



EAGLE EYES

Volume 17, Number 3

News From Fall 2009 Trimester

THE ART OF BUILDING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Suzie Boss, National Faculty Member with the Buck Institute for Education posted this Blog entry at Edutopia, an initiative of the George Lucas Educational Foundation, and is being reprinted with permission.



At Eagle Rock School in Estes Park, Colorado, the alpine air is so thin, it literally takes your breath away. For most of the 96 teens living and learning here, the Rocky Mountain setting couldn't be more different from the city streets they've left behind.

The promise of a fresh start is what brings kids here from all over the country. And as I learned during a recent visit, nearly everything about this unique place is designed to deliver on that promise.

Since 1993, Eagle Rock School has been providing life-changing education for teens and immersive professional development for educators. This powerful combination is funded -- with little fanfare -- as a philanthropic initiative of the American Honda Motor Company. The financial support means that kids who have dropped out -- or been kicked out -- of high school can enroll for free.

To stay, they have to avoid certain non-negotiables, such as violence, and be willing to challenge themselves mentally and physically. They get used to learning in a fishbowl, too, with a steady stream of young teachers coming to hone their craft during extended fellowships.

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COPPER MOUNTAIN RESORT CONTINUES SUPPORT OF EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL HOUSE RETREATS

by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development



Are you regular or goofy when you carve and shred? This January 12th marks the eighth year that Eagle Rock School students and staff teams will participate in a full-day Ride School to learn snowboarding techniques and terminology during the beginning of the trimester community building House Retreats.

The cumulative value of the in-kind donation by Copper Mountain Ski Resort exceeds \$20,000 and was initially secured by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development, when he served as Aspen House Parent. Other houses joining Aspen throughout the years have included Juniper House and Lodgepole House.

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GRADUATE PROFILE – WHERE IS HE NOW?

by Kelsey Glass, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development



Darren Lawrence, ER-19 (May, 1999)

Graduated ER-25 (December, 2001)

Geography: Arcata, California

Early in my Eagle Rock career as a student, I remember looking up to Darren Lawrence for his work ethic and his leadership ability. As I interview him, I see how those qualities have only been strengthened and how they have benefited him since graduating from Eagle Rock School.

How did Darren get to ERS? As Darren puts it, "I was a seventeen year-old high school dropout, working as a line-cook in a low-end restaurant, living on my own, and struggling to pay the rent. Day after day I dragged my feet to work for little reward. I soon realized I was passing up a huge opportunity by not finishing high school. My taste of life's responsibilities and the realization that I was turning down a gift some people never get, was a slap in the face. In retrospect, dropping out of school was one of the best decisions I made because it helped me understand what I was missing. I am lucky and very thankful I was given a second chance at Eagle Rock."

Before graduation he learned a few lessons that many are probably now experiencing, "I learned that I am easily distracted and when I focus I can work very hard. I learned that it's okay to have difficulties learning and it's very important to identify and work through those parts. I learned to be positive! No matter how bad things are, they can certainly get worse. I learned to never give up on myself. I learned that mistakes are okay as long as I can learn from them. I learned to ask questions when I don't understand something. Most importantly, I learned that I am still learning and as long as I am alive, I will always be learning."

His best Eagle Rock memories include 'A Day of Appreciation', so timely to remember during the winter holidays. "A few of my peers and I arranged for a day where the whole school ate beans and rice without silverware or tables for breakfast lunch and dinner. The staff agreed to take away access to all electronics (phones, computers, etc.) We put up signs with statistics about world hunger and the need to reduce consumerism. The point was to be thankful for what we had and recognize how good we had it at Eagle Rock. At the end of the day, we had a community meeting where students talked about appreciating what we have followed by an atonement process to forgive others and ourselves and to start over with a clean slate. I remember everyone writing what they wanted to be atoned for on a piece of paper and walking out to the forest where Robert and Philbert were standing next to a small fire. We each took turns placing our paper in the fire and being thankful for forgiveness."

Some of his other favorite memories included: Going on the California Conservation Corps trip twice, going to DC with the *Close Up!* class, trying to get no dings for an entire trimester, being challenged by the ERS curriculum, laying on the heated

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“Art of Building School” - Continued from Page 1

There are many lessons to be learned from Eagle Rock, but one that stands out from my short visit is the effort it takes to build community. From the school's big ideas to its daily routines, everything reinforces this community ethic. Students and staff eat side-by-side in the cafeteria and share in duties. They play on the same intramural teams. They abide by the same set of agreements, from being good stewards of the planet to giving freely of their talents.

Kids live together in houses where getting along is a necessity. They learn at their own pace in small, interdisciplinary classes. They get used to being “of use” to the larger community through frequent service projects.

Daily Rituals

Mornings at Eagle Rock start with Gathering. These daily meet-ups offer anyone -- staff or student -- a chance to speak up about a burning issue. On the day I was there, Gathering was even cozier than usual.

Our visiting group from the Buck Institute for Education added more than a dozen adults to the meeting. But the kids didn't seem to mind. They just squeezed a little closer on carpeted steps in front of a hearth, and welcomed us into their world.

Four kids from East Coast cities kicked off the conversation. Their beef? “People make fun of our accents, and that's annoying,” said one girl. Then they set the record straight with a fast-paced presentation, demonstrating with plenty of humor that urban culture is highly localized.

Depending where you're from, water might sound like wota, “But that doesn't mean we're stupid,” cautioned one boy. They followed up with a quick glossary: kid means friend, brick is cold, mad is a modifier. So when it gets really cold in Colorado, kid, it's mad brick outside. Audience members showed their approval by waving their hands using the American Sign Language gesture for applause.

No Barriers

Looking around the room, I noticed a few things missing from more typical teen gatherings: no headphones or personal music devices, no TV sets, and no video games in sight. Computers in the school library are used only for learning activities, not socializing online. “We want to avoid anything that can be a barrier to community,” explained Dan Condon, associate director of professional development. Students even forswear romance during their initiation period, when an extended wilderness experience teaches them about trust in a small-group setting.

On the flip side, I saw kids really listening -- to each other and to adults. I saw walls covered with artifacts of projects that push students to think deeply about what they are learning and why it matters.

And I saw genuine care for the environment. After lunch, kids were happy to point out that the trash from more than 120 people fit into one small basin; everything else from the meal was either eaten or composted.

