



September 25, 2008

THE CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL Weekly

Words from Rick

Grouping Children

At assembly two weeks ago the eighth grade gave us our mantra for the year, "Inquiring minds want to know," as they staged (danced really) a mock inquisition of the presidential candidates. Last week the seventh grade told tall tales of their trip to Mt. Lassen, each corrected afterward by a fact-based-truth-telling classmate. As I go around the school I see inquiring minds going at it everywhere I look. And such variety! Small groups discuss all sorts of things, from how to do a math problem, to what they want to write about, to what they see in a painting. They are writing or working arithmetic problems on their own, or speaking to the whole class about an insight they had. I could go on, but I don't have to because you've seen it. (If you haven't you might want to sign up to be an admission tour guide.)

What you see in each room is a diversity of minds striving to master something in the peculiar way that each unique brain approaches the world. Our students are being taught by master teachers who know how to deliver education in this way. The jargon for it is constructivism, but though the jargon is recent, the method goes back to the one room schoolhouse where heterogeneous grouping is taken for granted.

A generation ago, when I was running a school in Kansas City, it was considered controversial. The more common delivery system was to group students by ability and make them focus on the same narrow set of skills to master and then measure how well they measured up, grouping them according to "ability," as if there were one scale for ability and one could array the students along this continuum and group like minds together. If you google "heterogeneous grouping" or "homogeneous grouping" you can see that the debate continues today.

However, if you dig into studies about "tracking" and ability grouping you'll discover that the debate is essentially between those who see education as a complex process of building mental capacity that includes but is not limited to academic achievement, and those who see schooling as moving students up a narrow ladder of skill mastery; between those who see each mind as infinitely complex and those who place students on a continuum of ability based on the particular subject; between those who see intelligence as plastic AND developed through a complex process of engaging the whole organism in interesting phenomena, and those who believe intelligence is fixed; between those who think success comes from enthusiastic struggle toward goals and those who think (or fear) that success is largely determined by ability.

CDS has had twenty-five years of experience educating students in heterogeneous groups—twelve years of experience doing it with elementary age

Hot Dates

Thursday, September 25

5:30 p.m.

New Parent Reception

Ecolab

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Preschool and Elementary

Back-to-School Night

Friday, September 26

8:30 a.m.

Friday assembly

Sixth grade presenting

Tuesday, September 30

4:30 p.m.

Admission Office Volunteer

Orientation

Thursday, October 2

6:30-8 p.m.

St. Joseph's Hall Party

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



Thank You!

- To Erin Sheepo, Wini von Ehrenburg and Marla Zemanek for supplying hungry parents with donuts and coffee at Friday morning coffee last week.
- To Beau Timken for lending a huge hand at the Welcome Picnic. He was instrumental in the clean-up crew!
- To Ann and Dirk Van Gelder, Tina Leung, Paul Moreno and Andrew Henry for enthusiastically staffing the CDS table at Preschool Preview Night in Golden Gate Park last Wednesday night.

students. Now that we have three classes of graduates—there are 17 CDS juniors in high school—we have a large enough database to take a look at the theory as it applies to us. You will be hearing more specifically about how this applies to your children this year at both of our Back-to-School Nights.

Over the course of the year, you'll hear more about the unique way that CDS applies constructivism and differentiation in the *Weekly*. We'll keep you informed about the work of the faculty on the mathematics curriculum, and about our professional development workshops. (Next month's workshop is about implementing a framework for designing curriculum called "Understanding by Design.") We'll also keep you updated on additional events and parent-teacher discussions at CDS and throughout the Bay Area. (For example, on November 19, parent education group SPEAK will host a panel discussion by leading educators entitled "Successful Kids: Redefining Goals" just around the corner at the Greek Orthodox Church on Valencia Street). And in the spring, we will be very fortunate to host Pat Bassett, president of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), who'll talk with us about constructivism.

We are proud of our customized approach to education and want to you know all about how it works, so stay tuned for continued updates. See you at Back-to-School Night!

Transforming St. Joseph's Hall

Come Celebrate!

All are invited to the third floor next Thursday, October 2 from 6:30-8 p.m. for a reception and open house celebrating the completion of phase two of the transformation of St. Joseph's Hall. Whether you've had the chance to visit the new middle school classrooms or not, please join us to celebrate a second summer of successful construction and hear about plans to renovate the remainder of the building by installing an elevator and photovoltaic panels, enhancing seismic safety, restoring the building's historic exterior and improving all classrooms.

