

The Chronicle

It's about the process





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Printer:
PIP Printing

Issue III: June 2013

Greetings from Charlie

It's about the process. That's a truth, a constant goal actually, that permeates all our work at school. At a recent All School entitled by the Primes, "Pretend All School," the Primes read aloud plays they had written. First, the playwright chose actors from the audience. I got to be in one of them (playing a teacher, funny enough). What was amazing about this activity was the process-- the performance was somewhat, well, rough, as could be expected-- we'd had no rehearsal! But watching the gleeful six year old playwright watching her play come to life, and watching students of all ages collaborating on a tiny stage, taking direction most earnestly from the writer, was magical. As we leapt around the stage being foxes and bears together, the audience rippled with complicit laughter, imagining themselves in our shoes. The spontaneity of it all, combined with the playful teamwork made this an excellent example of process at its best. We weren't all buttoned down and following an adult's script. At the Center School we are constantly inviting children to drive the process and to take pleasure in the moment.



Charlie with her sons
Jude (MidUM) and Henry (MUP)

Process requires engagement; it relies on time being invested, and often involves love, joy, exuberance and enthusiasm. Of course, the outcome can be spectacular... I can think of many outcomes of the year, which were mind-blowing: the Variety Show, the Museum, the 8th grade films to name a few. But what made those so successful was the level of investment, a lack of self-consciousness or preciousness. Center School kids know how to dig in and experience their world, as evidenced in these pages.

Happy reading!
Charlie Spencer
Head of School

Greetings from the Board Chair

By Holly Lawrence, current and alumni parent
Board Chair through May 2013

I have loved my time on the Center School Board of Directors and I think my time as Chair has been most rewarding. One of the main reasons I love being chair is the opportunity to work so closely with the Head of School and to help the School with big-picture planning and initiatives. Center School has so much to offer the community and my goal as Chair has been fairly broad in that I've wanted to do whatever I can to help the School continue its meaningful role in so many families' lives. Center School is a hugely valuable educational institution; it's also the base of a vibrant community of thinkers, doers, and lifelong friendships.

My work with Center School has been a labor of love. I have a full-time job teaching and directing an academic program at UMass and sometimes doing both is lots to juggle. But I've never regretted a minute of it because I believe in the School and want to give in the ways I can. Serving on the Board fits me better than some of the other important tasks I could do as a volunteer. So for me, serving the School in a somewhat administrative, leadership capacity is a win-win and I'm honored to have had the opportunity.

I am the mother of three children – James in 3rd grade and Spencer in 8th grade at Center School. My daughter, Isabelle, is an alum of the class of 2011.



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Shout out!

6th Graders Cassidy McDonough-Penson and Sky Phillips built a playhouse in the Primes Field out of locally harvested wood donated by Lise and Tim Copping-er, parents of Tai (6th Grade).

A Minute for the Annual Fund

June 30th is upon us and we still have FAR to go to reach our goal! As of June 5th, we are at \$35,600 committed, which is 50.9% of our goal - yikes!

But we can do it! Many of you have purchased citrus fruits, attended our second Alternaprom, contributed through galloping wine and cheese nights and/or this year's Variety Show. **THANK YOU!**

But if you haven't yet made your Annual Fund contribution, please do so now. The Annual Fund is an essential piece of the operating budget that helps pay faculty salaries, fund financial aid, and support the programs and activities that keep the Center School dream alive! **Moreover, contributing to the Annual Fund is the easiest way for you to show you support the mission of the School.**

Last year, 213 families and friends helped us reach our ambitious 30th Anniversary goal of \$100,000. **INCREDIBLE!**

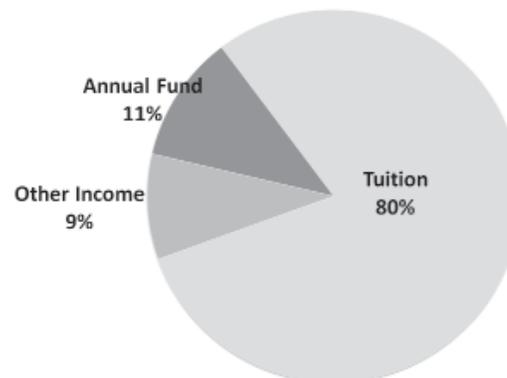
Of that group:

