

California Association of Independent Schools
Faculty Newsletter Fall/Winter 2005

CONNECTING WITH THE EARTH AND ITS PEOPLE



INSIDE:

It IS Easy Being Green

Environmental Education in Our Backyard

Little Green Schoolhouse

Tracking Bats and Mission Statements

From Local to Global: Young Women Empowered

...and more

*From the Editor*

“He had always thought of the sea as la mar which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her.” – The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

The year 2005 began in the aftermath of a cataclysmic tsunami, and has been blasted into autumn by a procession of disasters: hurricanes, and a catastrophic earthquake. Mother Nature has taken center stage.

Whatever was, or was not done that could have been, or whatever meaning people make of it, one of the things that seems clear is that we can choose to see nature as the old man saw the sea, or we can see her as the younger fisherman saw her, as “*el mar* which is masculine.” In this view the sea, and by extension Mother Nature, becomes “a contestant or a place or even an enemy.”

The NAIS conference in San Diego last February promoted the old man’s view in its theme, “Educating for Sustainability.” Eight faculty members from Turning Point School in Culver City returned to school so inspired that they formed the “Green Team,” a voluntary committee of interested faculty and administration with the mission to promote sustainability in classrooms and around campus. Matthew Kline shares the details.

In other articles, you will see how CAIS schools are responding to the challenge of sustainability while, increasingly, finding new ways to serve and learn globally as well as locally. Rather than contesting with our fellow inhabitants of planet Earth over a scarcity of ever more quickly disappearing resources, the schools represented by our authors are choosing to work in partnership with them – and with Mother Nature.

Leading the way from its founding day onward, Midland School in Los Olivos was a “sustainable” school before we had a word for it. The commitment to living with minimal consumption, and in harmony with Nature continues to this day as Lise Goddard, Director of Environmental Programs, explains in her article about “being green” at Midland.

Calmont School, a small elementary school in the Santa Monica Mountains for more than fifteen years has offered ongoing environmental education programs for all students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Weekly hikes into the canyons behind the school, while learning about ecology and environmental stewardship along the way, is the basis of these programs. Third grade teacher James Cinnamo gives details.

Environmental education at the Prospect Sierra School in El Cerritos is integrated with service learning, and Kathryn Lee, Director of Service Learning, and parent Deborah Moore, Executive Director of the Green Schools Initiative, tell us how. Further, Kim Wynn shows us that service learning isn’t just for the students, and Matt Allio links teacher professional development with school mission statements. Robert Kostrzeski sees a similar link between Drew School’s mission statement and co-leading a trip to Senegal. Karen Tobey shows us how Castilleja School combines the arts and community service, collaboration with a school in nearby East Palo Alto, and acting both locally and globally by “Dancing for a Difference.”

Disasters have a way of reminding us that “we are the world,” and that’s a good thing. They can also make the world seem a fearful place to our youngest students. Jami Wagner provides some ideas as to how we can “bring the outside in” and help our students cope with it. Finally, tickling funny bones and tugging at heartstrings, Laura Burges shares a few “notes from the front,” as she calls her delightful piece, reminding us of the joys of our profession.

Please take a moment to acknowledge, as we do with much gratitude, the two committees CAIS depends on to help plan and execute two bedrock programs which we annually produce - the Regional Meeting which this year will take place on March 13, 2006 in the South - and the Professional Days occurring this year in the North.

Don’t forget to check our new website at www.caisca.org. More information about our professional development programs may be found there. We hope to see you this year at our events!

— Sandee Mirell

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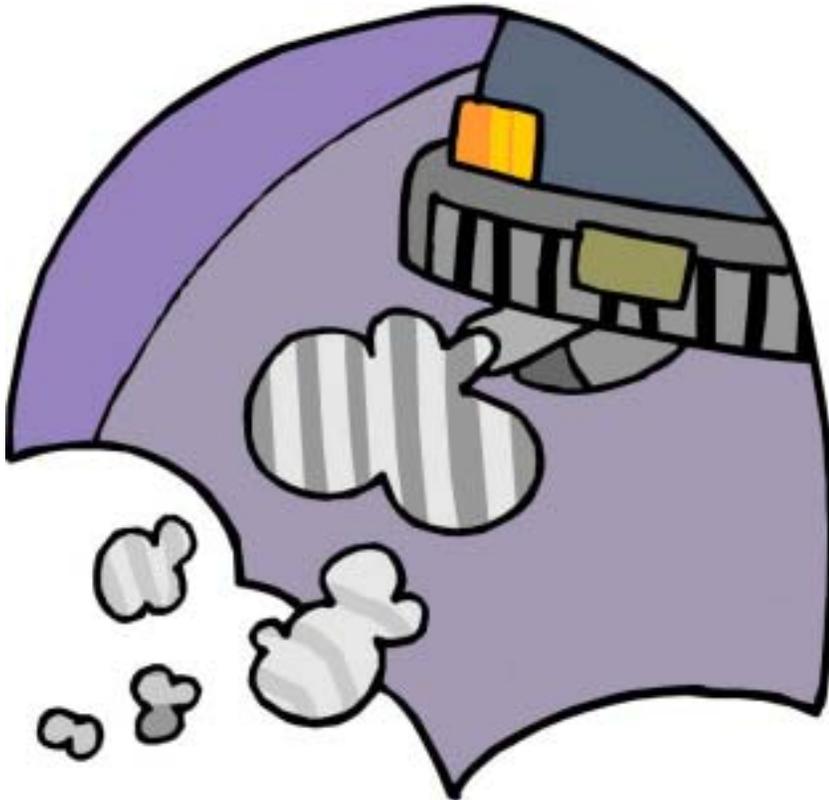


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NAIS conference
on sustainability
provides inspiration

The Green Team

by Matt Kline, Gaby Akana, and Jenny Quan

Level 5 teachers

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Last February, Turning Point School sent eight faculty members to various sessions and workshops at the NAIS Annual Conference in San Diego. The focus of the conference was *Educating For Sustainability: How Far Will You Go?* Faculty members who attended the conference came back inspired and excited about new ideas and possibilities. A voluntary committee of interested faculty and administration was formed to promote sustainability in our classrooms and around our campus. We call ourselves the Green Team!

