ROOTS & Wings
Spring 2005
THE NEWSLETTER of ECHO HORIZON SCHOOL

Kelley Butler, Madison Fair, Jenna Zweig, Emma Tung, Morissa O'Mara, Jennifer Halberstadter and Anna Sonenshein pose in front of the bulletin board they designed for the Beyond Shelter Drive.

Building on Success: *The Project*

Echo Horizon's new "21st century" science room will allow students to do extended experiments without having to shelve their materials to make space for the next lesson. A versatile and uncluttered performing arts classroom will be flooded with natural light, feature a resilient floor that is comfortable for young feet and legs and can be adapted for smaller groups. And the remodeled art room will give children room to do larger projects and a more efficient clean-up area. Teachers will also have space to frame some of those masterpieces without interrupting the children as they create.

Those are some of the benefits that Echo Horizon's students—and teachers—will be able to enjoy when the school's building expansion is complete. Not only will the construction project bring much-needed additional space, it will also give students more enriching learning experiences.

"The science room will allow students, particularly in grades 5 and 6, to explore in greater detail the wonders of the world around them," says Cori Carter, a 6th grade teacher. "It will definitely be a showcase for the school and will, hopefully, bring our already rich science program into the 21st century."

The 5th grade roller coaster project, in which students design their own rides as part of a physics study on movement and momentum, is a perfect example of the need for the additional classroom space. "It's very cool, but right now it takes over the whole classroom," says Mary Collier, who with her husband, Tom are serving as chairs of the capital campaign, and who have a daughter in 6th and son in 3rd grade.

The pre-kindergarten—which is now in its second year at EHS—has similar space issues. Teachers currently set up different areas for activities such as cooking, art, and science, and then have to take them down when the children are finished with their work. But that won't be the case when a new classroom is ready."It will be wonderful to have the space to leave learning centers set up for greater periods, as children benefit from being able to explore activities over time," says Ellis Enlow, the pre-k teacher. "We are also looking for-

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New Trends in Cochlear Technology

One of the central missions of Echo Horizon School is to help hearing-impaired children reach their greatest potential. And the cochlear implant, an electronic device surgically inserted into the inner ear, has played a significant role in helping several EHS students participate more fully in the learning experience.

Ten students at EHS currently have cochlear implants, which were invented in the 1950s when a wire, connected to a battery pack, was inserted into the inner ear of a patient with a severe ear infection. A similar experiment took place in Los Angeles in 1962, but it wasn't until the 1970s that technology developed by NASA enabled the device to be sealed into a small package that would last over time. Unlike hearing aids, which make sounds louder or clearer, the implants stimulate the nerves in the inner ear. While children need devices that are appropriate for their needs, parents of children with profound hearing loss often turn to the implants because they've already tried other methods, says Vicki Ishida, the director of EHS's Echo Center.

"These are kids that have a better chance of reaching their potential after being implanted, "Ms. Ishida says, adding that the goal is to give these children enough support now so they're prepared to function and achieve in school in the future.

Some EHS students are even at the forefront of the newest trend in cochlear implant technology—having the devices implanted in the second ear. So far, two children have had that surgery. Ms. Ishida was even able to watch the surgeries in progress. Children with two implants will not be able to hear perfectly out of both ears right away. What they hear might just sound like noise or interference. "They have to get used to it," Ms. Ishida said. "They have to exercise and train the ear to hear."

Preliminary research has already been conducted on children with two implants. In one study, the researchers found that the greatest benefit of having two implants was an increase in the ability of the children to understand speech in the midst of other voices. There was little improvement, however, in their ability to tell whether sounds were coming from the left or the right. "The ability to fully recognize the benefit of having two cochlear implants," the researchers concluded, "may require time after implantation during which the user learns to use both ears and to utilize binaural cues."

Nevertheless, teachers in the Echo Center are excited about helping the children through this new experience. "It will be a learning experience for all of us," Ms. Ishida said.

Principal Matters
by Paula R. Dashiell

In our increasingly fast paced digital age, with its emphasis on doing more, doing it faster and doing it better, the challenges of being an effective parent can be quite overwhelming. Parents are faced with a myriad of decisions, often about things foreign to previous generations of parents.

Studies on parenting styles, dating from the seminal work of UC Berkeley psychologist Diana Baumrind in 1971, conclude that an authoritative style is most effective in producing self confident children with lively, happy dispositions, well-developed emotional regulation and good social skills. In other words, children who are likely to be successful in school and to become good citizens. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children, but also demanding. They establish a structure within the family that provides a foundation for sound parental decision-making.

