THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

INSIDE:
The Advantages of Not Learning Another Language
Making the Most of Multiple Choice
“Who in their Right Mind Would Want to Teach?”

...and more
Even without a devastating Southeast Asian tsunami to command it, winter usually brings a momentary pause. As before and after satellite pictures from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and India circulate the Internet, the god Janus comes to mind. Janus was the Roman god of beginnings and endings, of gates and doors. He also is representative of transitions - between life and death, war and peace, childhood and adulthood, ignorance and understanding - and between old and new ways of seeing things.

In fact, Janus might well be the defining emblem of our profession symbolizing among those other things, the perennial tug-of-war between the various canons of our disciplines and the need for contemporary relevance. The articles that follow have in common a Janus-like approach to their subjects. Whether the point-of-view is a second look at multiple choice tests, as Peter Brown, in his second installment, encourages us to take; a look back at a home culture from which an author is temporarily removed as Melissa Kanemasu, Kim Kohler and Martha Kermott experience; or a childhood curiosity about another culture finally satisfied for Kim Kohler; a look at teaching through the eyes of his students like Erich Reinholz, or her younger self like Tanaz Artega; or from the viewpoint of technology like Marla Bainbridge, a collegial adventure like Kevin Cummings, or finally, recreating an 18th century life for 21st century students alike Kathy Allison; all these standpoints offer an opportunity to see the usual and “normal” through a different lens. It can be a transformative experience.

As I write, looking backward and forward here at CAIS, I see another exciting Regional Meeting on the horizon. We will be in the North this year, blessed by Sacred Hearts Schools’ willingness to once again be our hosts. The date is Monday, March 14th in Atherton. There are a total of 211 workshops being offered by 326 presenters, all but 16 of whom are you who teach in our schools. Since we had a waiting list left over from last year’s Retreat for Middle Managers, we are offering it again in Palm Springs April 10th-12th. Watch the website for details. Register on our website (www.caisca.org).

Looking backward, I see that we have welcomed over a hundred new teachers to our CAIS programs in our beginning teacher retreats, and have progressed more than halfway through our slate of Professional Days. They are in the South this year and have been a great success. More than a few Northerners have contacted us wondering if we’d be offering the same thing in their area. Contact your friendly, local Northern Professional Services Committee member and suggest it! And, who knows, that could be you. Soon we will be sending a call to school heads asking for recommendations for people to fill the positions coming vacant, so if you’re interested let him/her know. It’s a wonderful way to work with folks from different school cultures and different disciplines - and dare I say it? - take a look at professional development through a different lens.

—— Sandee Mirell
Director of Professional Development
THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

California Association of Independent Schools
Winter 2005

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Math in the “real world” – one teacher’s experience

What I Did During My Summer Vacation
by Melissa Kanemasu
Live Oak School Middle School Math melissa_kanemasu@liveoaksf.org

I walked into the building through the employee entrance and held up my ID for the security guard who gave me a nod and a cheerful, “Good morning.” I watched as the security gate flashed a green arrow signaling that it was okay for me to enter and made my way through rows of cubicles until I came to the one with my name on it. I switched on my lights, locked away my valuables, and secured my laptop into its docking station.

This is definitely a far cry from how I usually start each school day at Live Oak. However, it’s how I started each workday for eight weeks this past summer. I spent the majority of my summer working as a Lab Engineer at Intel in Santa Clara through a summer fellowship from IISME. IISME, which stands for Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education, was founded 20 years ago by a group of Bay Area CEOs with the purpose of bridging the gap between industry and education. Their mission is to promote interest in the areas of math, science, and technology by using teachers to affect change, and they provide a number of different industry-related professional development opportunities to teachers. Through their summer fellowship program, I was able to enjoy many different experiences.

The first day of work

On the first day of work, I was reminded of what it must feel like to be a new student on the first day of school. I met many new people who would be my coworkers during the next two months, and struggled to remember all their names. I got lost several times in the maze of buildings and rows of cubicles. At lunchtime, I wondered if I would find someone to sit with or would I have to sit alone.

Working in a cubicle

Working in a cubicle was much more of an adjustment than I thought it would be. I was surprised how isolated I felt, and amazed at how difficult it could be to concentrate, especially when people in surrounding cubicles were on the phone. I realized how much I missed the frequent interaction with kids at school, or even adults, for that matter.

Using math in “real life”

Every year there is at least one student who asks me the question, “How will we use this (math) in real life.” Well, this summer, I experienced firsthand how math is used in the “real world.” From hearing about
“Working in a cubicle was much more of an adjustment than I thought it would be. I was surprised how isolated I felt, and amazed at how difficult it could be to concentrate.”

Usage tables to calculating speed, forces and distances, math was definitely all around me. Each time I walked through the rows of cubicles, I saw calculations or equations scribbled on people’s white boards. I myself had to think back to my trigonometry days of sine and cosine when consulting with someone about a polishing angle and an acceptable margin of error.

**Being Just a Small Part of a Much Bigger Thing**

My task at Intel involved testing an automated polishing machine, which prepared small microchip samples for different types of analyses. The chips, which are used in different handheld devices such as cell phones, PDAs, etc., are frequently analyzed for quality assurance as well as failure analysis. New technologies are also constantly being developed and tested to make the microchips even smaller and faster.

Over the course of the summer, I realized how important my role was in the company even though I was just a very small part of a much bigger picture. In our day-to-day roles as educators, we often forget what an important role we play in our students’ lives. Each teacher contributes just a small part of a student’s entire education and each student we teach is just a single person in an entire generation. However, each small part may be that one component that completes the whole. Although I am very happy that I had the opportunity at Intel this summer, the experience solidified the fact that I was meant to be a teacher. I was quite satisfied with my accomplishments in microchip polishing, but not nearly as fulfilled as when I see a student finally “get it.” I returned to Live Oak ready to take on new challenges and eager to share my experiences of “math in the real world.”

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The author in front of Intel, where was reminded that she was meant to be a teacher.
A childhood home near Manzanar sparks curiosity later satisfied by a Fulbright visit to Japan

“Congratulations! You have been selected. . .”

by Kim Kohler

Chadwick School Art Specialist-Grades K-6 kim.kohler@chadwick-k12.com

My Japan adventure began in the fall with an e-mail from my head of school containing a link to the Fulbright Memorial Fund. I began investigating, becoming more interested, the further I read. The Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program was created by the Japanese government to provide American teachers an opportunity to immerse themselves in Japanese life and culture. This generous gift is given in thanks for American college educations received by Japanese students following World War II, a program sponsored by Senator William Fulbright and the American government.

