



# Community Comment

May 2011

## Salute to the Class of 2011!

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

My favorite memory is when our class was in Second Grade and we shared our work at Authors' Tea.

*Hannah Stroup*

I think the most interesting project I have done is make a math music video.

*Teddy Martin*

The most interesting book is *The Last of the Really Great Wangdoodles*. I love the book because of the fantasy and the creatures.

*Cece Fox*



My favorite memory was when I was in First Grade sitting on a bench when Daniel came up to me and asked if I wanted to play football. He was my first friend at Community.

*Henry Arneson*

The most important thing I have learned about myself is that I can write a good paper.

*Vivi McNett*

My favorite project was the GarageBand composition in Music when we mixed and matched different tracks to make our own sound.

*Will Vogel*

My favorite memory was the Dino Dig.

*John Maguire*

I learned that I could stand in front of a large audience and not get as nervous as I used to.

*Dotsy Ruwitch*

The best activity was the Low Ropes course because it showed teamwork.

*Andrew Plax*

Community School has taught me to persevere and be confident in myself. I hope one day I can repay Community for all the knowledge and wisdom it has provided me for eight wonderful years!

*Morgan Pruett*

I would tell a family considering Community that it is a fantastic school that

will teach your child how to be responsible and caring, and that classmates will become just like family.

*Ally Landrum*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is: "Do not drop the computers!"

*Luke Martin*

My favorite project was my presentation on Fiji for my "Where in the World" project.

*Alexis MacAskill*

My favorite memory is playing in the woods and on the swings with my friends during recess.

*Peggy Rianhard*

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The parent newsletter of

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#### 2010-2011

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# Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

## Excerpts from Annual Meeting Speech

Education has been in the news a lot this year. We have heard about the conflicts in Wisconsin and Indiana about teachers unions and public employees, and about budget cuts that have taken place in school districts throughout the country. We've also learned that these cuts are no longer a phenomenon in big urban areas, but in affluent suburbs as well.

However, while education in our country is largely broken, I am heartened by what is happening here at Community School every day. What is offered to the children at Community is beyond measure – it's exceptional. More than any other school I know, this is an environment that really works for kids. Whether it's our sheer academic record, with rigorous curriculum and extremely high test scores, or whether it's more qualitative, the environmental nurturance that you feel when you walk on this campus – what we are doing is truly outstanding.

But how do we do it and what is "it" anyway? It is something that we call Community School's "Secret Sauce" – describing it is hard, but we all feel it. This secret sauce is comprised of many ingredients: great kids and a wonderful mix of families; parent involvement; strong Board governance; our campus and facilities; our unique educational philosophy. However, one ingredient is more important than all others. The primary ingredient in Community School's "secret sauce" is the quality of our teachers. They are simply amazing!

The single most important determinant of school quality is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. Research study after research study confirms the fact that controlling for everything else – socioeco-



omic status, per pupil expenditure, technology, etc. – quality teachers is the single most important variable in creating quality schools.

Community School teachers are dogged in their work with our children, always determined to do what's right for kids – teaching them the skills that they will need to be successful and loving them and nurturing them to grow into thoughtful, compassionate, hard working adults.

Let me highlight what I see as some of our big accomplishments of the year, especially on the programmatic front.

I think the most exciting programmatic work that we have done this year is our work with differentiation – delivering curriculum at different readiness levels such that we meet the individual learning needs of the students. The goal is for each child to be both challenged and supported. Differentiating curriculum and instruction to 20+ students in a class is difficult work because every child really does have individual needs. But our teachers continue to learn how to best build lessons and deliver content to do just that. In addition, our schedule allows for frequent opportunity for small group work in which reading instruction and/or math instruction takes place in groups of 6-8 children such that



we can really meet the individual skill development of the children in our care.

Another programmatic highlight this year was our very purposeful Arts Integration Program. The Arts are being integrated into core academic subjects in a way that makes learning exciting and relevant for kids. For example, our fifth graders – as part of their normal study of the Revolutionary War – read patriot biographies. In Art, the children collaborated to create glorious patriot portraits. The fifth graders also made animated movies to complement their mythology unit, and even integrated naturalist drawings into their normal Fifth Grade hike in the fall – all examples of how an integrated curriculum transforms the learning experience.

This year, we introduced a new handwriting program for grades SK-6 which, by all accounts, has been a great success. The program is called *Handwriting Without Tears*, and we have seen great improvement in children's writing. In particular, our boys are approaching handwriting with much less frustration and much more success.

Under the direction of the Curriculum Council, the faculty did a yearlong study of our math program. Our math program has greatly improved over the last several years (which the test scores bear out). However, we still feel like we have room to grow. Next year, we will begin using a different form of the Houghton-Mifflin math program called *Math in Focus*. It uses the Singapore Math approach which, in essence, is more challenging and goes into concepts in great depth, ensuring that children really grasp key mathematical concepts. The research on Singapore Math is universally favorable, and we are excited to bring it to our students here at Community.