Parents considered authoritative provide much affection and attention. Love is freely given, not just when children are behaving well or excelling at some sport or in school, but also when they are not. When children are being "bad" is often when they most need love and attention.

In order to thrive children also need well-defined limits, which is the demanding part of the equation. Boundaries that are clear and consistent create a feeling of safety for youngsters. Children need to know that there are some things that are just "off limits" and that "no" means "no". Boundaries will naturally enlarge as the children get older, and as they assume more responsibility, but authoritative parents maintain the clarity and consistency.

However, within the established limits, parents with an authoritative style allow a fair amount of autonomy. They encourage verbal give and take, and share with their children the reasoning behind policies and decisions. They encourage their children to make some of their own decisions, and give them permission to deal with the consequences. Sufficient autonomy allows children to learn how to tolerate, and even gain strength from, disappointments, mistakes and failures.

Decisions about how to spend a holiday weekend or what type of birthday celebration to plan are perfect opportunities for shared decision making. Children are given some responsibility and control over their lives and parents can teach criteria for making good decisions. A beneficial side effect is the dialogue that ensues when alternatives are discussed.

The parenting challenge, of course, is knowing when to relinquish some decisions and when to share others. Giving children too much freedom, or authority, too soon can be scary and can be a source of anxiety. Besides, limits also give young people a standard against which to resist, which is a normal part of development.

At Echo Horizon School we endeavor to adhere to an authoritative style by providing attention and affection, consistent standards and expectations, and many opportunities for decision-making within that context. We've found that establishing clear limits and a fair amount of autonomy within those limits leads to valuable dialogue and creates a useful structure for youngsters as they mature into productive adults.

"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 and hearing-impaired 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.

GOALS

- Students will develop the academic tools, social skills and moral integrity needed to be successful in the next phase of education.
- Students will integrate themselves successfully, making contributions to a diverse society, while maintaining individuality and respect for others.
- Students will generate a variety of solutions and approaches to situations requiring thoughtful and creative problem solving.
- Students will develop the skills and positive attitude for engaging in learning as a life-long process.

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Building on Success

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ward to having a pre-k bathroom!"
While those changes will specifically benefit Echo Horizon's youngest students, most of the newly built and remodeled rooms—and outside recreation spaces—will be enjoyed by the entire student body.

And with the additional space for performing and visual arts, Ms. Collier adds, Echo Horizon will be able to maintain its commitment to providing instruction in all of the arts for each grade level. A new math classroom will also give teachers some extra space to spread out. The room will primarily be used for math instruction in the upper grades, but will also be available as a resource room for all teachers.

The most noticeable change to the school library is that it will be divided into two sections, one of which is specifically designed for younger students, with lower, easy-to-reach shelves, and age-appropriate books and furniture.

"They won't have to sift through the older kids' stuff," says Linda Demmers, a Los Angeles school library consultant who was hired to work on the project. "And there will be more open space because this is the age when kids want to sit on the floor."

The other section will feature books and resource materials for older students. There will also be four computer workstations, as well as laptop computers. A new teaching area will also be included, with an interactive teaching board. Tables and chairs will be added so that the librarians or classroom teachers can conduct lessons in the library. Lower shelves will also allow more space to display books or materials depicting special themes or holidays throughout the year.
But with all those changes, the most appealing aspects of the existing library will be preserved. "Some of it is going to feel like the old library, with lots of windows and natural light," Ms. Demmers says.

The architectural plan includes 10 additional feet in the technology center, but it wasn't until technology coordinator Elaine Wrenn explained how best to use that space for instructional purposes that the design really took shape. The expansion will create two additional rooms adjacent to the technology center that can be used as small audio and video studios. The studios will be useful to the 5th and 6th graders who do a lot of video projects, and to younger students when they record their voices to accompany slide shows they've created. "They work so hard on their projects," Ms. Wrenn said, "this will allow them to make their projects more polished and have a more professional edge."

Having the chance to provide input to the architects while the blueprints were being drawn has been a stimulating experience for the staff, says Echo Horizon Executive Director Norma Roberts. "This project has brought the faculty and staff together. There's much excitement in the air."

