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October 2003

From the Co-Directors:

"Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a teacher who was busily teaching in a Bay Area college. She was working with young children, and teaching student teachers to become teachers too. The student teachers would graduate from college and begin teaching in the neighboring community.

"The time was full of changes. Not as many women were staying home all day any more. Women were working, and finding that they could bring new ideas to the working community. They loved their jobs, and men found that they were happier too, because the family responsibilities were being shared more equally. The working community liked having more workers, but the workers' children needed care for the whole work-day now, instead of the classic half-day nursery schools in which the teachers had been trained.

"One day, the student teachers came to visit their old college again. The busy teacher was happy to see them, but the student teachers were sad. They told their teacher that they couldn't do a good job out in the working community. So many things about the community had changed, but things hadn't changed in childcare. Children stay at school so long each day, the student teachers said, so we need to feed them and give them naps and change them, and do things that teachers didn't used to have to do. We weren't prepared for this!

"This first made the busy teacher sad, but then she got mad. She had spent her life teaching good teachers to work with children, but now even well trained and well educated teachers couldn't apply what they'd learned about children to their classrooms. It was time to do something.

"She gathered together a group of other educators who were nearing retirement. They began to study the situation and to devise a plan for changing childcare to fit the modern world...."

The rest is AOCS' history. The teachers and thinkers who structured the programs, the parents who welcomed their new ideas, and the benefactors who believed in that philosophy all helped AOCS become the school it is today. AOCS truly has a life of its own. Again and again a good idea



has changed the design of the school; again and again parents and friends have stepped forward to offer their expertise. We could never be where we are today without all the love, support, wisdom, and help that everyone's provided. Here is a list of many of the folks whose energy, insights, and practical help set the course for much of who we are today. This list is far from complete; twenty years from now, many of your names will be on it! We hope to see many of these wonderful people again at the Open House on October 3!

People who have served on the Board of Directors:
 (*from present to past*)

Meredith Brown
 Linda Gardner
 Melba Wu
 Rik Hansen
 Liisa Hale
 Claire Bainer
 Marcia Riley
 Amy Clough
 Bruce Kariya
 Gail Myers
 Noelle Pillsbury
 Lynn Price
 Seth Rosen
 Shiree Teng
 Carla Dartis
 Dan May
 Steven Texeira
 Susan Sykes
 Holly Wilder
 Andretta Fowler
 Doug Henderson
 Newt McDonald
 Steve Reiner
 Amy Gentile
 Kathy Schueler
 Mary Hale
 Beverly Davis
 Helen Lore
 Susan Gallardo
 Dave Chenok
 Sally Retecki
 Robin Anderson
 Gordon Wong
 Rebecca Kuiken
 Darl Bowers
 Linda Copenhagen
 Lette Berhe
 Dianne Yamashiro-Omi
 Thea Hensel
 Donna Hunt
 Steven Vollmer
 Louise Anderson
 Doris Hutchings
 Donna Vaughn
 Virginia Steel
 Harlan Dalluge
 Eric Landis-Brenman
 Marsha Maartin
 Barbara Shaw
 Judy Rapp Smith
 Marsha Martin

Eric Berg
Sharon Albert
Elisa Boone
Caroline Easton
Frances Caro-Capolungo
Mardree Scott
David Tabb
Bevo Zellick

Founding Board

Anne Copenhagen
Barbara Forth
Gwen Foster
Stana Hearne
Dori Hutchings
Virginia Steel

Staff Who Have Shaped the Programs

Anne Copenhagen (All)
Barbara Forth (Infant Toddler)
Ma Leong (Food and Nurturing)
Claire Bainer (Nursery School)
Mona Reeve (Adult Education)
Gail Myers (Adult Education)
Glendora Patterson (AGAIN)
Ameena Muhammed (Infant Toddler)
Amy Rosenbaum (Adult Education)
Liisa Hale (Toddler Programs)

Parents and Friends Who Were Instrumental

Parent Participation

Thea Hensel

Building Committee

Richard Copenhagen, Cliff Ham, Peter Szutu, Steve Reiner,
Bill Cucci, Terry Ring, Chuck Seliger, Phillip Silva, Kaveh Rad
(particularly re: Seismic Safety), John Grimsich, Patrick
Guillemot Chris Lutz

