



January 25, 2007

# THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

## Words from Rick

### Safe to Be Bad

*I think what has chiefly struck me in human beings is their lack of consistency. I have never seen people all of a piece. It has amazed me that the most incongruous traits should exist in the same person and for all that yield a plausible harmony. . . . The censure that has from time to time been passed on me is due perhaps to the fact that I have not expressly condemned what is bad in the characters of my invention and praised what is good. It must be a fault in me that I am not gravely shocked at the sins of others unless they personally affect me, and even when they do I have learnt at last generally to excuse them. It is meet not to expect too much of others.*

—Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up*

I recall nine incidents of members of our community being bad in the last week, equally distributed between adults and children. If I know of nine, just how many that I don't know of do you guess there are? Given the continuing propensity in our society to deny the bad and the dark, and given how people avoid bringing such stuff "to the principal's office," and assuming that my own optimistic disposition discourages people from "raining on my parade," my guess is that the number might have been up into the solid three digit range.

That many offenses in this happy community in one week! What are we to make of this? I feel strongly that we should use it to remind us to build our community on a foundation of assuming that it will happen. Let's start with an example. A parent (call her Jane) emailed me the following story:

Freddy (age 3) and I were cleaning up his toys that were strewn about the family room. Let's just say he was an unenthusiastic participant. After stalling for a while I set a limit saying we would not be able to go outside until we finished putting his toys away. We went back to our task. Soon after, he threw one of his toys at me and it hit my hand hard. It hurt. I lost my temper and grabbed his shoulders and said in an angry voice, "You hurt me."

He was visibly shaken. He soon apologized for hurting me. After a moment he said, "Mommy, the next time I throw my toys can you not grab me?" I told him that I was sorry for grabbing him so hard but explained that I lost my temper because it really hurt when his toy hit my hand. I also said that I would try really hard not to grab him the next time I lose my temper. He seemed satisfied with this and frankly so was I.

Later when Marvin came home from work, I started telling him what had happened. Freddy chimed in, repeating to his daddy that he had

## Hot Dates

Today!  
4:30 p.m.

Girls basketball vs. Lycee Francais  
Boys & Girls Club

Friday, January 26  
8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly  
Sixth grade presenting

Friday, January 26  
8:45-10:15 a.m.

Middle school academic open house

Tuesday, January 30  
4:45 p.m.

Girls basketball vs. Live Oak  
UCSF Mission Bay, 1675 Owens St

Dates also posted on CDS website  
[www.cds-sf.org/news/calendar.html](http://www.cds-sf.org/news/calendar.html)



## Thank You!

- To Roger Nys and David Lytle for donating a television to the Boys & Girls Club for use in the middle school Spanish and humanities classes.
- To Ray Baxter and Linda Glover for taking all the unclaimed lost and found items to Community Thrift.
- To Brian Richard for repairing the bikes in the yard.
- To Karen Randig and Zac Fisher for donating an external hard drive for use in the David Minus Science Center.

asked me not to grab him the next time he threw his toys. At this point Marvin asked, “Freddy, why did you throw your toy at Mommy?”

Freddy considered the question. He then looked at his daddy and said, “Sometimes I just like to be bad.” He waited a few seconds more and then asked his Dad, “Do you ever do that?” I was hoping that Marvin would answer truthfully, and I was not disappointed. Marvin said, “Yeah. I do Freddy.” Then Freddy asked me, “Do you ever do that?” I also answered honestly and said, “Yeah. I do.”

I was very moved by Freddy’s ability to share his inner workings with his mommy and daddy. I hope we always have such intimacy! Interestingly, we had a great evening after that with no time outs. Freddy seemed happy. I know I was.

When I talked with the parents about this story, they confided in their moral dilemma of whether or not to confess to sometimes wanting to be bad. Each with their different upbringings, they had learned to deny their badness, and worried that talking about it openly and honestly with Freddy would give him permission to be bad. They were both happy to discover that they had transcended their upbringing.

