



Mattole Valley Charter School Newsletter

To Share and Celebrate our Vision
Holiday Edition 2008



**Happy Holidays,
Friends and
Colleagues**

I'm afraid that time got away from me this year...
Sorry it took so long to get this newsletter out.

I got to thinking that we, as educators, are really a weird bunch. Other people do their jobs by day and then go home and live their lives. We, on the other hand, seem to internalize our profession and sometimes obsess on it. I don't know how many times I go home and end up on email, conversing with other teachers and administrators well into the night. Are we talking about a fun night we had, a funny situation, or a planned trip??? NO! We are revisiting a meeting, a special student, or a problem we want to solve.

It's true; educators are a dedicated bunch. We don't always agree, and we have some very heartfelt ideals, but we do have something in common, and that is our major goal is to help students succeed, not just in school, but in life. So, I wanted you all to know that I respect you all and am proud to be part of the MVCS community. I may not agree with everybody, but I love to see teachers going for the best ideas, and I know that there's a BEST way for everyone – not necessarily the same for each individual.

Hope you all were able to relax and enjoy some time doing something for yourselves this holiday.
Cathy

Please send submissions for the newsletter. Let us all know the great things you've been doing, as well as tips, student work to share, announcements, etc.

In this Issue:

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Announcements and More...**

Mattole Valley Charter School celebrates 10 Years

On September the 27th, the Humboldt County crowd celebrated the 10th anniversary of MVCS, the longest running Charter School in Humboldt County, with a potluck picnic at Halvorsen Park on Humboldt Bay. The day was lovely - with camaraderie, good food, and entertainment.



Group Photo



Drumming with Willow Brook



Songs by Bethany and Hannah McKinney

APlus+ Conference in Del Mar

Mattole Valley Charter School was well represented at the annual A+ Conference, October 22 – 24th, in spite of the fact that it was far way and we had mostly decided we weren't going...But there were many informative sessions offered, and then some of us – encouraged by Pam - decided that we could also present some very informative sessions sharing all the cool stuff we've been doing and, well... we were pretty great!

Gwen Neu did a presentation on *Distance Teaching with Hotchalk*; Teresa Creech did three presentations *Hands-on Physical Math Games*, *Blackboard Algebra*, and shared with Julie Smith, *Week Zero for Blackboard for Math, History and Cinema*; Barbara Giacomelli. and Linda Dillen presented their successful *Block Scheduling* program; Kara Marten gave two interactive sessions on using *GoogleDocs as a Teaching and Communication Tool and Digital Story Telling*; Pam Lane shared a grant proposal on *Digital Portal for Charter Schools*; and Pam Lane, Cathy Wright, Teresa Creech, and Barbara Giacomelli presented our *Academic Improvement Plan*.

Sorry I didn't get pictures of all the presentations, but there is a sampling below, as well as a picture of most of us at the Welcome Reception with A+ Director Jeff Rice and Host. *Video Text Interactive* genius, Tom Clark.



The Reader's Journey Through HotChalk.com Class created the following poems:

Nightlife in Las Vegas

By Brittany Frost

The flashing lights all around are like music in the air
The people walking up and down the streets are like ants on an ant hill.
The cars zooming past are like flocks of birds.
Tall skyscrapers up high seem to be swaying overhead.

A Call to California circa the 1930s

By Daniel J. Ruggles

The Dust Bowl,
A cause of the mirage of prosperity,
The mirage was called California,
A beautiful oasis in propaganda,
But simply dust in The Great Plains.



Left - Teresa and Julie's session on Week Zero
Below – Cathy, Pam, Teresa, and Barabra present AIP.
Above Right – Kara with Google Docs, and Most of us at the Opening Reception



ODE TO THE SKI LIFT

By Camille Hayes

**Oh great mountain majesty
How I love to ride on thee
The shining white blanket beneath my feet
As I sit on a moving seat
Advancing forward to the top
I feel my very spirits drop
I see my exit dead ahead
An exit I will always dread
I hope I won't fall on
my butt
I seem to be stuck in this very rut
I stand up ready to depart
And actually hold my heart
I don't fall, it's a miracle!
Now I just have the mountain to tackle!**

Ode to Christmas

By Taylor Vitale

Christmas, O how I love Christmas;
The smell of cookies and eggnog
Leaves a sense of peace in my soul.

