



October 4, 2007

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Constructivism & the Parent-Teacher Partnership

Rick's keynote speech at Back-to-School Night (or at least what he was planning to say.)

Constructivism is teaching as if the human organism is a meaning-making machine. Constructivism is teaching that acknowledges the brain as a creative organ. If we were to diagram the brain's work when a group of students read a book or hear a lecture, we'd see a different bubble over each head in the room because each brain is constructing its own meaning; each brain is making something different out of the material. In teaching this way, students learn a lot more—not just a little more, but a lot more—maybe ten times more.

Constructivism means that we design curriculum and classroom support with our eyes on the long haul and focus on enthusiasm for learning, building mental capacity, working together, and most importantly, learning to be oneself. This is what we mean when we say we are "leading the child's unique genius out into the world to function effectively and gracefully within it."

The peculiar genius of this school is that we grew from a preschool, where a constructivist approach is most obviously appropriate. In fact, if I try to put myself in the shoes of preschool teachers, I don't know how it could be done any other way. You can't teach preschoolers as if they are empty vessels to be filled up. With preschoolers you have to teach academics in the context of building mental capacity. And you can't teach preschoolers as if they are all the same. They are their own unique selves—there's no getting around it.

What made this school great, and continues to make this school great, is the commitment made 11 years ago that all kids should be taught from a constructivist approach, from preschool through eighth grade. So, there is such a thing as the CDS approach to education, and tonight you'll hear a version of that approach in each grade—the preschool version, the kindergarten version, the first grade version, etc. We use this approach because it maximizes academic achievement and graduates kids who still love learning. CDS students know themselves better than when they started, are great at getting along with others and promise to get the most out of their high school experience.

But here is the point I want to make: at the core of all of this is our commitment to making sure that each child is appropriately challenged from preschool through eighth grade. So remember, constructivism-schmuctivism. Your kid comes first. Let's say you hear us say—as you will—that we teach mathematics so that your child understands mathematics as well as manipulates numbers well; or you hear us say that allowing invented spelling in the younger grades is important, and you are not sure that is right for your child.

Hot Dates

Friday, October 5
8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly
Sixth grade presenting

Friday, October 5
8:45 a.m.

St. Joseph's Hall Open House

Monday, October 8

Government holiday

No school

No extended program

Tuesday, October 9

6-7:30 p.m.

PTTA Meeting: Annual Fund and

School Finances

Faculty lounge

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



Thank You!

- To Barbara Kirkwood, Jeanette Layden and Carlos Vasquez for their amazingly efficient help in assembling admission materials.
- To Rebecca Grey and Chris Luomanen for donating two cassette tape recorders to the first grade class.

Remember: our deepest most unshakable commitment to constructivism includes our deepest most unshakable commitment to making sure that everything works just right for your child. It all comes down to the parent-teacher partnership. What's right for your child trumps all, and the parent-teacher partnership is the vehicle for making that happen.

What do you have to do to get the most out of a CDS education? Make sure you and the teachers have a solid consensus about how your child learns and what he or she needs and agree on how to proceed each step of the way. So, if you hear, "This is the way we do things," and you think your child needs something a little different, don't think you have a problem. Make a parent-teacher conference, come to an agreement about what your child needs and make a plan to address it.

It is trite to say that it takes a village to raise a child, but it's trite because it's true. At the core of that village is the parent-teacher partnership—if that nuclear village is working right, we can guarantee success.

Diversity News

Inclusion & Diversity at CDS

Based on input from a number of parents, the Board of Trustees formed a temporary Committee on Inclusion (COI) in August 2006 to study inclusion and diversity at CDS with a particular focus on increasing the recruitment and retention of under-represented racial and ethnic groups. Composed of parents, administrators, faculty and board members, the COI spent hundreds of hours over a nine-month period interviewing community members, studying best practices at other schools and consulting experts in the field. In June of 2007, the COI presented its findings to the CDS Board of Trustees including:

- CDS's founding vision emphasized the importance of encouraging/nurturing diversity systematically, particularly with respect to race and ethnicity.
- CDS has not fully realized this vision because CDS

lacks a strategic plan that addresses these issues comprehensively.

The board adopted a number of recommendations from the COI report, which can be summarized as follows:

- CDS should strive to increase and maintain racial and ethnic diversity among its students, Board of Trustees, Head Teachers and senior administrators.
- CDS should enhance its curriculum, hiring and training programs to combat bias, emphasize diversity and promote multi-cultural perspectives.
- CDS should increase educational and networking opportunities regarding diversity and inclusion for students, faculty, staff and parents/guardians.

The Board of Trustees also created a standing committee called the Committee on Inclusion and Diversity (COID) to continue the development of a strategic plan to support diversity and inclusion at CDS and report annually on the status of this work. The COID is co-chaired by new Trustee Carol Swainson, head of the Middle School at Head Royce School and former Diversity Director at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C., and PTTA Diversity Coordinator Michael Silver, a parent and new trustee. At a minimum, the COID must consist of at least two other trustees, the Assistant Head of School, the Director of Admission, as well as teachers and parents from each part of the school who represent the diversity of CDS.

We Need You! The COID is currently seeking interested parents, teachers, trustees and administrators who would like to help maintain and strengthen the School's mission as it relates to building an inclusive community. The COID invites you to lend a hand by joining us at our first community meeting on Tuesday, October 23 at 4 p.m. in the faculty lounge.