Fulbright awardees are selected from thousands of applicants who meet certain criteria. One must be a credentialed teacher or administrator with a certain level of experience and expertise. Outside of that, applicants are from the broadest imaginable pool of educators. The trips are arranged four times per year for groups of 200 to travel to Japan. Selected educators are completely funded. The trips consist of a training weekend in San Francisco and three weeks in Japan. Thus, 800 American educators have the opportunity each year to learn about a culture, a language and a way of life that, for most, is somewhat mysterious and unknown. What they bring home from such trips includes a deeper understanding of a foreign land and the structure of its society.

I stated “Fall” as my preferred target date, and began the application process. It consisted of recommendations, endless forms, medical approvals, and essays. The essays were, in a sense, the easiest part. My interest in Japan, begun decades earlier, had recently been piqued by an event that is presently taking place in the high desert of California, the Owens Valley, where I grew up. A controversial memorial to American citizens of
Japanese descent who had been incarcerated, against their will, during the period of World War II, was nearing completion. I was interested in that event in history because Manzanar, the place of the internment, was near my family home. The idea of American citizens being punished for their ethnic origin was a shocking bit of history, made even more real to us who lived nearby. My essay stated, in part:

“We knew nothing about Japan or Japanese people. Our curiosity led us to explore the deserted site for left-behind artifacts. We were never disappointed. In those early days (the 1950s), there was forgotten and discarded debris strewn over a large area.”

“We picked apples which grew in neat groves, followed rock lined streams and spillways, played in the remains of gardens which had a distinctly different look from our own, and tried to imagine how thousands of Japanese-Americans had lived so elegantly in an isolated, extreme, high desert environment, against their will. My parents insisted that we turn over each and every coin, potshard, tool, teacup, and other evidence of daily life to the Inyo County Museum in Independence. The museum was collecting what would eventually become a monumental display of Japanese cultural artifacts from the time of internment of American citizens. At present, the site is a National Historical Landmark. An interpretive center, dedicated to the truth of that time in American history, will open in 2003.”

“Time spent exploring Manzanar opened a window on a mysterious culture that had existed, unnaturally, in the shadow of 14,000 foot high California mountains for three years in the 1940s. Thus, began my personal interest in Japan, which by our evidence, produced stalwart people who were talented, creative, resilient, and sadly, persecuted here in America simply because of their ethnicity. At an early age, I saw this as people coerced into a life not chosen. This exposure led me to a highly sympathetic view of a people and an appreciation of their culture.”

“I sent off my final part of the application with a proposal for what I would do with my newfound knowledge, should I be selected. At that point the odds seemed in favor of my being right here at Chadwick School come autumn. I had, however, enjoyed the processes involved in the application, and felt honored to have been recommended.

In January, I received a super-thin envelope from the Fulbright Memorial Fund in Japan, which gave me a renewed appreciation for what our seniors go through during their college applications. I had hoped for the big fat envelope full of “acceptance” related materials, not the thin “thank-you-for-your-interest-but....” letter. Needless to say when I read “Congratulations!” I was elated. Thus began the adventure that I will never forget.

In early October, I arranged for six substitute teachers to cover my art classes for three weeks, met my fellow travelers in San Francisco, and was on my way to Japan. Especially exciting for our group was the prospect of visiting Japan during the beginning of a period of educational reform, such as had never before occurred in that country.”

“Especially exciting for our group was the prospect of visiting Japan during the beginning of a period of educational reform, such as had never before occurred in that country. One of the constant topics of discussion throughout my stay was the reform and possible outcomes from it. The Japanese were very interested in our American system and we were invited to offer comparisons and observations about the reform throughout our visit.

The first days were filled with tours of Tokyo, presentations on Japanese education, economy, communications, music, theater, art, peace education, and the environment. We were served Japanese food and, for most of us, the culinary delights and differences were significant. One sees most all the restaurant chains which we are used to at home. My observation was that Japanese people maintain a healthy diet by staying out of them. The chains were filled mainly with tourists. In any case, children are served traditional Japanese food in their schools. No soft drink machines or junk food in sight!

The evenings were for exploring Tokyo. Everything from Tokyo Disney to karaoke, which some of my fellow travelers had never seen (or sung!). We were invited to do it all. Tokyo is a very safe city and there are crowds even late at night. Our hotel was in the heart of a vibrant urban area. Everything was within walking distance or a subway or train ride. After a few days, most of us were experts on using the public transportation.
We were also preparing for the second leg of the trip, which was to travel to 10 different prefectures (like our states) which we would be visiting in smaller groups of 20. My group would be going to Shizuoka, a city of over 700,000 in the mountains near Mt. Fuji. On departure day, we boarded the Bullet Train, called Ambitious Japan! for a unique and exciting experience in travel. The other groups departed by plane, train, and boat for other prefectures throughout Japan. Much thought and planning went into the grouping of educators. My group was an interesting, fun-loving, and compassionate mix who were bright, articulate, and well traveled. We were asked to comment on every aspect of education that we observed, and I was proud to be part of such a distinguished group. One highlight of the trip was the interactions of the Fulbrighters. The assorted grade levels, disciplines, specialists, administrators, librarians, grant writers, and locales from which we all came, made for a very stimulating and always interesting dynamic within the group.

We arrived in Shizuoka with the first stop of a busy and hectic week being a visit to an art gallery to see a Marc Chagall exhibit. Throughout Japan there is a high degree of interest in all things Western, especially music and art. This does not diminish or homogenize the Japanese culture, but rather indicates how worldly and outreaching it is. We were prepped for visits to schools of all levels, elementary through college, boards of education, government offices, a PTA group, and other education related concerns. Our mission was to listen and learn as well as interact with students and their teachers everywhere we went. Students whom we visited were very excited to have Americans share their school day. They study English and loved having a chance to practice conversation. The language barrier was extreme for most of us. Without our excellent translators there would have been much confusion on both sides. In fact, even with perfect translations, some of our most hilarious adventures were due to complete and utter confusion over meaning.

