



# COMMUNITY *Comment*

*Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body & Spirit*

December 2008

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## Education Japanese-Style

by Susannah Danforth

Picture an elementary school where the teachers remain in their classrooms during recess and lunch. The playground and dining hall are full of children only, themselves overseeing the serving and clean up of meals, and resolving dodge ball disputes and other crises. At the end of the school day, imagine a school where the children – without being asked – clean the school, sweeping and returning things to their proper place. This utopian picture is the reality in Japan, where art teacher David Lang recently visited as a winner of the Japan Fullbright Memorial Teaching Project.



*“fellow students. There is a lot of pressure to be good because each student’s behavior is a reflection of the group as a whole.”*

*“It’s remarkable. There is little teacher oversight; it’s not necessary,”* David said. *“If someone gets hurt at dodge ball, the game stops and the kids take charge.”* David attributes the self-sufficiency of young Japanese to a group-oriented culture, where the peer pressure is to be good. *“Student behavior is monitored by*

As a participant in the three-week teaching project, David joined 158 selected American teachers from all disciplines. The group visited public and private schools in Tokyo as well the small town of Fukutsu, where he stayed overnight with a family. The program was sponsored by the Japanese government. David said he feels very fortunate to have been able to participate this fall, especially in light of the current economic crisis, which will likely eliminate the program in the future.

David observed many differences between the education of students in the United States and Japan. The broad picture in Japan is not as utopian as it first appears. *“There is a flip side to the group culture that shows*

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## Community Comment

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# Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

## The Power of Community

In recent weeks we have all seen the turbulence in the world economic markets rise to unprecedented levels. While the world's monetary challenges will not be solved overnight, each morning as I drive down Lay Road, I am reminded how fortunate we are to be part of such a resilient organization as Community School. Since its founding in 1914, Community School and its parents, teachers, and friends have weathered some of the most challenging eras in our nation's history. Imagine building a brand new school in the farmlands of Ladue at the height of the Great Depression. Picture the pressure and challenges the School faced through both World Wars. Through every period of economic and national challenge, the Community School family has bonded together and emerged stronger than ever.

Through this tumultuous economic time, we should never lose sight of the fact that we are giving our children the greatest of gifts – an elementary school education that is truly world-class. The research unequivocally states that it is the elementary years which ultimately have the greatest impact for children's achievement, social growth, and development. Children's first impressions of school last a lifetime. When children have a positive relationship with school at a young age, they are not only happier coming to school, but achieve at higher levels as well. That is why we make such an effort at Community School to



provide our children with a warm and nurturing environment. In the case of schools, first impressions do make all the difference.

It is in the elementary years that academic foundations are built. The academic preparation children receive in these early years sets the stage for all future achievement. Quite frankly, poor preparation during the elementary years simply cannot be made up later. And, of course, the academic preparation children receive at Community School is second to none. Year after year, Community School graduates enter a variety of secondary schools ready to achieve at the highest levels. They are consistently well-prepared for any challenges they face.

The elementary years are the most formative for children's social development. In early childhood children begin to form their social identity. Conflict resolution, working cooperatively, and solving social problems are skills learned during these early formative years. That is why we at Community School spend so much time





## HeadLines, continued:

teaching children these skills. They are not only skills for elementary school; they are skills for life.

During this time of economic uncertainty, the School's principal sources of revenue may come under pressure. However, Community is financially secure and stable. Part of this financial strength comes from the vision and foresight of the Board of Trustees when they started an endowment fund in 1980. As a result of strong returns and generous support from Trustees, parents, alumni, and friends, the Community School endowment has grown into the envy of independent elementary schools throughout the country. Of course, given the magnitude of the present downturn, our endowment portfolio has experienced losses. Through shrewd management by SEI, our portfolio



manager, and intense oversight by an extremely strong Investment Committee, the School is closely monitoring the endowment and is poised to be flexible with our annual budget, if necessary.

Having said that, the School remains intensely invested in several ideas. First, the School will continue its strong commitment to financial aid. We recognize economic diversity is a key component to the educational experience at Community School. Over the past five years, Community School's tuition increases have been among the lowest in the region. In addition, the Board has approved increases in financial aid spending in recent years, and plans to continue to do so in the future.

Next, the School will remain committed to providing stable and supportive employment. The teachers are the heart of our school. Their passion for teaching and their dedication to the children in their care is truly remarkable. Ensuring generous compensation packages and ongoing professional development opportunities for our teachers remains a top priority.

