



COMMUNITY *Comment*

Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body & Spirit

February 2010

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Communitycopia

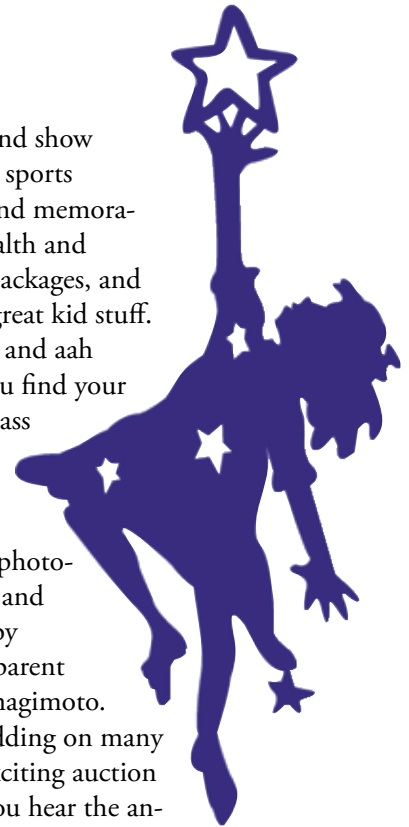
Ask yourself the following questions: Where can I find a getaway for me and five friends to one of America's top ten golf retreats? How can my child get to go hiking & picknicking with one of her teachers? How do I go from no wine cellar to a full one overnight? Where can I find a basket that contains a family membership to the Magic House AND goodies & gift certificates from Dewey's? The answer to all of these questions is, "Come to Communitycopia on Saturday, March 6 and be the winning bidder!"

For nearly a year, Julie Ralph and her auction committee have worked diligently to create an unforgettable event to support the students of Community School. The School will be transformed for the evening in order to highlight the stars of our lives – our children.

Imagine the wonders of the evening: You pull up to the front of the School a few minutes before 6:30 p.m., clothed strikingly in your dress or coat and tie. A valet opens your door and welcomes you as you stride toward the lighted entrance. Upon entering the star-filled hall, you are greeted by the event hosts and offered a glass of wine or the signature drink, a Communitini. After registering, you find your friends mingling and wandering through the Super Silent and Silent Auction tables, listening to the music of a live jazz trio led by CS alum Jeff Morrison '96.

You are astounded by the number of fun, high-quality items to bid on —

dinner and show combos, sports tickets and memorabilia, health and beauty packages, and tons of great kid stuff. You ooh and aah when you find your child's class portrait, professionally photographed and framed by current parent Taka Yanagimoto. After bidding on many of the exciting auction items, you hear the announcement for the dinner and live auction.



Making your way through the Haven Art Gallery and into the gym, you are stunned by the transformation. You find your table and sit down to a delectable meal provided by the famed Butler's Pantry.

During dinner, the live auction, hosted by professional charity auctioneer David Goodman, amazes you with the incredible and varied packages up for bid. Ranging from throwing out the first pitch at a Cardinals game to a home for a week at a Colorado retreat, the live auction wows from start to finish.

After enjoying your sumptuous dessert,

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Community Comment

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2009-2010

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Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

As all teachers know, children of the same age are not all alike when it comes to learning. Some students prefer to learn through hands-on projects, others are oral learners, while others learn best when working in cooperative groups. Students also have different areas of strength and weakness. Some students may exhibit a natural talent in math while, at the same time, may struggle in writing and language arts. Others may have a particular interest in the Arts or in social studies. The fact that all types of learners exist within Community School classrooms has led our faculty and administration to delve into the concept of differentiation to explore how we can meet the varying needs of the students in our care.

But what is "differentiation" anyway? Very simply, differentiating instruction means structuring classrooms such that students have multiple options for taking in information, processing ideas, and expressing what they learn. Differentiated classrooms provide various avenues to acquiring content, to making sense of ideas, and to developing product so that each student can learn effectively (Tomlinson 2001). In essence, differentiating instruction is giving kids exactly what they need in order to be successful.