All the shiny paper wrapped with bows
Create excitement in everyone's hearts,
And to find one's name nestled on a present
Is like a treasure of pure gold.

When I see all the lights twinkling through the night,
It reminds me of the stars in the sky.

Christmas, O how I adore thee;
Tis this is my ode to you,
And when you leave, I shall miss thee,
And wait 'til you come again.

A Diamond in the Rough on the Midnight Shore

By Marijka Gregory

A glisten in the midnight sun,
Lots of work that has been done
A shimmer, a shine, a color galore
A rock that is found on the midnight shore

The rock needs no tumbler
No blade or polish
Waves do the most part
The rough, they demolish

The rough rock tumbles and turns
As the waves do their job
The rock goes through currents
Sea storms and more
The waves keep on working all the more

So the wet masterpiece is found
It has been tumbled around, now on the ground
And because of what the ocean does
The rock's tough
Like a true diamond in the rough
And forever more, it will be found
On the midnight shore

Seven Skills Students Desperately Need

*Today's students could fail at life, says Harvard's
Tony Wagner, because their schools are too busy
teaching to the test...*

Excerpts from an article

By Meris Stansbury

Teaching to the test is a mistake, Harvard's Tony Wagner reminded the audience of his Nov. 18 keynote address to the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), because it interferes with transmitting the seven "survival skills" every student should acquire before graduating.

"A lot of people think the skills that students need to learn for the workforce and the skills they need to learn to be a good citizen are two separate sets. But they're not. What makes a student successful in the global workforce will make a person successful at life," he said.

Wagner said he hears two things repeated constantly by today's employers: "We need people who can ask good questions, and we need people who can engage others in thoughtful conversations."

"When I asked them whether or not they needed students to know the latest version of software, they said no," he added. "They told me that technology moves so fast that it's hard to keep up with. From the time students graduate to when they get the job, it's usually changed anyway. . . .Employers don't mind

training employees in technology--but you can't teach someone how to think."

Wagner, who consults for public and independent schools, districts, and foundations across the country and internationally, said his visits to some school districts have highlighted why state standards need to change--and why teaching to the test is not the way to achieve success.

"I went to visit many science labs in these districts," said Wagner. "Some of them were great, achieved great test scores, and most of their students went on to postsecondary education. But some weren't so great, and here's why: I was watching a group of high school students in a science lab. One group had a problem, and the Bunsen burner was smoking. But they weren't doing anything about it--just waiting for the teacher to come by and fix it. But the teacher wasn't looking, so I went over, and I asked: 'What's going on?' One of the kids said, 'Don't know, not working.' So I looked at them and I said, 'Well, what's your hypothesis?' They all stared blankly. Finally one said, 'Oh yeah, a hypothesis, that was one of our vocabulary words the other day, but I don't know what it means.'"

Wagner said the problem is that you can have all the equipment and technology you want, but "if you don't teach kids how to think, how to think beyond multiple choice, you've got a problem."

Wagner said teaching to the test not only limits students' ability to think for themselves, but also discourages students from studying subjects they love.

According to Wagner, students of this generation are not unmotivated; they're just differently motivated. "They're multi-taskers, they are drawn to graphics, they like instant gratification, they use Web 2.0 tools to create, and they love collaboration," he said. "If we can figure out how to grab their interest in learning, they'll become great thinkers and be eager to learn the basics."

Wagner presented a list of seven "survival skills" that students need to succeed in today's information-age world, taken from his book *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need--And What We Can do About It*.

It's a school's job to make sure students have these skills before graduating, he said:

- 1. Problem-solving and critical thinking;**
- 2. Collaboration across networks and leading by influence;**
- 3. Agility and adaptability;**

- 4. Initiative and entrepreneurship;**
- 5. Effective written and oral communication;**
- 6. Accessing and analyzing information; and**
- 7. Curiosity and imagination.**

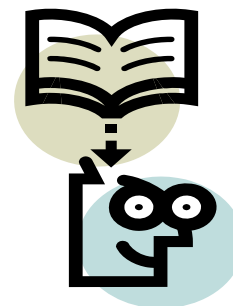
Professional Learning Communities

This year many MVCS educators are taking part in Professional Learning Communities training through Humboldt county Office of education. The entire staffs of North Coast Learning Academy, Willow Brook Learning Center, Mattole School, and a diverse group of us representing Independent Study are participating.

