

# The VOICE

*"Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another." - John Dewey*

## The Children's School is Moving to Oak Park

The Children's School is moving to a new campus in Oak Park over the summer break. We'll start the 2018-19 academic year in the former St. Edmund's school facility at the corner of Pleasant Street and Oak Park Avenue near downtown Oak Park, Illinois. The TCS board of directors approved the move to allow for program growth.

The Children's School has thrived at the St. Mary of Celle campus in Berwyn for 12 years. During that same time, the student body grew from 32 students to over 100. "We are indebted to St. Mary of Celle, who has been a fantastic landlord and neighbor. Nevertheless, due to our increasing enrollment, we've had our eyes and ears open for a space that helps address some of the challenges of a growing student population and program needs," says Dr. Pamela Freese, director of administration.

The St. Edmund's location will help meet those needs, with advantages such as:



- Enough room to grow to our full capacity of 145 students;
- Space that, while still shared by St. Edmund's religious education program on Sunday mornings, is primarily for TCS use;
- Additional classroom space for enhancing programming such as our building-block room, tinker lab, music room, and library;
- Exclusive use of the gymnasium, which allows the entire school community to gather in one space and also allows us to expand our after-school programs and host community events.

Located just 1.8 miles from the current campus, St. Edmund's is one block from the Green Line Oak Park train station, within walking distance of 2 parks, and close to the main branch of the Oak Park Library and downtown Oak Park. This provides convenience for both walkable outings in Oak Park and field trips to downtown Chicago.

The move will not affect next year's tuition, which had already been set at a 2.8% increase over last year. For the long-term, the board, administration and faculty remain committed to keeping TCS accessible to as wide a range of families as possible by keeping tuition increases low and further expanding financial aid.

Reaction to the move so far has been very positive. Kindergarten and first grade teachers were thrilled at floor plans for classrooms that could accommodate direct access to a play area on a protected veranda in the outer courtyard.

"The Middle Level is looking forward to bringing the same uniqueness and energy it has at the current location to St. Edmund's in the coming fall," says 7th grade teacher Melissa Barone. "Access to a stage and gym allows the possibility for students to develop new clubs surrounding interests in theater and athletics. Many students have already shared their vision for designing these opportunities next year."

*(continued on page 6)*



**The Children's School K-8**

*An independent not-for-profit K-8 school that embraces progressive education.*

## 2 - ELEMENTARY PROJECTS



### Kindergarten: Me, My Friends, My Community!

Self-portraiture is an important learning tool at TCS, in all grades, through a variety of media and exercises. Gem in a Cage Kindergarteners use self-portraiture to celebrate who they are as they begin to learn how to celebrate, respect, and cooperate with their classroom of friends. This understanding of individual differences, cooperation, and respect then carries into exploring what makes a community.



Kindergarteners also planned a special time together where they shared with each other the story of themselves as babies. "The children really enjoyed bringing in their infant photos, toys, and stories about their baby years. We came up with the idea because my fellow teacher Ms. Lucy Coria was expecting a baby of her own!" shares Ms. Nadine Brockman.

Lately the children expressed an interest in houses and homes, and are researching, reading stories, building, drawing, and discussing different types of houses and what makes a home.

### "All Aboard!" The Golden Rollie Pollie Express

Our first grade Golden Rollie Pollies chose "trains" as their project topic this fall, providing a great foundation for field trips as well as building academic skills like math and social studies! The class rode an "L" and a Metra train and toured Chicago's Union Station. "The highlight for many children was going upstairs on the Metra train to Edgebrook to see the engineer room and cab compartment to view the brake, horn and the lever that makes the train go in the other direction," says Ms. Chrissie Jaltuch, 1st grade teacher. "One unplanned surprise, was a 162 car freight train that passed while we waited to board the Metra. We'd been looking for an opportunity to view a freight train up close and this could not have been planned better." The class also visited the train museum at the Station Park in Lisle.

