



EAGLE EYES

Volume 3, Number 1

Spring, 1995

FROM SOUTHWEST ECOLOGY TO COTTAGE INDUSTRY: THE ERS CURRICULUM

- by Judy Gilbert, Director of Curriculum -

The ERS curriculum is experiential, learner-centered, results-oriented, integrated and rigorous. It is built around how people learn, not how teachers teach. The academic schedule at Eagle Rock occurs within a 14 week trimester divided into two six-week blocks of classes, an Explore Week, and a week of Presentations of Learning.

During the six-week blocks, students may choose one class that meets Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 9:20 (the "short" class) and one class that meets from 9:30 to 4:20 Monday through Saturday (the "long" class). Several times a week during the "long" class, students go to the Human Performance Center for two hours of physical education.

Offerings include multi-disciplinary experiences guided by two or more instructional specialists and interns. For example, in the "long" course entitled "Plants, Soil and Ecology of the Southwest," students studied the local impact of natural and human stresses on the environment. The final project included work with the Navajo nation in Canyon de Chelly on a revegetation project. Botany, biology, service learning, and environmental science credit could be earned in this course.

A course entitled "Sea Mexico" used a multi-sensory, multimedia approach to explore the period of Mexican history from 1900 to the present. The course immersed students in painting, drawing, researching, writing, speaking, listening, performing, cooking, and eating. Students could earn credit in language, notetaking skills, research, composition, art, foreign language, world history, and speech/communication.

Eagle Rock's first cottage industry was started through the course "Starting and Running a Small Business." Students researched and developed an actual small business producing goods and services. Market research, cost analysis, production, marketing, advertising, bookkeeping, sales, supply and demand, demographics, investing, borrowing, and banking were explored. Students could earn credit in mathematics, technology, career exploration, composition, speech, service learning, art, ethics and philosophy.

Students choose their courses based on graduation requirements on their Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs). Credit may be earned towards the graduation requirements in three ways: transferring credit from other schools, mastering the concepts and skills in ERS learning experiences, or demonstrating mastery of the concepts through testing or observation of the staff.

Independent studies offer more motivated students the opportunity to complete the Eagle Rock program at an accelerated pace. Independent studies are offered in areas such as life skills, composition, mathematics, language study and keyboarding. Explore Week is an opportunity to do intensive exploration in an area of interest such as painting, stained glass, theater, mini-wilderness trips, or dance.

During the Presentation of Learning week, students prepare and present a demonstration of their learning over the trimester to a panel of distinguished guests and to the Eagle Rock community.

ERS STUDENTS CRISS-CROSS THE COUNTRY

- by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development -

East and southwest. These are the directions traveled by Eagle Rock students and staff in pursuit of education recently. One group of students ventured to Washington, D.C. for a Close Up Foundation trip, another group to the southwest.

Students participating in Close-Up got an inside view of beltway politics during a week sponsored by the Close Up Foundation. They attended seminars with members of Congress, met with a representative of the Washington press corps, and conferred with lobbyists, government officials, and political fig-

ures to learn more about how government works.

Students Marion Blakeney, Nana Breeland, Jason Darling, Davian Gagne, Billy Henninger, James Masters, Joelle Strasser, and Cameron Wright were accompanied by intern Jackie Wind after weeks of preparation by instructional specialist Norrie Rothenberg and intern Patrick Hannigan on the Eagle Rock campus.

Students enjoyed a tour of the city and a visit to local sites as well as cultural activities, but the chief purpose of the experience was to interest them in local,

state, and national government. Working with students from other parts of the country, Eagle Rock students were helped to understand the importance of civic responsibility and involvement in the governing process.

Students traveling to the southwest prepared for their trip by exploring the ecology of the ERS campus with an eye towards comparing it to the ecology of the southwest. After a tour of Mesa Verde, they arrived at Chinle, Arizona, to work in the Canyon de Chelly on a tree revegetation project.

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ERS Students (continued)

During the revegetation project, they examined the geology of the canyon, sedimentation, stream ecology, desert ecology, and Navajo culture. After completing their project, they explored Delicate Arch in Arches National Park near Moab, Utah.

Students stayed at an alternative school in

Cortez, Colorado, at a Chapter House in Chinle, and at Big Bend campground along the Colorado River.

