

The 'basics' changed again



Sudbury schools develop the skills needed to thrive in tough times

The world's finance industry is in turmoil. Despite reassurances from public figures, only one thing is certain: nobody knows how this is all going to turn out. It's not even clear anyone really understands all that's going on.

One ugly fact: While there are no doubt plenty of guilty parties, thousands of men and women who followed all the rules are out of a job through no fault of their own. They worked hard in school, got the college degree, landed the good job with the major bank or Wall Street investment house, worked hard – and still had their world turned upside down. Let us hope they have both good luck and the fortitude needed to make a new career for themselves, because a huge chunk of those high-paying jobs they just lost are not coming back.

The world just changed. Again.

This crisis once again makes clear a crucial point behind Sudbury education: for the future, starting right now, the skills and talents needed to succeed in the 'real world' are not those learned in 12 or more years of traditional schooling. All those poor souls whose high prestige jobs just disappeared are not going to get their next job because they got A's in high school math or took advanced placement English. **They are going to need to be tough, resourceful and flexible.** They are going to need a network of friends and family to pull through. Unfortunately, hours, weeks and years of rigid structure, minute-by-minute management by an authority figure and countless hours of homework did not equip them with those skills and resources. In fact, the very personal, social and family time that makes such internal strength and social skills

possible were largely sacrificed in the name of efficient learning.

What is needed now is the **fortitude and personal strength to find your own path**, to change paths on the fly as conditions change, and the ability to not wed yourself to a system that will discard you the instant somebody else's idea of your value falls below some economic threshold.

That is why your child, my child – everybody's child – needs a Sudbury education. That's why **a Sudbury education is needed, perhaps, even more by the 'good student' than by the untraditional or outcast student** – that good student is rewarded for fitting in to a system that, frankly, will discard you the instant somebody else's idea of your value falls below some economic threshold. She is being set up for a lifetime of frustration and failure if she believes her life will be a series of paths predefined by others. Those untraditional and outcast kids are spared this delusion, a delusion thousands of formerly well-paid elite workers are being rudely awakened from this very moment.

Joseph Moore
Assembly President, Diablo Valley School

Open House
October 18
11:00 - 2:00

See what's happening
at Diablo Valley School

Staff Corner

From A to B and the elephant in between

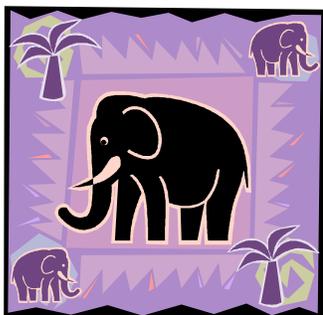
Some time ago in an island not so far away is my point A. My point B is somewhere ahead. These points are joined by the segment of my life. The construction and surfing of that segment is a delicate balance of priorities with not much of a reset button. Sure, you can restart many times, but you can't take back time.

With new parents at the school, I mention the facts I know want to be heard. I talk about college admission, the ease of covering math prep for SATs in one year, or the high percentage of extreme academically intellectual students in our midst.

Then I talk a little about the trunk of the elephant. I elaborate on the SAT thing by pointing out that this is possible because the students have been allowed to, at will, work with their three lead tools: **their brain, their voice and the ability to use them superbly in social context.** From there, the acquisition of academic and study skills is just a minor piece of the larger puzzle.

What I don't do much, is talk about the elephant in the room because it's just too cliché, too mooshy.

All this day-to-day, 9-to-5 rat race we play is a means to an end:



happiness, love, the preservation of our larger social structure, our future.

Life, being much more than the size of our paycheck, is also more than our academic achievements or fact-based memory capacity

(especially at the early levels of human nobness:). True success comes to the artisans of segments. It's difficult sometimes to see through the filter of old scars that all of our School Meeting members are extreme intellectuals who can argue a quarter into 26 cents and will win or lose the argument with a smile. It's their life and they know it. They're forging/discovering it in the best environment possible for artistic achievement... and they're having a heckagood time doing it.

Vicente Lopez, Staff

How we spent our summer vacation

I seem to recall that some like working in schools because it means they get summers off. Well the DVS staff, like impassioned people in any field, can't ever seem to really make themselves get away.

If you are receiving this newsletter, you know that Diablo Valley School isn't your run-of-the-mill type school. Rather than have students write a run-of-the-mill essay on how they spent their summer vacations, we thought we'd report on how the staff spent part of their summer vacation.

Site Improvements

Even though school is closed, staff kept popping in and out all summer long, working on all those things that don't get done during the school year and doing the annual summer site improvements, which this year included redoing the Tech Room and building a retaining wall in the front yard.

Sudbury Schools Workshop

But the summer-time plant watering was handed off in July to a couple of generous volunteers while all the staff plus two students packed up and headed off to Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts for a Sudbury schooling workshop.