The field trips spurred block projects with trains and a model train world in the loft. Golden Rollie Pollies also transformed the section under their loft into their own Union Station, including a ticket booth, gift shop, and map stand. Eventually the class mapped out their own "L" train system around TCS hallways, plotting routes for several different train lines, schedules, and stops. When presenting their project, their classroom served as a train museum and train depot for multiple wagons that they had transformed into train cars.



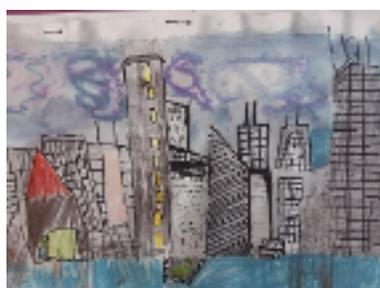
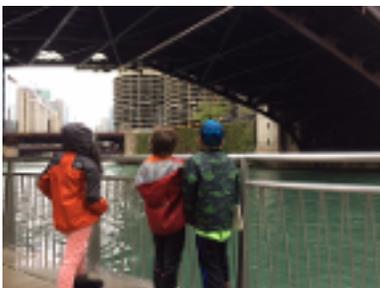
*The 1st grade classroom transformed into a train station and museum*

### "Chicago From the Ground Up" Explores Chicago River's Role in History

In a remarkable project combining geography and history, the second grade Iron Stars explored the Chicago River and the impact its natural landscape had on early settlements as well as the evolution of the City of Chicago. The project combined field trips to explore the river by boat through Wendella Boat Tours, examine drawbridges and how they work at the McCormick Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum, and learn how the river contributed to a thriving economy that helped early Chicago grow.

Students later worked on their research, writing and drawing skills to assemble their own book on Chicago history, *The Chicago River Through Time*. Inspired by the book *A Street Through Time* and their work with TCS librarian Ms. Polly Smith, the Iron Stars' book depicting what was happening along the river at various stages of Chicago's history, and how it may have looked. Children drew scenes from the 1800's until today, highlighting Navy Pier, drawbridges, the sewer system, many different animals-including prairie animals, fish, rats, and domestic animals, Fort Dearborn, cars, skyscrapers, the locks, buildings, streets, etc. One innovative touch included an acetate panel with illustrated flames that could be laid over a drawing of the city to show which areas were damaged by the Chicago fire. The book was on display as the center of a class presentation "Chicago From the Ground Up" where each student read an individual report on a facet of Chicago river history that was of interest to them. Students interested in biology focused on animal or plant species along the river, while students interested in history or how the Chicago economy grew could zero in on their own interest. In this way, the project curriculum supported students in exploring individual curiosities while allowing those same individual pursuits to contribute to a complex whole-group endeavor.

LEFT: Learning about drawbridges  
CENTER: drawing cityscapes along the Chicago River  
RIGHT: creating a book on the history of the Chicago River



## Ancient Africa: Many Cultures, Many Voices

Third grade Silver Salamanders chose the topic of Ancient Africa for study and project work. It seemed a daunting proposition, since the time range included over 24 centuries and the history of 55 modern recognized countries. Eventually the group narrowed their focus to western Africa.

Student Amani's Dad visited class to share about the food, people, and culture of Tanzania and taught the Silver Salamanders a bit of Swahili. The group also took a trip to the Field Museum's African Art section, and another trip where they studied the Yoruba language while afterwards enjoying a Nigerian meal with fried plantains.

The project culminated in a play written and performed by the students, which was based on a marketplace in the medieval kingdom of Mali. "Playwriting fit in perfectly with our writing focus at the time, which was dialogue!" explains Ms. Angela Whitacre de Resendiz. "We had been looking at dialogue in comics versus narrative to look at the mechanics (commas, quotation marks, and capital letters) as well as how to weave and balance dialogue with narration to create better stories. We then looked at the structure of scripts to include a third dialogue writing style and talked about how other information like stage directions are similar to and different than narration."

