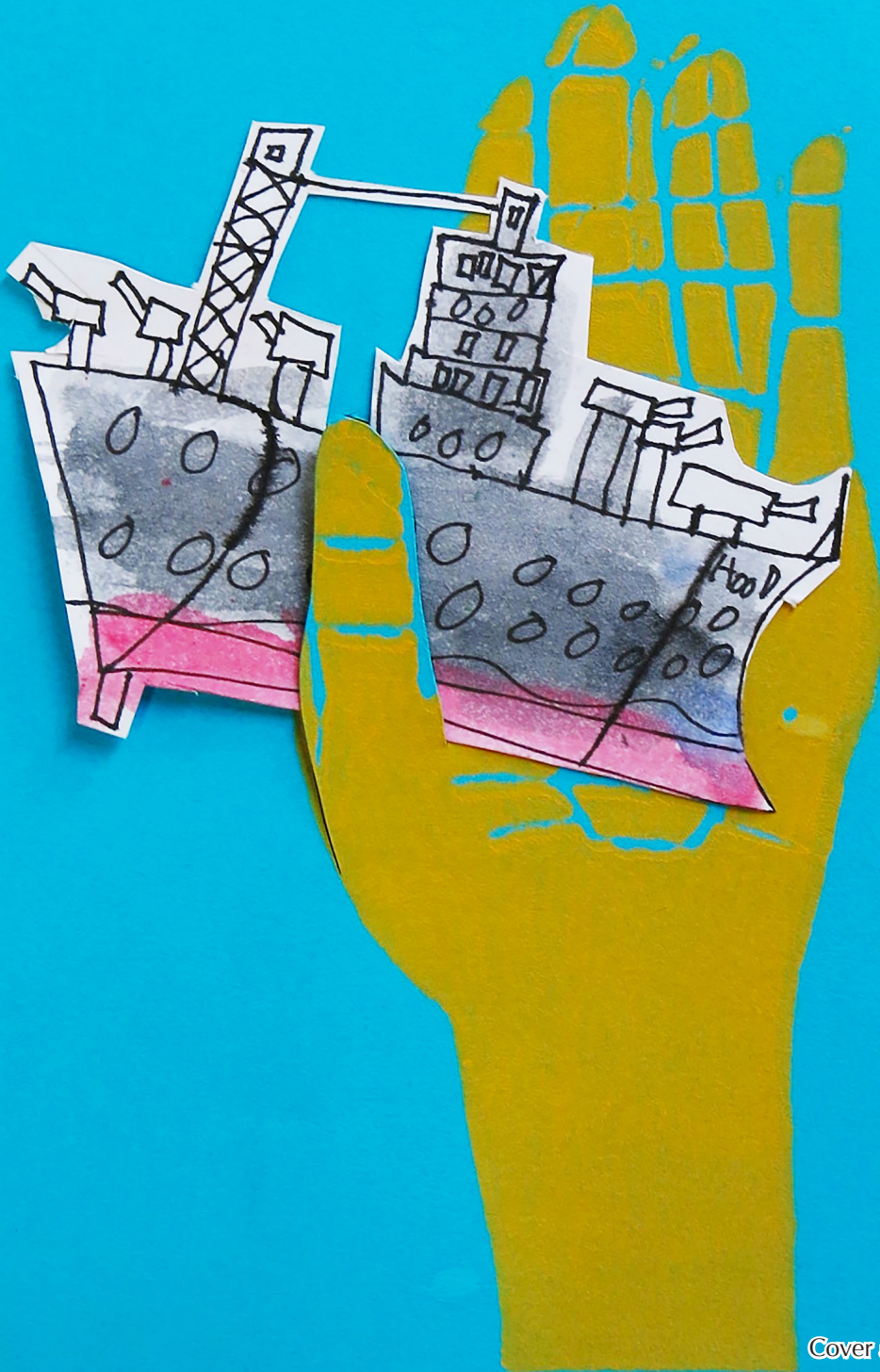


# BEHIND THE HEDGE

SUMMER 2014



Cover art by Julian Ochoa Gavilano, age 7



BERKWOOD HEDGE SCHOOL





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 Love Weinstock

# Love Letter

By Love Weinstock, Head of School



Our children's journey will extend far beyond their formal education. However, early educational experiences profoundly shape the foundation of their being, greatly influencing their future experiences. At Berkwood Hedge School, we are not focused on preparing students to pass an assessment test. Instead, through a rich and relevant curriculum, we are preparing children for a life of active and engaged citizenship.

This issue of our annual Behind the Hedge newsletter outlines the ways in which our teachers develop and implement a curriculum that cultivates creativity and intellectual curiosity, and helps children to develop the skills for social responsibility, civic engagement, and successful navigation of an increasingly complex world.