Our first task was to examine the effectiveness of our carpool effort. Level 5 students gathered carpool data over the course of a week. The results showed that about 12% of our families carpoled at least once a week (not including our 5 bus routes). All involved parties agreed that if we could increase this percentage, families, the busy freeways, and the earth could enjoy the benefits. To generate awareness we organized a *High*

Performance Carpool Day. We were able to double the number of carpools on that day, but even more importantly, there were people who realized for the first time the ease and convenience of a carpool. As a follow up, the enrollment packet for this 2005-2006 included a list of possible carpool match-ups for each family.

So far this year there has been a significant increase in carpooling. It is not uncommon for faculty to open the doors during morning drop-off and see children from as many as four different families come tumbling out! Buoyed by the success of our first endeavor, the Green Team is now working on promoting *No Waste Lunches*, starting a composting effort, and creating an Eco-Garden. Additionally, the Level 5 teachers have initiated a new program called *Footprints: Spotlight on Sustainability*. Keep an eye out for a workshop on sustainability at the Southern Regional Meeting on March 13, 2006.

A school stays true
to its roots
& leads
the way
in sustainability



It IS Easy Being Green at Midland School

by Lise Schickel Goddard

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Crowning a year of accomplishments on the leading edge of educating about sustainability, Midland School in Los Olivos, CA, was awarded a 2005 Santa Barbara County Green Award. The Green Awards recognize Santa Barbara County businesses and organizations for outstanding environmental efforts.

The most exciting part for Midland is that faculty and students are merely living out the school's mission and philosophy, a statement remarkable in its clarity, which includes the following words: simplicity, self-reliance, responsibility to community and environment, distinguishing between needs and wants, authentic student leadership, love for the outdoors, and stewards of the Earth.

WHY BE GREEN?

Founded in 1932, Midland provides college preparatory education to a diverse student body on a working ranch where daily maintenance needs are met by faculty and students. Midland's founder, Paul Squibb, wrote in 1957, "money, light, heat, and water are not things that flow

naturally out of pipes but are things for which somebody has to spend time and thought and energy..." Squibb understood that conserving natural resources depends on a way of life where basic needs are not met by casually flipping a switch, unaware of the cascade of impacts felt many miles away.

WHAT IS GREEN?

In keeping with this philosophy, Midland's faculty recently restructured the curriculum to more fully integrate environmental sustainability. Our experiential curriculum uses the natural environment, including Midland's 2,860 acres, as a classroom. Team-taught multidisciplinary core courses and electives, (such as Midland 101, on local topography, ecology and history, geology; Water and the West; Naturalist Studies; and Conservation and Agriculture), a senior thesis requirement, and grade-level thematic units like native vs. non-native landscapes, renewable energy, and the implications of public vs. private ownership of resources, engage multiple disciplines. Theory meets practice at Mid-

“Squibb understood that conserving natural resources depends on a way of life where basic needs are not met by casually flipping a switch, unaware of the cascade of impacts felt many miles away.”



Photo: Don Reel, Midland School

Midland sophomores hosted a free community workshop on the technical, environmental, economic, and practical aspects of solar energy in Spring 2005.

land. Our curriculum is supported by hands-on projects, including a large organic garden and native valley oak restoration. Students are encouraged to monitor water and energy use, to conserve both, and to recycle.

SOLAR ENERGY

Midland, which now meets about 5% of its campus energy consumption with solar, has completed two years of photovoltaic (PV) installations and plans to engage successive sophomore classes until much or most of the campus is powered by the sun. In 2005, as part of an innovative unit in chemistry, sophomores helped install a 3-kilowatt PV grid intertie system, took steps to conserve energy on campus, and then became teachers about the process, putting into practice the slogan, “Think globally, act locally.”

They wrote technical reports on how PV systems work. Thinking globally about solar energy included visiting a local gas-burning power plant.

Acting locally included participating in a campus energy audit guided by a Pacific Gas & Electric foreman. Compact fluorescent bulbs were installed throughout campus, and proposals written to Midland’s Board of Trustees asking for replacement of school washing machines with ENERGY STAR machines.

Additionally, Midland hosted a well-attended free community workshop on solar energy. Every sophomore enrolled in chemistry gave a brief talk, collectively describing how power plants generate electricity, how PV cells work, the environmental effects of burning fossil fuels, why solar makes ecological and economic sense, and ways to conserve energy. Author John Perlin gave the keynote address on solar water heating. The entire project was featured this past summer in *Solar Today Magazine*.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

Sustainability, or meeting present

needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is a genuine challenge, as it requires "... a radically reordered building process. In America today 30 to 35 percent of all energy use can be traced back to the decisions of architects," (Butchart, *The Art of Natural Building*, 2002).

Currently Midland's most ambitious and innovative project is the sustainable design and building with our students of a Compressed Earth Block (CEB) faculty house, which will be the first permitted house of its kind in Southern California. CEB, which is like adobe, is a load-bearing material, and this challenges a paradigm in conventional building that woodframing is necessary.

We are learning some of the inherent difficulties in designing and building a prototype. The original plans earned the highest commendation possible by Santa Barbara's Innovative Building Review Program (IBRP), and we have just been issued a permit for grading and building. However, to keep within our budget, we must simplify the plans. Occupy

ing a smaller building footprint, our Plan B, which will also incorporate passive solar heating and cooling, locally procured materials with low embodied energy, PV system, solar water heating, non-toxic and recycled materials, and rainwater catchment, will be even more green. The philosophy and building of this house are integrated into a course called Sustainable Building. This project was motivated in part by a compelling senior thesis, whose author deferred college for a year to co-teach the class. Faculty and students will build it alongside professionals. In addition to practical lessons in building, we are learning about the complexities of our county's permitting process, and are practicing perseverance.

HOW ARE WE DOING IT?

Under BP America's "A+ for Energy" program, we were awarded two \$10,000 grants in 2004 and 2005 to install PV grid intertie systems with students and to develop a campus energy plan. The first funded the 3-kW PV system that ties into the utility meter at the school's kitchen,



Ben Munger, Lise Goddard, and David Lourie accepted Midland's 2005 Santa Barbara Green Award for outstanding environmental efforts.

while the second will fund the new faculty house's 2-kW PV system, which will meet or exceed the house's electricity demands.

This year, we were awarded a \$50,000 grant from the EE Ford Foundation to help fund the building of the Compressed Earth Block faculty house. Requiring a matching component, the EE Ford grant will motivate donations from Midland's extended community.

