



# COMMUNITY *Comment*

*Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body & Spirit*

February 2008

## Technology Brings Studies to Life

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There was rain drops falling down. The ones that went all the way down were the ones that started. The other ones are coming down. The snow went down to the ground because it was dying. The snowman melted because of the raindrops.  
 By Greta



*A Jker's KidPix drawing of a snowman in the rain, with story dictated to the teacher*

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What do you do when one of your fifth grade teachers is on a trip to South Africa? Read her online journal and email her questions, of course. What about when you're a first grader studying Australia? Do a live video conference with a family in Australia and ask them all the questions you want! These are just two of the exciting ways that technology is being used at Community School to enhance units of study.

In today's world even the youngest students take technology for granted — before they can even read they've learned how to turn on the computer or start a new game of tic-tac-toe on their favorite kids' website. Teachers channel this knowledge and enthusiasm into practical learning tools for the classroom.

At Community, technology is not *independent* of the curriculum — it is *integrated* with it, and present in every grade and specialist classroom. Rather than teaching technology for its own sake (except for Keyboarding in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade), teachers use it as a means to enhance the curriculum. "We don't teach word processing. We teach writing using the word processor," commented Technology Coordinator Steve Culver. Basic skills are covered in the larger context of instructional goals. Examples include a Jker drawing a picture in KidPix and dictating a story



*Using Inspiration software, 4th graders create timeline maps graphically depicting the ten most important events of a novel and how they affect the main character..*

about it; 4<sup>th</sup> graders creating a timeline map about a novel they're reading; or a 5<sup>th</sup> grader pulling together a multimedia presentation on the American Revolution. Computers and related hardware are tools for students (and teachers) to research, create, and present their work.

Classroom teachers are responsible for determining where, when and how technology is applied. Wireless laptop and desktop computers are made available to every student and teacher. All computers are connected to a high-speed network, which provides access to personal accounts, the Discovery Center catalog and the Internet.

Teachers rely on technology as well, for everything from communicating with parents to researching and presenting instructional material. Several classrooms are equipped with SMART Boards, basically large touch-sensitive

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## Community Comment

The parent newsletter of

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# Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

## Building for the Future

On November 2, 2007 Board President Sandy Rogers and I sent a letter to Community School parents, grandparents, alumni, Life Members, and friends explaining that the Community School Board of Trustees unanimously and enthusiastically voted to move forward with the preliminary phase of a capital campaign.

This initial phase of the campaign comes after many months of research and planning and with great input from a wide cross-section of our community. In fact, this process began during the 2005-2006 school year when, under the leadership of Sandy Rogers, a committee composed of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and parents developed a five-year Strategic Plan for the School.

The Plan sets forth goals and strategy in five areas: program, marketing, facilities, diversity/inclusivity, and finance/governance. These goals keep Community School true to its mission, move the School forward, and sustain the superior elementary school experience that Community School provides.

Community's wooded, 16-acre campus is a tremendous asset and unique among elementary schools in the St. Louis area. With that in mind, under the able leadership of Tom Helmkamp and a team from Christner, Inc. Architects, the School developed a comprehensive Master Facilities Plan. In developing the Plan, focus groups consisting of parents, teachers, administrators, alumni, and even students were convened to provide input. The resulting Master Facilities Plan is an articulate merger of "needs," "wants," and

"dreams" that Community School will seek to tackle.

In the spring of 2006, the School retained the fundraising consulting firm of Ford & Associates to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to determine the School's readiness for a capital campaign and to gauge the scope of that effort. Based on the results of this study, which included both in-person interviews and direct mail replies, we learned that there is significant potential for a campaign and much excitement in the community concerning the proposed projects.

Looking ahead, four areas have been identified as priorities that have the potential to greatly enhance the delivery of Community School's mission. First is the **redesign of the teaching and learning environment for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades**. Resolving a less-than-optimum space issue in fourth grade by constructing a new classroom wing, designed as a mirror image of the Discovery Wing, is the best use of the space available. It allows the fourth grade to relocate to the current fifth grade space, and creates a new fifth and sixth grade upper elementary wing. Faculty and students will experience the advantages that updated technology, resources, and space considerations can provide to our educational setting.

