



February 1, 2007

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Courageous Community

Guest written by PTTA President Ray Baxter in response to Rick's January 17 column.

The children at CDS ought to be courageous learners. The adults in their lives certainly have been.

Two weeks ago, over the course of an hour, parents, teachers, trustees and administrators gathered to hear stories of the early days of CDS. One point that came up again and again in the stories was that the community has made mistakes, but has consistently learned from them. As Tracy Kirkham said, when the parents took over the school they were "naïve beyond belief." It's fair to say that any number of steps in the growth of the school began in that same spirit. "Can you have farm animals in the middle of San Francisco?" "Can middle school students have the same enthusiasm for learning as preschoolers?" "Can parents buy and run a school?" A prudent answer to these questions is "Probably not," and yet we see around us that those things have happened.

When Aimee Giles was originally hired as the Animal Caretaker in 1995, there was more zoo than farm at CDS. There were pigs, goats, rabbits, ducks, chicks and doves outside and birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals in every empty corner of the building. Aimee's job was to make sure the animals were fed and to bring order to the chaos.

The next year, as Notre Dame Plaza was being renovated, rats moved into the farm and Head of School Sandra Luna decided, "We can't have rats. The farm will have to close."

Aimee and Tracy painted the scene of classrooms of preschoolers, their parents and their teachers weeping as the animals were hauled away. This sad scene became a defining moment in the history of CDS, the moment that taught the community "the soul of this school is the farm."

Out of that experience of loss, parents, teachers and staff gathered to envision what a farm in an urban campus could be. In Aimee's words, they just started dreaming, but they did more than dream; they planned, researched, networked and applied for permits. They built a farm in the middle of the city and rebuilt the school's soul.

And they kept on dreaming. Determined to create a school that values individual genius and believes that learning should be fun, teachers and staff gathered to figure out how to translate the principles learned in the preschool to elementary school and then to middle school. Wanting to preserve a unique school environment, parents and teachers figured out how to buy the school and how to run it as a non-profit. More confident in the survival of the school

Hot Dates

Today

4:30 p.m.

Girls basketball vs. Creative Arts

Boys & Girls Club

Friday, February 2

Professional development day

No school

No extended program

Tuesday, February 6

7 p.m.

State-of-the-School Night

Wednesday, February 7

Copies of 2006 taxes due from all

CDS families applying for SST

Thursday, February 8

4:30 p.m.

Boys basketball vs. CAIS

Friday, February 9

Re-enrollment, sibling and children

of faculty/staff contracts for

2007-08 mailed

Dates also posted on CDS website
www.cds-sf.org/news/calendar.html



Thank You!

- To Ana Brubaker, Kristin and Andrew Henry, Tina Leung and Laura Pliska for their excellent help with last Saturday's visit day for prospective preschool families.
- To Anne Funsten for donating styrofoam and vinyl to the art department.
- A big thank you to Sanlin and Haden Cory for letting the after school team borrow Hayden's karaoke machine!

and wanting to ensure that the school lived on and lived up to its early ideals, parents and trustees met to create a strategic plan and the school's mission.

These were not easy decisions, but at each of these turning points the community gathered together thoughtfully, respectfully and with courage. You could argue whether some of these decisions have been made rightly or wrongly—we have made mistakes of course—but by making difficult decisions and learning from them we have become stronger and wiser.

Now, at a time when we are figuring out how to improve the building, how to grow the school to best fit with our mission and our values, and how to cultivate diversity in every aspect of our school, I see that same thoughtfulness, respect and courage everywhere in our community.

Next week, we gather to consider the state of the school. Some aspects of the state of the school can be expressed in a statistic or a spreadsheet; I don't want to minimize these measures of our performance. It's important to look at how CDS compares to our peer schools in terms of teacher's salaries and tuition, how well our students test and how well our graduates place. It's important to understand where our school is succeeding in cultivating diversity and how it's failing to live up to our hopes and expectations.

Not appearing on any spreadsheet, or in any statistic, is the ability of our community to be bold in dreaming of possibilities, creative in finding solutions and tenacious in learning from our experiences. The evidence is clear in the stories from the past, the work we are doing today and the dreams we have for the future.

From the Director of Diversity

Movie Night

On Wednesday, February 28 at 5 p.m. the Diversity and Justice Committee will host a screening of the film, "Tutu and Franklin: A Journey Towards Peace." This film documents the journey of a diverse group of young people as they confront conflicting perceptions and struggle to cross historic barriers. The wisdom of the elders and the vitality of the next generation combine in unexpected ways to create an inspiring new vision for racial justice. The event is open to all faculty, parents, friends and middle school students and will include a discussion following the film. Please RSVP with Charlie at charlies@cds-sf.org if you plan to attend.

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

Building Permit Progress

Right on schedule, architects from Jensen & Macy submitted two separate permit applications to the San Francisco Building Department last week – one for planned work on the interior of St. Joseph's Hall, the other for proposed exterior work. The interior work in the application consists of key safety and accessibility upgrades – extending the stairs at the east end of the building to the first floor, adding an elevator and building modern, accessible bathrooms on the first and third floors of the building. These improvements will allow CDS to use the third floor more fully as classroom space. The exterior work includes construction of a level porch with stadium seating down to the blacktop and removal of the exterior fire escape.

