting In" is the title of an article by Malcolm Gladwell in the October 10 issue of the *New Yorker*. What will probably strike most readers about the article is moral outrage at the apparently shameful elitism of Ivy League colleges, but for me that is just the trick that Gladwell uses to get our attention about a more important issue: what really does matter when it comes to getting in to an Ivy League college? (Or getting into high school for that matter.)

Of the many excellent points he makes, Gladwell's main point is that an Ivy League college is in the business of graduating people who will be successful. Their admission department, therefore, must be careful to admit students who have the potential for being successful leaders.

Gladwell points out that in the last seventy-five years, colleges have worked hard to identify the predictors of success. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they assumed it was just family and culture. But as America became more and more meritocratic, they paid more attention to recommendations and interviews, looking for evidence of "character," and using rating scales of characteristics. When they got serious about measuring intelligence and academic preparation the SAT was born. Today, we are so meritocratic that we are incensed when students are admitted to college because of their athletic ability. The November 6 *New York Times* Education Section featured an article which reports that being an excellent lacrosse player is "worth 200 points" on the SAT's.

Hot Dates

Friday, January 6

10-10:15 a.m.

Friday assembly

Seventh grade presenting

Monday, January 9

Winter enrichment classes begin

Tuesday, January 10

4:30 p.m.

PTTA meeting

Faculty lounge



Thank You!

- To all of the family farmers who lovingly cared for the sheep and chickens during the fall: Greg Mitchell, Dee Dee Schroeder, Mo and Margot; Julia Weber, Charlie Fineberg and Zach; Lydia Yaffe and Kira; Michael Fine and Leo; Nancy Myers, Warren Spicer and Isabella; Sara O'Malley, Richard Hilton and Nora; Kim Tennis and Kirby; Marilyn Rogers and Flynn; Beth Porter, Brooks Crichlow and Maia; DJ Anderson, Anne Anderson, Emma and Kate; Gary Strang, Gayle Strang and Carlyn; Peter Kusnierczyk & Patrice, Melanie Wise & Sascha; Bill Rusitzky and Mitchell.
- To Nerius Mercado and Amanda Newstetter for their expert help with the final admission tour of 2005.
- To all of the parents who helped throw an amazing faculty and staff holiday party: Jane Seabrook, Marianne Evans and Bill Veiga, Robin McClarren, Stephanie Scarpulla, Constance Laflamme, Patti Cazzato, Marilyn Rogers, Laura Pliska, Ray Baxter, Georgia McNamara, Kathleen Cologne, Luma Dahlbacka and the 1st and 3rd grade parents for providing food.
- To Susie Carlson, Tina Corse, members of the PTTA and all of the wraps and greens purchasers for the beautiful, hand-decorated cookies and generous holiday bonuses for all teachers and staff.
- To Gary Strang for volunteering time as our landscape architect, beautifying the yard and CDS grounds.

Today, the simple notion that schools should admit people solely on the basis of academic merit dominates. Gladwell refers to a recent book by Bowen and Schulman on the “shameful” preference given to athletes by Ivy League schools (*The Game of Life*, 2001). To deliver his punch line he pulls the following paragraph out to reveal that there is actually a method to these colleges’ madness:

One of these characteristics can be thought of as drive—a strong desire to succeed and unswerving determination to reach a goal, whether it be by winning the next game or closing a sale. Similarly, athletes tend to be more energetic than the average person, which translates into an ability to work hard over long periods of time—to meet, for example, the workload demands placed on young people by an investment bank in the throes of analyzing a transaction. In addition, athletes are more likely than others to be highly competitive, gregarious and confident of their ability to work well in groups (on teams).

Gladwell calls this a classic example of “burying the lead.” I agree. This paragraph points to one of the most important concepts in education, a concept which good schools have always known; i.e. there is far more to success than grades and test scores. A wide variety of research over the last fifty years has demonstrated that there is no correlation between performance on standardized tests and any measure of adult effectiveness or success.

