

# ROOTS & WINGS

The Newsletter of Echo Horizon School



*Echo Center Director Vicki Ishida, along with Echo Center teachers Carly Alsbach, Shea Denham, Jennifer Mascolo and Jessica Aguillon, accepted the Continuing Excellence Award at the Alexander Graham Bell conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

## National Recognition of Echo Center

In late June, the Echo Center program was recognized with the *Continuing Excellence Award* at the 48th Biennial Convention of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell).

Vicki Ishida, Echo Center Director, accepted the award on behalf of the school and its faculty. A number of teachers from the school traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to attend the conference and were present at the awards banquet.

"We are so honored by this recognition," said Ms. Ishida. She continued, "It has been heartwarming to read the letters of support from many of our students' families and professionals in the field.

We celebrate the success of our students on a daily basis and it is good, I think, to step back and look at the overall effectiveness of our program. Our graduates

leave Echo with the skills that allow them to succeed in school and in life."

Head of School Paula Dashiell reflected on Echo Center's success. She said, "When Carol Proctor Landsberg founded the school 25 years ago, it was with the vision of setting a high caliber of expectation for listening, spoken language and academic learning. Vicki and her team have parlayed that vision into reality."

According to AG Bell, Echo Center has "gone above and beyond in support of spoken language for children who are deaf or hard of hearing." The organization first awarded the Echo Center with special recognition in 1991.

The conference hosted approximately 1,500 attendees from 44 U.S. states and 14 countries, bringing together families, educators and professionals in the field

## Diplomats from Singapore Visit EHS

In April, EHS was one of two U.S. elementary schools selected to host a team of nine officials from the Singapore Ministry of Education. The visit was part of the diplomats' global research in developing a National Master Plan for technology use in Singapore schools. The school was chosen due to its reputation for innovative uses of technology.

The visitors toured classrooms and interacted with students, teachers and parents to learn how the school integrates technology into the curriculum. Of particular interest was the 1:1 laptop program. A panel of students and parents provided valuable insights into how access to and use of technology at EHS impacts their learning. Elaine Wrenn, Technology Coordinator, explained, "our program is strong because our teachers embrace technology as an integral part of the educational experience."

Mrs. Tan Ching Lee, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, shared, "What we have seen has sparked many conversations amongst us and we have gained useful insights from the visit." Ms. Wrenn concluded, "we were honored and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with global partners in the interest of improving teaching and learning at EHS and around the world."



*Students proudly engaged the visitors with hands-on demonstrations and answers to their many questions.*

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## Principal Matters

From time to time I find myself suggesting to parents that their children will talk to them more often and more intimately if they will just listen and not try to solve every problem that is presented.

I am reminded of this frequently, such as the time when my older daughter, now an adult, was sharing a frustration. I immediately went into “fix it” mode and began giving advice and questioning her about the situation. Our communication quickly broke down; she shut me out. The next day I realized that, instead of allowing her to think about the situation out loud, I focused on the “problem” and was full of suggestions. I took the initiative away from her by interjecting my own thoughts. She did not want that; she just wanted someone to listen.



negotiation, problem-solving, debate or public meetings. Simple truthful conversation where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each listen well.”

Several of our teachers use a technique during their morning meetings that supports listening to one another. A topic or question is proposed and each child gets a chance to respond. The child whose turn it is to speak holds a Koosh ball. Everyone else’s job is just to listen, to take in what is being said. Interruptions aren’t allowed. When one child is finished speaking, the Koosh is passed to someone else. It is a simple technique, but one that encourages true listening—an activity that creates a bond among the children. They get to know one another in a deeper, more personal way.

As adults we seldom take time for such conversation—for listening to one another—just because we each need to be heard. We are too busy, too controlled by our lists of things to do. Time for genuine conversation is something that all of us would do well to seek actively to put back into our lives.

*Paula Dashiell earned her Bachelor of Science from Indiana University and her Masters of Arts for teachers (M.A.T.) from Harvard University. She has been Head of School at EHS since 1987.*

How many times do we fail to really listen to our children, spouses and friends – to just take in what they are saying? Often, I suspect, we jump in with our opinions. How often have you shared something about yourself, and your friend responds by switching to his or her own story instead of just accepting what you have said with a simple acknowledgement?