We prepared for these projects with pilot projects in 2003-04, including a small off-grid PV system that powers lights in the student commons room, and a solar well pump designed and installed as a senior thesis project to meet needs for irrigation and fire reserve. These projects taught us practical lessons and likely made Midland a more compelling grantee by demonstrating our commitment to mastering solar education as a process, not a one-time outcome. These projects have fostered student appreciation of how PV cells work and why the world needs them, challenged conventional building paradigms, and forged partnerships in our community. It's easy to be green at Midland School!



Midland students making Compressed Earth Blocks in a hydraulic press powered by biodiesel.

Photo: Lise Goddard

An oak woodland site in the midst of L.A.
inspires ongoing environmental
education program

Environmental Education in Our Backyard

by James Cinnamo

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Calmont School is situated in oak woodland between two creeks on twenty magnificent acres in the Santa Monica Mountains of Topanga. One of the creeks drops fifty feet through a series of waterfalls and then gently flows through sandstone rock pools. The back of the school is wilderness. Here, on the surprisingly wild edge of Los Angeles, Jon Earl and Ellen Petty have been sharing a deep appreciation of the natural world with our students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Each week for one hour, Jon and Ellen take the students on hikes into the canyons behind the school, and teach them about the ecology and stewardship of our environment.

In 1989, Jon and Ellen began *Rhapsody in Green*, a nonprofit conservation organization, bringing together scientists working to save the environment with volunteers from all over Southern California. That same year, they decided it wasn't enough to just do restoration, especially if people in the future didn't care about it. They approached us here at Calmont, with an idea for an ongoing environmental education program for elementary school kids.

"It was our *Rhapsody in Green* work with Dr. Rudi Mattoni, a famous butterfly scientist from UCLA, that especially shaped our initial approach," says Ellen. "Through Dr. Mattoni we learned just how important the native plants are to the environment and how each of us could make a difference if we became more aware,

gained knowledge, and then got in and did some hard work. But it was the Calmont School site itself that provided the heart, soul, and inspiration for our ideas to come alive."

"Awareness is the starting point in every grade that we teach," says Ellen. "The changing parade of nature through the seasons delights and focuses a child's awareness. There is unbelievable variety and freshness about it. It speaks without words and is powerful and unforgettable."

In October, the students make bread from the acorn crop and dine on red cactus fruits. November and December rains bring movement and life to the creeks and pools. The kids hike up the hill and smooth-out areas of sand, where the following week they find footprints of deer, raccoon, ringtail, quail and more. Bluebirds hang out for the winter. Frogs and turtles appear. Spring brings a wonderland of wildflowers. The kids wash their hands with flowers of blue *ceanothus*, the "soap plant." They hear the distinctive sound of red-winged blackbirds sitting in the willows at pond's edge. Spectacular scarlet buglers ornament the walk up the hill past the Art and Science building.

"Every kind of flower is a potential lesson," says Jon. "Chinese houses, a beautiful purple and white wildflower, was the food plant in this canyon for the caterpillars of the *quino checkerspot*—a butterfly that was

once plentiful in southern California. Shockingly, it's now gone from all of LA and approaching extinction." So, while Jon and Ellen's *Rhapsody in Green* traveled to San Diego to help start an effort to rescue the butterfly in its final survival areas, at Calmont, the kids spread seeds of Chinese houses in hopes that the butterfly will one day return.

Hope is a mainstay of Jon & Ellen's program. "We know that kids will always be hearing about problems in the world—especially problems with the environment," says Jon. "With restoration, we saw a way out. If the kids participate in solving problems by, for instance, removing milk thistle, a weed from Europe that threatens the local environment, or, by planting willow trees, the world and their life make a lot more sense."

Three years ago, students began a project that could have national ramifications. They cut down *arundo donax* near the parking lot. *Arundo*, an exotic invasive plant, is the biggest threat to the environment in all of Topanga Canyon and in many areas across the country. Government officials only see one way to get the *arundo* out and that's to poison it with repeated applications of powerful herbicides.

"From our experience at *Rhapsody in Green*, we knew there was another way—hard work!" says Jon. By cutting the *arundo* and continuing to cut it every time it comes back up, we exhaust the plant. Each kid was assigned his or her own plot. After two years, the *arundo* was gone—its dead roots remaining behind to hold the creek banks."

Besides their local work, students have raised money to save rainforest acres in Central America, sent letters around the world about various issues such as saving Olive Ridley Turtles in India. And, a few years ago, they wrote letters to the State of California to save an impor-

"Each week for one hour,
 Jon and Ellen take the students
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 and teach them about the
ecology and **stewardship**
 of our environment."



tant pond situated near the school. Zuniga Pond was saved by the state after that. "I think our letters helped," says Ellen.

Jon and Ellen lead a special field trip for each grade every year. One grade does a fossil-dig up at the top of Topanga where they find 16 million-year old *turitellas*, clams, shark's teeth and much more. Another class goes out to Pt. Dume on the Malibu coast in April, to watch gray whales heading north. "From the cliffs above, we're so close that we can hear the whales breathe," says Ellen.

Environmental education programs can be fun, but sometimes are criticized for being too scattered, touching here and there on various subjects, often without a final destination. In recent years, the whole purpose of environmental education has been questioned as to its circumspection. Who are "they" to decide who the "bad guys" are in society, is a common fear. Jon acknowledges these complaints and says he and Ellen are not there to "program" kids with our "conclu-

sions." "We mostly give the kids questions, the kind of questions we all face throughout our lives, and see what answers they come up with!"

Jon and Ellen's *Rhapsody in Green* work with endangered species led to a Special Award from the United States Secretary of the Interior in 1996, one of two awards that Secretary Babbitt flew out here personally to present. Through example, through education, and through involvement, they hope to increase nature's chance for survival on this planet. The other day, the kindergarten class was out collecting acorns that had fallen on pavement, to plant on a barren hillside. A scrub jay was squawking loudly from atop an old oak.

"Oh, I think he's worried that we might be taking some of his acorns," said Jon.

"He'll be happy when he sees we're planting them," said a 5-year old. When the kids started planting, sure enough, the scrub jay stopped and just quietly watched. Another one of those lessons without words.

Adults realize that practices at their school did not provide a healthy and sustainable model for kids to follow – and do something about it.



