

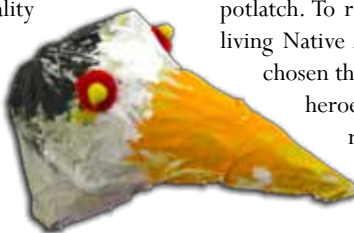


DEAR PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF VALLEY,

How do we measure success?

As a board member of the Valley School and a career educator, I was thrilled to see the repeated success of Valley fifth graders this year in their application and acceptance into many highly respected middle schools. I know the Valley community is proud of these students, as they should be. We are all confident they can move on to the next level of their education prepared to take on new learning challenges.

This can certainly be considered an indicator of the quality of the Valley curriculum; however as rewarding as it is to see these students go through entrance testing and make successful transitions, it may not be the most important measure of the school's program. As the Valley School ends with the elementary grades it would be easy to assume the school has completed its job as the fifth graders move forward.



I think those of us involved in the school believe the more important aspect of the Valley experience is the development of personal characteristics that can't be measured easily by tests. Successful people are generally happy, creative, empathetic and cooperative folks who enjoy their personal relationships, the challenges of new experiences and the exploration of differing ideas. These characteristics are valuable in both their personal and professional lives. The individual who sees a challenge as an opportunity to develop new skills and has an ongoing thirst for information and ideas will be successful not only in the work place but also at home with family and friends.

The very nature of the Valley School supports and nurtures the development of these characteristics of the accomplished adult. Small class size gives each individual a chance to share, be recognized for his or her contributions and gain confidence. The close relationships developed between the children and their teachers encourage and support the growth of interpersonal skills.

The variety of hands-on activities encourages creativity and a genuine excitement about learning.

In order to acquire and retain skills and knowledge there needs to be a context, a real life experience that provides the glue to make for lasting memories. At Valley those experiences insure that the skills will be practiced and the knowledge will have a meaningful place to reside.

The focus on Native Americans in the fifth grade is a perfect example of a full and rich context with the students participating in collaborative research books, button blanket construction and the culminating potlatch. To reach this point, they have learned from historical and living Native Americans about their arts and world views and have chosen their own animal spirits. The third, fourth, and fifth grade

heroes project is another fine example of a context with real personal meaning. The classes worked together as well as individually, reading short biographies and autobiographies, writing about their personal heroes and sharing with their peers. They created "life-size" portraits displayed in a "Hall of Heroes" to be enjoyed by all.

Those kinds of activities found at every grade level at Valley School make for lasting memories. Months can be spent in classrooms memorizing information and practicing skills, but without meaningful context and real application of skills all will quickly fade.

Recently the Valley board had the opportunity to meet with some young adult alums who shared fond memories of the school. It was clear from their remarks that Valley had a lasting influence on their lives. It was not only the acquired knowledge they reminisced about, but the freedom to develop as individuals, the relationships they had with classmates and teachers, and the very special events and activities that gave them the context for skill development and the knowledge they gained. Listening to their memories and seeing their confidence and excitement about life are the true measures of the long lasting success of Valley School.

DAVID DOUGLAS

David Douglas, a Valley Board Director since 2002 was a teacher and lower school director at the Bush School for 25 years. He also taught and directed Chelan Valley Independent School for four years followed by a three year period as principal and consultant at Brighton School in Edmonds, Washington.



Imaginary birds throughout
by the Second Grade

VALLEY GRADS, PRESENT AND PAST

Congratulations, Fifth Graders! In the first round of offers, our fifth graders were all accepted into their first choice schools and all received multiple offers of admission. Schools offering invitations included Billings, Lake Washington Girls School, Seattle Academy, University Prep, Seattle Girls School, Northwest School, Forest Ridge, and Bush School. Some graduates chose public schools including Washington Middle School in the APP program and the Spectrum program and Mercer Island Middle School. We couldn't be more proud of their success.

