

REACH

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

Monday, October 22, 2007

A Weekly Newsletter from the REACH Parent Foundation

Important Reminder

The week of October 29th, every school day (except for Nov. 1st which is a holiday) will be early release days due to parent conferences, and students will get out at 2 p.m. Mark it on your calendar.

Halloween Costumes at School

When your students are busily planning their costumes to wear to school, please remind them that no masks are allowed, only face paint.

Parent Meeting ReCap

Thursday night's REACH Parent Meeting theme was skill building/community building. We began with the initial logistical information such as reminders by J.T. O'Neill about homework expectations (ten minutes a night per grade....so for sixth grade, that would mean sixty minutes – not more, not less...), and the importance of timeliness. Please get your students to school by 8am, and 7:45 for advanced band, as lateness creates a disruption for both teachers and students.

Field Trip Coordinator Stacy Low spoke to the great need for parent drivers and passengers for field trips, and Clubs Coordinator Ann Akers talked about the need for drivers for Cooking and Pottery, which are both off-site clubs. We will not be able to continue with offsite clubs unless we can regularly procure enough drivers for them.

REACH Treasurer Judi Scherrer gave a step-by-step guide for using E-scrip, Community Smart Card and Scrip. This is basically free money for REACH, and not hard to do. Easy instructions on how to sign up and start contributing at no cost to you every time you make a purchase are in the parent handbooks.

E-Scrip simply involves registering your credit and debit cards. Every time you use them, REACH gets a percentage of the sale. You can also sign up online for a Community Smart Card, and once it comes in the mail, present it at participating vendors such as Andy's Market and Friedman Brothers, before paying for your purchase. Again, very easy, and an even higher percentage gets donated to REACH than with E-Scrip! Lastly, and most lucratively, you can go to the Scrip site and order scrip on line (in \$10, \$15, or even \$250 amounts) and then get your money to the Scrip Coordinator. Two days later, you get a card in that amount that can be used like a gift card for purchase at that store, restaurant, hotel, etc. Until the Scrip Coordinator manifests him- or herself, you can give the money to Judi. For any parents out there who can't volunteer during the day, becoming the Scrip Coordinator is a great opportunity to contribute to the program because you can do it all behind the scenes!

See Cheryl's summary on the following page for her presentation at the meeting.

Next came the main topic of the evening. One of the aspects that makes REACH



www.reach-program.com

Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 30-Nov 2

2 p.m. dismissal for all students

Tues. Oct. 30

Public Relations Committee
6:30 Brook Haven library

Thurs. Nov. 1

Student holiday

Fri. Nov. 2

Parent coffee before school
Rm. 9 if wet or cold

Wed. Nov. 7

Parent chat led by Laura Goldenberg 8:00 a.m.
In Rm. 9 - ask any questions

Wed. Nov. 7

RPF Board mtg 6:30
Brook Haven library

Mon. Nov. 11

School holiday

Wed. Nov. 14

Diversity Committee meeting
6:30 Brook Haven library
Interested in increasing the diversity of REACH?

Thurs. Nov. 15

Parent meeting
6:30 Brook Haven library

unique is our attention to the social and emotional facets of middle school life. If students don't have ways and opportunities to navigate the swells of middle school social waters, they will have a hard time with the academics. Fifth grade parent Kathleen Tuttle talked about the skills developed in the Tool Box program (developed by Mark Collins) for the 4/5 class. Skills are encouraged to help children become aware of their feelings, deal with stress (we all practiced taking slow, measured deep breaths!), toss out negative comments (throwing them in the 'Garbage Can'), and develop the courage to speak up. Kathleen runs the 6th grade program in Life Skills. She did her dissertation for her Ph.D. on Emotional Intelligence, and brings a lot of her own skills and experience to this area. She facilitates the weekly class meeting for the 6th grade, and helps the children develop the skills to address a myriad of issues and conflicts that arise in their lives and classroom. The parents did a Values Exercise that she had done with the class that week, helping them to identify the values they hold most dear. Our values included family, friendship, hope and laughter. Kathleen will post websites and a bibliography in a future newsletter or on the REACH website for further information on this important subject. (Presentations about Leadership class for 7th grade and Decisions class for 8th will occur at a future meeting.)

