EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL NAMED 2010 COLORADO STATE SCHOOL OF CHARACTER

Portions being reprinted with permission from the January 21, 2010 edition of the Estes Park Trail Gazette

The Foundation for Character Development has named Eagle Rock School the 2010 Colorado State School of Character. The Colorado State Schools of Character Awards event will be held at the Supreme Court Chambers at the Colorado State Capitol in Denver this summer. The vision for the Foundation for Character Development is to provide safe and effective learning environments, where all youth excel academically, socially and physically.

Eagle Rock has progressed to the national competition for the Character Education Partnership (CEP) National Schools of Character awards program. Every year, CEP names approximately 10 public and private schools and districts (K-12) as National Schools of Character (NSOC) to serve as models for effective character education. They receive a grant to share their transformational strategies with others at breakout sessions during CEP’s annual National Forum on Character Education, where CEP honors them at a special awards ceremony. They also serve as mentors to other schools or districts and offer professional development at their home sites.

In addition, their campuses become demonstration sites. CEP helps the National Schools of Character share their stories by highlighting their work on CEP’s Web site and in its annual publication, National Schools of Character: Award Winning Practices.

Head of School Robert Burkhardt explains, “We are honored to be considered for this award. For 16 years, Eagle Rock has strived to build a learning community where students and staff develop the content of their character on a daily basis.”

EAGLE ROCK STAFF MEMBER HONORED BY BOULDER COUNTY BUSINESS REPORT

Portions being reprinted with permission from the February 19, 2010 edition of the Boulder County Business Report

Forty young businesspeople have been named to the Boulder County Business Report’s inaugural Forty Under 40 group. Members of the group are young emerging leaders under the age of 40 in the Boulder Valley.

“We were very impressed by the quality of the nominations and the caliber of the individuals nominated,” said Christopher Wood, Business Report publisher. “The Boulder Valley is very fortunate to have these dynamic young professionals poised to assume leadership roles - and many who have already done so.”

Dan Condon took Eagle Rock School’s Professional Development Center in Estes Park from a place that occasionally hosted workshops to a national leader in providing training for visiting educators, a producer of award-winning DVD’s and multiple books and articles, and a key player in national school reform. He also founded the Colorado Public Allies site with ties to the Obamas.

Condon has worked with several hundred nonprofit organizations and schools since the early ’90’s. He serves as a faculty member with Public Allies Inc.’s Leadership Practice in collaboration with Northwestern University’s Asset Based Community Development Institute.

He has the potential to greatly impact public education in the Boulder Valley, Colorado and the United States in the coming decade to make education for all children more equitable.
LESSON STUDY AT EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL

by Amir Erez, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Mathematics

My name is Amir and I am the Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Mathematics at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center for the 2009-2010 year. The Fellowship Program is an extremely intense year long placement which includes long hours teaching, learning about education, engaging and building community, and being a role model, advisor, mentor and authority figure to our students. The Professional Development Center helps other educators around the country learn how to get students excited about education and prepare them to be active engaged members of their communities and the world. Given this wide-ranging mission, it makes sense that Eagle Rock has partnered with the Colorado Department of Education to train new educators such that they receive their license at the end of the year and can then take what they have learned back to public education.

When I found out that I had the chance to simultaneously participate in the Public Allies Teaching Fellowship and complete the work necessary to obtain my license, I was excited, but also unsure of whether I could manage the extra workload in an already demanding environment. I made the decision to go for it, and it’s been one of the most valuable experiences for me this year.

In the first trimester, the licensure candidates attended weekly licensure seminars facilitated by Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development. We learned about teaching best practices, theory and pedagogy, and then we were able to experiment and practice with the new knowledge we had attained that same afternoon in our classes. My educational background is one of outdoor education, so learning about reading comprehension strategies, engaging students prior knowledge and classroom management, to name a few, was all new for me. The chance to practice these new skills in a safe environment where I could fail was what solidified the knowledge and skill.

In the second trimester, licensure was centered on what is called Lesson Study. In lesson study I wrote a lesson plan, presented it to a forum of teaching fellows, instructional specialist and other staff, and received feedback on it. In this phase of lesson study I could tell the forum what concerns or questions I had, and what specific things I wanted the group to focus on when they came into my class to observe. After actually observing my class, in the next licensure seminar, there was a protocol run debrief session of my lesson. This was one of the most valuable parts of the lesson because I got to see the things that worked, as well as the struggles. When teaching a class, sometimes it feels like I am running around the room with my head cut off. To get an outsiders point of view often presents many surprising aspects of the class I normally would not have seen or thought about.