The Little “Green” Schoolhouse

by Kathryn Lee, Director of Service Learning, and

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One in five Californians spends their day in a K-12 school: kids, teachers, administrators, janitors, and parent volunteers, all inhabiting a separate, hopefully idyllic, but often idealized, world-within-our-world. Yet, we are finding that these worlds, these idyllic environments – where we send our children to learn and develop – are often unhealthy and unsustainable. A growing body of research is showing that the poor environment at schools is a detriment to children’s health and learning: from the use of toxic pesticides and cleaners to poor indoor air quality that exacerbates childhood asthma, from unhealthy school lunches that contribute to childhood obesity to inadequate outdoor recreation facilities and gardens, from inefficient energy use to lack of recycling.¹

Ultimately, the school environment is a microcosm of society’s broader environmental and health problems. Our efforts to teach our children healthy habits, stew-

ardship, and leadership often fall into the “do as I say, not as I do” mantra, since the health and environmental practices at schools do not necessarily provide a healthy and sustainable model for kids to follow. These are in contrast to children’s natural affinity for and love of nature, animals, and “doing good.”

At Prospect Sierra School, a K-8 school in El Cerrito, California, we have been working for several years to deepen our service-learning program as part of our effort to fully embody our school motto “developing heart, mind, and community.” We developed a curriculum guide for the program, called “Caring for People and Places.” The theme has provided enough breadth and flexibility that the diversity of teachers’ passions and kids’ interests can be captured. The curriculum was designed to integrate service-learning topics into the existing grade-level curricula, as well as provide some school-wide coherence across a K-8 school with two

campuses and approximately 250 children and 400 parents.

Growing experience with service learning programs now shows a whole range of demonstrated benefits, including fewer behavioral problems, improved academic achievement and higher-order thinking skills, and stronger ties to schools and communities.² Combining service learning efforts with a focus on environmental education and "greening the school" – basically using the school environment itself as the focus of such programs – offers the perfect opportunity to engage kids, teachers, administrators and parents in hands-on, place-based projects that will directly improve their own health and the sustainability of their daily environment, as well as contribute to protecting our global environment. Using kids' analyses in making changes at school is empowering,

and mobilizes kids to apply their experiences outside of school as well.

Key components of the Prospect Sierra program are grade-level classroom work, connections with the school or wider community, monitoring and evaluation, and opportunities for reflection on and celebration of the efforts. The topics include

- watershed restoration at an adjacent park
- building a school garden on both campuses
- raising awareness about local birds and animals
- reducing, reusing, recycling, and rotting (including a worm compost for lunch-food-waste and switching to recycled paper and other products)
- partnering with local schools for kids with physical and learning challenges
- honoring local seniors through an oral history project.

Students spiral back around to various topics at different ages, gaining a deeper understanding of the issues as their capacity for thought and action grows. For example, students study organic gardening, farming and farm workers in both first and sixth grades.

For the last few years, the fourth and fifth graders have taken the lead in analyzing the school's garbage and paper waste. They have conducted audits, weighing and analyzing trash from lunch, paper recycled, and garbage from a monthly school-wide "pizza day." They have designed and implemented new systems for school recycling, educated the school community, and presented proposals to school administrators and the parent association.

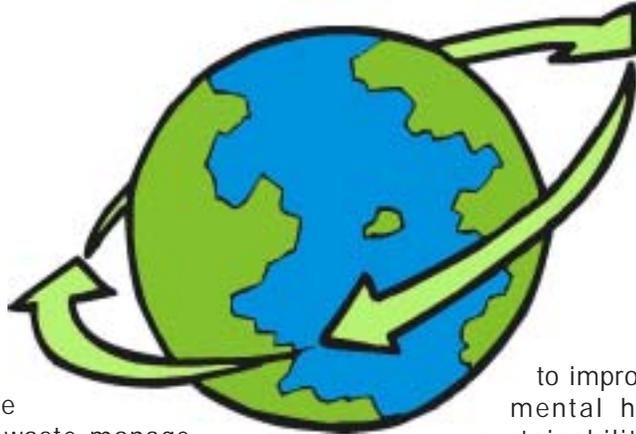
The *Recycling Times* newsletter produced by fourth graders last year (on 100% recycled paper) challenged families to pack a waste-free lunch and provided tips on how to do it complete with recycling comics and puzzles. Fourth graders also produced a skit called, *Stop! In the Name of Earth* (with music and dance moves), to educate the whole lower school campus about how to recycle, including what to put in the worm compost bin.

Fifth graders did a cost-benefit analysis of the school's switching to different types of recycled paper, examining price differentials, how many trees would be saved, and how much pollution would be avoided. They made beautiful cards out of handmade recycled paper from their classroom and sold them, raising \$250 for the school to partially offset the higher cost of buying recycled paper. These efforts were ultimately rewarded with a \$1,000 cash



Prospect Sierra's current 4th graders are conducting an audit, weighing the garbage and recycling of an average day to measure the school's improvement over previous years.

“Fifth graders did a cost-benefit analysis of the school’s switching to different types of recycled paper, examining price differentials, how many trees would be saved, and how much pollution would be avoided.”



prize from the county’s waste management authority!

This year, the school community is adopting “Greening Our School” as a more visible campaign. New efforts will include: creating an elective at the middle school focusing on school greening efforts, inviting inspiring speakers to assemblies, creating community-wide participation through developing a “school environment and justice ethos,” and establishing a Green Team (comprised of parents, teachers, students, and administrators) to facilitate ongoing initiatives. Hurricane Katrina’s devastation occurred just as our school year started, and we are now integrating hurricane relief efforts and understanding environmental justice issues into our Service Learning Program this year, as well.

Teacher Kathryn Lee, and parent and environmental professional, Deborah Moore have led the work at Prospect Sierra. Deborah was so motivated by participating in the development of Prospect Sierra’s program that she has since co-founded the Green Schools Initiative to help catalyze and support efforts

to improve environmental health and sustainability at other public and independent schools.

The Green Schools Initiative’s first report, *The Little Green Schoolhouse: Thinking Big About Ecological Sustainability, Children’s Environmental Health, and K-12 Education in the USA* and website – www.greenschools.net – document how *unhealthy* and *unsustainable* schools are today and provide a framework for transforming our schools based on the Precautionary Principle, which advocates a policy of anticipatory action to prevent harm. The report provides a sample school board resolution, specific recommendations for action, and resources, curricula, and tools to support local actions. We want to reach out to other schools, share experiences, and build a network of “green schools” supporting collective action, building market power for “green alternatives” like recycled paper, non-toxic cleaners, bio-diesel buses, or solar energy, and advocating for healthy and sustainable schools.