Development Committee

Kathy Tactaquin, Laura Ham, Jan Eldred, Dianne Yamashiro
Omi, Etta Heber, Fran Bowman, Carmella Johnson, Liisa
Hale

Business Planning

Jose Arce, Sally Retecki, Linda Copenhagen, Liisa Hale

Property Acquisition, Zoning and Funding

Alice Akawie, Dori Hutchings, Kathy Schueler, Keith
Copenhagen

Auction

Melba Wu, Susan Ransom, Trish Marshall, Lucia Rodriguez,
Carol Copenhagen, Shoshana Walcott, Melba Yee, Barbara
Nagle, Liane Lau, Jackie Ito-Woo, Anne Cairney, Leigh
Pierson Brown, Carolyn Chun Phillips

Emergency Planning and Medical Supplies

Marge O'Halloran

TLC

Grace Manning Orenstein, Phyllis
Gorelick, Connie Tabb

First Funders

Keith Copenhagen, Ann Hatch/Tamarack Foundation, Ellen Sherwood

Yard and Garden Development

Virginia Steel, Nata Post, Elsa Bauman, Claire Bainer

Fall Mailer

Kathleen Dinar, Linda Gardner, Jody Lerner

Banner

ML Haynes, Linda Gardner, Rosa Warder, Karen Bovarnick, Liisa Hale

Many many thanks to all who have helped shape AOCS in the past and all who will help shape its future!

—Liisa and Claire

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Getting to the Heart of Things

Both the Nursery School and Hedco groups have had their house meetings. These meetings are just a pleasure: the teachers love sharing the work they are doing in their rooms, and parents enjoy getting to know the teachers and learning about the thought that goes into their child's day. After the Nursery School meeting I walk into my house feeling grateful for the wonderful parents and the culture of caring that AOCS creates in our community. A neighbor's voice comes onto my message machine. She is upset by a call from her daughter's teacher. Anne, the youngest of three, is in the fourth grade; she's nine. I pick up the phone the sad story pours out; the more I listen, the sadder I feel.

Anne's teacher called to tell her parents that Anne had gotten into trouble at school that afternoon. It seems that there is a boy in Anne's class who bothers the other children; he stands too close, he doesn't listen when the children are talking to him, his hands seem to always get on the other children's stuff, he gets silly and talks too loud. He's a non-specific botherer. It is hard for the children to put into words what it is that he does that they don't like. Already this early in the school year, the children have decided they don't like to play with him and they don't know what to do to solve their problem. At recess, one of the boys in the class drew a picture of "Chase" pooping, then asked Anne (being one of the girls with the best handwriting) to write "Chase" on the bottom of the drawing. After recess Chase found the picture on his desk. The teacher knew Anne's handwriting and recognized the drawing and scolded both children for the picture, making them stay after school and calling their parents.

This is such a typically stupid school story. It could have happened to any of us when we were in elementary school, it could have happened to Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, or to children from almost any generation. The teacher's response hasn't changed from generation to generation either. This is the stuff that pits children against teachers and makes children wonder if the teacher is on their side or not. The teacher responded in a typical and, in my opinion, unhelpful way. Yes, it is absolutely true that drawing people pooping is not a very nice thing to do. It is, in-fact, a rather

“immature” problem solving strategy, but, by definition, children are immature. In my mind, it is the adult’s job to suggest a more mature solution. The children in this situation needed help to learn to behave in a more mature and constructive way. Though in this day and age, we know what we ought to do, we are slow to link our knowledge with our action. I wonder what it will take to shift people’s thinking to bring the way we care for and educate the children in our country up to what we know about people? Think of the body of knowledge and thought that has gone into human development in just the last ten years. We can’t afford to know better and keep behaving in the same old way, perpetuating old-fashioned thinking at the detriment of our children. How can we expect to create peace on the planet if we don’t actively teach folks to be kind to one another?