The Reform Movement includes relaxing the schedule to five days a week of school, from six, which had previously been the norm. There is skepticism by some that children can be properly educated and prepared using the new schedule. The test driven system has not changed and there is a fear that children will not be able to learn enough or test high enough to attend the schools to which they and their families aspire. The reform was designed to allow more freedoms, and for families to have more time to play and have fun. Many parents have enrolled their children in juku (prep) schools to take up what they perceive as the slack. Many children actually go to school seven days a week. The reformers believe that an appreciation of nature, play, and creative pursuits should fill the extra time. The biggest issue seems to be that the government desires critical thinkers, nurtured by experiential education, but is not willing to reduce the power of the corporations that determine the conditions of employment.

As it is now, children at the junior high level determine the course of their lives by effort, specific school choices, and test scores at an age at which their American counterparts concentrate on socialization. My observation was that in spite of such pressure, the students were industrious, helpful to each other, focused on their work, fun-loving, multi-talented, and friendly. The students are involved with all aspects of their school days. Typically they serve all of the food, clean (thoroughly!) the school and school grounds each day, run errands, participate in a variety of sports and activities, keep complicated schedules, study during breaks, and watch over each other. Several hundred children at an elementary school were madly playing on a huge playground during a recess. Many were riding unicycles in and out of pipe obstacle courses. When we asked where the supervising teachers were, we were told, “The kids watch out for each other.” It seemed to be working. A bell rang and all the unicycles were neatly parked and the kids lined up to come back into their classrooms. It was hard for me to be totally objective when confronted with such cooperation! In any case, we asked if the kids had been prepped for our visit and were thus behaving unusually well. We were told that the kids were behaving normally, though a bit “louder” than usual.

At the end of our week in Shizuoka we went as individuals to private homes for a traditional Japanese custom, the “home stay.” For many Fulbrighters this was the highlight of the trip. My hosts were educators (principals). Their oldest daughter is an associate in a law office, and a younger daughter is study
ing jewelry design in Rome. Their home is in a rural mountainous area outside Shizuoka, surrounded by green tea farms. We knew to expect we would be confronted with traditional Japanese living. Great effort is made by host families to make their American guests feel welcome. Discussions of world affairs, both current and historical (the daughter had studied in Nebraska and spoke and translated English), heartwarming, humorous stories and videos of family life and trips, exchanging presents, a hike to an exquisite temple and shrine in an ancient forest, and a lovely walk through a 400 year old apple orchard along a waterway, filled the weekend. My hosts prepared beautiful meals for their honored guest-me! I continue to be overwhelmed by how generously and warmly I was treated. I hope to one day be able to repay the honor. The weekend was soon over. We made one last stop with our small group of 20 where we were guests at a Japanese country inn called a “roykan.” It was an incredibly luxurious spa with tatami rooms, baths, and beautiful landscaping and decor and a feast of traditional food. Located on a black sand beach with Mt. Fuji dominating the horizon, it seemed the perfect culmination of our Japan experience in the countryside.

Back in Tokyo we regrouped as 200 Fulbrighters. There were more educational offerings, discussion groups, debriefings, and presentations by each prefecture group. While we had all had similar structure to our time away from Tokyo, the experiences were interestingly dissimilar. Each group, bonded and now a unique amalgam of personalities, had shared a vast array of cultural, interpersonal, geographical, culinary, and artistic experiences. To educate each other and thank our hosts, we shared a final night of videos, pictures, performances, artifacts and memories. It was emotional, wrenching, and fulfilling at the same time. Though many of the Fulbrighters had traveled throughout the world all agreed that the Japan experience was so filled with experiences, images, smells, impressions, kindnesses, and astonishingly unique views of time and place that the trip had become an experience that no one could well-describe. Much time would be needed to assimilate it all.

I would like to end with a story. I thought I would be able to share it with my students, colleagues, parents, and friends. In truth, I find it so emotional that I have been able relate it to only a few people. The poignancy of it somehow defines my trip. I hope the telling will accomplish one of my goals which is to affirm that I found modern Japan, while full of contrasts and complicated beyond words, to have warm, caring, loving people who will continue to influence the world in ways that are profound, beginning with the education of its children.

A speaker related the following to us during one of our last gatherings. He is an educator and also the president of a toy museum begun by his family many years ago. Toys and “play,” freedom of expression, and creative thinking were of utmost importance to this man. He spoke eloquently of the need for unsullied and accessible outdoor space and, more important, the time to experience it. I surmised that there was a message in the fact that he was a chosen speaker for the Fulbright Memorial Fund program. To a hushed room full of American educators, hanging on every translated word, he described a group of Japanese students who were studying and practicing for an upcoming test. The test was of utmost importance as the results would determine who got admitted into the “best” high schools therefore increasing the chance that those students would be admitted into the “best” colleges and thus would be hired by the “best” corporations, insuring a successful and prosperous life. A practice question was, “What do we get when the snow melts, when the icicles melt, and the ice melts on the pond?” “What is the result?” “The answer to each will be the same.” Of 60 students taking the practice test, 59 answered, “Water.” One girl wrote, “Spring.”

Japanese educators desire that, with reform, more children might offer the answer given by the lone girl, and that the 59 others who gave the technically correct response, and thus were much better prepared for the test, will come to appreciate the beauty of her answer.
While teaching at a Chinese high school in Shanghai last fall, I was constantly asked about the American system of education: What makes American education so strong? American students are much more creative than Chinese students; why is that? Is there a secret formula used to get such impressive results? So, I attempted to discern what we do that is so unique. Yes, we train teenagers to think critically, but is it the process of learning that ultimately develops students with skills for interpreting new data and arriving at original conclusions? Or is there something else that explains the strengths of American education?

By contrast, the Chinese style of education that I observed in high school classrooms was restrictively information-based. Teachers filled their lectures with seemingly infinite pieces of data, memorized by the students through countless exercises, and accurate recall was expected. There were no breaks from the exercises; students took home enough exercises to fill most of their vacation days. The testing was constant in all subjects; sophomores and juniors took ten final exams, and starting in the fall, seniors prepared for a host of comprehensive college-entrance exams in June. The Chinese education I experienced lacked significant exposure of students to creative or critical thinking that would give them the ability to recognize and evaluate original problems or ideas.

Acting as a novice education consultant, I offered to the Chinese teachers and administrators qualified advice on how to improve their teaching methods, curricular goals, and learning strategies. Or at least I tried. I discovered fairly quickly a few problems with the apparent dichotomy between these educational philosophies.