The PLC model is one that is getting a lot of attention in educational circles. PLC helps educators to solve practical problems while supporting each other as a group of learners – Learning While Doing...Isn't that what we'd all like to do and have our students do as well?

Each of our PLC groups has chosen a task centered on improving student learning in our school, based on standards and best practices. Hopefully each group will share the outcomes of their projects.

I know the Independent Study group is working on a neat project that will culminate in a Parent/Student Handbook for Independent Study families. We're very excited about the project, and the finished product will be shared with everyone.



A Written Piece from Siena Klein's Student:

The Most Beautiful Day.

By Shaka Sickels

The weather recently was ever changing, a sudden shift from chilly to hot occurred 4 days ago but today it was oddly drizzling rain lightly rained for most of the morning, with a powerful yet cool sun that had been evaporating it, around 2pm I set out for a coffee at the local coffee place a few blocks from home. I

made note of a vast rainbow arching over a crimson tree with brooding clouds spanning the sky overhead. this caused me to pause a moment. I also made note that the air was very refreshing.

I had spent most the afternoon toiling away to organize and repair everything I could, all day I had needed supplies and finally I decided to go to the store.

At roughly 7:10pm. I was burst out of the house to go to the store for candles and other supplies when my attention was immediately toward the sky. After a moment I became entranced in them, feeling like all I wanted to do was to stand back and watch. Then my mind snapped into the decisive action of rushing back to get a jacket so I could comfortably chase the sky. I was in and out and chasing the view toward Redway school.

Across the sky and over the school I saw fabulous lights in the center of a gathering of parted tree tops with the quaint little school connecting the pavement I was standing on with the trees behind the school reached far up to form a interesting and contrasting tree line, in between two of the trees in the tree line was a faint yet prominent rainbow arching downward to the trees while all around and above it were far out cloud formations with an array of lighting.

It had been a beautiful day until now, but this was outstanding!

I thought of a need to get a better view still, thoughts to climb to higher heights or scale a building or tree, yet the only place that seemed plausible was a steeple just up the parking lot to the entrance of the school. Once I got there I witnessed indeed the most majestically beautiful sight of my life. I was at a different angle looking in another direction entirely. I could see much more of previously unseen yet hinted at views.

I stood at the bottom of a small hill separated by the road and decorated with green grass patching a light and clean looking ground, with fabulous trees that had dark blood bulbs all over the wild and dark branches. I now had a better angle on the clouds where fire and light danced, rain clouds raced out toward the town in front of me and quaint houses and luscious neighborhoods surrounded me,

While in front of me was the most amazing of all of the other directions, almost all of my attention was concentrated where the distant mountain chain dipped and declined in size, letting a layered sea of storm clouds with wild blue highlights into the valley. On the other side of the canal the mountains had made the clouds were closer and more defined, running across to channel the clouds but declining to go under the spectacular water clouds, and everything was

struck with the sun in the most fascinating way possible. The Sun, was utterly undetectable; it was hidden deep in the wall of rain clouds. But its light still spilled up over the dark blue storm clouds.

The light hit all sorts of large and small clouds all over the sky. Lower toward the sun and over my head was a very large and gelatinous half stormy cloud showing through as a gold brazen fire of color. Others were more red and some just a voluptuous peachy orange. Between the hills the mist happily existed and enthralled me.

As I was just standing in awe I decided to sit down by one of the rigid and beautiful trees with the lavish dark bloody color that were up the steeple. The ground was surprisingly dry. It had very little dew but was fiercely alive with the fresh water and sunlight it had been getting for further analyzing the vision.

All of the plant life was vibrant with the morning rain and current twilight mists with trickle of rain.

At this point I did not know whether I was tearing up or if it was just the light and inconsistent drizzle of rain. The moment made me more in tune with my surroundings. I will be going out tomorrow at the same time.

As the rain clouds climbed up through the sky and blocked out the sun I knew this vision was fading, in a minute or two I noticed the prominent and fantastic highlights on the trees around me and the ones that stuck out on the mountainside's.

After some time giving my appreciating for the spectacle I started my way back up to the store. By the time I got out 10 or so minutes later the sky was all dark and blue from faint light fading through the spreading storm clouds.

