



RVCP News

a newsletter for growing minds



Community Spirit is Our Strength

As I sit to write my contribution for this month's newsletter my mind is swirling with so many thoughts about what to say. There are

many things happening at our school as a whole and in the Sunflower class in particular, that it's hard to know where to start. One theme that keeps arising at RVCP's meetings is the need for community building at the school. I have been thinking about this theme since I started working here – what is the community that I am entering, not only as an employee but as a parent? What is the culture of this community? How are new people received and welcomed? To be sure, there are always ways to improve community building and RVCP has many ideas on how to strengthen our commitment to this. I also think that the community we have is a strong one.

I see our community when one family offers to provide transportation for another child to get to daycare, I see it when I get e-mails regarding lunches at the

park or plans to get together on snow days or over breaks. I see it in the adults' relationships with each other – the

drop off and pick up conversations that take place – how was your vacation, how's the new job, what happened at the doctor's appointment, is your kitchen remodel finished yet – all these little interactions are what builds community. Community happens when we run into each other at the park, or at the store and we chat for a minute. It happens without us even trying. It happens because we are a group of people experiencing the unique, yet universal pleasures and challenges that come with caring for small children – together.

Co-op is a wonderful place where people can support and learn from each other. I can ask someone with an older child how they navigated through the dreaded kindergarten process, someone else can ask me how Abbie's toilet learning process went. We share an intimacy that is built into the school because we are exposed as parents as a result of being in the classroom with our children. This intimacy can be golden in time of crisis – I had multiple co-op families offer me a place to stay while our power was out over break.



Barbara Pastores (from left) and son Maceo enjoy some interaction with Roberto Andino and Jake Jungkwan Hull.



Hanna finds her way during Caterpillar Class.

What's inside...

- 2 A message from the Board co-chairs on proposals to change the structure of RVCP.
- 3 Parent Educator Cesily Crowser talks about how to recognize your parenting style.
- 4 A holiday and an Open House are on the calendar this month.
- 4 Try out some of the books listed under Recommended Reading.

Exploring Ideas

From the Board

Hopefully this newsletter finds us all back at school without any major weather disruptions, and well rested after the holidays! We are using our newsletter space this month to answer questions about the co-teaching proposal. However, before we get into the questions we would like to clarify that the proposal came to fruition within one meeting where four minds worked incredibly well together and the result was sort of magical, especially when we figured out that it was financially sound! We really haven't had the opportunity to think through every detail and realize that along the way details will continue to pop up. But we think that it is all manageable and the committee is committed to playing an active role in implementing the model should it be accepted.

In November, the board discussed implementing co-teaching and asked for volunteers to create a proposal for next year. The committee included Sara, Julie, Barbara Pastores and Duane Best. When we met, we began with a blank slate and imagined our ideal, which included mixed age, co-teaching and a full day option because that was a request that had been raised in conferences. In a more traditional curriculum, the standard is two teachers. At RVCP the curriculum is more social-emotionally based, and thus requires more emotional intensity from the teachers. By implementing the co-teaching model we would raise the standard of quality in the classroom, and therefore better meet the individual needs of our children.

The major themes that emerged as folks thought about the proposal centered around parents working in the classroom, mixed age classes and curriculum, and the needs of our teachers.

Questions by parents have ranged from families paying more and not working in the classroom to concerns about losing the co-op model if parents aren't working enough. The proposal was not designed to address how much parents work in the classroom, although it may allow for parents to work a little less because there will be two teachers. It seems to us that parents are feeling stretched, with many not able to have much flexibility around when they can work and others dealing with childcare for a sibling so they can work. Some may be relieved to work less, while others may miss classroom time. As always, parents are and will continue to be welcome in the classroom at all times. Our current bylaws allow for families to pay more and opt out of working in the classroom; it is a policy that has come under fire in the past because it doesn't specify how many families can choose this option in a given year. This policy is one for the board to review, along with several others, once the vision statement is complete.

The questions regarding mixed age classrooms and curriculum centered around 2-5 being too large of an age spread, concerns about how it would work for both age ends, a desire for parent education regarding mixed age classrooms, and what the curriculum would look like (would the afternoon be a repeat of the morning).