At this point, one parent perceptively commented on the night's theme, and related that he could recognize the skills, but wondered where the community was. Our next presenter, Karen Short, a former REACH parent and RPF Board member spoke more directly to the formation of community in her talk about the Empower Program. She described the program as very challenging, for students and

parents alike. The curriculum is called "Owning Up", and it helps students to identify their roles in social interactions, and again helps them to identify the elephant in the room in middle school dynamics. The Empower Program was implemented at REACH for several years, and in a modified version last year. Karen will offer a workshop for the 7th and 8th REACH teachers in November, so that they can begin to utilize this wonderful resource, and then pursue further training for all the REACH teachers this summer.

Karen described a typical power structure, where one student might be a bully and another a target, pointing out that all the students present are bystanders, and their role is pivotal. If they collude, or are silent in these situations, the bullies maintain power. But if they speak up, and challenge the premise, the whole environment changes. Karen said all students struggle in their own ways and in their own

roles socially, and the bully needs to be seen as someone who is struggling as well, rather than be typecast. She also cautioned parents to expect that students may be dismissive about the Empower Program as it can be uncomfortable for them, but to know that they are taking in skills that will benefit them tremendously for years to come. We, as parents, must also be aware of the roles we play, and know that when we gossip, it is modeling negative behavior for our children. She encouraged us to address our concerns directly with the person we are having feelings about.

As we continue to build skills and develop community, we need forums for dialogue and support. We will have a Parent Chat time once a month. This is a time where anyone can ask questions or share thoughts about the program with Nancy Higham, and at least one RPF Board member. The first one will take place on Wednesday, Nov. 7, at 8am in Jenny Sortino's class right next to Nancy's office. Since the next scheduled Parent Meeting is a month away, we will schedule an interim parent meeting the last week of October for an evening time for parents to be able to again, share ideas, thoughts, concerns, etc. That time will be posted in the REACH newsletter. And lastly, we hope to make time on a regular basis, at the regularly scheduled parent meetings, for parents to be able to have a dialogue about the many issues that arise for us as a community.

Thank you Ann Bueller and Julie Heinsen for set up, 4/5 parents for the wonderful snacks, and to the presenters.

– Laura Goldenberg, RPF Board-Parent Relations

Look at the end of the newsletter for a list of *Top Ten Ways to Raise Emotionally Intelligent Kids.*

Website News

Class calendars. Wondering if your child has an assignment due later in the week? Now seventh and eighth grade parents can check the REACH website (reach-program.com) to see upcoming assignments in Ms. Jaton's Humanities classes. Access it from the Class Pages menu on the site or go directly to www.reach-program.com/jaton_cal.php. The page uses Google Calendar to generate the listing, so you can view as a list or a monthly calendar. If you have a Google account, you can also click through to add an event to your personal calendar. We're hoping to get all the class homework assignments posted on the website this way.

Would you recommend REACH? What would you tell your friends and neighbors about why REACH is a great fit for your kid? We're looking for some brief comments along those lines to post on the site. Believe it or not, it's not too early to think about promoting REACH for the 2008-09 school year. So, forward any glowing comments you'd like to say publicly (or anonymously) to rkoman@gmail.com

Photos and multimedia. Digital images and movies of special projects, field trips and events are needed for the site. Check out student work on the home page and submit your student's work to rkoman@gmail.com



From the RPF President

The following is taken from a presentation made at the REACH Parent Meeting last Thursday, Oct. 18.

“Most people live passively, content with whatever cards fate hands out. Some live in a twilight world of unsubstantial fantasy. A very few, driven by personal demons, spend their whole lives in pursuit of dreams, and find in them such a potent source of energy that all things become possible.” – From a Herb Caen column, early 1970’s

I believe that, to some extent, we are all in this room because we are dreamers. I think we value the creative process and want our children to know and value it too. But dreams without action never come true. I think much of what education is, is giving our kids the skills they need to make their dreams come true.

REACH is really a fantastic dream. We are LUCKY! We all have the opportunity and the responsibility to make it real. But by design, this program requires commitment and personal investment. It simply does not happen without it.

This year has presented the Reach Parent Foundation with some small financial challenges. We have 4 classrooms, yet with lower enrollment than we are used to. Our average monthly donation is also lower than it has been, and the cost of the field trips for both children and parent chaperones is being covered by these monthly donations. The field trips make up an enormous part of the budget, – 40%! This cost was paid for by the parents last year in the form of a separate “activity fee” on top of the monthly donation. In developing the budget and the program this year the Board’s intention was to have the monthly donation cover ALL the REACH costs (it even includes allocations to each class for birthday and year-end gifts for teachers). Because of the lower enrollment (66 this year, 94 last) and the lower average monthly donation, we are coming up short.

