

## The Sudbury model at home

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A trusted child who is held accountable will be self-reliant.

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To get the most out of a Sudbury education, it is critically important that the key features of this unique education are supported at home. A Sudbury education is designed to enable kids to become responsible, trustworthy, self-reliant and self-motivated. It is very easy to send the message to our children that they are not trustworthy, not responsible, weak and lazy, even with the best of intentions. Here, then, are one parent's ideas about how to help your student grow:

*Trust:* All day long, every day, at a Sudbury school students are trusted to use their time well. For many parents and even some students, this trust is a huge leap of faith – clearly, it seems to us, kids left to their own choices will waste their time. Yet experience has shown, at DVS and at other Sudbury schools, that kids who are trusted do extraordinary things. To our grown up, well-schooled eyes games and hanging out may well look like ‘nothing,’ yet we see the outstanding creativity and communication skills of our students. Where do you think they got them?

As parents, we must resist the temptation to denigrate play, to express disappointment with what our child does with her day, or to suggest that she should crack a

book or study math instead of hanging out with friends. First, it won't work. At best, you'll get sullen cooperation, and at worst, the child learns that she is not trusted, is assumed to be incompetent, and will act accordingly. Trust that your kid will learn what they need when they need it. Hundreds of Sudbury kids for more than 40 years prove it works. You'll be rewarded with a happier, better adjusted child.

*Responsibility:* Every kid at our school learns (some sooner than others) that they will be held responsible for their actions. Kids are not moral cripples – they can embrace responsible action. As parents, we need to recognize this and insist on age-appropriate accountability. It's OK to insist that your kids help out around the house – it's their house, too. It's OK to have reasonable rules and logical consequences. Not only will you both be happier for it, your child's experience at school will be very much enriched and reinforced.

*Self-reliant:* A trusted child who is held accountable will be self-reliant. They will learn one of the very most important lessons of adult life: if you don't make it happen, it probably isn't happening. If you don't manage your own life, someone else will be all too happy to manage it for you. Expect a lot from your kids – they can do it!



*Self-motivated:* The greatest blessing of a Sudbury education may well be giving kids the time and space to get utterly and completely bored. Only then can the hard truth be truly known: you are in charge of your own life. You make it happen. You create the interesting stuff. When your kid says ‘I'm bored,’ do you immediately start trying to engage them and solve their problem? If so, maybe you need to back off, and empower them to make life interesting again. It's a life skill we're crippled without.

None of this stops us from being parents and taking our children's age and other real limitations into account. But it is a challenge to us all to realize how much our kids are capable of, and to give them the room at home to become the excellent people DVS is trying to help them become.

*By Joseph Moore,  
Assembly President*

## A day to remember: Graduation 2010

In a song and dance tribute to the tune of "Some Day My Prince Will Come," Teresa and Micaela performed "Some Day I'll Graduate" – just one part of the June 12<sup>th</sup> ceremony arranged by our 2010 graduation committee. It was a day to celebrate our six newest graduates – some who have spent a few years with us and others who have been School Meeting Members continuously since age 5 or 6.

Besides the musical interlude, the graduation event featured speeches by members of the school community. DVS co-founder Ofer Erez alluded to the hard work of keeping the school running and urged the graduates and their families not only to say thank-you, but also to "do thank-you." Staff Anne-Martine Moore exhorted the graduates to love – not humanity – but humans, the people they encounter in daily life. Staff Vicente López congratulated the graduates on

being part of an elite school. Graduate Brenan Peterman took the podium to say that what he will miss most are the DVS students, staff, chores, and arguments.

Finally, Assembly President Joseph Moore presented diplomas to the graduates, all of whom have completed a written and oral defense of the thesis "I have taken responsibility for preparing myself to be an effective adult in the larger community."

Post-ceremony refreshments included graduate Teresa Moore's cake creation, designed as a stack of books with titles representing each graduate's unique interests. It was delicious!



Co-founder Ofer Erez addressed the graduates and families.