Second, **renovating and expanding the kitchen** will better accommodate today's student body. Currently, the School's kitchen, built





*HeadLines, continued:*

in 1948, does not have the appropriate food prep space, refrigerated storage, or appliances to deliver the high-quality nutritious lunch program that we are striving for. With the School's truly unique family-style lunch philosophy as our guide, it is now time to improve the kitchen so that nutritious, kid-friendly meals can be created by Chef Mike and his team.

**Third, improvement to Lay Road and our on-campus driveway** has been identified as an important priority.

Not only do we hope to improve carpool efficiency, but we want to ensure the safety of our children by creating a bypass lane for emergency vehicles and a safer pick-up and drop-off area.

And, finally, **increasing our endowment** remains an essential goal. Not only must we generate funding to cover the increased maintenance and operational expenses of our new spaces, the Community School endowment allows us to attain other important strategic goals such as increased financial aid, maintenance of competitive faculty salaries and generous professional development funds, and maintenance of state-of-the-art technology resources.

Much work has already been completed as we strive to achieve our ambitious goals. Parent and Trustee Greg Fox has agreed to chair the campaign. His able leadership, experience, and unwavering dedication to Community School will be of tremendous value as we seek to



raise the gifts and pledges necessary to make our dreams a reality.

In addition, Dr. Bill Danforth '38 has agreed to serve as Honorary Chairman for the campaign. Dr. Danforth is the former Chancellor of Washington University and has long-time ties to Community School. He had three children who have graduated from Community, four grandchildren who have graduated, and two more grandchildren who are current students at the School. He was impressed by the thorough planning and scope of the campaign and was pleased to accept our invitation to serve as Honorary Chairman.

I am thrilled to report that 100% of the Community School Board of Trustees have already generously pledged support to the campaign. I'm also delighted to report that Ladue's

Zoning and Planning Commission has already approved Community's Master Facilities Plan. Next steps will include communicating with all constituencies about the School's campaign plan and securing the necessary gifts and pledges to help make our vision a reality. Our aim is to include everyone in this effort.

I will continue to keep you informed as this new, exciting phase in the life of Community School unfolds. I look forward to keeping you posted and, as always, thank you for your ongoing interest and support.

*Matthew*

*Above: Site Plan map for proposed Community School improvements*



by Sondra Denk

## Cardinalcopia!

Breaking news... *Cardinalcopia* chair Anne Sutter and her committee have been hard at work since September inking deals for auction items, signing advertisers and scouting the talent at Busch Stadium as they prepare for the big event in May. There's still room in the front office, if you'd like to be one of the sponsors.

On Saturday May 10, the Community School team will enjoy a private party at Busch Stadium. During the first inning, all players will bask in the limelight of the field, enjoy ballpark appetizers and cocktails in the dugout and mingle on the warning track.




But wait — what's that?! Up on the Jumbotron will be pictures of the farm team (our very own homegrown talent) and ads from our sponsors. Next the players will move to the Green Seats for their perfect view of the live auction items on the Jumbotron. The crack of the paddles will be heard as players bid on fabulous trips, gourmet dinners, parties and more!

During the post-game celebration, the team will move to the Cardinal Club to enjoy a buffet dinner as only Busch Stadium can provide. And just in case a player was outbid during the Live Auction, there will be plenty of Silent and Super Silent items to swing at.

Tickets will go on sale soon, so don't be left out. This game will be blacked out for the viewing audience. Add your name to the roster and be part of this evening of Cardinals, cocktails and casual fun at the stadium in support of Community School. Watch for your invitation to arrive in the mail soon!

In the meantime, are you ready for Spring Training? Tune into the online

*Cardinalcopia* auction bidding at: [www.cmarket.com/auction/AuctionHome.action?vhost=Communityschool](http://www.cmarket.com/auction/AuctionHome.action?vhost=Communityschool) There are lots of great items on there, including one of the coveted Cornucopia parking spots! Before you head out of town for Spring break, the following items are closing March 13 —

-  Head for the Day
-  Holiday Parking
-  Juggling Lesson
-  Kids' Hearts Will Melt at the Melting Pot
-  Ride & Roll the Night Away at Children's Hospital Night at Six Flags on May 30
-  Score Big for the Blues on April 5
-  Sixth Grade Went-A-Camping (2007 DVD)
-  Vroom Vroom Vegas! in June

