

REACH

A Creative Arts Magnet Program
Brook Haven Middle School, Sebastopol, California

Monday, January 14, 2008

A Weekly Newsletter from the REACH Parent Foundation

4 Meetings in a Week...What Fun!



What a delight it was to attend all 4 of the meetings with the teachers and their classes this past week! JT facilitated the conversations which dealt with what we should KEEP and what we should TWEAK about various aspects of the program.

Two things stood out for me when all was said and done. The first was how the comments of each class were so revealing of the general development of the respective ages of the students in each class. The conversations in the 4/5 reflected the nurturing, fun explorative nature of that age. The 6th revealed the dynamic changes that so often characterize that age group. And both the 7th and 8th reflected the inevitable looking to the future; high school and academic preparedness.

The second thing I came away with was how fantastic it was to have a meaningful forum, lead by our supportive and talented counselor, that gave parents a real opportunity to freely express their thoughts. The fact that, as parents, we have such an avenue for meaningful input into this program is at the core of what makes REACH so valuable.

For those who attended, thanks and I hope it was meaningful for you too. For those who could not make it, I am sorry you did not add your thoughts to the mix. But never fear, there is always next time! – Cheryl Constantini, RPF Board President

Calling All Drivers

Just one quick glance at the January calendar and you'll see that REACH kids are stepping out! Unfortunately, we are experiencing a driver deficit. Please take a peek at what's still needed and volunteer. E-mail Stacy Low to sign up slow@sbcglobal.net

- **Jan. 22, Tues., 8:30 - 3:00**, 7th grade is going to San Jose Tech. Museum and Rosicrucian Museum (8 adults and about 4 cars are needed)
- **Jan. 25, Fri., 10:30 - 1:30**, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades are going to Wells Fargo Center for the Arts to see "Jazz at the Lincoln Center" (We have the following drivers: Stacey Schuett, Jessica Switala, Sandy Reed, Cheryl Constantini, John Thompson, and Bonnie Van Anda. We need an additional 21 student seats in approx. 6 more cars)
- **Jan. 28, Mon., 8:30 - 3:00**, 6th grade is going to the San Jose Tech. Museum (8 adults and about 4 cars are needed)
- **Feb. 1, Fri., 9:00 - 1:00**, 7th and 8th grades are going to Wells Fargo Center to see "Not a Genuine Black Man" (We have Aurora Thompson and Sandy Reed driving and we need an additional 21 seats for students in approx. 6 more cars)



www.reach-program.com

Mark Your Calendar

Tues. Jan. 15
SUSD Board mtg. 7 p.m.

Wed. Jan. 16
RPF Board mtg., 6:30 p.m.
Brook Haven Library

Fri. Jan. 18
Clubs start

Mon. Jan. 21
School holiday, MLK Day

Tues. Jan. 22
7th grade field trip to
San Jose, 8 - 3:30 p.m.
Body World

Thurs.-Fri. Jan. 24-25
4/5 Field Trip to Ft. Ross

Fri. Jan. 25
No clubs, schoolwide
due to field trips

Fri. Jan. 25
6, 7, 8th Concert
Jazz with Wynton Marsalis
Wells Fargo Center
10:30am - 1pm

Mon. Jan. 28
6th grade field trip
Rosicrucian Museum
San Jose, 8 am - 3:30pm

**For long range planning,
check out the REACH
calendar on our website:
[www.reach-program.com/
calendar.php](http://www.reach-program.com/calendar.php)**