- 58 of you gave for the first time ever - let's go for two!
- 113 rejoined the Annual Fund after taking a year or two off
- We received gifts ranging from \$5.00 - \$30,000

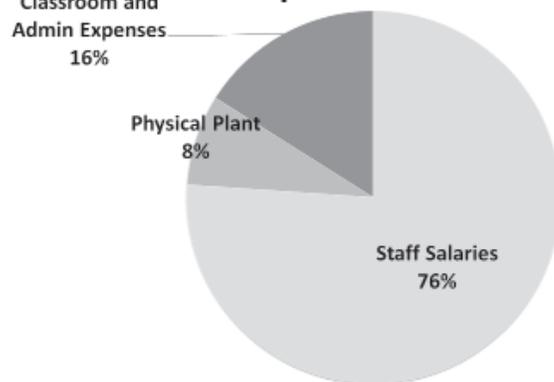
It takes all of us! Please contribute today.

Use that convenient envelope included in this mailing, or go online NOW to give: centerschool.net. THANK YOU!

GCS Income 2011-2012



GCS Expenses 2011-2012



New Family Profile

Meet the Stordeur Pryors

By Maria Danielson, current parent

Henry Stordeur is a “brilliant, impulsive” 5th grader (in the words of his parents Jerry Stordeur and Liz Stordeur Pryor). When his mom took a history professorship at Smith College, they uprooted from Los Angeles, where Henry and his older sister Lilli had been at a progressive school, and moved to Northampton, enrolling their kids at the public school there.

“It wasn’t working for Henry,” says Liz. He was having a hard time because he felt that the

outside, if they all managed to quiet down in the cafeteria first. Then they’d have to waste their outside time lining up properly to go back in. Kids need physical activity to help them with their concentration.”

Liz and Jerry started looking around for alternatives. They attended an All School assembly with Henry. “He loved it. You could see his eyes light up” as he watched 8th graders excitedly present their work. Still, he was reluctant at first to change



rules at school and during outside activities kept changing. “Going outside is huge,” says Jerry. “At his old school, they would only have 10 minutes

schools and leave some good friends. They met with Emily Cross who would be Henry’s teacher. She gave Henry some math problems to gauge his

placement. “He got one of the problems wrong and was worried about it afterwards, worried that he might not get in. He wanted to impress her. That’s when we realized that he wanted it.” Henry started in the Mid-Ums for the 2012/13 year.

“By the second day, he started telling us almost every day, ‘I love my new school. Thank you for changing my school,’” says Liz. “It’s about respect. The teachers respect the kids and the kids respect each other.”

“At his old school homework didn’t seem to matter. Now he feels more of a responsibility,” says Jerry. Liz adds, “Everyone knew he was smart, but he didn’t produce. Now he wants to perform. He wants to get it right for Emily. I’ve also been impressed with how interdisciplinary it is. Even when they are outside, they are learning. He’s building knowledge sets.”

“I asked him how it was going with the interrupting, which was a big problem at his other school. He said, ‘Well, I don’t really interrupt anymore because if I do Emily will ask me to leave circle and I’ll miss other people’s perspectives.’ So the consequences are clear to him and he realizes he will miss out if he’s disruptive.”

Henry has been thriving at the Center School. The Stordeur Pryors wish they could have

sent their daughter, now in high school, here as well. They attended an information night about the uppers program and were struck by how poised and well-spoken recent graduates were.

“Can I add something? I’ve been very comfortable with the way the school deals with diversity,” says Liz. Her historical work delves into issues of race and class. “The Center School talks about abolitionism and deeper parts of history in a way that’s not pat. They really help students think deeply about difference. I’ve appreciated that.”

The Center School community is certainly richer to have the Stordeur Pryors join us.

Alternaprom 2013 a success!

Many thanks to alumni parent, Ed Wierzbowski, owner of the Arts Block in Greenfield, for donating his time and space to the fundraising event!