We believe it is a necessity to protect children’s health and the environment – at school and in the world outside of school. By empowering kids through service learning programs, we believe we are giving them the tools to transform the world. We hope to collaborate with you on making this dream a reality! 

¹ “The Little Green Schoolhouse: Thinking big about ecological sustainability, children’s environmental health, and K-12 education in the USA,” by Joshua Karliner, The Green Schools Initiative, March 2005. Available on-line at www.greenschools.net.

² “Impacts of Service Learning on Participating K-12 Students,” by RMC Research Corporation, December 2002, updated July 2005. http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts/



Teacher's goal to get out of her usual frame of reference leads her to summer service in Thailand.

Deciding to Serve

by Kim Wynn

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I once read that on any given day a classroom teacher makes almost as many decisions as an air traffic controller. As my summer vacation was approaching last spring, I knew I had to make another decision, but this one was for me. How did I want to spend my sacred time from June to August? Aside from the list of things that had been put off during the school year - and jury duty, I knew this summer was going to be different.

For many years now, the idea of volunteering abroad has called out to me.

My goal was to get out of my frame of reference and to be truly in touch with the world around me - not just from watching the news or reading the newspaper, but from experiencing it myself. I knew wherever I ended up, it was going to be challenging. I would have to break open my own cultural stereotypes, and practice selflessness at a higher level.

After much research, I settled on Cross-Cultural Solutions (www.crossculturalsolutions.org), a New York-based international volunteer service organization that provides health care and teaching services in over ten countries. One of their goals is to empower individuals

to bring about a positive change in the world. Being a teacher, I thought this was a perfect match. My next objective was to seek funding. I wrote a proposal and was selected to receive a grant from Fund for Teachers (www.fundforteachers.org), a non-profit organization providing educational grants to teachers for summer study.

Cut to July 30, 2005. I have landed in Bangkok, Thailand. I am staying in a house with 20 volunteers from the United States, Canada, Australia and the U.K. The home is located in the Bangsue district, which is known for its woodworking. The in-country staff is professional, friendly and accommodating.

The service component of my volunteer work also involved cultural exchange. I would have to fully immerse myself in the Thai culture. I was placed for one week at an elementary school with two other volunteers. This was followed by two weeks at a hospital. The school was located at a *wat* (Buddhist temple) in a working class neighborhood. The level of English spoken was little to none.

The kids treated me like a rock star, wanting my

autograph, and to shake hands each day. A young girl, Sakom, approached me humbly while bowing her head towards her hands, which were held in a prayer like position. She politely said, "Please teacher, may I go out?" I had no idea where she was going. I soon learned that she was asking me to use the bathroom.

At the hospital, I worked primarily with nurses and customer service, as well as pharmacists and massage therapists. My purpose was to teach English conversation, especially pronunciation. This was an unforgettable experience. The doctors and the anesthesiologist were anxious to practice their English. They invited me to sit in on numerous surgeries. One of these observations included brain surgery. That was an education!

I also had a responsibility to teach a two-hour class daily. Initially, I did not think I knew what I was doing. The medical environment was unfamiliar, but I was quickly made to feel welcome and accepted. During a class, Ning, a nurse asked, "What is the difference between want and need?" She was simply inquiring about how to ask a patient if he/she needed a wheelchair, but to me it was a much more profound question. In Thailand, most everything is a need, but to me, a fourth grade teacher from Culver City, CA, it was clear that I had some thinking to do.

Another component of my volunteering included learning from the community in which I worked. This was referred to as Perspectives Programming. I was given an opportunity to learn about the local culture and customs, and to understand how communities develop. These activities included a visit to some of Bangkok's most beautiful *wats*, a boat trip through a lotus field, spending time at an AIDS hospice, a Thai



The staff at Kasemrad Hospital was overwhelmingly kind, supportive and eager to exchange cultures.

cooking lesson, being enlightened by a Buddhist monk, and language lessons.

Phra Anil Sakya, the Buddhist monk I was introduced to shared the following words of wisdom as he drank a cup of tea: "If you hold this cup for too long, your arm will eventually get tired, your wrist will weaken, and the mug will become quite heavy. If you resist this, it only becomes more difficult. Try to see things as they are. Things are always changing. Try to give up your attachments. Let it go. Don't be a stupid monk holding a coffee cup." I found this anecdote to be something worth remembering especially when I returned to the States and entered my classroom in September.

I also found time to travel. I chose to head south to Koh Phi Phi Island, and volunteer my time helping with tsunami cleanup. I also went north to Chiangmai. It did not take long to fall in love with what is called the "Land of Smiles."

Thailand, the country, is extraordinarily beautiful, but it is the people

I will remember most. The energy is a combination of chaos and simplicity. The Thai people live by what is called *mai pen rai*. This translates to "no problem/no worries." Nothing is ever any trouble. The Thai in-country director from Cross-Cultural Solutions remarked, "Things are not taken too seriously in Thailand, yet everything is done with care, genuine interest, and awareness." I learned more than I ever imagined about cultural understanding, service learning, social responsibility and compassion.

On August 20, 2005, I returned to the United States with a new perspective. I am a more careful listener, more in tune with what I consider and know to be important. My experience has left me forever changed. Educating this next generation about tolerance, acceptance, citizenship and respect is at the forefront of my teaching. One more decision I have chosen to make. I know one thing for certain: my decision about what to do next summer has already been made.

“Unconventional” professional development in Malaysia brings meaning to mission statements

Tracking Bats and Mission Statements

by Matt Allio

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I've always been interested in how professional development truly merges with the mission of a school. Before coming to Walden School, I taught 7th and 8th grade math at The San Francisco School whose mission statement declares that the school "...cultivates and celebrates the intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise of each student..."

Furthermore, as I read the mission statements of other independent schools, I gather other relevant commentary such as "...global outlook...", "...purpose larger than self...", "...responsible participants in the world...", "...a life of inquiry...", "...committed to multiculturalism...", "...ignite passion for learning...", and "...being international citizens..."

How can teachers ensure that the professional development path they enjoy translates into positive contributions in the classroom and the larger school community? How can we develop professionally within the complexities of the mission statement? Beyond our own professional development, how do we as teachers model the mission statement of our schools? The obvious answer to these questions, of course, is to travel six times zones away to reflect upon the ideals that form the underpinnings of our school days.