I was recently asked if differentiating instruction was simply an approach that mollicoddles students and makes them dependent. Absolutely not. In fact, differentiation is "teaching up" – supporting students in achieving at a level



higher than they ever thought possible. Community School teachers know that learning takes place most effectively in classrooms where knowledge is powerfully organized, students are active in the learning process, assessments are varied, and students feel a sense of connection (Wiggins & McTighe 1998). This is why Community School teachers give systematic attention to the readiness, interest, and learning profile of every child in their classroom.

Differentiation at Community looks different depending on the grade level in which it is being implemented. For example, in Junior Kindergarten, the class may be studying the letter "B." While some children may still be working on recognizing and forming the letter, other children may be associating a sound to the letter and producing word lists (e.g., ball, boy, basket, banana, etc.). Other JK students may be ready to incorporate "B" words into a story and, perhaps, are ready to author their own "B" books. These students can then read their book aloud to teachers and classmates. The point is that under the simple umbrella of the letter "B," each child is being challenged based upon their level of development and readiness.

Jennifer Haney, the music teacher for second through sixth grades, began differen-



HeadLines, continued:

tiating how she teaches and assesses the recorder this year. She first surveyed and assessed students on how they learn best when using the recorder. The students were grouped according to their skill and comfort levels. Some students are in groups of two while others may be in a group of five. They practice together, taking turns being the starter (starts groups by saying “1, 2, 3, ready play”), stopper (stops groups if he/she hears a mistake), fixer (corrects the mistake), and checker (makes sure the mistake was corrected). Then students have the option of testing with their group or alone. The different levels are correlated with karate belt colors – white moving to black (nine levels). As students accomplish a level, they receive a piece of yarn or string of that color to tie on their recorder. The students who earn their black “belt” help mentor other students. “Recorder Karate,” as it is affectionately known, has been a huge success. Students are very enthusiastic about practicing and feel comfortable in their groups. The students are asking to come to music class before school to play their recorders. While this example highlights the special class of music,

similar types of differentiation are occurring throughout the school in math, reading, language arts, science, and social studies.

To make differentiation work effectively, there is much thought and planning that must take place. Community accomplishes its rich differentiation in two fundamental ways. First, it maintains an extremely low student-teacher ratio (7:1) – the lowest of any elementary school in St. Louis. This allows teachers to break children into small groups for skill work and to give them focused attention and care. Every day at Community each child has an opportunity to work in small groups for instruction.

The second way that Community School implements its differentiated program is through the hiring and training of highly effective and passionate teachers. Our teachers truly know their students and work diligently to individualize their programs to meet specific needs of children. Community School teachers know that motivation to learn increases when students feel kinship with what is taught (Piaget

1978). Therefore, our teachers structure their classrooms and programs in ways that develop an intrinsic love of learning in children.

While the concept of differentiation sounds new, it is something that Community School has been doing for decades. Meeting individual student needs has always been a cornerstone of the Community School philosophy. I know the Founding Mothers would be proud to see this concept being lived-out so beautifully today.

Matthew

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Piaget, J. (1978). *Success and understanding*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tomlinson, C. (2001). *How to differentiate in mixed-ability classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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Third Grade students testing for their purple belts during “Recorder Karate.”



A Day in the Life of 3rd Grade

by Michelle Hammersmith

This article is part of an occasional series highlighting the educational program at Community. Although there is rarely a “typical” day at school, here are glimpses from a recent January day in Third Grade.

7:45 – Students begin to arrive in 3N and hang up their winter gear and backpacks. Homework is handed in.



8:00 – The two class “mayors” present the calendar (day, month and year) and the day’s lunch menu.

8:00-8:10 a.m. – A student stands up in front of the classroom with note cards and delivers her “Oral History Presentation.” Each 3rd grader interviewed a grandparent or elderly neighbor regarding his/her life as a child - about school, forms of transportation, types of games, and family traditions. After the presentation, Ms. Hoessle asks the students to recall facts about the speech; the presenter calls on her classmates to answer questions.

