

REACH

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

Friday, November 21, 2008

A Bi-Weekly Newsletter from the REACH Parent Foundation

Teacher Report on the Empower Training

REACH instructors Claudia Dalessio and Maggie Peters, and Program Director Karen Mirabelli attended a training in Washington, D.C. on the Empower 'Owning Up' curriculum over the Veterans Day school break.

There was great energy and enthusiasm when a group of teachers and counselors came together in Washington D.C. to improve the communication between students and staff through Empower Training. Empower is a program
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REACH Feast!

Parent are encouraged to contribute towards and/or come enjoy our all-school **Thanksgiving Feast and Class Presentations** on Tuesday, Nov. 25 at 12:35 pm. Each classroom needs helpers for set up and clean up and, to keep this a 'green' event, please bring your own utensils, plates, napkins, and beverage of your choice. Check with your class (or Humanities) teacher to find how you can participate.

REACH Winter Social

Mark your calendars for our REACH Winter Social, fun for all!

Saturday, Dec. 6th from 7-10 pm

at the home of Bill and Ann Akers, 408 Pleasant Hill Rd 823-4554

Come partake in this lovely evening and opportunity to connect with your REACH community! Good food and drink, good friends, good time!

Please bring a beverage of your choice and a potluck dish (Dessert provided):

A-L: bring Appetizers L-Z: bring Main dish

Bring your kids to our 8th-grade-sponsored **Activity Night** at the Brook Haven Gym. Kids will enjoy a fun filled evening of organized games and activities as well as a movie and plenty of wholesome snacks.

6:45-10:15pm Cost is \$10 per child, younger siblings ages 6 and up welcome.

Permission slips and advance registration are required. The form is available at school.

www.reach-program.com

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, Nov. 25

REACH Thanksgiving Celebration, All grades

Wednesday - Friday, Nov. 26-28

No School, Thanksgiving

Monday, Dec. 1

WFC *Romeo and Juliet*, 7th & 8th Grades

Saturday, Dec. 6

Winter Social 7-10pm
REACH Parents

Saturday, Dec. 6

Kids Activity Night
6:45 - 10:15pm, Brook Haven Gym

Wednesday, Dec. 10

REACH Parent Foundation, Library 6:30pm
Interested Parents

Friday, Dec. 12

Winter Music Festival Evening

Pledge Reminder!

It's time to get your monthly pledge in! Please drop in the REACH box in the Brook Haven office or mail to: RPF, 708 Gravenstein Hwy N. #203, Sebastopol, CA 95472

“Empower” continued from page 1

that attempts to break down the biases and stereotypes students have of one another and of the adults in their lives. What piqued my interest most was the analytical way in which this program calls for teachers/counselors to address pop culture and the students’ exposure to media and media influences. If we can claim that we are what we eat then certainly students become a great deal of what they view and listen to. Frightening, truly!

Where do we fit? How do we belong? With whom do we belong? Am I popular? Am I part of a group? These are valid questions that both adolescents and adults pose. As human beings we strive to find a place, a group, where we feel we have like-minded interests, where we can feel a certain sameness, belonging. It’s this sameness that motivates students to seek attention from varying peer groups. Empower asks students to take a closer look at how they view themselves and those closest to them. Who are my friends? Are these peers my friends or simply people using me to bridge a gap?

The program provides students with tools to cope with their friendship circles as well as those that remain on the periphery. Empower, quite simply, is a program meant to empower students to become self-motivated, confident, and independent individuals in an ever-changing world.

Having the opportunity to listen to teachers from all over our nation (including one educator from Perth, Australia) was a powerful experience. While we traveled far and wide to attend this conference and though our experiences differed by demographics as well as geography, a common thread united us: the desire to improve students’ predicament, to give them key elements in dealing with social situations. These needs did not change, regardless of the location of the school.

-Claudia Dalessio

Owning Up

“Bullying” is a term that most people know. It is when a person is picked on over and over again by an individual or group with more power, either in terms of physical strength or social standing. Usually bullies choose people whose appearance or social status doesn’t necessarily fit with the norm, and those who bully feel their social standing rise as a result of their maltreatment of others.

In order for bullying to stop, we have to become

aware of what it is, how it originates, and how to prevent it from happening in the first place. Claudia, Karen and I were lucky to be able to learn some of these things from the “Owning Up” training that we attended over the Veteran’s Day holiday. We gained invaluable lessons that we can implement right away about embracing differences in others, taking a stand when others are being bullied, and dealing with anger that results when being bullied.

One of the more compelling aspects of the training, is learning how the media affects who is considered to have “social status”. There are so many subliminal and not-so-subliminal messages telling children what they should do and who they should be in order to be “cool”. Those messages are contained in things ranging from dolls and toys to music lyrics and video games. It takes you back a step when you become aware of the messaging that is inundating our lives.

We returned with some new tactics to help our students grow into more accepting people, who find bullying just as offensive as most adults. We also walked away from the course realizing that bullying is not going to go away unless we inform and teach others about what it is and how to stop it.