If there were ever a time when you who might be able to contribute a little extra each month, or make a one-time extra donation to help chip away at our deficit, or if the parents who have kindly signed up for the big overnight field trips could to pay their own way this year... that would be fantastic!

Money is not the only thing that makes this dream a reality, the TIME you give is also essential. If you have not yet found a way to give some time to the REACH program, I encourage you to. It is rewarding beyond words. There are many ways to contribute: driving on field trips and for



Clubs, and supervising the kids during Yard Duty are just a few . . . And we’re still looking for people to help with Volunteer Coordination and Scrip Coordination...

In addition to the great value it provides the program, volunteering brings the personal reward for parents of being an active model for our kids – of showing that making dreams come true requires passion, effort, commitment and action!

REACH cannot flourish without us. Be the dream!
– Cheryl Constantini

(Another view of) King Henry IV

The air was thick with excitement on Friday, Sept. 28 as the REACH 7th and 8th grade classes prepared for the car ride to Dominican College to see the Marin Shakespeare Company perform Henry IV. There were complaints and promises of “See you soon” and “I’ll text you” as people waved out the windows of the cars and scurried about to exchange ipods or music. Then the cars drove away and games of Truth or Dare, loud conversations and music began. Not all enjoyed the drive of course. “I was stuck between Sam and Dylan,” said Thor. “It was incredibly annoying.” But the majority of people seemed to have enjoyed themselves. Said one student, “I had to tell my teacher all sorts of embarrassing stuff.”



Finally, all cars arrived safe and sound and friends reunited after such a “long” time apart. Shelby Tansil read some odd pickup lines and we laughed while Nancy Higham bought us our tickets. We filed into the outdoor theater, grabbing cushions on the way in and sat down on the wooden benches, laughing, joking and telling tales of the car ride. The director made a quick speech and then . . . the play began. The play consisted of a cut version of the first half of Henry IV in which King Henry is facing rebellion from all sides while his son (Hal) wiles away his hours at the Boars Head Tavern where he drinks, jokes and, all in all, acts like a typical lowlife with his best friend POins and the lying, fat, comical drunkard Falstaff.

We ate throughout the play and watched in amazement as the actors wove a tale of intrigue, war, feuds, kings and rebellion before our eyes. The language was difficult to understand but the actors made up for it in body language and diction inflections. When asked what she remembered about the play Xandra said, “Poins (or Ryan Schmidt) was so hot.” He was probably the most common topic of conversation on the way home. – Shelby Triplitt, 8th Grade



Pure Movement

On Friday October 19th, the 4/5 class of REACH had the opportunity to go to the Wells Fargo Center to see a performance of hip hop dancing done by a company called Pure Movement.

The dancers showed us many kinds of hip hop including lock, pop, house, and break. All the dancers were very fluent in the moves. Even though one of them was deaf he seemed to hear the music just like all the others. It was amazing to see them flipping and moving so fast and comfortably. It was great to watch them dance even though there were some pretty tall people sitting in front of us. The music really got everyone into the beat of the dance. There were so many complicated moves it seems like it would have taken them ages to learn all of them!

I loved watching each dancer in turn and seeing them each give their own example of the type of hip hop that they were showing us. I feel really lucky to have been able to see it. Overall I think that it was a great field trip.

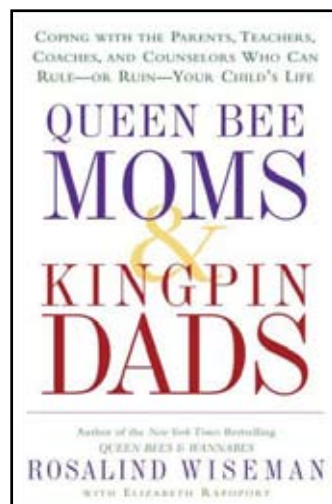
– Alya Bohr, 4th Grade

Author Interview: Rosalind Wiseman

*Queen Bee Moms and Kingpin Dads:
Dealing with the Parents, Teachers, Coaches, and Counselors Who Can Make—or Break—Your Child's Future*

Your New York Times bestseller *Queen Bees & Wannabes* (Crown Publishers, 2002) was a runaway success that strongly resonated with parents of teenage girls. What prompted you to turn from the teenagers' to the parents' perspective?

