

# ROOTS *& Wings*

Spring 2007

THE NEWSLETTER of ECHO HORIZON SCHOOL



*Laptops Make It To The Science Lab!*

## One-to-One Laptop Program

Putting Apple iBook laptops in the hands of every 5th and 6th grader at Echo Horizon School has allowed students to keep up with the latest technology and use those tools to demonstrate what they know. "Having twenty-four/seven access to technology has given students the freedom to explore and express their learning in ways that work best for their learning style," says EHS Technology Coordinator Elaine Wrenn.

The laptops give "students the ability to learn and work anywhere any time—at their desks, on the floor, in a quiet corner, in the hall," Ms. Wrenn explains. "We saw an impact immediately."

Schools begin one-to-one laptop programs for a variety of reasons, but some of the most popular ones include broadening learning beyond the classroom and giving students a way to be more engaged in their work. It also prepares them for a 21st Century work environment with most careers now making use of computers and the Internet.

Laptops are also a complement to project-

based learning, which increases at Echo Horizon during the upper grades. According to 6th grade teacher Cori Gafni, students have used their laptops to create presentations for their science fair projects, make up games, design brochures, and create "iMovies" about their trip to Yosemite National Park. "I think the most remarkable outcome of the program is how students actually do come to see their laptops as a tool for their learning, just like pencil and paper," Ms. Gafni said.

Having the laptops at home also allows students to extend their learning beyond what is happening in the classroom. One student, Ms. Gafni adds, took a course on Flash animation, and then taught his classmates what he learned. (See alumni in the news sidebar)

Noah Ulin, a 6th grader this year, says individual laptops encourage students to integrate new visual and audio elements into their class projects using programs that they might have been hesitant to try before.

Vicki Ishida, the director of the school's Echo Center program sees particular benefits for

## Paper Clips

Using social situations that are familiar to young adolescents, Sandra Roberts gets students to think about their own behavior. "How many of you have talked about someone behind their back?" the middle school language arts teacher from rural Whitwell, Tenn., asked Echo Horizon School's 5th and 6th graders during her recent visit. "How many of you have witnessed kids being teased or bullied? How many of you went and told a teacher and how many of you just walked away?"

While schoolyard drama seems far removed from the horrors of the Holocaust, Ms. Roberts draws parallels between turning one's back on their peers and the way the world turned its back when millions of Jews were isolated, imprisoned, and killed.

"It's a great example of what man can do to man," she says. "This was a good lesson for our kids to learn about the power of hate."

These were the themes her students explored when they embarked on a project of collecting simple paperclips to represent the millions of Jews lost in the Holocaust—a topic that Ms. Roberts herself says she knew almost nothing about, much less her students, who are overwhelmingly white and Protestant.

What started with one paperclip sent from a woman in Texas turned into an international movement with eventually over 27 million paperclips being mailed to the school along with letters of Holocaust survivors and family members.

Articles written by journalists Dagmar and Peter Schroeder, White House correspondents for German and Austrian newspapers, attracted even more media attention to the project. Ultimately, a documentary film, "Six Million Paper Clips," was made, as Ms. Roberts and others at the school began looking for a way to permanently house the paperclips in a memorial at the school. They decided that a German railcar, once used to transport Jews to concentration camps, would be an appropriate monument. Ironically, the railcar traveled to the United States on Sept. 11, 2001—the day of the terrorist attacks.

Talking about the railcar, Ms. Roberts told the students, "This symbol of hatred that was going to be changed to a symbol of hope traveled on the day the U.S. was attacked." Visited by almost 500 people a month, the railcar is now the only Holocaust memorial "designed, managed, and run by children." A challenging Holocaust studies class at her school also continues.

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Recently, I was reminded of something a psychoanalyst friend relayed a few years ago. This man was reflecting on the way he had raised his own children. "If I could do it over again," he said, "I would not be so afraid to let my children be unhappy at times. My own feelings, when the children showed the least displeasure, got in my way and then I misapplied some of the psychological concepts I had learned. Now I know that I weakened my children by thinking that I had to try and make sure they'd be happy at all times."

Many parents seem to be able to bear almost anything except evidence of a child's frustration, displeasure, boredom or other unhappiness. Because strong feelings are aroused in the parents when the child is unhappy, some immediately try to come to the rescue, almost as if to say: "I'll do anything. Just don't cry, just don't be sad."