8:10-8:20 a.m. – Students turn their attention to the chalkboard and review the “Daily Challenge.” Ms. Bezdichek calls on students to correct spelling and punctuation in two quotation sentences. They also fill in analogies, such as, right

is to wrong as false is to ____ (the answer is “true”).

8:20-9:10 – Along with 3S, students break out into four math groups in four separate rooms. One group learns math through music by singing the 7s, 8s and 9s times tables before launching into fractions, while the group next door is practicing equivalent fractions on white boards. Another group is relating fractions to real life by dividing “pizza” among family members, while another group is doing place values for millions. The teacher selects seven cards from a deck and tells the students to form the highest possible number. The numbers are 7865189. Some students have the correct answer: 9,887,651.

9:10-9:55 – Half of 3N heads to music with Ms. Haney, while the other half stays for writing. The music students warm up with a hello song, followed by a rhythm song in which each student fits his or her favorite ice cream flavor into the rhythm.

Next, Ms. Haney directs the students’ attention to a new grace song that she wrote, called “Let’s be Thankful.” Students sing, “Let’s be thankful for this day, for our friends and time to play. Let’s be thankful, let’s be glad, for our food and things we have. Let’s give thanks for you and me, and our home and family. Let’s be thankful every day at Community, ‘cause that’s our way.” Now it’s time to take out recorders and music books. Students play the “Treble Clef” song and then it’s time for Recorder Karate. Students who have passed their green belts go into sound-proof rooms and start working on their purple belts. Ms. Haney finishes testing the remaining students for their green belts.

9:55-10:30 – Back to the classroom for writing. Students log onto laptop and desktop computers and start keyboarding stories about the lifestyles of different cultures in colonial St. Louis. The

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Board of Trustees

by John Lemkemeier

Since becoming president of the Community's Board of Trustees this school year, I have heard many variants of the questions: "*How does the School determine who serves on the Board?*" and "*What does the Board actually do?*"

The first question can be answered more quickly than the second. The School attempts to find Board members who, based on their backgrounds and expertise, are well-suited to assist the Board in its work and who will make the Board broadly representative of the School community. This means looking for a combination of people with education, construction, fundraising, legal, business, full-time parent and other backgrounds who come from different ethnic groups, religions, genders, socioeconomic positions, and areas of St. Louis. Then the School tries to persuade these people to spend a bunch of volunteer time working on the Board.

On the second question about the roles of the Board: the Board's number one job is to hire and support the head of school. In this we have been quite fortunate. The Board hired Matthew Gould before the 2004 – 2005 school year and the School has benefited greatly from his leadership over the past 5+ years. Matthew reports on the significant happenings in the School at monthly Board meetings and frequently uses the Board as a sounding board on myriad issues.

While day-to-day operational issues fall exclusively under the domain of Matthew and his administrative team, the Board works with Matthew on the longer-term strategic issues facing the School. These strategic issues vary somewhat each year. The Board spent much of the past several years, for example, developing a Master Facilities Plan for the School and working on the recent *Branching Out* Capital Campaign that made possible the new kitchen, the driveway renovation, and the Leadership Wing for our 5th and 6th Grade students. This year, we are concentrated primarily on planning the long-term financial future of the School as well as looking at the School's approach to development. We are also discussing recommendations relating to diversity that arose from the AIM process which the School undertook last year.

Much of the Board's strategic work is performed by committees which are comprised of both Board and non-Board members. The Board has six standing committees: building and grounds; culture; development; executive; finance; and investment. The committees in each of their strategic areas make reports and recommendations to the Board, which determines how the School should proceed in each particular area.

The final role for Board members is a re-



sponsibility shared by everyone in the School community: to be involved in and contribute to the life of the School. This contribution can take on numerous different forms, from volunteering in School events like the Book Show, Cornucopia and the School Picnic, to coaching sports teams comprised of students, to participating in the School's development efforts in Annual Giving or capital campaigns.

At its most basic level, the School is the community of our 220+ families who have come together to give our children a great education, and the teachers and administrators who make this happen. Our community is strengthened through everyone's contributions. For me, it is a great honor and privilege to serve the School as Board President. Please feel free at any time to contact me with questions relating to the Board.

