What Is The Size Of The Problem?

Irving Berlin says, “Life is 10% what you make it, and 90% how you take it.” Some people seem to have a gift to take it in stride, not take it personally, go with the flow…But given the rise of road rage, anti-anxiety medications, and our nation’s average blood pressure, it seems most of us struggle with this. Children are no exception. In fact, for many, dealing with life’s frustrating elements is compounded by the overall lack of control children have over their own lives. We tell them when to go to school, what to eat for lunch, when to bathe, go to bed, wake up, turn off the television, etcetera. Sometimes this challenge looks like an inappropriate outburst—loud and/or physical. Sometimes it’s quiet and internal, sulking and holding a grudge. Sometimes it’s tears and “I’m having the worst day of my life!” At The Soulard School, we help students grow and develop Irving Berlin’s wisdom by asking, “What is the size of the problem?”

Here’s how it works: Using pen and paper, I draw a number line from 0 to 10. Zero represents no problem. Ten is the very worst thing that could happen. Every child’s (and adult’s) ten is different. Obviously, the worst thing that a 3-year old can imagine is different than what a 12-year-old can imagine. There are no wrong responses. However, I have encouraged an “If I fall down and get hurt” response to include “hurt so badly that you have to go to the doctor or hospital.” We then write that down under the ten. Next, we return to the problem at hand. For example: Joe knocked down Sue’s block tower. Sue screamed, took a swing at Joe, and then broke down in tears. “Sue, on this line when 0 is no problem and 10 means you got hurt and have to go to the doctor or hospital, what is the size of the problem when your blocks get knocked over?” Older children tend to accurately place the problem low on the scale (even if admitting it somewhat begrudgingly). Younger children, still driven mostly by emotion, will often tell me it’s a 7 or 8. I plot it and ask, “Really? Blocks getting knocked down is almost the same as going to the hospital?” After reflection, and a more accurate sizing of the problem, I then point out that his/her reaction was more suited for a 7 or 8 sized problem. Finally, we brainstorm on what things we could do to help the response match the size of the problem.

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Congratulations to Dawn Pulsipher who won our Parent Volunteer Drawing for two tickets to the symphony on Valentine’s Day! Dawn was one of the top ten parents with the most volunteer hours so far this year. Way to go, Dawn! Thanks to Amy De La Hunt who donated the tickets as an incentive to update your hours. If you have not updated your volunteer hours for this year, please do so as soon as possible. Cards are located outside Teresa’s office with directions on how to fill them out. If you are keeping track at home and prefer to email your information, please send it to teresa.mulvihill@soulardschool.org.

Remember, tracking volunteer hours is one way we demonstrate to potential donors the amazing level of parental participation we have at our school. Thank you for keeping your commitment of 3 hours per month, 27 hours for the year!

Every year McGurk’s is kind enough to give us a booth to run and all the day’s tips go to the school. We need a handful of people to complete the last shift. If you can work 5-9pm please email Sarah Christman. Bring a friend or a couple friends to help too! It is always a good time selling drinks and food and watching the crowd go by. There are always heat lamps and last year we had a cozy fire pit to keep us toasty.

For interested Soulard School parents & staff ... The Wilson School (in Clayton) will be hosting Dr. David Elkind to talk about the importance of play in children’s lives. His presentation “will cover the kinds of learning that come from play at each age level and will also suggest ways in which we can bring free, spontaneous and self-initiated play back into children’s lives.” Dr. Elkind is currently Professor Emeritus of Child Development at Tufts University.

The program is free; reservations requested: speakerseries@wilsonschool.com

The PA’s next meeting for PA Officers will be February 17th @ 6:30 PM.

The next open meeting for all interested parents will be March 23 @ 6:30 PM.

Elections for next year's Officers will be April 21st @ 6:30 PM.
After reading *What Is The World Made Of?*, the Enigma class wanted to know more about matter. They began by experimenting with the properties of liquids. Their task was to identify the liquids in the bottles using their awareness of consistency and their knowledge of everyday liquids.

The content of the bottles and their predictions:
- Water - Vinegar
- Colored water - Kool-aid, juice, medicine
- Glue - White Paint, Milk
- Mouthwash - Windex Gatorade
- Shampoo - Honey

Following the simple direction to create an invention that has a circuit in it, the Mosaic and Thrive classes became young inventors. Friday afternoon they set up their finished projects and opened their door to the rest of the school, welcoming their curious schoolmates in to learn from and participate in their projects.

