

The VOICE

"Teach the young people how to think, not what to think." - Sydney Sugarman

Giving Back: TCS Helps Feed the Homeless Teaming Up with Housing Forward for 11 years!

Since relocating to the St. Mary of Celle facility in 2006, The Children's School has partnered with Housing Forward to help provide meals for the homeless. St. Mary of Celle serves as a weekend shelter facility for Housing Forward (in rotation with other churches and community locations in the western suburbs.)

TCS classrooms take turns preparing 60 bag lunches for the shelter once each month. Food donations for the lunches are coordinated by the class parents. "Working with Housing Forward is in-line with several of our civic engagement and social justice curriculum goals," says Christina Martin, TCS director of curriculum and instruction.

In addition, TCS families volunteer to provide food for four dinners during winter months. The shelter normally hosts approximately 60 homeless. Each dinner requires 5-6 families to volunteer. Families can choose to provide the main course, vegetables, salad, bread and butter, milk, juice, or dessert. Some families may choose to stay on location to help prepare, serve and clean up after the meal. TCS board member and dinner coordinator Julia Huff, says: "We are blessed with some home chefs and restaurant chefs here at TCS. Last year's meals included everything from baked chicken to meatloaf and chili. All were delicious and hearty meals that were well enjoyed."

"Mostly, the children help by serving the dinner," says Julia. "Adults will supervise but it's a great task for the kids. The children work in teams of two and are very enthusiastic about meeting the guest's needs."

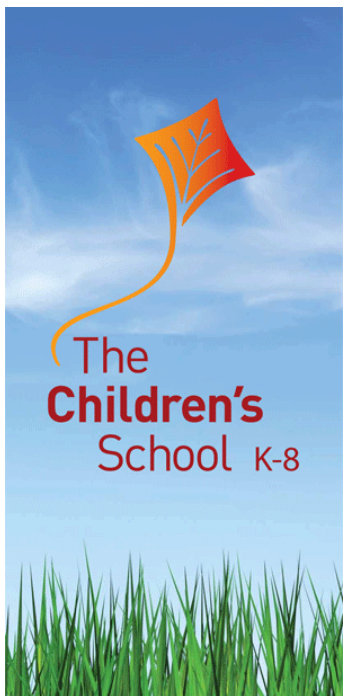
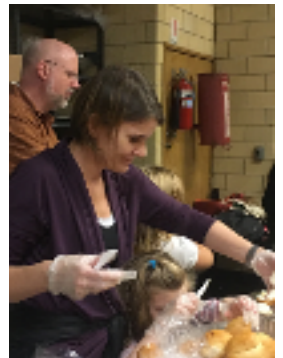
Julia's daughter, Catherine, helps out at the dinners and says: "Helping with Housing Forward made me see that I am really lucky. I was sometimes surprised to see families there. I feel good about giving my time to something important."

Beatrice, a fifth-grade student at TCS, has participated in the dinner program often. She says, "I like delivering the food to everyone and preparing it in the back. It not only feels good to be part of this, but you can also have fun!"

Fifth-grader Kyrielle has also participated in the dinner program. She adds, "It's good when kids get involved with a program like this because they will likely be more comfortable helping the homeless in the future when they are adults."

Dates for this year's dinner volunteer opportunities are: 12/16, 1/20, 2/17, and 3/17. If you and your family would like to contribute food, money or time as part of the team for one of the above dinner dates, please contact Julia Huff at huffjulia@aol.com.

"Housing Forward is a great organization in our community," says Julia. "Our relationship with St. Mary of Celle allows us to connect with Housing Forward and through them connect with and give back to the greater community."



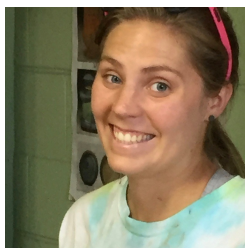
*An independent
not-for-profit K-8
school that embraces
progressive education.*

Meet Our New Teachers

It's been exciting for both our students and adults to have five new faculty members at school this year. With enthusiasm, energy and talent, they are already making a big impact in our classrooms. We've asked each of them to share a bit about their first impressions of TCS, what they enjoy here and what their goals are in their new positions. Here are excerpts from their responses to help you get to know them a bit and see why we're so happy to have them on board. If you'd like to read more about both our new and veteran teaching staff, visit our new website and find our faculty page under the "About" section.



Melissa Barone is the new teacher for TCS 7th grade. "I am in awe of the supportive environment at TCS. The faculty/staff, students, and parents have been tremendously welcoming. I felt I was part of the community before school even began. I am also fortunate to be within an environment that graciously provides educators with trust and freedom to allow curriculum to emerge with the students. Being part of TCS fosters my creativity and supports my continual growth as an educator so I can provide purposeful and meaningful experiences for the Middle Level students. My goal for the Middle Level students is for them to work towards honoring their own voice but also the voices of others."