DVS class of 2010: Yo'el, Greg, Brenan, Andrew, Phil, and Teresa

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### *Excerpts from 2010 thesis defenses*

"To me the word 'freedom' does not mean not having to do anything, but rather being able to do everything." *Teresa*

"I have learned that working with people outside of my comfort zone can be fun and more beneficial than working with a good friend." *Phil*

"The only law: Freedom to do anything except take another's freedom." *Brenan*

"I learned tact; that sometimes one must be careful how one presents the truth, no matter how true." *Andrew*

"I've had a long and plentiful life at DVS, full of intrigue and boredom, ups and downs, failures and successes. Now it's time for me to move on, although even past this point I will never cease to read, role-play, and research." *Yo'el*

"I've learned a good deal about people during my time at DVS... I know this is because at DVS you have to deal with a real community and a more diverse age group." *Greg*

## Always somewhere: a movie review

An interesting discussion broke out after the recently watched movie *Race to Nowhere*. <<Spoiler alert follows>> It's a documentary, and you know about the incident early on in the movie, so this is no real spoiler. <<pointless violence follows as well>> A girl decides to take herself out of the equation. The mother of her friend makes this documentary in response. It focuses on the negative aspects of education, the placebo-like, will-breaking, military-inherited method we currently bow to as the right cultural way to do things that presumably led to her decision. (This is my description, not the filmmaker's.) The movie consists of interviews: teachers, students, parents, psychologists.

Part of the discussion that followed the movie was kind of fruitless, because what really needs to be talked about involves questioning your own foundation and the structure of society. Some educators present expressed the idea that if students with better grades went to "better" schools, the school's average would drop and loss of funding would lead to a loss of jobs. Let that sink in. Should kids really be spending the largest part of their day in an institution whose philosophy follows this kind of bottom-line decision-making motivator? And a whole big chunk of overtime after that, doing homework? This idea was discussed by teachers who cared enough to dedicate an evening to self-enrichment in the field, people who, as wholeheartedly as I, want success with the force for their padawans. Unfortunately, no amount of duct tape is going to fix this one.

As humans have always done, we will adapt, evolve and decide: Do we

live to be happy or do we live to be obedient? Kids will pursue their happiness, regardless. Would you prefer them equipped with tools of cut-throatness, sneakiness, stress management, mental medication, self-esteem badgering, or with democracy, social etiquette, empathy, self-knowledge, love for the present, desire for the future and hands-on experience with the game of chess that will lead them there piece by piece, step by step?



The next day I watched students at DVS laugh and play and talk and talk and talk, argue and solve, cry, then smile and smile and smile. I watched a six year old drop a two-digit subtraction in like two seconds, while dodging fire, to determine how much damage incoming ships dealt.

"OMG! They play video games?" Yes, these same kids who understand the satisfaction of a well-tuned body, because they get to run around all the time in this great California weather, the same kids who will blow your mind with the extensive vocabulary and expression skills they develop from talking so much. They get to choose what they do constantly, they get to listen to their inner voice of self-preservation and enrichment, and they have the time to follow it... and the friends to do it with.

At the end of the day they go home and have dinner with their families, play with their dogs and have sleepovers. They absorb more of their home culture while they negotiate with their parents about

chores and allowances and where to go on family trips. Then they bring that culture back to school so that we may all enrich from it.

Every day we partake of that buffet of knowledge and culture as we play cards, create and complete projects and debate to our minds' content in the Judicial Committee and School Meeting. It's not that they finally take charge in the race; here, they never lose it to begin with.

*By Vicente López, staff member*

**DVS Open House**  
Saturday, October 16  
11:00 am – 2:00 pm.  
Our panel discussion  
starts at 1:00 pm.

### Want to help? Consider donating an item from our Wish List.

- Drum kit
- Computers - new within last two years
- Computer headphones
- Flat screen monitors
- Ergonomic keyboards and mice
- Laptop computers
- Software: MS Access, MS Office, Windows XP
- Child's wagon
- Lawnmower cover
- All weather potting table
- Art supplies
- Heavy duty vacuum cleaner
- Knitting needles/crochet hooks and accessories
- Matching office/computer rolling chairs
- Outdoor storage unit for gardening tools
- For the kitchen: bowl mixer

*If you have something else you think we could use, please contact the school Donations Clerk.*

**Diablo Valley School**

A Sudbury School

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Patti Berrow

**Diablo Valley School**

A Sudbury School

2924 Clayton Road  
Concord, CA 94519**Open House**

Saturday

October 16, 2010

11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Panel discussion at 1:00 pm

***Tired of racing to  
nowhere and waiting  
for Superman? There is  
an alternative. Come  
talk with us.***