The inspiration for this book came during a talk I gave to a group of parents. In the middle of my presentation, I noticed that two mothers sitting in the front row were rolling their eyes, sighing, and shaking their heads while one of them whispered, “Not our girls. Not



our girls.” At first all I could think about was how rude these women were, but then I realized that the dynamic among the mothers in that room was strikingly similar to what you’d find in a group of young girls—with one crucial difference. Because they were adults, the Queen Bee moms could act worse than Queen Bee girls because they knew no one would call them out on their behavior. In that moment, I knew that I would write about parents.

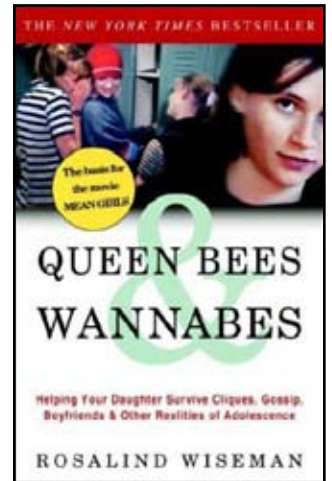
The two most intimidating types of parents you describe are the Queen Bee Mom and the Kingpin Dad. What are some of the most common conflicts that arise involving these types of parents and what are some strategies for dealing with them?

When a Queen Bee Mom or Kingpin Dad hears that their child has been hurtful to another child, a common response is: “Well, I just think she took it the wrong way. My child didn’t mean anything by it and, anyway, that child has always been a little sensitive.” I think it is important to remember that the bullies never get to define how hurtful their (or their children’s) behavior is for the victim. Different people might have different interpretations of an event, but no one gets to question another’s right to their feelings. So get your courage up and deal with the Queen Bee Mom and Kingpin Dad. Tell them exactly what you don’t like, state what you want instead, and then reiterate by telling them how important it is to you that you all work together to fix the problem.

You say that one of the hardest things for parents is knowing when to get involved in a child’s conflicts. Let’s say my child has a misunderstanding or a disagreement with a teacher—either about classroom behavior or about a grade he feels is unfair. How do I decide whether to step in and, if I do step in, what should I keep in mind when I meet with that teacher?

If your child has received a grade he thinks is unfair, he should talk to the teacher, not you. But you can help him prepare for that conversation. First, review the criteria for the assignment or test. Second, have your child articulate his problem with the grade based on the criteria. If your child still believes he’s right to complain, he should arrange to meet with the teacher at a mutually convenient time. This means he shouldn’t spontaneously demand a meeting right before class, during class, or when the teacher is going from one class to another.

The only time you should immediately get involved is if



your child is being insulted, dismissed, or disrespected by the teacher. Have your child write down exactly how she is being treated that she feels is disrespectful and ask her what outcome she would like to see. Arrange a meeting at a time that is convenient for the teacher. Describe the problem, request what you (and your child) would like, and affirm your belief in treating teachers and children with dignity.

You make a point of inviting fathers to take a more active role in their children's lives and in the school community. What do you hope fathers in particular will take away from your book?

First and foremost, I want dads to stop passing the phones to their wives when someone calls about their child. Honestly, there are so many great dads out there, but there are still way too many of them that run away when their child is having a problem with other children. At the same time, I want to give dads the courage to stand their ground when moms interfere because they think the dads aren't doing "it" (whatever "it" is) right. Overall, I want dads to pick up this book and feel that it speaks to them and not just to their wives. I want them to believe that they can and should be involved in the social lives of their children. I'd also like to see fathers stepping up more when they see other dads bully other adults and children.

You say that parents often speak to each other in coded messages. What are some common code phrases parents use and what are they really expressing?

I have a lot, but here are two of my favorites:

- My job as a parent is to protect my kids. Parents love to be the mama or daddy bear. They persuade themselves that they are protecting their children from a life-threatening situation. Too often, though, they end up protecting their children from experiencing frustration, disappointment, or being held accountable for bad behavior.

- My biggest priority is my children. This one never ceases to amaze me because the underlying message is that most other parents don't feel as committed to their children. If another parent says this to you, it's hard to know how to respond. I've been tempted to say, "Really, that's so wonderful for you because I'd rather be watching TV."

According to your book, parents have a moral obligation to speak out when something unfair or contrary to their values takes place in the school community. Tell us about some of the reasons parents typically don't speak up and then tell us what effect that has on their children.