Our safe and supportive learning community balances a high level of personal accountability with an equally high level of collective responsibility. Our curriculum is not a body of knowledge that our teachers transmit to our students. Instead, learning is approached as a dynamic process in which understanding is developed by experiencing, collaborating, making, and reflecting. This interdisciplinary approach cultivates critical thinking, creative problem solving, and self-expression.

Our students engage in authentic discourse in which they are encouraged to respectfully and compassionately disagree and challenge one another's ideas, as well as those of their teacher. The curriculum is a dynamic interaction in which students and teachers continuously reflect, define, refine, and redefine as they go beyond knowledge toward understanding—The teacher asks rather than tells, guides rather than instructs, and partners with students and colleagues as a learner.

I am excited to share parts of our curriculum in the pages ahead through stories from within and beyond our classrooms, told by our amazing teachers themselves.

Hanan talks about a curriculum built upon trust in the natural wonder and interest of children, while Marti speaks of the cultivation of first grade poets. Elisa discusses her journey in planning and implementing a program that is both integrated and relevant to students. Seema shares a vision of a curriculum that prepares children to be agents of positive change—to identify and break down assumptions, misconceptions, stereotypes, and generalizations, and to become more self-aware and culturally competent. Erica Koval discusses a Spanish program in which children become storytellers. Erica Ryan outlines the value of experiential learning and the ways in which children make and become a part of history, while Vera examines the critical value of a program that is well differentiated and considers the convergent and divergent needs of individual learners. Marianne writes about preparing students for middle school. And, finally, Zappo offers us a meditation, an example of the how we use the breathing tool, from our social-emotional curriculum the TOOLBox Project.

Berkwood Hedge teachers respond with flexibility and enthusiasm to the individual child and the collective needs of the group. Our teachers reflect together, challenge one another, and create a staff culture of support and respect. This creates a learning environment in which each child is valued, and can contribute and thrive. Our program is relevant, thematic, project-based, and engages complex concepts rather than simple facts. We support the well-being of the child, and our teachers passionately facilitate learning, guided by rigor, relevance, relationship, and reflection—Berkwood Hedge prepares children for life!

 Love Weinstock







## Integrated Curriculum

Elisa Edwards

One of the things I've enjoyed most about returning to the classroom full time this year has been the chance to integrate curriculum. As I stepped into a different and an unexpected role last summer, I searched for a big idea that could thread through our work in the year ahead. I love the deep understanding that comes when children make connections across disciplines, applying what they've learned in one context to another. This year, I chose to weave the curriculum around the ideas of growth, change, cycles and constants.

We began by focusing on the self, on internal change. I was moving up to second grade with a group of children I had taught the year before. Sixteen of my eighteen students had been together as first graders. Just one was new to the group and one was returning after a year abroad. Rather than resting easy with the

idea that most of us knew each other, I focused on how we might have grown and changed over the summer. We could all be new again in one way or another. Some of the changes were obvious from the outside: I lost two teeth. I got a haircut. Other changes, we could not know without being told: I swam better than I thought I could. I learned to skateboard. Still other things had remained constant: I'm still funny. I still like spies.

In our next project, we stepped outside ourselves to study change in our community. We asked: How has our school changed? How has our neighborhood changed? What was it like when our parents and grandparents were children? This led to a math investigation in which we explored the idea of constant difference. Within the context of our family histories, we examined differences in age. We wondered: How old were my parents when I was born? How long till I am as old as my parents are now? How old will they be then? Why are there patterns in the answers to those questions?

Change came up again as we studied plant and animal life cycles in science. We've just finished tracking the metamorphic change of painted lady butterflies. And as we read and shared books this year, we noted how the characters grew and changed over time.

Writing work was also ripe with change. Second grade is a time when revision becomes a clear part of the writing process as children develop the stamina to revisit and revise their work. We imagined the intention behind the writing of favorite authors and how they might have revised their work to make that intention more clear. We reexamined our own writing, decided our own intentions – what were we hoping our readers might feel reading our work? Sharing our drafts with others, did our intention come through? What changes could we make to bring it forward more?

Connecting back out, we asked ourselves: how could we affect change in our communities? Some students noticed that while the containers our sushi lunches came in were compostable, the soy sauce packets were not. They surveyed their peers to find out if others were interested in change, spoke to the appropriate adults about more sustainable options, and worked with their art teacher to design ceramic soy sauce pitchers.

In another project, we connected with the Hungry Owl Project, a local organization working to reduce the use of pesticides and rodenticides by inviting owls to nest in the area. With parent support, we built six screech owl boxes for HOP to use.

From all this, I've seen my students develop greater flexibility and increase their acceptance of change. Just last week, during Design Time, a small group of children were designing domino runs. Two sections of the run were accidentally triggered before the creators were finished. At first, the reaction was one of frustration and upset. But moments later, a child announced that they had agreed to do multiple trial runs to test their designs before the final show. It was a shift in perspective that recognized the need for change, experimentation and flexibility – similar to revising one's writing after sharing it with a partner or a small group in a "trial run".