Faculty Profile

Get to know Emily Cross

By Katie Schendel and Gordon Anderson



The two year span between ages nine and eleven is a significant developmental period. Entering this period you might think purple elephants are awesome, twinkly-eyed fairies and princesses can find joy everywhere, and Magic the Gathering is the most complicated game EVER. At the end of this time, it's quite possible you still think these things are true; however, if you are a student in Emily Cross' class, along the way you have: designed and constructed a wooden purple elephant push toy based on the mechanical concepts of simple machines, participated in the writing, prop-making, and acting of an original class play that gives fairies and princesses a distinct voice, and learned the underpinning of the combinatorial mathematics that are crucial for mastering the subtleties of Magic playing. In addition, you have played the role of a towns-person in a reenactment of colonial America, gone canoeing at Barton Cove, solved problems using fractions, calculated the height of the brick building from its shadow, written and presented a research paper on one of the fifty states, and created a sculpture out of chewing gum. This is MidUMs territory at the Center School.

What does it take to provide and sustain an environment where children learn critical thinking, build self-esteem, and still get to hang on to the creative spirit that many feel they lost somewhere in elementary school? Emily Cross has been doing it for almost ten years at the Center School. How does Emily manage to engage her students in learning activities? According to Emily, kids naturally want to learn- it's up to their teachers to provide them with activities from which they will learn and feel good about themselves after they have seen the end result of their work. I asked Emily what aspects of teaching this age group she enjoyed the most. She responded: "They are happy and seeking independence. They love projects and play just as hard as they learn. In other words, they're perfect (or as close to perfect as a person would ever want to get)".

Emily has the ability to tailor her curriculum to fit what her students are interested in at the moment: "Pretty much every single thing I set out to do becomes something different. Last year as we explored (the theme) "hopes and dreams," I mentioned in passing the idea that our hopes and dreams were like "Pie in the Sky." It became a huge project with representations and recipes and was one of my favorite projects of the year. Student ideas are often so much better than my

own. I love watching them take my ideas and turn them into who knows what! And all along the way they are learning so much, much more than my humble beginnings of a goal." This flexibility and insight or what she terms "stubborn patience" is what makes Emily a master at the art of engaging her students in a learning process that does not feel like it's something they don't want to do. At the same time, her students are encouraged to take risks, such as entering into a class debate, trying a new painting medium, or paddling a canoe for the first time.

One of the most popular MidUMs projects is going out to the woods and creating a village. The students create a "village" in the woods behind the school and give it name. For example, when our son Edwin was a MidUM, the village was named "Pine City." The children construct houses out of sticks and other found materials, property lines are drawn and a governance structure arises complete with speeches, debates and elections. With the village and role playing come conflicts, resolutions and many instances of cooperation. The students infuse the simulation with their own personalities; their play becomes improvisational theatre at its best.

It is Emily's ability to relate to a child's point of view while maintaining her role as a motivator and teacher that helps create the environment of trust where learn-

ing happens. Her way of experiencing the world is perhaps in some ways similar to her students. When asked what she does for relaxation, she responded, "I love to go out in my kayak and paddle about. I can also easily get pulled into books and I struggle to return to the 'real world.' I'm usually tackling some sort of house project, trying to fix something that I broke or out in my boat peacefully ignoring the things I 'should' be doing."

Of course, a sense of humor is a big part of the nine and ten year old experience, and Emily is always ready with a way to make humor part of the MidUMs' day. "When my class needs to be quiet and focus we don't just get quiet, we play the quiet game. When we are walking through the school, in an effort to not disrupt other classrooms we walk by imagining we have marshmallows on our shoes and in our mouths."

Emily's sense of humor is not just for her students though. Her advice for parents of children who are entering MidUMs? "Buy pants that are too long, they grow a lot!"

It seems that Emily has exactly what it takes, that balance of support and challenge, to create a winning environment for MidUMs. In this MidUMs Territory our children blossom into happy and successful sixth-graders-- and beyond.

"Student ideas are often so much better than my own. I love watching them take my ideas and turn them into who knows what!"

Alumni Profile

Cameron Bluh-Derricote '11 By Emma Thorup '12

The person who has made the greatest impact on my life more than anyone else in the world is by far my friend Cameron Bluh-Derricote. While that might seem silly and you could be wondering how a 15 year old could make such a big impact on my life, Cameron is one of the most inspiring people I have ever met. She is fun-loving, carefree, very deep and the most intelligent person that I have ever encountered. The most truly inspiring thing about her is that she manages to be all these things while suffering from Wegener's Disease, something so fatal that when she was first put in the hospital she was not expected to live 2 days.