Adults are amazingly good at convincing themselves that they shouldn't speak up, and it's important to look closer at

these rationalizations. Here are three of my favorites:

- I can only change myself; I can't change someone else. While it's true that you can only be responsible for your own behavior, "I can't change anyone else" can easily become an excuse to never confront anyone.

- It'll only make the situation worse. Sure, if you attack the other parent's parenting, competence, and integrity, of course she'll get defensive and attack you right back. But give yourself some credit. With a little preparation and maturity, parents are quite capable of having a conversation that positively addresses the problem.

- I'm not going to stoop to the other person's level. It's critical that parents have the courage to ask themselves what is truly behind this statement. Parents often use this response as a way to assert a moral superiority over the person with whom they are angry. But I think my hands-down favorite is when a Queen Bee Mom or Kingpin Dad stands up at a parent meeting and says, "I think I speak for every parent here when I say . . ." Most other parents sit there silently thinking, "There's no way this person is speaking for me." But very few parents publicly contradict the Queen Bee Mom or Kingpin Dad. Instead we all complain about them to our spouses or friends on the drive home. Instead of complaining, I suggest saying something during the meeting. I know that's the last thing most parents want to do, but unless more of us are willing to speak up, the Queen Bee Mom or Kingpin Dad will succeed in setting the school's agenda. And your child will have to live with the consequences.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Writer's Sampler - Local authors lead lively writing sessions. Through Nov 5, Mon at 7. Oct 29, Lisa Shulman on "Writing for Children from the Inside Out." \$15, 707.829.4797. Sebastopol Center for the Arts, 6780 Depot St, Sebastopol, 707.829.4797, Mon-Fri, 10 to 5; Sat-Sun, 1 to 4.

Tuesdays at the Teahouse - Free performances every Tues at 8. Infusions Teahouse, 6988 McKinley, Sebastopol, 707.829.1181.

Fourth Thurs at 6, Sebastopol Great Books discussion group - 707.829.5643. Coffee Catz, 6761 Sebastopol Ave, Sebastopol, 707.829.6600.

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.

Top Ten Ways to Raise Emotionally Intelligent Kids

- **Model emotional intelligence yourself.** Kids see how you respond to frustration, they see how resilient you are and they see whether you're aware of your own feelings and the feelings of others.
- **Be willing to say "no" to your kids.** There's a lot of stuff out there for kids, and your kids will ask for a lot of it. Saying no will give your kids an opportunity to deal with disappointment and to learn impulse control. To a certain degree, your job as a parent is to allow your kids to be frustrated and to work through it. Kids who always get what they want typically aren't very happy.
- **Be aware of your parental "hotspots."** Know what your issues are -- what makes you come unglued, and what's this really about? Is it not being in control? Not being respected? Underneath these issues lies a fear about something. Get to know what your fear is, so you're less likely to come unglued when you're with your kids
- **Practice and hone your skills at being non-judgmental.** Start labeling feelings and avoid name-calling. Say, "He seems angry," rather than "What a jerk." When your kids are whiny or crying, saying things like, "You seem sad," will always be better than just asking them to stop.
- **Start coaching your kids.** When kids are beyond the toddler years, you can start coaching them to help them to be more responsible. Instead of "Get your hat and gloves," you can ask, "What do you need to be ready for school?" Constantly telling your kids what to do does not help them to develop confidence and responsibility.
- **Always be willing to be part of the problem.** See yourself as having something to do with every problem that comes along. Most problems in families get bigger when parents respond to them in a way that exacerbates the problem. If your child makes a mistake, remember how crucial it is for you to have a calm, reasoned response.
- **Get your kids involved in household duties at an early age.** Research suggests that kids who are involved in household chores from an early age tend to be happier and more successful. Why? From an early age, they're made to feel they are an important part of the family. Kids want to belong and to feel like they're valuable.
- **Limit your kids access to mass media mania.** Young kids need to play, not spend time in front of a screen. To develop creativity and problem-solving skills, allow your kids time to use free play. Much of the mass media market can teach your kids about consumerism, sarcasm and violence. What your kids learn from you and from free play with others will provide the seeds for future emotional intelligence.
- **Talk about feelings as a family.** State your emotional goals as a family. These might be no yelling, no name-calling, be respectful at all times, etc. Families that talk about their goals are more likely to be aware of them and to achieve them.