



February 26, 2009

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Is Competition Good for Kids?

In response to last week's article, "The Magic of Childhood/The Rigor of Academics," a parent wrote:

Are you saying that the genius of the CDS program is to insulate a child from premature competition? If a person is either naturally competitive or encounters a competitive environment, then puts their all into it and prevails, then there is a worthy sense of pride and accomplishment. If competition is embraced "in a CDS way," then a CDS child is better equipped to cope/handle knowing how to "go for the win" in outside competitive situations with honor and integrity.

I couldn't have said it better myself—apparently I didn't. A "cooperative environment" is nothing more or less than a place where humans are really good at conflict. At CDS we do not encourage cooperation over competition; we teach the disciplines of conflict appropriate to the social situation. Conflict on the basketball court should look quite different from conflict in a writing group. On the basketball court we teach the disciplines of effective competition and in class we teach a set of cooperative disciplines. The competitive set includes good sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship includes not letting your adrenalin get the better of you (e.g. keep focused on the goal; don't get mad at the opponent). It does not include being relaxed about who gets to the ball first and who ends up with it (e.g. GET THAT BALL).

My caution against acceleration through childhood is by no means a call to insulate. The belief in childhood includes an understanding that children have a natural motivation to make something of themselves, to know stuff, to express themselves, to create, to author something, to solve problems ...and to win. The challenges they take on are signals that they are ready to get good at something. As we adults cheer, coach and correct from the sidelines, we need to monitor ourselves with, "Whose game is this?"

Asking this question will help us regulate the intensity of our involvement so that we don't let our own vicarious enthusiasm overpower the child's automatic desire to succeed. This is true whether the project is beating an opponent to the ball or pleasing a teacher with a piece of writing. As we inject ourselves into the project with "keep your eye on the ball" or "never split an infinitive," let's make sure we are not trying to *either* accelerate or insulate.

A basketball game—any game—is playing at conflict and in my view is a good and natural thing. Sports and games are, of course, important courses in the conflict curriculum. One of the functions of school should be to provide games of conflict so that children can practice skills to cope with it. There is no

Hot Dates

Wednesday, February 25
Fiesta donations due

Thursday, February 26
6-7:30 p.m.
Parent-teacher book group:
Raising Lifelong Learners

Friday, February 27
8:30 a.m.
Friday assembly
Sixth grade presenting

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



Thank You!

- To Manda Ederer, Rebecca Grey, Todd Hosfelt, Debbie Jasso, Paige Lang, Andrea Reynolds, Elizabeth Seirmarco, Ann Van Gelder and Rachel Yeaman for their help with this week's visit days for prospective kindergarten families.
- To Vanessa Lambright for donating two laptop bags to the IT department.
- To Jeff Hicks for donating wood to the Firecracker kindergarten class.
- To Susi Alexander for donating lemons to the Country Fair lemonade making team.
- To Ynze Bijl for donating soccer balls, flags and cones to the P.E. program.
- To Roger Nys for donating seven Hewlett Packard computers to the IT department.
- To Jeannette and Brian Layden for providing coffee and breakfast treats at Friday coffee.
- To Teddy Bear families for providing a wonderful array of breakfast goodies for this month's faculty breakfast.

"scope and sequence" for this curriculum because the sophistication of conflict management skills will be determined by the readiness of the individuals and the requirements of the environment in which they find themselves. At sixth grade it is quite natural for a kid to learn how to beat the other kid to the ball.

Adult passion for the child's success can be a serious demotivator. The work of people like Madeline Levine (*The Price of Privilege*), Hara Estroff Marano ("A Nation of Wimps") and David Elkind (*The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*), point mostly to the dangers of over-protection, but they also warn against acceleration. A belief in the child includes a belief in a pre-existing inner drive. Our role is to educate this drive, not to create it. I was simply reminding us of something CDSer's already know; i.e. to *educate* means to lead out. Our job is to create the conditions in which the child will learn the necessary disciplines to succeed, and not to try to implant the desire to succeed. We must always act as if that is already there.

The entire CDS curriculum could be outlined as a series

of conflict opportunities. A central idea is that conflict is okay. The message is: "Of course you want to conflict. It can be exciting, scary, exhilarating, anguishing, sad, disappointing, challenging, frustrating, fun and a creative opportunity. We will guide you in how to do it effectively and gracefully." Being graceful on the basketball court includes more than graceful body movement. It includes being in right relationship with one's own teammates and also in right relationship with the opposition. Integrity on the basketball court is being true to one's own talents, abilities and potential, and true to the other people in the room and the requirements of the game. Sports can be a great educator.

So, no: acknowledging competitive nature in even younger children or in their environment is by no means "accelerating them through childhood." On the contrary, I was intending to communicate that the desire to win is built into the human organism. It manifests itself differently in different people in different situations; we don't need to accelerate it.

Thank you for forcing me to clarify.

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

Progress and Pledges

Thanks to the generosity of parents, trustees, friends and foundations, contributions to the *Building Our Future* campaign total over \$1.8 million, including more than \$1.4 million in paid gifts. These donations have allowed CDS to renovate much of St. Joseph's Hall over the last two years -- building out the third floor, modernizing bathrooms, adding the environmental education kitchen and improving building safety, systems and accessibility. Although these features of St. Joseph's Hall have quickly become part of the established landscape of the school, it was not long ago that putting classrooms on the third floor appeared to be prohibitively complicated, the state of the building's bathrooms was a source of recurring (and entirely reasonable) community lament and the radiators emitted little more than clanging noises during the chilly winter months.