Wotka Book Talk

This year's Wotka Book Talk will center on the book *No: Why Kids of All Ages Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, by David Walsh, Ph.D. In this "yes" oriented culture and age of instant

gratification, saying "no" can be hard, but this book gives great strategies and tips for how to do it. The talk will be led by librarians Debbi Krieg and Terri Kerley, and all interested parents and

faculty are welcome to attend. The date and time are Wednesday, March 31 at 1:30 p.m., so you'll have plenty of time to read over Spring Break! Hope to see you here!



Spring (Garden) Fever?

by Michelle Hammersmith

It may be cold and gray outside, and the trees still bare, but spring is just around the corner. Your garden beds and planters can soon be blooming with beautiful flowers and lush foliage, if you make plans to visit the Community School Flower Sale on Tuesday, April 20!

Choose from a variety of premium hanging baskets, bedding plants, potted flowers and tropical plants to dress up your garden for spring. Your children will have the opportunity to shop for flowers, vegetables, herbs and cacti the day of the sale. Kids love digging in the dirt and planting colorful flowers and vegetables. Gardening is a fun outdoor activity for the entire family!

Pre-order forms will arrive in your child's Friday folder on Feb. 26. Re-


member – pre-ordering is the preferred method to ensure you receive the best selection. Additional forms can be downloaded from the Community School website. Don't forget to order flowers for Administrative Professionals' Day (April 21) and Mothers' Day (May 9).


All proceeds will go towards the Community School Scholarship Fund.

Volunteers for the day of the sale (with or without green thumbs) are needed for all shifts from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. If you're available, please contact Michelle Hammersmith at (314) 965-2687 or Janis Forsen at (314) 579-9690.




Focus on Faculty


 Community School would like to welcome two student teachers from Webster University this semester! Kelli Baker (*left photo*) has her masters degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Communication Arts, and is working in 1S. Melissa Romine (*right photo*) has her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Language Arts. She is working in 3S. Welcome, Kelli & Melissa!

 Teachers are continuing to improve classroom instruction and methods by attending professional development. **Christine Bugnitz** (PE) attended a drumming workshop called "Health-Rhythms Facilitator Training" in San Francisco. **Mark Palmer** (Director of Advancement) and **Laura Falk** (Director



of Communication) attended the CASE (Council for Advancement of Secondary Education) District VI Conference in St. Louis.

 Congratulations to **Kris Major** (JKE) and her husband Tom on the pending late summer arrival of the newest little Major!

 Community School would like to welcome the newest member of the Maintenance staff, **Linda Knowles**, who will be working a part-time evening shift.



Advancement Update

by Mark Palmer

There is much excitement surrounding the upcoming Communitycopia dinner auction – the School’s major biennial fundraising event. We are looking forward to a great evening in support of our students and hope everyone will be able to come out and join us.

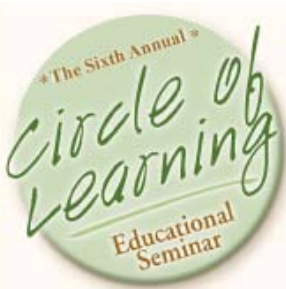
The Annual Giving Campaign continues strong, but we need everyone’s participation to achieve our goal. We have two targets this year: 100% parent participation and a monetary total of \$460,000 that goes towards the day-to-

day needs of our students and faculty. Annual Giving is the most important fundraising effort for Community, and has a direct and immediate impact on our children’s education. The monies received are used for classroom supplies, gym equipment, learning resources and much more. Annual Giving funds help fill the gap between the true cost of education and tuition – all the money goes to support student learning. Your participation sends the message that you believe in the mission of the School and your money makes possible the great

education at Community. If you have not done so already, please participate today. To all those who have given to date – thank you! We appreciate all you do for Community.