The theory behind mixed age classrooms calls for at least a two-year age span. It actually works better to have a larger age span because it provides a greater range of ability, which allows for more opportunities to be a learner and a mentor. Mixed age classrooms better support children as they can connect with peers at their developmental level. Mixed age classrooms reflect families and life. We can definitely provide parent education around working in a multi age classroom. The curriculum at RVCP is generated by the children's interests, so it will be a reflection of what any particular group is pursuing.

Traditionally, RVCP has valued supporting teachers in their professional development. Our little ones take a lot of energy, especially when they are being listened to and respected so carefully!

Other less complex questions/issues were around licensing, market demand for full day, age cutoffs for classes, siblings in class together, having all options on the table, and a request for more discussion time.

Because we will continue to be a co-op and have parents working in the classroom, we do not have to be licensed. At this point, 10 families are very interested in the full day option. We can try to balance the age range in the classes; Jen Wise MacColl is working on a draft of current families choices. Some families are excited about the idea of potentially having their children in class together, others are less sure, especially if one stayed for the full day and one left after the half day. And double co-oping is a challenge for anyone. These questions would be up to individual families to sort out, based on their children's temperaments and family needs.

We believe the proposed model is the best model in that it allows for full time co-teaching and it allows for full day options. There really could be a myriad of options, and, quite frankly, we don't have the resources to pursue all of them. We think this model is workable, financially sound, and a positive change for the school. As always, parents are welcome to call either of us with questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

**Barbara Pastores
and Kelly Lippman
RVCP Board Co-chairs**



Recognize Your Parenting Style

A message from Cesily, Parent Educator



Have you ever taken the time to think about your parenting style and the effect it has on your child? I did. Just this past month I have been studying parenting styles. As I researched I found myself looking for clues as to what type of parent I am. Most articles divided parents into three categories:

1) **Authoritarian** – highly demanding, strict, punitive, controlling. This parent has a lot of rules and doesn't necessarily feel the need to explain.

Things are run in the "my way or the highway" type of thinking. These parents often discipline with fear. Children in these households know that their job is to obey the adult without question or discussion, and that if they don't, severe consequences could follow. At first, as a parent of two, I thought: "OK, that doesn't sound that bad. It sounds like a very well run household with a clear 'boss.'" Who wouldn't want their kids to do what they say when they say it?

It turns out that children raised with this type of parenting are often the opposite of what one would expect. Having all these rules and an adult around to order your behavior does not make for a well mannered, well adjusted child. Instead studies show that these children do not have a well developed sense of internal self control, and are often less confident and withdrawn. That makes sense, if someone is always telling you what to do, how could you ever develop the ability to make decisions for yourself? Also, you would begin to think that you can't make decisions because you are constantly wrong – leading to low self-esteem.

2) **Permissive or indulgent** - lenient, no behavior demands, child is expected to "self-regulate" their behavior. Permissive parents allow their children to be "in charge" of their world. Children are expected to learn appropriate behavior on their own and no standards are set for them to follow. A permissive parent does not punish or control their child's behavior. "No" would be seldom used in this house. Parents are striving to reason with their children, there is *a lot* of discussion going on in this house. According to the definition, these parents value their children's individuality and want them to have a sense of freedom. "So," I thought "if the authoritarian strict approach is so bad then this, which is the complete opposite, must lead to a well adjusted, self-controlled adult.

Wrong! According to the research, children raised with this parenting style tend to be impulsive and have a hard time adjusting to structured environments (school, workplace, other people's dinner tables, etc.) Being raised without boundaries does not lead to a child who can set them for him/herself; instead studies show you get a child who continues to have no boundaries. These children did not learn how to follow rules. They tend to have behavior problems and do less well in school than other children.

3) **Authoritative** – the middle ground. These parents set rules, but still allow for discussion and explanation. They use guidance rather than punitive discipline



Jasper is drawn to a story told to Poppy and Campbell by Shana MacLeod during the Sunflowers Class.

involving fear. In this house, clear standards of behavior are established and the adult is "the boss," but children are allowed to play an active part. Children in this home are valued for their contributions and encouraged to take on leadership roles, but not to the extent that they feel in charge.