Due to a generous grant from the Hearst Foundation, and organized by the Earthwatch Foundation (www.earthwatch.org), I spent a month deep in the rainforest of central Malaysia. The grant allowed me to assist a team of scientists from the US, UK, and Malaysia dedicated to the conservation of one of the most diverse bat faunas in the world.

The ancient rainforests of central Malaysia are home to 10% of the world's bat fauna. Spending a month in a 30-million-year-old rainforest, working alongside highly specialized scientists and our equally informed tropical guides (the Orang Asli, indigenous tribal people who inhabit the rainforest) was an indelible, if not profound, experience in, to understate, illuminating the snippets of mission statements listed above.

My work in Malaysia, on multiple levels, transported the mission statements from the glossy brochures to vivid

reality. I was able to help in conserving a rich diversity of bat species facing a severe decline as forest habitats are lost, or become fragmented—a purpose larger than self. I lived in very rugged rainforest conditions, no running water or electricity, right along the equator—igniting a passion for learning. I observed firsthand the Muslim culture of Malaysia—global outlook. I assisted with a multinational team of scientists and guides—international citizenry. Before and after negotiating the challenges of the rainforest, I navigated the streets of Kuala Lumpur—inquiry. The thirty days in Malaysia did cultivate “the imaginative, intellectual, and humanitarian promise” spoken about so often at The San Francisco School.

Scaling smaller, one might wonder how spending a month in the rainforest of Malaysia can possibly enhance student learning within the 600 square foot classroom where I spent my days teaching math. Teaching, as we all know, requires tremendous output. I believe that teaching is equally dependent on receiving quality input. This can occur in a number of ways. Attending content level conferences and workshops, networking with other schools, and reading professional journals immediately come to mind. However, I would argue that my time in Malaysia produced a steep, if not vertical, learning curve that can only translate into a more meaningful classroom experience for students. If we want our students to inquire, have a global outlook, become responsible participants in the world committed to multiculturalism, have a passion for learning, realize their humanitarian promise, wouldn't that mean we, as teachers must do the same? Isn't modeling the mission statement part of our larger role on campus?

The mission statements of our schools are meant, I imagine, to be dynamic and vigorous reflections of our desired communities. These mission statements are not intended to be static and rigorous blueprints left to a school brochure. I know, without a doubt, that a month spent in the rainforests of Malaysia, while not standard issue professional development, brings the school mission statement off the page. This can only help the students. 



First-hand experiences
with Muslim traditions
and Senegalese culture
enrich school's curriculum.



Summer in Senegal

by Robert Kostrzeski

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Drew School

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Our eyes burned with tears as each family performed a dance, and everyone clapped as we were introduced. The sense of community was overwhelming! Fighting through my own tears, I looked up to see that over half of the students felt the same deluge of laughter, love, and kindness. We simply could not believe what we were experiencing.

As our bus arrived, hundreds of smiling children greeted us. I do not believe that any of our students expected such a welcome. As the family drummed, one student whispered in my ear, "How do I take this all in?" It was an unforgettable moment!

Drew School, a co-ed college preparatory high school in San Francisco, created "Summer in Senegal" this past summer. Three teachers and twelve students experienced an amazing cultural and travel experience. Our home base: Dakar, Senegal.

My colleague Daouda Camara, a French teacher and native Senegalese, and I developed a top-notch study abroad program. Daouda has had ten years of experience working for the US Peace Corps. Furthermore, he recently obtained a DEA (Diplôme d'Etude Approfondie) in Linguistic Studies, with his fieldwork throughout fourteen Western African countries. I have ten years of study abroad experiences at various organizations, including the Council for International Educational Exchange, the School for International Training, and the University of Arizona, among others. Our shared excitement about the values of international educational experiences, and the full support of Drew's head of school, Sam

Cuddeback, enabled us to build a "chance of a lifetime" for our Drew students and students from other Bay Area schools. It was a two-year project to recruit, market, and create the program.

The goal was to expose students to first-hand experiences with Muslim traditions and Senegalese culture. (At Drew our sophomores study the Islamic world and China in their social science class.) Working closely with an in-country staff, we were able to offer a program combining a village home-stay and travel program.

Our village home-stay proved to be the program's highlight for all of us. Each student was whisked away for the first of two overnights with our families. That evening proved to be a monumental growth experience for our students, and us as chaperones. Not only did we not speak fluent Wolof, but we were in the middle of Senegal, Africa, with no running water, electricity, or close proximity to another program participant.

Of course, each chaperone knew where each student had been placed, but we made no visits. We had asked each family to call us only if we were needed. Students communicated in French and a few Wolof words. To their surprise, they communicated effectively through body language and most importantly, smiles. Also, with the primary school literacy rate growing to nearly 50% – our students were surprised to have so many younger children wanting to write down Wolof vocabulary to help teach us. Indeed, we soon realized that the current literacy initiative in Senegal has propelled these younger children ahead of their older family members.

Our students felt honored that a bedroom that might normally sleep four or five children had become their home for our few days in the village. Goats, cows, and chickens roamed right in their front yard. Everyday, our students observed the tackling of the daily chores, the preparation of meals, and the laying out of daily prayer mats.

Our visits included: Gorée Island, where we saw the Women's Museum and the Slave Museum, where we stood at the Door of No Return – the last glimpse of Africa that many slaves saw before being sold. We also visited Saint Louis,



Drew students are dressed up by village host families and invited to a dance celebration in their honor.

“As the family drummed, one student whispered in my ear, ‘How do I take this all in?’ It was an **unforgettable** moment!”

Senegal's old French capital, the IFAN (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire) Museum, the Peace Corps Headquarters, and various local mosques.

We were able to partake in *djembe* (African drum) lessons, a safari at Bandia Forest and Park, and a stained glass painting course with a famous Senegalese artist. The contacts that we had developed over our years of travel helped generate and personalize some of these opportunities. A very special side trip occurred at the end of the trip, when some of the students traveled with Daouda to his home village, and met his mother in her home.

Students found “Summer in Senegal” to be “one of the best learning experiences” of their lives. A female student stated: “If anything, I am so much more appreciative of the liberties I have as a woman in America. I feel that personally this trip has allowed me to grow and further conceptualize and internalize the culture here. I would

never have known the other extreme if I didn't venture to come here.”

And a male student continued, “I really appreciate what I have in my life. It's definitely different here in Senegal, but I would love to come back next year! I'll never forget playing soccer with the boys in the village.”