Mirabai enthusiastically named her project “I love an open circuit!” Here she is showing a Mum’s student how to trace the heart all the way around without making it light up. “When the hook touches the heart shaped wire it creates a closed circuit, therefore, making the bulb light up.”

Paige built a generator. “A generator is an item that helps produce electricity. Electrons are pushed through a wire to the lightbulb. When the magnet spins it gives a field that forces electrons along to the light.”
What Is The Size Of The Problem?

On the front, this takes a lot of time. But subsequent events are quickly addressed with just the questions, “What is the size of this problem?” “What is the size of your reaction?” “What can you do to help yourself make those numbers the same?” Eventually, I only ask, “What is the size of the problem?” and the child is able to help him/herself. This has been so effective; I have heard children help each other saying, “This is only a size 2 problem. We can work it out.” Few things in life are a 10 — for any of us. When we help children with the 90% of life to take, we empower them to shift their energy to move mountains with the 10% of life they make.

- Kelly Bock, Head of School

**roundtable discussion**

2/25 7PM

NurtureShock

“The central premise of our book is that many of modern society’s strategies for nurturing children are in fact backfiring — because key twists in the science have been overlooked. The resulting errant assumptions about child development have distorted parenting habits, school programs, and social policies. They affect how we think about kids, and thus how we interpret child behavior and communicate with the young. The intent of this book is not to be alarmist, but to teach us to think differently — more deeply and clearly — about children. The topics covered in this book are wide-ranging, devoted to equal parts brain fiber and moral fiber. They relate to children of every age, from tots to teens. Specifically, we have chapters devoted to confidence, sleep, lying, racial attitudes, intelligence, sibling conflict, teen rebellion, self-control, aggression, gratitude, and the acquisition of language.”

- Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman

Join us as we explore Bronson and Merryman’s book NurtureShock: New Thinking About Children. We will meet Thursday February 25th (there is no school the following day) at 7pm for a Round Table Book Discussion. Read the book - or as much as you can - and join us to share your thoughts and responses. This is a book that the staff have been exploring for professional development as well (especially chapters 1, 2 & 8), and we hope this will be the first of many great book discussions that deepen the communication in our community.

Email Katie Mack at info@soulardschool.org with any questions.

**SPONSORS & DONATIONS**

Please email Sarah Christman first if you have contacts for donations, there are many businesses we will be asking and we do not want to overlap our efforts.

We are looking for sponsors. Sponsorships give us great opportunity for growth in this fundraising effort. Levels range between $500 and $5000 and include tickets to the Soiree along with, advertisement on the Soiree invitation and poster. Please let Sarah if you have a personal connection with a local business that might be interested in taking advantage of this opportunity.

Our silent and live auction items are focused on experience based, family or group activities. For example a 6 week class at Craft Alliance, a Book Club Starter Kit donated by Left Bank Books, restaurant gift certificates, and movie passes. If you have the ability to donate time at a vacation home or travel opportunities we would like to offer more items in that category.

**TICKETS**

Each family is expected to sell 4 tickets. These 4 tickets are $50 each. General tickets are available for $60. Last year more than 350 people attended the soiree, generating a large portion of the event’s funds. Our goal is to have 350 attendees. The family requirement is not intended to be a hardship, you are asked to sell these tickets because a varied group of guests is important.

**MAILED INVITATIONS**

If you would like us to send a mailed invitation to a friend or family member, please give addresses to Sarah.
events & information

Camp Soulard is once again THE place to be this summer! Our one and two week camps are founded on the good ol’ days of summer. Remember your lemonade stand, playing in the creek, making up your own games and changing the rules... pitching a tent in the backyard and catching lightning bugs... and creating the messiest art projects only the outdoors would allow.

June 7-11 Games, Games, Games: Beyond the board- all the outdoor favorites including those with water and an opportunity to make up plenty of your own.
July 12-16 & 19-23 Neighborhood Ecosystem: Exploring our place in the natural world. How can we be good citizens of a neighborhood as well as our ecosystem?
July 26-31 & Aug 3-7 Open-Air Studio Arts: ...wet wild messy and creative... tie-dye, sun prints, mud painting... sandcastles, squirt bottle paints...paper mache...
August 9-14: Urban Camping: Explore the art of camping: building a shelter, pitching a tent, preparing meals outdoors, hiking and developing navigation skills.