In her book, *Turning to One Another*, Margaret Wheatley suggests that listening to one another may be what we need at this time in our troubled world. “Simple, honest, human conversation. Not mediation,

## Echo Center Honor

(continued from front page)

of deafness from around the world.

In his letter of support to AG Bell, Josh Swiller, author of *The Unheard: A Memoir of Deafness and Africa*, summarized his admiration for the program. He wrote, “I have visited with schools and institutes for auditory training in New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., St. Louis and Northern and Southern California and other places... I can say without a shadow of a doubt that the Echo Center/Echo Horizon Program is far and away the best one I’ve seen.”

Swiller identified in his letter the “brilliant” underlying dynamic of the Echo Center program. He wrote, “It builds upon children’s essential empathy and lack of judgment. [The DHH students] are integrated naturally and seamlessly in the school’s social and academic fabric... [they] learn to see their disability as irrelevant.” He continues, “It’s not that their deafness isn’t there, but that it doesn’t matter.”

Jennifer Mascolo, Echo Center Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher, believes the recognition is well-deserved. She said, “We are so proud of our program and our kids. Our formula works and our graduates are the proof.” She concludes, “They learn to maximize their hearing, work with their technology and interact with their peers. With that focus, they can accomplish whatever they set out to do.”

## We have Two Gifts to Give our Children

One is Roots, the Other, Wings.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Echo Horizon School is to educate hearing, deaf and hard of hearing children in an inclusive environment in which independence, self-reliance and mutual respect are valued and encouraged with a curriculum designed to be challenging and developmentally appropriate for each learner.

## A New Logo!

We unveiled our new logo this fall!

In keeping with our mission to nurture our students’ roots in the fundamentals, in society and within our Echo Horizon community, while at the same time helping them to spread their wings, we have taken flight!



That cool blue horizon is making its appearance all over the place!

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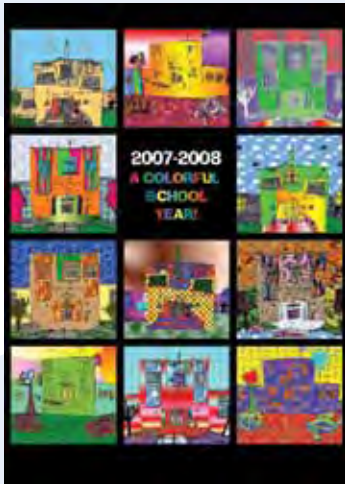
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## Documenting a Year

Each year, a group of Fifth and Sixth Graders work to envision, design and create the Echo Horizon yearbook. They meet with faculty advisors after school once a week from October through May.

Faculty Advisors Kristen Berg and Shea Denham guide the students as they work through each element of the task. "It's amazing, really, that these students are doing this at an elementary school level," Ms. Berg explains. Ms. Denham adds, "First they choose a theme, then decide on a great number of layouts. They take the photographs, interview students and staff, write captions, then upload, place and fine-tune these elements. It involves a lot of work, to be sure."

Ms. Berg adds, "Our students learn so much in this process of publishing a book from scratch... and the whole school loves the result!"



A page from the 2007-2008 Yearbook.

## The Beat, the Art, the Moves, the Drama... BAMmeD!

The arts curriculum at EHS blends music, creative movement, theatre arts and visual arts. Nowhere is it more triumphant than in the sixth graders' end of year performance, BAMmeD!

Arts Coordinator Cathleen Wolff explains, "Each year we break the mold. Students create and perform a thematic piece integrating all areas of our arts program. Working collaboratively, they design a presentation that weaves these strands together with a conceptual theme, allowing the students to demonstrate the layers they have integrated."

The students brainstorm possible ideas and choose the theme in the fall. Maya Zellman, creative movement teacher, describes the depth of thought behind the May 2008 performance. She says, "They chose 'Future.' We talked about automation and disconnect. How do robots move and how might they interact? I introduced mask work and in theatre arts, with teacher Karen Stegall, they made the artistic choice to wear black fabric and neutral masks, erasing individuality."

"As the piece went on and individuals began to emerge," she continues, "the costuming reflected the change. As masks and black clothing were discarded, faces and brightly colored wardrobe pieces were revealed. It was inspiring to guide the students' organic creative process."

