



# Community Comment

October 2010

## Students Think "Art"

"I want Community School students to be artistic thinkers – to think creatively, think critically, think independently – not just about their own work, but about other work they see and experience." This is Art teacher David Lang's goal for his students, from Senior Kindergarten all the way up through Sixth Grade.

"What do you like about this painting?" "What would you change about this sculpture?" "Why do you think the artist did it this way?" are questions you often hear in class as students are encouraged to think more substantively about artwork. When they ask, "Does this painting look good?" students know that they'll never get a direct answer, but instead questions in return: "What do *you* think?" "What would make this look the way *you* want it to?"

Mr. Lang tries to expose students to art in ways they might not normally experience. Sometimes this is through field trips. For their study of printmaking during the Revolutionary War, Fifth Grade visits local print shops where they see three different kinds of printmaking. At other times, visiting artists come in to talk to the students or demonstrate a skill, such as basket

weaving, raku firing, or woodcutting. Last month, the Nigerian art ambassador Ibiyinka Alao (who recently won the United Nations International Art Competition) spoke to the sixth grade class about his colorful art and how he uses his paintings to express ideas from his culture and tell stories.



*Ibiyinka Alao explains one of his paintings to sixth grade.*

In keeping with Community's focus on cross-curricular integration, art projects are closely tied to academic subjects. One of the most clear-cut connections is with social studies. When third grade studies Japan, they'll learn about raku firing, and create Japanese tea bowls. When fourth grade studies Native American cultures, they'll learn how to weave blankets with traditional Native designs. But Art relates to other subject areas, too – math, for example. In

younger grades, students are challenged to create pictures with just triangles or just rectangles. Second graders spend time talking about scale and using it to transform a small picture into a larger one. Fifth Grade studies and creates tessellations.

Always valuing process over product, Mr. Lang explains that his teaching philosophy emphasizes ART over CRAFT. "There is definitely value in craft skills, but I want kids to begin

*Continued on page 8*



Headlines.....page 2  
Admission Notes.....page 3  
Teamwork.....page 4

Advancement Update.....page 5  
Stan & Clayton Rice Night.....page 5  
CPA Volunteering.....page 5

New Faculty.....page 6  
Focus on Faculty .....page 7  
Candids.....page 8



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The parent newsletter of

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#### 2010-2011

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## Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould  
(Excerpted from Grade Night speech)

I am very excited for this year! We obviously had a very busy summer, but our construction projects are complete, and I am very pleased with how everything all turned out. It was a pleasure to greet the students on the first day of school standing underneath our newly restored front porch and entryway.

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) recently published a report describing what it believes to be the seven essential capacities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools of the future. When I read this NAIS report, I was struck by the consistency with which Community School implements each and every one these capacities.

The first capacity is *analytical and creative thinking and problem-solving*. I believe that we should be teaching our children to run toward problems. No one will ever pay our children to solve a non-problem. Every problem is an opportunity. At Community, rote drill-and-practice learning is simply de-emphasized. We are pushing kids to think “out of the box” to identify, manage and address complex problems.

The second capacity is *complex written and oral communication*. Communicating clearly to diverse audiences, listening attentively, and speaking effectively are all core competencies that are extremely important for future success. Through Community’s public speaking and writing programs, children leave here extremely competent in these areas.

Third: *leadership and teamwork*. At Community, we want children to initiate new ideas. We want them to take risks



and feel safe doing so. Building trust, resolving conflicts, and providing support for others are further skills that we believe children truly benefit from. And it all culminates in our sixth grade program where our students have a plethora of leadership opportunities.

The fourth capacity is *digital and quantitative literacy*. Understanding, using, and applying digital technologies is certainly an important skill in the world of the future. The availability that our students have to the latest technology is second to none. But one of the areas that I believe does not get enough credit at Community School is our math program. Math is an area that the School has put tremendous focus on in the last several years, and our efforts are paying off. On last spring’s ERB tests, in Grades 3-6, Community School outscored independent school norms in 94% of the skill categories tested in math. I would posit that few, if any, schools come close to these results.