The improvements completed in the first two phases of the project have been funded with a combination of donated funds and construction loans. As part of the school's loan package, the bank has set a deadline of June 1, 2009 for CDS to raise \$1.4 million in paid gifts

School Wish List

- Though we've harvested all of the delicious fruit from our lemon tree in the garden, we still need more lemons to juice for the Country Fair. Please bring any extra lemons from your trees at home and leave them at the front desk. We will make sure they are transformed into delicious lemonade this May.

and \$2.25 million in all -- paid gifts plus pledges to donate in future years. It is no small success to report that we have already exceeded the bank's \$1.4 million paid gift requirement. As a result, we are focusing on securing written commitments for approximately \$500,000 in additional pledges needed to satisfy the terms of the school's construction loan. A pledge is a promise to pay in the future. Unlike a donation to the CDS Annual Fund, which must be paid by the end of the school year, a pledge to the capital campaign can extend for several years. Many donors to the *Building Our Future* campaign have made multi-year commitments to maximize what they can contribute. Now more than ever, as we seek to continue to improve the CDS campus and preserve the school's access to credit, pledges to give to the campaign over the next couple of years will have a profound impact on the campaign and the school in general.

For more information, take a look at the new materials on the first floor bulletin board, next to the Family of the Week display, which show what has been accomplished and what needs to be done by June 1. The CDS web page devoted to the campaign and St. Joseph's Hall renovation, www.cds-sf.org/giving/cc, has before and after photos from both summers of construction as well as details regarding the campaign and vision for the whole building. Donations can also be accepted online, and, as always, feel free to contact Marion Quinones at marionq@cds-sf.org or 861-5432 x323 if you have any questions.

From the Classrooms

Eighth Grade News

Can you believe it? Our eighth graders are entering their final months at CDS and they've been quite busy.

- They just mailed off their essays to the Lincoln Bicentennial contest where they described what

makes a "hero," who they look up to and made comparisons to Abraham Lincoln. Four winners in this national contest will receive an all-expenses paid trip to Chicago and Springfield, Illinois.

- They are working on the third edition of their class newspaper, *Say What?* If you haven't read a copy, be sure to check out the newest edition.
- They will have a special guest speaker, author Dave Eggers, speak to them about his novel, *What is the What*.
- They went to see *Slumdog Millionaire* as part of their study of culture, media and journalism.
- They are beginning a project with the fourth grade where they will facilitate a "Great Books" reading group and discussion.

From the Office

Family Farmers Needed

Don't miss a great opportunity to help out in the farm and garden during one of the dates below:

- April 8-10
- August 17-21, 31
- September 7

To sign up, contact Kelsey at kelseys@cds-sf.org.

Book Group Meeting

Do you wonder what you can do to help your child succeed at school, learn to read and write, understand math or do his or her homework? Looking for a parenting book that provides hands-on ideas and advice about how to help your child love learning? Then *Raising Lifelong Learners* by Lucy Calkins is the book for you!

Please join us on Thursday, February 26 from 6-7:30 p.m. for the second meeting of our parent-teacher book group. We'll have a lively discussion and hear thoughts from parents and teachers about how to support your child's learning in a way that merges nicely with the CDS curriculum and philosophy. In this second meeting, we will discuss social studies, science, math and establishing healthy hobbies and work habits. At the end of the meeting we will also briefly brainstorm thoughts about what kinds of parent education people would like to see in the future.

The book is available on Amazon for \$11.53 and three copies are available to check out from Margaret Piskitel, Curriculum Coordinator.

Whether you joined us for the first meeting or not, please join us now. Free childcare (for CDS students) and dinner will be provided to adults and children who attend.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Margaret Piskitel, Curriculum Coordinator at 861-5432 x349 or margaretp@cds-sf.org, so that we can plan for food and childcare.

A Right-Brained Future

Please join us on Tuesday, March 31, from 7-8:30 p.m., to hear NAIS President Patrick Bassett's talk, "The Right-Brained Future: Creating Mindsets for the 21st Century." This event will take place at the Mission High School auditorium and is hosted by CDS and Mission High School. All parents are invited, including parents from other local Bay Area independent schools. For more details, see the flyer attached.

Events

Fiesta 2009

Donations

Donations for Fiesta 2009 are due! You can turn in a paper donation form in the Fiesta box at the front desk or you can submit your donation online at www.cdsfiesta2009.cmarket.com. Online donations are quick and easy; please turn your donation in as soon as possible so that our online silent auction will be full of great items to raise money for sliding scale tuition. If you need assistance with donation ideas, please contact Pat Rose at patrosepr@yahoo.com, or Andrea Reynolds at andrea-reynolds@sbcglobal.net.

Invitations

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 28 and keep your eyes peeled for your Fiesta 2009 invitation which should arrive in the mail soon. You'll find an RSVP card inside; please RSVP promptly. We'll keep your information on file here and when you arrive the night of the event, you can just check in and receive your bidder number then. We look forward to a great community party!

Upcoming Dates

Monday, March 9

Professional development day
No school; no extended program

Saturday, March 28

6:30-11 p.m.
Fiesta 2009
Mighty (119 Utah Street)

Tuesday, March 31

7-8:30 p.m.
"The Right-Brained Future"
Pat Bassett, NAIS President
Mission High School

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

Children's Day School

333 Dolores Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-861-5432 (ph)
415-861-5419 (fax)

www.cds-sf.org

Editor: Mary DeNardo, cdsweekly@cds-sf.org
Submissions due Wednesdays, 8 a.m.
Contact Mary to receive the Weekly via e-mail