



COMMUNITY *Comment*

Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body & Spirit

May 2008

Salute to the Class of 2008!

Inside this Issue

Class of '08.....page 1
Headlines.....page 2
Focus on Faculty.....page 6
Science.....page 7
Spring Pictures.....page 8



Community School's sixth graders have some wonderful memories of their time here, as well as sage advice for future classes:

My favorite memory was definitely buddies. I really enjoyed having someone younger than me look up to me.

Chris Wetzel

Community was the best nine years of my life, and I'm glad I got to come here!

Brin Datema

My favorite memory was in third grade when we got to play in the woods.

Michael McNett

The most interesting activity was writing haiku poems in third grade, which was very fun and challenging.

J.C. LeResche

My favorite memory at Community

was the sixth grade camping trip. I had looked forward to it all through Community and it was better than I thought it would be.

Henry Rogers

The single most important thing I've learned from Community is that I am my own self and I don't always have to go along with everyone.

Courtney Trowbridge

My favorite memory of Community is the many musicals we've had. I love them because I love being in the spotlight.

Elizabeth Lewis

The Dinosaur Dig in JK is my favorite memory.

Matt Kaplan

The most interesting project was the cereal box in Sixth Grade.

Kevin Steinhouse

Volume 2007-08, Issue 4



Continued on page 6



Community Comment

The parent newsletter of

Community School

900 Lay Road
St. Louis, MO 63124
(314) 991-0005
(314) 991-1512 Fax
www.communityschool.com

Head of School

Matthew A. Gould, Ph.D.

Editor

Laura Falk

Contributors

6th Grade Students
Matthew Gould
Dana Saulsberry

2007-2008

Board of Trustees

Sandy Rogers, *President*
Robert Hermann, *Vice President*
Stacy Rubenstein, *Treasurer*
Dr. Shilpa Thornton, *Secretary*
Samantha Bledsoe
Bill Bolster
Steve Brackney
Peter Edison
Janis Forsen
Greg Fox
Daniel Harris
Tom Helmkampf
Kerry Holekamp
John Lemkemeier
Dr. Padmini Muddasani
Martin Myers
Sally Scott
Michele Thomas
Mary Otto, *Alumni Board President*
Lisa Trowbridge, *Acting CPA President*

Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

(Excerpted from Annual Meeting Speech)

It has been a wonderfully busy year; we have accomplished so much, and we have so much for which to be proud. But the primary thing that we have accomplished, and the thing for which we should be most proud, is that we have lived our mission. We have created an environment where our children can learn and stretch in their academic abilities; where they can grow physically in a safe and supportive community; and where they can develop the capacities of self-confidence, perseverance, empathy, creativity, and leadership.

We have an outstanding curriculum at Community School. It is rigorous, integrated, and sequential. It is also thorough and well documented. But the truth is that we are never satisfied. We are constantly striving to improve our program and the delivery of that program.

One of the ways that we have been vigilant in the ongoing assessment, revision, and improvement of our program is through curriculum mapping. Through the able leadership of Christine Bugnitz, Lori Marusic, and the entire Curriculum Council, we re-energized the mapping process during our August in-service with an open and frank discussion of our mapping journey. The new subject that we tackled this year to map and review has been Literature. And, I believe we have already seen gains in terms of literature alignment across the grade levels.

We made two significant enhancements to our program this year which I think are worthy of note. Unsatisfied with the spelling and phonics program being used at the time, a group of teachers approached the administration eager to search for new materials to better challenge and to better

meet the needs of the students we teach. A rigorous summer review by teachers and administrators led to the adoption of the *Words Their Way* spelling and phonics program for Grades SK – 6. This program is more challenging than the one we had been using in the past and, more importantly, the program has built-in flexibility in order to meet the individual learning needs of our students.



This idea of meeting the individual learning needs of children is one of our great passions at Community School. In fact, differentiating instruction is one of the great philosophical hallmarks of our School, which leads me to the second curriculum enhancement that we added this year. Spearheaded primarily by Lynn Christopher and Sandra Cirrito, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) has now been implemented in all classrooms, grades 1-6. The DRA is an assessment that we use to get a thorough handle on a child's instructional reading level. Once we have a true understanding of the strengths and challenges of a child's reading profile, we can truly provide focused instruction to each individual child. I am happy to report that our teachers are embracing this process because they are seeing the benefit in terms of student achievement.