It Takes a Village

Building this special community takes ongoing effort and attention to what may seem like small details. But clearly, it's the big picture that matters most. This is a school determined to change the future for kids who have gone missing from public education. Every Eagle Rock graduate receives a college scholarship of \$14,000. This money doesn't come from corporate sponsorship; it's raised by the Eagle Rock staff.

In this tight-knit community, such generosity comes with the territory.

Eagle Rock also aims to influence the larger education landscape by sharing its example. Do you see ideas about building community that could transfer to your school setting? How does your school go about reinforcing community values?

To weigh in and to read more of Suzie's blogs visit: <http://tinyurl.com/yhxmgos>

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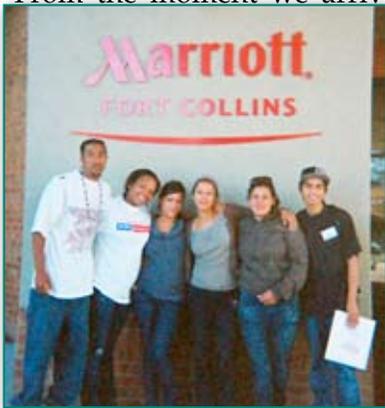
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CREATING A SHARED STORY FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

by Berta Guillen, Instructional Specialist in Society & Cultures

When veteran student Angel Flores approached me about a Facebook invitation he received to a youth conference on immigration reform, I was skeptical, surprised yet excited. The date was two weeks away and the deadline for registration had already passed. I recruited four more students (Melissa Gutierrez, Ian Austin, Vanessa Jimenez and Jon'Ya Crawford) secured our reservation and *Team Rock* was formed. We headed to Fort Collins with no real understanding of what we were about to experience. All we knew is that we were going to spend an entire weekend with one another at a hotel with two hundred other young people.

From the moment we arrived,



personal accounts of young organizers and students moved us deeply. They shared their stories of pain losing a loved one to deportation or experiencing discrimination because of lack of documentation. These stories were told in ways that had my diverse students engaged and motivated. Throughout the weekend we would all learn to tell our own personal stories, *the story of self*, in order to motivate others.

At first, speaking about oneself seems easy. Yet, when we were given exactly two minutes to tell our story of self, we were stone cold. We each took five minutes to write down an interesting story or challenge that

would serve as a focus for our story. Most of us failed to fully encapsulate ourselves in two minutes. We kept asking ourselves: What am I about? Why am I here? As we tried again and listened to each other, the students and I began to understand that our stories would always change. However, they were valid and integral components of creating comprehensive reform that is inclusive.

After a few hours of practicing our story of self, we were then charged with creating a story of us. This story was not any easier to capture. We all felt a part of something so unique: Eagle Rock School. Yet we all shared our personal journey for coming and staying at the Rock. We found that all of us were seeking a challenge, felt stagnant at home and were committed to changing ourselves. Our one point of divergence was our reasons for being at the conference. The four Latinos in the group all shared the story of someone they knew who had been impacted by a broken immigration system and all four had immigrant parents. The two African American students shared a common background rooted in slavery with elders in their family who were from the South. They were both aware of some Native American ancestry as well. Interestingly, both shared the opinion that Immigration wasn't a "black" issue yet as they recalled the injustices faced by immigrants today, of all backgrounds, they could identify with those inequalities.

We managed to find common ground while respecting our different histories. On a microscopic level, we had bridged a gap that this movement was attempting to do across the nation.

Now, how can we get people back at Eagle Rock to join us?

A few days later, at Wednesday morning gathering, *Team Rock* put their public speaking skills to use. Angel Flores started by sharing his story of self, disclosing personal reasons why immigration reform was important to him. Jon'ya told the community that this was an issue all of us needed to be aware of because of the diversity of families it affects. Ian and Vanessa shared more experiences to demonstrate the bond that the group built over the weekend. It was Melissa who delivered the story of now. She spoke with conviction that it was time for us to stop sitting on our laurels and waiting for change to happen; the time was now. So, she asked, house by house, ASPEN, LODGEPOLE, are you with us?! There was a resounding "YES!" in the School House.

While gathering ended with plenty of energy, there was still much work to be done. I hoped that the students would take charge of the challenge with my guidance. However, the students were given the initial confidence to discuss the issues but not an understanding of how much work and time must be committed to make real change. After a few failed attempts to create the student-led meeting, *Team Rock* members decided they were too busy to organize and that the goals they had initially set out for themselves were too grand considering their busy schedules.

I believe the conference was just the beginning for the young people involved. They gained exposure to the issues, learned different leadership models and discussed them publicly with others. Regardless of the success of *Team Rock*, there is no doubt in my mind that the conference was an enlightening experience for all of us.

EAGLE ROCKERS ATTEND FALL FORUM IN THE BIG EASY

by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development

During the first week of November, a sizable crew from Eagle Rock joined over a thousand other educators and students for the 2009 Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) *Fall Forum*. This year's forum theme was *Changing Schools. Changing Lives*. The Forum was held in downtown New Orleans, Louisiana. Eagle Rock staff and students presented three of the over 300 workshops offered during the conference, and attended meetings as members of the Affiliate Center and Small Schools Project networks.

The Fall Forum is CES's primary networking and professional development event, bringing together educators, students, parents, and leading thinkers in education from around the world to exchange ideas, ask questions, and share insights about effective school practices and designs. The conference consists of workshops, interest group gatherings, and other sessions in the content strands of teaching, learning, and assessment; school culture, practices, and design; leadership; and community connections.



The goals of the Fall Forum are to: Deepen practitioners' understanding of how the CES Common Principles can guide change and improve outcomes for all students; Provide opportunities for attendees to network with others about their experiences and efforts to redesign their classrooms, schools, and districts; Allow attendees to hear from and exchange ideas with leading figures in American education today; Stimulate conversations about issues of importance; Influence people to embrace CES ideas and priorities.