Speaking of grads, we caught up with a few former Valley students to check on their directions since high school. Clearly many have world travel and adventures on their agendas. **Seth Bergeson**, now a junior at Whitman College, has already spent time in Denmark researching the effects of long-term incarceration. He is currently in Africa where he experienced an 88 hour bus ride from Dakar, Senegal to Mopti, Mali among other unforgettable undertakings. Another moving story comes from **Wally Euyang** who traveled around Nicaragua on vegetable-laden local buses for a month before heading to Wesleyan University in Connecticut to commence his freshman year. With an eclectic range of courses from Mandarin Chinese to calculus and art history, Wally is also an assistant in the environmental studies department. He almost immediately bumped into another Valley grad, **Ben Vigus**. Ben, now a sophomore, plans to major in theater and religion, and will be in Tibet for his first semester junior year. He starred in this year's Wesleyan production of *The Three-penny Opera*.

Reed Schuler graduated from Pomona College and spent much of 2008 in Shanghai, China on a Fulbright Scholarship where he studied a regional transportation plan. He is now in Boston with the Audubon Society of Massachusetts focusing on climate change. His sister, **Zoe Schuler**, is finishing her freshman year at the UW and considering a major in English. In the meantime, she plans to travel to Barcelona and Lisbon after her spring quarter. **Morrow Woods** and **Lena Hart-Bundy**, are also at the UW successfully completing their freshman year. They are planning to room together and both work in Fremont, Morrow at the resort wear shop, Tininha's, and Lena at the PCC. Their Valley classmate, **Margot Smith**, is completing her first year at Occidental College.

Nisa Orozco-McCormick, a multi-talented athlete, is wrapping up her freshman year at St. Mary's College of California where she was awarded a scholarship to play Division One lacrosse. Her brother, **Quetzal Orozco-McCormick**, plans to enroll in an intensive emergency medical training course through Seattle Central Community College. His mother, Kathryn, reports that his goal is "just work and live life."

Alec MacInnes graduates from Colgate University in upstate New York this spring with a double major in philosophy and international relations. A devoted traveler to Europe and Asia, he is currently staying in the U. S. to focus on preparing for law school exams. **Isabel Wohlstetter** will soon complete her studies at New York University and is hoping to return to Berlin where she spent time as an undergraduate. She will be working on her German to add to her fine French skills.

Petra Rees Thompson graduated from Western Washington University in just three years (2003-06) then managed Lululemon Athletica in Bellevue and opened its University Village store. She has since decided to study apparel from the design perspective and will be with Parsons in Paris and the Fashion Institute in Milan this summer. Margot's brother, **Peyton Smith**, traveled to Costa Rica this past year and also spent a semester at Bonn University in Australia, then visited Thailand and New Zealand. After graduation from Vanderbilt University, he recently moved to New Jersey where he is starting a hedge fund with three classmates. His mother, Megan, would be happy to share details to prospective investors.

We welcome news of Valley grads for future editions of the *Voice*.

ISLANDWOOD, A FIFTH GRADE TRADITION

Every year the fifth grade eagerly anticipates four days at IslandWood on Bainbridge Island in the spring. Referred to as "A School in the Woods," this camp builds students' knowledge of the environment, appreciation for nature, and teamwork skills. This year, once we arrived at camp, the students were divided into two field groups and hit the trails. While other schools joined us at meals and for evening presentations around the campfire, students were not mixed in the field groups, allowing them to feel safer about taking risks and making further connections with peers they already know.

We returned from IslandWood spilling over with information to share. We spent our days hiking in the woods, learning about plant and animal interactions along the way, while our nights found us in clean, cozy sustainably built lodges. Our two field naturalists quickly established rapport with the children and engaged them in exciting learning activities. Visits to the greater neighborhood took us to a greenhouse, a tree house, a cemetery, the team challenge course, and Blakely Harbor. The students learned about minimizing food waste, sketched nature, searched for evidence of wildlife, used composting toilets, and consulted a compass. Frequently they had to figure out new ways to work together to solve group challenges, such as completing the "Mohawk Walk," crossing an area only on ropes.