Finally, the School will continue to pursue its ambitious capital project –

dynamic new academic spaces, infrastructure improvements, and endowment growth. We are grateful for the remarkable progress of our *Branching Out* campaign and for all the support and well wishes we have received as we approach our ultimate goal. We are grateful for the strong legacy of giving and leadership that has brought us to this point in the life of Community School, and it is clear we are witnessing that same commitment unfolding once again.

With all the changes to the global economic landscape in recent weeks, so much remains the same within the cozy confines of Community School. We remain completely devoted to fulfilling the promise of our vision – helping our students develop confidence, hone critical and creative thinking skills, learn to explore opportunities and take risks, and develop a sense of purpose and responsibility to the world beyond the self. When the dust settles and the swirling activity of markets and investments has abated – wherever they stop – you can feel confident that the investment in your child's education will prove to be a solid choice.

*Matthew*

## Decorate Community School's Giving Tree

The Giving Tree in the Community Center is just waiting to be filled up with goodies. You have until Wednesday, December 17 to participate!

All donated items will be given to South Side Day Nursery (SSDN), an organization that works with low-income families in South St. Louis. One of its missions is to provide affordable daycare for working families. As such, the

nursery would greatly benefit from the following items:

- \* Kids' mittens & gloves
- \* Kids' hats
- \* Kids' scarves
- \* Diapers (particularly larger sizes, such as 4, 5 & 6)
- \* Pull-Up training pants
- \* Baby wipes

Mittens, gloves, hats and scarves can be placed on the tree. Diapers and wipes can be placed underneath. Let's show our Community spirit in helping needy children!





The following two articles are part of an occasional series highlighting what goes on during a day at Community. Although there is rarely a “typical” day at school, here are glimpses from a recent October day in First and Fourth Grades.

## Snails, Shapes & Stories in 1st Grade

by Michelle Hammersmith &  
Laura Falk

7:45 - Students dash in, hanging up backpacks, returning and checking out books from the classroom library.

8:00 - Teachers ring a bell, the signal for settling down. Helper assignments for the week are reviewed, and the calendar helper tells the class the day and date, and the number of days of school so far. Mrs. Barmeier writes the date on the board in English and French, each with several mistakes. Students identify and fix the errors. Headlines from the newspaper that students have brought in are reported on, and students are given their new lunch table assignments.

8:15 - The class divides into three groups. For the next two hours, these groups will rotate among Music, Science, and Reading/Language Arts.

Reading: The children who remain in the room are divided into two groups by readiness, with one teacher working with each group. One group begins working on a review of short vowel sounds and some consonant sounds. Reading a short book follows, with a worksheet asking questions about the book. Afterwards, comes dictation with students writing on a dry erase board - first short vowel sounds, then three letter words, and finally a four letter challenge word. Some work with flash cards ends the session. The other group takes turns reading aloud, “Mr. Putter and Tubby Pour the Tea,” and then discussed it, along with questions from the teacher. Students then worked independently on pages reviewing short vowel sounds from their “Explode the Code” workbook. As they finished, they read DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) books at their desks.

Science: In Science, Mrs. Linde poses the question, “Why do leaves change color?” Students brainstorm ideas, then Mrs. Linde reads a book to them about it. The class discusses chlorophyll and



the process of color change. Then they create a colorful leaf with green watercolor over crayon resist to demonstrate chlorophyll’s properties.

Music: ♪ “Good morning, 1st Grade! Good morning, Teacher!” ♪ The class begins by taking a few deep centering breaths, then sings “All Around the Buttercup 1, 2, 3” in English, French, German, and Spanish. Mrs. Morrison discusses rhythms with the class using the “Snail, Snail” song, and they take turns putting bar lines on a magnetic board to show measures. Clapping follows to demonstrate heavy and light beats, and then the song “Deedle, Deedle Dumpling, My Son John.” Students each take one shoe off and



thump their feet to show the heavy and light beats. They do a quick worksheet, putting lines between measures of various songs, then decide which set of beats represents the Snail song. The class practices the songs they will perform at Sunrise Assisted Living on Friday. Finally everyone is on their feet singing the Snail song while circling around into a spiral (snail) shape, then back into a straight line.