I'm already thinking about how to revise and enrich cross-curricular connections next year. To my mind, integrated curriculum is a reflection of the interconnected world we live in. Supporting children in seeing and making those connections will serve them well wherever they go.

## Differentiated Instruction

Vera Balarin

Differentiated instruction is catching fire in education today. Teaching to the middle and hoping that everybody will learn is no longer acceptable. Whatever the topic is, there are always some students who already know something about it and there are some students that are not ready for it yet. So how do teachers at Berkwood Hedge teach? How do we challenge each student and make sure that instruction is focused within each student's zone of proximal development? How do we differentiate math instructions?

A role of a teacher at a progressive school such as Berkwood Hedge has changed from that of lecturer to that of a coach. Teachers don't teach lessons, they teach students, tailoring

*"Teachers don't teach lessons, they teach students, tailoring instructions to meet individual student's needs."*

*-Vera Balarin*

instructions to meet individual student's needs. Instead of standing in front of the class and lecturing, teachers conduct workshops which offer a lot of opportunities to confer with the students. These conversations help the teacher assess a student's understanding, find gaps that are preventing a student from developing better understanding, and set up the next goals for this student. Confering is a great opportunity for differentiating. This is a time when the teacher asks questions to collect data about a learner and guide the students in their learning.

One of my favorite math problems is the "handshake" problem: In a room with five people, how many different handshakes are possible? After the teacher poses the problem, the students solve it in different ways. At the end, the class gets together to discuss different approaches and solutions.

While students are working on this problem, the teacher confers with them and uses formative assessment to target the instruction. Math teachers often suggest to students to think of visual models to represent the problem. For example, if students make elaborate drawings of people to solve the problem, the teacher suggests that they use a symbol to represent each person. A symbol can be a circle or a letter. If students are not ready to take this first step to abstract thinking, the teacher might suggest using a manipulative, or ask a group of students to act out the problem by shaking hands.

Other students will quickly notice that the first person in the problem shakes hands with 4 people, the next person shakes hand with 3 people, etc; and will compute  $4+3+2+1$  to find the answer 10. These students are ready to work with larger numbers and to make generalizations. The teacher might ask them to figure out how many different handshakes would there be between 10 people? Or 100 people? How can you quickly add the first 100 numbers? Can you write a rule that will work for any number of people? How can you prove it? How would you explain your solution to others? While these students are exploring deeper, the teacher uses this opportunity to provide additional support to students who need it.

Finally the students are asked to prove their thinking to a group of their peers. This often leads into rich discussions where young mathematicians practice justifying their thinking and learn from each other.





# Art

## Instilling Joy and Love of Art

Kalen Meyer

My philosophy in teaching art to children is to give them interesting, challenging and most of all, fun projects. The most important gift I can give students of this age is a love of making art. I usually give them assignments that I am interested in exploring in my own work. When I tell them I could give their projects to adults, I mean it! I continually think of new projects and am genuinely excited by the prospect of trying new ways of doing art with students. I hope a little of my enthusiasm rubs off on them!

I have been teaching art to children for 14 years, starting by volunteering in my daughter's kindergarten class. I found that as an artist I had just the right amount of knowledge and experience in several different media (painting, drawing, printing, photography and artist's bookmaking) to thoroughly enjoy sharing those interests with children, and began a professional second career teaching art to kids. I now teach art to the EARTH, AIR, WATER and FIRE classes at Berkwood Hedge.

When teaching, I try to give the right amount of freedom and parameters in their projects, so children can experience their own creativity, but have some basis to start from. Just today one of my students told me, "I love parameters!" and I have to agree, it helps to start with an idea and see what you can do with it, rather than be faced with a blank sheet and infinite possibilities. For instance, for the project on the cover, we made a drawing of our hands on a printing plate. Before we drew, we talked about how different each hand is, which led to a close examination of our fingerprints and whether we had paisley fingerprints or swirls. Everyone drew their hands differently. They then drew an object that they were interested in, and put it in one of their printed hands.

The greatest part about teaching art is seeing how a child interprets an assignment. I am continually delighted with what they come up with, how they think in surprising ways.

Part of an art education is learning how to work with different media and be successful using different techniques. That part of working with children is also fun, introducing them to something new that hopefully they will be able to use as they grow. I try to cover a wide variety of media during a school year, we always do at least one book project, a few different printing projects, plenty of painting and drawing and of course working with clay.

I hope what I instill in these students today will stay with them and allow them to create with their hands for literally the rest of their lives... in this world of technology they are growing up in, there is still a great satisfaction in making something tangible out of paper, canvas, ink and glue.