Speaking of student achievement, I am always proud to report our annual test



HeadLines, continued:

scores. However, I always provide a caveat about these scores. Good test scores are not our goal; they are not what we aspire to be as a school. We are a school that values process over product; we are a school where the journey is more important than the destination. However, these scores do validate that our philosophy of education – hands-on learning, creativity, group process, collaboration, emphasis on the Arts – works. In looking at our most recent ERB scores, Community School classes outscored other independent school classes in 98% of the skill categories tested. Let me put this in perspective – of the 132 skill categories that are tested in Grades 3-6, Community School students outscored independent school averages in 129 (98%) of those skills categories! But what really matters is that our kids still have fun and love coming to school!

This year, we have taken a good, hard look at Community School's homework practices and procedures. We know that homework is getting much press right now, and we want to make sure our homework practices are consistent with the mission and philosophy of the School. Let me give you a quick fact:



The National Association of Educational Progress reports that for six- to eight-year-olds, time spent on homework doubled from 1981 to 1997, and by 2005, it increased by another third. So what does this mean for Community School? A wonderful committee led by Sharon Barnholtz and Marty Hoessle, comprised of classroom teachers from SK through Grade Six, are taking a critical look at homework at Community. They have researched the data, surveyed the entire faculty, compiled reports, and will share some of their findings with the full faculty next month. This committee will continue their work next year with the goal of recommending schoolwide guidelines for homework at Community School. I greatly appreciate their efforts in this important work.

As you know, community outreach is extremely important at our school. We are fortunate to have such a fine school and to have so many resources at our disposal. We recognize that not everyone is so lucky. This year, students, faculty, and staff have been involved in a multitude of community service projects. For example, over 1,000 different school supply items were collected for KidSmart in connection with the Community School picnic; over 300 place-mats were created at Thanksgiving for residents at Hosea House; 319 hats, gloves and scarves, as well as 64 boxes of diapers were donated to the children of SSDN; 318 valentines were lovingly created and sent to our troops

overseas; and 20 Easter baskets were delivered to Webster-Rock Hill ministries. Character Education is not simply an “add-on” at Community School. It is something integrated into the fabric of our culture and our daily teaching. Thank you to Lynn Christopher, Sharon Kaufman, and the entire Character Education Committee for helping us to look outside of ourselves and think of others.

Technology is an area we don't talk a lot about, but it's an area in which we are growing. We are putting age-appropriate technology – computers, software, SMARTBoards, projectors, video equipment, etc. – in the hands of both students and teachers and are finding seamless ways of incorporating technological tools into our curriculum. This year, our teachers have learned a new word processing program and have learned how to utilize the new Community School website. Under the leadership of Steve Culver and Jessica Klingbeil, our Technology Committee has done important work this year. In addition to updating the three-year Technology Plan, members of the Technology Committee hosted a series of “mini” classes – e.g., website training, presentation software, newsletter production – for their colleagues. Witnessing teachers teaching teachers in such a supportive and intellectual community is truly inspirational.

An area that continues to grow is our After School Program. Just to provide a bit of historical context, the year before I arrived at Community School four years ago, the only program offered after school was Extended Day and there were less than 50 children enrolled in that program.

Continued on page 7



Sixth Grade, cont.



The camping trip in Sixth Grade builds trust and maturity. *Stuart Fort*

I would tell a family considering Community that it is a loving, caring and accepting community. *Katie Harris*

My favorite memory at Community is making the Third Grade forts. *Chad Yip*

The most interesting project was in Nursery when we all nurtured baby chicks. *Grace Danforth*

My favorite memory is playing cello at lunch. When I finished my piece I got huge applause from the supportive audience. *Nate Stuhl*

At Community School, I have loved being able to create masterpieces out of wood in Shop. It has really let me express myself freely. *Zach Lamb*

The most important thing I have learned at Community is to respect teachers and friends. *Olivia Polk*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is to make sure to always say good morning to your teachers. It

makes them so happy to know that you care about them. *Adrienne Brauch*

My favorite memory from Community was learning to play the alto saxophone and the baritone saxophone. *Daniel Diemer*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is to make sure you use your time wisely because you will get more done. *Joe Banton*

I would tell a family considering Community that it is a great place for making friends and it challenges your child. *Armand Gauda*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is to enjoy your childhood while you still can. Don't rush to get older. Spend time with your family and friends. *James Liang*

Without Community, I wouldn't be the person that I am today. *Molly Smith*

My favorite memory at Community is on my first day when I walked in the door and made a friend. *Bobby Hermann*



The most important thing I have learned about myself at Community School is that I am a good athlete, and I have also learned to be more social. *Grant Muckler*

I would tell a family considering Community for their child that this a wonderful school where there are many opportunities for their kid. *Nathan Dee*

The best piece of advice for a younger student is to try and just have fun in Sixth Grade, because before you know it you will be graduating! *Megan Fox*

My favorite memory here at Community School would probably be the Sixth Grade field trip to low ropes. *Shelby Marshall*

My favorite project that I have done at Community was the Hundreds Day chart in SK. *Anna Stillman*

Community is a wonderful school where your differences don't matter. There are so many special classes like French and shop, it makes going to school fun. *Lily Reisinger*



I would tell a family considering Community for their child that they have made a great decision in sending their child to the best elementary school in St. Louis.