A few highlights this year were:

- picking herbs and baking biscuits in a cob oven, learning how food goes from "dirt to dinner"
- spotting buffleheads, robins, coyote scat, frogs, deer, banana slugs, ravens, and rabbits
- hunting for edible plants and keeping an eye out for interesting fungi
- identifying macro-invertebrates collected from the pond
- working with an world-renown ornithologist in a huge tower at the top of an old growth forest canopy

The naturalists repeatedly told me how lucky I am to work with these fifth graders and I replied, I know!

LAURA MAIER
Fifth Grade Teacher

A VALLEY SCHOOL IDEAL: EMERGENT CURRICULUM

The notion of emergent curriculum remains high on the list of educational ideals at Valley. Recently the school's founder, Pat Overy, discussed this concept with the pre-primary and primary teachers at the suggestion of Director Barry Wright. It is the study of things that arise from the children, their interests and experiences. Sometimes it might be a brief but intense observation of plant life or the darkness of December. Other times it develops into full-blown units of study.

Follow-up by adults is the key. The teacher must be willing to abandon her planned curriculum and embrace the humble earth worm squirming in a small hand. "Adults need to be curious and adaptable and see with the eyes of a child. Successful emergent themes are not pre-planned. They are impromptu, not sequentially perfect." The teacher learns to work collegially with children and to admit a need to find out more about the topic at hand. "A certain energy is emitted when children and adults tackle a new subject. It invigorates both," explains Pat.

Why is this so important? It empowers children to see their own interests valued and explored. As the conversations and research expand into the greater community, a kind of network of learners is naturally created. When teachers support this organic movement, the collaboration is uncontrived and enriching.



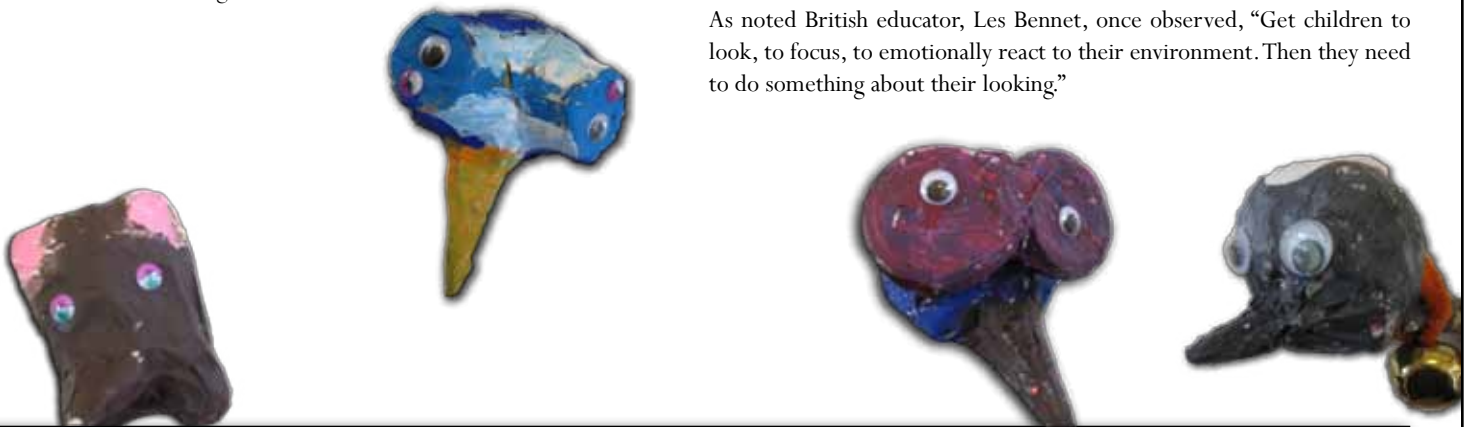
Pre-K artists

In the end it is the process, not the product. It is the willingness to seize an inspired moment, right as it bursts into flame. This is the true definition of "child-centered." Like the child's interest, it is impulsive and immediate. Pat related such a moment of inspiration during a campus weeding party one recent week-end. The children were naturally drawn to growing things unearthed as the soil was turned over. She followed them as they shared their discoveries, offering to locate containers for grubs and a pot for a plant that had put down roots from a buried branch.