Due to the intensity of learning and teaching encountered here week-to-week, I felt confident by the start of the second trimester that I could deliberately plan my class utilizing a variety of proven educational methods, but still unsure of the true effectiveness of the lesson on our students and my ability to execute the plan. The lesson study process has been instrumental at answering these questions and in honing my practice as a new educator using new practices. As many of the fellows have expressed to each other, we can’t imagine a job that provides more empowerment to individuals than this one. Lesson study is a prime example of this empowerment. I know that as a result of my time here as a fellow but specifically as a new teacher being mentored by outstanding people throughout the school, I will be a confident and skilled teacher wherever I go.
What do out-of-school youths offer the workplace? If you ask the public or look at research statistics, it's easy to conclude: not much. Young people who don’t complete high school are often disengaged not only from employment and education opportunities, but also their communities.

Eagle Rock School in Estes Park, Colorado, is an alternative high school for students who didn’t thrive in mainstream settings. Its curriculum emphasizes experiential education and service learning. When the W.K. Kellogg Foundation decided to sponsor a national initiative called New Options for Youth, which explores various credentials as alternatives to high school diplomas, it did something unusual. Among the researchers the foundation engaged to collect data were service learning students from Eagle Rock.

Michael Soguero, a math teacher and director of professional development at Eagle Rock, said, “We were really thought of as partners in the project.” Soguero’s math class covered the use of statistics, and a research firm based in Atlanta, Georgia, offered the students training in the ethnographic skills of neutrality and objectivity in interviewing, surveying, and documentation. Through their carefully designed protocols, eight Eagle Rock students conducted surveys and qualitative interviews with more than 75 young men, predominantly black and Latino, from Baltimore, Maryland, and Oakland, California, who hadn’t succeeded in traditional school settings.

Because the Eagle Rock students had faced similar hurdles themselves, their base of empathy made the experience powerful. Interview subjects seemed more willing to disclose details about their thoughts and their lives with student-researchers. The project underscored the belief that young people are experts about a substantial number of things that adults are not.

Amanda Hansen, one of the young researchers, talked about what she found empowering about the project: “We were dealing with a real-life situation where we got to develop skills in finding a solution.” Students explored aspirations and hurdles by asking their interview subjects such questions as, What do you want in life? What makes it hard for you to get it? “I love how I can relate to a lot of these out-of-school youths,” said Hansen.

Over a four-month period, the students collected information from multiple perspectives and aggregated and analyzed their data. Students learned to look for patterns among the responses and correlations between the surveys and interviews. “They learned about navigating the real world,” said Soguero.

At the end of their project, they flew to Michigan to present their findings to the Kellogg Foundation. Perhaps least surprising, they found that service learning was among the programs that help out-of-school youths take meaningful steps to employment. Students also left the project feeling that the experience had a profound effect on their ability to make a difference and be involved in the issues affecting their communities.

For more information about the initiative visit: http://tinyurl.com/ERSNOI
On January 14–15, at the beginning of ER-50, Eagle Rock students and staff hosted the Third Annual Earth Fest at the historic Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. This EagleServe event brought over 200 people together to participate in educational booths, workshops, and other activities centered around the theme of earth-friendly actions people can take to build a more sustainable community.

The festival began in the Concert Hall at The Stanley with the showing of a Ken Burns film entitled, “The National Parks, America’s Best Idea.” This was followed by earth-based dances of universal peace, and a keynote lecture by Michael Brownlee, co-founder of Transition Colorado, entitled “Making the Transition to Community Resilience and Self-Reliance.”