Pre-conference activities commenced on Thursday morning. Eagle Rock students Cynthia Alonzo & Ana "Gigi" Rivera attended a day long Youth Forum where they explored the essential question: "If you had the whole world listening, what would you have to say?" to develop creative voice and agency to powerfully project who they are and to act on the change they want to see in the world. Nationally recognized hip-hop artist, star of the award winning documentary film, "The Hip Hop Project," and powerfully inspirational speaker

Chris "Kazi" Rolle shared his inspiring personal story as proof that "All Things Are Possible" and supported youth participants to use visualization and writing techniques to unlock the messages they want to share to the world through their writing and performance. During the same time, Eagle Rock staff attended local school visits and onsite daylong workshops.

Karen Ikegami, Mathematics Instructional Specialist explained, "Attending Fall Forums have done more to shape my teaching than any other workshop or conference I have been to. The conference is filled with other educators that are interested in progressing in their instruction, school structure, and school culture in similar ways as I am. At this year's Fall Forum I got to take time to think about two things that are close to my heart. The first is that being involved in education is to be an activist for youth. This means that our jobs are not only to teach well, but to improve the educational landscape on a larger scale for all students. The second is that good instruction happens when we are intentional about making the content relevant and useful to our students."

Thursday evening's conference opening began with a bang by the Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Charter School marching band. Participants were welcomed by Tyra Newell, Executive Director, New Leaders for New Schools, New Orleans. The main speaker for the evening was Gloria Ladson-Billings, Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who addressed the applications of cultural competence and critical race theory in the preparation and pedagogical practices of teachers who are successful with African American students.

On Friday morning Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development and Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development were joined by Rivera in presenting *Making Change Stick: Restorative Justice Case Study*. What does it take to make change stick? Participants were invited to learn about the struggle of change, and the tools for successful navigation, through the case study of implementing a Restorative Justice program at Eagle Rock School. In addition to receiving materials on the Restorative Justice program, educators gained an understanding of how to implement any change process. Teachers left with stories, energy and practical tools to bring back to their schools.

SOLVING AMERICA'S EDUCATION PROBLEM

The following piece appeared in November 27, 2009 'Editorials and Opinion' section of the Estes Park Trail Gazette and is being reprinted with permission.

The recent report released by the *Alliance for Excellent Education* points out that “in the Denver metropolitan area, 8,769 students dropped out from the Class of 2008. These high school dropouts did so at a great cost not only to themselves but also to their communities. Reducing the number of dropouts by 50 percent for just this single high school class would result in tremendous economic benefits to the Denver region. The following are three examples of the economic impact that these 4,385 new graduates would have on Denver and its surrounding area:

1. **Increased Wages.** By earning their diplomas—and in many cases, continuing their education—these new high school graduates would together earn nearly \$69 million in additional wages over the course of an average year compared to their likely earnings without a diploma.

2. **Increased Human Capital.** After earning their high school diplomas, many new graduates would not stop there. An estimated 77 percent of these students are projected to continue their education after high school, some earning as high as a PhD or other professional degree.

3. **Additional Tax Revenue.** As these new graduates' incomes grow, local tax revenues will also increase. Annual state and local property, income, and sales tax revenue would grow by nearly \$8 million during the average year as the result of increased spending and higher salaries.”

Nationally, American schools fail to graduate 1.2 million students each year and it's costing the country billions in unearned wages, taxes, and productivity. But the solution for these kids and the country can be found within the walls of our non-traditional schools.

While saddled by the challenges of managing a growing disengaged student body, this nation's school systems must search for a way to prevent a generation from failing.

Studies have shown that successful education begins with the establishment of a sense of community within a school, where students clearly understand the role they play in developing and maintaining core values. In this type of setting, students, teachers, and staff share in a community of learning, responsibility, and trust, this encourages students to re-engage with education.

When Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, a non-traditional alternative high school, was established in the mountains of Colorado sixteen years ago, we knew that one school could not change the landscape of American education, but we could begin to move our nation's collective mindset about failing students away from managing problems and toward creating environments that foster engagement and success.

At Eagle Rock the student body is composed of youth who have either dropped out or are on their way to dropping out of high school. For many this is the last stop on the road to redemption and their opportunity to receive a quality education. Many students arrive at Eagle Rock from places where they feel the struggle to survive is an individual and daily battle. We provide them with a second chance that begins with an emphasis on the importance of community.

Our effort to engage the disengaged is not feel good confidence building. It includes an academic program that is both focused and demanding, structured around interactive, interdisciplinary project-based learning. We support this challenging curriculum with close-knit relationships among students, teachers, and staff. Every staff member works directly with students and the entire school community meets every morning in a gathering space. School governance is thoroughly democratic and obligates every member of the community to have a voice.

This openness is grounded in self-discipline. Every student learns the values and expectations of Eagle Rock School and commits them to memory – with a focus on individual integrity and citizenship, making positive life choices and living in respectful harmony with others. Just as important, every student contributes 500 hours of service per year to community service. Over time students internalize school values and expectations and thereby take ownership of their futures.

In our effort to encourage and enable schools across the country to learn from the lessons of Eagle Rock School, we work with and mentor schools to share this experience through developmental opportunities for educators who are interested in new integrative approaches to education. For thousands of visitors each year, the school's Professional Development Center

“Copper Mountain Resort” - Continued from Page 1

Copper Mountain Ski Resort is one of the largest resorts in Summit County and is 120 miles from campus with 2,465 acres of skiable terrain. Copper’s base elevation is 9,712 feet with a 12,313 foot summit elevation. The Ride School, located at the Union Creek base area, is located on the west side of the mountain with 3 lifts (Kokomo, High Point, and Lumberjack) servicing only green (easier) runs for the benefit of new riders.

Student Robb Miranda said, “Coming from California I had always heard about snowboarding but never had the opportunity to try it before. My favorite part was how patient our instructor was with us. It was so fun.”

Student Melissa Gutierrez explains, “It was awe-

some and not something I’d ever tried before because there is no snow where I live and it’s expensive.”

Aspen House Parent Janet Johnson stated, “Copper has been extremely generous to us over the years. Our students consistently cite their experience at Copper as a highlight of the trimester. Because of this experience our students, some who have never seen snow before, even develop a passion for riding. I am thankful to Copper Mountain for making it happen.”

Juniper Staff House Team Member Karen Ikegami explains, “I love the Copper Ride School with my students because everybody (staff & students) are learning a new skill together and it give us something to bond over.”