Cameron and I have been best friends since I was a sixth grader nervously starting out in the Uppers program. She was a seventh grader in the same boat, because of the way the grades had been switched around that year. We had known each other for a while, but that year it just somehow clicked and we became inseparable, along with our other mutual friend Isabelle. We made movies together, took pictures, and had countless sleepovers. The amount of good times and memories I have had with this girl is incredible.

At the end of the next school year, our class took a trip to a place called Camp Takodah, which is



Emma Thorup, Isabelle Reynolds, Cami Bluh-Derricote, Maya Watson at Uppers dance in 2011

basically just a collection of cabins in the woods by a beautiful lake. There was a bit of a flu going around. We got back after 2 nights there, when Isabelle, Cameron and I had a sleepover. It was no surprise that Cami (the name all close friends refer to Cameron by) was feeling sick and had to leave early the next morning. The next night I got the call that Cami was in the hospital with something that looked like pneumonia. It rapidly got worse and worse, and after two weeks, Cami was in intensive care as the doctors rushed to figure out what she had.

I visited Cami at hospital. Our family made dinner and brought it to the hospital. It was a very intense time. After going through many hospitals, Cami was finally at Boston Children's Hospital, but all the doctors could come up with was some kind of cancer. That night Cami was on life support. Of course, being the amazing Cami, she made it through the night. Not only that: she made it through the month, finally being diagnosed with lung based Wegener's, an au-

toimmune disease where the cells in her lungs were attacking the other cells in her body.

Cami was still in intensive care, but during those three months she spent in the hospital, I've never seen someone take such a harsh issue with such ease. What you should know about Cami, is that she has an incredible sense of humor and wisdom, too. I would go to visit her in the hospital and she would be smiling and laughing, telling jokes to all who would listen, and being her usual happy self. When the Wegener's started to attack her, it was the summer she turned fourteen, and before we knew it, Cami was allowed out of the hospital for a few weeks at a time. Soon her hospital visits grew farther and farther apart, and she eventually could stay out of the hospital, besides some regular checkups, for months at a time.

When Cami turned fifteen this past summer, it was an event to celebrate; she made it one more year. While I would normally take that for granted, or at least feel sad over the fact that turning fifteen should have been assumed, the ever-optimistic Cami was ecstatic. I have never seen someone take anything life throws at them and hit it right back. She was on the brink of death and managed to bring herself back up, and she still has her fun and always-excitable attitude, albeit with a level of depth and understanding of life I could never hope to achieve.

I am in constant awe of Cami and how she can get over things. I used to just take all of life for granted,

and assume that having everything handed to me on a silver platter was to be expected, but since Cameron got sick, I have learned to take life day by day, because you never know what could happen. Cami is one of the ultimate examples of not letting the hardships in life get you down, and simply keeping your spirits up.

Shout Out

Every Center School student and family donated gently used coats and winter wear to the Turner's Fall Survival Center, in our winter holiday warmth drive.

Just this past summer, Cami and I went boating down a river with her family, splashing around in the water and acting like our usual eccentric and fun selves. Even needing to stop to take what to me seems like thousands of medications she's on didn't dampen her spirits. She has taught me another important lesson: that friendship can mean more than just sleepovers and movie nights. It is also about teaching one another deep, important aspects of life. Now I just hope there's something I could possibly teach the amazing Cameron Bluh-Derricotte.

Cami is now in the Boston Children's hospital again with a Wegener's relapse, but with her attitude and the optimism behind her, I know she'll fight it off. Cami is the strongest person I know. She is a real hero, fighting off every last thing trying to keep her down, and always teaching those around her about how to enjoy every part of life. She is a miracle.

Classes of 2013 and 2009

Where are they headed?