10:15 - Animal crackers for snack along with a quick game of “I Spy,” and a few examples of story problems, which segues nicely into math time. Today, students are writing an original Halloween or fall story problem. Students write down their problems, using invented spelling if necessary. Teachers will then type up the stories, students will illustrate them, and they will go into a word problem book. Here are some examples of the students’ work (with invented spelling):

“There are 12 footballs. 6 get throghtn. How many are left?”

“There are 5 levs. 2 blowe away. How many are left?”

“There are 6 pesis of candy. Fore get eten. How mene are left?”

As students finish, they read quietly while waiting for teachers to check their work.

10:45 - Time for Weekly Readers. The class reads through the story together, then students work independently on questions. Teachers check their work, then students pack up their Readers and their math homework.

11:00 - Recess!

11:30 - After a lunch of pasta and salad,

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## 4th Grade Studies Pumpkinology 101

by Michelle Hammersmith &  
Laura Falk

7:50 – As students enter 4S, they immediately hang up coats and backpacks, and begin turning in homework. On their desks are spelling lists, which they begin cutting up into individual words.

8:00 – As it starts to get a bit loud, Mrs. Willis says, “3-2-1. *Stick or no stick?*” The class answers “*Stick!*” Mrs. Willis responds, “*Show me then,*” and the class quiets instantly. (Twenty sticks equals a reward.) Mrs. Willis introduces the substitute teacher. A few students go to the Discovery Center to check out books; others finish their morning tasks.

8:10 – Along with 4N, the class divides into four WOW groups (WOW stands for *Words Our Way* - the spelling/vocabulary curriculum). Each group brings the spelling words they cut out earlier. They begin sorting the words into columns. The teacher asks, “*Do you see any patterns? Any vowel combinations?*” Volunteers provide words from their columns. The words all have the /ô/ sound, but use different patterns of spelling. Examples include: *flawless*, *autumn*, and *almost*. There are also a couple of “oddball” words that don’t fit in any of the columns. As students debate which words go where, the teacher says, “*Defend your thinking. Don’t just guess.*” Students copy the columns of words into their notebooks, and decide

they know the meanings of all the words except “gawking.” “*Something to do with a horse?*” “*Does it have to do with walking?*” “*Look it up before Tuesday,*” responds Mrs. Willis.

8:35 – Back in the classrooms, it’s time for Pumpkinology! Each student has brought in a pumpkin for today’s activities, and there is a wide variety of colors and sizes. Two worksheets are passed out: “Pumpkin Math” and “My, You’re Losing Weight.” After reviewing instructions, students get to work. The first job is estimation with questions like: How many seams do you think the pumpkin has? How much do you think the pumpkin weighs? Students begin counting seams, weighing pumpkins and measuring circumferences. They weigh pumpkins whole, without the “lids,” and without the seeds and pulp. Weights are charted onto a line graph.

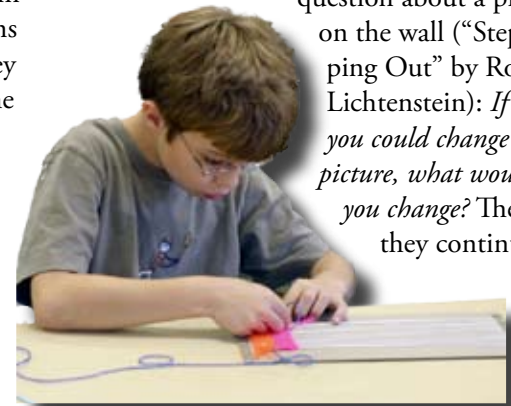
9:20 – Recess!

9:40 – Back inside. Half the class is off to French (along with ½ of 4N). The rest stay and continue working on their pumpkins. In French, the French flag is out on the board, which means conversation in French. The students do a dictation test on numbers, which they have been studying, then receive their next set of vocabulary words. Next they begin two worksheets – one with “Lotto” (or Bingo), which allows them to practice their numbers. On another they must fill in speech bubbles over cartoon characters’ heads to practice how different people would greet each other. For example, how would the greeting of

two young friends be different from a teacher and student greeting?

10:10 – Back to class and pumpkins, and the other half of the class goes to French. They finish their worksheets, then begin separating the seeds from the pulp. The seeds will be roasted in the kitchen, and shared with their SK buddies. During clean-up, students offered opinions on the pumpkin experience: “*Fun!*” “*Awesome!*” and reviewed concepts from the process, such as estimation, graphing, and measurement.