If you stop and analyze this story, Anne really didn’t do anything wrong. In fact, neither did the child who drew the picture. True, it wasn’t a very articulate form of communication, and drawing people pooping is not generally considered friendly; however, that behavior was a response to a problem. The real problem was that Chase was (and very likely is) bothering the children and no one helped him at all! That makes me mad. Chase was put right into a victim position because he was helped without learning how to help himself. What did Chase learn? He knows that for some nebulous reason the other kids don’t like him, but he doesn’t know why. He learned to depend on the teacher to protect him, and that he can’t manage his own friendships. Actually the “naughty” children were on the right track—they were trying to communicate. They wanted to tell Chase that he was bothering them and that they don’t like it. It is not him they don’t like, it is what he was doing.

Sadly, the teacher missed a great opportunity to help all the children involved. I would have liked to hear that the teacher had drawn the children together to help them work out the problem. I would have liked to hear that she had facilitated a thoughtful conversation that explained to the children involved in the mix-up what had happened and what they could do next time to prevent it from happening again. When this kind of a problem occurs in the Nursery School, the teacher is thoughtful about the words she chooses as well as her body language. She stands or sits near the “victim” while supporting the children who were “caught”. They all need to know that they are loved and safe from criticism, and that the teacher is there to help. Then each child needs a turn to explain what happened from his or her perspective. There is no interrupting, everyone gets a turn to have his or her full say.

Chase would have support saying how he felt about finding that picture on his desk. The other children would feel comfortable expressing why they were upset with Chase in the first place. Then the teacher would say something like, “Oh, I see,” and review the mix-up using constructive, objective language; then she would say to Chase “I guess they really don’t like it when you stand so close, talk so loud, etc.... do you think you can remember to give the other children a little more room?” “Good, you’ll remember and there won’t be any more pictures like this on your desk and Anne and Joe, if you are having trouble with someone, will you come tell me so we can work it out before there is trouble?”

This allows everyone the chance to work on the problem together and to understand themselves and each other better. Friendly words and constructive suggestions are set in place, there is no judgment or moralizing; the assumption is that everyone wants to get along and that they all are learning how to do that. In an environment where the children's social and emotional growth is addressed as well as their academic needs, the children can relax and learn knowing there is guidance available if mix-ups occur and that teachers really teach.

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Snapshot in the Schoolroom

We have a cardboard box in the schoolroom yard and the children have been busy with that box: climbing inside, closing the flaps and hiding, popping out and surprising each other; some children tried to fill it with sand, others to pull another child in it like a sled or to roll it over. Everyone has had a turn. The box remains popular though it is looking a little dilapidated now. Today one of the children pulls the large turquoise tub over the top of herself near the box and hides in there instead of in the box. What a big surprise it is to pop out from under the tub instead of the box! Another child puts the tub on his back and announces, "I'm a snapping turtle!" The other children digging nearby watch the turtle for a while, looking a little worried. One child gets the funnel off the sandbox shelf and puts it on his finger saying, "Poke, poke," quietly to himself and pushing the end of the funnel into his hand. Quietly the teacher steps closer and comments, "Remember about funnels—they are good for pouring, getting the sand into a small opening. Let's find a good container to use with that funnel!" The play continued rather uneventfully; the child with the funnel got busy making cakes and the turtle got hot and lost interest in the tub.

This is a great example of good teaching, and is so subtle that it could easily go unnoticed. The ability to observe and anticipate a problem before it happens, to keep stress and conflict at a minimum and the harmony flowing is extremely important. It is from this state of homeostasis that creativity, confidence and learning occur.

This snapshot is a good example of the quiet thoughtful teaching that is seen throughout the children's school. It really shows how the teacher's agenda at AOCS is so different from the agenda of the elementary school teacher whose primary focus is on educating the child's mind. In these early years, children cannot separate their minds' learning from all the other learning they are doing. The children must feel that they can trust their teacher to treat them with respect; if the teacher had said to the child with the funnel, "I see you poking with that funnel! You'd better not be thinking about poking at your friends—I told before don't poke with the funnels!," then all that focus on poking would make it hard not to want to poke. Fussing at a child without actually making a clear constructive suggestion about what you want the child to do just lowers the child's self-esteem and makes them feel like they can't trust you.