First, Chinese education is, in fact, excellent when evaluated for its content. The sophomores I taught were doing college-level physics problems with ease; the retention of knowledge for most students across disciplines was vast, comprehensive within a discipline, and
always accurate and reliable. Fields of study in their learning are especially broad-based because of the holistic approach the Chinese take when conceptualizing what we see as separate fields of study. They readily handle their 5,000 years of written history, while too many American students barely know in which century the Civil War took place! Chinese students narrow their area of study by their junior year in high school either to the humanities or the sciences, resulting in highly specialized programs in universities. While an American student might spend more time in college “finding himself,” a Chinese student simply continues his serious pursuit of academic knowledge. In fact, I decided that we as educators in the U.S. could learn a lot from Chinese-style education, especially when it is taken as specialized knowledge in fields such as theoretical physics, epidemiology, or biochemistry.

A second problem I realized was admitting to the limits of American-style education. Do we cater to our students too much with concern for self-esteem and sensitivity toward diversity? Do we, intentionally or not, compromise the rigor of the content in order to make our students feel comfortable? Chinese parents called the school in Shanghai to complain when teachers gave too few homework exercises; American parents are more likely to insist on vacations free from schoolwork. Our weakness seems to lie more with making the material fit the needs of the students rather than keeping the teaching and learning at high standards.

In the end, I spent one meeting with the Chinese teachers and one meeting with the administrators simply describing how American schools are set up, including the harsh realities of conditions in many public schools and admitting the “elitism” of private schools. With the teachers of English, I offered more specific suggestions, such as designing exercises that require students to take given information, but draw their own conclusions; setting up small-group discussions allowing students to articulate individual opinions; and continuing to encourage teachers to find and use techniques that allow them to grow as professionals. The high school where I lived is a very progressive one, sincerely attempting to reform its program by imitating the essential elements of American-style education; and while I appreciated the efforts to improve and realized the global pressures that reward such imitation, I must admit that I was humbled by the high quality of their content-based education.

What’s our secret to a strong education? Perhaps it’s that our approach to education reflects cultural dynamics that value individualism and independent thinking. Still, we might want to consider whether our cultural sensitivities are dictating our education decisions, or if such decisions are truly reaching for the highest academic standards for all students. If asked, I would recommend that American teachers learn from the Chinese approach to education; we could be more effective as educators if we found a better balance that combines the two approaches to teaching and learning.
The Advantages of Not Learning Another Language

by Eric L. Reinholtz

Marlborough School Secondary Foreign Language Eric.Reinholtz@marlboroughschool.org

How can they still be saying “Mi llamo es”? How many more times will I have to explain that “ne” and “pas” go around the conjugated verb? After ten years of teaching first-year Spanish and French, I was becoming frustrated with my students’ apparent inability to learn and retain what I considered to be the most rudimentary aspects of Romance grammar and syntax. I questioned my teaching methods. I lamented the cognitive shortcomings of a second generation raised in front of a television. I questioned the commitment of American education (public and private) to second language acquisition. After all, I had learned French and Spanish as a non-native, and I had a graduate degree in each (M.A. in the former, Ph.D. in the latter) to prove it. If I didn’t find a solution to my dilemma, I was fast on my way to becoming one of those colleagues who refuse to teach any course without the word “advanced” in the title.

Luckily for me, my goddaughter’s parents, Diego and Susanne, moved to Sweden. Actually, Emily was not yet conceived (or conceived of) when I first made the trip that renewed me as a teacher. Falling in love with Sweden during my first visit, I decided that my second trip should involve some formal language study. I had learned French and Spanish without any difficulty, and Swedish, like English, is a Germanic language. I estimated that four weeks in July at the University of Uppsala would provide me all the basics I needed to start on the fast track to proficiency. I even opted for the accelerated course. A month of intensive study would surely be more than adequate for a linguist of my ability. In no time at all, I would be reading Strindberg and ordering aquavit just like a native.

It took me about forty-eight hours to realize the extent of my error. Swedish, with its confusing array of vowel sounds, its noun declensions, and the ridiculous speed at which the natives insisted on speaking, was overwhelming. Moreover, I resented the Germans and Dutch who were also taking the course. Weren’t their languages practically the same as Swedish? They should not have been placed in my class with such an unfair advantage. I struggled through the homework assignments, but each time I thought I was making headway the instructor would dash my hopes with a quiz or test. Spanish and French verb infinitives end in the letter “r”; in Swedish, “r” marks the conjugated form. If it’s “Ella habla” and “Ella quiere hablar” for “She speaks” and “She wants to speak,” why would the Swedes go and make it “Hon talar” and “Hon vill tala”? It was beyond unfair—it was practically discriminatory.

When the four weeks of misery were done, and I had made every excuse known to unsuccessful language students, I limped out of the course with a B- on the final. I wasn’t sure I could speak any Swedish, and wasn’t sure I still wanted to. Then it dawned on me. My instructor must have been thinking, “Why does this guy keep putting an “r” on the infinitives? And he calls himself a language teacher!” The fact is, learning a language—or anything else—only seems easy because we’ve been doing it for so long. I probably said “Mi llamo es” early on the path to a doctorate in Spanish literature. Those four weeks in Uppsala paid off in a huge, albeit completely unexpected way. Now, rather than pulling out my remaining hair when my students make those so-called “dumb” mistakes, I remember that language learning—or any other kind for that matter—is a matter of trial and error, with a major emphasis on the latter. And my Swedish? Well, it’s getting better a little bit at a time. I’m confident that I will be able to speak to my goddaughter Emily when I go to see her next time. Of course she’s only seven months old, so I don’t have to worry about sustaining much of a conversation—just yet. Looking a year or so ahead, I know that if I keep at it, I will continue to have the small linguistic epiphanies about concepts that eluded me in Uppsala—just the way my students probably will when they are a year or so removed from “Mi llamo es.”
Making the Most of Multiple Choice:
Constructing Test Questions to Assess Formal Reasoning*

by Peter Brown

Menlo School Secondary History Teacher pbrown@menloschool.org

If the examples presented in published sources in history and the humanities are any indication, multiple-choice tests can present a dilemma to educators who want to teach students to reason and solve problems over and above the memorization of discrete facts. If you were to peruse the many published tests in history and humanities, you might conclude that the multiple-choice format is best suited only for factual recall. The purpose of this article is to challenge the notion that multiple-choice have to be solely used to test memorization.