On Saturday morning we gathered back in the Concert Hall at 9:00 a.m. where, after a welcome from Estes Park Mayor Bill Pinkham, a keynote presentation was given by Emily Evans of Natural Capitalism Solutions, followed by a panel discussion featuring an array of outstanding guest speakers who had come to present workshops on a variety of topics related to sustainability. These speakers included:

- Architect Michael Tavel, who presented on, “Envisioning Sustainable Communities,” providing three examples of sustainable communities and their relevance to Estes Park. Tavel shared insights about Swiss Alps mountain towns known for their dense, walkable urban environments, the rebuilt community of Greensburg, Kansas whose emergence as a “greentown” after being devastated by a 2007 tornado is making news around the world. He also talked about Geos, a 25-acre sustainable urban neighborhood planned for Arvada, Colorado. Tavel, of Denver, specializes in sustainable, urban mixed-use architecture and town planning. A life-long summer resident of the Estes area, Tavel is devoted to promoting sustainable urban land use in Colorado and the Mountain West.
- Author Carolyn Baker focused on the theme of “Inner Transiton: Without it, Nothing Changes.” Her presentation used storytelling to the steady beat of a drum to discover the inner treasure that we must access to begin the transition to sustainable living.

Ashara Ekundayo presented on “Grub Politics & Eco-Cultivation,” which engaged the audience in how issues of class, race and culture are interconnected as they relate to food. She explored solutions for growing community and economic sustainability through urban farming. A visionary, cultural activist, and entrepreneur, Ekundayo is an international lecturer and media personality who can be seen hosting “The Activist Studio” on Freespeech TV and on-air at KGNU.org community radio in Denver.

High Altitude Permaculture’s, Sandy Cruz offered insights into living with “Clarity and Opportunity in Turbulent Times.” Changes are afoot! said Cruz, and people have the option to take steps toward strategic transformation. Cruz has been gardening at 9,200 feet and experimenting with plants for over 30 years. She founded High Altitude Permaculture in 1992 and holds a Diploma of Permaculture Design from the International Permaculture Institute. Sandy currently teaches Permaculture and consults on site planning and design in the Boulder and Estes Park area.

Trathen Heckman offered a taste of change through “Community Empowerment: Education that inspires Action.” Heckman focused on an array of projects ranging from backyard permaculture gardens and grey-water systems to collaborating on a 25,000 sq foot model garden at City Hall in Petaluma California. He showed how these models can be applied locally to inspire and build community, engage local government and business, and regenerate ecosystems. Heckman lives in the Petaluma River Watershed where he grows food, medicine and wonder while working to compost apathy and lack.

Perhaps the highlight of Earth Fest are the sustainable living exhibits and vendors who displayed their wares on Saturday afternoon. While this was going on in the Concert Hall, workshops were held in different parts of the Stanley Hotel. Presenters included:
Eagle Eyes Page -5-

Over the course of ER-50 and through the beginning ER-51 Eagle Rock School has been working hard to understand our culture of diversity. We and are taking part in an Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM), which has been developed by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). The assessment has been completed at many other independent schools throughout the nation, and as a residential school our results will need to assess the roles of inclusivity and multiculturalism in all aspects of the Eagle Rock School community –both in and out of the classroom.

Eagle Rock School has a large focus on personal growth. While we encourage our students to grow, we also expect staff to grow and develop as instructors, and as individuals while working at ERS. As an institution with such a strong emphasis on personal growth and self-improvement we will use the AIM to improve our community by setting a baseline for inclusivity and multiculturalism. We hope to give a voice to those issues that may not have been at the forefront in the past, but that can be addressed as we move forward. The results of this study – and recommendations about how we can improve our inclusivity and multiculturalism – will be incorporated into Eagle Rock’s strategic plan.

Walking around campus it is easy to see that we have a community of students and staff that is very diverse. This assessment delves deeper and assesses our principles, actions of our administration and staff and how members of the greater community outside of the school perceive ERS. As we work to complete this survey we hope to understand how we can improve our culture to make all people feel welcome and as valued members of an inclusive community.

Jeff Liddle, Director of Curriculum, along with a steering committee is currently overseeing the process of implementing the survey and making recommendations for ERS. As the leader of this project, Jeff noted, “We intend to gain a comprehensive understanding of where we stand with regard to inclusion and multiculturalism. Understanding our current assets and challenges will allow us to establish a strategic plan to become an even more inclusive organization.”

The first step in the assessment process was to educate all members of the community on the definitions used the survey. This education process included students breaking into small groups to have discussions about what multicultural education and diversity means in this survey and well as what it meant to them in general. The culmination of Saturday current events was a Jeopardy! style game involving questions about people of different cultures and definitions centered on diversity. After using this education process to help standardize definitions of multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion all staff and students completed the survey during week six. We are now extending our survey scope to include alum, parents, and former fellows in order to understand the broader picture.