ALUMNI CORNER

Caitlin Date, '99, a senior at Harvard-Westlake School, is a National Merit finalist; she is taking AP and honors courses as she prepares for college next year. A devoted basketball player, she also does community service through the Girl Scouts, an organization she joined as a kindergartner at Echo Horizon School. "I liked Echo Horizon's philosophy," she says. "It was not about grades and competing with other students, but doing the best you could. That made a huge difference and helped prepare me for a relatively competitive environment like Harvard-Westlake, by teaching me how to be supportive of my friends."

Lily Haskins, '00, a junior at Marlborough School, already has a career path marked out for herself; she wants to be a pro-bono lawyer, specializing in inner city human relations: landlord/tenant disputes, social security, and basic public work. In February, she went to Washington, DC to participate in the National Youth Leadership Forum on Law, and this summer, she hopes to intern at the ACLU. She traces her engagement and commitment back to Echo Horizon, which, she believes, gave her the tools to think for herself. "Unlike other schools," she says, "Echo Horizon has a much more liberal environment. It's conducive to letting you figure out what you want to do."

Stephen Taylor, '02, a freshman at Windward School, likes soccer and lacrosse, and also performs in the school jazz band, where he plays trumpet, an instrument he first began to learn as a student at Echo Horizon because he "liked the sound." For Stephen, EHS offered an essential grounding for his current studies, which include world history, physics, and geometry. "Echo Horizon," he says, "prepared me for moving up and out. It gave me confidence, and taught me that I could do whatever I set my mind to do."

SAVE THE DATE: The 2005 EHS Alumni Get-Together will take place on Monday May 23, from 3-5 PM.

Service Learning: *Students Can Make a Difference*

Natural disasters often make us feel helpless, as if we were at the mercy of forces much more powerful than ourselves. Yet in the aftermath of the December 26th tsunami that killed more than 150,000 people in South Asia, Echo Horizon's 4th and 5th graders learned an important lesson about the ability of natural disasters to empower us, as well. On January 25th and 26th, the 4th grade held a hot chocolate and sparkling cider sale that raised $1123, which was sent to the American Red Cross for tsunami relief efforts; the following week the 5th grade hosted an all-day carwash that brought in more than $2300, which they gave to Operation USA for the same cause. "In our class," says 4th grade teacher Craig Call, "we discuss so many things where kids of this age feel ineffective. But this was something where the kids realized that they were not silent participants, but could really make a difference in the world."

Isabella Parisot works hard for the Tsunami Relief Carwash

The idea of making a difference is, of course, at the heart of "service learning," which has long been an important aspect of the EHS experience. Every year, the entire school participates in such activities as Thanksgiving in a Box, Beyond Shelter and Family-to-Family. Even Readathon has a service component, with Scholastic offering book donations to underprivileged schools. What sets the 4th and 5th grade tsunami relief apart, however, is that none of it was generated by faculty or administration, but by students, who saw news coverage of the devastation over winter break and returned to school determined to help in whatever way they could.

"When we got back from vacation," explains 5th grade teacher Kelly Nick, "the kids all wanted to do something. We had never done anything like this, but it was their idea, so we were there to facilitate."

In the 4th grade, the dynamic was similar. "Both classes simultaneously expressed wanting to do something," notes Kim Wynn, whose students began to discuss relief efforts almost immediately. "Two students from 4C were approaching Mrs. Dashiell at the same time 4W was brainstorming ideas."

Before the 4th and 5th graders could raise any money, both had to come up with effective strategies. Each grade formed committees to explore different fundraising options, then voted on what to do. The kids came up with a lot of possibilities. They discussed a bake sale, a yard sale, even bringing in money of their own. Once plans were in place, some kids worked on publicity, while others went to local businesses to request donations of money or supplies. For both grades, the key was channeling student enthusiasm into practical efforts they could achieve on their own. "What I learned," says 5th grader Sophie Strauss, "is that if you set your mind on something, you

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Outdoor Learning: *The New Playground*

The building project at Echo Horizon School will bring not only new classroom space inside the building, but new opportunities for physical play and learning outside as well. The playground for the younger students will include a new play structure and a can't-miss basketball hoop called the "fun tunnel." These will not only challenge their physical abilities, but also encourage them to use their imaginations.

Surrounding the climbing structure will be a circular path with a new kidney-shaped sandpit replacing the current sandbox. And a new four-square court will allow for 12 different games. "There will be some exciting structures for the youngsters," says Craig Cunningham, a playground designer from 21st Century Education Enterprises who developed the plans for the new yards. "There will be a variety of new challenges so they can develop appropriate motor skills."