Adam Wang

I have learned that you can be yourself and still have great friends and be happy with where you are in life.

Elizabeth Robin

I would tell a family considering Community that it is an amazing school because of its comfortable environment for every student. Everyone knows each other.

Rachael Eickmeyer

My favorite memory is of all my friends and I playing our made-up games in our "Olympics" in 4th Grade.

Hannah Rodgers

My favorite memory was in First Grade when I made my first research project!

Drew Philpott

I've learned that to be a good person, surround yourself with good people.

Jack Maritz

I really enjoyed the Time Capsule they saved from First Grade. It was really fun to look at!

Louis Grace

I've had so many happy and joyful times here at Community. I have also made a bunch of friends who all love to enjoy and play with me, no matter what.

Josh Zoeller

The most interesting project was the puppet show. It was fun designing and creating the puppets.

Kristina Murray

I learned that anything is possible if you work hard, be respectful and kind, and show self-discipline.

Madeline McDonnell

I remember in Fourth Grade when our class studied the culture of Native



Americans. In the end we made a fair with different booths exploring different Native American regions.

Michael Bergerac

Thanks to all the sixth graders for sharing their CS experiences!

Headlines, cont.

This year – between Extended Day, 13 different "mini" classes, Homework Club and Girls on the Run – 202 Community School children participated in at least one after school activity.

Finally, I want to comment on Admission and Placement. Community School continues to be one of the most sought after elementary schools in the St. Louis region. From last year to this year, applications to Community jumped 21%. We received applications from Illinois to the western edge of the Chesterfield Valley, from North County, South County, and everywhere in between. I'm happy to report that 28 new families will be joining us next year and that we are fully enrolled for the 2008-2009 school year. I am also happy to report that our reten-

tion rate – the percentage of current families who are re-enrolled for next year – sits at 97%. (The NAIS average for retention is 89%.)

In terms of placement, our sixth graders (once again) had a tremendous year. Members of Community School's class of 2008 will be represented in nine secondary schools next year including: John Burroughs, MICDS, Whitfield, Chaminade, Crossroads College Prep, Villa Duchesne, Ladue Middle School, and Wydown Middle School in Clayton. We will miss this fabulous class of sixth graders, and we wish them well in all of their future endeavors. We know that each of our graduates will be successful and will take a tiny bit of

Community School with them in their hearts as they forge out into the world.

While we have accomplished much this year, I want to end where I began and that is with the kids. The heart of this school lives with the notion that Community School is a wonderful place to be a child! Children certainly receive an outstanding education here. But it is so much more than that...it's a place where children are truly known and truly nurtured to be all that they can be. So to everyone in our community, I thank you for all that you do to make Community School such a magical place. It's been a great year!

Matthew



Focus on Faculty

🦋 Congratulations to Art Teacher **David Lang**, who was recently selected as a participant in the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund (JFMF) Teacher



Program for October 2008. The program, sponsored by the Government of Japan, provides American teachers and administrators with fully-funded short-term study tours of Japan. The JFMF program is designed to increase understanding between the people of Japan and the United States by inviting U.S. educators to visit Japan and share their experiences with fellow Americans upon their return. JFMF participants travel to Japan, learn about Japanese culture and education, and return to implement a self-designed plan to share their knowledge and experience with their students, colleagues, and community. In addition to incorporating his JFMF experience into enhanced art curriculum for his students, Lang also is planning various presentations to Community School faculty, parents, and the Missouri Art Education Association.

🦋 Congratulations to this year's Lowenhaupt Award Winner, **Eileen Morrison!** Her work with the Early Childhood Music Program is legendary around the school, yet she constantly strives to improve her teaching. The Lowenhaupt Award recognizes faculty members who have furthered the education of children through excellence



in program development, presenting information at conferences or workshops, or publishing works for other professionals. The award was established by the Lowenhaupt family in honor of Henry C. Lowenhaupt, a former parent and grandparent. The award is conferred by a committee consisting of the Head of

School, Division Directors, and the past four Lowenhaupt Award winners.

