



May 14, 2009

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Send Us Your Stories

So, James and Christian are standing by the split rail fence lining the Papa Artie Bower at the Country Fair while I'm warming up by the charcoal pits, getting a dose of male banter from the guys flipping burgers. I'm shivering and trying to prepare myself physically and psychologically to walk to my execution at the dunking pool. Beating my arms on my chest, I say to them, "Nice place to stand." And James says, "Yeah. This is where the cool guys stand." And Christian says, "Yeah, we're saving their place for them."

On checking with Christian's parents later, they were comfortable that he is coming along nicely as a humorist, and are equally open minded about the implications of his gift for humor for his future career trajectory. I said, "All Head of School qualification-lists end with 'good sense of humor.'" Then after a pause added, "Be sure you put this story in the journal you are keeping on him."

Many of us have kept a journal about our children, at one time or another, for tracking their progress, acknowledging benchmarks of growth, or as a gift to future biographers. A story like this is the kind of information that should be in it. Compared to this character revealing moment in the life of Christian, noting when he learned to crawl, walk, talk, read or learned the multiplication tables shrinks in significance.

In her April 29 *New York Times* article titled "Kindergarten Cram," Peggy Orenstein does a brilliant job of exposing the American craze of attempting to accelerate children into academia (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/03/magazine/03wwln-ledge-t.html>).

She joins many others in warning of the negative side effects of a narrow focus on academic skills. We Americans seem to have an anxious need for our children to perform on that narrow range of skills faster and sooner as if it had something to do with success—which it doesn't. In particular, she emphasizes the importance of play.

Helen, nearly four-years-old at the time, was playing in the sandbox on a sunny Saturday morning. On the other side of the sandbox, a brawl broke out between a brother and sister. Helen watched as they knocked each other to the ground, arguing over a shovel. She watched intently for a while, then calmly looked around, found two more shovels, walked over, and handed one to each of the siblings. The fighting stopped. They handed Helen the shovel they had been fighting over and went back to playing happily together. No words were exchanged.

In addition to delighting in Helen being Helen, we could also note that she

Hot Dates

Friday, May 15
8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly
Kindergarten (Luisa) presenting

Tuesday, May 19
4-6 p.m.

Committee on Inclusion and
Diversity meeting

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



Thank You!

- To Jeanette and Jeremy Wilmerding, Jen Millet and Steve Chaitin for providing delicious Friday morning coffee and baked goods.
- To Molly Meng for leading Friday morning coffee “greening” efforts by bringing in a bowl of sugar (reducing packets), silverware (reducing our use of disposable eatware) and ensuring that we use what we have now before purchasing more.
- To Robin Woods for donating a Telecaster electric guitar to the CDS music program.
- To kindergarten families for providing an outstanding faculty breakfast last week!
- To Angie Jolie for taking photos at the Country Fair.

observed a conflict, deciphered the dynamic, figured out a solution and implemented that solution, all with the utmost confidence. That these skills Helen practiced are necessary for success and satisfaction in the maelstrom of life that will be coming at her in ever-increasing degrees of complexity for the rest of her life, is obvious. For those with a narrow focus on “the basics” it may be less obvious that these sandbox skills are also essential for full functioning in a classroom when confronted with academic problems.

To function fully in and out of academia, we need to develop the whole nervous system of the entire organism, and link as many parts of the brain as possible to the pre-frontal cortex so that our children make increasingly better decisions as their world gets more and more complex. Social decision-making, imaginative play, creative design, graceful movement and self-expression in all its forms increase our ability to make decisions in all aspects of our lives by strengthening the decision-making hub in our brain. The more kinds of challenges that pass through this Grand Central Station of our Brains, the stronger we will be.

And so, let kids play; don't over-program their lives. Talk with them, read to them, but don't burn them out on homework. While we are at it, act as if they know what they are doing—they usually do on one level or another. But above all else, notice and delight in the development of their character for that is what education is all about: creating the conditions for discovering and bringing out

all of a person's gifts and talents. And when you see your child being delightful, tell the story. Whether or not you keep a journal, send it to us. We thrive on these stories.

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

May...We...Pledge

The dedicated corps of CDS capital campaign volunteers has started reaching out to all CDS parents to ask for your support of the *Building Our Future* campaign to fund the renovation of St. Joseph's Hall. All through the month of May, volunteers will be personally delivering a small packet of campaign materials as well as a handy, not-available-in-any-store CDS fridge magnet to fellow parents. We hope you'll read the appeal, post the magnet, encourage family and friends and contribute with generosity to help us reach our goal of \$2.25 million in total campaign pledges.

The detail about *pledging* – i.e. promising to give in the future – is important. As part of the school's construction loan, the bank has set a deadline of June 1 for CDS to raise \$1.4 million in paid gifts and \$2.25 million in all – paid gifts plus pledges to pay in future years. Thanks to the generosity of parents, trustees, friends and foundations, we've already exceeded the bank's \$1.4 million paid gift requirement. What we're asking for now is that each one of us do everything we can to commit to the campaign this year as well as for the next couple of years. If you can give \$100 now, please consider pledging \$100 a year for three years. If you've completed a pledge to the campaign, would you consider extending your giving for another year or two? And if you can't give now, would you be able to commit to a gift next fall or next year?

