



February 14, 2008

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Success, Failure & Self-Esteem

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters both the same;*

—Rudyard Kipling

While formulating hypotheses last month, the second grade did an activity in which they wrestled with the question of how to eliminate one of two hypotheses. In the course of the conversation the idea that a “wrong” answer is just as good as a “right” answer was introduced. (Each can give you exactly the same amount of information.) It is not just a lesson in science and language arts, but a lesson for success in school, in social situations and in life. “No” may feel bad, but it is actually no worse than “Yes.”

A parent of a kindergarten applicant sent me a speech on “The Importance of Mistakes” by John Cleese. Here is an excerpt:

... the very first nursery story that my mother ever read me was called “Gordon the Guided Missile.”

When Gordon sets off, it sends out signals to discover if it’s on course, and signals come back. “No, you are not on course. So change it, up a bit and slightly to the left.” Gordon changes course and then, rational little creature that he is, sends out another signal. The missile goes on and on making mistakes, and on and on correcting its behavior in light of feedback, until it blows up the nasty enemy thing.

As a result of making hundreds of little mistakes that could be corrected immediately, eventually the missile succeeded in avoiding the one mistake that would have really mattered—missing the target.

When Edison first produced the light bulb that worked, he explained that he had made more than 200 attempted light bulbs before one worked. “And how,” a journalist asked, “did you feel about all those mistakes?” “They weren’t mistakes,” Edison replied (calmly, I’m told). “Every failure told me something that I was able to incorporate in the next attempt.”

Our culture has a built-in notion that self-esteem is a function of success, praise and staying “positive.” Actually, that’s wrong. Self-esteem is a function of enthusiastic struggle, an important part of which is making mistakes. Pursuit of goals that are central to ones needs, values, interests and in keeping with the requirements of the environment, builds self-confidence and makes one

Hot Dates

Friday, February 15
8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly
Sixth grade presenting

Full-pay re-enrollment, sibling and
children of faculty/staff 2008-09
enrollment contracts due

7-9:45 p.m.
Middle School Valentine’s
Day Dance
Boys & Girls Club

Monday, February 18
Presidents’ Day observed
No school
No extended program

Tuesday, February 19 – Friday,
February 22
February vacation
No school
Extended program available

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



Thank You!

- Thank you for your excellent help with the recent admission visit days for prospective kindergarten families: Danielle Conrad, Jon Gilmour, Amy Hecht, Tina Leung, Ann Van Gelder and Carlos Vasquez.
- To the Liang family for donating oranges, almond cookies and fortune cookies to help celebrate Chinese New Year.
- To middle school families for providing a delicious faculty breakfast last week!
- To all the families who have donated lemons to the second grade class for squeezing and freezing in preparation for the Country Fair: the Quinones family, Levinson family, Hohulin family (with help from Kirby Graff and Asiana Ouk) and the Glassman family.

successful.

Our culture's obsession with ability is another dimension of our confusion. It is generally understood that ability is the best predictor of success. Not so. Hard work is. Going after something with a will and a willingness to persevere through set-backs—and learn along the way—produces results.

“The Secret to Raising Smart Kids” by Carol Dweck is a *Scientific American* article making the rounds of the faculty these days. I commend it to all who are raising and educating children. In it she posits two views of intelligence:

... I developed a broader theory of what separates the two general classes of learners—helpless versus mastery-oriented. I realized that these different types of students not only explain their failures differently, but they also hold different “theories” of intelligence. The helpless ones believe that intelligence is a fixed trait: you have only a certain amount, and that's that. I call this a “fixed mind-set.” Mistakes crack their self-confidence because they attribute errors to a lack of ability, which they feel powerless to change. They avoid challenges because challenges make mistakes more likely and looking smart less so... The mastery-

oriented children, on the other hand, think intelligence is malleable and can be developed through education and hard work. They want to learn above all else.

It is common for teachers and parents to feel that our job is to build a “positive self-image,” and saying something negative like “No” is to be avoided. This can actually be debilitating by cutting the person off from important data that will lead to good decisions. A much better goal is an accurate self-image. With accuracy as a goal we keep our eye on the right ball: strengthening the child's reality-testing-mechanism. Learning that “No” is as valuable as “Yes” is a very important lesson.

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

Capital Campaign Parties

Led by expert development consultant Sandy Drew, a group of dedicated parents and trustees met last night to make plans for the *Building Our Future* capital campaign this spring. In the true CDS spirit of having fun while building community and making progress, plans are now being made to party our way to the campaign's \$2.25 million goal by June. Tentatively in the works are parties for fifth grade parents, the LGBTQ affinity group and Dolores Park neighbors, and more will be arranged in the coming weeks. If you would be interested in hosting a gathering to share information about St. Joseph's Hall and encourage support of the campaign, please contact Marion at 861-5432 x323 or marionq@cds-sf.org, and watch for more information soon.

From the Office

SST Materials

The Access and Affordability Committee meets during the month of February to consider sliding scale tuition applications for returning families on a first priority basis. At the end of this month, the Committee will turn to considering applications from new families. If you have not turned in your 2007 tax information (including copies of W-2s, 1099s and all schedules), please turn them in immediately. Also, if you received a postcard noting missing application materials, please turn in the requested forms. The Access and Affordability Committee will not consider incomplete applications.

School Wish List

- The first and second grade classes request lemons from your trees! In an attempt to make and freeze lemonade for the Country Fair in May, they need additional lemons. If you have lemons to donate, you can drop them off at the front desk.

Events

Fiesta Online Catalog Launch

Donate and bid on your favorite items while visiting our 2008 Fiesta online catalog! This year we're making it even easier to donate, create your own wish list and start the bidding—all from the comfort of your own home. Check it out today and enter your donation items; online writers are waiting for your entries!

Simply go to the 2008 Fiesta online catalog at <http://www.galaxygoo.org/Members/Fiesta>. If this is your first time visiting the online catalog, you'll need the CDS key to register an account. The key is "poppy." If you've visited the catalog in the past, your account is already set up. Please do not re-register. If you've forgotten your password just click "Forgot Your Password" and your password will be sent to your e-mail account.

For questions about the online catalog, please contact Robin McClarren at robinmcc@speakasy.net or (415) 241-0669.

Extended Program News

Camp Spots Available

There are still a few spots available in the K-8 February 29 camp (held during parent-teacher conferences) sponsored by Swivel Arts and the Boys & Girls Club. While the official deadline has passed, both the Swivel Arts and printmaking camps will remain open until all of the spots are filled.

CDS Yahoo Group

Our CDS Community Yahoo group is a forum for the CDS community to share information about life outside of school. Join this Yahoo group, our in-house "craigslist," by visiting: groups.yahoo.com/group/cdscommunity.

Upcoming Dates

Friday, February 29

Parent-teacher conferences

No school

Extended program available for K-8 (8:30-5 p.m.)

Monday, March 10

Professional development day

No school

No extended program

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

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