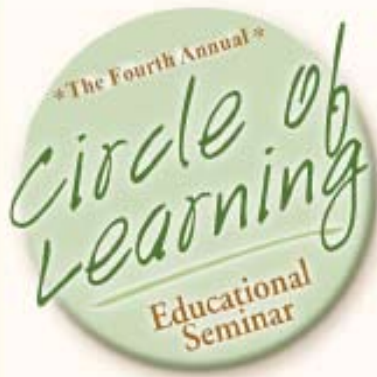
ONLY ONLINE - chances to win an Albert Pujols-autographed baseball! Registering on the auction site will give you one chance. Bidding on something will give you one more! The lucky winner will be drawn at Busch Stadium on May 10. You can't win if you don't get online!

It's not too late to order your Cardinalcopia tee shirt! Contact the Advancement Office for an order form.



A very special Cardinalcopia thank you to our 2008 sponsors!

*Anonymous*  
*Stacy & Jim Cooper*  
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*Laura Cusamano & Manuel Silva*  
*Sondra & Larry Denk*  
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## The Blessing of the Circle of Learning!

Angeles Association of Independent School Counselors and serves on the boards of the Center for Early Education and the Counsel for Spiritual and Ethical Education, a century old inter-faith organization serving private schools. She contributes articles to *Independent School Magazine*, *Camping Magazine*, and the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*.



Mark your calendars for the upcoming Circle of Learning Speaker Series, to be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 10! We are thrilled to be hosting Dr. Wendy Mogel. Her talk is titled: “*Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Raising Self-Reliant, Optimistic Children in a Nervous World.*”

Dr. Wendy Mogel is a nationally known clinical psychologist and parent educator. *Publisher’s Weekly* gave her best-selling parenting book, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, a starred review saying, “Impassioned, lyrical and eminently practical, this volume is a real treasure.”

A graduate of Middlebury College, Dr. Mogel completed an internship and post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. She is the co-founder of the Los

Next year, Scribner will publish her book about what parents can learn from teenagers, *The Blessing of a B-*.

*Excerpt from an article by Wendy Mogel:* I tell parents it is good for kids to be bored, unhappy, disappointed and confused, to feel deprived, to tolerate longing, and to be cold, wet, or hungry for more than one and a half seconds before they graduate from high school. It is good for them to have a crabby, unenlightened, uninspiring fifth grade teacher. Why? Because they are absolutely for sure going to have a crabby, unenlightened,

uninspiring boss when they have a job one day and are likely to have a crabby, unenlightened, uninspiring spouse. . .at least the first one.”

### *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* Wotka Book Talk

Join us on Wednesday, March 5 from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. to discuss Dr. Mogel’s best-selling book! The talk, led by librarians Debbi Krieg and Terri Kerley, will take place in the Discovery Center.

All interested parents and faculty are welcome to join the discussion. This will be a wonderful way to get energized for Dr. Mogel’s talk on April 10!

## “Have some Vegemite, Mate?”

The first graders have headed Down Under (figuratively speaking, of course) to begin their annual study of Australia. With topics such as culture, geography, native people, flora and fauna, there’s plenty to learn about.

The curriculum is integrated across subject areas. A didgeridoo player visits the classrooms to demonstrate the instrument. Students create aboriginal-type paintings. There’s an “Aussie Store”

where students can practice their currency counting skills from math. Students also pick an Australian animal to write a report on. They design a diorama habitat box for it and create clay animals in art to inhabit their boxes.

So next time you see a first grader, say “G’day!” and ask him if there’s any tom sauce (ketchup) to go with your chips (fries) and if there are any Mintees for dessert!



*First graders are working on creating their maps of Australia.*



## Wrestling/Gymnastics Assembly

The P.E. Department just completed their annual units on wrestling and gymnastics. Fifth and sixth grade students displayed their skills at a recent Thursday assembly. Boys demonstrated various wrestling moves, as well as exhibited short matches. Working in small groups, girls choreographed their own gymnastics routines and performed them.



## Jungle Gym

Another perennial favorite from the P.E. Department is Jungle Escape — a creative obstacle course utilizing almost every square inch of the gym. For an entire week, students crawl through tunnels, swing on ropes, teeter over balance beams, tumble down ramps, traverse the length of the climbing wall and more. To make it even more fun, the process is couched in a jungle theme. Students are motivated with such phrases as, “Fall off that balance beam and you’ll be in a river full of man-eating piranhas!”