A fifth capacity that showed up in the NAIS report was *global perspective*. Through our social studies and history program, we are working with our students to develop just that – an appreciation of the vast diversity in the world in which we live. We want children to develop open-mindedness, particularly regarding the values and traditions of others. So, whether it’s a



### *Headlines, continued:*

study of Mexico in JK, China in SK, India in Second Grade or Africa in Sixth Grade, we are opening our children's eyes to the world.

Sixth: *adaptability, initiative, and risk-taking*. At Community School, we want children to develop flexibility, agility and adaptability, as well as to bring a sense of courage to unfamiliar situations. I think changing the world should be on every child's "to do" list. That is why at Community we constantly stress the importance of responsible risk-taking.

The final capacity noted was *integrity and ethical decision-making*. These skills are developed through our formal character education program, but more importantly, these skills are cultural at Community School. Part of the inherent culture of our school is to help our students make reasoned and ethical decisions in response to complex problems.

But how do we do it? How do we instill these characteristics in children at Community School? I think that it

comes down to a rather simple, yet profound, idea and that is the power of relationships. After doing some research on relationships in school, it seems relatively clear that the quality of relationships in schools has a direct influence on the quantity of learning that takes place. It turns out that conscious work on relationships at school is more than just a good idea; the importance of relationships is substantiated by hundreds of studies involving thousands of children in at least a dozen countries, and the body of research continues to grow. So when we strive to create a warm, family-like environment at Community, it's not just because it's a nice thing to do. We do it because it is good for kids' sense of self and security, and it is also good for their academic growth and development.



am extremely excited about this year. We will work with the Board to build a new five-year Strategic Plan. We will update the entire Community School curriculum in preparation for our seven-year ISACS re-accreditation. We will continue to differentiate curriculum to meet individual student needs. But, most importantly, we will continue to work diligently to ensure that each and every child feels safe and loved and finds a place to shine at this remarkable school.

*Matthew*

## Admission Notes

We all know that to really "get" Community School you have to come through the doors and experience it. We are hosting two events this fall to get potential families in the door.

First is our Open House, held in early November, which consists of a presentation (including remarks from two recent CS graduates) and a tour of the school. Next is "Monday with Matthew" — an early morning time to come in, have some coffee, and

informally chat with Head of School Matthew Gould. Parents will have the option of going on a tour afterwards.

If you know anyone who is in the process of choosing a school for their child(ren), please encourage them to attend one of our events! Word of mouth remains our single best marketing tool.

Don't forget to let prospective families know they can fill out the application form online!

## Open House

Saturday, Nov. 6 - 9:30 am

## Monday with Matthew

Nov. 15 - 9:00 am

*Visit the Admissions section of [www.communityschool.com](http://www.communityschool.com) for more information.*



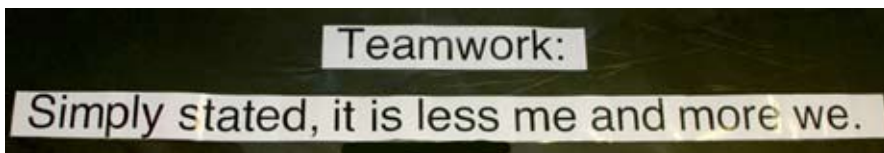
## Sixth Grade Teamwork!

The sign in the hallway leading to the sixth grade room (*top photo*) says it all. A major theme for sixth graders is Teamwork. It permeates all their activities, both in and out of the classroom.

Nowhere is this more evident than in their outdoor education activities, starting with the Team Challenge Course (formerly called Low Ropes). In mid-September, the class tackled the course over two days. Half the class went each day, and once there, they were divided into two teams. The first activity was creating a team cheer; in keeping with the day's activities, the cheers centered around "trust."