Pat suggests that this kind of supported examination and discovery is essentially the first step in the scientific method. An unexpected find, a jar, curious peers and interested adults: these are the needed ingredients. "I wonder what will happen if..." "Let's watch and paint what we see next."

Of course as the children grow older, the curriculum becomes more prescribed as the teachers are required to impart received knowledge. Yet often the best teaching still comes from noticing the glimmer in a child's eyes when a subject has suddenly hit a sympathetic nerve. It is the essential invitation to go off track, to let the lesson plan fall away. It might be a glimpse of a crow dive-bombing a passerby. It might be the tickling sensation of that wiggling worm.

As noted British educator, Les Bennet, once observed, "Get children to look, to focus, to emotionally react to their environment. Then they need to do something about their looking."



VOLUNTEERS BEAUTIFY CAMPUS

The first but hopefully not last Spring Garden Party on April 25 was highly effective as a dozen parents and their children attacked weeds, pruned shrubs and flung mulch over the grounds at Valley. In a four hour burst of enthusiasm and hard labor, the volunteers worked their magic. Spearheaded by Tom Kushner, father of kindergartner Rilke, and by board member and plant guru Megan Smith, the weeding party ensured that campus flower beds reflected the splendor of the beautiful fruit trees blossoming above them. Many thanks to all who shared their muscle power and gardening enthusiasms.



From left to right:
Anika, Owen, Riley, Aiden, Rilke, Gracie, Andre, Henri, Alexa, Esme

EXCERPTS FROM A FOURTH GRADE LETTER:
COLONIAL TIMES COME TO LIFE

Dear Parents,

Wow, your kids are awesome! They did an amazing job on Friday's play, *A Lion to Guard Us*, adapted from the book by Clyde Robert Bulla. We cannot thank enrichment specialist Cindy Monte, enough for her genius and vision with the production. It is always amazing to see the chaotic beginnings of play practice blossom into an incredible presentation. As always, we were very impressed by the kids' enthusiasm, hard work and desire to put on a great show for you and the school.



In the midst of play practice, the students were also learning about colonial life in Plymouth which they showcased to the school in a Living Museum on Colonial Day, April 30. After reading and discussing descriptions of the first houses in Plymouth, the children made clay sculptures for a display about home life. Following their study

of conditions during the voyage from England, small groups of fourth grades created model boats and sea chests full of things a colonist may have brought along. As they discovered what colonial schools were like, the children made traditional hornbooks and practiced writing with quills and ink in fancy script. They quickly experienced how difficult it is to write neatly with quills! Visitors to the museum observed colonial children playing simple games, such as hopscotch and cat's cradle or sewing adorable sock dolls for their pre-kindergarten buddies. Everyone enjoyed seeing the fourth graders (and their teachers) in colonial garb. It certainly added to the effect and was great fun!

Throughout the week, the boys and girls continued to read books from the Dear America Series about Remember Patience Whipple and Jasper Jonathan Pierce through their diaries about the Mayflower voyage and their first year in Plymouth Colony. Life was very difficult and all the students were understandably awed by the fact that over 50% of the original voyagers died that first year. Illnesses, accidents, and lack of food all contributed to their dire situation. Luckily no such catastrophes were reenacted during Colonial Day!



MARY CHILDRES
SUZANNE COLEMAN
Fourth Grade Teachers

Colonial Times stitching
(Top to Bottom) by Ann and Meg

Night Running

Spiderwebs swaying in the night wind.
Waving stars twinkling in the black night.
Swirls running, eyes are watching.