Being frustrated, disappointed, lonely, worried or unhappy are all part of the human condition. Knowing how to deal with painful feelings by problem solving, by learning how to bounce back from adversity, by dealing productively with stress is what we must each learn to do for ourselves. The research on stress clearly shows that we learn to manage stress by first dealing with reasonable amounts of it while being emotionally supported in our struggle. "Yes, that's a tough one and I'm sorry." "I can see you feel badly." "I know you'll find a way to deal with that problem," and other similar responses can be very supportive, as can a look, a touch or simply being present.

If parents come to a child's aid too often and too consistently, they risk saying to the child that having

negative feelings is not only terrible, rather than a normal life process, but also that to have these feelings is terribly upsetting to the parents. Children may learn to protect their parents by not allowing themselves to experience sad feelings, possibly limiting their range of feelings altogether. Children may also learn to manipulate their parents to get their own way, which is also not strengthening.

Parents often interpret situations for their children when the children need to do their own interpreting - when they need to learn through their own experiences, which, at times, may be less than pleasurable. Children then learn that they can think, can weather a jolt, and can find their way out of a bind. They learn that they are capable, thereby strengthening their self-concepts, and they experience pride and happiness.

Hopefully, our children will have experiences in dealing with stress and unhappiness in doses that are not life threatening or so traumatic that they cannot easily recover from them. But it is important to learn to how to weather disappointments, loss of privileges for not having done a job or fulfilled a promise and how to live with a "no", an "I expect this of you" or a "you need to wait." If dramatics and tears are hard to take, or if we assume that being occasionally unhappy is detrimental, we may want to give the matter another thought. Could not being occasionally unhappy be even more detrimental to our children in the long run?

*Excerpted from an essay by Gerda Lawrence, Seeds UES Clinical Social Worker, 1982*

(cont. from front page)

hearing-impaired students. Having a wireless laptop allows students with hearing loss to move to an area where there is a more comfortable noise level. The laptops also "provide another means for note-taking," she said, adding that, depending on the student, "listening to the teacher and looking up and down to write notes can be a difficult task."

Once a student develops strong-enough key-boarding skills, she said "a laptop enables a student to continue to maintain eye contact with the speaker while typing notes."

But what does research say about the advantages and disadvantages of giving students computers that they can use both at school and at home?

This is still an emerging area of study. But studies so far suggest that students write more—and write better—when using laptops. The Center for Applied Research in Education Technology, a project of the Washington, D.C.-based International Society for Technology in Education, cites studies which found that teamwork and interpersonal skills improve when students can collaborate using laptops.

Other studies demonstrate that when students consistently produce work on laptops, teachers can more closely monitor—and monitor in different ways—their understanding of concepts and how they apply what they've learned.

Some experts, however, also note that schools should be careful to avoid pitfalls that can occur with student laptop programs. Students have to be taught to use the laptops appropriately. At EHS, students learn about and are expected to follow the guidelines of the school's Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

Security of the computers can also be a concern but Ms. Wrenn says "the kids handle the responsibility very well. They are very attached and don't want anything to happen to them because they rely on them to do so much of their work."

Student achievement won't necessarily improve if teachers don't receive training on how to get the most out of using laptops. At Echo Horizon School, teachers each have their own laptop and receive ongoing professional development in using technology to enhance student learning. Since teachers have been integrating technology into their instruction at EHS for many years, the transition to one-to-one laptops for students was an easy and welcome one, Ms. Wrenn explains.



*Laptops Make It To The Library!*

## *"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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## ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

**Nathan Platnick, a 2006 graduate of EHS,** was recently highlighted in "eSchool News," an online publication about school technology, for his enterprising work using sophisticated software programs to enhance his presentations. At the time Nathan was in 5th grade, he designed a website focusing on a tsunami relief effort involving his class. He used Atomic Learning, a software training and support site on the Internet, to learn how to use Dreamweaver, a web-design software program. Then he taught himself to use Flash animation, and even created a class during his lunch period for other students who were interested in learning the same skills.

"When he reached sixth grade, students began to notice his animation work and started asking him to show them how to use Flash," the article says. According to Elaine Wrenn, technology coordinator at EHS, Nathan, who now attends Brentwood School, was "an excellent teacher," and other students were able to have the same success. For his work, Nathan also won a California Student Media and Multimedia award.