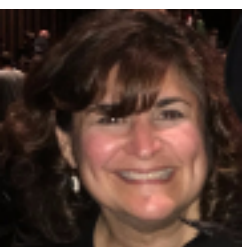
Aileen Berg is our part-time Art teacher. "TCS is such a warm and welcoming place that gives me so much creative freedom! Though I have been a teacher for many years in many capacities, TCS is the first place where I feel that I have my own space. TCS has carved out a little art nook and then handed it over with complete trust and support. This year some of my goals are to do more long term projects and really push the clay in ways we haven't before, giving the students knowledge of all the clay's magic! It is also important to me to ensure that every student has the best time in art class that they can!"



Jasmine Davis is an associate teacher in the 2nd grade and kindergarten. She says, "I really enjoy my experience at TCS so far. My first impressions of the school, the students, the parents, and the staff have been extremely positive. Everyone has been remarkably welcoming to me, and has made me feel very comfortable. I feel like there is a very strong sense of community, and everyone involved is invested in providing the best education possible for the TCS students. I have seen many differences between my previous school and TCS. There is more parental involvement. The students also seem to be more respectful, polite, and value the needs of their peers more."



Karen Grimaldos is our new 4th grade teacher. Karen says, "The students here are thoughtful, empathetic and very creative. It's wonderful to see how their differences and varying interests are honored and respected in the school. One striking difference that I notice between TCS and other private schools is that TCS is committed to making progressive education accessible to a broader range of children and families. Developmentally, fourth grade students are reaching a new level of self-awareness and are becoming more individualistic. This is why one key social-emotional goal that I have for my students is to explore how their race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage influence their self-identity."



Parvaneh Smith is TCS' new social worker. She says: "I am inspired by so much and so many at TCS. On a daily basis, I delight in a wise statement or unique perspective. My background is in progressive education, giving me an understanding of childhood through a developmental curriculum. I use these insights as I work with children. I look forward to building strong relationships with students as I come to know them and they me. I am also looking forward to building a network with social workers located in progressive schools."

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 our school community and progressive education. If you would like more information or have comments, please call 708-484-8033 or email us at thevoice@thechildrensschool.info, and be sure to visit us online at www.thechildrensschool.info.

TCS Shares its Ongoing Social Justice Curricular Goals in a New Document

The Children's School recently enumerated its social justice curricular goals in a document that is available for view or download on our new website. Introduced at Curriculum Night on September 18th, 2017, the list of goals is the result of several months of faculty collaboration under the leadership of Christina Martin, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

A focus on social justice is not a new idea at TCS. The statement we call "Our Hopes for Each Child" has always included group process, civic engagement, and social justice. From its very first year, our school has emphasized these principles in our traditions of group meetings and Town Hall meetings. Another part of our curriculum has always been the idea of providing mirrors and windows — mirrors so that a child can see their own identity and experiences reflected back, and windows so that a child can look out to understand the identities and perspectives of others. Ms. Martin explains: "Children are driven by an innate curiosity to make sense of the world around them. We also see children driven by an innate sense of fairness to take action to make the world a better place."

Ms. Martin explains that the goals are constructed to give students a tool kit, not a doctrine: "Our Social Justice Curriculum is not intended to push forth a particular political agenda. We do not aim to have each student arrive at the same opinion or perspective or action. Rather, we want to give students tools to make their own thoughtful decisions around complex issues."

The TCS Social Justice Curricular Goals are broken down by grade level. For example, one of the eleven goals for kindergarteners is: "Notifies, expresses concern, and seeks help when someone is not being treated fairly." A fourth-grade goal

is more complex: "Recognizes historical and current inequality among groups of people." By middle school, the student is able to take more responsibility and look more deeply into social issues. One of their goals is: "Names and investigates problems arising from social, economic, and environmental inequities inside and outside of the school community and seek ways to address these problems." Each of the above goals is based on the same fundamental principle of fairness. The curricular goal for each successive grade builds on that fundamental principle and incorporates a wider focus as the child grows developmentally.

Social justice is not confined to the formal curriculum at TCS. "Social justice teaching and learning for our K-8 students remains primarily about how we treat each other and how we enact values of justice, inclusion, fairness, empathy, and compassion in our day-to-day lives," says Ms. Martin, who invites comments from parents on the goals. View or download the document here: goo.gl/XZv68jC



Students packing up the truck at our annual food drive



Middle School Hears Debate on Dakota Access Pipeline Issue

TCS Now on YouTube!

The Children's School recently launched its first YouTube channel! We have two older videos up, and this Fall will have a video series on "Why Progressive Education?" featuring our founder Daniel P. Ryan, Ed.D. We encourage you to share our videos with friends, family, and neighbors who may be curious about both TCS and progressive education.