A final programmatic accomplishment this year was, in preparation for our seven year re-accreditation through ISACS, we updated the entire school curriculum. While we tweak our curriculum every year, this comprehensive review has resulted in a thorough update which accurately reflects what we are teaching in every subject area at every grade level. This is just one step of the re-accreditation process, but an important one. I am confident that our ISACS evaluators will see a curriculum – in writing and in action – that is sequential, rigorous, rich in depth and breadth, and by all measures, truly good for kids.

Not only is the School very strong on the programmatic front, we are also doing extremely well on the broader institutional front. The finances of the School are strong, and we continue to operate with a balanced budget. We hit our Annual Giving goal and parental involvement in the School is strong.

A key marker of institutional strength, especially in these challenging demographic and economic times, is enrollment. Over the past several years, recruitment has become harder due to these economic and demographic realities. Nevertheless, I am proud to report that we are in great shape for next year. Not only did we have a ten-year high in our retention rate (maybe an all-time high) with a retention rate higher than 97%, we will invite thirty-one new families to Community School next year. The School is full for next year, which is an essential ingredient to our financial stability.

With the shifting admissions landscape, recruitment can no longer rest solely in the purview of Dana Saulsberry in the Admissions Office. Marketing the School can no longer be the responsibility of only Laura Falk, our Director of

Communications. We need everybody – all of our parents, Trustees, and staff to be marketers of Community School. Collectively we have something great here. All of us need to be telling the story of Community School and working to bring great kids and families here. The stability of our school requires it and, I know we all believe, Community School is a place worth championing.

In terms of placement for our sixth graders, there is no elementary school in St. Louis that places its students into the top secondary schools the way we do. The Class of 2011 will be represented in eight secondary schools next year, including: John Burroughs, MICDS, Whitfield, Chaminade, Westminster Christian, Thomas Jefferson, Wydown Middle School, and St. Ann's. We will miss this fabulous class of sixth graders, and we wish them well in all of their future endeavors. We know 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.

Every morning, I stand on the front stoop to greet the children and it's just magical. I see children jumping out of their cars and rushing into the school building. I see children eager to see their teachers and to be with their friends. I see children excited to learn something new. And when you see happy children entering into a place where they are loved, nurtured, and honored, it is, indeed, magic. When children are known the way they are known here and with that as our mission, and with our mission implemented so beautifully, I can say with confidence that it has been an extremely successful year.

*Matthew*



*Salute, continued:*

My favorite Community School memory was going on the India field trip in Second Grade. *Kaitlyn Alexander*

The most interesting project was the edible book report because we got to do research and eat at the same time. *Matt Fort*

The public speaking here is outstanding. *Luke Lamb*

The most important thing I have learned at Community is that if I try hard I will always get where I want to be. *Shae Daney*

I would tell a family considering Community that it is honestly amazing. You can't beat the outstanding environment and the loving, caring teachers. *Riley Sullivan*

The most interesting project was the "Where in the World" project, because I got to learn about a different way of life. *Hannah Lester*

My favorite memory is spending time with my teachers and friends on the camping trip.



*Maisie Pritchett*

There are many projects that I liked, but I loved the art animation project. *Whitney Williamson*

I've learned that if I try, I can write a pretty good story. *Natalie DeWitt*

The most interesting project was the drum I made in Woodshop. *Griffin Meyer*

Everyone here at Community is like a big family - supportive and encouraging. *Libby Forsen*

My favorite memory at CS is when I sang a "Don't Stop Believin" solo in front of the whole school. *Cole Harmon*

My favorite project was the Environmental Concern Project on Nuclear Energy. *Will Sutter*

Community School has helped me a TON for secondary school, academically and physically. *Adam Gurley*

My favorite activity was when we made booths for our social studies class in 4th grade. I was able to learn and still have a lot of fun. *Daniel Knight*

The most interesting activity would be mummifying the chicken because it was very interesting. *Dylan Giacini*

The field trips at Community are something that I always enjoyed. I loved how Community was able to help me experience new and exciting things. *Hope Sterkel*

My favorite activity was when my dad came into class to teach us about West Point and Civil War soldiers. *Ian Doty*

The most important thing that I've learned about myself is that I am really good in science. *Jimmy Giacini*

My favorite memory of Community School was when we dressed up in Nursery by the window as princesses. *Ellie Krause*

My favorite memory of Community School is Mr. Hoots because he is so funny and nice at P.E., and he has been the P.E. coach for generations of my family. *Charlie Baldwin*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is that organization can make school a lot easier. *Andrew Denk*

The most interesting project was creating a math game because I was able to work with my friends. *Julia Sciortino*

My best piece of advice for a younger student is to use and plan your time wisely in class! *Sydney Giacini*

Community is a great school where everyone feels accepted and everyone has fun while learning. *George Rogers*





## Sustaining Community



(rather than using disposable cups) and removing recyclables to the recycling dumpster.