**Hannah Moss, a 2003 EHS graduate** was recently featured in Campbell Hall's high school newspaper, *The Piper*, for her community service work benefiting a homeless shelter. The organization through which she volunteers, Path Passages, focuses on feeding homeless people, as well as teaching participants skills so they can earn employment.

Hannah, and a fellow student, Hannah Davis, also received a grant from Campbell Hall's alumni board, to support their volunteer work. They, along with other finalists for the grant funds, are expected to make a presentation about their project to the alumni board this spring. According to the paper, "Although they didn't found the organization themselves, the funds Moss and Davis received will help it go on longer."

**Rebecca Levinson, a 2002 EHS graduate** has been named as one of L.A.'s "Top 10 Mensches" by *The Jewish Journal of Los Angeles*. Now a junior at Oakwood School, Rebecca was honored for her many volunteer activities, one of which includes being trained by the Peer Education Project of Los Angeles to lead informal discussions with other teenagers about HIV/AIDS and avoiding risky sexual behavior. She also tutors a 5th grader, organizes American Cancer Society fundraisers, and traveled to El Salvador last summer where she learned about the culture and worked in a women's bakery.

"Volunteering is in her blood," the author of the article wrote, noting that as the daughter of David Levinson—who founded the citywide volunteering day known as Big Sunday—she grew up learning how to help people.

## Riding for Reading

For Echo Horizon 6th grader Alice Kuhns, riding horses and reading books is a winning combination—for her and for the school. Alice recently participated in the Riding for Reading Benefit Show at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in Burbank. As one of 50 riders, representing 46 schools, she received prizes and earned a grant for the school's library.

"It was a lot of fun," said Alice, who was among the top 10 riders in the competition. "You get to do a victory gallop with your ribbons."

Founded in 1997 by three women passionate about horseback riding, Penny Carpenter, Lisa DaValle, and Marnye Langer, Riding for Reading is a nonprofit organization that recognizes young riders from the 1st through 12th grades, and promotes reading at the same time.

"In the United States, equestrian sports are relatively obscure in relation to mainstream sports like football, basketball and baseball," according to an article on the organization's Website.



Alice Kuhns Rides for EHS

"Riding for Reading grants have catapulted many of these riders into the limelight and given them much deserved recognition for their achievements and accomplishments."

In its first three years, the organization raised over \$20,000 for school libraries in Northern California. Students who participate in the program also receive donated gift bags full of prizes for themselves and their horses. The schools represented in

the September 4th show in

Burbank received close to a combined \$5,000, and more than 500 books were donated to the cause, and will be distributed to schools with little or no library funds, senior centers, and after-school programs.

Alice has been riding horses for about two years, and is already at a "very good intermediate" level, according to her mother, Maggie Kuhns. She rides about four times a week, and has a pony named Emmy. The horse's "show name" is Imagine That.

## Advanced Recycling - "environmental sustainability"

Used coffee grounds may be the oddest item Echo Horizon parents have ever been asked to donate. But second grade teachers Anita Melnick and Roz Henderson had a very good reason for their request. The grounds make an excellent soil for growing mushrooms—and teach students principles of recycling and re-using a material that would otherwise be thrown away.

The project was inspired by a workshop on sustainability that Ms. Melnick, Head of School Paula Dashiell and other faculty members attended last summer. Led by Gunter Pauli, founder of Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI) and a driving force behind the "zero emissions" movement, the two-day session was an effort to show educators how they can implement some of these principles in a school setting.

"I'm a firm believer that the time has come for designers to design an environment that enhances lifelong learning," Dr. Pauli said when he visited Echo Horizon School recently, focusing his comments on constructing educational facilities that are both "green" and that improve the health of the students and adults in the building. "In the design of sustainability, you use what you have available around you. It's rethinking what is available."

The lecture was open to EHS families as well as school administrators, teachers, architects and designers from throughout the Los Angeles area. It was also one of a series of appearances Dr. Pauli made in Southern California last fall.

His theories are also finding support among other experts in the field of school construction.

The American Institute of Architects and Capital E—a clean energy technology and "green" building consulting firm—recently released a report showing that energy efficient schools not only have lower operating costs, but the students who attend them have higher test scores and improved health.