While multiple choice exams do not allow for the kind of authentic demonstration of knowledge that a well-constructed essay question or performance assessment does, they can nevertheless be designed to monitor and facilitate reasoning and lead students to new insights. In the first article, I explored how teachers might construct such tests using Pat Arlen's ideas about stimulating formal reasoning in the classroom. While Arlen's interest is not assessment or multiple choice questions per se, her ideas about questions and question techniques can be readily applied to constructing multiple-choice tests. This article explores how one might construct reasoning-oriented multiple-choice tests in a given discipline and curriculum using the ideas of Benjamin Bloom, who almost fifty years ago headed a group of educational psychologists and developed an important and influential classification of higher order thinking.

In deconstructing Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956), Arlen provides three useful tools for constructing formal reasoning questions: firstly, she...
clearly defines and delineates formal reasoning as a cognitive task involving application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. Secondly, she ranks question-types along a rough continuum of difficulty correlated with Piagetian categories of concrete reasoning, low formal reasoning, and formal reasoning. Finally, she provides action words that can be used as guides for the test-constructor seeking to assess different kinds of thinking.

**APPLYING BLOOM’S TAXONOMY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE**

The knowledge or comprehension type question often begins with words such as “list”, “label”, “identify”, “match”, “name”, “reproduce”, or “locate.”

Q1: Identify the prince who Krishna counsels in the Bhagavad Gita.
   a. Arjuna.
   b. Ganesha.
   c. Lakshmi.
   d. Hanuman.

Answer: a

Q2: In the 1819 case of McCulloch v. Maryland, the Supreme Court under John Marshall decided that
   a. All of the answers below.
   b. Congress had “implied powers” not explicitly stated in the Constitution.
   c. The power to tax involved a “power to destroy.”
   d. The “necessary and proper” clause allows for the creation of a national bank.

Answer: d

To answer questions Q1 and Q2 correctly, a student would need to understand the syntax and vocabulary of the question; be able to translate his own understanding of, say, Krishna’s and Arjuna’s relationship as one of counselor and counseled, as well as be able to retrieve from memory his knowledge of facts surrounding the topic. The question is largely concrete because it requires little abstraction or problem solving. Because Q2 is demanding the recollection of a list of characteristics, a delineated label, or an expanded definition, it would also be an example of a knowledge or comprehension question that demands little or no formal reasoning. Both of these kinds of questions abound in published tests, particularly in history.

Application questions, on the other hand, require what Arlen calls “high concrete” or “low formal” reasoning ability.” Action verbs signifying this kind of question are “show”, “make”, “translate”, “illustrate”, and “construct.”

Q3: Om is a well-known example of a
   a. jiva.
   b. mandala.
   c. mantra.
   d. yoga.

Answer: c

Q4: After Cain slew Abel, he asked God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The most accurate translation of God’s response into modern vernacular would be
   a. “Why the hate?”
   b. “Of course, man. You are so busted even for asking me that!”
   c. “No, Bro. You ARE your bro.”
   d. “Take this mark of Cain, and let everybody know how BAAAD you are.”

Answer: b

Questions that ask for examples, like Q3, or the construction of maps, are the models for this kind of question. While all multiple-choice questions pose some translation issues in that they demand that students substitute the test’s language into their own internal language, the “translate” question, Q4, requires outside knowledge of the Biblical passage and the ability to translate this understanding into the vernacular while preserving the original meaning. Assuming students are familiar with the vernacular offered in the multiple choice question, this low-formal type question falls squarely in the zone of proximal development of many ninth and tenth graders – and students get a kick out of these kinds of exercises.

Similar to the application questions, analysis questions require high concrete or low formal cognitive demands and are often (though not necessarily) signified by verbs such as “classify”, “compare”, “investigate”:

Q5: Which statement best reflects the views of an Anti-Imperialist around 1900?
   a. “Spain should pay the U.S. for damages to American property and lives.”
   b. “The United States should not trade with other countries.”
   c. “Annexing Puerto Rico will just cause the influx of dangerous radical ideas.”
   d. “Annexing territory by force violates the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.”

Answer: d

Q6: The relationship between Siddhartha Gotama and Hesse’s Siddhartha before the end of the story could best be described as a
   a. Leader and follower
   b. Hero and adversary
   c. Finder and seeker
   d. Father and son
Q7: Suppose the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments had NOT been added to the Constitution in the aftermath of the Civil War. Which of the following would have been the most likely change to occur?

a. African Americans would have been denied the right to vote in the South by the late 1890s.
b. The Civil War would have begun anew.
c. The Civil Rights movement of the 20th century would have had greater obstacles.
d. The various immigrant groups of the late 19th century would have been accorded the status of slaves.

Answer: c

Q8: Some historians argue that the United States government dropped the atomic bombs on Japan to improve American negotiating power with the Soviet Union after WWII rather than to achieve military victory over Japan. Which of the following is the most important claim these historians make?

a. President Truman knew the Soviet Union was about to join the war against Japan prior to the U.S. dropping the bombs.
b. President Truman misled the American public by significantly over-estimating the cost in American casualties of a U.S. land invasion of mainland Japan.
c. President Truman knew of the Soviet Union’s imminent plans to invade Western Europe.  
d. President Truman believed that the Soviet Union would be more cooperative in Germany if the Japanese war ended before Soviet involvement.

Answer: d

To answer Q7, a student would have to recognize that choice a is not correct because African Americans were in fact denied the right to vote even with the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments; that b is a possible, but unlikely answer: the Radicals of the north, for one, were the constituency most sympathetic to African Americans and the Constitutional amendments, but they had lost power by the 1870s. Answer d is unlikely because areas most heavily affected by immigration such as the North and West were also the most anti-slavery before the Civil War. Answer c, then, is the best answer.

Much of the early Civil Rights movement was bound up with Constitutional law, the Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 case in particular—a major event in the burgeoning Civil Rights movement of the 1950s. This case was based on a principle enshrined in the 14th amendment.

The point here is that a lot of outside information must be synthesized to answer this question. To answer Q8 one needs to recognize what claims these historians made and didn’t make (answer c should be eliminated because it is not a claim any of these historians make) and then be able to judge which argument is most salient. To arrive at the correct answer, d, a student would need to know that Soviet intervention in the Japanese war was imminent and recognize that this answer makes the most direct defense of the historians’ claim. In requiring a defensible speculation based on the given choices or a reasoned judgment, both Q7 and Q8 are questions that require a great deal of factual knowledge and recall, as well as formal reasoning.