Parents and families were at first skeptical about sending their teens to Africa. However, after the trip, emails conveyed delight and confidence in the program: “Thank you so much for making this trip possible...She [Drew student] was especially moved regarding the history of some of the places visited, they created very powerful feelings within her, feelings that I believe will guide her in her life choices. Thanks again to you and all those who participated in this wonderful experience; we truly appreciate your efforts.” – Parent Class of 2005.

A Marin Academy family shared: “Thank you for providing an exceptional first experience for them in Africa. It was a memorable trip for

both; an adventure for brothers together in a country they had thought about for many years.”

As a life-long educator, I believe that sending students to non-traditional study abroad programs is essential at the high school level. It is a chance to challenge students' misconceptions about non-Western culture and philosophy. I am grateful to Drew for this opportunity to co-lead such a program. We already have six Drew families ready for the summer of 2006 program that will incorporate an excursion to Gambia.

Drew is enthusiastic about all of its international opportunities including recent trips to Francophone Canada, Spain, and France. Other recent Drew study trips have included Mexico and Japan. Drew teachers and staff are actively planning future trips to El Salvador, Tanzania, and Martinique. Our mission statement addresses academic talents, self-confidence and respectful, responsible citizenship. “Summer in Senegal” allowed us to live that mission.



From Local to Global: Young Women Empowered

by Karen Tobey

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D*ancing for a Difference*: the alliteration rolled off our tongues. A committee made up of faculty and students sat in the dining room of our private all-girls preparatory school planning an event that would lead to two of our students representing Castilleja on a Women's Empowerment Delegation to Africa sponsored by an international humanitarian organization, Save the Children (savethechildren.org).

Co-sponsored by the fine arts and community service departments at the school, this dance collaboration involved not only intra-school cooperation, but also the pairing of two college preparatory schools, one in the Silicon Valley suburb of Palo Alto, and the other in a largely African American and Latino community of East Palo Alto. We united for a common cause – to raise funds for an organization that has as its mission to raise education and health standards in the poorest areas of the world. As a history teacher, I have often emphasized to my students how uniting for a common goal brings together people of diverse economic, social, or political backgrounds. This event brought together students from diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds in a collaboration that has made a difference in the lives of children on the other side of the globe.

The *Dancing for a Difference* performance catapulted Castilleja into the global community. There was something magical in the atmosphere that night. Students knew they were dancing for a reason beyond self-promotion. The funds they raised through both ticket sales and auctioning of student art from both schools would support health and education programs for children in Ethiopia. Their dancing would make a difference for young people who lacked adequate health care, clean water, and education.

Within weeks following the energizing program, Save the Children found funding from Silicon Valley venture capitalists enabling two Castilleja students to take a trip that has been a life-changing experience for them. As youth members of the Women's Empowerment delegation, their journal entries on a website called

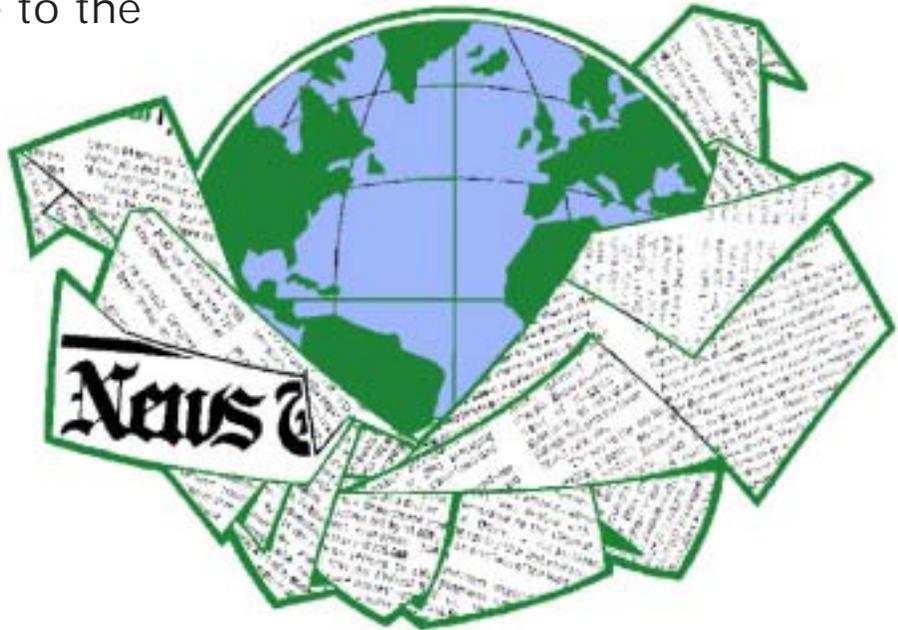
YouthNoise.com/save depict their travels and meetings. Never will they take basic health and educational opportunities for granted again. The following entry from one of the girls' journals poignantly tells one story firsthand:

Yesterday was the day we visited Handura Maru, the school Castilleja funded in Woliso. We were all surprised that the school had just gotten its first female teacher and the school was pretty much at 50-50 girls to boys ratio. One of the simple things the school does to assure that ratio is a girls' bathroom. Something that we don't even think about back in the U.S. has the power to send about 120 more girls to school. . . These kids see education as the ultimate privilege, something that made me realize that education was yet another thing I take for granted.

So where do we go from here? Through assembly programs and meetings, the students who took part in the women's delegation will help to educate our school, our community, and via the Internet, youth in other parts of the world, about the countries they visited. They will help to sponsor and promote *Dancing for a Difference* again this year, collaborating with Eastside Preparatory to put on a show whose ticket sales will continue to fund the health and education programs sponsored by Save the Children. In the process, they will bring together our own diverse local communities. Their efforts will also help to foster self-sustainable programs in Africa, giving children in the developing world a better chance to have their most fundamental human needs met.

I am thrilled to know that our students have found that they can effect positive change in the real world, learning that small steps can make huge differences in the lives of children living in poverty. Castilleja and Eastside Preparatory Schools are finding that it is worth the effort it takes to promote health and literacy for children who deserve a better chance at the future. At the same time, our students are experiencing and teaching others that education provides empowerment for people on both sides of the globe. 