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During that same time in another session, Ikegami and Alonzo joined authors Jill Davidson and Laura Flaxman, along with a panel of educators from schools featured in CES’s new book, Small Schools, Big Ideas: The Essential Guide to Successful School Transformation, to discuss evidence of school and school system transformation in communities nationwide.

Later than afternoon Condon, Soguero and Rivera were joined by Alonzo in presenting *Creating a Tone of Decency & Trust – Working with Youth who Find Success Elusive*. This workshop used the nationally recognized Eagle Rock School & Professional Development Center (a CES Mentor School & a CES Affiliate Center) as a case study for the CES EssentialVisions DVD & Toolkit. Participants learned how to take steps toward transforming challenging school and classroom settings into communities infused with a tone of decency and trust.

The Fall Forum also presented an opportunity for the CES Small Schools Network to touch base and meet with their mentor or mentee schools. Staff from Eagle Rock and Odyssey – The Essential School briefly met to reflect on their partnership, and to make plans for professional development for the coming months including a trip out to SeaTac, Washington in May.

Soguero explains, “Inspired by Ted Sizer, the Coalition of Essential Schools has served a vital function by gathering folks from all over the country who are committed to creating schools that are good places for young people. With Ted’s passing, it’s more important than ever that we continue to network and bring attention to what works for kids. There is no annual gathering comparable to the Fall Forum for serving this worthy purpose.”

To learn more about the CES Fall Forum visit www.essentialschools.org

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provides space, time and facilitation for educators to consider an approach to schooling that focuses on creating a community committed to the learning and success of adolescents.

A few year’s ago a former Eagle Rock instructor founded a small alternative high school housed in a larger, comprehensive high school in New York City. Understanding how institutional structures could create barriers to student achievement, his goal was to create an educational institution that would shift the focus away from managing the movement and behavior of students to focusing on building relationships and re-engaging them in the educational process. Using Eagle Rock’s model of focusing on core values

and creating a sense of community, he succeeded in establishing a school with a graduation rate twice that of the parent comprehensive high school.

These pockets of success arise in schools that have redesigned their approach to education, beginning with principles that promote building a community of learners, and a belief that all students can succeed in the right learning environment. This sense of community, along with the development of shared values, creates the stable relationships that are essential to an effective educational system.

Robert Burkhardt is Head of School at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, a tuition-free high school and learning center for educators interested in education renewal and reform located in Estes Park, Colorado.

MEET THE PUBLIC ALLIES TEACHING FELLOWS

by Mark Palmer, Director of the Public Allies Teaching Fellowship Program

“All Who Dare!” is a phrase that serves as our tagline at Eagle Rock School & Professional Development Center. It means different things to different people. For our eighth class of twelve Public Allies Teaching Fellows that arrived in September, they dare to share their lives, their talents and a year of service with our community.

The dozen individuals were chosen from over 150 applicants and come from all over the country. They bring a wealth of experience to share with our students and staff and we are excited to welcome them to our community.

Matt Bynum, *Outdoor Education Fellow*, most recently worked with *Outward Bound* out of Leadville, CO. Matt has also worked with *Naturalists at Large* in Ventura, California and has a degree in Recreation with an emphasis in Outdoor Leadership.

Amanda Christman, *Curriculum Fellow*, had a short drive up the mountain from Denver where she most recently lived. Amanda has a B.A. in Integrated Visual Art and Public Relations and has worked with *Girls Inc.*, part of the *Urban Servant Corps*, an AmeriCorps Program.

Daphne Clyburn, *World Languages Fellow*, grew up in Oxford, Maryland and has worked with *Great Hollow Wilderness School* in Connecticut. Daphne received a B.A. in anthropology from Wesleyan University.

Amir Erez, *Mathematics Fellow*, grew up with a Boulder address but for the past few years he has worked for *Outward Bound*, which took him all over Colorado teaching climbing and mountaineering. Amir has a B.S.E. in Industrial and Operation Engineering from the University of Michigan.

Peter Finn, *Music Fellow*, just cannot seem to stay away from the state of Colorado. Peter graduated from Colorado College with a degree in Mathematics and a minor in Music. Peter has worked for *YMCA Camp Widjiwagan* near Ely, Minnesota.

Kelsey Glass, *Professional Development Center Fellow*, comes back for more. Kelsey is an Eagle Rock School graduate who then received a Bachelors Degree in Recreation Administration with a minor in Business Administration. Most recently Kelsey worked at *Zane Middle School* as a Campus Supervisor with the behavior management team.

Dan Hoffman, *Society and Cultures Fellow*, has a Bachelors Degree in Urban and Environmental Policy. Dan worked with AmeriCorps in the San Francisco with



a program called *Bay Area Youth Agency Consortium - San Francisco Urban Service Project*. Dan is also combining his time at Eagle Rock with the Teaching Certificate Program at Prescott College

Anne Lindberg, *Science Fellow*, has a Masters of Environmental Science from Evergreen State College and has worked as the Sustainability Intern with Centralia College. She is from Seattle, Washington.

Alyssa McConkey, *Health & Wellness Counseling Fellow*, has worked as an intern for the *Bal Ashram Children's Orphanage* in India. As a Peer Resources Advisor for Wellesley College, she worked and served as part of the World Convergence on Religions for Peace. Alyssa has a Bachelors Degree in Peace and Justice.

Joel Oubre, *Human Performance Center Fellow*, has worked with the *Leelanau Outdoor Education Center* as well as with the University of California at Santa Cruz where he was responsible for developing and providing proactive educational community building programs. Joel has a bachelor's degree in Business Management Economics with a minor in Education.

Ryan Plantz, *Service Learning Fellow*, most recently worked with the AmeriCorps program *I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder County*. He has also worked for the Madison School District in Madison, Wisconsin. Ryan has a Bachelors degree in History and Sociology.

Reggie Scuggs, *Language Arts & Literature Fellow*, grew up in a suburb of Chicago. He is an alumnus of *Public Allies Chicago* and worked at the *Center on Halsted* where he served as a catalyst for the LGBTQ community. Reggie has a B.A. in Journalism.

As the deadline for next year's class of Public Allies Teaching Fellows nears we hope you'll spread the word and let interested individuals know about this powerful teaching and learning opportunity for emerging educators. More information may be found at www.publicallies.org/eaglerock.