Please contact co-chair Michael Silver (michael.silver@barclaysglobal.com) or PTTA Parent Involvement Coordinator Sara O'Malley (sara@omalleyhilton.com) if you are interested in

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.

School Wish List

- The Dolphin kindergarten class needs a CD player/boom box for their classroom. If you have one you'd like to donate, please contact Candy Mabry at candym@cds-sf.org.

contributing to this important work. We will use this space in the *Weekly* to update the CDS community regularly about inclusion and diversity news, events and opportunities.

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

St. Joseph's Hall Open House

All parents are invited to tour the St. Joseph's Hall renovation at an open house tomorrow, October 5 after assembly. Come at 8:00 for coffee in the yard, stay for assembly at 8:30 and, after the sixth grade is done leading assembly, explore the new classrooms, kitchen, bathrooms and staircase. Construction of the first phase of the building renovation is done (with some punch list items and touching up still to come), and the open house will be a good opportunity to see the new and remodeled spaces. At least one of the new middle school classrooms will be unoccupied while students spend time with their buddy class, so parents will be able to come inside without disrupting students.

From the Classrooms

Food Drive

The Dolphin kindergarten class (Candy and Jasmin's class) is hosting a Food Bank Drive! Barrels are located in the lobby of St. Joseph's Hall and at the preschool bungalows. Items that are needed most include canned fruits and vegetables, canned meats, soups and stews, pastas and cereals, beans and 100% fruit juice. No glass please.

Community Event Night

Thursday, October 11 marks our first Community Event Night at the Boys and Girls Club. Middle school students and their parents are invited to watch segments of the film *Born Into Brothels* and view public service announcements created by CDS students. *Born Into Brothels* chronicles a documentary photography project undertaken by children in India who live with their mothers that work in brothels. Film excerpts will focus

on the photography project and how it alters the lens through which the children see themselves and their lives. Please join us from 6:30-8:30 p.m. for viewing and discussion. Food will be provided.

From the Office

Family Farmer Training

Having read last week's exhilarating account of a weekend spent in the farm and garden by Dave Cohen, you're probably dying to get your hands in the dirt, scoop chicken feed and take home fresh eggs! All you need to do to make your dream come true is sign up to be a family farmer and attend the next family farmer training on Saturday, October 20 at 9 a.m. To sign up for the training, contact Misty Cummings at mistyc@cds-sf.org or 861-5432 x321.

Events

Bay Area Grandparent Breakfast

We mailed invitations last week to local grandparents for a casual breakfast on Friday, October 12 from 8:30-10 a.m. We'll still hold our annual Grandparents & Special Friends Day on Wednesday, November 22 for all grandparents and special friends. We added the October event for local families so that Bay Area grandparents, many of whom travel over the Thanksgiving holiday, have an opportunity to visit the school, meet other grandparents and hear from Rick about CDS plans and programs. The visit will include Friday assembly, a walk-through of the newly renovated St. Joseph's Hall and classroom time.

Go Bulldogs!

Co-ed Volleyball Calendar

Today, 4:30 p.m.

CACA, Boys & Girls Club, 450 Guerrero Street

Tuesday, October 9, 4 p.m.

Lycee Francais, 20th and Ortega Streets

Wednesday, October 17, 3:45 p.m.

Katherine Delmar Burke, 7000 California Street

Extended Program News

Fall Enrichment Classes

Enrichment classes roared into place this week and have nearly full rosters! After some confusion about start dates, enrollment is extended through Friday, October 5 and interested parents are encouraged to contact Dan at 861-5432 x315 with any questions about availability or special circumstances. Our apologies for any communication failures surrounding this fall's enrichment session.

Coming up in the next few weeks, we will publicize and implement a menu of feature club activities within the after school program. These are new organized programs available to all members of the extended program at no additional cost.

Finally, please take the time to read the attached letter clarifying extended program charges and policies. After one month of programming, we've learned that various interpretations of new and existing policies exist, and we hope to make clear the uniform policies for all parents and students.

PTTA Update

Upcoming Meeting

Please join us next Tuesday, October 9 from 6-7:30 p.m. in the faculty lounge for a PTTA meeting about CDS finances, fundraising and the upcoming Annual Fund phonathon. Members of the Board of Trustees will give an overview of the CDS financial framework including the budgeting process and development efforts. Will tuition increase? How can we, as parents, help minimize tuition? What are some of the budget questions the finance committee struggles with? How can we best utilize our connections to foundations? Is there value in donating \$5 to the annual fund if that's all you can afford? We hope to answer these and other questions.

Childcare is available for any CDS student (grades pre-8) and any sibling in grade K-8. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate any non-CDS siblings that are preschool age or younger. To sign up for childcare, please contact Ryan Gordon at ryang@cds-sf.org by the end of the day Friday.

Upcoming Dates

Tuesday, October 16 & Tuesday, October 17
Annual Fund Phonathon

Thursday, October 18
Middle school forum

Thursday, October 18 & Friday, October 19
Picture Day

Monday, October 22
Professional development day
No school
No extended program

Tuesday, October 23
4 p.m.
Committee on Inclusion & Diversity meeting
All are welcome
Faculty lounge

Friday, October 26
Sibling admission applications due

Saturday, October 27
Alumni Reunion &
High School Roundtable

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

Children's Day School

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