Working together, we can get this done, and we're asking everyone to help. Even if your gift must be small, please contribute, since strong participation is important now more than ever. Completing a successful capital campaign in a tough economic climate will keep CDS strong and healthy as we improve our campus facilities and make this a better school for the future. Thank you.

From the Office

Early Arrivals

Please remember that school begins between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. (depending on the grade) and the school yard opens at 8 a.m. If you need to drop your child off at

school before 8 a.m., we offer morning extended care from 7:30 to 8 a.m. daily.

We love that students want to get here early, but when students congregate at the black gate, there is no one to supervise them. Regardless of age or grade, all students who arrive before 8 a.m. and are not accompanied by an adult **must** go to a.m. care, which is located in Collette's second grade classroom.

We are experiencing resistance from middle school students in particular, some of whom are stopping in the Notre Dame Plaza rear garden (not allowed) or hanging out on Dolores Street (not controllable by CDS as they are not on school property, but certainly not advised).

As this is a safety issue, we are asking all parents/guardians to talk with their children and give them the guidance they need to go to a.m. care. If cost is a concern, please contact Dan Larson, Extended Program Director, at danl@cds-sf.org or 861-5432 x315, for assistance.

Family Farmer Dates

Not ready for urban chickens in your own backyard? Here's your chance to experience fresh eggs on the weekend or during our San Francisco summer this August! Contact Misty Cummings (newly returned from maternity leave next week) at mistyc@cds-sf.org to sign up for the following dates:

- June 6, 7
- August 8, 9, 17-21, 31

Events

Class of 2009 Graduation

On Tuesday, June 9 we'll hold the Class of 2009 graduation ceremony in the CDS yard. (Watch for your graduation invitation in the mail this week.) Graduation will run from 3:45–5 p.m. All parents are invited to attend and bring their children with them; please note that there will be no extended program available that afternoon. Stay tuned for more graduation information. We hope you'll join us in celebrating this year's graduating class and all of their achievements!

Country Fair Details



We inadvertently forgot to thank Alycia Freeman and Dave Klaus for their great help with the Country Fair. Dave was the fabulous emcee and Alycia helped design and make the bow ties, along with lending a hand for many of the day's activities. Thank you Alycia and Dave!

Please remember to pick up any serving or storage-ware you brought to the Country Fair, located in the hallway next to the reception desk. Also, if you donated a cooler and need to pick it up, please email Amanda Richard at amandar@cds-sf.org and she will put it on the porch for easy retrieval.

PTTA Update

March in the Pride Parade

On Sunday, June 28, CDS families are invited to represent our school by marching in this year's San Francisco Pride Parade. We're in the beginning stages of planning our participation in this powerful event and would love your help. Consider rounding up your family and friends and joining the group of CDS families to show the city what an amazing, diverse and supportive community we are.

The parade begins at Market and Beale Streets at 10:30 a.m. (our group will gather at least an hour earlier, more details to come about exact time) and finishes at Market and Eighth Streets at approximately 2:30 p.m.

If you are interested in joining the fun, please contact our CDS Pride Parade Chairs, Cory Warren and Ray Cendana at gcwarren@mac.com.

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. (Earth friendly tip: bring your own mug!)

We're always looking for additional volunteers—if you're willing to sign up to bring morning sustenance, please contact Friday morning coffee coordinators Wendy Bokhorst-Heng at wdbheng@gmail.com, or Angie Jolie at ajolie@morillojolie.net.

PTTA Questions or Ideas?

- General e-mail, CDSPTTA@yahoo.com
- Laura Pliska, President, (415) 641-5116 or laura@sfbabyworks.com
- Robin McClarren, Faculty Appreciation Coordinator, (415) 235-0295 or robinmcc@speakeasy.net
- Sara O'Malley, Parent Involvement Coordinator, (415) 348-8841 or sara@omalleyhylton.com
- Karen Randig, Secretary, (415) 824-1784 or krandig@msn.com
- Andrea Reynolds, Preschool Representative, (415) 860-7556 or andrea-reynolds@sbcglobal.net
- Darya Soto, Diversity Coordinator, (415) 812-1715 or daryasoto@yahoo.com
- Carlos Vasquez, Classroom Liaison Coordinator, (415) 987-6501 or xcvasquez@aol.com

Upcoming Dates

Friday, May 22 & Saturday, May 23
Shakespeare performances

Monday, May 25
Memorial Day observed
No school
No extended program

Friday, May 29
9-10 a.m.
Step-Up Day

Sunday, May 31 – Sunday, June 7
Eighth grade trip

Monday, June 1 – Saturday, June 6
Sixth grade trip

Monday, June 1
Last day that, with written notice, you may withdraw your child from the 2009-10 school year without incurring the obligation for the total tuition

Tuesday, June 9
3:45-5 p.m.
Eighth grade graduation
Last day of school

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

Children's Day School

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