Underscoring the importance of these efforts, Jeff Liddle says, “We find inclusion is important to us because of the high value we place on community as a healing and support mechanism for the growth and development of young people. The extent to which we are inclusive is the extent to which we can meet the needs of all community members, both staff and students. The more our school meets the diverse needs and assets of community members, the more successful we will be.”

Our next step in the assessment process will involve all staff participating in smaller discovery groups which will be looking at all aspects of ERS -- from the student life to our administrative team. Each small group will answer survey questions designed to identify what areas the school is doing well, and where we can improve. This process will be completed during our first staff week of ER-51. Each discovery group will write a report that will be compiled with the survey results into a final report. This report will include recommendations on how to improve ERS inclusivity.

As we complete AIM survey, we are looking to a future where all students, and staff will feel included in all aspects of the community. We strive to be better and better each day at everything we do, and we are committed to achieving a higher standard of multiculturalism and inclusivity. We want to be a place where all feel welcomed into the ERS community.

For more information about AIM visit http://tinyurl.com/NAISAIM
Melissa has been accepted to the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design in Denver for this coming fall where she will study animation. Melissa hopes to one day be an animator for Disney/Pixar.

Seida Fabiola Landeros came to Eagle Rock in ER-41 from Compton. Fabiola was interested in Eagle Rock because she felt her public school would not prepare her adequately for college. While in Estes Park, Fabiola took full advantage of ERS and travelled frequently, as well as grew personally. Fabiola learned to slow down and appreciate life. She also increased her capacity to connect with diverse groups of people.

Fabiola has many memories at Eagle Rock, but a few stand out. She remembers fun on the field of dreams playing softball during intramurals, Big Mike grilling outside in the summer, Fun Day, making sushi with former house parents Jen and Jimmy, and staying up late in the LRC with fellow ER-50 graduates. Fabiola will miss the inventive courses such as ones taught by Robert. She will begin school in the fall at Long Beach City College with the hope to transfer to UCLA after two years. Fabiola hopes to major in business and find a career that helps people.

Ruthy Toro joined the Eagle Rock community in fall of 2007 from Manhattan, New York. Ruthy came to ERS because she knew she wanted to change, but didn’t have the support or motivation at home. She recognized that ERS would give her structure and consequences, which she needed, as well as a clean slate.

One of the biggest challenges Ruthy faced at Eagle Rock was developing relationships with staff on campus. She didn’t have much respect for adults and saw them as adults in positions of authority. After time Ruthy saw that everyone gave the same respect to each other, whether teacher or student. While it took awhile to actually develop those relationships, she now recognizes how beneficial it was to make those connections. Ruthy will continue her studies in the fall on the East Coast hopefully at Howard University. She hopes to major in business and law with a minor in dance.

Renee Gallardo also arrived at Eagle Rock in the fall of 2007. She came to ERS from Orange County, California where she wasn’t finding success in school. Renee will miss sharing laughs in the Lodge with amazing people and activities like Bob’s Brain Bowls. She will also miss opportunities like visiting New Orleans where she assisted in relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

Renee will work this summer in RMNP as a Biological Science Technician. In the fall she will begin school at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, Oregon. Renee hopes to transfer to Oregon State University after two years where she will major in Biology.

Peter MacGill & Cathee Courter’s “Ghosts, Earth Energies, and Electrosmog in the Estes Valley,” Ponderosa High School and Eagle Rock School students speaking on issues of diversity and sustainability, and Lynette Marie Hanthorn’s & Michael Brownlee’s “A Community VisionQuest,” in which participants envisioned what life in Estes Park might look like, feel like, taste like, and smell like by 2030. All these workshops embraced different aspects of the ethics and principles of the global Transition Movement, emphasizing the localization and regeneration of community.

The exhibits and workshops came to a close at 5:00 p.m. in anticipation of the slow food dinner which got underway in the Main Hall of the Stanley Hotel at 6:00 p.m.. Dinner was served buffet style from organic and ethically prepared food provided by 7 area restaurants. Nearly 200 people joined together for this scrumptious highlight of the Earth Fest.