Students learn what we test. If we want students to learn to think, reason, and to express themselves in speech and writing, there is probably no substitute for authentic assessments such as projects and essays. But the ubiquitous multiple-choice test can play a role, too, when tests are constructed in such a way as to put factual recall in an appropriate and supportive position to reason. How do students react to these kind of reasoning-oriented multiple-choice tests? In my experience, they feel challenged and often excited by them and look forward to discussing them afterward. In addition, aids such as Bloom’s can make the task of test construction easier and fruitful for teams of teachers wanting to clarify their own thinking about their courses and to find ways to advance and measure the reasoning skills of their students.
A new look at tech integration

The Academy Model: Linking Initiatives through Professional Development

by Marla Bainbridge

Chadwick School Director of Educational Technology marla.bainbridge@chadwickschool.org

So many initiatives, so little time. Finding time to invest in school improvement initiatives can be a challenge. The Academy model is one way to address the issue of time and link initiatives such as technology integration and curriculum design. While fostering collegiality, cross-divisional collaboration, and leadership within the faculty, the Academy provides opportunities for teachers to initiate professional growth with the intent of being used in the classroom.

Research suggests that technology can enhance student learning and related skills are necessary to function in today’s world. When teachers are empowered to make decisions to use technology in ways that enhance curricula and student learning, it is more likely that the academic curriculum, rather than a technology curriculum is driving technology use, thus making the technology use seamless. While some schools may measure their success by the number of technology related projects their students complete, effective use of technology is more about curriculum, content, instructional strategies, and student learning.

This usually requires a shift in teaching style, and that takes time to develop, practice, and reflect upon through quality professional development. In an article from the June 2003 issue of T.H.E. Journal (Technological Horizons in Education) titled Removing Barriers to Professional Development, Lynn Feist, Ed.M. of Grant MacEwan College describes research showing that effective professional development opportunities include active learning focused on the technology that teachers can use in their classroom, while at the same time building in follow-up procedures. Research also suggests that learning opportunities are more successful when a teacher’s time is used well, and incorporated into their teaching schedules. Teachers are more interested in sessions that are tailored to their own learning styles and driven by their curriculum.

The Chadwick School Academy provides a professional development opportunity to teachers ready for the paradigm shift in teaching style, as well as the time, support, and follow up needed to master it. The primary objective of the Academy is to provide time and ongoing support to teachers for redesigning curriculum units that integrate technology effectively and enhance student learning beyond traditional instruction. Participants are awarded a stipend of $450.00, the Understanding by Design book by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and Macromedia Web design software.

Academy participants are chosen from brief online applications which outline their current efforts to integrate technology into the curriculum. Being a K-12 school, we strive to take advantage of opportunities that promote collaboration across grade levels, and the cohort model of the Academy is highly effective in accomplishing this goal. It promotes a safe environment for teachers to try innovative instructional strategies while
“While some schools may measure their success by the number of technology related projects their students complete, effective use of technology is more about curriculum, content, instructional strategies, and student learning.”

providing teachers technology skills they need to instinctively integrate technology into their curriculum.

Ongoing professional development is more effective than the “drive-by professional development” method, according to the research and the Academy doesn’t stop with a single workshop. Academy meetings are built in to the school calendar throughout the year. The first meeting in the spring guides teachers on how to prepare for the Academy, and they receive their book and software. Next, participants attend three professional reading group sessions to discuss Understanding by Design, by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe followed by a week during the summer. This extended time is used to create a technology-enriched Internet-based lesson, or unit in the form of a WebQuest based on the backwards design process. Teachers are immersed in a variety of software and technology for forty hours, thus creating opportunities for teachable moments.

An important aspect of the Academy model is celebrating successes and taking advantage of opportunities to share accomplishments. We celebrate on the last day of the week in the summer session with a “graduation” luncheon where participants share their work, new knowledge and philosophies of educational technology and curriculum design with administrators and other stakeholders. The participants also share their experience with their colleagues during the year in a department meeting.

Though a technology product is created, the Academy really isn’t about the technology. The true goal is to provide time and support for teachers to effectively examine and apply technology, while further developing their knowledge of curriculum design. In so doing, they also develop a personal philosophy of educational technology. The Academy process is ongoing; it continues through the next school year with pre- and post-WebQuest conferences, and three follow-up meetings built in to the calendar for the cohort to reflect upon and share the risks they have taken in their classrooms based on their Academy experience. By linking these initiatives, we provide teachers with time to redesign a unit or lesson while learning new skills and reflecting upon their experiences.

How do you know if you are using technology effectively?

Ask yourself...

• How does the use of technology enhance the learning goal?
• Is the technology providing students with more immediate access to information in a way that allows more time to be spent on deepening the learning?
• Is the technology providing an engaging component to an otherwise dry topic that will motivate students to dive into the content you want them to learn?
• Does the technology allow students to create a product that is of professional quality, therefore creating a sense of pride in presenting it to their classmates?
• Is the option of using technology a choice for students who may thrive in that environment and help build self-esteem?
• Does the use of the technology provide a time saving element for students to spend less time editing, rethinking or re-conceptualizing?
• Does the technology allow students to sort data faster and more efficiently, thus using the results and creating more time for higher level analysis?
• Does the technology allow students the access to more rapidly communicate with experts and people all over the world to gather information?
• Does teaching the content with technology require more class time than traditional instruction and if so, is the content a significant part of your curriculum and worthwhile of the time?
Want to learn something? Teach it!

“Who in their Right Mind Would Want to Teach?”

by Tanaz Arteaga

The Archer School for Girls Math Science Teacher and Academic Decathlon Coach
tarteaga@archer.org

When I was fifteen years old, sitting in my Health and Wellness class, I was startled by the teacher’s voice calling my name.

“Tanaz, how about you? What do you want to be when you grow up?”

“I want to be a doctor, so I can help people not hurt,” I heard myself reply almost automatically. Thank goodness I knew the answer to that one or she might have noticed that I was daydreaming.

“Well there are many careers that help others. Have you ever considered becoming a teacher?” Mrs. Jacobs asked.