Education researchers have found that the outside space surrounding a school can be just as important to the curriculum as a conventional classroom. "Every school's grounds are potential educational spaces where concepts taught within the school building can come alive to students," writes Cheryl Wagner of the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. "Research shows that students absorb and retain math, science, language arts, and other skills that incorporate their immediate environment and use all five senses. Once we accept that education naturally occurs both indoors and out, the term 'outdoor learning' will begin to seem as strange as the never-used 'indoor learning.' "

Additional pieces on the kindergarten yard—including an outside drawing board and interactive play panels—will provide teachers in the lower grades opportunities for integrating the outdoors into their lessons.

The older children will see plenty of changes in their part of the playground as well. The baseball diamond, as well as the basketball court have been preserved but repositioned.

"You're going to have some color and greenery out there that you don't have now," says Mr. Cunningham. And the addition of some new shade trees will help shelter students and teachers from the southern California sun.

Physical education teachers Julie Parrino and Kelly Killian are also looking forward to integrating the new playground structures into their P.E. curriculum. "The new building project," Ms. Parrino says, "has provided us with an opportunity to create an environment that will be multi-functional and more aesthetically pleasing."

Parent Participation:
Tapping Into The Experts Among Us.

Echo Horizon has always been a school where parents have a significant effect. From school tours to hot lunch, Readathon to the Halloween Carnival, this is a community that relies on parent volunteers as a way of expanding the boundaries and possibilities of student life. Even when it comes to academics, parents often play a vivid part. Take our 5th grade, where parents are invited on a regular basis to share their time and expertise in areas ranging from chemistry to theater arts. "I think it's really important," 5th grade teacher, Jeff Tremblay explains, "to access the experts among us, and let the kiddos see that we are all part of a larger learning community."

Deborah Nordman develops a character.

Rob Palmer demonstrates how to "mix-it-up" to Jake Palmer.

For Mr. Tremblay, the idea of parent participation is hardly a new one; he began to experiment with it while a teacher in New Hampshire, long before he came to EHS. The idea, he says, is "to give information to the kids that we could never offer," and, in the process, stretch their understanding of the world. Two or three times a year, a parent will come and offer a mini-assembly to the 5th graders, which is a demonstration of what they do. This year's guests included Rob Palmer, a chemist at Chevron/Texaco whose son Jake is a 5th grader, and theater director Deborah Nordman, mother of Leah, who is also in 5th grade. I try to ask a lot of questions," says Mr. Palmer, whose one hour chemistry lesson features "a basic experiment" — an acid-base titration, for instance — to introduce certain elementary concepts, and is interactive, designed to get students involved.

Mrs. Nordman, for her part, brings in a theater exercise (this year, she spoke on how to develop a character), although the larger lesson is about the value of an engaged life. As she explains, "I enjoy involving the kids in the fact that parents can have passions. The word 'work' is often an anathema, but going to work can be stimulating and exciting, and I want them to know that."

What Mrs. Nordman is getting at is the notion of extending education beyond the classroom, of bringing in the outside world and making it relevant to students' lives. This is also the reason the 5th grade teachers feel it is so essential for parents to participate. "We like to have parents come in as much as possible," Mr. Tremblay explains. "On Back-to-School Night, we ask everyone if they have any talents or knowledge that they'd like to share. The kids really respond; it's very special. Not only in terms of information, but as a way of teaching lessons about citizenship — about the importance of getting involved and volunteering — as well."

Service Learning

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can do it, no matter how impossible it seems." That sentiment is echoed by Craig Call, who found the students' success nothing short of amazing. "We thought if the kids raised $200-300," he says, "that would be successful. They did an amazing job."

Raising nearly $3500 for tsunami victims offers an inspiring lesson in what even "a group of 9-11 year olds" can achieve, said both Mrs. Wynn and Mr. Call. But there's another, more elusive benefit at work here, which is the benefit to the students themselves.

"We have two big goals in 5th grade," Mrs. Nick says, "independence and citizenship. Both were covered by this event. It was a true community service opportunity."

Mrs. Wynn agrees. "The value is immense," she stresses. "The students spend a good deal of 4th grade learning how others have shaped and influenced the communities they live in. This experience provides an opportunity for them to influence, impact, and serve others. This project integrates and fosters intrapersonal skill development, organization and time management skills, decision making, math, social sciences, and the points of pride. You can't design a better lesson. The learning is incredibly meaningful."

Kate Rowey, Alice Kuhns, Katie Adler, Claire Hookstratten and Jake Harris help 4th grade raise funds for the Tsunami Fund.

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