In addition to being tremendously entertaining, it’s also quite a workout. The best part, according to P.E. teacher Christine Bugnitz, is that “the students don’t even realize how hard they’re working — to them they’re just having fun.”





## Explorers Play



From Vikings to Vespucci to Verrazzano and more, Fourth Grade has been studying the Age of Exploration. Students have researched and written reports and poems, and discovered reasons for the exploration of the New World and how that exploration changed the world. This unit culminated in a play in late January called "The Explorers."

In small groups, students created skits based on explorers and their adventures. Pulled together with some songs by Drama teacher Caroline Zarinelli, the play showcased an incredible amount of knowledge and enthusiasm on the students' part.

Faculty, parents and the rest of the student body greatly enjoyed the performance.



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## Firecracker Press

Fifth graders recently took a trip to Firecracker Press, a local letterpress printing and graphic design studio, which uses antique printing presses combined with modern computer technology. The students got to see one of the printing presses in action. In art class, they will soon be learning how to make and print their own currency.





## Technology, cont.

computer screens. Still more have video projection capabilities, which enable the teachers to project computer displays to the entire class simultaneously.

Re-vamped last summer, the School's website serves a dual function. For an external audience, such as prospective parents, it provides a vast source of information about the School. But there is also an internal component for faculty, students, and parents. Once logged in, users can access a variety of information, both schoolwide — detailed monthly calendars, lunch menus, etc. — and class-specific. Each classroom (and specialty area) maintains its own webpage. Teachers are in charge of updating and posting information. These pages may include class newsletters, photos from the latest event, links to relevant sites, class videos, homework assignments, and more.

Community School is committed to technology as an interwoven piece of each discipline. That commitment includes providing the hardware, software, and training that teachers require to address the particular needs of their students and their classrooms. As Steve Culver likes to say, "Community doesn't try to stay on the *leading* edge of technology. We want to be on the *working* edge. We want to make sure



*A fifth grade math lesson is demonstrated by a student on the SMART Board.*

that what we have truly *works* for the students at developmentally appropriate levels."

So what does the future hold for technology at Community? It's probably safe to say that there will be more videos and podcasts as teachers become more comfortable with the technology; more rooms will become equipped with SMART Boards and video projectors; and the website will continue to increase its interactivity. Luckily, the school has a Technology Committee comprised of administrators and teachers who continually evaluate and coordinate all technology advancements and concerns. The current technology program is the direct result of teacher input and a committed administration, and the future of the program will continue to rely on those tenets.

*An excerpt from the 5th grade exchange between teacher Lynn Smith (on a trip to South Africa) and the class:*

Dear Mrs. Smith,  
We enjoyed reading your entry today. We are hoping that you will get the recipe for alligator tail and ostrich to bring back for Chef Mike to fix for a Community lunch! We did not find the picture of you with face paint and a bongo drum. We are sorry we missed your dance!

We are working hard on our skits so we have to go now! Don't forget to come back to the fifth grade - with a penguin or baboon!

Over and out for now-  
The Fifth Graders  
P.S. What was that mystery animal?

Dear Fifth Graders,  
I haven't responded because I have been busy posting new information on my website. It would be great if Chef Mike would learn how to make crocodile, not alligator. I made a mistake on my animals. It actually tastes like pork.

I put the picture of me with face paint on the website. I certainly will be coming back. Tomorrow I leave Cape Town for another long flight to the US. Looking forward to seeing you all on Monday!


-Mrs. Smith

## Focus on Faculty


You wouldn't think Chicago in the winter is the place to be, but a number of faculty and staff have recently participated in events there:

 **Debbie Barmeier** (1<sup>st</sup>), **Katie Dolan** (3<sup>rd</sup>), **Ann Epps** (2<sup>nd</sup>), **Kristin**

**Hornell** (N), **Sharon Kaufman** (JK) and **Martha Overcash** (SK) attended a conference on "Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation" in January, featuring nationally acclaimed curriculum expert, Heidi Hayes Jacobs.

 **Sandra Cirrito**, Early Childhood Learning Specialist, attended the invita-

tion-only "Academy for Exceptional Teachers" conference in February.

 **Laura Falk**, Director of Communications, attended a February workshop called "Marketing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education."