This full day of engaged learning came to a close in the Concert Hall with a flurry of activity beginning with “Dances of Universal Peace,” then moving to Trathen Heckman’s keynote on “Reverence and Resiliency – The Ecology of Awakened Action” addressing the question: Why not a well lived, eco-designed life in service to your purpose, community and planet?, finally concluding with the annual Earth Fest Variety Show featuring local and regional talent including some of Eagle Rock’s finest.

The 3rd Annual Estes Earth Fest embraced many ideas and realities reflecting a world of great risk, challenge, sustenance and hope. It may be said that Earth Fest is a way of calling one another to full presence and engagement in this living world. In hosting this event, Eagle Rock provided an integral function in the Estes Park community, helping to put the future of the community first by combining education and environmental stewardship with service to others.

Skip forward to March 26, 2010, the date of the first organizing meeting for the 4th Annual Estes Earth Fest. On this day twenty people from seven organizations gathered at Town Hall to begin planning for the next Earth Fest. Our vision for 2011 is threefold: to recognize the separation that is occurring in the human family and in our relationship with nature; to find and express the connections we have with one another and the planet; and to demonstrate ways to contribute to a good future for the whole. For next year, we are considering changing the name of the event from “Estes Earth Fest” to “Sustainable Estes.” The word “sustainable” implies both the ongoing nature of Earth, supporting life in all its forms, and the co-existence of a healthy, diverse human population living responsibly within its means upon the earth. The aim for this festival is to help us learn to live sustainably in the Estes Valley, as a community of diverse people with a unity of purpose.

For more information about Earth Fest visit http://tinyurl.com/EstesEarthFest

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER AT EAGLE ROCK SCHOOL JOINS THE GRAD NATION CAMPAIGN
by Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development

Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center has been working tirelessly for 17 years to provide a school for high school age students who are dropping out of high school. Equally if not more importantly, we have been providing professional development services: consulting, coaching and hosting for educators from around the country who wish to work on re-engaging students in learning, keeping them in school, and supporting them through graduation.

With General Colin Powell’s March 1st announcement of the Grad Nation 10-year campaign to mobilize the country and reverse the dropout crisis, the Professional Development Center’s efforts are validated and encouraged in the work that is now receiving so much national attention. Grad Nation is an initiative of America’s Promise Alliance, the nation’s largest partnership providing support to young people.

The Professional Development Center at Eagle Rock School is especially heartened by the five promises of the Alliance: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others. All promises exemplified at Eagle Rock School, the school associated with the Professional Development Center.
For the past several years, the Professional Development Center at Eagle Rock School has been working through networks and organizations, bringing together schools in large numbers who are working with disenfranchised youth. We have mentored schools through the Coalition of Essential Schools Small School Project, engaged with the founding team of the New Mexico Building Education Congress committed to launching 23 charter schools, and provided staff development to schools in various districts including Mapleton in Thornton, Colorado and Highline in SeaTac, Washington.

Most recently, we’ve been instrumental in supporting principal training for the Big Picture Learning network. A clip of our recent summit convened in San Diego drawing together seven California schools can be seen at tinyurl.com/gradNATIONers

Last week, we convened a half dozen Big Picture schools in Bloomfield, Connecticut to study how to further improve the innovative model developed by these schools to “give students that individual attention, while also preparing them through real-world, hands-on training and the possibility of succeeding in a career” as cited by President Obama during the March 1st announcement of the Grad Nation campaign.

For years, we have been endorsing and supporting the work that General Powell’s Grad Nation campaign is designed to address and we are pleased to find our focus amplified through this nationwide initiative. It is our intent that working through the expertise of the existing reform networks mentioned above, the application of our professional development experience and through the addition of the national spotlight of the Grad Nation campaign, every student, regardless of their background will ultimately have the opportunity realize their full potential.

For more information about Grad Nation visit http://tinyurl.com/GradNation

EAGLE ROCKERS ATTEND EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING SCHOOLS OUTWARD BOUND CONFERENCE

by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development

This past February Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development & Karen Ikegami, Mathematics Instructional Specialist were invited as two of 88 special guests to attend the Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS) National Conference held in Kansas City, Missouri.