8th Graders, GCS Class of 2013

Lydia Anderson
Stoneleigh Burnham

Julian Burgoff
Amherst Regional High School

Claudia Danford
Amherst Regional High School

Isabella DeHerdt
Northfield Mount Hermon

Jackson Fisher
to be determined

Shannon Hobbs
to be determined

Sasha McCraney-Montalvo
Ralph C. Mahar Regional High
School

Sirena Phillips
Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter
School

Lauren Phillips-Jackson
Amherst Regional High School

Spencer Reynolds
Academy at Charlemont

Ben Schocket-Greene
Academy at Charlemont

Eliza Sclater-Booth
Northfield Mount Hermon

Noah Spiegel
Amherst Regional High School

Gabriel Wysoker
Northampton High School

12th Graders, GCS Class of 2009

Jon Bander
Advanced Welding Institute, VT

Pearl Burgoff
Greenfield Community College

Meghan Drisko
Marlboro College

Aliza Fassler
Smith College

Esther Glovacki
Emerson College

Jenna Hartwright
Salem State College

Julia Himmelman
Bay Path College

Kate Jenkins-Sullivan
Guilford College

Noah Mishkind
Kalamazoo College (after volun-
teering in Guatemala)

James Parfet

Kellie Rainville
Emerson College

Jessica Robinson
Smith College

Sophie Ryan Thorup
University of Vermont

Libby Ryan-Small
Mass College of Liberal Arts

Katie Sperry
Carlton College

Henry Weis
Skidmore College

Student Voices

Soapbox Derby - Downhill Racer!

By Maisha Stephens, Ayana Sofia, and Ella Deters, 7th Graders



In May and June 2012, the 6th grade Uppers built a soapbox derby car to race in the local Soap Box Derbies. The 6th grade class made decisions about the car by either voting or consensus. The first thing we had to do was build the structure of the car. Joe Landry, a local artist and engineer who has built many soapbox cars, helped us with the physics and the welding.

The next step was deciding on the design. We ended up deciding on a shoe but soon found out that the structure fit neither our design nor would it be aerodynamic. We decided to put panels in the sides and spray paint flames on them using a stencil. We went to Joe's workshop in Turners Falls to put on the panels and get the brakes intact as well as the seating and steering.

While we were at his workshop we worked in groups and tested the speed of toy cars using differ-

ent weights, drags, and surfaces such as gravel, dirt, water, oil, and debris. For weight we used rocks and weights of various sizes and for drag we used plastic bags. The point of that experiment was to find ways to improve the actual car so that it could go the maximum speed in any situation. Each lab group ran multiple trials with toy cars, charted the times, and compared results. We learned that speed equals distance divided by time and used this formula in this experiment. Our conclusions were that using the maximum allowable weight and minimum drag will improve the speed.

Later that week, we went to Unity Park, the place we would actually race the car. Everyone got a chance to test-drive it. It went very smoothly, but we decided to improve the steering and tighten the brakes a bit.

Then we started painting around the edges and spraypainted the metal bars and unpainted space. We ended up having to work a couple of times over the summer to get the details done. We raced the car a total of 3 races and 4 runs.

The first race was in Bernardston. Gavin raced and won 1st place for kids. Chris, our teacher, also raced the car in the adult division and came in 6th place. The second race was in Brattleboro and Mike raced it and got 3rd place. The last race was in Montague. Ella raced and won 3rd place in the younger kids division. Gavin raced the car in the teen division and won 2nd place.

Ella said “I was terrified and wanted to bail after I found out that I was racing alongside another car, but it ended up being fine. Once I was actually racing it was a lot of fun. It kind of feels like you’re flying. You feel so important, especially with all your friends from the Center School there to support you. In the end I’m really glad I did it.”

Some of the sponsors that helped us with parts and supplies were Katalyst Kombucha, Bicycle World, David Brock, and The Greenfield Center School. We really appreciated the funding they gave us. Thank you for reading our article!

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**Remembering
Jamie Greenberg**
by Jane Stephenson

The Center School community was

saddened to learn that one of our beloved alumni, Jamie Greenberg, passed away on Thursday, April 4, 2013. Jamie was surrounded by loved ones and died peacefully after his recent relapse of Acute Leukemia. He was 21. Jamie is survived by his big sister, Julie, and his parents, Elizabeth and David.

We remember Jamie as an earnest and hardworking student. He enjoyed a quiet humor and, while he always demonstrated impeccable behavior, he would often smile from the side of his mouth when a classmate demonstrated goofy antics. Jamie had strong social skills, was liked by everyone and was kind in all circumstances. He could work smoothly in any group situation and kept a calm head, even in soccer. Jamie was an extraordinary soccer player, known for his incredible speed, control, and flexibility on the field. Some of Jamie’s Center School teammates were less-experienced and less inclined to push their physical limits. Instead of finding this irksome and irritating, Jamie was such an encouraging coach on this team. He loved an underdog “win” --whether it was his team or another’s.