-Maggie Peters



October Celebrations

A few weeks ago, REACH parents and students enjoyed a celebration and presentation of the multi-disciplinary projects that all the grades have been working hard on this Fall.

The 4/5 class has been studying Native American tribes, a multi-faceted project for which each student made a costume, built a diorama, wrote a report, made an instrument, and prepared a dish for all to sample as



we toured each station set up by the students.

The 6th grade has been studying Early Man, and parents and students observed a skit of the Discovery of 'Lucy', the first creature from whom humans descended. We also toured various stations run by students in costume. This class's Earth Science scrapbooks on The Earth, Tectonic Plates, Earthquakes,

Volcanoes, Tsunamis, Landslides and Power were also on display.

The 7th graders showed off their scrapbooks from their study of Ancient Rome. We listened to a presentation by the students and admired the stunning mosaics completed under the guidance of Art Teacher Judy Timmerman.



As part of their block on Colonial America, the 8th graders delivered oral presentations and displayed scrapbooks, hand-cut silhouettes and the lovely quilt collage projects (also constructed under Judy's guidance).

The event clearly conveyed that project-based learning is alive and well at REACH!

-Diana Badger

Cubbies

Don't forget the \$10 for cubbies. We have only received two donations so far but have received many more requests for cubbies.

-Karen Mirabelli

8th Graders Comment on Election Day

"I was very happy that Obama won. I do not despise McCain, but I don't think that all of his ways are right. Once Obama took the lead with about 70 electoral votes, I was pretty certain that he would win. McCain's speech was not bad, but Obama's speech was wonderful to my ears. I thought that it was inspirational. Once the president was decided, I focused my attention on Prop 8, which I've been working on with my dad to defeat. I'm really upset that Prop 8 passed, since I can't understand why people are against it for any good, legitimate reasons. It makes me angry."

- Becca Graff

"When I was watching the election on television, I was so happy that Obama was winning over most of the states! Then when I saw McCain's speech, I felt sad because he had worked so hard to win. It seemed to me that some of his own supporters were booing both him and Sarah Palin. I really didn't know who I was going to support for president. I decided that I just wanted to go with the flow."

- Abby Sortino

"I feel that this election will change America. This is a really big leap for our country, and I hope that people can accept Barack Obama as a person and not just as an African American. I just hope that one day all people can be accepted for more than just the color of their skin, so that everyone can share in the American dream."

- Hana Rabin

"I was so happy when they said Obama won! I was relieved we wouldn't be in the hands of another Republican! I think having Obama will be a great and memorable change for our nation. And it's amazing that people have overcome their feelings towards African Americans, and decided this is what's best for our nation."

- Maya Matsumoto

Notes on Tweens

The November 5th parent meeting featured speakers John Alilovich and Judy Fiermonte, therapists and educators who specialize in children and families. The two talked about tweens, solicited questions from parents and spoke to a wide range of developmental and social topics as well as issues like adoption, exposure to drugs, and parent-child relationships. The following is excerpted from John Alilovich's handout on tweens:

Understanding Your Tween (ages 8-13)

Tweens are children who need and don't need; it takes some time and effort to understand them and their needs.

- They are already trying to get free of the family. They try to learn things for themselves.
- They try to master skills without help. They don't expect much help from parents in most of their tasks.
- They have a propensity to grow stronger psychologically and begin keeping emotions at bay; their spotlight shifts to the world around them.
- There are lots of physical changes that set in slowly and at a rapid pace. At the end of their tweens they are in puberty.
- Emotions sway between tears for no reason to attempts to control situations by themselves and proving they are strong. Parents are easy targets and all emotions turn into arguments with parents.
- Girls love to look their best; comparisons begin and gradually turn to competition which can lead to ego issues among friends. Parents hear more complaints about peers.
- They love alone time.

Tween Parenting

Tweens can act like teenagers, but want attention like children. It can be hard to figure out what your tween really wants.

- Tweens seem to get upset at anything and everything—this is the time when parents should support them instead of losing their cool.
- Do not interfere too much; too much exercise of parental authority makes tweens grow hostile. They should feel the presence of your support without interference.
- Your child wants to be more independent and

Join The New Reach Fundraising Committee!!

The impact of these economic times is being felt in many sectors including the REACH Parent Foundation budget. To offset the trend we see in reduced donations and still maintain the current level of fantastic offerings, we've decided to pursue two courses of action: raise more money and utilize more parent and community volunteers.

At the last RPF board meeting, as we brainstormed ideas, it became clear that we needed a separate committee to address this issue. The task of this group will be to identify and implement ways to generate money for our program and find new ways of involving parents and the greater community.

Paula Peterson has already offered to be on the committee. (yea Paula!!) We would meet once every two to three weeks for the next few months. Please call or email Cheryl Costantini (823-0950) if you would like to join. We're bound to have some fun!!

enjoy more liberty at home—she might want to be left alone at home or allowed to go off on her own when out. Reassure yourself that your child is ready for such an ordeal. If you feel confident enough, give her the chance after ensuring her safety. This will make him feel confident and more comfortable towards you. Remember, though, that although your tween may be acting like a teenager, he or she is not yet one, which means monitoring from a distance is needed.