Dan & Karen joined 741 educators from 26 different states. They participated in some of the 165,000 hours of professional development offered in 118 master classes.

ELS is a national, non-profit organization that opens new elementary, middle and college-oriented secondary schools, and partners with existing schools, to improve student achievement; build student character; enhance teacher practices; and infuse a positive school culture. The ELS approach promotes rigorous and engaging curriculum; active, inquiry-based pedagogy; and a school culture that demands and teaches compassion and good citizenship.

A Master Class (workshop) entitled “A Slice of a Learning Expedition for Educators – Physiology and Fitness at Eagle Rock School” was presented by Scott Gill, Regional Director & Director of Adventure and Nature Programming with ELS along with Dan & Karen. A Learning Expedition For Educators (LEE) goes beyond an institute and unpacks the multiple aspects of a well designed learning expedition. Participants attending LEE’s experience the elements of a learning expedition from the immersion or kick-off to the production of quality products and culmination. This master class sampled the experiences of the Physiology/Fitness LEE and of Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center.

Scott explains, “Eagle Rock has hosted Expeditionary Learning’s Physiology & Fitness...”
**MY JOB – RYAN PLANTZ**

*by Ben Pen*

Portions reprinted with permission from the March 2010 edition of *Youth Today*.

Age: 25

Salary: Stipend of about $18,000 a year.

**My Organization:** Eagle Rock School is a tuition-free residential high school that serves students ages 15 to 21 from across the country who have not found success in a conventional school. Eagle Rock School’s educational model focuses on outdoor education, experiential learning and community service. Students come from all races, religions and backgrounds. The school also functions as a [Professional Development] Center for education professionals.

**My Job:** Plantz, one of 12 Public Allies teaching fellows at the school, describes his job as multifaceted. “With regard to the Public Allies aspect, the fellow group works to develop leadership skills through professional development, trainings, weekly seminars and development of a team service project,” Plantz said.

“I co-teach a service-based civics class in which students complete internships at local businesses and organizations. As the Service Learning fellow, I facilitate Eagle Rock’s all-school service days and plan projects like Earth Fest, an environmental and community-focused convention. As part of the residential community, I participate in many of the same activities as the students: We eat meals together, attend morning gatherings, complete daily chores, participate in intramurals and take part in community meetings.”

**How I Got Here:** Plantz received his bachelor’s degree in sociology and history from the University of Wisconsin. His youth work experience includes spending two years as a high school track and cross country coach in Madison, WI, and serving last year as an AmeriCorps volunteer with the I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder County, CO, a dropout prevention and college preparatory program serving low-income students.

**Best Part of My Job:** “One of the best parts is that my job doesn’t feel like a job, and I am doing something that I am passionate about,” Plantz said. “Eagle Rock allows me the opportunity to constantly learn and grow as a teacher and a person. But in the end, it’s the students that make my job great – they continually amaze me.”

**Worst Part of My Job:** “The long hours can be difficult. Eagle Rock has very high expectations of its fellows, and the nature of a residential school is demanding, with respect to the time commitment and energy needed to meet the students’ and community’s needs,” Plantz said.

**Memorable Moment:** “It’s impossible to single one moment out. Each time I get a big smile and a hug, it makes my day,” he said.

“Outbound Conference” - Continued from Page 8

Professional Development Institute for 14 years. It was great to be able to invite Dan and Karen to co-present this session at the conference. Eagle Rock and Expeditionary Learning have been partners in educational reform and it was a treat to have Dan and Karen collaborate with me and present at the conference.”

Karen reflected, “The conference was a great place to both learn about what was happening in Expeditionary Learning schools and share with them what Eagle Rock could bring to their community of schools. I found the ELS network to be a community of innovative and inspired educators. It was refreshing to get to spend 3 days learning and working with them.”

To learn more about Expeditionary Learning Schools visit [http://www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)
EAGLE ROCK SUPPORTS BIG PICTURE PRINCIPALS CONVENING  
by Karen Ikegami, Mathematics Instructional Specialist and Dave Manzella, Literacy and Literature Instructional Specialist

Principals from Big Picture schools from all over the nation gathered in Nashville, Tennessee in March for their annual Principal’s retreat. The purpose of the gathering was for principals to reconnect, share stories, be inspired by the work of others, and be able to bring back innovative ideas that will make their own schools more successful. Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development, Dave Manzella, Literacy and Literature Instructional Specialist, and Karen Ikegami, Mathematics Instructional Specialist, attended the meeting.