After their cheer, the next activity was, aptly, the Trust Walk (*top left photo*). Students were partnered, and one was blindfolded. The other partner had to verbally guide the blind one across a field and down a forest path. Partway through, everyone stopped, discussed what worked and what didn't, then switched who was blindfolded.

From there came a variety of difficult challenges, including Porthole to Adventure, Slack Wire, Zigzag, and Blast Off. Slack Wire (*bottom photo*) is the most individualized of the activities, requiring a person to cross a wire about 2.5 feet above the ground, relying only on two guide ropes. Balancing is quite tricky. Teammates provide support,



spotting and helpful advice.

Other challenges required true teamwork and communication. Porthole to Adventure involved passing each teammate through a tire suspended off the ground - without touching the tire. Much strategy was involved, especially when deciding which team members went first and which went last, and how to pass them through.

Blast Off is a deceptively simple-looking challenge, which required the entire team to stand with at least one foot on a box for 10 seconds. Sounds easy, but the box is small, and balancing everyone is impossible without help. Each team had to work through the process of 1) realizing they had to work together; and 2) discovering what method(s) would work.

Perhaps the most frustrating challenge was the Zigzag - a series of five boxes which had to be connected with four boards (*top right photo*). The goal was to get the entire team from the starting box

to the ending one. No more than two students could be on a box at one time, and if they fell off a board while crossing, had to go back to the beginning. The real trick? One of the boards turned out to be too short to reach between the boxes, so initial strategies had to be revamped. Again, seemingly simple, but this challenge consistently takes longest.

Team leaders (the teachers) never tell students how to complete a challenge. They merely facilitate discussion, make sure all opinions are being heard, and ensure safety. The students must figure out for themselves what's working, what's not working, and how to fix it.

According to the sixth grade teachers, "Sixth Grade is as much about life skills as it is academics. Building leadership and teamwork skills will benefit the students in every aspect of their lives. Low Ropes is an excellent opportunity for the students to not only continue practicing cooperative problem solving in an environment outside of the classroom setting, but also to grow as both leaders and team members."



by Mark Palmer

## Counting On Community

Each year, the parents, teachers, grandparents and alumni of Community School express their support of the mission of the School and the students in our care through gifts to our Annual Giving Campaign. We count on each one of these gifts, regardless of amount, to help Community. You have received a bright green envelope in the mail with a letter from our Annual Giving Chairs asking for your support. Our goal is to have each of our families contribute before December 31, 2010, so please send in your gift or pledge soon.

At its core, Community School is comprised of 250 families and 75 teachers and administrators providing the best elementary education in St. Louis for our children. It takes approximately \$6 million dollars each year to make the School's mission become a reality. \$5 million of that amount is funded through tuition. The remaining \$1 million is obtained through Annual Giving and the School's endowment. Annual Giving allows us to moderate tuition and provide a tax-deductible way for parents to directly impact the world-class education

happening every day at Community.

A group of parents have come together to be a part of the new Annual Giving Committee for the School. These parents are going to reach out to others to encourage participation in and to answer questions regarding Annual Giving. While their contact will primarily be through phone calls and emails, they have also created a fun video about this Campaign. You can see the video on Community's website. Together, we can help Community count on a great year!

## Stan & Clayton Rice Family Night

by Mindy Berry & Carol Goldstein



Calling ALL 5th and 6th graders and their dads or special friends for an evening of fun! It all begins at 5:00 p.m. with outdoor games coordinated by physical education teacher Jim Hoots, followed by a fried chicken dinner. The evening's entertainment will be

provided by comedy magician McVicar the Trickster (*see photo*). It will be a night filled with fun and entertainment.

Stan and Clayton Rice Family Night, formerly Father's Night, was renamed in honor of Clayton Rice, Class of 1996, and his father Stanley who died in a house fire in 1998. The school honors them each year

during this event because of the special bond between Stan and Clayton; they were often characterized as best friends. This annual event which includes 5th and 6th graders and their fathers or special friends occurs each fall.