The two applications and accompanying sets of plans were submitted separately because the exterior application will be routed through the Landmarks Board and approval will probably take more time. So far, the CDS architects have received positive feedback from the city on both permit applications. In the next few weeks, the Architects Steering Committee will review more detailed pricing and timeline information from Plant Construction. At meetings this month and next, the CDS Board of Trustees will use this information, as well as financial and fundraising updates, to determine the scope of the project planned for summer 2007. A great deal of work and progress is taking place behind the scenes right now, and we will keep parents posted as decisions are made, permits issued and plans finalized.

School Wish List

- The music department needs instruments; in particular, three guitars and two flutes. In addition, they can use any other instruments that people would like to lend long-term, or offer as a donation. If you'd like to lend or donate an instrument, please contact Grace Renaud at 861-5432 x388.

From the Classrooms

Progress Reports

Reminder: Friday, January 19 was the last day of the first semester, and report cards are being sent home this week. You can expect to receive your child's progress report in the mail during the first week of February. We do not have specific conference days allotted for February, but as always, please call your child's teachers directly if you have any questions about the reports or want to schedule a time to speak with them in person.

From the Office

State-of-the-School Night

State-of-the-School night is quickly approaching. Please join the CDS Board of Trustees on Tuesday, February 6 from 7-8:30 p.m. in the third floor art space for a discussion of topics including school finances and future directions for growth and facilities planning. Cookies and coffee will be provided.

Childcare

Childcare is available for State-of-the-School night from 7-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6. Please sign up with Ryan Gordon before 4 p.m. on Monday, February 5 so we can staff the event appropriately. Please note: this service is provided for any CDS student (grades pre-8), and for siblings who do not attend CDS in grades K-8. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate children preschool aged and younger who do not attend CDS.

Drop off for childcare begins at 6:45 p.m.; there is no care from 6-6:45 p.m. Popcorn and a movie will be provided.

Events

Fiesta 2007

The Fiesta solicitation efforts have commenced! This year we are looking for items that create experiences, bring the community together and can be provided as a gift certificate (host a cocktail party at your home, donate a pass to your favorite yoga studio, etc.) A Fiesta class captain will be calling you soon to offer assistance and suggestions for creative donation ideas. Donation forms can be dropped off at the front desk and are due by Friday, February 23. If you have any questions, please contact Robin Wander at 415-286-3689 or robinw@post.harvard.edu.

Fiesta invitations have been sent out to the entire CDS community. Many of you have sent in RSVP cards—please look for your ticket purchase confirmation letter in the mail starting February 12. If you haven't yet responded, please RSVP!

Extended Program News

February Vacation Camp

This year's February vacation camp theme is "The Civil Rights Movement." For this camp, students will be divided into the following age groups: preschool, K-I and 2-8. The camp will run from Tuesday, February 20 through Friday, February 23. Extra registration forms are available at the front desk. **Please note: registration for this camp closes on Friday, February 9.** Late sign-ups will not be permitted.

Go Bulldogs!

Basketball Scores

Girls vs. Lycee Francais
CDS 26, LF 16

Girls vs. Live Oak
Live Oak 14, CDS 11

Basketball Calendar

Girls: Today, 4:30 p.m.
Creative Arts, Boys & Girls Club

Boys: Thursday, February 8, 4:30 p.m..
CAIS, Boys & Girls Club

Sports Hotline: 415-861-5432 x397

PTTA Corner

Friday Morning Coffee

Come join other parents for coffee and doughnuts in the yard after Friday drop-off, 8-9 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.

PTTA Questions or Ideas?

- Ray Baxter, PTTA President, (415) 902-0765 or ray@warmroom.com
- Patrick Everett, VP, Coordinator of Classroom Liaisons, (415) 609-4055 or patrick@everettnilsson.com
- Laura Pliska, VP, Coordinator of Welcoming Initiatives, (415) 641-5116 or laura@sfbabyworks.com
- Michael Silver, VP, Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives, (415) 518-1803 or silvermas@aol.com
- Ann Van Gelder, VP, Parent Volunteer Coordinator, (415) 647-8561 or anndirkgv@hotmail.com
- Tanja Beck, VP, Coordinator of Events, (415) 377-8756 or tbeck@zephyrsf.com
- Yvelise Cabral, VP, Middle School Coordinator, (415) 348-1154 or yvelisecabral@msn.com
- Edwina Paschal, VP, Middle School Coordinator, (510) 499-7739 or edwinapaschal@earthlink.net

Upcoming Dates

Friday, February 9

7:30 p.m.

Middle School Valentine's Day Dance
Miraloma Clubhouse

Monday, February 19

Presidents' Day observed

No school

No extended program

Tuesday, February 20 – Friday, February 23

February vacation

No school

Extended program available

Monday, February 26

Re-enrollment, sibling and children of faculty/staff
2007-08 enrollment contracts due

Dates also posted on CDS website
www.cds-sf.org/news/calendar.html

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