I've been inside until now trying to describe what I saw, but the colors and way the clouds shifted and were pushed by the shapes of the trees I cannot put into words.

I thank you for your time,

Hopefully, some day I can put what I saw onto canvas.

Happy painting, I hope you have a pleasant evening.

Inservice Opportunities via HCOE

www.humboldt.k12.ca.us/pdo

The following qualify for funding through HPSG:

- February 3: Reading for Para-educators with Dr. Anita Archer
- February 4: Scaffolding Reading Comprehension with Dr. Anita Archer
- February 28: Mini-conference on Teaching Strategies with local teacher presenters

*Please remember that you must complete a **Travel and Conference Form** BEFORE you attend any professional development activity to be paid by MVCS. Contact Gwen at 707-476-8406 or Pam at 707-445-2660 ext. 12 for assistance with the form.*

Other Professional Development Possibilities:

- January 7: Drug Culture in Humboldt County; sponsored by HCOE
- January 27: Literacy through Music with Ron Brown for K – 3; *sponsored by Humboldt Reading Council, call 441- 4630*
- March 26: Executive Functioning: Helping Students Learn How to Learn; sponsored by HCOE
- April 24: Suicide Intervention; sponsored by HCOE

Some Beautiful pictures of the music program at Beginnings Learning Center



Some things to try...

Some websites:

Download 25,000 books at Project Gutenberg - gutenberg.org

Lessons in foreign language – bbc.co.uk/languages

Invitations...

SWAIN Learning center will give a presentation about P.A.C.E. program for students with processing problems, regarding a possibility of training for the program. This program has had some amazing results, and while I don't believe in Miracles, this may be something to learn more about. In Mendocino – Fort Bragg Jan 29th, 12'oclock luncheon at North Coast Brewery. Call Cathy for info. 707-445-2660 x13

CAHSEE Steps Online Test Prep

CAHSEE Steps Stepping into your Future course is a FREE web based preparation program developed and put on by Butte Community College to help students pass the CAHSEE. There is also an Algebra module. This course is an interactive web based CAHSEE

preparation program which provides pre-assessment, video introduction to concepts, interactive games to apply concepts, scaffolded learning exercises, a strong peer component, and post assessment.

At this time of year, we should be seeing some students who have already failed the CAHSEE once, or more, and have some idea of others who may be at risk for failing one or both parts of the test, so please call Cathy 707-445-2660 x13 to find out how you can attend a brief webinar from any location to prepare you to get your students signed up for this very promising program.

Language Arts Adoptions

Gwen Neu and Cathy Wright are involved in reviewing the new Language Arts K-8 programs that are going to be available for next year. There are some new aspects to all the adoptions, including an intervention program built into the programs.

By Spring, Gwen and Cathy will give you our recommendations about programs that may work for us at MVCS. We'll keep you posted.

Online Parent Training

Gwen and Cathy are also working on online parent training programs through *How to Master*. These trainings will include several programs which will also be able to be printed out: How to Use a Teacher's Edition, How to Use Planners and Set Long and Short Term Goals, Understanding Testing, and others to be completed by spring.

We Learn...

- 10% of what we read**
- 20% of what we hear**
- 30% of what we see**
- 50% of what we see and hear**
- 70% of what we discuss with others**
- 80% of what we experience**
- 95% of what we teach someone**

That's why we're all so smart!

Seriously, though, keep these percentages in mind when we teach and make assignments.

Want to find out how to do anything???

Try Howcast.com. The site, put on by YouTube and Google employees, features 7,500 instructional mini-films with answers to many questions.

Keep our Brains Balanced!

Technology has revolutionized our lives, but there may be a downside. According to recent research digital immersion can cause us to lose social connections that protect us from stress. And may also suppress the frontal lobe of the brain – hindering memory, attention, and problem solving.

So, don't forget to keep in touch.

Make sure there's face-to-face time.

Share time with friends...talk, laugh,

Keep and value connections with friends, and family.

Try new things.

Lastly, Rules for Good Writing:

Avoid clichés like the plague; they're old hat
Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.

Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

Don't repeat yourself, or say again, what you've said before.

Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

Just thought I'd put in a Thank You to two people we rarely see, but who keep our school together daily...Our Records Department personnel, Linda Huddleston and Roxy Kennedy. Thank You!



Happy New Year!