Creation of the student-oriented Green Team has been one focus of the faculty Sustainability Committee this year. Comprised of teachers and chaired by Pam Qualy and Debbie Willis, the committee's goal is "to promote a heightened awareness of ecologically responsible behavior. The committee will work to support a community of

students, faculty, staff, and families whose daily actions reflect care for the earth and its resources."

Led by the Sustainability Committee, Community School has taken a number of actions to reduce waste. Burned-out incandescent bulbs are replaced with newer energy-efficient bulbs. Students and teachers are encouraged to use water bottles or ceramic coffee mugs instead of styrofoam or plastic cups. The School is recycling more than ever. There's even a special box in the faculty lounge for

paper that can still be used on one side for scrap or rough drafts.

One area that has been getting "greener" is the kitchen. Student are now composting fruit scraps after lunch two days a week. Coffee grounds also go into the compost bin. The compost will be used to enrich the School's garden plots, which in turn, provide some of the lettuce for school meals. *(See photo at left of Chef Mike picking greens.)*

Children's snacks are being packed up and carried to the classroom in reusable canvas bags instead of paper bags. When plastic cups do get used at lunch, they are now made completely out of corn products and are compostable. A local company hauls away used cooking oil and turns it into biofuel. Sage Dining Services also tries to buy food locally whenever possible.

Sustainability is most commonly defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Hopefully, the practical actions being undertaken at Community School embody that definition, as well as set a good example for all our students.

The Green Team! While this may conjure up images of caped crusaders in lime or emerald, at Community School, the Green Team has specific responsibilities to help make the school a "greener" environment by reducing waste and saving energy.

One student from each class is a member of the Green Team. Their jobs include activities such as turning off lights, checking to be sure water is turned off in bathrooms, reminding peers and teachers to bring water bottles for lunch

## Advancement Update

*by Mark Palmer*

The pursuit of goals is a fact of life at any school. Whether academic or athletic, in the classroom or on the playground, students and teachers are constantly working to achieve pre-defined objectives. The advancement efforts at Community this year have done the same, striving to generate financial support for this magnificent institution. Just as our children have succeeded in achieving their goals, so

too have the parents, grandparents, alumni and friends of Community in donating needed funds that allow the educational magic of our School to happen on a daily basis. The principal source of support has come through our Annual Giving Campaign, which has generated over half a million dollars through gifts from every member of the Board of Trustees, each faculty member and administrator, and more than eighty

percent of our current parents – not to mention the hundreds of grandparents, alumni and parents of alumni who have given so generously. We sincerely thank everyone for this amazing support! We also thank all those who contributed to our Community Classic events and to the Master Teacher Scholarship Fund in honor of the retirements of Mrs. Sharon Barnholtz and Mr. Jim Hoots.

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## Advancement, continued:


Additionally, we extend our deepest gratitude to all the volunteers who have worked behind the scenes to make our many activities throughout the year so amazing. From the opening day of school to graduation, literally thousands of volunteer hours have been logged in support of our students. Thank you to

everyone who has contributed to this memorable school year!


The achievement of our advancement goals as a School promotes a sense of pride and accomplishment. We look forward to recognizing the contributions of so many in our upcoming

Annual Report, due out at the end of August. If you would like to be a part of that publication by making a gift to Community prior to the end of our fiscal year (June 30), please contact the Advancement Office. Thank you again to everyone who has helped our students this year through gifts to Community!


## Focus on Faculty


 Congratulations to this year's Lowenhaupt Award Winner, **David Lang**. Dave is the Art teacher. Dave's seamless integration of art into academic disciplines, as well as his professional presentations, teaching after school classes, and mentoring a student teacher shows his dedication both in and out of the School. 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 JKW Teacher **Kristin Hornell**, 6th Grade Teacher **Stephanie Oteng**, and Director of Early Childhood **Kathy Fitzgerald**. The 10-year recipients were Facilities Manager **Bill Bauer** and Business


Manager **Christine Ficker**. The 15-year recipients were First Grade Teacher **Debbie Barmeier** and Upper School Head **Cathy Haines**. A 25-year recipient was SKW Teacher **Martha Overcash**.

 Congratulations to 1st Grade teacher **Karen (Swisher) Larson**, and long-term sub **Kemper Wisland** who were both married this spring!

 Congratulations to Nursery Teacher **Sonie Orsay** and husband Thomas on the arrival of their daughter Rani, born April 1!



 Congratulations to 5th Grade Teacher **Kristen Ruckman** and husband Dave on receiving full guardianship of her niece Bella and nephew Judah!

 Congratulations to 2nd Grade Teacher **Jered Gruszka**, 3rd Grade Teacher **Shannon Galfi**, and 4th Grade Teacher **Nikki Dantuono** on their impending new bundles of joy! All are due this June and July.