10:50 – The entire class troops off to Art, where they respond in writing to a question about a print on the wall (“Stepping Out” by Roy Lichtenstein): *If you could change the picture, what would you change?* Then they continue



work on their Native American-inspired projects of painting and weaving. Some sketch out a “primitive” design, then begin to paint it on canvas. These will be used to decorate the teepee in the Community Center. Other students are working on weavings, busily engaged manipulating strands of yarn and combing them into place.

11:25 – The class cleans up and then heads to Science, where they are beginning a new unit on food chains. After a quick review of the weather unit they just completed (“What are the tools we use to measure and forecast weather?”



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## Community School Takes AIM

by Kerrigan Kaplan



It takes courage to look in the mirror and be objective about what you see. At Community School, we are applying this character trait to our first-time participation in AIM – the National Association of Independent Schools Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM). The purpose of AIM is three-fold: to assess a school's current level of inclusivity; to facilitate meaningful dialogue on building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive school community; and to provide benchmarking to measure future progress.

AIM is a comprehensive assessment process that takes four months to a full school year to complete. It includes both a self-assessment and a climate survey. The self-assessment is completed by Discovery Committees within the

school and addresses several aspects of the school – from governance and leadership, to policy and admissions, to student life and parent, faculty, and alumni involvement. The self-assessment is due in December 2008 and will be reviewed by the AIM Steering Committee.

The climate survey, on the other hand, is a confidential online survey completed by faculty, administrators, staff, parents, Trustees, and alumni to measure the culture of inclusivity and multiculturalism within our school. It will be launched in January 2009. Additional information about the survey will be sent home prior to the survey start date. Survey data will be gathered in the spring, analyzed during the summer, and be used to create initial benchmarks for Community School and to assist in future strategic planning, training, and programming. Parents can expect an AIM Summary and Actions report in the fall of 2009.


Community School is the only elementary school in the St. Louis area and one of only a few elementary schools nationwide to participate in AIM. John Burroughs participated in AIM

as a beta school in 2005. According to Daniel Harris, Director of Diversity and Multicultural Education at John Burroughs School (plus a Community School parent and Trustee), *"I can say our process was strengthened by having the AIM data available to us as we pursued our strategic plan for diversity and inclusivity at Burroughs. As a parent, I am proud that Community School continues to proactively pursue the highest standards in quality education...AIM is but another step in that process!"*

*"I see this as a tremendous opportunity to identify our core strengths as well as opportunities for improvement relative to inclusivity and multiculturalism,"* says Dana Saulsberry, Community School's Director of Admission and Diversity Coordinator. *"The results of our participation in AIM will help shape the culture of our school on issues of diversity and multiculturalism for future generations. We look forward to sharing the results with our Community School families in fall of 2009."*


We anticipate the rewards from this self-reflection will improve our strategic planning as well as enhance our mission of nurturing body, mind, and spirit.

## Focus on Faculty

 **Lynn Christopher** (4N) is pulling double duty this year with professional organizations. She is serving on the ISSL (Independent Schools of St. Louis) Teacher Services Committee, as well serving as an ISACS (Independent Schools Association of the Central States) teacher representative. Thank you, Lynn!

 Head of School **Matthew Gould** is now serving as a Board Member for

ISSL, and is chair of the Hiring Fair to Promote Diversity.

 Congratulations to **Jessica Klingbeil** (2N) and **Paige Noel** (N), who both finish their masters degrees this month. Jessica will have a masters in elementary education and her reading specialization certification from UMSL, and Paige will have a masters in early childhood education from Webster.

## Admission Notes

There's one last formal Admissions event for this admission season. It's the Information Coffee, which will be held on Wednesday, January 21 at 8:30 a.m. Invite your friends and family!

And, it's official! Our online application is up and running. Prospective families can fill out their application online, and pay with a credit card - applying has never been easier!



## Advancement Update

by Mark Palmer

The recent Thanksgiving holiday allowed us time to reflect on the wonderful blessings we enjoy as families and friends. The same sentiment holds true for our school. We express our sincere gratitude to those who have so willingly stepped forward with both financial and volunteer support for Community. Our Annual Giving campaign continues to provide critical funds for our daily operations, our fantastic parent volunteers are busy organizing more successful events, and our alumni community is reconnecting with the School.