Art by Ellora, age 9

## Dance

Patricia West

The time is 9:00 a.m. and the EARTHlings have just filed into the community room, first stopping by the indoor water fountain to take off their shoes and socks. Some walk right to the rug and sit down, criss cross, while others may take a detour; hopping, skipping, jumping around the room to end on the rug where we begin class every week.



Photo Credit Steve Zhang

We start with a group drawing of a flower. This is something we've been doing since the beginning of the year. The drawing represents the elements of dance: energy, focus, body, space, time and force. Each week a different person contributes to this group drawing. Earlier on, someone drew the roots of the flower and labelled it energy and with each successive week we add onto the flower labeling each part a different element. Today, we are drawing and labeling the petals. The children label each petal with words to describe components that dance includes.

On this given day, the petals read: music, stillness, motion, and soul. As usual, after warm up, I present the EARTHlings with a challenge.

"Let's see what movements we can do through space that uses the idea of 'over'." We all tried "over" motions with our hands, our arms, heads, backs, legs and more. "How about 'under'?" How does "under" feel in the body?" The EARTHlings were moving through space spontaneously. Some children were swooping way low and ducking as if under an imaginary chair. Others snaked their head and back down and through while some used smaller body parts like fingers or hands. By this time I have my drum and I'm accompanying their moves. The room is buzzing and I feel that now is the time to extend the challenge.

Dance is a process of safe exploration; class is a space where we surprise ourselves with our creative pathways and findings. Working with Berkwood Hedge students makes this easy. Being an artist and a teacher demands flexibility and the ability to let go of your vision of what may happen. Teaching dance is most fulfilling for me when I allow the students to guide me into the unknown. The children broaden the scope of possibilities by tuning into the present moment. This is something that I work to accomplish in my every day life as well. Being able to teach dance at Berkwood Hedge is truly exciting.

# Dance





# Beyond The Classroom

Erica Ryan

As a teacher, I seek to broaden the scope of what we learn in the classroom through relevant, engaging experiences in the field. We all look forward to the special days when we venture out to learn together in a context outside the classroom. Children engage their senses and participate in different ways. It’s also a chance for me to notice my students’ behavior in a new context, giving me greater understanding of each child, one that cannot be fully realized in the classroom.

I see the value of field trips when students enthusiastically raise their hands, hoping to be called on, so that they may respond to a question or share an inspiration. Comments such as “Oh yeah, we learned about...” and “That reminds me of...” and “I wonder why...” give voice to the learning. Lessons are not limited to the field trip program; rather, the experience begins the moment we step off campus. I teach my students to navigate spaces respectfully and to look out for their own and each other’s safety. Moving through city streets, our long double line travels as a big family, accountable for one another.

Sometimes the most memorable lessons are unplanned. Last year at Point Reyes National Seashore, students noticed a great blue heron stalking its next meal. Those who tuned into this moment got to witness it use its beak to capture and swallow a vole, regurgitate it, and swallow it again. Students gathered to see what was so compelling, and we all stared in silent awe.

In reflecting on another year of fourth-grade field trips, the most powerful memory that comes to mind is an experience at “Grandmother Rock,” an old Nisenan Indian grinding rock in Coloma. It was a serendipitous moment, as I had just read the class, “The Other Way to Listen,” by Byrd Baylor,

a poetic narrative about truly listening to the world around us. Feeling the poignancy of that place, I asked the class to take a minute to “listen to the rock,” to hear the stories of generations upon generations of Nisenan women who gathered there for thousands of years, pounding acorns, telling stories, raising their families. And for a long and uninterrupted time, the children sat silently upon the stone touching it with reverence, looking out into the distance, feeling a sense of their place in history. These are the moments we cannot capture in the classroom.

# Breaking Down Assumptions

By Seema Patel

Berkwood Hedge School Mission Statement  
“Our small cooperative community of students, families, and educators share a commitment for preserving the environment and promoting social justice within both the school culture and the larger community.” We are committed to strengthening diversity of all types, including cultural, ethical, racial, learning style, economic, gender and family structure...”

I remember when I first came across Berkwood Hedge in 2006 and felt an instant connection with this part of the mission statement. The value the school placed on social and environmental justice intrigued me, and I knew I had to be here. Social justice has always been a critical and driving force in my life from my early years till today. As I navigated my world as a child of immigrant parents, I faced many challenges and experiences that eventually led me to be an educator for social change. This social justice lens has been intricately woven into the 3rd grade curriculum--It is the way I work with kids, the words I choose to use, the questions I pose, the books we choose to read, and the mindset I come in with.