Any school that would take a student who is not bound for success is putting its reputation at risk. Good schools often “take risks,” but behind those decisions is a sense that the student possesses a certain drive or promise and will make something of their gifts and talents. Good educators are well aware that there is more to success than grades and test scores. By all measures this year’s eighth grade class is performing very well. Over half the class has test scores over the 90th percentile and almost all of the students’ grades are A’s and B’s. These facts, however, will not insure acceptance into the top independent schools in the Bay Area. These schools have lots of applicants that fit this description. What most admission departments are looking for are distinguishing factors.

I know from my visits to high schools last spring that most of the independent schools are looking for something vaguely labeled “character.” Character has mattered to educators for thousands of years—at least back to the ancient Greeks. What constitutes character has changed and varies somewhat from culture to culture. A hundred years ago Ivy League colleges seemed to confuse character with social class. Today, we have the benefit of some pretty good research that identifies the characteristics of success. Drive, self-confidence,

ability to work in groups, social and emotional competence and ability to compete constructively, do predict success. What is very obvious about our students is that they have character. Not only are they “characters,” but they have the disciplines of those who can harmonize their desires with the requirements of diverse situations, and can harness their gifts to make a difference to others. These are critical elements of what I call character. If that character can show up to the high schools, they will be snatched up.

Yes, we all know that there is no certainty in the high school or college admission process. However, what I have learned in the last thirty years of helping and watching hundreds of young people, including four of my own, is that everyone goes to high school, and that what really matters is not what high school you go to, but the character that goes to high school. Young people who love learning, know themselves, and can work well with others will be successful both in and out of school.

The Dirt

Family Farmer Training

It's that time again! The winter Family Farmer Training will be held on Saturday, January 28 in the farm and garden. Becoming a family farmer is a great way to get to know the sheep and chickens and spend time in the beautiful farm and garden. The training will last approximately one hour (at 9 and 10 a.m.) and will provide you with all of the information you'll need to care for the animals and the garden. We have space for twelve families (a maximum of six during each time slot) and we'll be scheduling dates for the next four months; please bring your calendars. You only need to commit to two weekends and/or holidays during the next four months and in return you'll have the chance to bury your fingers in JoJo's warm, soft wool and collect fresh eggs for Sunday morning breakfast. Please RSVP with Misty at 861-5432 x321 to sign up for a training at 9 or 10 a.m.; leave your name, phone number and time slot you prefer. If you were trained last May or September and want to take care of the animals just RSVP and show up at 10 a.m. to pick dates; you don't need to attend the training. Thanks for your help.

From the Office

Annual Fund

As we draw very close to the January 15 close of the parent annual fund campaign, I'm pleased to report that the Starfish class has joined the 3rd grade in reaching 100% in parent participation. Way to go Starfish families! Based on a quick check of CDS development records, this seems to be the first time a preschool class has reached this mark. Participation throughout the school has been very strong – 85% of parents have made a gift or pledge, and parent contributions now total \$109,000, very close to the parent goal of \$115,000. A hearty thank you to all of the families who have recently donated to the Annual Fund. Parents have shown great enthusiasm and strong support for CDS this year, and I am very grateful to everyone who has served as a class captain, solicited, given, pledged and spread the word about the importance of the Annual Fund at CDS. Please contact me (Marion) at x323 if you can help us reach our goal in the next 10 days. Thank you!

From the Classroom

Blood Drive

In conjunction with their study of the human body, the kindergarten class will be hosting a blood drive at CDS on Friday, February 10 from 2:30-6 p.m. If you are able to give blood, please call 861-5432 x356 or e-mail Carlene at carlenel@cds-sf.org by Friday, January 13 to give the teachers, students and participating blood bank an idea of how many parents will be participating. Thanks for your support and participation.

Events

Fiesta 2006

Happy New Year! By now, you all should have received the Fiesta 2006 packet in the mail. Extra packets and donation slips can be found at the front desk. Please remember that we need all forms returned to us by Friday, March 3. Thanks to everyone for helping with this year's Fiesta. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call Stephanie Scarpulla at 415-999-6227 or Robin McClarren at 415-235-0295. And don't forget, the date of this year's celebration has been changed to Friday, April 7, 2006.