NAIS SUPERPOWER SPOTLIGHT – EAGLE ROCK STUDENTS

This piece is being reprinted with permission from the National Association of Independent Schools where it first appeared at www.nais.org on December 6, 2009

“When I went to school myself, the staff didn’t trust student voices. In fact, they never asked our opinions on much of anything, except perhaps where the prom should be held.” Stanley Richards was a teaching fellow and alternative licensure candidate at Eagle Rock for a year. “What a loss!” he said. “Now that I’m at Eagle Rock, preparing to be a teacher, I cannot imagine not engaging students in discussions about what affects their lives profoundly - their own education. And, I cannot imagine learning about education in any better way. They are my best teachers.”

Having voice affects not only teacher candidates and fellows, like Stanley. It affects teaching staff, who depend on students to help them learn. It also affects visitors to the school’s professional development center. Here they dare to ask questions they cannot ask students in their own schools - and are surprised that students are so smart and knowledgeable about learning. Students, themselves, learn from having voice. They learn from each other, and they understand themselves better when they are given voice. “My school affects me by allowing me to hear my voice,” said Leslie, a student. How beguiling to think that hearing their own voices, perhaps for the first time in their educational histories, helps students gain self-knowledge.

Eagle Rock staff are certain that the school thrives because it depends on student voices to embrace the myriad challenges of education, especially the education of adolescents who have not succeeded in school previously. Eagle Rock is an intentionally small, independent school in Estes Park, Colorado; it welcomes visitors to its professional development center; and it hosts fellows and licensure candidates who are part of Eagle Rock’s community for an entire year. Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center was developed as a philanthropic project to serve two purposes:

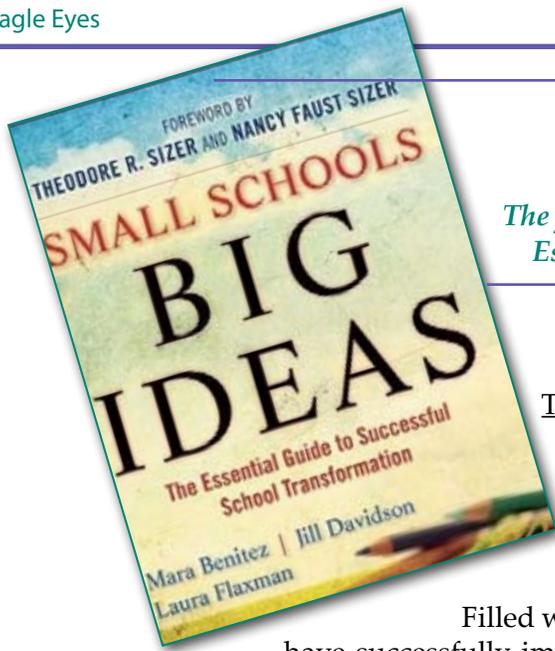
1. Graduate young people who have the desire and are prepared to make a difference in the world.
2. Positively affect education, primarily in the United States.



These seem like simple enough goals, until you realize that Eagle Rock intentionally enrolls students who many people think are the hardest to educate in U.S. schools - those who have dropped out and, perhaps, made decisions that jeopardized their lives (and the lives of others). The second purpose of Eagle Rock to some extent explains the first goal. Besides wanting to do something to help students who have been lost to the education system, the founders of Eagle Rock also wanted to have an effect on education, especially in the United States. By selecting hard-to-educate young people - rather than those who are successful in school no matter what the conditions are - Eagle Rock gains credibility. The strategies that work at Eagle Rock have validity because they work for those for whom success in traditional schools has been elusive.

The school would probably not exist were it not for the second purpose, improving education, not just in the United States but worldwide. The professional development center would probably not work were it not for the school, which is a living laboratory for educators.

We celebrate super students at Eagle Rock - and everywhere!



NEW BOOK FEATURES EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL

The following article appeared in the October 23, 2009 edition of the Estes Park Trail Gazette and is being reprinted with permission.

Small Schools Big Ideas – The Essential Guide to Successful School Transformation by Mara Benitez, Jill Davidson & Laura Flaxman

“This guide shows how the principle-based and equity-focused model from the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) can be used to redesign existing schools and create new schools that prepare students for this century’s challenges and opportunities.

Filled with inspirational stories and illustrative examples from schools that have successfully implemented CES principles and practices, *Small Schools, Big Ideas* offers information and inspiration needed to:

- Transform schools in order to achieve equitable outcomes for all students
- Understand various school design options
- Establish school vision, mission, and goals to raise educational expectations and results
- Develop transformational leadership
- Cultivate a professional learning community
- Implement student-centered teaching, learning, and curricula
- Build productive relationships with families and communities
- Establish strategies for sustainability

These recommendations and proven strategies can help educators transform their schools to become truly equitable, personalized, and academically challenging.”

Praise for Small Schools, Big Ideas

“Small Schools, Big Ideas tells the story of the next generation of Essential schools. The authors illustrate the fundamental necessities of putting students at the center, trusting teachers and families, and instilling democratic practices. The Coalition of Essential Schools continues to light the way for schools as places of trust, imagination, and real learning; these principles and ideas that we developed and put into practice a quarter-century ago continue to evolve, and are still the best ways we know to create life-changing teaching and learning.”

—Deborah Meier, Senior Scholar and Adjunct Professor, New York University

“For educators, policymakers, and anyone else working to improve education in America, *Small Schools, Big Ideas* is a tremendous resource. The authors draw on both research and direct experience to provide a detailed, practical, and inspiring analysis of what must be done to create the schools we need.”

—Pedro Noguera, Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education, New York University

To purchase the book visit <http://tinyurl.com/ye293nw>

"I HAVE A DREAM" AT EAGLE ROCK

By Ryan Plantz, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Service Learning

Amongst the heavy traffic of educators visiting Eagle Rock School's Professional Development Center this past fall was a group from the *I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder County* (IHAD).

Sixteen AmeriCorps volunteers, led by Cathie Williamson, Program Coordinator and Elyana Funk, Project Coordinator, spent two days touring campus, shadowing students, and participating in the ERS learning community. This valuable experience has been made possible through a connection established years ago by Eli Spanier.