It was then that the class erupted into laughter - who in their right mind would become a teacher? Poorly paid, hardly respected, and babysitting a class of immature students.

After Five years of teaching, I find myself asking the same question. Who in their right mind would want to become a teacher? The thing is that now I know the answer to this question. I want to be a teacher. I want to join the ranks of the lunatics who do so much, but get so little respect. But why? This is not always the easiest question to answer, especially after a hard day at work when no matter how patient you were those darn kids wouldn’t pay attention. Yet, summer after summer, I find myself back in the classroom instructing a new group of fresh minds. So why do I return? Three simple, but painfully cheesy, reasons: I adore sharing knowledge, I learn more from teaching than from anything else, and I want to give back to the community and help others.

I blame my initial desire to teach on my mother. When I was ten years old she bought my family a blackboard and suggested I play “teacher” with my two younger sisters. I believe she was just trying to find an activity to keep all three of us busy at one time and in one place. Little did she know what an intense desire in my heart to share my knowledge with others she was creating. At the parent-conference of my middle sister, her teacher commented to my parents that she had never seen such a young student grasp fractions even before being taught. My little sisters were absorbent
the topic clearer to myself at the same time. By presenting material as a teacher I was also able to anticipate possible mistakes that might be made. It was a very interesting thing—through teaching I had become the learner I always thought I could be. In the front of a classroom, you discover things about yourself you never even realized. The lessons your students can help you learn extend beyond the academic into your own being and extend into the nature of human beings. I believe that we never stop learning and the classroom provides a wonderful outlet for self-exploration and continued education. If I were sitting at a desk working on a computer everyday I am sure there would be things to learn, but not at the same level of what the dynamic and vibrant classroom can teach the teacher.

Now to the most cliché reason I became a teacher: I wanted to give back to the community and help others. Like Anne Frank, I believe that people are essentially good and her words on “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world” have always truly inspired me. Like Mrs. Jacobs said back in high school there are lots of careers that help people, but what other career helps shape the minds of those people from a young age? What other career teaches people to learn and gives them the foundational skills they will use for the rest of their lives?

So, how am I helping that one student who insists on failing every test because she refuses to finish her homework? I guess that is the beauty of being a teacher - there is the classroom curriculum and then there is the entire hidden curriculum that teachers share with their students. From study skills to life skills, to realizing that failing to prepare is preparing to fail (Abraham Lincoln), to understanding that hard work and effort truly do pay off in the end teachers truly teach their pupils more than academically. There are many lessons teachers instruct on a daily basis that go far beyond how to solve a quadratic equation and into truly shaping the minds of the future in the classrooms of today. When I wanted to be a doctor years ago it seemed like a natural thing to help others, but I didn’t realize that a doctor only sees patients who are already sick while a teacher sees that person daily and can have more of an affect on them.

Teaching is not about the fame, or the money; it is about others. Sharing knowledge, absorbing knowledge and helping to create responsible and productive citizens is what teaching is all about. Then there is this unexplainable satisfaction I attain from teaching that is hard to put into words. It is a feeling that affirms my career decision everyday no matter how many times they ask the same question over and over again or how many times I have to ask them to do the same thing. I guess it is this same feeling when a young student finally simplifies that expression correctly or the hardworking but underachieving student finally scores that A, and I guess to be a teacher you have to be a little crazy and a lot caring. Maybe Mrs. Jacobs wasn’t as funny as we all thought- maybe she had a great idea. And thank you, Mom, for purchasing that blackboard because as we all thought- maybe she had a great idea. And thank you, Mom, for purchasing that blackboard because it pointed me in the right direction, so I can happily ‘play teacher’ every day and answer the question “who in their right mind would want to teach”. I would. We would.
Those who can do, and those who can and love people, teach

Collaboration Counts

by Kevin Cummins

The Branson School  Secondary English
kcummins@branson.org

I stood in a crowded train between Taipei and Taichung.

“Are you an American?” the man beside me said.

“Yes,” I replied.

“What work do you do?”

“I am a teacher.”

“You are a good man,” he said.

“How’d your class go?” Phil says. Phil Guterriez and I each teach a section of American Literature I this trimester. We have a formal meeting at 10 o’clock every Wednesday morning. We plan lessons, write assignment sheets, and discuss paper topics and share strategies.

“Did they think Edna was triumphant in the end?” Phil asks after our respective classes had their last discussions of Kate Chopin’s The Awakening.

“I didn’t ask whether they thought her triumphant,” I said. “I asked whether her final actions showed artistic courage.”

Teaching requires courage. My stomach tightens on evenings when I teach the next day. The next morning’s classes invariably go well, and I wonder why I had been so nervous. Other jobs do not move me. Teaching matters. My work means something when I teach a boy to write a persuasive argument, a girl to question society’s conventions, or an entire class to use a semi-colon. When a boy stays after class to explain his desire to import saffron from Iran, I know my teaching matters.

Teaching has more in common with theater than any work I have done. Combining the work of scriptwriter, director, and actor, a teacher performs as an artist. Laughter, kindness and wit under gird both theater and teaching.

Having taught school for most of my adult years, I have never collaborated so freely with colleagues as I do in the English Department at The Branson School. All five desks in the Branson English office face the center of the room. When we sit at our desks we, my colleagues and I, see one another. Too often, colleagues fail to see one another. Too often, teaching occurs in isolation. At Branson, my colleagues share ideas about grammar, writing and books, assignment sheets, paper topics and lesson plans. Challenged to keep pace with colleagues, I count on our weekly team meetings to discuss the week’s progress.

For my ninth grade English class, I meet with three colleagues to discuss The Odyssey. On Thursday afternoons at 2:30, we discuss the following week’s lessons, type a common assignment sheet, and laugh. Laughter sustains us. Who doesn’t want to laugh? Karen usually begins our weekly meeting with an anecdote. “Here’s one for you,” she says, and she launches into a story about a rough phone conversation with an agitated parent over improvised guidelines for the freshman treasury candidate whose campaign rests upon the promise of a free donut for every vote. The story gives us a laugh, we discuss bribery, and then we begin our work.

I relish the role of colleague. A recent hiatus from teaching taught me how much I missed the kinship of educators. Caring most about learning, ideas, and people, I teach. I love the exchange of ideas. Work outside of schools means less to me. I recall my first foray away from teaching—a summer term class in painting and drawing at a New York City art school. As the term wound to a close, another student told me her dream: “I’ll teach if I have to, though I’d rather work alone in my studio.”