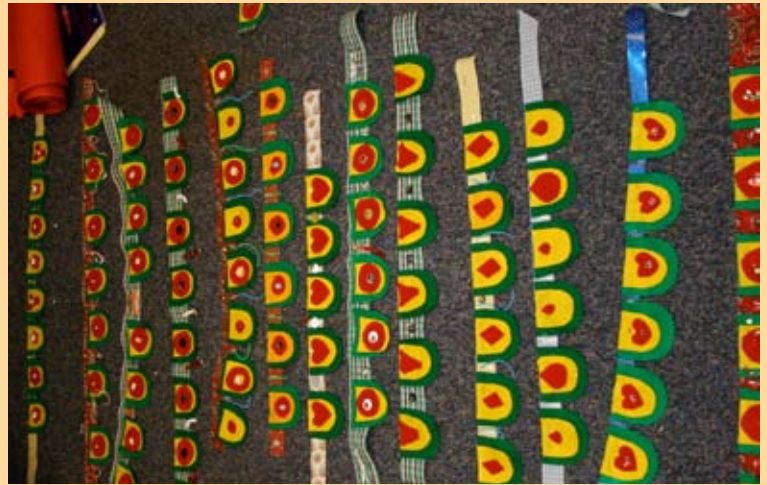
Holiday Happenings Around the World

The last day of school before the winter break, the teachers, with the generous help of many parents, planned a rotating activity event to provide experiences of various winter holidays in different cultures around the world. The students, placed in mixed-grade groups, went from classroom to classroom for different presentations representing the food, music, pictures, and craft activities of different countries/cultures. The 4/5 room presented Hannukah, with students making their own chocolate gelt and menorah bases. The 8th grade room hosted the Winter Solstice with a candle making operation and descriptions of the sun's position relative to the earth at Solstice. The 7th grade classroom presented the holidays in Spain, Japan, and Germany, each with art to make and food to eat. And the 6th grade classroom represented Dawali, a November Festival of Lights that takes place India. The students made felt wall hangings to be placed over doorways and sampled very good Indian food made by our parents with recipes from India. It was a very successful event that the students enjoyed; thanks to all who made it happen!

—Nancy Higham



Solstice on Earth



Dawali, Festival of Lights in India



Christmas in Spain



Hannukah and Gelt-making



Kathleen Tuttle's Life Skills class sings holiday Songs at the Senior Center in Sebastopol



Thanks and Good-Bye

Life is such a blessing, it gives us so many beautiful things. Friendship and love is one of them. But a time comes when you have to say good-bye to your friends. Six months back when I came to Sebastopol from India I was very lonely in this foreign land. I was scared, how would my kids adjust to the new environment, worried about their education. My biggest concern was my eleven- year old son, Vanshaj, who was very shy. Finding a good middle school wherein he would get quality education and also a friendly environment was the biggest challenge. But all my worries came to an end when he started going to REACH at Brook Haven Middle School. Thanks to the loving teachers and friendly kids, adjustment to the new environment became so easy.

I really adore Claudia Dalessio for her wonderful project ideas and making Language Arts so interesting. Learning through Projects can be so interesting. It turned a scary subject like Maths into a favorite one. Vanshaj is so happy here. He is learning so many different things. I could not believe it when I saw him performing in the drama. My sincere thanks to John for finding out the actor in my son who was so shy and giving him the opportunity. I was amazed to see how parents gave so much of their valuable time to make this program a success. Volunteers in the classroom, yard duty at school, fieldtrips, organizing events both for children and family, you can find them everywhere.

What a wonderful community it is! I never felt lonely. Whenever I went to school I could always find some friendly face.

Right from the first day at school I found so many friends there. Ann Buller was so loving, I felt as if I have known her for many years. The parent get-togethers gave me not just an opportunity to make friends but also to come closer to the culture, which is so different from mine. Regular parent-meetings and mails from school and teachers kept me close to school everyday. I always knew what is happening at the school, even Vanshaj said, wow, mom, how do you know everything we are doing in class?!

We talk so much about REACH at home that my seven-year old twin daughters say Mom, will you send us to REACH when we grow up? and I say, of course. Now that we are moving to Boston, I feel so sad. We will miss all the moments we spent here.

We will miss great friends and teachers, love and affection and above all the close bond with the community. One thing is sure, wherever we go you all will live in our hearts. It doesn't matter how long a time we spend anywhere else, the place that would give us a feeling of home in America would always be SEBASTOPOL. Thanks a lot for all your love. Thanks to all the parents and people for creating a program where my son could get good education and exposure to art. —*Matma Vanshaj*



Matma Vanshaj at the Dawali Celebration



Vanshaj studying hard.

January Donations Due

Please get your January pledges in to the office if you haven't yet. Or, mail to REACH Parent Foundation, 708 Gravenstein Hwy North #203, Sebastopol, CA 95472.