The 3rd grade Native American Studies Unit is an example of how social justice is promoted in the school culture and in the curriculum. This integrated unit begins with an honest look at what we have learned, been told, seen, and/or read about in regards to The Native American Tribes of North America. The students generate the list and I create a safe space where there are no right or wrong ideas. As we read through the list, patterns emerge around cultural assumptions, misconceptions, stereotypes, and generalizations. Throughout our unit of study we begin to break down the list and the truth begins to emerge. In a social justice- social studies curriculum students come to their own truth about our history. We as teachers facilitate the process through rich literature, artifacts, documentaries, guest speakers, field trips, inquiry, multiple perspectives, media analysis, current events, and hands-on activities.



As responsible researchers, the AIR students gain important literacy skills along with the critical thinking skills such as making text comparisons, understanding the structure of informational/expository text, note taking, summarizing, organizing information, analyzing resources, and publishing an interactive poster.

I feel a sense of accomplishment each year as the AIR group moves on with a new understanding of who they are and how they fit into this world. They begin to question, with open eyes and hearts, what they believe in and what they stand for! In my eight years, it has been a true privilege and honor to teach 3rd graders to be part of their becoming more self aware and culturally competent.

# Energizing The Classroom

Emily Esguerra

Energizers are quick movement activities designed to refresh and refocus students’ bodies and brains. They can be short or long in duration, high intensity or low impact, loud or soft in volume, intended to relax or awaken students. No matter what shape they take, the premise behind these physical movements is consistent—in order to learn well, children need to move.

What I love most about energizers is how accessible, positive, and fun they are across all grade levels. There are energizers that I use with the current SPIRIT class that I will use in the same fashion with my middle school students in the summer. I’ve found too that there is rarely a space where it’s not appropriate to utilize them—transitions in and out of the classrooms, to break up longer instructional blocks, during an afternoon “slump,” etc. More than just their accessibility, however, energizers cultivate a classroom culture that can extend far beyond any curricular subject. Students are synchronizing movements, songs, chants, and interacting together in an amusing and infectious joyous way. One of the class’ favorites is, “Awake, Alert, Alive, Enthusiastic.” In this energizer, learners follow specified physical movements lead by myself while they synchronize corresponding words (i.e.- “Awake [index fingers to temples], Alert [hands to top of head], Alive [cross arms over chest], Enthusiastic [slap thighs then snap]”).

I’m not the only one that finds these physical movements helpful either. Research indicates that by focusing on physical movements while at the same time centering on the corresponding speech, children are invigorating their brain for more productive learning. These “brain breaks” increase blood flow, bringing more oxygen to the brain and improving concentration. In addition, students are developing gross motor skills, coordination, flexibility, spatial awareness, rhythm, oral language, and self-control.

One of the great benefits of being an educator is that I am constantly on my feet—instructing, weaving my way from student to student, circulating the room and playground. Even in all my daily movement though, I myself find energizers helpful when I do them along with students. They’re short, but the quick bursts of physical motion bring a little bit more life, energy, joy, and focus into the classroom and into the students.



# A Story to Tell: TPRS at Berkwood Hedge

By Erica Koval

Three years ago, my teaching was turned inside out as I learned about TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling). Since adopting this method, my students became much more proficient in Spanish, had more fun and wanted to continue their language learning. Invented in California by Blaine Ray, TPRS involves James Asher’s method of Total Physical Response and deepens understanding of the language through personalized storytelling, reading, and the natural approach to teaching language. I have continued to teach with this method because it gets results for all students. Many components of TPRS align with how we know the brain learns best. This article will highlight three: the use of patterns, the learning environment and long-term memory.

First, the brain seeks patterns. In class, all new words are taught in chunks. Students do not memorize impossibly long lists of vocabulary. Instead, they are exposed to high frequency words through actions, story telling, pictures, and reading. In these activities, students always have a context for the new vocabulary: a situation, story or personalized questions. By listening to, creating, reading and acting out stories, students are able to hear, see and practice the patterns of the language. Nothing is taught in isolation, and the brain is able to make connections and immerse itself in the patterns of Spanish.

Second, the brain learns best in a safe and inviting environment. In my classroom, students are never forced to participate. I have found this causes students to shut down. They are hesitant to participate again, and rarely create spontaneous language. When students are ready, they will participate. I work hard to give praise to individuals and the group as a whole for speaking in Spanish and trying new words. We make jokes and talk about funny situations that matter to them. As a result of personalized stories, students are more interested and more willing to take risks because the content was co-created by them and their classmates.

Finally, TPRS methods ensure that language becomes a part of long-term memory. Students see, hear, touch and act out new vocabulary. They use multiple senses throughout the class to experience words. This supports them to drive the information into their long-term memory. Plus, with this method, new vocabulary is repeated many times. Learners need at least fifteen (often much more) meaningful connections with new information before it becomes a part of their long-term memory. That is why we repeat the words in many ways: actions, reading, acting, storytelling, and games.