When Jamie was in 6th grade, he picked the island nation of Tuvalu for his country study. Never heard of Tuvalu? That’s probably why Jamie picked it. Tuvalu was an underdog country in Jamie’s mind. His choice of Tuvalu presented a gigantic number of challenges for his study: No tourist guides of Tuvalu existed, Tuvalu’s population of 10,000 inhabitants is shrinking every year, along with its land

mass. Jamie loved this challenge. He became devoted to Tuvalu's main threat: rapid loss of land.

This is a lesson we all learned, in a heartbreakingly hard way, this week. Jamie's time in this world



Jamie and Julie

Jamie learned that Tuvalu, just 10 square miles was predicted to be completely sunken into the ocean 2050. Jamie's country study soon turned into a quest for justice. He became impassioned about preserving Tuvalu culture-especially its music and dance-before all evidence was erased. At the tender age of eleven, Jamie realized that everything, even land masses, countries, even an entire culture-is fleeting.

was way too short. It's not fair that he's gone. But with the same passion and devotion Jamie showed for the tiny island nation of Tuvalu, we too hold Jamie and his beautiful family, David, Elizabeth and Julie, in our hearts. Jamie, you will not be forgotten here. We honor you and hold you dear.

Shout Out

UMass Social Justice Interns, Michelai Lowe and Sy Prescott, worked on documenting racial diversity at the Center School and a social justice component to add to the 6th grade Country and Culture study, respectively.

Faculty Voices

Building a Math Culture

By Chris Sanborn, 6th grade teacher

I've been thinking about math lately. I love math. I especially love to teach math. I think it is because mathematics can take me from the abstract realm of cosmology and quantum mechanics to the everyday realm of calculating gratuity at the People's Pint or designing a dining room table for my home. Intellectually, math is both grounding and freeing.

Math class is one of those times throughout the day when you can smell the smoke from the fires of

noticed there are students who are completely comfortable and engaged with numbers and problem solving, who have nimble minds, who can dig into a concept, unpack it, repack it, rotate, turn, flip, twist, and embrace it, who jump right in, needing no warm up into the world of math.

Is this nature or nurture? I've asked them, and I've asked their parents: "*Do you do anything at home that supports this?*" The answer is usually a natural, "Yes."

“If math is a foreign language to some children, that let’s consider that foreign languages are sometimes best learned in immersion.”

learning within student brains. In any given math hour, students fly from disequilibrium to balance, from “I don’t get it!” to “This is easy!” What could be more satisfying than that? I am fortunate to have a community at Greenfield Center School that allows me to indulge such professional pleasures. As a teacher, I am aware that not all of us enjoy math the way I do. I’d love to change that, of course, but I can’t do it alone. It takes a village to raise a mathematician.

As a teacher of mathematics for 15 years in various schools, I have

What can we do to nurture math in our children? Let’s first look at how we create a culture of literacy.

We read with our kids on the couch, we read aloud to our kids before bed, we listen to audio books in the car, we talk about books and stories, we write stories and letters and poems. Reading, literacy, letters and words are such an obvious part of our everyday reality. A verbal-linguistic culture like our Center School culture has no problem integrating literacy into all aspects of life. But what about mathematics?

Sometimes we treat math like it's a foreign language, a separate reality from the one we're all in. Kids who struggle with math approach it that way, like something totally unfamiliar that they must try to comprehend. If math is a foreign language to some children, that let's consider that foreign languages are sometimes best learned in immersion, in everyday use, with practical applications.

I encourage you to take the time to build a math culture in your family, in your kid's life, in your home. It doesn't have to be worksheets and textbooks, rote problem solving and discussion of formulas. In fact, it shouldn't be.

Kids love to play games. Card games, board games, puzzles, and games of strategy are excellent for sharpening a child's mathematical mind. Here are some examples of games you can play on a regular basis that keep math alive in the brain. There are hundreds of examples of games you can play, and probably have at home, that keep math alive in a child's brain. Below are just the ones I play on a regular basis, or have played with kids and know to be effective in building the math culture:

Card games include **Blackjack 21, Rat a Tat Cat, Set, Solitaire, Poker, Uno, Phase 10, Skip-Bo, Canasta, Bridge, etc....**

Board games include **Chess, Backgammon, Go, Tower of Hanoi, Quarto, Mastermind, billiards (pool), S'math, Tangrams** and many more.