Asilomar Math Conference



At the end of November, the California Mathematics Council held its fiftieth Mathematics Conference at Asilomar Conference Grounds near Monterey, CA. I told my students that I was going to spend the weekend with 3000 other math teachers talking about

how much fun it is to teach math. None of them thought that they would like to spend their weekend doing that! However, despite this vote of “No fun” from my students, Mr. Shreve and I had a great time. Mr. Shreve, a Brook Haven math teacher, and I each had the opportunity to pick eight different workshops and presentations out of the 300 offered. We, of course, focused our selections on the issues and lesson ideas related to 6th through 8th grade, mostly going to different workshops and sharing the best ideas. I was able to take away some great lesson plan ideas, as well as some fun math games and activities, some of which I am already using in class.

Overall, it was a fabulous event which allowed us to network with other teachers, learn some new techniques and activities, and to get even more fired up about teaching math.—*Steph Fraine*

Keeps and Tweaks

Class Meeting Recap:

We had four productive evaluation meetings this last week on “Keeps and Tweaks” for the Magnet Program. J.T. O’Neill did a grand job of guiding the discussions and getting answers to some of her questions about our interface with Brook Haven teachers and students, about PE, and our general satisfaction. Each meeting had an active group of parent participants. Teachers also had valuable suggestions and comments.

The following represents some of the highlights from each meeting:

In the 4/5 class, parents and students like the special activities, the park and playground option at lunch, and they are satisfied with the campus even though they are younger. Melissa wants a more concrete Community Service plan for her students but needs a parent to volunteer. Lack of on-line access is also a problem for her. Parents want students to learn to type, and would like to see more cross-grade activities. The question was asked about the

parents who signed the school contract for volunteering 5 hours a month but who have not fulfilled that pledge. There was talk of J.T. contacting these parents with a reminder that volunteerism is a foundation for our program.

In the 6th grade the parents are pleased with the energy and enthusiasm in the classroom and appreciate the regular communication about learning and the weekly updates on missing assignments. They also like the enrichment that is available to students and especially P.E. Parents found the flexibility for students to remain in their small classroom groups or to move into the larger Brook Haven social scene a real plus. Suggestions included the need for regular class meetings and more Empower. They want to know the key items planned for Life Skills and in Spanish classes so they can support these classes intelligently. Particularly in Spanish they want the notebooks to be sent home weekly for parents to be able to follow up.

In the 6, 7, and 8 math meetings it was clear that Steph has a good rapport with the students and that generally they like math. Parents appreciated that students have the chance to correct their mistakes on math tests to raise their grades. Some students are getting extra follow-up with weekly progress reports or daily assignments checked in planners, which is helpful. All parents wanted to see the tests within a week of being taken and to see the homework regularly. They also requested that there be more creative activities making use of their math skills, especially for those students who are achieving mastery easily. Steph made a big plea for math tutors daily in first period during Algebra where tutors can support the students having some difficulties so he can fly with the advanced students. Steph indicated he has 3 ability levels in each of his 3 math classes. Parents also want to know the skills being taught weekly and when their students are more than 2 assignments behind. Parents wanted a short math review every night to make sure students are hanging on to the learning steps accomplished each day. Also Steph verified that students must show all their work (how they calculate a problem) at all times.

The same group of parents then stayed on for **7 and 8 Language Arts and Social Studies**. Parents commented that these students are really happy at Brook Haven, there is no bullying, no social problems. A big plus is J.T.’s availability to just listen. Students are really enjoying the books they are reading and the discussions which follow. Parents are satisfied with the consistent structure of the classes and particularly mentioned the year-long Social Studies binder process. A request was made for more essay writing which is in the schedule coming along prior to the 7th grade writing test in March. Teachers would like more crossover between enrichment and regular academics and more control over the enrichment process so that it

is better integrated with the regular curriculum. The long day came up for discussion, some dissatisfaction with the offerings in 0 period, the early dismissal on Wednesdays for the rest of Brook Haven, and the need for more health education. A longer discussion followed on the need for parent volunteers, for more community building between parents and teachers which might lead to more volunteering, and definitely the need for a volunteer coordinator, and more structure in the use of volunteers.