- The main issue with tweens is their ever-altering emotions. Give them their time, understand their problems, talk to them and make them feel comfortable with you so they are willing to confide.
- Talk to your tween freely and ask the questions which keep the conversation flowing beyond mere "yes" and "no" answers.
- Let your tween express feelings.
- Learn to relax while handling your tween—this will help you both feel more at ease with each other.

-John Alilovich, MFT, 537-6832

Interview with Fencing Teacher Jim Liebich

By Rachelle Steele



Moniteur Jim Liebich has been fencing competitively for ten years in the Bay Area. In the 2005 Summer Nationals, Jim placed 7th in the Division III Men's Epee competition, out of 167 fencers. In 1999, Jim began coaching at the Sonoma Fencing Academy and eventually earned his

Moniteur teaching degree from the prestigious French Fencing Federation. He is currently working on his Provost degree and teaching the Fencing Club at REACH.

REACH: What do you like best about teaching your art form?

JL: I love teaching students who are enthusiastic because we actually give each other a lot of energy. I love that feeling of excitement when a new student is learning to fence! I also love just being able to share fencing, which is very important to me.

REACH: What is the most challenging aspect of teaching?

JL: Getting people to understand that fencing is not something you can learn in a month. It's not like in the movies; it takes patience and self-discipline. You need to do the work incrementally, it's not like suddenly you are really good.

REACH: Tell me something I may not know about you...

JL: I was the first person in my family to fence and it was also my first athletic endeavor. I have also fenced against Franck Boidin, who took 3rd place in men's foil at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. He was a great fencer and also a really nice guy.

REACH: Do you teach anywhere else?

JL: Oh yes, I have my own fencing club in Santa Rosa and I also teach at SSU and a few other schools. I try to keep busy.

REACH: Have you ever had a public showing or performance of your art?

JL: I compete all during fencing season, September - June. The weapon I compete with is an epee.

REACH: What's the most fun you've had practicing?

JL: I've had a lot of really fun



Classified Announcements

Hello families!

My name is Maya Matsumoto. I am a current 8th grader at REACH, and was wondering if anyone needed a babysitter? I am free most days and love hanging out with kids! My rate is \$6.50 an hour.

I'm fun and am friends with a majority of your children, so getting to know each other will be fun and easy! You can contact me through my home phone number, 707-823-0950.

Thank you!

For future issues, please send any community events, items for sale, services to offer, and other classified announcements of interest to the REACH community to Laurie Rubin at earthlaurie@earthlink.net



bouts, especially fencing Olympic level fencers; they're at a totally different skill level. It feels amazing to be able to fence people who are that accomplished. It would be as if you were playing soccer and a really famous guy like Beckham came by and

joined your game.

REACH: What do you most want people to come away with from your classes?

JL: I want them to enjoy the experience of fencing, whether or not they continue with it. If they have a positive experience, then they can pass it on to someone else. In my opinion, the more people that know about fencing the better.

REACH: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

JL: All the rules we have today came from the rules created in dueling and the dueling code was very strict. Defending your honor was very serious business. The dueling code was written by fencing masters and approved by European Royalty. Over the past century, dueling has lost its relevance so fencing became a sport.

I like teaching the REACH program, the kids are enthusiastic, and they are there because they really want to be there. There should be more athletic and extracurricular activities in all schools.

Photos courtesy of Rachelle Steele



Window Into the Classroom: 4/5 Student Updates

New Math Program

In the beginning of November, director Karen Mirabelli ordered new math worksheets for the 4/5 kids. Teacher Mrs. Peters and the kids have been getting along much smoother during math time.

At Brook Haven in Sebastopol this math miracle is all thanks to Karen Mirabelli. The kids get a worksheet everyday and learn how to do the various math problems and then they try doing the math problems by themselves.

There are two sides to the math worksheet. On one side there are math problems that they do in class. On the back there is homework for the evening. If they don't finish the in-class side of the page, that is also homework. This program is very good for the 4/5, so the teacher and kids can learn the program at the same time!

—Noah Kriegler Allen (5th Grade)

Question and Answer Boards

Last Friday Magi Discoe came and taught science. The children started to make Q and A boards.

They are made out of foam board, Christmas lights, wire and brads. The children started to strip the ends of a skinny battery and taped it to the board and took one end of the wire and taped it on the battery. Then the children put questions near a brad and put the wire from the question brads. Magi helped by bringing in supplies. The point of a question and answer board is to have the light light up when you have the right answer. This is a very good way to learn about electricity and circuits.

—Jaida Steere (4th Grade)

Book Reports

Our class is doing book reports on any book we want that is in our class library. Our class has been working for several days. I hope we will do some more. We are mostly reading chapter books. We have to have a book with one hundred pages or more. We will be doing it for a month. That's a long time to read a book! What we will do after reading is make a cereal box book report that we will share with our class. It is a good way of reading books in class.

—Ash Rand-McNeil (4th Grade)