Charlie
Third Grade

The Unicorn

Who made your brilliant coat of white?
Your horn iridescent gold and silver?
How did it become on your noble brow,
your delicate unbreakable sword you go to war with?
How does it enchant young lads and lass?
What makes it, so when you touch a lake it
makes all poison disappear?
Unicorn oh unicorn what created you?

Ruby
Third Grade

LONG LIVE WORDS
AN ALL-SCHOOL CELEBRATION

Long Live Words was the cry heard 'round the school on May 15. Students, families, friends and teachers gathered to celebrate the joy and wonder of word--written, spoken, sung and imagined. During the afternoon the community enjoyed the classroom displays of the many ways Valley students explore and enjoy words. Poem mobiles, favorite book displays, handmade albums all added to the festivity. Earlier in the day, the third graders gave an inspired performance of A Play on Words, a collaborative drama based on three picture books.

During the days leading up to the festival, teachers queried the children and recorded words brought to mind by adjectives like "spicy" and "surprising." At the May 8 Friday morning meeting the Words Progress Administration (mostly cleverly disguised parents) used a word from each child to compose on-the-spot poems, typing furiously on electric machines.

At the celebration, each child received a copy of *Vivent les Mots*, an all-school compilation with contributions from each student on a number of themes. It contains poetry, reflections, song lyrics, definitions of imaginary words, favorite phrases and more. Some illustrated their thoughts with pictures, others by writing stories. Children detailed their ideas about the things they know or wonder. They collaborated on multi-media bookmarks during their art classes and picked poems--favorites and originals--from pockets posted in the library.

Librarian Marilyn Nicolai used this perfect occasion to announce the winner of the Valley School Book of the Year, Chris Monroe's *Monkey with a Toolbox* which was chosen in an all-student poll. Parents and children contributed volumes to a book exchange, and then chose new treasures from the "stacks." The remaining books were donated to the Seattle Public Library and the United Way Volunteer Reader Program. This seemed a fitting finale to a celebration of the written word. *Vivent les Mots!*

CINDY MONTE
Enrichment Specialist



INTRIGUING SECOND GRADE WRITERS

How do you encourage second graders to write up a storm? You reveal that a small beast is keeping a diary in their classroom--or that they might correspond with a fairytale character--or that French children could read their "lettres." Teacher Jessica Logan hit the jackpot on all three of these and more.

On October 15, she discovered that Salt, one of two second grade pet rats, was keeping a personal journal; the rest is history as documented in a binder grown very thick by the month of May. Salt described how she and her pal Pepper learned to read, type, compose poems and recount nighttime adventures. Unbelievable! Of course students wrote notes to Salt and eagerly awaited her weekly literary output. Her journal has even been honored as the subject of two classroom book reports which were twice rated five stars out of five!

Salt and Pepper happened to have a fascinating wild rat friend, Balderdash. Amazingly, Balderdash's genealogy led all the way back to Rattus Maximus Supremus, a noble rat and great friend of Julius Caesar's. The stories he told confirmed the second graders' concurrent research into Ancient Rome and added a thing or two about omens, pirates and Mt. Vesuvius. This last topic was extremely helpful since the second graders happened to be studying vulcanology.

They then made a happy etymological detour with the discovery that "ology" means the study of something as they sought a title for their class book on volcanoes. "Dadology," "lunchology," "ologyology" came flowing out onto sticky notes in crazy word play. Jessica reports that for some students this switched on the creative juices.

For others the inspiration came from listening to *Yours Truly, Goldilocks* and *Dear Peter Rabbit*, two hilarious epistolary children's books with fairytale characters by Alma Flor Ada. Jessica introduced the correct form for letter writing at the same time and several vivid fairytale pen pal friendships flourished. Other children chose to write to real people whom they admire, but so far the fictional characters seem to be more reliable correspondents.

Jessica also instigated a letter writing campaign to French children thanks to a former colleague in Evreux, France where she taught English as a foreign language specialist. If real or imagined pen pals didn't catch every student's imagination, then "des enfants francais" might do the trick. As Jessica explains, "I look for ways to engage each child in writing so that their particular interests will inspire them and so that they can have authentic writing experiences."