In and out of school, this is something we all struggle with in raising our children, but Jane and Marvin are onto one of the solid principles of a happy school as well as a happy family: Let’s not be in denial of badness. If our schools and our families are to be strong they have to be safe places to learn. To be safe places to learn we have to value three things we would rather avoid: difference, conflict and error. When you stop to think about it, difference, conflict and error are where so much important learning can take place. If we avoid this “negative stuff” we

compromise our ability to learn. We especially compromise the reality-testing mechanism of our children, because human reality is largely made up of difference, conflict and mistakes.

Growing up, children are looking for a powerful adult (hopefully a parent) who can contain their badness—accept it, make room for it, and yet not be destroyed or overwhelmed by it—someone who will neither withdraw from it nor retaliate. Someone who can accept it as a fact of life like other undesirable things and help the child learn to work with it, to be creative with it, meet it with understanding, even to play with it, to metabolize it into their personality without letting it be destructive. Marvin and Jane did this, and they were justifiably proud that they did.

“Freddy is always testing.” So are all kids, all the time. Sometimes we say that as if we hope they will stop. Actually, it is vital that they keep testing the environment to find out what is real and what is imaginary. One could outline our work with children under the statement: strengthen their reality-testing mechanism. But since reality is not simple, we do kids an injustice by trying to make it simple and Disneyesque. The reason fairy tales are important for children is that they include the dark side also.

I told Jane that it was good that she apologized in order to remind Freddy of our standards of behavior, but I also told her not to feel guilty about losing her temper, either. By losing her temper, which she hates to do, she did what some adults have a hard time doing—confronting a child with the real consequence his action causes.

The inconsistency is confusing to adults who are taught they should be consistent, but with inconsistency the child picks up a deeper sense of the true complexity of the world. And kids are smart enough to grasp a deeper, more complex world. This is a very un-1950’s way of looking at society, but if people can accept badness as real, perhaps there will be less moralizing and more morality.

## School Wish List

- The after school program would like to borrow a karaoke machine for an afternoon of student karaoke. Please contact Michael Gast, 861-5432 x329 or [michaelg@cgs-sf.org](mailto:michaelg@cgs-sf.org), if you have a karaoke machine you’d like to lend.

## From the Office

### Steam Update

You may have noticed steam near the double wooden doors of St. Joseph's Hall on cold days. This is water vapor from a leaky underground pipe in our heating system. Our heating specialists have assured us that the pipe poses no risk. A thorough review by Western Plumbing & Heating and Timmons Design Engineers in the next few months will determine whether we repair and keep the system or upgrade it.

## From the Classrooms

### Progress Reports

Friday, January 19 was the last day of the first semester, and teachers are diligently finishing up report cards and progress reports even as the *Weekly* goes to print. 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.

## PTTA Update

### Got Feedback?

It's amazing – the first semester is already over! As we embark on the second half of the school year, Laura Pliska, PTTA VP & Coordinator of Welcoming Initiatives, invites all members of the CDS community to

## Go Bulldogs!

### Basketball Scores

Boys vs. Lycee Francais  
CDS 32, LF 22

### Basketball Calendar

Girls: Today! 4:30 p.m.  
Lycee Francais, Boys & Girls Club

Girls: Tuesday, January 30, 4:45 p.m.  
Live Oak, UCSF Mission Bay, 1675 Owens St.

Sports Hotline: 415-861-5432 x397

join her at Maxfield's Café (corner of Dolores and 17<sup>th</sup>) on the last Wednesday of each month, starting next Wednesday, January 31, after drop-off for an informal feedback session. As she plans for next year, Laura's intent is to solicit feedback from the community on what you feel is working, what needs adjusting and how the PTTA can assist you in becoming more involved in the CDS community.

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

## Upcoming Dates

**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 sliding scale tuition

**Friday, February 9**

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

**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](http://www.cds-sf.org/news/calendar.html)

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Submissions due Wednesdays, 8 a.m.

Contact Mary to receive the *Weekly* via email