For the play, the children made a Yoruba helmet, homemade adobe bricks, mud cloth, farming tools, jewelry, drawings of gods and historical figures, and a background painting of a temple and palace in Timbuktu. Meanwhile, in art class, they made clay masks, model buildings, and stamps based on their research.

The class saw how conventional history books often downplay the importance of women or ignore the topic of diversity, even though real history shows a different world. Ancient African cultures often had bicameral male and female governments, with centuries of female rulers. The students learned that much of the ancient world, including Europe, was multiracial, often with multiple religions coexisting peacefully. This is why Ms. Angela says: "Studying real history can help us imagine a different world for ourselves!"



*Students wrote and performed a play based in a marketplace in Medieval Mali (top and center) and learned to count in Swahili (bottom).*



## Titanium Titans Engage with Architecture

The fourth grade Titanium Titans and their teacher, Ms. Karen Grimaldos, are excited to be studying architecture together. In addition to conducting research for individual reports, the class traveled to downtown Chicago to learn about the science of architecture with the Chicago Architecture Foundation.

Through an interactive indoor presentation, Titanium Titans learned about how the forces of compression and tension act on buildings. They also discovered how architects and engineers utilize architectural and structural elements such as columns, cantilevers, keystones, arches, trusses, and domes to address challenges posed by compression and tension.

Afterwards, students headed outdoors for a walking tour. They explored the architecture of the Symphony Center, the Art Institute, and various other buildings and were challenged to identify the architectural elements that they had studied.

After the tour, the students lunched at the Chicago Cultural Center and then embarked on a self-guided tour of this architecturally significant building. Students were able to identify numerous architectural elements constructed of marble and hardwoods, exploring the Grand Army of the Republic Hall where they took time to gaze up and study the intricate stained glass dome and carved wooden ceilings. The class concluded its tour in Preston Bradley Hall with a viewing the world's largest Tiffany stained-glass dome, which is 38 feet in diameter and contains over 30,000 pieces of glass. The students also visited the Frank Lloyd Wright home and studio in Oak Park.

In progressive education, each project topic becomes the fulcrum for academic learning in a wide variety of areas. Architecture is a great starting point for related learning in art, history, mathematics, and physics.

## 4 - MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECTS

### Amber Animals Production Company Presents...

The fifth-grade Amber Animals and their teacher, Ms. Laura Marquez, are creating their own TV show to shed light on environmental issues! They are building the sets, writing episodes, and assigning production roles, with each student contributing their unique talents in this multi-faceted project.

The class visited WTTW, Chicago's local PBS affiliate station, on a field trip. At WTTW, they walked through all of the steps that go into producing a one-hour television show. One of the primary things they learned on the trip was the necessity for collaboration. In crafting their own show, the writers collaborate with set, prop, and costume designers, who also must collaborate with each other. "Everyone is making sure that their ideas fit nicely together to create the best T.V. show possible with our resources," says Ms. Marquez.

Most recently, the students enjoyed an acting class with Lila Leff to prepare for performing their roles. We're staying tuned for the show this season!



*Assembling sets, props and costumes for the television show "Return of the Teleporter"*

### War Project Spurs Field Trips and a Visit from Carol Moseley Braun

Former U.S. Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun toured our school and spoke to middle school classes on the historical and sociological significance of World War I. She also added perspective on the experience and contribution of African American soldiers in World War I. The Ambassador's talk came on the heels of a full semester study on war for 6th grade Einsteinium Tungstens, including class field trips to the National Veteran's Art Museum and the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in Chicago. Read more about the war project and Ambassador Braun's visit at [www.thechildrensschool.info/news](http://www.thechildrensschool.info/news).



*The 7th grade read the myths they'd created to 4th graders, who drew what they visualized in their minds about the story*

### Mythical Creatures Class at TCS!

No, it isn't the new class at Hogwart's. Mythical creatures served as the theme for the seventh grade Tiger's Eye project this fall, guided by teacher Ms. Melissa Barone.