Free childcare for CDS students will be available if you RSVP at the front desk by Monday, September 29.

From the Office

Join the Green Task Force

The first monthly meeting of the Green Task Force will be held on Tuesday, October 7 at 3:30 p.m. in the second floor meeting room of the 16th Street building. All parents and teachers, and students in third through eighth grades, are welcome to join us! Please RSVP to Misty Cummings at mistyc@cds-sf.org if you plan to attend; pre-meeting information will be sent out.

Alumni Corner

Class of 2008

We're pleased to announce that Maria Paschal ('08) was recently awarded the Roberts Leadership Scholarship at Culver Academy (a college preparatory boarding school in north-central Indiana). Maria is one of just two freshmen awarded the scholarship based on academic, citizenship and character excellence. The scholarship covers Culver Academy expenses and includes involvement in a spring break/mission work project as well as an off-site summer study program in the U.S. or overseas. Congratulations Maria!

School Wish List

- The after school program needs yoga mats for after school activities and enrichment classes. If you have a mat to donate, please contact Dan Larson at danl@cds-sf.org.

Events

Back-to-School Night Tonight!

CDS holds two Back-to-School Nights, one for parents in grades 5-8 (Wednesday, September 24) and a second for parents in grades pre-4 (Thursday, September 25). Both nights give teachers the opportunity to share with parents what skills and content their children will be covering during the year as well as a chance to demonstrate how the class is structured to challenge each child appropriately.

We know this is a short amount of time to share a lot of information. We appreciate your thoughtful questions and efficient transitions between all aspects of the evening! In order to respect the importance of the parent/teacher communications planned for this evening, we will be a “dry” campus this year (i.e. no wine will be served). We will serve light food and refreshments.

Back to School Night is one of the few parent events at CDS where we do not provide childcare. Please remember to secure childcare for the evening. Also, please remember to arrive early to find street parking as there is NO parking in the CDS lot. We encourage you to take public transportation if at all possible.

Preschool & Elementary BTSN Schedule

- 6:15–6:30: Parents gather in the yard for refreshments
- 6:30–7: Program starts, words from Head of School, Assistant Head and Board Chair
- 7–7:05: Transition time to classrooms
- 7:05–7:45: Classroom presentations (younger sibling or student last names L-Z)
- 7:45 – 7:50: Transition time to classrooms
- 7:50–8:30: Classroom presentations (older sibling or

student last names A-K)

Please note that parents with only one student are encouraged to meet with specialists on the third floor and visit the new middle school classrooms when they are not in a presentation.

Fiesta 2009 Class Quilts

Calling all quilters! Do you love to sew? Would you like to learn? CDS has a proud tradition of making class quilts each year which are displayed at the school, photographed for a school poster, and then auctioned off at our annual Fiesta fundraiser party in March. Each class needs parents to help the kids get the ball rolling with their inspirations, designs and artwork. If you can handle a pair of scissors you're qualified!

Come to our quilters meetings this Friday, September 26 and next Friday, October 3 at 9 a.m. on the third floor faculty lounge in the new 16th Street building to find out how you can help. For more information, contact Susan Chastain, our quilting maven, at susan@susanchastain.com.

Board Corner

Board Letter

By now you should have received a letter mailed home from Matt Schwartz, Board Chair. We've also included an electronic copy with the emailed *Weekly*. The letter

Go Bulldogs!

Co-ed Volleyball Scores

September 23, CDS vs. San Francisco School

Game 1: SFS 25, CDS 23

Game 2: SFS 25, CDS 23

Co-ed Volleyball Calendar

Monday, October 6, 3:30 p.m.

KDBS, 7000 California Street

Friday, October 10, 3:45 p.m.

CAIS, 150 Oak Street

Tuesday, October 14, 4 p.m.

Lycee Francais, 20th and Ortega Streets

Thursday, October 16, 4:10 p.m.

KDBS, Boys & Girls Club

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.

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@omalleyhilton.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

Tuesday, October 7

3:30 p.m.

Green Task Force meeting
Second floor, 16th Street building

5:30-7 p.m.

PTTA meeting: CDS Finances & Annual Fund

Monday, October 13

Government holiday observed

No school

No extended program

Tuesday, October 21 & Wednesday, October 22

Annual Fund Phonathon

Saturday, October 25

Alumni Reunion

Monday, October 27

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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