🦋 At Community's recent Annual Meeting, several teachers and staff were recognized for their years of service. Five-year honorees included Early Learning Center Specialist **Sandra Cirrito**, Maintenance Worker **Mary Daus**, Homework Club Advisor and Linguistics Teacher **Barb Forst**, Assistant to the Head **Cheryl Garrison**, 4N Teacher **Janice Kamps**, and JKW Teacher **Paige Toder**. The ten-year honoree was 2N Teacher **Ann Epps**. 20-year recipients were Accounting Assistant **Pat Eppler** and 3N Teacher **Marty Hoessle**. And finally, with an amazing 35 years under her belt, SKW Teacher **Carole Lemen!**

🦋 Congratulations to 2nd Grade Teacher **Jered Gruszka** who was married to Angela Saracino on April 17!

🦋 Congratulations also to 3rd Grade Teacher **Katie Dolan** and her husband Pat on the birth of Jack Patrick Dolan - born April 24.



Photo: Some of the Annual Meeting award recipients include (from left): Matthew Gould, Carole Lemen, Ann Epps, Marty Hoessle, Cheryl Garrison, Barb Forst, Sandra Cirrito, Janice Kamps, Paige Toder & Eileen Morrison



The 5 “E’s” of Science

What can you make from 3 colors of PlayDough, a balloon, and a Ziploc bag? If you’re a third grader at Community School, it’s the perfect recipe for a model of an atom, which is a great introduction into the study of electricity. Third graders will continue their study by investigating electromagnets, insulators and conductors, static and current electricity, and will build circuits with light bulbs and batteries.

This is just one example of a comprehensive unit of study that makes up the science curriculum at Community School. While the program is definitely hands-on, Science Teacher Amy Kilpatrick says that many hands-on programs are so focused on “doing” science that they fail to provide a true understanding of the concepts underlying the projects. Community uses the cycle of learning approach, which incorporates the 5 “E” steps: engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation to ensure the students truly grasp the ideas presented.

Continuing the electricity example from above, “engagement” might include



reading books to the class (which could include both fiction and non-fiction) to start them thinking about electricity and what they may already know. Building a model of the atom would fall under “exploration” and would help demonstrate to the students how loose electrons can travel between atoms to create a current. In the “explanation” phase, students are asked to express, both orally and in writing, what they learned from the model building exercise. This might take the form of journal writing or lab reports. “Elaboration” takes the knowledge a step further, and children apply what they have learned so far by building a simple circuit with batteries and a light bulb. “Evaluation” could include students drawing parallels relating their atom model to their circuits. A cumulative project could investigate real-world applications of energy use and conservation.

The electricity unit is just one example of the exciting work students are doing in science. Fourth graders studying space build scale models of planets, then place them outside at a scaled distance from each other — as far as they can go on school grounds, anyway. They quickly learn that Uranus and Neptune (and formerly, Pluto) would be all the way across Clayton Road! A highlight for first graders studying pond habitats is getting to go out into the campus pond with their waders and nets to collect examples of pond life they can study under the microscope. Sixth graders study forensic techniques and get to solve a mystery using DNA evidence.



The spiralling, sequencing science curriculum also integrates a variety of subject areas. Math, of course, is a natural — whether it’s working on a chemical formula, or drawing a planet to scale. Writing takes a variety of forms, which might include reports, journaling, creating a travel brochure for a planet, analyzing current events and writing reactions to them, and more. Art is incorporated in many of the projects, including one where students take the simple machines they’ve studied to create a fictitious complex machine that they both draw and write about.

One of the joys of Community’s 16-acre campus is the ability to fully utilize it for science classes. The trail and woods, the butterfly garden, and the pond provide easily accessible outdoor “classrooms” where students can experience firsthand what they’ve been learning.

The observation and investigation taking place in Community science classes result in students who are both eager and excited to learn more about the natural world around them.

*Photos: (Above) - Students work on their balloon model of an atom.
(Left) - Students investigate the properties of static electricity.*



Spring Happenings

Spring at Community School is chock full of exciting events. Here are a few recent snapshots.

Right: Nursery just held their annual Mothers' Tea, where one of the highlights is putting together a "launcher."

Below: Community School's annual Jump Rope for Heart event raised almost \$11,000 for the American Heart Association.



Grandparents & Special Friends Day, held on May 2, was a huge success, as always. Students love nothing more than showing off their work and classrooms to their doting Grams and Gramps!