Subscribe to our new YouTube channel at "The Children's School, Berwyn, IL." To find it more easily, just click the YouTube icon at the top of our new website!



4 – CURRICULUM FOCUS: WHY PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION?

The Power of Play-Based Learning: Insights from an Interview with TCS Founder Daniel P. Ryan, Ed.D.

Q: "There seems to be a big push for kids to advance in academic skills at a very young age these days — even in preschool. Could you talk a bit about the importance of play-based learning?"

A: "When John Dewey started the notion of progressive education, he said, 'We learn by doing and we remember things by doing.' Dewey posited this from his own philosophical beliefs, but he didn't have the brain research we do now. Today research affirms many of the tenets of progressive education. We've learned that when children are playing with blocks or playing 'house,' there are huge synapses forming having to do with executive function. You can't really teach executive function, it must develop innately.



Brain research shows that children aren't just 'playing,' they work at their playing. 'Bob, you're going to be the Dad. Suzie, you're going to be the little sister. Jimmy, you'll be the dog...' They set up structures, they determine what roles people will have and carefully construct the rules. All of those tasks are wiring the brain for executive function.

In progressive education, one of the major philosophical components is play-based learning. Parents might walk into our kindergarten and say 'Oh, they're just playing they're not learning, they're not doing anything.' But the teacher will say: 'Oh, see this group over here? They have costumes, they're imagining, they're working on creating structures with themselves about who is in what role. See these magnetic tiles over here? That's about math, geometry, and physics.' We have these different types of materials in the room for a reason. They aren't just playing. Plus, we're asking them to rotate to different areas and to interact with different kids and to work with different materials. There are also times when we pull

"Why Progressive Education?"

Highlighting the benefits of progressive education in helping your child reach their full potential. Be sure to check out our new series of "Why Progressive Education" videos on our website and YouTube channel.

them together and read to them, we expose them to letters and sounds and words and numbers. But then, they take what they've learned and use that to interface with their world of play.

We've asked children to grow up too fast. Consider something like a Leapfrog toy, or parents who might proudly say, 'My child was able to read at three years old.' Mechanically putting letters together and the sounds they make can sound like reading, but do they love reading? Do they enjoy what they're doing? Do they understand what they've just read?

One of the great tenets of progressive education is letting children unfold developmentally. To say that all children must be able to read by the end of first grade is a disservice to the developmental continuum. Children don't ride a bike at the same age. You ride a bike when you're ready to ride a two-wheeler. We don't say, 'They haven't ridden a bike by five years old so something's wrong with them.' In progressive education we say that between the ages of four and eight, that's when children learn to read. One child may get it at four, another child may not get it until the end of first grade or beginning of second grade, but as long as they are showing the correct understanding and developmental readiness along the continuum of pre-reading skills you let them be.

Research now shows that those children who are given the opportunity to learn to read at their own pace become lifelong readers because reading is in them, it's a part of them, not forced upon them. It's the same with math when you let it unfold."

Daniel P. Ryan, EdD, founder of The Children's School, is a leader in progressive education and is currently assistant superintendent of Winnetka District 36. He was formerly principal of Hubbard Woods Elementary and director of Baker Demonstration School.



Five TCS Teachers Travel to P.E.N. Conference in Boston

Five teachers from TCS traveled to Boston to join the biennial Progressive Education Network Conference. The theme of this year's conference was: "Amplify students' voice, agency, conscience, and intellect to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world." Featured speakers included progressive education luminaries Deborah Meier, Jonathan Kozol, and Sonya Nieto.

"Having the opportunity to spend a long weekend discussing progressive education and reflecting on my practice with educators across the country was invigorating," says 7th grade teacher Melissa Barone. "I couldn't wait to go back to the classroom and share my enthusiasm and passion with my students."

Many of the workshops took place at Mission Hill School, a public progressive school in Boston. "Attending the workshops and talking with fellow TCS teachers gave me so many ideas to improve my teaching practice," says eighth-grade teacher and high school transition coordinator Gloria Mitchell.

"Overall, the focus on student voice was a reminder about the importance of the progressive education tradition," says Gloria. "John Dewey (among others) recognized that children do not come to school as blank slates to be inscribed with whatever their teachers -- and their culture -- deem important, but are feeling, thinking human beings with experiences, values, and wishes of their own. To ignore this fact is to miss out on a tremendous source of motivation, vitality, and interest in school. One statement that resonated with me, in a film about project work: "You [the teacher] may have a vision of what their work could be. But they [the students] have to make their own choices."

On their trip the TCS group also visited Belmont Day School in Belmont, Massachusetts, and were particularly impressed with their arts and woodworking program for K-8. They also touched base with former TCS board chair and parent Brian Schultz, who recently relocated from Illinois to Ohio.