A far more serious problem is that all the children within the earshot of the teacher will hear the fussing and feel that the

teacher cannot be trusted, and that perhaps school is not a safe place after all. Even the youngest children react to protect themselves from feeling vulnerable or getting hurt. We adults know that “closing-down feeling,” the way we get quiet or mad or argue or leave an unpleasant situation. These are survival techniques we developed in our childhood, which later become personality traits we can hide behind when conflict occurs. Far better than creating personality traits that we must later learn to manage, would be to learn to be our authentic loving selves in every situation, to speak up when necessary and to keep quiet when that’s appropriate. Most of us had no help in learning how to do this. We didn’t learn when not to take things personally, or that talking loud and fast don’t make people do what you say. No one said, “Use the funnel for pouring, step right over the urge to poke; if you feel worried say something, take care of yourself and you’ll be OK.”

Young children are totally dependent on the teacher for their own sense of emotional well-being. The teacher’s emotional self-discipline allows the child to come to know his or her own feelings and express them without having to sort out them through the filter of the teacher’s feelings.

A good preschool education is expensive, but look what you buy for your lucky child: self-knowledge beyond measure!

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AOCS Staff Profile: Lucy Lowhurst

Lucy Lowhurst cherished her AOCS experiences so much that when her two children graduated, she decided to stay.

After supporting AOCS’ mission as a parent volunteer, Lucy decided to join the school’s staff just before her older son moved on to elementary school. For more than four years now Lucy has served as AOCS’ administrative assistant.

“I wanted to work for an organization that was very much in line with my principles,” Lucy said. “As my older son went through the program, I could see how much care and attention went into everything they did—the toys and activities they put out for the kids, the food they ate, the schedule they were on.”

Lucy quickly found other advantages at AOCS. She liked the fact that the school took care of all the details—from diapers to food—which was important to her because she worked 50 hours a week when her children attended. “One of my reasons for wanting my children in a daycare center instead of at home with one person is that I wanted my children to be more socially adept than I was,” Lucy says. “I also liked having more than one person taking care of them instead of just one, the diversity of the families and staff and the fact that different languages were being spoken here.”

One of the main benefits to joining AOCS is the pace of life.

“There is a tendency not to overreact to things here. They are so in tune with the wide band of what normal is,” Lucy says. “It is a very loving and caring atmosphere, and the people are very relaxed and supportive—as opposed to how life is for most of us, which is very busy.”

Lucy maintains a relaxed lifestyle when she is away from AOCS. She likes to walk or exercises in a friend's home gym. Tilden and Redwood are some of her favorite local hiking spots, and she has an affinity for the trails around Lake Tahoe. She takes her sons, Nathaniel, 7, and Joshua, 9, to Cal football, basketball and baseball games.

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Car Seat Crazy?

From: Rockridge Kids , August 2003

Car seats, car seat laws, and of course, information concerning car seat safety, may feel to you like it's changing by the minute. It can certainly be confusing, but let us try to make things a little clearer:

- As of today's writing, California's kids must ride in an approved car seat until they are either 6 years old or weigh in at 60 pounds. Of course the seat must be certified, properly installed, and your child properly restrained.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends even stricter criteria. NHTSA strongly recommends that, laws aside, kids should ride in certified car seats until they are at least 8 years old, 80 pounds, and 4'9" tall. We strongly agree with this advice. While it may seem unrealistic to some parents, it is an unfortunate fact that auto seat belts rarely fit children properly under the age of 12. Also, SUVs have created dangerous side-impact issues against which high back boosters help protect. Ultimately, the longer you can keep your child in a certified, properly installed car seat, the safer your child will be. A child is ready for the regular seat when you answer YES to all of the following questions:

1. Can your child sit back against the car's seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat?
3. Does the shoulder belt lie across the chest, not the neck or throat?
4. Does the lap belt fit low and snug over the thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

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A Reminder from the Staff

With winter approaching and the days getting colder, be sure to bring extra cold-weather clothes, such as long pants, sweaters, jackets, and hats, for your children's cubbies!

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The Fall Mailer is Here!

The Fall Mailer is one of two primary fundraisers for AOCS. It brings in an average of \$35,000 each year, which funds parent activities, childcare for parent events, and AOCS

subsidies and scholarships. These are all things that make AOCS the wonderful place that it is.

“What is the fall mailer?”

The fall mailer is a direct mailing that solicits support from relatives, friends, acquaintances, and businesses that you may frequent. This year the mailer theme is AOCS’ 20th Anniversary.