Moving between past and future, they introduced transitional elements by breaking down and rebuilding functional set pieces across five scenes. Designed and



Sixth Grade explores the collaborative process.

constructed with visual arts teacher Kristen Berg, the sets were further implied with lighting, staging and video projections.

The elemental approach allows for individual skill levels to fit within a bigger cohesive piece. Ms. Wolff explains, "For example, the complex melody played on soprano xylophones is tethered down by the strong consistent beat of metallophones." The music flowed from the Orff-Schulwerk approach, the basis of the school's music program.

"Our arts faculty are working professionals," explains Ms. Wolff. She adds, "The collaborative process is instinctual for them as practicing artists and we pass this on to our students. Our curriculum reinforces the importance of the interconnectedness of the group."

And stage fright? Ms. Wolff answers, "We teach to it. We put them in front of an audience as early as age four. With positive reinforcement, students bring forth something unique. Sharing for an audience becomes a positive and fulfilling experience."

## Alumni News

JENNA ZWEIG, '05



2008

I am in my second year at Crossroads School and have enjoyed participating in plays and musicals and studio art and figure drawing classes. I am a member of the choir and the Crossroads AIDS Ambassadors, which promotes AIDS awareness at high schools around Los Angeles.



2003

I have found a strong passion for Community Service and helping those in need, performing with a school group in a musical that traveled around San Francisco to rehabs, hospitals, nursing homes and centers for abused children. I also worked at Camp Harmony as a counselor for underprivileged kids.

JAMES WINKLER, '91



2008

After graduating from Echo Horizon School in 1991, I headed east to Boston, first attending Cushing Academy and ultimately earning a Bachelor of Arts in economics from Tufts University. I then moved back to Los Angeles and began a career in real estate.

I have been working and living in West Los Angeles for about five years. When I am not working, I am usually playing basketball or racquetball or I am out on the water sailing.



1991

Add your Alumni News to the Alumni website!  
Visit [www.echohorizon.org](http://www.echohorizon.org)

# Teaching Physical Education Fundamentals through Cooperative Activity

The Physical Education (P.E.) program at EHS has been carefully designed to present and reinforce specific athletic skill acquisition, overall fitness, cooperative skills and a commitment to lifelong health and well-being. These elements are present at each level of instruction.

“All students have different starting points and we engage them there,” says P.E. teacher Kelly Killian. She continues,

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“A physically educated person is one who has mastered the necessary movement skills to participate confidently in many forms of physical activity, values physical fitness and understands that both are intimately related to health and well-being.”

- California State Frameworks

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“Within one group of kids, we have a wide range of skill and motivation. By presenting incremental challenges and opportunities

to participate, we teach to the individual child while building a cohesive group.”

Fellow instructor Tracey Tremblay agrees. She adds, “Team building and sportsmanship are key at this age. Competitiveness can really inhibit participation, so we emphasize self improvement, cooperation and participation instead of ‘winning.’ We reinforce our Points of Pride within group activities and it has immediate results.”

Mrs. Tremblay, who has taught Second and Third Grade at EHS for ten years, joined the P.E. team this year. Lindsay Rodolico, who began midway last year, rounds out the team as the third teacher.

Across the year, instruction covers a wide range of gross and fine motor skills, including hand-eye coordination, hand-foot coordination and balance. In addition to the Presidential Fitness baseline and progress testing, units include ball skills; sending and receiving; striking; offense, defense & strategies; Run/Jump/Fly and Healthy Heart.



*Collaborative games teach the fundamentals of athletics, equipping students for team sports.*

Students in Kindergarten through Sixth Grade can participate in a series of intramurals this year, as well. Ms. Rodolico explains, “We have a mix of competitive and non-competitive activities during noon recess. In addition to the Mileage Club, we are offering basketball, soccer and flag football, to name a few.”

Ms. Killian illustrates the success of this approach. “Our students cheer each other on in a way that is unique for this age group. It’s actually remarkable and the result is that each student can confidently develop his or her individual competence.” She concludes, “Our goal is to send our students out into the world knowing what they can do, not what they cannot do.”



*Structured activities help to develop students’ gross and fine motor skills, coordination and balance.*

## Echo Horizon School

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