There are also number puzzles like **Sudoku** and **Ken Ken** that can be used with all skill levels. **Jigsaw Puzzles** and hand-held puzzles like **Rubik's Cube** or **Perplexus** build special relations and problem solving skills.

Building games and activities are also perfect for building a math culture. Examples include **blocks, Legos, K'nex, Jenga, Keva Contraptions, Connectagons, Erector Sets, Lincoln Logs**, and more.

Games aren't the only foray into the world of math. Any **musical activities** – (i.e. listening to and

singing songs,



rhythms, dance, playing musical instruments) can strengthen the math muscles. Older kids can apply mathematical skills to practical home projects: measuring, cutting and joining wood for building projects or doing the same with fabric for sewing projects.

The possibilities for creating a mathematical culture outside of the classroom are seemingly infinite.

Interview: Laura Baker

by Terry Kayne

Terry Kayne: *When you first came to the Center School there was already a progressive mission in place but the specific focus on equity was missing. You added the social justice and ethical decision-making angle and made it central to our school's work. This was an ambitious addition to the mission of a K-8 school. Did you have personal experience that influenced this focus?*

Laura Baker: First of all, it is important that all the work done while I was at the Center School be framed as developing from the collaboration of many voices, a "we." Early on in my tenure, we went through a clarifying process in which we wrote our mission and our beliefs. Social justice and ethical decision-making were explored and agreed upon during those meetings. My job, then, became the facilitator of implementing those visions. We had to keep working at clarifying and becoming explicit about ways to teach and assess these important skills. Our work at staff meetings was often focused around these areas.

If you ask me if this was important to me, I would have to say, "yes." My own experience as a person from a family that was annihilated during the Holocaust has been at the core of my belief that education is larger than academics. My dedication to peace and justice was furthered during the 1960's. Being



Laura Baker

an activist is a social responsibility.

TK: *During your tenure here what were a couple of social justice investigations or projects you were most proud of?*

LB: I will speak of two here, each of them school-wide. The work we did developing essential questions for each of the levels of classrooms that came directly from the mission was exquisite. It showed our integrity with our beliefs and gave direction to the studies in which students were engaged. In our work we had many deep and important conversations and made sure that, at the end of the Uppers' experience, our mission would be accomplished.

The second project that I want to mention is the literature project that the entire school worked on. This was very related to the essential questions work, and extended it with specific attention to the objectives of literacy development. We broke down skills that were reinforced, taught, and offered for exposure all in the service of social justice and ethical decision-

making.

TK: *Clearly social justice is a weighty topic with different entry points for young children vs. teenagers. What have you seen small children access and learn about social justice or through social justice teaching? What have you witnessed teenagers being able to do around social justice? How have you seen it affect their next steps as high schoolers or into adulthood?*

LB: I think social justice is a way of thinking that is based upon our notion of fairness and our belief that everyone counts and matters and that we all share a responsibility to make our world an accepting community. Actually I think young children understand that early, and that they unlearn it from observations and experiences in the world. When we teach young children ways of honoring all people, and begin with their own communities, it feels right. The classroom and the playground are wonderful contexts for this teaching. I remember one time when the Primes did a whole study of the ants on the playground to help them understand fairness. It was incredibly complex.

I believe that our students graduate with a lens that they bring to the world. And yes, I think it makes a difference with their choices as adults.

TK: *What are some of your fondest memories of being director?*

LB: My fondest memories are all connections with people. The Cen-

ter School is a “school home.” We were connected by heart, by mind and by our actions.

Laura Baker was the director of the Center School from 1999-2008 and is now on the faculty at Westfield State College.

Terry Kayne taught at the Center School from 1982-2010 and in that time also served on the Board of Directors and as Interim Head of School.

They remain dear friends and are still ardent Center School supporters.

Shout Out

This spring, Mike Vear, our school caretaker, switched his college major from engineering to education and became Bob Strachota’s teaching intern. This switch was inspired by seeing what was possible here at school and wishing to be part of it.



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