Deb Eads, instructional specialist, and Louis Hernandez, intern, supervised students Mike Roark, Rhianna Eusea, Kate Feigen, Kyra Gonzalez, Brian Hansen, Jessica Hickey, Ame Yniguez, and Janel Strasser.

Student Nana Breeland was in the right place at the right time during the trip to Washington, D.C. When President Clinton emerged from a lunch at the Capitol with the King of Morocco, 300 or more people were waiting to greet him, Nana among them. Standing along a ledge, among flowerpots and held back by a rope, she waited, but President Clinton got into his limousine. . . .

And then got out again! Security converged on the crowd, checking bags, purses, and wallets, even taking away a baseball a child had in his hand. The President shook hands along the front of the crowd. When he got to Nana, he took her hand in both of his and looked her in the eyes. "Nice to meet you, Mr. President," Nana said. "Nice to meet you," he said.

"He looked terrible," Nana recalled, "big bags under his eyes."

TO THE EAGLE ROCK YEARS

- by Addie Russell, Student -

By the time you read this, Addie Russell will have graduated from Eagle Rock School.

Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center! Sounds like a stuffy place. Well, that is the last thing it is. It is a place where students are slowly discovering who they want to be. It is a place where young adults are given opportunities to express themselves, even if their expressions would be considered "taboo" in a normal society. It is a place where both men and women are allowed to grow. It is a place where I have managed to define the kind of woman I want to become.

In case you are not aware, Eagle Rock has made many things possible for those of us who did not believe in ourselves. Before Eagle Rock, I was working and out of school. I saw no reason for going back to school. I also thought that people who were drug-free and did not drink or smoke were prudes, naive. Little did I know that I was capable of making it so much further in life. . .with-out drugs.

As I recollect what Eagle Rock was supposed to do for me and think about what it has actually done for me, I see two completely different things. It was supposed to allow me to receive my high school diploma as fast as possible, and I didn't honestly care if I learned that much or not. Changing and growing did not really interest me. I saw this place as a hideaway school--I could escape from the pressures at home and the influences that constantly brought me down and at the same time work towards graduation. Weak, I realize now, but then I was blind to it. Strong, I now have my eyes open to my future.

I have learned things about myself that I never knew before. I learned about my fears and how to control them. I've started dealing with issues that have been haunting me for years. I have some wonderful bonds with adults and I feel I could tell them anything.

The feeling of community is not only something new to me, but I have discovered it is something I like. I enjoy the feeling that I can stay in a community and not have to worry about people hurting me. I have never lived in a place where there is nothing but crime, so I have not really learned the hardships of a rough city life, and I'd like to keep it that way.

I ended up making friends here--yuck! I thought they would just get in the way and I knew it would be hard to let go. It's not that I'm not a friendly person. I just hate saying good-bye. I'm very emotional, and now I'm faced with saying good-bye to the best friend I have ever had. I know that's just the way life goes, but losing a certain level of closeness with your best friend is never easy. It's just so hard to say good-bye!

EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL

- by Jeff Blackman, Student -

By the time you read this, Jeff Blackman will have graduated from Eagle Rock School.

Hello, my name is Jeff Blackman and I am an Eagle Rock student. I would like to tell you what Eagle Rock has done for me. It all started back in 1993 when I was attending school in Thornton, Colorado. I was not a very polite student and not

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Jeff Blackman - continued

very nice to my teachers. Despite all the horrible things that I did, there was this one teacher who still wanted to help me. Her name was Mrs. Hartman.

Mrs. Hartman was my English teacher, and she knew that I was struggling in school so she contacted my aunt and discussed Eagle Rock with her. Shortly following that, my aunt and I were given an application, so I applied. After applying, I went through an interviewing process and was accepted.

After being accepted, I arrived at Eagle Rock thinking that this would be a piece of cake. Was I wrong! My first big struggle and sign of growth

was the twenty-one day wilderness trip which has helped me all the way to this day. One thing that Eagle Rock has taught me is to keep my head up no matter what. There were times on the wilderness trip where I just wanted to lower my head and give up, but with the support that was given I learned to raise my head and go on.