Circle of Learning Speaker Series



Mark your calendars for the upcoming Circle of Learning Speaker Series, to be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 8. Community School

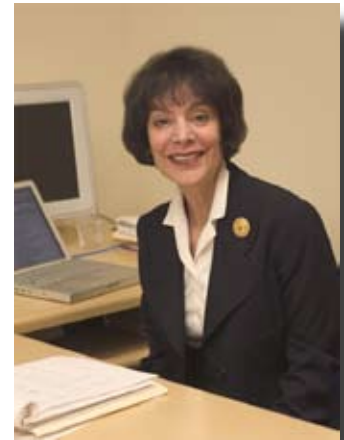
is extremely pleased to host Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

Dr. Dweck is one of the world’s leading researchers in the field of motivation and is the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Her research has focused on why people succeed and how to foster success. Dr. Dweck authored the critically acclaimed book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. She has held professorships at Columbia and Harvard Universities, has lectured all over the world, and has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her scholarly book *Self-Theories:*

Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development was named Book of the Year by the World Education Federation. Her work has been featured in such publications as *The New Yorker*, *Time*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe*, and she has appeared on Today and 20/20.

The Circle of Learning Educational Speaker Series is designed to provide parents, faculty, and members of the broader St. Louis community the opportunity to hear noted experts in the fields of education and child development. The overall goal is to strengthen the “circle of learning” by deepening our knowledge as parents, educators, and individuals.

The Circle of Learning Speaker Series was launched in Spring 2005 and is made possible through the Sheillah B. Rogers Fund for Curriculum Excellence. The first speaker to participate in this series was Ned Hallowell, author of several books concerning stress and distract-



tion, as well as *When You Worry About The Child You Love* and *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness: Five Steps to help Kids Create and Sustain Lifelong Joy*. Next was Mary Pipher, author of New York Times bestselling books *Reviving Ophelia* and *Another Country*. Following her was Dr. Mel Levine, who has written numerous books, including *All Kinds of Minds* and is an expert on children’s learning differences. In 2008, we hosted Dr. Wendy Mogel, author of *Blessings of a Skinned Knee*. Last year’s speaker was internationally-recognized child development expert Michael G. Thompson, author of *Raising Cain*.



Third Grade, continued:

students take on the role of a Native American, a French person, slave or a free black and write about the person's life in first person. In their stories, they meet someone of another culture and compare the differences.

10:30-10:50 – Outside recess.

10:50-11:35 – It's time for social studies. The class divides into two groups to test their knowledge of vocabulary words from the book, *Under Three Flags*, written by 3N's own Ms. Hoessle. One group plays, "Eggspert," which is a quiz-show format game in which the teacher asks a question and the first team to press the button with the correct answer, is awarded points. The other group tests their knowledge of the vocabulary words by playing the card game "I have, who has?" The groups switch off halfway through class.

11:35 – 12:15 – The entire class troops off to Science class where they learn about the six simple machines: incline plane, wheel and axle, wedge, lever, pulley and screw. Students learn how to apply the formula $work = force \times distance$. Students view a short film

about the simple machines that can be found in a hardware store and complete a worksheet on "The Wrench as Wheel and Axle."

12:15-1:00 – Lunch

1:00-1:45 – The class treks off to PE, and the boys and girls separate. The girls learn gymnastics moves from Ms. Schmer, while the boys practice wrestling under Mr. Hoots' guidance.

1:45-2:00 – Back to the classroom where students get comfortable with big pillows and settle down for DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time.

2:00-2:15 – Students break into four groups for Word Study. They break off into pairs and quiz each other in spelling.

2:15 – Time for literature as the class sits in a circle. Students lead the discussion about the novel *Dear Austin: Letters from the Underground Railroad*.

2:45 – Individual Study/Reflection. Homework is distributed. Another student delivers her "Oral History Presentation." It's time to pack up and prepare for carpool.



Communitycopia, continued:

you go to see if you won any of your silent auction bids. A gift bag awaits you as you bid farewell to all.

Communitycopia will create many wonderful memories and will give you the chance to win many incredible items, all while providing the financial support the School relies on. Make sure you are a part of it. There is still time to send in your RSVP card and to organize your table. Do it today! Together, we'll celebrate the stars of Community and their brilliant future at Communitycopia on March 6!

Thank you to our Communitycopia Sponsors!

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