TPRS is a wonderful teaching method that aligns with how our brains learn and work best. Students are able to create patterns and connections, learn in a safe and supportive environment, and put the language into their long-term memory.





*“The Trouble with Poetry is that it encourages the writing of more poetry”*

*-Billy Collins*

Zebra and Finch are quite a pair.

I like to see them in the air.

When there is a problem,  
they always calm me down.  
So, that is why I like them a lot.

They are fun and pretty  
Or as beautiful as the sun.  
When they are done with their life,

I say, “What fun you have been.

What courage you have brought  
in me  
And that is good.

Ethan Kremen  
age 7

## Telling Many Tales...At Berkwood Hedge

by Marti Mogensen

For several years, I have used “The Trouble with Poetry” by Billy Collins to introduce the genre to the first grade WOODworkers.

Before reading, I ask, “What do you think Billy Collins might be thinking? What trouble might he see?” And, they knowingly respond with “Poetry is hard to understand”, “It is not easy to rhyme poems”, “It is hard to find the right words”, “Some people are not poets”, and the like.



And, then, we read the delightful, insightful poem and learn that, “the trouble with poetry is that it encourages the writing of more poetry”.

And, the aha moment!

We talk about how we can see that “trouble” with so much of what we do! The trouble with writing, the trouble with reading, the trouble with storytelling--and how lucky we are that we are doing all of these things. We have them meshed and merged into our learning--from reading buddies and story circles to journal writing and class plays. And, they encourage us to do more... Fill us with the urge to tell more!

“Poetry fills me with the urge to write more poetry. Poetry fills me with joy and I rise like a feather in the wind.”

With endless thanks to Billy Collins, MM



Photo Credit Paul Mueller

## Writing Workshop

by Hanan Masri

We all have teachers in our lives- people who have shown us inspiring possibilities or reassured us that our very own instincts are to be trusted. One of them for me has been Lucy Calkins, the founding director of the highly esteemed Teachers College Writing and Reading Project in New York City. Lucy taught me to trust the natural wonder and interest of children and to create a classroom in which the teacher is a watchful facilitator.

I begin with the children gathering around. Perhaps that day we are studying another child’s piece of work, a writer that has written with an eye for detail. During another session, I may pull books off the shelves and show the differences between sentences in storybooks and line breaks in poetry. Some lessons hone the mechanics: the capital letters, punctuation, sight words- the bones of this architecture. While on other days, we try to pinpoint the soul of the process- what the person is trying to say and how do they do it.

Using a constructivist framework, I invite children to get into “pair shares” and exchange what they notice and wonder. On the morning we study a poem by a former Berkwood Hedge student, we note how the writer shows us, rather than tells us, his feelings. We marvel at his careful word choices. We consider that if he had written about thunderstorms instead of “sunny weather,” the meaning could have been quite different. For awhile, we even debate whether “a zoo full of animals” is truly a happy or sad image. It inspires a collective poem on sadness by the children who fill it with images of being homeless, not having any fun or money, “a thousand slaves, a million red ants.”

The children are then released to their tables to try their hand at what was shared communally in that mini lesson. The teacher circulates, eavesdropping on conversations and conferring individually with children. Each conference is tailored to that child and their process. Adult teachers also make notes of progress and new discoveries by that child as well as ways to support that young writer. It is a delicate mix of celebrating the work and gently stretching their craft. Meanwhile, the children are encouraged to turn to each other for support; the children are often paired with a peer-friend who is there to help retrieve a word or provide an audience for that freshly penned story. The children are told early on in the year that there is a teacher sitting right next to them, within arms reach! The children are reminded to trust themselves and each other. Teachers are encouraged to trust the process and to provide the structure and freedom to let it all emerge.

As poet Naomi Shihab Nye writes, “Teaching and writing are separate, but serve and feed one another in so many ways. Writing travels the road inward, teaching, the road out.” Writing Workshop aims to create an environment where we help others move inward and even grow the courage to share those invisible, interior worlds. It is a work of heart.



Wind  
cold December winds  
pushing me backwards.  
Warm summer breeze  
frolicking past me.

Spring gusts  
chasing away winter.  
The fall winds come whooshing  
past me  
to knock some leaves off a tree

Owen Husband-Meyer  
age 10

*“For a while, we even debate whether ‘a zoo full of animals’ is truly a happy or sad image.”*