Teacher's response to the trauma of 9-11 provides a model for classroom responses to disastrous events



Bringing the Outside In: Current Events in the Classroom

by Jami Wagner

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Any teacher who worked through the weeks following September 11th knows how stressful a lack of information (or misinformation) can be for a young mind. I personally experienced a class of second graders echoing their parents' fears and using language that they couldn't possibly understand to explain their feelings. This type of reaction clearly indicated the necessity of dealing with such catastrophic events in the classroom. For instance, the repeated broadcast of the towers falling agitated and confused many students. Reinforcing the reality that it was only the two buildings on one day and not numerous buildings *every* day helped them feel more secure. This simple bit of stability offered children a solid footing from which they could begin discussions at home.

So, how does one go about informing students of the happenings in the world around them? It is widely accepted that students retain and own knowledge when they are involved in the discovery process. For this reason, cooperative learning lends itself superbly to the study of current events. Beginning with a short discussion addressing specific concerns and then moving into more focused consideration in smaller groups is a great way of keeping everyone engaged. Often, separating an

event into the "who, what, where, when and why" aspects can be an effective way of giving each group its own section to focus on. Once each group has had ample time to flesh out a particular question, groups present their findings to the rest of the class. This method encourages discovery and fosters a true ownership of the new knowledge they acquire.

As upper elementary students become finely attuned to the impact current events have on their lives, the frequency with which the news is discussed increases markedly. At this stage, students are hyper-aware of adult conversations and concerns. Inconsistent listening skills and an oft-overwhelming need to trump their peers' knowledge makes it highly probable that pieces of information assimilated at home will be shared the next day at school. Combine this with the hormonal changes upper elementary students experience, and it's simple to see how misinformation can quickly become fact in their world. The feeling of superiority this new information gives students lays the groundwork for misinformation and can easily lead to general student agitation.

Implementing the cooperative learning strategy is relatively easy with this age group. Often, supplying each group with materials that lend themselves to the dis-



covery of pertinent information is enough to start the ball rolling. It's important to divide the larger concept being studied into smaller, more manageable sections. The intention is for each group to develop a solid understanding of its area. Groups create a poster (or another form of visual aid) to assist them in presenting their new knowledge. I have found that these projects are most effective when they can be completed over the course of a few days. Giving students separate times to discover the answers, produce their visual aid, and present their information results in higher levels of understanding.

This same strategy works well with lower elementary students. However, there is substantially more preparation to be done before students can truly explore parts of an event. Rather than simply supplying the students with resources, instructors at this level must break down each section into easy to follow explanations.

During our second-grade exploration of the tsunami, for example, groups were supplied with short narratives answering the questions: What is a tsunami? How did the tsunami start? What areas did the tsunami effect and what would happen if there was one here? What can we do to help?

Young students often fear that a distressing event is as likely to occur in their own neighborhoods as in the rest of the world. This was certainly true during our study of the tsunami, with the majority of my students living within ten miles of the Pacific Ocean. A key focus of our project was learning about the early-warning buoy system that alerts oceanographers of any drastic changes in sea levels. This allowed my students to again feel safe about living by the ocean.

Groups also explored "before" and

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"after" pictures, computer animations, globes, and maps. At this level, it's often desirable to have each student produce his or her own poster to present. This helps focus the groups' presentations. Students are given individual questions to answer and illustrate on a piece of construction paper that serves as their visual aid during presentation. These individual posters lend themselves well to classroom or hallway displays, and when viewed together, they offer a clear picture of the event studied.

It's not always possible to answer the question, "Why?" This was not an issue when we learned about the tsunami, having plenty of scientific information explaining how the underwater earthquake caused the giant waves. However, not all events can be so easily explained. When complex situations like September 11th arise, the "Why?" component is not so easily articulated. In these circumstances, it is important that educators focus on facts that can be ascertained and leave the questions of "Why?" to the parents. Families often have different explanations and beliefs about why things happen in our world and it's important that we allow them to handle the more challenging situations personally.

Our reality is hardly a static environment. The last five years have presented a particularly memorable set of dire situations, and children naturally absorb adult discussions about them. As these events serve to shape us, they also impact the lives of our students. It is our responsibility to help inform and support students as they navigate and understand this ever-changing landscape. With the correct approach, even events dramatically affecting *us* become manageable in the classroom. Let's encourage our students to stay active and informed participants about the planet on which they live.





Notes from the Front

by Laura Burges

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I have been teaching third grade at The San Francisco School for quite awhile now. My students appear at the door each morning, full of wonder and energy, and they often bring surprising insights along with them. Whether you are a new teacher or a veteran, I humbly offer the following suggestions as we have embarked on a new school year together.

1. *Start each day as if you have fantastic news to impart. I like to greet my students at the door, shake their hands, and exchange a few words. Usually when I say, "How are you this morning?" they reply, "Fine." But Loretta would sometimes reply, "My life is a barren wasteland."*
2. *Keep an eye on Loretta.*
3. *Don't underestimate your students. They may know a lot more than you give them credit for. It was a third grader in my class, Andres, who wrote a story with the intriguing title, "A Coma Can be a Good Experience or a Terrible Nightmare."*
4. *Don't be afraid to tackle the hard questions. I remember when Anna looked up and asked me, "What happens after you die? I forget."*
5. *Remember that children have great depths of compassion. When my father died and I was away, my assistant Lucie asked the children to write me letters of condolence. Arielle wrote me a lovely sympathy card with the touching thought, "Just when you think everything is going great - DEATH! ARGHHH!"*
6. *Be humble. Expect that the day will come when a student will ask you a question you just can't answer. It was Nick who stumped me with the query, "Is Reno really the biggest little city in the world?"*
7. *Your children may be far more able to bring their piercing insight to literature than you anticipate. When we were discussing "Cinderella," Andy pointed out, "I think that in this story, Cinderella does all the work and the Prince just has balls."*
8. *Your students will surprise you by taking intuitive leaps you may not have considered. I always ask my students to write a little bit about what they think multiplication is before we begin that unit. Spencer wrote, "I'm not sure what it means to multiply but I'm pretty sure it has something to do with bugs because I know they do it."*
9. *Finally, remember that you are there not just there to teach children, but to learn from them. One day as I was sitting at my desk, Nathan walked by and did a little dance step. I called him over and said, "Nathan, what were you thinking about just then?" And he answered with excitement, "Do you ever forget you're alive and all of a sudden you remember again?"
Yes, Nathan, I do.*



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Many, many thanks to these dedicated, hard-working committee members who help make possible this year's Southern Regional Meeting and Northern Professional Days.

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