



A Non-Profit Corporation Founded in 1973 756 Cherryvale Rd., Boulder, Colorado 80303 (303) 494-4112

March/April 2005

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## From The Chair

Many, many thanks and congratulations to each and every one of you. The **Our School Fundraiser** was a smash success! We got many compliments on the food and drink, the quality of items and their display, and the attractive and festive decorations. Thanks go to all the committee chairs and their members, and due to their hard work and cooperation, it was a VERY impressive event indeed! The guests – present parents, friends, relatives and alumna – all enjoyed themselves. It's always amazing that about forty families, two teachers and one alumna can make this event happen. Is it because of a sense of community and cooperation from all? Is it because we all want to preserve a quality of early childhood education that's rapidly disappearing in this country? Is it because parents and teachers at Our School are advocates for young children and will not compromise on young children's fundamental right to an education full of possibilities for positive learning and being? It's likely to be all that and much more!

The two chairs of the fundraiser steering committee, Kathy and Rachel, certainly have done an outstanding job! We should appreciate how they were able to keep track of everything and everyone. Those close to them truly realized their dedication, and saw the work they did which went way beyond their responsibilities as chairs. They deserve many, many thanks for a very complex job and more! Also, we want to thank those parents who solicited items beyond belief! After so many years of fundraising, we can confidently affirm that our **tremendous** success is due not only from families meeting the basic requirements of our fundraiser as stipulated in our Policies, but from those who provide the leadership and individual commitment – both visible and invisible – to contribute more to enhance this quality early childhood program for their children and children to come. Their dedication is advocacy for all children.

Not only was the Our School Fundraiser a successful event, but it certainly was very successful financially! Our goal was \$20,000. **The result is 28,804!**

To be thorough, the fundraiser steering committee will meet to review all of the various aspects of pre-fundraiser activity as well as the event day. They will report to the Board, outlining what worked well and what should change. The Board, through the designated spokesperson(s), will report to the membership on the fundraiser assessment at the Spring semi-annual meeting scheduled for April 19. The Board will also discuss the surplus revenue from the fundraiser at their March meeting and will make thoughtful recommendations to the members present at the semi-annual meeting who, in turn, may have suggestions for the Board to consider. The ultimate consensual and voting decisions on school finances reside with the Board officers and are final.

# Exclusion and Inclusion

by Jim and Yvonne

It is evident that by knowing subject matter and professionally observing young children at play that some may initially have a *preference* for exploring a particular material, some may *sketchily* explore a variety of them, and some may *avoid* using material or engaging into activities altogether. The *why* may not be transparent, but the



objective *how* reveals to us the degree of understanding, interest or prejudice. This then guides us as to what challenge, support or remedy needs to be pro-

vided. Why? Good education resides in discovering properties of material, various relationships with other material, creative possibilities with singular or related extensions, and the social context of play. Good early education also resides in us, the teachers, to constantly assess the status of *how* they play or use language and gesture, so as to *timely intervene* when necessary with *what or who* that would challenge and enhance the play process. We realize that this is a simplistic explanation of an educational process that is, in fact, very complex.

We make the point regarding education through playing with material for it is closely related to what happens in social relations. Of course, preference, sketchiness or avoidance may also apply to young children's social interactions. Furthermore, they already come to this preschool with emotional laden personal and cultural experiences, religious, legal and ethical values from family, community and media. In their not fully-developed brains, these are interpreted in black and white egocentric terms full of "*supposed to or not supposed to*" rather than with reflective understanding. We all know that we can't mold children to our exact wishes either. The brains' nature is to *choose its own* perceptions to keep secure those interpretations already residing within the brains' channels. Children's brains however are still developing, especially the frontal lobes. The early years

are the peak years for acquiring social attitudes and behaviors. But because reflection and analysis (here comes the frontal lobes again) are still at a rudimentary stage of development, social understandings are also rudimentary. To help this complex developing process so as to avoid having minds narrowly rigid, biased or prejudiced, children need to be exposed to environments (just like in subject matter reflected in material) that foster an open variety of perspectives and relations that are substantial and not restrictive or fleetingly casual. Therefore, socialization needs to have an *educational content* as a variety of social contacts are just not enough.

Children's human relationships need to be explored, just as they explore with material. Especially nowadays, as even young children spend an increasing amount of time in front of electronic machines, and because the early childhood years are, in terms of brain development, critical ones for forming many attitudes and behaviors. Only within *human interaction* can children acquire attitudes and behaviors that increasingly help them define the many avenues for being a social human being. What is intriguing is that no matter how dear to them and loving the adults are, no matter the rewards or punishments, no matter the lectures and the consequences given, we can't mold children into the exact outcome of adults' wishes. The psychologist Watson tried in the 1920-30's without success.

This is a long but necessary introduction to come to the core of this article: *How* young children *include or exclude* other children. Often, the *why* is clear – because they interpret or copy influential models, both human and electronic. They become the social "*supposed to or not*" that is the norm. Given an environment where social exploration is open and using our knowledge and accurate observation, what we need to assess is: Are the emerging attitudes and behaviors conducive to further social autonomy, mutual respect and understanding? Are they consistent? Are they acceptable to family cultural and universal standards of human conduct free of social prejudice?