*-Hanan Masri*



Spirits, A Poem    Hanan Masri

ada  
you are a pot of warm, winter soup

alejandro  
you are an exciting day circled on a calendar

arlo  
you are the blanket your family covers you with when you are pretend asleep

david  
you are the blueprint of a mighty machine

diego  
you are a beautifully choreographed dance

gabe  
you are the moment humans discovered fire

greta  
you are the novel everyone is reading and swooning over

inez  
you are what naomi shihab nye calls “the words underneath the words”

izzy  
you are a lake teeming with life

jaime  
you are the soft look of someone who has awoken from a good night’s sleep

julian  
you are the buzz of 10 o’clock recess

kaitlyn  
you are strawberries at the height of their season

maxie  
you are the grace of the winning team, the pride of the losing

mia  
you are a nest of robin eggs

nathaniel  
you are the party nobody wants to leave

noah  
you are a field of grazing horses

patricia  
you are a photo album filled with good memories

penn  
you are a nightlight in a dark room

ruby  
you are a loud, luscious laugh in a movie theater

sandia  
you are the bridge that sees both sides

sofie  
you are cave walls covered in hieroglyphics

theo  
you are a song sung on a road trip

zappo  
you are what the right amount of salt does to food

zoe  
you are a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice



Photo Credit Steve Gray

“Giving children room to reinvent is the spark that lights their creativity and engagement in math.”

-Elisa Edwards



Emergent Mathematics    Elisa Edwards

The other day, the parent of a former student reached out to me. Her daughter had loved math in her classes at Berkwood Hedge, but had completely lost interest when she left the school after second grade. As she approaches middle school, her mother is looking for ways to renew her passion for math. It’s a story I’ve heard before and one that made my participation in a think tank on Emergent Mathematics at UC Santa Cruz in early July all the more relevant—how do we ensure that the teaching and learning of mathematics is open, flexible, creative and engaging, so that children’s excitement doesn’t get snuffed out?

The think tank was co-led by Jeff Holcomb and Judith Montgomery. Jeff and I met in Petaluma in January at a workshop led by Cathy Fosnot, the creator of the Contexts for Learning Mathematics curriculum used in all the classes at Berkwood Hedge. Jeff has just come back from four years of teaching and studying Realistic Mathematics Education in The Netherlands, which is at the root of Cathy Fosnot’s work, and is eager to find collaborators. Judith is the director of the Monterey Bay Area Math Project at UCSC and—small world—co-taught in our very own Earth Class with Deanne in the late eighties!

The term emergent mathematics, similar to the idea of emergent literacy, refers to the work that children do from birth onwards to construct mathematical understanding through a combination of cognitive development and interactions with the world around them. Given the right conditions, i.e. a community that supports all learners to play with ideas, look for patterns, persevere through challenge, craft arguments, critique peer’s work, and revisit their own, children will reinvent significant mathematics. Giving children room to reinvent is the spark that lights their creativity and engagement in math. The work of the teacher in this is to provide a realistic context in which the children can immerse themselves and to know the landscape of learning with enough depth that they are able to get underneath each child’s current understanding, recognize the big ideas that are emerging and scaffold their growth to the next level.

In conjunction, we discussed the importance of Jo Boaler’s work at Stanford. A colleague of Carol Dweck, author of, “Mindset”, her focus is on undoing the harmful mythology around math. Her research disproves the common belief that math is a fixed intelligence (you either have a head for math or you don’t), supports the findings on neuroplasticity (your brain is capable of growth much longer than previously believed), and supports the notion that math is about discovery and exploration rather than transmission of a set of facts and formulas.

The think tank group, ranging from kindergarten to college teachers and coaches working in both public and independent schools from Berkeley to Aptos, spent three days sharing perspectives and resources and grappling with how to create the classroom communities and the teacher expertise to do this work widely. There are further connections to be made with colleagues at Stanford and UC Santa Barbara. I’m thrilled to have connected with people who share my passion and I look forward to continuing our collaboration when we meet again in September.





GRADUATING CLASS OF 2014

## FIRE



*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*  
- Nelson Mandela

Maya Jewel Aronson

Kahtya Sophia Cherney

Mattias Sebastian de los Rios Rogers

Liam Alexander Edwards

Zachary Entenman

Isabella Ferber

Luis Carmen Fraser

Elijah Joseph Gibb

Zoe Hunt

Flynn Carvalho Mager

Fiona Georgiana McDonald

Ariel Zohar Newman

Adé Mia Porter

Emma Shamir

Gabriel Farnady Stevens

## How Is It Possible That They're Ready For Middle School?

Marianne Burkhead

At the end of the 5th grade year, Berkwood Hedge students anxiously await their transition to middle school. They are full of questions. "How will I deal with more homework?" "How will I remember my locker combination?" "What if I can't find the bathroom?" "What about all those bigger kids?" At the same time, they are ready for a bigger pond, a bigger pool of friends, more opportunities for sports and other extracurricular activities, and the academic challenges that come with the territory. How does Berkwood Hedge prepare these kids for the new reality of middle school?

Normalizing the transition is a huge factor in allaying the natural fears that come with any life change. Our 5th graders visit middle school throughout the year, some independent schools and some public. They are able to familiarize themselves with the campuses to a certain extent, and they get an idea of what the class expectations are, what kinds of "elective" opportunities they will have, the sports and after-school clubs that are offered, and what those "big kids" look like!