Eli was an intern at Eagle Rock School from 2000 to the spring of 2001, when he decided to accept a position as AmeriCorps Director at IHAD. CEO Lori Canova created the position for Eli Spanier to strengthen the programming at IHAD, a rapidly expanding non-profit. The mission of the IHAD program is to "motivate and empower children from low-income communities to reach their education and career goals by providing a long-term intervention program including mentoring, tutoring, and cultural enrichment. Upon graduation from high school, each *Dreamer* is eligible to receive a *last dollar*, four year tuition assistance scholarship for college or vocational school." Eli seized the opportunity to create a meaningful connection between ERS and IHAD.

AmeriCorps volunteers from IHAD have visited ERS as part of their annual training and professional development since Eli became AmeriCorps Director 2001. Elyana Funk, Program Coordinator of the Sanchez class since 2001, remembers Eagle Rock students organizing a soccer clinic for the 4th grade Sanchez *Dreamers* in 2003 as part of the *Soccer Savvy* class. The clinic was

a wonderful opportunity for younger *Dreamers* to interact and learn from Eagle Rock student-mentors. Having joined several of the AmeriCorps groups on

their professional development visits to Eagle Rock, Elyana has incorporated many Eagle Rock traditions and values into her programming in an effort to create a specific culture and cohesion among *Dreamers*. "I've intentionally tried

to create ritual and routine with the Sanchez class, and much has come from Eagle Rock," Elyana explains. Elyana has also strengthened the program by integrating the values of democratic governance by developing

'Dreamer Council,' an elected group of student leaders that represent the class.

Beyond professional development visits, cooperation between ERS and IHAD has extended further. Three former IHAD AmeriCorps volunteers have gone on to become Public Allies Teaching Fellows at Eagle Rock. The most recent addition is Ryan Plantz, the current Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Service Learning. This collaboration has also created an opportunity for several staff members and AmeriCorps volunteers from IHAD to sit on Presentation of Learning (POL) assessment panels at Eagle Rock. Several students from the IHAD program have visited Eagle Rock in recent years, but this fall marks the first time a *Dreamer* from Boulder County has attended Eagle Rock. Leslie Hernandez, from Lafayette, completed the Wilderness Course and just finished her first trimester.

Support from the leadership of both organizations will ensure that this mutually beneficial partnership continues for years to come.

For more information about IHAD visit www.ihadboulder.org



I Have a Dream®
BOULDER COUNTY

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by Dave Manzella, Instructional Specialist in Language Arts and Literature



The old Eagle Rock School *Individualized Learning Plan* (ILP) has just expired. Students no longer need a laundry list of checked boxes to prove they are ready to graduate. With the new ILP's focus on aligning student academic goals with Eagle Rock's five expectations (developing an expanding knowledge base, communicating effectively, creating and making healthy life choices, participating as an engaged global citizen & providing leadership for justice) writing is going to look a lot different at ERS. A tour of the Learning Village will reveal that writing instruction is happening in every classroom.

The *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC) approach has been gaining popularity in classrooms since the 1980's. At its heart, WAC is a method of weaving writing into all disciplines. Format, style, and conventions are different for each content area and students need to have experience writing in all of them to be successful in the academic world. WAC is also an instructional approach that emphasizes writing as a tool for learning. When students interact with the

information they are learning through writing, it can improve their comprehension and retention of the material. Writing then ceases to solely be a vehicle for the regurgitation of student knowledge.

The focus of instructional meetings has been literacy. Early in the trimester, Instructional Specialists and Public Allies Teaching Fellows were introduced to the language of the *6+1 Trait Writing* model and have begun to incorporate the instructional practices into their courses. *6+1 Trait Writing* is a method of building common language students and instructors can use when talking about what good writing looks like. The model breaks down quality writing into seven characteristics: *ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation*. *6+1* is also a method of accurately pinpointing where a student's writing is strong as well as where they need improvement. Instructors take ideas from the literacy training sessions back to their classroom, and report their successes and struggles at later instructional meetings. The WAC approach to writing instruction would not be successful if ERS instructors were not willing to support student writing in their content areas.

The work in classrooms has already begun. In *Society and Cultures* Instructional Specialist Berta Guillen's class, *Savage*

Inequalities, students are wrote their educational biographies and used the Ideas rubric to assess their writing. Service Learning Instruction Specialist, John Guffey, had students complete "case studies" of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in his class *Peace Jam*. While in *Italian for the Adventurous* class, World Languages Instructional Specialist, Russ Rendon's class wrote reviews of movies and other Italian culture. When students are exposed to more genres of writing, they become better prepared to tackle bigger writing projects, such as *Major Research*.

Major Research remains a major part of the new student ILP. The project will be used to assess a student's understanding of the *Expanding Knowledge Base Power Standard: The process of research promotes clarity and accuracy when acquiring new knowledge*. Historically, *Major Research* has been a hurdle in an ERS student's pursuit of graduation, but through the implementation of research skills instruction across the ERS curriculum, students can gain the skills necessary to complete this writing project earlier in their career.

These changes in the ERS writing program will not happen overnight. Through adoption of the *6+1 Trait* language, regular professional development focused on literacy, and the desire of all instructors to support students' writing in their classrooms, we will build a sustainable writing program at ERS.

PATHWAYS TO PARKS: EAGLE ROCK INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

by Ben Baldwin, Research and Learning Specialist
with Rocky Mountain National Park
Photo credit: NPS-RMNP



The Eagle Rock Internship Program is a collaborative partnership between Rocky Mountain National Park, and Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, a year-round, residential, full-scholarship high school for students ages 15–17, located in Estes Park, Colorado. The school provides students that have not succeeded in traditional public schools an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. The Eagle Rock School student body comprises a purposefully diverse community with students from across the nation. This Pathways to Parks partnership develops opportunities for students to connect with national parks, fosters student interest in science and public lands, and ultimately provides a path for students to pursue careers in the National Park Service.

Pathways to Parks

The Pathways to Parks is an initiative of the Rocky Mountain National Park-based Continental Divide Research Learning Center. Pathways is a three staged approach: information, involvement, and internship. It provides students with multiple entry points to employment with the National Park Service. These include volunteering, citizen science, service learning, and shadowing. Students engage with the park based on their level of interest and commitment.