The group analyzed legends from Norse, Greek, and Egyptian mythology. They agreed on three basic elements of myths: myths are told in the third person, myths follow a simplified storyline with a conflict that comes to an interesting resolution, and myths show our desires to explain the universe through teaching morals or explaining natural phenomena. They learned about the power of oral tradition, and how myths can evolve over time within a culture.

Students each wrote their own myths, with professional storyteller Megan Wells coming to class to answer questions on writing myths. One fun exercise included students pairing up and writing myths about each other. Later, they made sculptures of mythical creatures in art, and created myths about real creatures in nature that didn't have one.

One of the most interesting explorations for everyone was a drawing exercise: After hearing a Norse myth read aloud, each student drew what they'd visualized in their mind about how the creature looked. "It allowed us to see different people's perspectives, because everyone drew something different even though we heard the same story," says Lydia, one of the class members. Later in the year, the 7th grade students shared the same exercise by reading their myths to 4th graders, so that the 4th graders could draw what they envisioned as they listened.

## Hire Understanding: A Podcast Project on Discrimination

When the eighth-grade Freddie Mercury class chose the topic of discrimination for their Fall studies, they wanted a project that would not only help them

***"I think it is really cool that a group of middle schoolers in school can just decide to make a podcast and it can happen." - Carter***

understand various forms of discrimination, but also a project that could make a difference by raising awareness on the issue.



The students chose to create and distribute a podcast called *"Hire Understanding,"* and composed a mission statement: *"Hire Understanding aims to spread awareness and change minds on the subject of workplace discrimination. Our team of middle-school interviewers talks with people who have experienced discrimination, as well as people advocating for workers' rights."*

The classroom soon turned into an online startup company in miniature, as students negotiated creative decisions from naming the podcast and designing a logo to picking out website colors and theme music for the podcast. Collaborating and sharing their own ideas while respecting the ideas of others gave them practice in soft skills demanded in today's adult workplace culture.

The class solicited and found insightful guests, taking turns interviewing, recording and serving different roles on the production team. After several weeks of work, the students uploaded the podcasts to SoundCloud, an audio hosting service, as well as their new podcast website found at [www.hireunderstanding.org](http://www.hireunderstanding.org).

***"This project has made me more aware of what's going on, and I'm noticing discrimination in shows I watch and have more ability to talk about what I'm seeing." - Kira***

***"It would be amazing if this helps as few as three to five people, but every person we assist with their problems is a victory for the podcast as a whole." - Jamie***

Making and distributing a podcast provided hands-on experience in many different aspects of digital production, including sound recording, sound editing, web design, copywriting, and graphic design. "It has been gratifying to watch these young adolescents go from being the consumers of digital media to the creators of their own content," says Ms. Gloria Mitchell, teacher and TCS high school transition coordinator.

Part of the project-based curriculum at TCS includes post-project reflection by students, so they can evaluate what worked and what didn't during the project. Ms. Mitchell reports on this reflection process for the 8th graders after they finished their podcast project, "Students wrote essays in which they reflected on their learning and actions, compared intended with actual outcomes, evaluated their own strengths and challenges as learners, synthesized meanings, and considered how they will apply their new understandings to future experiences."

**"Hire Understanding" podcast episodes available at [www.hireunderstanding.org](http://www.hireunderstanding.org)**

### Episode 1: "You Play Okay for a Girl"

Students interview trumpet player Mary Dye about her experiences as a woman in the classical music world. We talk with Mary about how blind auditions help decrease bias in the audition process and have contributed to a growing number of women musicians in top orchestras.

### Episode 2: "Step Up and Be Allies"

Features an interview with Bernadette Smith, CEO of Equality Institute, about the push for legal protections for LGBTQ+ people in the workplace. Bernadette talks with us about understanding the gender spectrum, corporate policies that protect workers from discrimination, and why "the best is yet to come" for LGBTQ equality.

### Episode 3: "No Salary History"

Melissa Josephs, Directory of Equal Opportunity Policy at Women Employed, outlines why employers shouldn't ask job applicants about their salary history. She explains that it is an important issue in the workplace and in the hiring process because it puts people who have had low-paying jobs in the past at a disadvantage.