Before teachers can truthfully answers those questions they have to be versed in the subject matter of cultural anthropology, social psychology and semantics so their own social backgrounds do not color their ability to educate. A soundly socially-oriented education avoids reinforcing myths and bias and, therefore, the ignorance that

leads to prejudicial rejection of a score of human beings.

*"I don't want you to play with me!"* This is a rejection that needs to be addressed and resolved as it is very different from *"I want to play alone!"* This may be a singular remark and not tainted by prejudice. However, if these kinds of statements or corresponding behaviors are not addressed in appropriate interventions but are inadvertently condoned in early childhood, what could it mean for later social relations?

*"Yes, Mary you can play with me, but not you Cory."* Playing "favorites" is a child's frequently used uncomfortable game. Unchecked it becomes a more sophisticated one among adults. It defines the "supposed to or not" context in social, racial and ethnic classes, religious affiliations, business associations, gender, etc. Can the worthiness and the content of an individuals' character be disregarded out of indifference or acceptance of artificial cultural boundaries that prejudicially preserve a *status quo* learned in early childhood?

*"I always play with Peter 'cause he's my best friend and you're not."* Do young children comprehend the concept involved in friendship at 3, 4 or 5 years of age? Can they be discriminate in their companionship choices? Is it a dominant, submissive, competitive or complementary relationship? Is a "best friend" one who invited you to his birthday, or gave you some object? Or is it that their families are mutual friends and the children have implicitly or explicitly been given the message that they also should be *best friends*? Let's remember, just like with play material, children need to *explore and explore* peer relationships in various ways so choices of companionship evolve out of increased social knowledge.

**Our School seminar on April 11 will discuss these issues. Interested?**

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Dragon Chasing at the Summer Session

## Announcements

### Membership

Enrollment for the 2005-2006 school year is moving on smoothly. Our website has attracted many interested families to come to the school's Open Houses. Some come with misconceptions about the tuition rates and therefore have difficulties seeing its relation to our quality program, although they are impressed by the richness of possibilities in this environment. If financing their child's education is truly an obstacle for them (rather than just doing a simple price comparison to the market place), we then attempt to tell them about tuition assistance. Some are genuinely interested to pursue this avenue because they really want a good early education. Others refuse to see the relationship of cost to quality as a legitimate expense and, for them, early education is not a priority. Other misconceptions arise about program content – some want their preschoolers to be *taught* letters and *numbers* and trace *shapes* and follow "*social instruction*," so they'll be "*ready*" for kindergarten. We give them a 2-minute speedy course in child cognitive, physiological and social development to help them get some insight into how children's most appropriate *learning* – even letters, etc. — springs forth through the *content of their play* without adult abstracted verbal "*lessons*." Those verbal "*lessons*" are a form of indoctrination that block a child's sense of autonomous competence at his or her own tempo of development. Most, if not all, parents in the school know that a brain is like a parachute – it only functions when open. The visitors who come with open, curious, intrigued minds are the interesting ones – they are the real advocates for their child. We hope they'll choose Our School as their whole family will benefit from that experience.

We still have a few openings in all sessions for next fall: 2 to 3 in the 2-day, 3 to 4 in the 3-day and 1 to 2 in the 4-day session. Check your co-oping schedule or the website for the schedule of open houses.

### Summer sessions

For interested families, please return or pick up a summer session form. Remember it's only open to new or returning families in the fall and the p.m. children going to kindergarten. It starts in mid-July and lasts three weeks. It does help enormously with the transition in the fall for the new students, for those moving to an older session, and for those who need more group experience before they go to kindergarten. There is a \$50.00 application deposit that is applied toward the summer tuition fees when you return an application. No co-oping is required.

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April

- April 2 Open House – 10-12 am – Bring new families  
April 5 2-day Session Meeting  
April 11 Seminar: Inclusion/Exclusion – featured in this newsletter and open to the public  
April 16 Open House – 10-12 am – Bring new families  
April 19 **Semi-annual Meeting – Required**  
Fundraiser report  
Discussion: The Dragon and Other Things that Never Die  
April 26 Board Meeting

May

- May 5 3-day Session Meeting  
May 7 Open House – 10-12 am – Bring new families  
May 12 4-day session meeting  
May 14 Open House – 10-12 am – Bring new families  
May 17 Orientation Meeting for new families for fall 2005 and those who missed it in 2004-2005 (no children)  
May 22 School Picnic – 4-7 p.m.  
Leaving, returning and new fall 2005 children and families welcome. Takes place in the school yard. It's a pot luck (food enough for family and 4 more. Bring your own drinks and table setting; school toilets and water available.)  
May 26 2-day session meeting  
May 30 Memorial Day, no school  
May 31 Last Board meeting

June

- June 3 Last Day of School

Summer session

July 18 – August 5 – Applications now available

- All meetings are from 7:00 – 9:00 pm at Our School Preschool unless otherwise noted. Please plan to attend the whole meeting.
- Meetings are for parents only unless otherwise noted.