I choose people. I choose collaboration. I choose to teach.
Colonial Immersion Week offers perspective on life in the 21st century by comparison with another time

21st Century Students, 18th Century Lives

by Kathy Allison

Campbell Hall School
allisok@campbellhall.org

Elementary Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator; Art Specialist

What started five years ago as an impulsive experiment dreamed up by the art teacher (me) and the then fifth grade social studies teacher, Gretchen Kempf, has evolved into an institution which last year involved eleven teachers and ten or twelve parents. Colonial Immersion Week has changed somewhat over the years, but from the beginning a central component has been that the students come to school every day for “a week” (it’s varied from three to five days) in colonial costumes, experience “colonial” schooling and activities, and engage in reflective assignments to help them get some perspective on our country’s history by re-enacting life 250 years ago.

West Coast students often have only a vague feeling for the early British Colonial period of our country, and for the symbols and institutions that originally gave rise to the United States. After all, Williamsburg - where I was privileged to spend an incredible week at the Summer Teachers’ Institute five years ago - is nearly 3000 miles away. It would be wonderful to take our students to the cultural and historical icons on the East Coast, and some lucky schools do, but we decided instead to bring 18th century Williamsburg to California.

Students view a series of videos from Williamsburg, do some preliminary reading on the period, and then begin to create their basic costumes. For boys, this means a long vest (waistcoat) made of felt and a black cardboard tri-corner hat with a queue (pony tail) down the back. The waistcoats are stitched together on sewing machines set up in the classroom. Last year we had six machines and six or seven parents for each class. The boys really enjoy the sewing machines (after all, they have motors, don’t they?), and with one class period to cut them out, and one class period to sew, the basic waistcoats are done. We do, of course, point out that colonial tailors and seamstresses didn’t have the luxury of machines, but all the sewing after this initial phase IS done by hand, so students see how clothing actually comes together and also have some experience with finishing by hand.

Costumes for the girls consist of long cotton skirts and white muslin “mob caps”. The girls stitch the seams and casings on the skirts on the machines, and caps are cut out and gathered with tapestry needles and narrow ribbons. Both the boys’ and girls’ costumes are worn with white cotton shirts (a blouse or dress shirt with
long or three-quarter sleeves). Boys wear knee-length pants (either cut off sweatpants or baseball pants) with long socks. We supply them with white cotton stock ties. Girls can add shawls or aprons.

At the end of the first week of the unit, students are given biographies of specific Williamsburg residents (available in the Williamsburg published lesson plans and on line on the Williamsburg site, http://www.history.org). These biographies are divided up into gentrý, middling, apprentice and slave categories, and students embellish their basic costumes by hand to reflect the life style and class of the person they represent. Gentry gentlemen get LOTS of gold buttons and braid. Middling craftsmen get buttons, but not gold. Ladies and some wealthy middling craftspeople might have lace on their caps and aprons. Slaves might have fancy livery or patches on their clothes, depending on their circumstances, and so on. Students get very invested in these embellishments.

In the meantime, students are working in social studies class with a resource packet including such things as glossaries of colonial terms, information about 18th century trades and crafts, selected 18th century proverbs and moral advice, illustrations of clothing, graphic organizers for interpreting primary documents, as well as material about their own particular historical character. When biographical details are scarce, as in the case of some of the slaves, supplemental information about the general group of people (apprentices or slaves) is included in the student's packet. There is also a “Colonial Museum” in the classroom with facsimile items (again, many from the Williamsburg catalogs). Students do a variety of pre-writing activities with these resources and then write either a basic “autobiography,” or his- torical fiction in the Colonial Journal created in art class. This journal, featuring marbled paper and quill pen calligraphy, as well as various other examples of writing and illustration, is shared in a Young Authors celebration at the conclusion of Immersion week. Preliminary activities generally take four to five weeks.

On the Monday of Colonial Im mersion Week (generally in mid-Feb ruary), students arrive at school in costume ready to experience life in the 18th century. Activities during the week have included: making candles and paper in science lab, planting a garden, cooking, playing colonial games in P.E. and song flutes in music, illustrating various activities in their journals, using quill pens (chancery cursive calligraphy was introduced earlier as part of the journal), poetry recitation, and doing math on “slates.” We’ve also had an archeo logical “dig”, as well as a virtual “dig” on the Williamsburg site, and, perhaps most importantly, writing about any, or all of these activities.

Students also present two colonial programs, in which “slaves” (after working with the librarian demonstrate African American storytelling), “gentry” (after working with the P.E. coaches) demonstrate an 18th century dance, and demonstrate 18th century games. Students perform 18th century pieces on song flutes, share their interpretations of various 18th century quotes, and present the characters and social classes of their colonial personae. The culmination of the week is a colonial feast, prepared by the parents, and featuring Colonial recipes, and Young Authors, during which students share their writing with par ents and guests.

Total curricular time is somewhere between 40 and 50 hours per class, including class time, rehearsal
and performance time. It is spread out over 6 weeks, with an additional 4 weeks of art studio time before the main unit begins, and is shared among the ten teachers and specialists in the fifth grade. All of the costume construction comes out of music and art time.

And what do students get out of all of this sometimes frenetic activity?

- An enhanced perspective on life in the 21st century by comparing it to life in another time;
- A great deal of information about the history, culture, and economics of Colonial America;
- A sense of what life was like in a context very different from today, identifying with the diversity of roles within a historic community and with an important chapter in our national story;
- Appreciation for the time and effort involved in providing basic things like food, clothing, and education in a pre-industrial time; learning how some of these things are actually made; extrapolating people’s values by the choices that they made;
- Pride in mastering a number of unfamiliar skills;
- Appreciation of music and the arts as windows into another time;
- Introduction to the interpretation of primary documents; how do historians know what they know?;
- Introduction to archeology and the interpretation of physical data;
- Exposure to 18th century moral education; understanding some of the moral grounding of the Founding Fathers;
- Descriptive, expository and narrative writing experience based on careful observation and historical accuracy.

Campbell Hall’s is only one of a number of models of Colonial Days in California – Willowsburg is re-created at the Willows School for instance, and activities of the San Diego Unified School District come to mind – but our Colonial Immersion Week is an example of a fully integrated curricular unit that really works and that students will, hopefully, never forget.