

Dear Parents,

As I watched the Kindergarten Rainforest Play, a true gem of the Carlisle Public Schools, I was struck by the systemic work (systems thinking) happening on several grade levels. Recently, ecosystem studies have been done at both the kindergarten and the eighth grade levels. The foundation for systemic thinking starts as our kindergarten students study the rainforest ecosystem, understanding the concept that trees are needed to sustain the animals. On a more complex level, our eighth graders see how our actions, more than just cutting down trees, has a systemic impact on all that we do. Our fifth graders are in the middle of their endangered species project. All these projects show education at its best, where students see connections and can make predictions based on facts. Teaching students to think analytically and critically is one of the most important skills that we can provide for our students, and a recommended skill in the study, Skills for the Twenty-First Century. As many of us delighted in the performance of the kindergartners, I also salute the kindergarten teachers for starting the critical thinking processes at such an early stage. Beyond this activity was a well-developed unit helping students think systemically.

Another thought that struck me was the community involvement in producing such outstanding student work. As George Bernard Shaw said, "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can." Staff, students, and parents are all part of this intricate school community that is Carlisle as evidenced by the songs taught by the music teachers, artwork done with the help of the fine arts teachers, costumes made by the parents, and the combining of classes by the kindergarten staff. Other teachers helped make it a family event by letting siblings and cousins leave class to support the younger children. Administrators and teachers arranged schedules to come and see this event. We witness this throughout the school year as our staff and parents collaborate to help all of our children achieve.

Our town residents continually give in so many ways, most recently by approving \$325,000 at Town Meeting just for the schools. (\$150,000 override for FY08, \$75,000 in free cash for FY07, and \$100,000 for locks and phones.) Successful schools are dependent on the community. Having just heard that the override passed, and witnessing the parental involvement with the Rainforest Play, clearly this overall community support is another facet that helps us excel. We are most grateful to the citizens willing to serve on School Committee as well as those who made sacrifices to pass the override.

Carlisle Public Schools are successful thanks to an extraordinary community that operates systemically to help children succeed. As we revel in the work of our kindergartners and our eighth graders, we thank you for your role in making these events successful in our own little ecosystem -- CPS.

Sincerely,  
*Marie Doyle*