Throughout the years at Berkwood Hedge, students acquire skills that will benefit their middle school experience, as well as a strong academic foundation that prepares them to meet the demands of this next step in their educational journey. In the 5th grade, we focus on the particular skills that will ease the transition: organization, test and note taking, study skills, and research skills. We dip into textbooks, exploring what is required to read text based information effectively. We also take a standardized test just to see what that feels like. We even practice opening combination locks, putting to rest one of the most common fears about middle school!

Our newly minted middle schoolers often return to Berkwood Hedge to touch base with the familiar and to let us know how much they are enjoying all the benefits that those middle grades have to offer. It turns out that they can get into their lockers with ease, they know where the bathrooms are, and they find that the bigger kids are more helpful than fearsome!





# Taking The Classroom To The Field



Full Belly Farm  
AIR Class



SF Symphony- WOOD Class



Coloma  
WATER Class



Cazadero- EARTH Class



Marin  
Headlands  
FIRE Class





## We Could Not Have Done It Without You!

The Annual Fund and the allocation of our resources is an expression of our values of Berkwood Hedge School. As always, the children are at the center of all we do. The 100% participation in our Annual Fund by Board members, staff, and parents is a manifestation of the generosity and the dedication of our wonderful community to our children. Berkwood Hedge is a vibrant learning community because of the generosity and support of both our immediate and greater community. I extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has shared their hopes, dreams, time, and talents to make our school great.

We have accomplished so much over the past year. Join us in celebrating our successes and counting our blessings; below are just some of the many highlights of 2013-14:

New computers in the FIRE & WATER Classrooms

Mounted overhead projectors the FIRE & WATER Classrooms

The launch of new website

An excellent first year as lead teacher of the EARTH class for Elisa

Great new teachers: Jeannie McKenzie, Erica Koval, and Emily Esguerra joined our team  
Diversity Committee Teach-In extensions: A viewing the film: "Unnatural Causes", and a workshop on social-class for parents.

A new mosaic school sign at the Bancroft entrance - Gift from the Class of 2013

A new dance program led by Patricia West

A wonderful new venue, The First Congregational Church of Berkeley, for our Music and Dance Spring Performance

A reinvigorated After School Program under the leadership of Jason Morte

Moving Spanish instruction into the classrooms for more curricular alignment and content integration

A record breaking year for the Annual Fund with 100% board, staff, and family participation.

A Board Meeting led by Jim McManus, Executive Director of the California Association of Independent Schools

Annual Staff and Parent Art Nights facilitated by Kalen Meyer

FIRE student leadership of Community Meetings

And, we made several improvement to our beautiful site:

Remodeled Community Room

Created a Reception Office at the McKinley Gate

Built a new retaining wall around the perimeter of the school

Built new storage benches and on-site storage

Upgraded the chicken coop

New bathroom and Community Room entry floors

Fresh coat of paint throughout the school

Berkwood Hedge is a special school, and we are fortunate to be a part of a community in which each of us contributes to its greatness—Each of you have made Berkwood Hedge the school it is today, and your support ensures Berkwood Hedge will continue to thrive well into the future. We appreciate your ongoing support.

Thank you for your generosity!

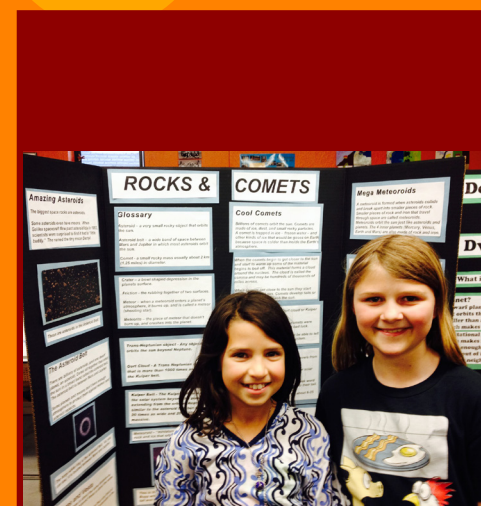
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Martha Vujovich and Jim Gibbs  
Jay Feldman  
Franziska Marks  
Kathleen Sharp (In memory Alita Rosenfeld)  
Emeline Owen Orloff  
Sheetal Singh and Jonathan Larson

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Chelsea Cooper and John Clarke  
Irwin and Barbara Kremen  
Joama Marie Seward Trevorrow  
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On January 30, 2015 we will be celebrating our 100th Day of School. We need you to help us reach our benchmark of **100% family participation by the 100th Day of School**. No contribution is too small and your gift will support every teacher, student, and program at Berkwood Hedge School. Please consider making a gift today

**Go to <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1422341>**



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