



February 12, 2009

# THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

## Words from Rick

### The Magic of Childhood / The Rigor of Academics

The gleam that was in Jim Robinson's eye when he founded Children's Day School in 1983 was a belief in the magic of childhood. All greatness at this school grows from that one seed.

I saw this genius manifest yesterday as third graders simulated the socio-political conflicts that challenged the pioneers on their way west in the nineteenth century. While they read about families that launched themselves into the life and death struggles of finding a new home in a wilderness, they were also role-playing being a family. Their experiences lead them to talk about concepts of authority, bargaining, compromise, leadership, democracy and many other variables that led to the success or failure of such nascent organizations.

And speaking of variables, the first graders were learning arithmetic while conducting a physics experiment. "How far will a marble roll after it comes out of a paper towel tube 16 unifix cubes long?" "How does this distance vary if it is released from a height of one block thickness, two blocks thickness, or three blocks thickness?" In order to answer this question they had to deal with variation in answers. "What is the right answer if on one trial the marble rolled 72 unifix cubes, 78 on another, and 74 on yet another?" Are first graders ready to learn averaging? Are they ready to come up with an answer such as "75 plus or minus 3?" They were working on these adult-level concepts on the same day that they were learning—using little plastic blocks—why 20 comes after 19 and why 200 comes after 199.

A number of second graders began their day marveling at frost. There was so much on the picnic tables that they could make small ice balls. They scraped and collected frost from the picnic tables and benches and put it together into one ball. Sara decided they would conduct a study of how long it would take to melt. They all made estimates (ranging from 29 seconds to 4 minutes) and then checked the ice ball at regular time intervals to measure the validity of their predictions. They discovered that they all underestimated—the right answer is about 9 and a half minutes depending upon when you decide it's all become water. (If only financial managers and economists had been so scientific.)

By fourth grade they are making statements in class such as "I learned that when you are measuring an angle, if you make a small mistake on one side of the room, you are way off when you get to the other side of the room." And about something completely different: "We were very fair with each other, and

### Hot Dates

Friday, February 13  
8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly  
Seventh grade presenting

Monday, February 16

President's Day observed  
No school; no extended program

Tuesday, February 17 – Friday,  
February 20

February vacation  
No school; extended program  
available

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



## Thank You!

- To Ana Brubaker and Amy Hecht for helping lead admission tours.
- To Rebecca Grey, Debbie Jasso, Paige Lang, Jeanette Layden, Sara O'Malley, Jason Perkins, Beth Porter, Andrea Reynolds and Carlos Vasquez for helping host prospective kindergarten parents during kindergarten visits.

we were kind of easy and didn't make a big deal out of where we were going. It reminds me of the mountain and molehill thing that we learned from Ms. Ginny last year." By fourth grade they are reading and making inferences about what they read.

One of the many brilliant aspects of letting kids be kids as they develop their academic skills is that it is the best way to maximize brainpower. CDS teachers know that when they meet a child on a child's level, when they believe in the power and complexity of the whole child pursuing some interest with passion in a real-world context, there can also be plenty of rigor—and should be. They have the wisdom to engage the child before mixing in the skills, the concepts and the disciplined thinking. Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of kindergarten, used to say, "Play is the work of children." Since then, many great educators have picked up on this theme and applied its wisdom to elementary education. Jim Robinson and today's faculty all share this same insight. At CDS we are not just teaching mere academics, we are ensuring that academic disciplines will be used in real life. Believing in the magic of childhood includes the wisdom that the development of the human brain is so complex that you don't really have it right unless it feels a little like magic.

After reading my weekly articles about the basketball team, a parent asked me if the "CDS Way" didn't have some soft underbelly, some tragic flaw. He and another father kept noticing how their two sixth grade sons seemed to be too thoughtful of the other person when they found themselves going for the same ball at the same time against a player with a different jersey. "Is this cooperative environment training kids to be less competitive?"

To those anxious about preparation, either for academically competitive high schools or athletically competitive situations, I join Jim Robinson in saying, "All in good time, my dear, all in good time." The drive to

perform, achieve and win comes from deep within the human organism (in different measures from person to person.) Meanwhile, the genius of CDS is that acceleration through childhood to skill mastery or winning puts children at risk for missing all the wonderful stops along the way, stops where they gather all (not just some) of the equipment and the strength necessary to measure up in later challenges and conflicts.

## From the Office

### Family Farmers Needed

Help welcome Kelsey Siegel to CDS by helping out in the farm and garden. Kelsey is here during Misty's maternity leave and is still looking to fill a few family farmer spots:

- April 6-10
- August 17-21, 31
- September 1, 7

To sign up, contact Kelsey at [kelseys@cds-sf.org](mailto:kelseys@cds-sf.org).

### Sliding Scale Tuition

While the official deadline for applying for sliding scale tuition for 2009-10 has passed, if you have concerns about being able to afford to return to CDS next year, PLEASE consider applying for sliding scale tuition. As stated in last week's letter from the Board of Trustees, the Board approved a special \$125,000 increase in the sliding scale tuition budget to aid families experiencing serious financial setbacks that could impede their ability to return in the fall. The Access and Affordability Committee will make 2009-10 sliding scale decisions for returning CDS families on a first priority basis during the month of February.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact Donna Shibata, Director of Finance and Operations, at 861-5432 x314 or [donnas@cds-sf.org](mailto:donnas@cds-sf.org).

## Events

### Fiesta 2009 Donations

Have you checked out our new online silent auction site at [www.cdsfiesta2009.cmarket.com](http://www.cdsfiesta2009.cmarket.com)? It's so easy to use you can donate an item in less than five minutes! And you'll help make our annual celebration and auction fundraiser a huge success in the process. The online silent auction will run from Tuesday, March 10 through Wednesday, March 25. Don't miss this great

## School Wish List

- The first and second grade classes are already busy preparing for the Country Fair by juicing the lemons from our garden, but we can always use more. If CDS families have extra lemons at home from their own trees, we will put them to good use. Lemons should be bagged and can be left at the front desk with Elsa.

opportunity to get your donations in and help raise money for sliding scale tuition. **Please remember that donations are due (either online or on paper) by Wednesday, February 25.**

## Calling All Knitters

Art teacher Elizabeth McClellan is once again leading the collective knitting of a blanket to be auctioned at this year's Fiesta. All you need to know is the basic knit stitch to help out and she will put you to work. Last year's beautiful blanket was a great success in the "best of" silent auction and helped raise money for sliding scale tuition. If you're interested in knitting, please contact Elizabeth at [elizabethm@cds-sf.org](mailto:elizabethm@cds-sf.org).

## PTTA Update

### Diversity and Inclusion

The PTTA and the Committee on Inclusion and Diversity invite everyone to an evening of conversation about racial, cultural and socio-economic diversity at CDS on Tuesday, February 24 from 6-8 p.m. We'll hear from the administration and faculty on what's being done to enhance and celebrate diversity in the classrooms and in our community, how these issues are handled in the curriculum and what areas we are still striving to improve. This is a chance for parents to ask questions, give feedback, and hear about opportunities to get involved.

To help guide the discussion, you can send questions in advance to Sara O'Malley at [Sara@OMalleyHylton.com](mailto:Sara@OMalleyHylton.com), or just bring them to the meeting. Pizza and childcare will be provided. Remember to sign up at the front desk by Monday, February 23 if you plan to use childcare.

## Upcoming Dates

**Tuesday, February 24**

6-8 p.m.

Diversity and Inclusion meeting  
hosted by COID and the PTTA

**Monday, March 9**

Professional development day  
No school; no extended program

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 e-mail