Career Choices

The Eagle Rock Internship Program focuses on bridging the critical years between high school and college when students are making decisions that will influence their career choices. Students may choose their park career path from any number of positions in administration, facility management, resource stewardship, and visitor protection. This program gives students hands-on experience, connects them to the existing workforce, and mentors them as they begin their working relationship. Its innovative educational and development program emphasizes active, interdisciplinary, experiential learning. The Eagle Rock Internship Program begins with a volunteer experience, followed by a full-time, paid, temporary position at the park, complemented by professional development training. The volunteer experience is executed in conjunction with a course at Eagle Rock School. Students divide their time equally between volunteering in the park and attending Eagle Rock School, discussing and

applying their experiences in the classroom. Staff from Rocky Mountain National Park and Eagle Rock School work closely together to ensure the volunteer and classroom experiences are complementary. During the second half of the program, the students are hired as part of the National Park Service Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). This two step approach ensures that students prepared for employment are personally choosing to commit to a job typically in the same position as their volunteer experience.

Park Experience

The training and professional development that students and the park participate in throughout the internship consists of a series of assignments, activities, and discussions. These activities include documenting fieldwork in a field journal, recording their experiences through photo assignments, setting goals, working with supervisors on progress assessments, and reflecting on their experience. The internship is unique because it is guided by weekly themes based fundamental competencies (personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance) for leaders in the federal government: interpersonal skills, oral communication, integrity/honesty, written communication, continual learning, and public service motivation. The purpose of the assignments is to help the interns make the most from their experience and provide a context to assess and develop knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Future Stewards

This Eagle Rock Internship Program supports sharing national parks with students and nurtures the next generation of park stewards. Both Rocky Mountain National Park and the Eagle Rock students benefit from this carefully structured program, in part because students are introduced to working in the park as volunteers and are more prepared to make the transition into employees. The National Park Service as an organization benefits by connecting with a diverse student population at a time when career choices are being made. According to one student, “At the beginning of this it was just something to do, but I realized at the end my internship that it has opened millions of opportunities for me.”

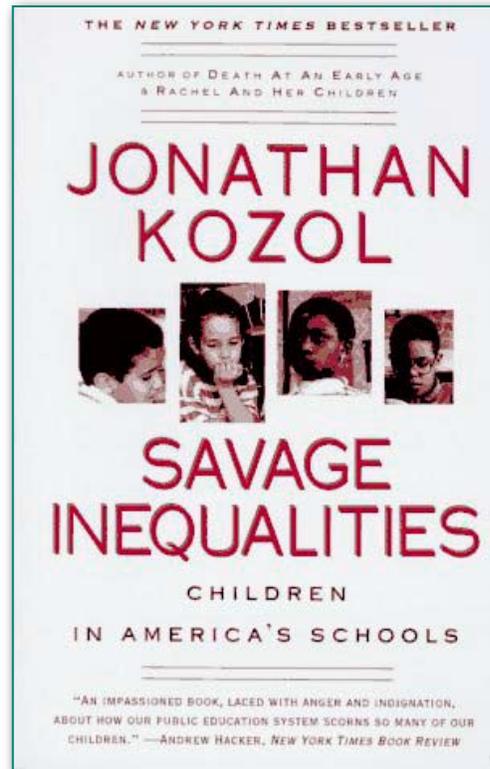
SAVAGE INEQUALITIES

by Dan Hoffman, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Society & Cultures

What is the purpose of school? Does racism exist in America's public schools today? Can all students attain educational achievement despite societal factors? In order to tackle these difficult questions, students in the class *Savage Inequalities* read the award-winning education book Savage Inequalities by Jonathan Kozol. During the process, the class discussed how race and class influence one's educational experience. However, the real excitement came during weekly visits to Boulder to attend a University of Colorado education class.

The CU Boulder class, Education and Society, taught by Molly Shea (Eagle Rock Summer Intern in 2009), also read *Savage Inequalities*. On these weekly visits, students from CU and ERS came together to create cross-cultural understanding around education reform. "We wanted our students to reflect on their educational experiences as it related to Kozol's book and share their views with college students at CU Boulder who were also reading *Savage Inequalities*," said Berta Guillen, the Society and Cultures Instructional Specialist who led the class with Public Allies Teaching Fellow Daniel Hoffman. "Through these visits we hoped students at both institutions would challenge their own ideas on privilege, discrimination and many other issues that Kozol believes impact public schools every day."

Eagle Rock students gained a lot out from the experience too. "It was great working with a college class and to have a discussion with those students. Not only did we learn a lot about Kozol's book, but we learned



more about speaking publicly with large groups since the Boulder class had over 30 students in it. We also became much closer as a class through the experience," said Eagle Rock student Jo-Anne. On visits to Boulder, Eagle Rock students also had the opportunity to take college tours and speak with other faculty and students at the college outside of the classroom setting. "It was great to see our students get excited about CU Boulder and ask questions about the application process," said

Hoffman. "I didn't really expect that as an outcome of the class." while these weekly visits yielded valuable experiences for both students at CU and Eagle Rock; they were not the only activities the *Savage Inequalities* class tackled.

Back in Estes Park, Eagle Rock Students wrote their own personal educational autobiographies, investigated primary sources on the internet to better understand how property taxes affect school performance, and explored different forms of discrimination by putting on short skits describing institutional, interpersonal, and internalized racism. "The skits were really entertaining," said student Jo-Anne "I never had a class where we got to learn about racism in this way. They really grabbed my attention." Through this hard work, students gained a better understanding of how education works in the U.S. and how educational institutions have helped shape their own lives.

INNOVATIVE MATH COURSES

by Karen Ikegami, Instructional Specialist in Mathematics



Building a boat to learn physics and algebra? Mosaicing birdbaths to learn about polygons and geometry? The students at Eagle Rock have been pushing the limits of project-based learning in order to stretch their minds. The two math focused classes for the fall trimester asked students to put their learning to use on some pretty big projects.

From the outside it may look like students in the Boat Building class simply built two cedar strip canoes. However, the actual construction of the canoes only scratched the surface of what the students learned. The canoes acted as a vehicle for complex lessons about teamwork, individual perseverance, the culture and history of boats, density, velocity, scale models, and chemistry. "At times it can feel like the building is taking a lot of class time. But you have to remember that that is where the real learning is happening," noted Math Instructional Specialist, Karen Ikegami.