In addition to his work with ZERI, Mr. Pauli is the former chief-executive officer of Ecover, a Malle, Belgium-based cleaning products company that is taking on giants, such as Procter & Gamble, but with an ecologically sensitive approach. The company's line of laundry detergent, shampoos, and other products are made with natural soaps and renewable materials, such as vegetable extracts and natural oils. With its thick grass roof and walls made of recycled clay from coal mines, the company's factory has become a bit of a tourist attraction in itself.

In 1994, he founded ZERI, an international network of people looking for innovative and "sustainable" solutions to the world's problems that work in "harmony with nature," according to the organization's website.

ZERI also has an educational initiative that explains these issues for children through a series of fairy tales, written by Mr. Pauli. He also urges educators to involve students in the search for new and innovative ideas.

"We make children feel as if they cannot contribute," he told the audience at EHS. "If any of you have plans to design schools, talk to the kids first."

# AIMing to Include

Echo Horizon School is engaged in a new type of assessment—not one to determine how well students are progressing—but one to gauge whether the school is fulfilling its mission of attracting a diverse student population and including everyone in the life of the school.

Called the Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism, the tool is a new resource from the National Association of Independent Schools and guides schools in asking tough questions about all aspects of school operations, from school governance and leadership to student life. Part of the association's "equity and justice" initiative, AIM is intended to provide results that allow schools to "strategically plan for building and sustaining inclusive independent school communities." Through the process—which takes up to a year—schools can set benchmarks, and determine whether they are meeting them.

In announcing the new effort to parents at the beginning of the school year, Head of School Paula Dashiell said she had been asked by a few parents whether "something had happened" to lead the school to adopt the AIM process. But the fact is, she explained, AIM allows schools to be proactive about addressing matters that might lead to someone feeling left out. Now that the school's building project is complete, she added, it was a good time to concentrate on this process. Echo Horizon is also one of the first schools in the country to use the assessment.

AIM is a close match the for school's existing core values, which include mutual respect and inclusiveness. The school's strategic plan also talks about recognizing society's increasing diversity and encouraging a "truly inclusive outlook."

EHS also has a unique mission of serving hearing-impaired children, Mrs. Dashiell added, giving the school an additional reason to foster understanding of parents and children with different needs. Mrs. Dashiell and Ivonne Silver, mother of 1st grader Conner, recently gave a presentation on AIM at a California Association of Independent Schools conference for trustees and school heads. They talked about Echo Horizon School's specific efforts to "integrate the deaf education program and the mainstream program into something that worked for everyone," said Mrs. Dashiell, adding that participants in the session were interested in how the process might apply to their schools.

As part of AIM, roughly 100 people, including Echo Horizon parents, staff members, and even alumni participated in "discovery committees" last fall to discuss these issues. Fifth-grade teacher Jeff Tremblay and Echo Center teacher Jessica Aguillon—who both helped organize the two evenings on which the discovery committees met—said the topic of "what is diversity" actually generated quite a bit of discussion. And they sensed excitement among people about how their input would be used to improve the school.

"The participation thus far has been good," says David Leichenger, the father of 5th grader Matthew, and a member of the AIM Steering Committee. He added that he hopes the effort will enable EHS students to "act naturally—by default and as the rule—in an inclusive, interested, welcoming, respectful, open-minded and understanding manner with regard to the many differences among people."

Mrs. Dashiell said the people she talked to about the process expressed "a great appreciation for an opportunity to talk" about matters that sometimes get pushed under the surface. In addition to the work of the committees, the entire school community was invited in January to complete an online survey that allows for feedback on school climate and culture. Recommendations from the committees and data from the survey will then be used to draft a final report for the school's board of trustees and the administration.

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## Echo Horizon School

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# Paper Clips

*(cont. from front page)*

While much of her talk was frank and sobering, Ms. Roberts encouraged EHS students to find their own cause.

And for those students who didn't get to hear Ms. Roberts speak, a connection between Echo Horizon School and the students in Whitwell, Tenn., will continue. During this year's Read-a-thon, 15 cases of books were donated to Whitwell Middle. They were then turned over to Whitwell Elementary School, with many of them going home with the students.

"When a child speaks with passion, adults will listen," Ms. Roberts told the students. "I want you to be the next big project everybody's talking about."

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## Readathon, 2007



*Pamela Reed Smolan and Paula Dashiell  
accompanied by eight avid readers  
launch our 2007 Readathon!*