One-Week Sessions: $145  Two-Week Sessions: $280
You may sign-up for half of a two-week session.

Camp Soulard is open to students entering Grade 1 through Grade 6. All camps are held from 9am-3pm, Monday through Friday. Early Morning Care is available at 8:00am at no charge. Extended Day is available until 6:00pm at $5 per week.

feedback from Open House attendees ...

“We don’t believe we will find an environment better suited for [our child] and we would like to stop looking.”

“I didn’t want to miss the deadline... We asked our kids, and hands down, this is where they want to go.”

“I love that the school is so hands-on, research driven & child guided.”

“We look forward to enrolling (fingers crossed) ...”

“This is the school I wanted as a child, the school I would have flourished in.”

“I couldn’t be more impressed. I am excited for my son to attend.”

thank you to all the parents & staff who worked so hard to make these comments possible!

upcoming group tour dates

Group tours are led by Assistant Head of School, Sarah Christman, and are an opportunity to walk through the school & a day in the life of a Soulard School student – Elementary & pre-K. The next ones are:

Thursday, February 11th, 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Tuesday, March 2nd, 9:00 – 10:00 AM
2009/10 calendar

FEBRUARY

2 TU 8:30 AM First Tuesday Coffee
10 W all day 100th Day of School + Pajama Day
13 SA (various shifts) Mardi Gras
15 M all day School Closed – President’s Day
22 M 2:30 PM Student Assembly – Families Invited (+ birthday books)
25 TH 7:00 PM Roundtable Discussion – “Nurture Schock”
26 F all day School Closed – Records Day + Kakao outing

MARCH 2010

2 TU 8:30 AM First Tuesday Coffee
9-11 TU-TH Parent /Teacher Conferences
12 F End of Second Trimester
15-19 M-F Spring Break Victor | Campus – Closed
17-19 W-F Spring Break 13th St | Campus (Nursery) – Closed
29 M 2:30 PM Student Assembly – Families Invited (+ birthday books)

APRIL

2 F all day School Closed – Professional Development Day
6 TU 8:30 AM First Tuesday Coffee
10 SA 6:00 PM Orchestra Benefit Concert @ Atomic Cowboy
12 W 6:30 PM Parent Association Elections
21 TH Teaching Peace Parade
22 TH Student Assembly – Families Invited (+ birthday books)
26 M 2:30 PM Student Assembly – Families Invited (+ birthday books)

MAY

4 TU 8:30 AM First Tuesday Coffee
8 SA 5:00 – 9:00 PM Soulard Soiree
14 F all day School Closed – Records Day
20 TH Student Art Show & Strings Assembly
24 M 2:30 PM Student Assembly – Families Invited (+ birthday books)

* event added/changed this month
+ mandatory attendance

CMAC & South Broadway Art Project

Registration Days & Open Studio
11am - 2pm, Feb 13th & 20th 2010

CMAC is a visual art center, studio and gallery. We host birthday parties & arty parties, art classes, workshops, camps and South Broadway Art Project. Soulard School Families receive a 10% discount everyday @ CMAC

ART CAMP @ CMAC
SPRING BREAK 2010
March 15th - 19th

THEMES:

Monday: Spring Bling
Tuesday: I spy with my little eye
Wednesday: Decadent Design
Thursday: Kids gone TILED
Friday: Printmaking

social events group outing

Join your school friends for a chocolate tasting event at Kakao on Friday, Feb 26 at 1 p.m. Kakao’s owner is a chocolatier who uses only natural ingredients and makes all his candy by hand. The shop is located at the corner of Jefferson and Shenandoah. Cost is $5 per person and there’s a limit of 20 people total (grades 3 and above only please). Anyone who’s interested can contact me via phone 771-6322 or e-mail to sign up. To find out more about Kakao, visit http://kakaochocolate.com/.

- Amy delaHunt,
Social Events Committee

Iris & Quinn enjoy January’s Social Events Cmte. outing – skating at Steinberg with their TSS friends.