Martin Luther King, Jr. March

For the second year, CDS teachers, administrators, students and families are encouraged to join the annual Martin Luther King Jr. march on Monday, January 16. We'll be joining other neighborhood schools and organizations to celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. We will sing songs, make signs, visit Yerba Buena Gardens and march in the larger parade as it goes up Market Street to the Civic Center. Please join us for this meaningful and important celebration! We will be meeting at CDS at 10 a.m. on Monday, January 16 (regular school is closed) and will finish up at the Civic Center in the early afternoon. We'd love for families and the larger CDS community to attend! To find out more please contact Michael Gast at michaelg@cds-sf.org or 861-5432 x329. Please RSVP with Michael so we know how many people to expect. For more information on the celebration you can visit www.norcalmlk.org.

Extended Program News

Goodbye Ayana

Ayana Thomas, fifth and sixth grade extended program teacher, will be returning to school full time. Her last day at CDS is tomorrow, January 6! Please stop by and wish her well in her future endeavors.

After School Program

It's really important that all students are signed out from the extended program at the front desk. This is how we monitor safety and insure proper billing. Middle school students are encouraged to sign themselves out independently if they have permission, but regardless, need to be signed out by someone each afternoon. Preschool parents, please continue to make the trek across the yard to sign out your children.

Also, all students who stay past their class dismissal, whether for the after school program, enrichment classes, study hall, tutoring or for any other reason, need to have an extended program agreement on file. Please pick one up at the front desk or from Charlie if you haven't already.

Winter Enrichment Classes

Registration for winter enrichment classes has ended. However, there are still a few classes with openings. Please call Charlie to find out what spots are available. Classes start next week! Also, there was a misprint in the original registration packet. "Wood is Good" will be held on Tuesdays, not Thursdays.

PTTA Corner

Friday Morning Coffee

Come join other parents for coffee and doughnuts in the yard after Friday drop-off, 8:30-9 a.m. This is your chance to meet other families, have a few minutes of grown-up conversation and grab sustenance and caffeine before you start your day.

In addition, we need volunteers on occasion to help set up and bring doughnuts. To volunteer, contact Michael Silver at 415-518-1803 or michael.silver@barclaysglobal.com or sign up on the sheet posted in the first floor entryway. Nothing gets the kids out of bed in the morning like the knowledge that they will stop off for doughnuts during the drive to school!

PTTA Questions or Ideas?

- Marianne Evans, PTTA President, (415) 648-1731 or goevansgo@yahoo.com
- Amanda Richard, VP, Classroom Liaison Coordinator, (415) 695-0657 or amanda.richard@sbcglobal.net
- Laura Pliska, VP, Community Building Coordinator, (415) 641-5116 or laura@sfbabyworks.com
- Ray Baxter, VP, Secretary, (415) 902-0765 or ray@warmroom.com
- Michael Silver, VP, Parent Volunteer Coordinator, (415) 597-2413 or michael.silver@barclaysglobal.com

PTTA Update

State of the PTTA

This year the PTTA has made a concerted effort to build the CDS community by increasing involvement of classroom liaisons, creating an officer responsible for community development and a standing community building committee, contacting new families a number of times before the academic year begins, and changing the structure and location of the welcome picnic. The agenda for the upcoming meeting will be to examine these efforts:

- Which of these initiatives have worked and which have not?
- How might we modify these efforts in the future?
- Is there anything else the PTTA might be doing to develop and encourage the CDS community?
- Are there other areas where the PTTA ought to focus?

Bring your feedback, ideas and your passion for CDS to the PTTA meeting on Tuesday, January 10 at 4:30 p.m. in the faculty lounge.

All parents are welcome at PTTA meetings. Remember that CDS is committed to parent participation and provides free childcare while parents are in meetings; sign up at the front desk before 10 a.m. the day of the meeting.

Community Building Committee

The date for the next meeting is TBD. For information about the Community Building Committee please contact Laura Pliska (415-641-5116, laura@sfbabyworks.com).

If you have any comments, questions about the PTTA Updates, or items you would like included on the PTTA calendar, contact Ray Baxter (415-902-0765, ray@warmroom.com).

Upcoming Dates

Monday, January 16
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
No school
No extended program

Monday, January 16
10 a.m.
MLK Day march
Meet in the CDS yard

Thursday, Jan 26 & Friday, Jan 27
Parent-teacher conferences
No school
No extended program

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