Each week students worked on constructing the boats with the help of Jeff Liddle, Director of Curriculum. Having built his own cedar strip canoe and taught the boat building class in the past, Liddle is Eagle Rock's resident boating expert. Liddle worked with the students to understand how group work and individual integrity play into the success of the building process. As they built the boats, they learned about themselves and others as workers by evaluating successes and failures. Students learned just as much from their accomplishments as they did from their mistakes.

In addition to constructing the boats, students worked in the science lab to understand other aspects of boats. The students answered questions such as:

What makes a boat float? What is the chemistry of epoxy? How much does a boat cost to build? What role have boats played in various cultures? Ikegami worked with Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Mathematics, Amir Erez and Director of Professional Development, Michael Soguero, to put together the curriculum for the class.

As the course came to an end, the two cedar strip canoes were ready to put in the water. Students were excited to test out their handiwork. The canoes were then sold to benefit of the Eagle Rock School Higher Education Fund.

The second math class of the fall trimester also had students putting their construction know-how to the test. The trimester began with the students learning the basics of polygons and quickly saw the students putting that knowledge to use. After learning about regular and irregular polygons, the students created an original polygon to use in the design of a birdbath in a class called Bath Math.

Using concrete board and lots of elbow grease, the students each constructed the skeleton of a polygon-shaped birdbath that would be used in further lessons on area estimation and volume. Calculations were made on just about everything on the birdbaths from how much area the birdbaths would cover to the amount of tile that would be used to cover the surface of the birdbath.

Each student chose a place to donate their birdbath. While some birdbaths are being donated to areas on campus, other birdbaths will find homes off campus such as the *Birds Of Prey Rescue Center* in Boulder, Colorado.

While both the *Boat Building & Bath Math* classes did not cover a wide range of topics, the math concepts that were covered were used in a deep and real way to try to help students understand what it feels like to apply knowledge. In the end, students have been able to speak about the math concepts in a way that shows true understanding and not just memorization of facts.

Ikegami explains the philosophy behind the course design, "Our goal, as a math department, is to help students see that numbers and math really are a part of every day life." Upcoming courses include *Feeling Lucky?*, a course that explores gaming and decision making through probability, *Math4Life*, a look at the linear and non-linear relationships of money and personal finance, and *Entrepreneurship*, using algebra to help plan and start a business.



“Graduate Profile” - Continued from Page 2

floor of the hearth in the lodge on cold winter mornings, doing service work everyday, competing in the ERS triathlon, going home for break, coming back after break, presenting a slideshow of his photography, playing the didgeridoo on top of Bonepipe, the wilderness trip (so many memories there), making new friends, meeting awesome people, being embraced by such a large family, and finishing my graduate Presentation of Learning.

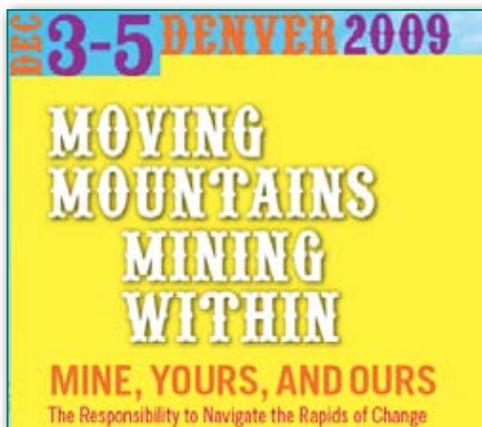
What has been going on since Darren’s departure from ERS? He has been going to school and being thankful for everyday life. He spent the first three years of life after Eagle Rock going to College of the Redwoods where he received an Associate of Science with high honors. Since then, he attended Humboldt State University progressing towards a Bachelor of Science with a major in Environmental Resources Engineering. He graduated this month. This past April,

he passed the eight-hour Fundamentals of Engineering exam, which is required for a Professional Engineering license.

Some of Darren’s favorite classes in college included chemistry, thermodynamics, fluid dynamics, environmental ethics, renewable electric power systems, building energy analysis, electricity and magnetism, and math classes.

Oh, and there has been time for playing outdoors in California. Darren explains, “I have been enjoying snowboarding, bike riding, hiking in redwood forests, disc golfing, rock climbing, swimming in local rivers, and tide-pooling on local beaches. If you’ve never stood next to a 350 foot tall tree, then you ought to come up to the Northern California.”

After wrapping up the last of his degree, and a trip to Sri Lanka to visit his mom, Darren is looking for employment in engineering with an emphasis on environmental sustainability, remediation, and preservation.



STAFF ATTEND

“PEOPLE OF COLOR” CONFERENCE

by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development

During the first week of December several Eagle Rock staff members attended the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) *People of Color Conference (PoCC)* in Denver, Colorado.

The NAIS board of trustees explain, “The ... board affirms the following for the People of Color Conference (PoCC) sponsored by NAIS: PoCC should be designed for people of color as it relates to their roles in independent schools. Its programming should include offerings that support people of color as they pursue strategies for success and leadership. Its focus should be on providing a sanctuary and networking opportunities for people of color and allies in independent

schools as we build and sustain inclusive school communities.”

The conference began Thursday morning with a keynote address by John Quinones, co-anchor of ABC TV’s *Primetime* and correspondent for *20/20*.

Following the keynote, Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development presented *Creating a Tone of Decency & Trust – Working with Youth who Find Success Elusive*. This workshop used the nationally recognized Eagle Rock School & Professional Development Center (a CES Mentor School & a CES Affiliate Center) as a case study for the CES EssentialVisions DVD & Toolkit. Participants learned how to take steps toward transforming challenging school and classroom settings into communities infused with a tone of decency and trust.

Jesse Beightol, Instructional Specialist in Outdoor Education explained, “This was a great opportunity to collaborate with diverse

educators from across the country. I was especially inspired by conversations about cultural resiliency and how we can help our students harness their inherent strengths to be successful in the 21st century.”

Philbert Smith, Director of Students, who also served on the local planning committee said, “PoCC was a again a great opportunity to what others are doing in their schools. The speakers were outstanding. It was also wonderful to see all of our planning come together.”

Jeff Liddle, Director of Curriculum stated, “The PoCC was very valuable for me. I came away with very practical ideas for developing a strategic minority staff recruitment plan. This year we’re also using the NAIS Assessment for Inclusion and Multiculturalism and I attended a session that will prove very helpful as we conduct the assessment.”