The necessary details of standard spelling and grammatical conventions are also addressed in second grade through more directed worksheets, spelling tests and the study of contractions, homophones, grammar rules, "outlaw words" and other language booby traps. The children also write each day in their personal journals with considerable freedom although particular topics may be required occasionally in order to encourage writing for an assignment.

Jessica carefully distinguishes how she helps children in both these arenas. "I do make corrections directly on grammar worksheets so that parents routinely see what they are working on. However, in their creative writing, I always use post-it notes or have one-on-one discussions. They then make their own corrections so that their personal expression is not intruded upon."

In the end, it is clear that teachers who love to write themselves are the best inspiration for their students. A creative and variable approach has the greatest chance of success. Jessica admits that her own classroom compositions require much time and energy but also yield great pleasure.

VALLEY RECEIVES NORCLIFFE GRANT FOR SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION

Valley School is very pleased to announce that it has received a \$25,000 grant from the Norcliffe Foundation, a local nonprofit family foundation, to help fund solar panels and monitoring systems for the Meeting Room building. Thanks to a formidable technical and editorial effort by parents Gina Anstey and Karen Conover who collaborated on writing the grant, our students will reap the many benefits of this new addition to Valley. The proposal grew out of all-school environmental studies in the spring of 2007.

The school will provide the modest additional funds needed to pay for a 4.2 kilowatt solar photovoltaic panels system manufactured by Sanyo with installation by Puget Sound Solar. The system includes the photovoltaic solar panels, an inverter to convert the energy for interconnection to the utility grid, and a large display for the Meeting Room to allow students to view the energy output of the solar panels. Here are excerpts from Gina and Karen's winning proposal:

We propose to use the solar panels as a call to action -- a means that will consistently present our students with ways that can connect them to social deeds, the concepts of environmental accountability, and personal responsibility. The accompanying monitoring systems will supply a teaching tool for students, a visible and constant commitment to social responsibility.

The estimated energy output of the project is approximately 4,800 kilowatts per year, or 12-15% of the Valley School's electricity needs. Operation of this project would reduce 5,200 lbs of CO2 in the 1st year, which is equivalent to:

- Planting 17,623 sq. ft. of trees
- Not driving 6,281 miles (2.5 times the distance between LA and NY)

Solar panels are but one step on Valley School's journey to improve the local and global environment. However, they are a huge step. They are a springboard to conversations about other energy systems, such as fossil fuels, hydropower, and wind.

Many thanks again to Gina and Karen and the Norcliffe Foundation for making sunny days at Valley even more valuable.

POEM IN YOUR POCKET DAY

April 30th was the second National Poem in Your Pocket Day. The celebration started in New York City in 2002 and sprang from a poem by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers that begins “Keep a poem in your pocket, keep a picture in your head.” The idea is simple, choose a favorite poem during National Poetry Month and bring the month to a close by carrying it with you and sharing it with others.

We have celebrated the day in the Valley library for the past couple of years, with pocket sized poems for students to choose and carry, but this year we planned a project that would take Poem in Your Pocket Day outside the school's gates. Students in several grades made pocket shaped displays that we filled with short poems for both children and adults.

The colorful displays were distributed to coffee shops and bakeries, hung up in grocery stores and music stores, and pinned to telephone poles and bulletin boards around Seattle. By the next day, when we collected the displays, we had distributed more than 200 poems!

Next year we will expand the celebration to include more locations, more local poets, and perhaps a “poetry drive through.” One of the students suggested asking McDonalds to participate, so that on one day of the year McDonald's employees would ask “Do you want a poem with that?”

MARILYN NICOLAI
Librarian



Lyla, First Grade



Al Ling, Third Grade



THE VALLEY SCHOOL 309 31ST AVENUE EAST, SEATTLE, WA 98112

Imaginary birds by the second grade



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