Even the weather was kind to us spoiled Californians not used to intense humidity while we visited with staff and founders of other Sudbury schools from across the United States and around the world. We laughed until our sides hurt, got so involved in discussions we almost (!) forgot to get ourselves down to the groaning buffet boards for meals, and found ourselves in collegial, yet intense agreement or disagreement over points raised about Sudbury education.

Looking back at our report of the last Sudbury Conference we were pleased to see that our prediction, "See you again in 2008" had come to pass. Whether putting the philosophy into practice in Japan or Germany Sudbury schools deal with the same issues because, despite our cultural diversity, human nature is the same. It is always interesting and thought provoking to hear how other schools have handled similar issues. The material we have gathered from others working on the cutting edge of schooling enriches our efforts at DVS.

Thank you to all our Sudbury colleagues of all ages!

Student Expressions

You are not an XML engine

By Andrew

Extensible Markup Language (XML) is a document format used to store and transmit structured data. It is very popular on the web, where it is used behind the scenes to structure and style web sites. The latest versions of Open Office and Microsoft Office both use XML as their underlying file format.

That's all well and good, but what makes XML so great? Why would you use it? And what is an XML engine anyway? XML is a text file on a computer that looks like this:

```
<file>
  this file contains text
  <paragraph color="red" font="TNR">
    This text is in a XML document.
    Cool, isn't it?
  </paragraph>
</file>
```

An XML engine is a program component that reads and writes XML. XML Engine vendors have already solved the problem of writing data in a logical, structured format, while the XML standard itself defines what that format should be. That is the first great thing about XML.

The second great thing about XML: it is a standard. In other words, XML written by vendor A's XML engine is the same as XML written by vendor B's XML engine. That way, vendors can focus on making a faster/safer/easier-to-use engine and not on creating a better file format. Although XML engines may be different on the inside, and may be made by people as diverse as Microsoft and SomeDudeWithAComputerInHisBasement-Soft, on the outside they are all the same. They read/write the same XML as everyone else. This is a good thing for customers and is an excellent software philosophy.

It applies poorly to people.

It would make my day to find out that the doodles I made with software X can be edited in software Y, and that I can just pick which ever one I like. It would not make my day to learn that, despite all the uniqueness I was born with, the skills I have are the same as those of 10,000 other people, that MegaCorp can just swap me out if they don't like me.

In the strange world of computers, diversity of file formats is a barrier to communication. When software thinks differently, it can make the user's life difficult. In the real world, diversity is a boon. **Different ways of thinking help us solve problems**, and a multitude of skill sets is needed for every endeavor.

It is strange that we tell children that too much computer use is unhealthy, yet we school them as if they were the very computers they mustn't overuse.

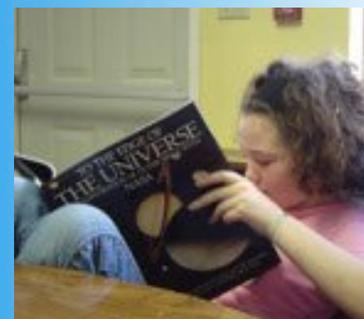
Students at Diablo Valley School practice diverse skills for adapting in a changing world



Working together



Concentrating



Understanding the 'big picture'

Diablo Valley School

A Sudbury School

2924 Clayton Road
Concord, CA 94519

PHONE:
(925) 676-2982

E-MAIL:
office@diablovalleyschool.org

WEBSITE:
diablovalleyschool.org

Diablo Valley School admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Read this newsletter online at our website.

Kindly notify us when you no longer need to receive a hard copy mailing.

DVS Thanks You

Thank you so much to our wonderful supporters who have made gifts of funds or materials to help our school:

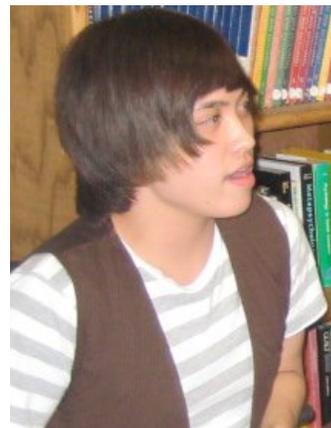
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| Moore Family | Nicky Tenney | Nicole Hammer |
| Neiche Loggins | Patti Berrow | PG&E |
| Vicente Lopez | | |

Congratulations and all the best to our June 2008 graduates



"Attending DVS has taught me that the choice to live my life is all mine. Before I came here I was just another face in an overcrowded classroom. Here I have the support of everyone I reach out to."

Julie
2008 graduate



"I think a big reason why Sudbury schooling and DVS has helped me is the school's staff. The staff seems to care about the students."

Chris
2008 graduate

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