Since July, the Annual Giving campaign has raised nearly \$172,000 in gifts and pledges. Many of our current parents and faculty members have already donated, joined by a plethora of grandparents, past parents and alumni. With the economic realities being what they are, this progress towards our goal of \$440,000 is a true testament to our collective belief in the mission and

programs of Community. However, we have much ground yet to cover. Our participation goal is 100% of all parents and faculty to make an annual gift. If you have not done so already, we invite you to make your donation prior to December 31 in order to take advantage of 2008 tax benefits. Please know how much your contributions are valued and appreciated throughout the School.

The School's volunteer-led events thus far this year have shown the true spirit of Community. From the Fall Picnic to Book Show to the Faculty Appreciation Lunch, the Community Parent Association has outdone itself in support of the School. Now we can look forward to the biennial Community Classic parties: the Family Party will be February 20, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Center and the Buder Gymnasium. Stay tuned for exciting details about the Parent Party. Be ready to come have some fun!

The Alumni Association Board has been busy reconnecting with Community's alumni. An effort to update our alumni database is underway in preparation for a new alumni directory next year. To aid the process, we have a new alumni update form on the School's website. Our graduates can now send us their most recent contact information with the simple click of a button. If you are an alum or if you know one, visit the website and send us an update. (Look under the "Getting Involved" link.)

As we consider all the amazing things that have transpired at Community in the few short months of school this year, we can only give a resounding THANK YOU to everyone who has been involved. It is with excitement and dedication that we look forward to the remainder of the year and your continued support.

## Thanksgiving Project



*Each year in November, Family Groups traditionally create placemats to give to an organization that provides Thanksgiving meals. This year, approximately 300 placemats were donated to the elderly residents of Bethesda Dillworth for their Thanksgiving dinner.*





# Spirit Day



*From dressing up in blue & white or Community School gear to the run around campus, the Annual Spirit Day/Cross Country Run is always enjoyed by the entire school!*



# Branching Out Campaign

*by Susan Hunkins*

Momentum remains high as we continue to visit with Community School families and friends about their participation in the capital and endowment campaign now underway. While many families have already joined in the fundraising, we will continue to reach out to other families, grandparents, alumni and friends of the School to bring us closer to our fundraising goal of \$8 million. Plans are in place to break ground as anticipated this spring with expansion of the kitchen area first, followed closely by new construction of the fifth and sixth grade Leadership Wing. The architects

have completed their designs, engineers and construction managers are gathering specs, and all are poised to begin their work.

It is an exciting time for all of us and we are eager to realize the dream that has been just a vision for two years. You can track our progress by visiting the School's website and clicking on the campaign logo to get the most updated news and see the architect's plans and renderings. Supporting Community School efforts will continue to be reflected back through the children every

day for many years to come. By helping with this exciting project and giving the children an exciting place to grow and learn – their future truly begins here, at Community School.

**Goal: \$8,000,000**





### Japan, continued:

up in schools. There is a real hierarchy among the students and bullying is a problem.” School admission is highly competitive and the academic culture revolves around testing, especially in secondary schools. “In the lower level, learning is more hands on. However, as the students get older, the classrooms become more rigid. How one tests is extremely important. The focus is not on problem solving, but on testing well.” In response to declining test scores, the arts curriculum in Japan has been cut back, and students are spending less time on music and the visual arts. Interestingly, the public schools in Japan are the more prestigious. Private schools are for those students who are not succeeding in the public school system, and whose parents can afford the tuition.

Although the Japanese child may not be as well rounded as his American

counterpart, sports are a big factor. “Baseball is huge,” David said. Children also play tennis, participate in kendo shinai (bamboo sword fighting) and enjoy the rituals of the Japanese tea ceremony. Classes are co-ed, but students often self-segregate by gender.

David said he was extremely impressed with the city of Tokyo, describing it is extremely easy to navigate. “It is the cleanest city I have ever seen, but I could never find a garbage can,” he remarked. “The people were helpful and polite.” David also enjoyed the food – sushi of course, but also seaweed, fish, dumplings, and fermented soy beans. He was able to attend a presentation of Kabuki Theatre, which he describes as a “lost art,” and visit the Yokohama Triennale Contemporary Art Exposition.



Although we're not quite sure what it says, here's an article about the group in a Japanese newspaper!  
(See David in back right corner.)