Children raised with this style of parenting are the most self-controlled and confident out of the three. They have been allowed, within the comfort of boundaries, to explore. They were made a part of the process and have been able to apply discussions they had with their parents to other problems. These children are confident because they have been told their opinions matter and they are able to cope with situations because they have learned how to follow rules.

The Authoritative approach to parenting is always described as the "right" way to parent. As I compared my parenting style to the three, I thought I was probably right on. I figured having studied it for so long I should have it down by now and be the perfect authoritative parent. So I took an on-line quiz (www.activeparenting.com) to prove just how wonderful a parent I was. I answered each question honestly. Then I waited for the computer to pat me on the back and tell me what a great job I was doing raising my children.

My results showed that my parenting style was more authoritative, which they labeled active, but not much more. Out of a possible 50, I ranked 34 for authoritative, 30 for authoritarian, and 19 for permissive. I was shocked! I couldn't believe that my parenting style was pretty evenly split between authoritative and authoritarian. I never see myself as being overly strict or bossy and try hard not to rule in fear. The interesting thing was that on their scale my belief that I was an authoritarian parent was 19 while my actions were only a 15.

Over the last few days, I have really observed my parenting. I have stopped myself from saying my version of "because I said so. I am trying to think before I speak. Also, I realize that my most Authoritarian parenting comes when I am stressed or rushed. I try to slow down a little, where I can. I plan on eliminating some of the stress by preparing for the next day (getting clothes out, putting backpacks by the door, locating my keys) the night before. I don't expect to reach what the books would call perfection, but I can try and my family will benefit from subtle changes.

I encourage you to take the quiz, see what your results are. Then, if you didn't get results you liked, watch your parenting for the next few days and see where you can make changes to make things better.

Plan ahead- RVCP Activities

January						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fri	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

- Jan 9 7:30 p.m., Monthly Parents Meeting
- Jan 15 Holiday: NO SCHOOL
- Jan 16 Board meeting
- Jan. 21 6 p.m. Deadline for the February RVCP newsletter
- Jan. 30 6-8 p.m. First Open House of the year. Volunteers needed.

Our Community

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This intimacy can also cause fear of judgment. I know that I have felt watched and worried about being judged more than once in the co-op setting – is everyone thinking what a horrible parent I am because I am forcing my child to leave screaming and crying? More often than not, the only person judging me is me.

Parenting is a humbling exercise and we are in a vulnerable position when we do it in front of others. We all have different parenting styles and as we build our community we are learning to value and honor the differences and diversity that exists within our school. We are also learning to value and honor what we as individual parents do with our children – and that it is OK to handle a situation differently from another parent. It is this very difference that makes our community strong. In the classroom, kids get to see that families are different; they get to experience this difference and are

learning how to navigate and negotiate the different styles each adult brings to the room. This is life. The co-op model brings life into the classroom. It is sometimes messy, it is sometimes profound, and our children get to experience it. As a result, they start learning the skills for coping and forming relationships with peers and adults. Our ability to form a strong community and accept each other's differences is a model for our children.

After reflecting on the strengths of our community, I feel so pleased and privileged to be a part of it. Not only because it is strong but because we are working with intention to make it stronger. We are devising ways to be deliberate in how we meet the needs of our community – through our policies, our school structure and our meeting times, among other things. If our community is strong right now, I feel a great hope and pleasure about what it will be in the future.

Happy New Year!

Sara

Recommended Reading

Source: Seattle Public Library

Board Books

- Your Personal Penguin by Sandra Boynton
- Touch and Feel: Fire Engine by Dorling Kindersley
- Snowballs by Lois Ehlert
- Olivia's Opposites by Ian Falconer
- Baby Cat Nicky 123 by Carol Friedman
- Nicky's Jazz Lullabies (Music CD) by Various jazz artists
- Cleo the Cat by Caroline Mockford
- A B C by Matthew Porter
- Trucks and First Words and Animals by Roger Priddy

Picture Books

- I'm Not Cute! By Jonathan Allen
- While You Are Sleeping by Alexis Deacon
- Welcome, Precious by Nikki Grimes
- One More Sheep by Mij Kelly
- The Library Lion by Michelle Knudsen
- Up by Jim La Marche
- Adele and Simon by Barbara McClintock
- Mama, I'll Give You the World by Roni Schotter
- Clip-Clop by Nicola Smee