**Please save the date and time now: Wednesday October 13th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

## Get Involved!

by Jeanne Champer

Welcome all new and returning families to Community School. As you will learn, Community School is truly a community of involved parents, both in- and outside of school. Parental involvement is not only key to improving children's academic successes and self-confidence, but it is also very important to our success as a school.

Become involved through the Community Parent Association (CPA)! We would love to have you share your ideas, enthusiasm, and time. There are many volunteer opportunities to

accommodate different interests and time availabilities. We encourage you to try out one or two committees to see how you like them, and if they fit your schedule. Not only will you help the School, but it is also a wonderful

opportunity to meet other families at Community. For more information, the CPA officers and committee chairs are listed on page 13 of your Buzz Book. Please contact them to start participating now! **Thank you!**

Year-round committees	Event committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery Center</li> <li>• Book Covering &amp; Repair</li> <li>• Mailing Committee</li> <li>• School Tours</li> <li>• School Store</li> <li>• Yearbook</li> <li>• Community Comment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Picnic - September</li> <li>• Book Show - early October</li> <li>• Stan &amp; Clayton Rice Night - mid-Oct.</li> <li>• Faculty Recognition/Hospitality - February</li> <li>• Community Classic Family Party - February</li> <li>• Community Classic Parent Party - April</li> <li>• Flower Sale - late April</li> <li>• Grandparents/Special Friends Day - early May</li> </ul>



## Welcome New Faculty & Extended Day Staff!



**Dustin Cutts**, 5th, has a master of arts in education from Lindenwood University. He has taught at North Kirkwood Middle School and Tillman Elementary School in Kirkwood where he created and taught an enriched mathematics curriculum to a group of gifted fifth grade students. Dustin commented, *“Community offers incredible and exciting opportunities for students; every student gets to experience a sense of comfort and a feeling of success.”*



*“Community School is a place where the students, parents, and the faculty understand the importance of education and genuinely care about one another,”* says **Nikki Dantuono** (4N). Nikki received a masters degree in educational leadership from Wright State University and a BS in elementary education from Miami University, OH, and has taught first and second grades, coached high school boys/girls tennis and girls basketball, and helped open a new school.



**Rob Duss** has been a band director for over 30 years, teaching band from elementary to high school. He is a graduate of Missouri State University, and earned his masters in music education at VanderCook College of Music. Rob is an adjunct faculty member at St. Charles Community College, and is teaching a music education course at Lindenwood University. Music-oriented as always, he says *“Think it, sing it, pulse it, play it!”*



**Megan Futhey**, 3S, received a BS in psychology and a masters in elementary education from Truman State University. She has been teaching for the last five years in St. Louis City, most recently as a fourth grade math teacher in an eMINTS (technology-enriched) classroom. Megan says, *“I am so thankful to be working in a community of teachers and staff who are genuinely focused on the education, enrichment, and betterment of the child.”*



*“I love the positive energy that runs throughout the school!”* **Veronique Gardet** is the new Early Childhood French teacher. She was born in Marseille, France, and moved to the United States nine years ago. She began her studies at the Catholic Institute of Paris where she studied English. Veronique is fluent in French, Spanish, and English.



**Mike Pieroni**, 4S, graduated from Harris-Stowe State University with a bachelor in education and a minor in social sciences. Mike taught middle school social studies at Imagine Academy of Academic Success and at Confluence Academy, and substituted in multiple school districts. *“It really feels like a community here because I feel like I know so much about my students and their families.”*



"I love working at Community! The environment here truly nurtures mind, body and spirit for both students and staff." **Karen Swisher**, 1N, originally from Honolulu, Hawaii, received her BA in education from Pacific University. She has certifications in early childhood and elementary education. Karen spent the last five years teaching kindergarten in Tillamook, OR, as well as teaching a bilingual Spanish program.