So should students at Community School be in charge of cleaning the school at the end of the day? “I think kids rise up to high expectations,” David said. “However, we live in a different culture and we would have to get that expectation in place first.”

### 4th Grade, continued:

How does the sun's energy drive the weather?), they launch into some vocabulary words they will be using to study food chains: producer, consumer, herbivore, carnivore, omnivore, predator, prey, decomposer, scavenger. They begin reading a short book about food chains, and look specifically at the ideas of parasites, mimicry, and camouflage, and students give examples of each.

12:20 p.m. – It's lunchtime. After the “Johnny Appleseed” song, students feast on corn dogs, green beans and yogurt. Fourth grade band members excuse themselves for practice. The band teacher, Mrs. Zarinelli, has students practice playing “Hot Cross Buns.” She gives out practice assignments and dismisses the class.

12:55 p.m. – Back to the classroom for Social Studies. The 4th graders are work-

ing on Native American projects. Each pod is assigned a region that Native Americans inhabited prior to European colonization in North America. Groups are assigned to the following regions: the Northwest, the Northeastern Woodlands, the Southeastern Woodlands, the Southwest and the Arctic and Subarctic. Students use the class time to research and make models of food, shelter, clothing, tools and beliefs that Native Americans in their regions utilized. Students are encouraged to use materials that Native Americans would have used.



The teachers make suggestions to students, such as “Don't use tape, the Native Americans wouldn't have used it.” Some students use actual mud and clay from outside to construct a hut. Others use cardboard to construct a teepee, while others use wood to build a longhouse. Students make several things out of cardboard and paint – from masks used in religious ceremonies to tools, clothing and food.

2:00 p.m. – It's time to pack up and record homework assignments before heading to P.E. The girls practice field hockey in the gym, while the boys play flag football outside.

2:55 p.m. – Back to the classroom to prepare for carpool. Fourth graders are looking forward to another fun day tomorrow!



### 1st Grade, continued:

Mr. Gould enters the Community Center. He compliments the first graders for being excellent role models (they are the first to be quiet). He asks the students, "What is the word of the month?" They reply, "Cooperation." Mr. Gould walks around the lunch room reading *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni. Mr. Gould concludes, "When you work together (like the fish did in *Swimmy*), good things can happen."

12:00 – First graders line up and head back to class for Handwriting. Students practice upper and lower case "S," while Mrs. Barmeier and Mrs. Heitmann walk around the room checking proper "S" formations. Students take out books for DEAR time.

12:15 – Off to P.E., where Ms. Bugnitz engages the students in warm-up exercises. She explains the Halloween obstacle course. First, swing on the ropes, but landing on a spider gets you ten jumping jacks. Then travel through Candy Land and weave in and out of giant candy corn (orange cones) while hopping on bouncy balls. Next is the hula hoop toss; try to throw hoops around the Halloween creatures. The next ob-

stacle is walking over a bridge (jump or step on the spring board and walk across the mats) without waking the "sleeping monster." Then, crawl through a tunnel without disturbing the witch inside.

Next, try to knock the spiders over with bouncy balls in the hockey goal. Then, it's ghost-busting time; students hit the end of a see-saw board and try to catch ghosts when they pop up. At the end of the obstacle course is the skeleton bridge (balance beam) – walk across, but don't fall off, or you'll have to do ten sit ups!

1:00 – Students break into two groups for Art and Phonics. In art class, students are making shape patterns. They draw the shapes of their choice on colored construction paper, then cut and paste them on large sheets of paper. Some students make squares and triangles, while others make rainbows and hearts.

Meanwhile in Phonics, students are working on /th/ and /wh/ words and sorting pictures – such as thimble, white, thick, wheat, thorn and think – and pasting them under the appropriate word blend.

1:45 – Circle time on the carpet. Students take turns calling out words that begin with /th/. Next they think of words that rhyme with "at" and "ig."



2:00 – First Grade North and South come together for play practice with Mrs. Zarinelli. They sing and dance as they practice for their upcoming production of "Pieces of Our Past," a play about the history of Community School.

2:45 – Back to the classroom to look at *I Spy* books. Then it's time to pack up and prepare for carpool.

## Community Candid



From left: Parent Mindy Berry drops in for Band practice; 3rd Grade presents during Japan Day at lunch; Chef Mike with his little "Chef for the Day" helper (Cornucopia auction item)