Since being at Eagle Rock I have seen a lot of people come and a lot of people leave, some by their own choice and others due to rules being violated. Through experiences like these I have learned that I have a choice in everything that I do. So to sum it all up, the biggest thing that Eagle Rock has done for me is give me a chance, and that means a whole lot to me.

ADMISSIONS

- by Yee-Ann Cho, Admissions Specialist -

Whenever I talk about Eagle Rock School, I am asked about the admission process. People want to know, "How do students apply to the school?" This question usually leads to the larger question of "Who gets in?" I will answer the first question in this issue of "Eagle Eyes" and the second question in the next issue.

Because Eagle Rock is built upon the belief that diversity is not only desirable but necessary, we look for students who hail from different parts of the country, different socio-economic backgrounds, different racial/ethnic groups and religions, and hold a variety of beliefs. Approximately half of our student body is from Colorado; the rest comes from around the country, from inner cities, suburbs, and rural communities. On application, our students range in age from the latter half of 14 years to 17 years in age.

Within Colorado, students apply through one of nineteen districts that have signed a letter of agreement with us and are known as "participating districts." In order to apply through these districts, students must currently or previously have been enrolled in a school in that district. Each district's liaison receives application packets from Eagle Rock; distributes them to counselors, principals, teachers, or students themselves; collects completed applications from students; and submits them with recommendations to Eagle Rock.

In many ways, out-of-state students have an easier time applying to attend Eagle Rock because the participating district agreement applies only to Colorado. Keeping in mind our interest in achieving diversity, we target certain regions of the country from which we would like to recruit students. We work with community groups, social service organizations, and educators in various cities; once in awhile we hear from individual applicants.

When we have collected a number of in-state and out-of-state applications, we schedule a first round of interviews with prospective students and their parents or sponsors. After completing these interviews, John Oubre, Eagle Rock's Director of Students, and I meet to discuss applicants and put together an initial list of students we would like to admit. We then ask those students and their parents or sponsors to come to Eagle Rock for a second interview, at which time John and I review some required paperwork and address any questions or concerns that applicants may have.

While a second interview indicates strong interest on our part, it is not a guarantee of admission. Rather, we use the time to determine if there is a match between the school and the student. If, by the end of the meeting, we determine that there is interest on both sides, we make a firm offer of admission.

ON BELAY!

- by Rick Penner, Human Performance Instructional Specialist -

The Eagle Rock climbing wall is now a reality. The summer 1994 class "How to Build a Climbing Wall" designed the wall, focusing on physics, wall design, safety, material costs, climbing gear and liability issues.

This artificial climbing wall is located in the southwest corner of the Human Performance Center, 22 feet tall and about 30 feet wide. The wall has "routes" to its top, ranging in difficulty from easy to hard. With overhangs, cracks and seemingly blank faces, it is a challenge for any level or experience. The wall can safely handle

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Eagle Rock School
(Continued)

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On Belay - continued

six climbers and their belay partners. Routes can be changed to provide enough variation for years to come.

Why an indoor climbing wall? The rationale for building it goes far beyond the joys of rock climbing or learning a new lifetime skill. The wall demands interdependence between two people--the climber and the belayer. The climbing wall demands problem solving, a level of fitness, trust between partners, effective communication, and some risk-taking.

The belayer is an integral part of the climbing duo. This person is under contract to the climbing partner to keep the activity safe by communicating commands with the climber, keeping the rope snug while climbing, and safely lowering the climber to the ground. The climber at times must get out of his or her comfort zone, and the wall allows the climber to extend past perceived mental and physical limits.

Keeping with the ERS theme of adventure-based education, use of the climbing wall is included in the Human Performance curriculum.

Eagle Rock students who "hung in there" during the design and construction phase were Kelly Pankow, Bryan Lawlor, Deobray Ivory, Marion Blakeney, and Billy

Henninger. Special thanks to the Boulder Rock Club, particularly Casey Newman, and Big Peak Construction's Steve Holmes for working with students in this educational adventure.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS, APRIL 1995

MALE

- 6 Latino
- 11 Caucasian
- 4 African American

FEMALE

- 2 Latina
- 14 Caucasian
- 2 African American
- 3 Asian/Pacific Islander & Caucasian
- 1 Latina/Caucasian
- 1 African American/Latina

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