Community School is pleased to welcome two student teachers this semester. **Lyndsie Schultz** is in 2S and is working on a masters degree in elementary education from Washington University. **James Fitzpatrick** is in 6th and is working on his teaching certification from Webster University (he already has a bachelors in educational studies).



Marlo Hendricks, Punita Vakil,  
Ebony King


We would like to extend a huge welcome to our three new Extended Day staff members! They help make the After School Program hum until 6:00 every night. Also, remember that Lynn Christopher (4N) is the new Director of After School Programs this year.


## Focus on Faculty

 Community School is thrilled to announce Art teacher **Dave Lang** has been honored with the Emerson *Excellence in Teaching* award. Dave was one of four independent school teachers to win a grant. His proposal was geared toward art animation in the elementary classroom. Congratulations to David!

 Many teachers took part in professional development this summer: **Lynn Christopher** (4N), **Ann Epps** (2N), **Cathy Haines** (Assistant Head), **Marty Hoessle** (3N), and **Kristen Ruckman** (5) attended the Singapore Math Conference in Las Vegas; **Kathy Fitzgerald** (ECC Director), **Jenn Haney** (Upper School Music), **Dave Lang** (Art), **Lynn Smith** (5), and **Caroline Zarinelli** (Drama) attended the Arts Integration Academy in


Arizona; **Mindy Bezdichok** (3N), **Megan Futhy** (3S), **Shannon Galfi** (3S) and **Stephanie Oteng** (6) attended the Midwest Conference on Differentiated Instruction in Illinois; **Judy Fisher** (Learning Center) attended Developing Multicultural Curriculum in Connecticut. Alpine Tower training was attended by **Mindy Bezdichok** (3N), **Christine Bugnitz** (P.E.), **Dustin Cutts** (5), **Megan Futhy** (3S), **Jenn Haney** (Upper School Music) and **Mike Pieroni** (4S).

 During in-service week, faculty members participated in workshops led by author and math educator **Greg Tang** and *Handwriting without Tears* expert **Cathy Van Haute** (shown in photo at right).

 Faculty were busy in less academic ways this summer as well. Congratula-

tions to **Sherea Dunlap** (6th) — formerly Sherea Spinner — on her marriage and **Kris Major** (JKE) on the birth of baby Thomas!



 **Andy Van Der Tuin** (Woodshop) recently had two sculptures accepted to the Art St. Louis show *Room with a View*. "Night House" - a sculpture of wood, metal and bone - won an Award of Excellence." The second sculpture "Easy Walk to Local School" (wood and metal) has also been accepted into MOAK 2010 - an upcoming 4-state art show.



*Art, continued:*

thinking about art as a *process*.”

As such, sixth graders do independent projects in art, similar to those they undertake in woodshop. Students are required to create three project proposals. Again, much time is devoted to the planning process. Before starting to actually make their projects, students turn in a plan which includes 1) a sketch with measurements; 2) a materials list; 3) a step-by-step plan [which may require them to research techniques]; and 4) finally, a rubric for how the project should be evaluated. This final step, in particular, leads to much thought and conversation about what makes art “good” – as well as what

the student’s personal goals or objectives are for the piece. Students must also investigate and write a short report on an artist who has created something similar.

Above all, art is fun and hands-on. The students have a lot of freedom within assignments to create what *they* want to. When you ask students about art class, the responses range from “The blind contour drawings were fun,” to “It was great to go outside and draw



things from nature,” to an enthusiastic “I love painting!”

## Community Candid



*Above left:* Third graders preparing new lettuce beds (Chef Mike has promised to use the lettuce in salads!); *Below left:* Book Covering Committee hard at work; *Above middle:* JKers enjoying the ECC playground; *Right top and bottom:* Fifth graders performing their Constitution Play at a recent Thursday assembly