All in all it was a positive and affirming process, greatly enhanced by J.T.'s leadership and the participation of the classroom teachers. There will be some proposals at the Board meeting this Wednesday that will make some changes to address some of these issues in the planning for the third trimester this year.

A complete list of all the comments will be handed out at the RPF Board meeting on Wednesday night this week. Any parent wanting a copy just needs to contact Nancy and it will be sent to you as a hard copy or e-mail.

—Nancy Higham

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Just Write! Creative Writing for Kids and Teens with author Lisa Shulman

This class is for kids who love to write. Explore poetry, short stories, scripts, and other types of writing. We'll play with elements of writing such as character, dialogue, sensory details, and metaphor in a fun, relaxed setting. Let your imagination soar and your pen go wild! Each class will include fun group and individual writing activities, as well as time to give and receive supportive feedback on your current projects.

Session 1: 5 Thurs, Jan 17-Feb 14, 3:45-5:15 pm Session

2: 4 Thurs, Feb 28-Mar 20, 3:45-5:15pm

Session 1 Fee: \$75 Session 2 Fee: \$60

Register with Sebastopol Center for the Arts

Rep Auditions - Actors with physical theater and teaching experience desired for two-person adaptation of Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" school touring production. Auditions held Jan 13, 10 to 12. Tour dates TBD. Call for appointment. 707.823.0177. Sonoma County Repertory Theater, 104 N Main St, Sebastopol 707.823.0177.

ArtisTree - Kids ages four to 10 and their adults invited to take interactive gallery tour followed by "Painting with Color" workshop. RSVP. Jan 13 at 9:30. \$10-\$15 per family (up to five people). Di Rosa Preserve, 5200 Carneros Hwy, Napa (North Bay), 707.226.5991, Gallery hours: Tues-Fri, 9:30 to 3.

Father Knows Best - Salmon Creek Middle School presents annual production. Ending Jan 19; Fri-Sat at 7. \$5-\$10, 707.874.1205. Salmon Creek School, 1935 Bohemian Hwy, Occidental.

Sebastopol Center for the Arts - Through Feb 17, "Alchemy of ReUse: Art of the Re-Cycled, Re-Used, Re-Imagined." In Gallery II, "Caught Light," paintings by Jennifer Hirshfield. Jan 17 at 7, gallery talk. \$5-\$7, 6780 Depot St, 707.829.4797, Mon-Fri, 10 to 5; Sat-Sun, 1 to 4.

Quicksilver Mine Company - Through Feb 17, "Bakers Dozen 2008," annual group exhibit of northern California artists. Through Mar 2, "Heartworks VI," sculpture by Monty Monty. Quicksilver Mine Company, 6671 Front St, Forestville, 707.887.0799, Thurs-Mon, 11 to 6.

Santa Rosa Laughter Club - Start every day with a laugh to improve health. If cold or rainy, meet at 3933 Deuce Ct. Daily at 8:30. 707.525.8878 or 707.824.1993. Village Green, Sebastopol Road, Santa Rosa

Once Upon a Mattress - Marilyn Izdebski Productions presents Broadway's satiric version of sensitive princess. Ending Jan 20; Fri-Sat at 7:30. \$10-\$18, 415.257.5136. Playhouse, 27 Kensington Rd, San Anselmo (North Bay), 415.258.4640.

Peter Pan - Presented by Broadway Bound Kids. Jan 10-13; Thurs-Sat at 7:30; also Sat at 2; Sun at 1 and 5. \$14-\$16. Sebastiani Theatre, 476 First St E, Sonoma (North Bay), 707.996.9756.

Tree Recycling - Bring your undecorated Christmas tree for recycling. Ending Jan 13. 707.565.3375. Sonoma County Fairgrounds, Brookwood lot, 1350 Bennett Valley Rd, Santa Rosa

CLASSIFIEDS

Free Legos

Sadly, the lego era is over for our family. There's a free grocery bag of legos (probably hundreds of dollars worth) to the first caller. Amy at 887-0278

Want to Advertise?

REACH classifieds for for-sale items, events, and interest matches are free for individuals in the REACH community. We also have business classifieds. If you'd like to advertise your business in the REACH News, it's \$10 a month or \$50 a year for a classified ad or \$100 a year for a 2" x 2" ad. Kid businesses advertise free.