“How can I help?”

AOCS parents can help by providing names and addresses for the mailing list. Continuing parents received lists of names that they submitted in the past with a request for updates and new names. New parents received a form for submitting names of people whom they believe support the idea that children deserve the best.

Everyone on the mailing list will receive an informative and personal mailer that describes all that AOCS offers (wonderful care for kids, the Neighborhood Accreditation program, the AGAIN Support Program, TLC counseling services, and scholarships for children in the community) and how they can help. Each mailer contains pictures of the children and will specifically include a picture with your child in it. You get 1 parent participation hour for every 4 new names you submit.

In addition to submitting names, you can also assist with putting the mailer together: gluing photos, writing notes, and, of course, stuffing and addressing envelopes.

It is our goal to have the mailers out by mid-November, so please turn in your names now! If you are interested in volunteering or if you have any questions, please contact Lucy.

Thanks!
from the Development Committee

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Caution! It’s Halloween!

Halloween can be a confusing and scary time for pre-school children. Little children depend strongly on body language and facial clues to be sure that they understand all the meaning of language, so painted faces and masks can be very disconcerting. Young children often have a hard time telling the difference between what is real and what is pretend, so often the “pretend” of Halloween is very confusing and really not too fun. You can help your children to enjoy this holiday by trying to match the fun to their ability to comprehend and process its events.

At AOCS we ask that the children save their dressing up for home. It’s hard for the children to concentrate and play constructively in a classroom full of monsters and princesses. Candy would just add to the insanity, so please keep that part of the celebration at home too.

At school we have been talking about Autumn and how the weather is getting cooler now and leaves are changing color. The children are watching the squirrels busily harvesting walnuts and hiding them for winter, and the children are busy finding walnuts on the ground that the squirrels miss.

Listen for the fall poems and songs the children are learning, and watch for the fall colors coming home on your child's art work. As the month progresses there will be pumpkins, gourds and dried corn in the classrooms for children to touch and discuss.

While we are on the subject of Halloween, pay a little extra attention to what your child is seeing on TV. Commercials and cartoon specials often give children scary ideas about monsters and make a safe world seem full of unpredictable and dangerous things. Be forewarned and try to protect yourself and your child from having to deal with nightmares and the acting out that scary monsters seem to elicit.

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A Note from Next Door

Dear Parents at AOCS,

We want to thank you for the lovely repair to the driveway of the Abom House. It has been more years than we care to remember that the pothole near the street has been a great annoyance and a somewhat dangerous car denter besides. To have it so neatly returned to its job as a driveway access has brought great joy and happiness to all of us who use it.

With much gratitude from,

Glendora Patterson, Eloise Farren, and Anne Copenhagen, and, we're sure all the others who use that driveway for pick-up, meetings, etc.

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Remember:

All AOCS classes will be closed on Friday, November 7 for a Staff In-Service Day!

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AOCS Anniversaries

We celebrate the following anniversaries for our staff in October:

Ma Leong 1983—20 years!
Ana Lara 2000—3 years!

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Comings and Goings

Welcome:

Abby S., parents Jane S. and Paul S. and big sister Maggie in the Schoolroom, joins the Playroom.

Anisya L., parents Karya L. and Emmanuel E., joins the

Playroom.

Athena P., parents Taylor and Ted P., was born on September 25! Congratulations, Taylor and Ted!

Jasmine E., parents Millicent C. and Darrell E. and big brother DJ in the Homeroom, joins the Todds.

Parker J., parents Heidi and Jay J. and big brother Hunter in the Schoolroom, joins the Playroom.

Stephen S., parents Nora W. and Roger S. and big sister Alexandra an AOCS grad now at Head-Royce, joins the Infants.

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Birthday Books

I Can Do It Too! from Maya N. for her 2nd Birthday

Diggers and Dump Trucks from Jonah I. for his 2nd Birthday

Are You a Spider? and *Are You a Ladybug?* from Aidan O. for his 1st Birthday

Moonchild, Star of the Sea from Tiana C. for her 3rd Birthday

Are You a Snail? and *Bear's Bargain* from Lanie G. for her 2nd Birthday

Books you can purchase for AOCS in honor of your child's birthday are displayed in the front office.

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