Teachers Nadine Brockman, Karen Grimaldos, Dana Nasralla, Gloria Mitchell and Melissa Barone attend P.E.N. event.



Reunion with former TCS Board Chair Brian Schultz at 2017 P.E.N. Conference.

Good Work: A Middle Level Perspective *by Will Hudson, Middle Level (6th-8th) Coordinator*

Good work requires time. At the forefront of our planning in the Middle Level, and throughout TCS, is an emphasis on maintaining large chunks of time to develop our projects. The importance of this cannot be understated. Asking questions, pursuing inquiries, and sharing what's been learned with peers and the wider community, taken together, constitute the core of work that all students are immersed in daily at our school.

With all that we would like to accomplish in a day, a week, or in a school year, and with high school looming on the horizon, it can be easy to lose sight of time as an essential element of our endeavors. All School classes (physical wellness, music, library, and art), content blocks, and math groups all foster student growth, opportunities for learning, and are invaluable components of the Middle Level curriculum. However, as progressive educators, we must also be mindful not to over-schedule students, leaving them opportunities and time to direct their own hard and joyful work of exploration.



All children are wildly curious about the world around them. Adolescents are no different. The only difference is that these young people are taking their first steps towards analyzing, deconstructing, and reconceptualizing a world that's wider and more complex than they may have imagined. Making sense of their individual experiences, discovering connections between disparate ideas and academic pursuits, questioning beliefs, values, and building new neurological pathways of learning are all time intensive labors integral to the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of the adolescent mind.

To this end, we consistently devote our mornings or afternoons, ideally an hour or more daily, to project work. During this time, students may work independently, in small collaborative groups, or participate in class discussions, all centered around topics and themes they have deemed worthwhile and meaningful. As teachers we listen, we push, and we sometimes direct: Yet we always work to facilitate the pursuit of knowledge, both of self and the world. First and foremost, we create the space, and give the time, for growth and learning to unfold.

TCS Rocks New Classroom Names!

This year's theme is rocks and minerals, so our students unleashed a landslide of creativity in choosing the following class names:

Kindergarten

"Gem in a Cage"

First Grade

"Golden Rollie Pollies"

Second Grade

"Iron Stars"

Third Grade

"Silver Salamanders"

Fourth Grade

"Titanium Titans"

Fifth Grade

"Amber Animals"

Sixth Grade

"Einsteinium
Tungsten"

Seventh Grade

"Tiger's Eye"

Eighth Grade

"Freddy Mercury"

Reasons to Be Proud: Our TCS Annual Appeal!

November is the season for our annual appeal to families and friends of The Children's School to raise funds for our programs. In prioritizing your giving this year, we'd like you to consider the reasons why you can be confident and proud in giving generously:

- **Your money goes to programs!** Recent audits show that over 91% of all income goes directly to programming, with less than 8% of our budget spent on administrative costs.
- **We never pester!** Unlike other schools and causes, our annual appeal is one of only TWO occasions during the year where we ask for donations, the other being our annual benefit in spring.
- **Your doorbell stays quiet!** Unlike other private, and even public schools, we at The Children's School believe that raising funds for our school is the responsibility of the adults. We don't send our kids out with sales kits to raise money door to door. We don't sell cookies or greeting cards, or use our students' after school time to raise money.



These reasons are also why we need your sincerest consideration of our annual appeal letter, and your most generous contribution. Give proudly, knowing we work hard to raise and use our funds responsibly, so that we can continue to offer the best in progressive education.

NOVEMBER 15TH - 17TH
ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

NOVEMBER 21ST 9:30-10:15 AM
THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST

NOVEMBER 22ND - 24TH
THANKSGIVING BREAK
No School Wed., Thurs., Fri.

DECEMBER 1ST 9-11:00 AM
FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE

DECEMBER 13TH 7-8:30 PM
BOARD MEETING

DECEMBER 25TH - JANUARY 5TH
WINTER BREAK - NO SCHOOL

JANUARY 12TH 9-11:00 AM
FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE

JANUARY 15TH
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY
NO SCHOOL

JANUARY 25TH
11:30 DISMISSAL - Conferences

JANUARY 26TH
NO SCHOOL - Conferences

JANUARY 31ST
1ST ROUND DEADLINE FOR
FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS

JANUARY 31ST 7-8:30 PM
BOARD MEETING



Our New Website is Live!

If you haven't seen it yet, check out our new re-designed website at www.thechildrensschool.info.

It's colorful, bold, responsive, easy to navigate, and packed with new features! Let us know what you think.

Thank you to our website working group Becky Fuller, Danielle Tomlinson, Kathy Zmich, and Janice Lodato, and to consultants Shelley Rees and Curt Silvers, and to our communications coordinator Tracy Litsey. Many of the photos are courtesy of Laura Donoghue, Eileen Moloney, and Lindsay Schumaier.

Enjoy our new window to the world!