## TCS Moves to St. Edmunds *(continued from pg.1)*

Teachers scheduled a second tour of St. Edmund's at the end of February to help choose classrooms for each grade, and to more closely assess and envision their program and its needs given the new facility's layout. Administrators hope that the new location will allow for more community events, a higher visibility in the Oak Park community, and easy access for those who commute via car, bus or "L."

"Our move to Oak Park is a return to our roots," says Ms. Christina Martin, director of curriculum and instruction, noting the school was founded in Oak Park in 2004, and is still legally incorporated under the name The Children's School of Oak Park. "At the same time, we've established great relationships within the community of Berwyn, and hope to keep a strong presence there as well as in Forest Park, Maywood, River Forest and other neighboring communities."

The lease begins just after the close of the 2017-2018 school year, and the move is set to begin a few weeks after graduation. Moving a multi-faceted community such as TCS, and its eclectic collection of beloved furnishings and learning tools, is sure to be challenging. Yet more challenging will be transforming empty hallways and classrooms into a TCS-styled space that is comfortable, welcoming, colorful, and that stimulates learning and encourages children's imagination and creativity. To that, Dr. Freese says: "We have a blank slate that everyone is invited to help paint!"

TCS knows that students, families, faculty, and board members, both past and present, have built great memories in its Berwyn location. The school welcomes everyone to its regularly scheduled on-campus events throughout the coming months to experience and say farewell to their school home in St. Mary of Celle.

## Auditors Give TCS Good Marks

Our most recent audit this past January went very well, as auditors evaluated the financial and organizational records of The Children's School. "We're most proud of the fact that 90.8% of all funds continue to go to programs, with only 9.2% going to administration and fundraising," says Dr. Pamela Freese, director of administration.

Dr. Freese adds: "In keeping with our mission, we have always put learning first in our decision-making since our start in 2004. That mindset allows us to offer a valuable program that is not driven by revenue. We are working on ways to offer more scholarships so that financial constraints need not be an obstacle in attending TCS. We also seek ways to dedicate more resources to programs and the advancement of lifelong learning."

For more information on each event, please visit the event calendar on our website or call 708-484-8033.

**MARCH 7TH** 7-8:30 PM  
BOARD MEETING

**MARCH 26TH -30TH**  
SPRING BREAK - NO SCHOOL

**APRIL 6TH** 9-11:00 AM  
FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE

**APRIL 13TH**  
NO SCHOOL - Institute Day

**APRIL 18TH** 7-8:30 PM  
BOARD MEETING

**APRIL 20TH** 7-11:00 PM  
ANNUAL BENEFIT

**MAY 4TH** 9-11:00 AM  
FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE

**MAY 4TH** EVENING  
HOOTENANNY

**MAY 10TH & 11TH**  
TH Early Dismissal, FR NO SCHOOL  
CONFERENCES

**MAY 17TH** EVENING  
COLLAGE CONCERT



## The Children's School Annual Benefit

Come celebrate 14 years of progressive education and our upcoming move to Oak Park! Food, drinks, friends and fun await parents, directors, faculty and staff, board members, alumni, and friends of TCS.

**WHEN:** Friday, April 22nd, 7pm - 11pm

**WHERE:** Exit Strategy Brewing Co., 7700 Madison Street, Forest Park

To sponsor the event, contact [pfreese@thechildrensschool.info](mailto:pfreese@thechildrensschool.info). Tickets will be available soon -- watch your email!

## The VOICE

**Welcome** to the quarterly newsletter from The Children's School. Here we share stories, photos, interviews, and feature articles highlighting our student's work, faculty, school activities, and other news that gives readers a better understanding of progressive education and our school community. If you would like more information or have comments, please call 708-484-8033 or email us at [thevoice@thechildrensschool.info](mailto:thevoice@thechildrensschool.info), and be sure to visit us online at [www.thechildrensschool.info](http://www.thechildrensschool.info).