Here are a few of the ideas participants heard about that sparked interest along with some thoughts on how Eagle Rock could implement them.

Paul Hudak of Terra Nova High School in Portland presented on the Terra Nova Community Farm. With the help of Paul, students turned ¾ acres of their school grounds into a small student run farm. The goals of the Terra Nova Community Farm are to educate students about sustainable agriculture, small business management, and building community while providing connections to science and math classes. Paul and his students are running their farm as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and are expanding their project for the coming growing season.

Eagle Rock is also expanding its growing capability. John Guffey, Service Learning Instructional Specialist, Ryan Plantz, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Service Learning and Manzella are enlarging the current garden on campus to include several more garden beds and a small apple orchard. The added space will allow the garden and greenhouse crew (which includes four students) to grow more food for Eagle Rock’s kitchen and other community members.

Dana Luria, The Bronx Guild Internship Coordinator, spoke about City Year, a year-long national service program. For a year, participants serve as tutors, mentors, work in after-school programs, and help develop youth leadership. City Year applicants choose the city they want to serve in and if selected receive a stipend to help pay for living expenses, health care and an education award. There are City Year programs in 19 US cities as well as London and South Africa.

Like many high school students, Eagle Rock students often struggle with deciding what to do after graduation. We can see this as a great opportunity for the Eagle Rock student who isn’t ready to transition into a college or university. A year of service could provide an ERS student with the reflection time that would enable them to make the right decision about their post-secondary education. Further, our relationship with Public Allies, Inc. would serve as a great option as they are located in 20 communities across the country with an aggressive expansion plan.

Mike Mariner of Roadtrip Nation described his journey with two friends to learn more about the world around them. What began as a personal trip, turned into a model for real-world learning that is used all over the country. The basic premise is that students interview adults in order to find out how they ended up where they are. Students find ‘experts’ in an area they are interested in, create interview questions, and then travel to meet that person. Sometimes students need only to travel down the street, other times they need to travel across the country or even the globe.

Roadtrip Nation is a model that could be used at Eagle Rock to help students expand his or her thinking about the possible paths one’s life can take. Although it is not currently planned as a course, the Roadtrip Nation curriculum could lend itself well to an Eagle Rock course for students ready to explore the possibilities for life after Eagle Rock.

One of the goals of the conference was for principals to expand their thinking about what was possible. One way the conference organizers did this was to provide time for the participants to hear from a wide range of innovators. The talks at the conference were structured in the style of TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talks. TED Talks are 18 minute lectures given by leaders in a specific field. After the short talk, there is time for the audience to discuss what they heard with each other and the presenter in an open format.

At Eagle Rock, the TED Talks format could be a way for students and staff to share more about their lives as well as stimulate conversations. Using forums like the variety of Eagle Rock’s community meetings to share, students and staff

See “Big Picture” - Continued on Page 11
Town of Estes Park Trustees and staff hosted students of Eagle Rock School and Estes Park High School on March 19 for Students in Government Day. Each student played the role of a Town department head or manager and presented an issue as an action item for consideration by the Board of the Trustees. Student participants were Brindy Farrell, Drenae Thompson, Jesus Ramos, Josh Timberlake and Marolise Williams from Eagle Rock School; and Brendan Solano from Estes Park High School. 2010 marks the third year of the Students in Government Day program in Estes Park.

Since December, Town of Estes Park staff worked with staff and students from Eagle Rock School and Estes Park High School to prepare for this year’s Students in Government Day. The program is designed to help students develop an understanding of local municipal government and to promote their participation in community affairs by teaching them how to become more informed and involved citizens and voters.

Town Administrator Jacquie Halburnt commented on the importance of Students in Government Day. “I think it’s important for young people to understand that real people are the driving force behind our governments.” She continued, “By working with Town staff and our Board of Trustees, it is our hope that these students will feel comfortable and eager to get involved in government throughout their lives.”

In January, the students attended an orientation led by Town Administrator Halburnt, Deputy Town Administrator Lowell Richardson and the Town’s seven department heads. The students learned how municipal government works, including the roles of citizens, the Mayor and Trustees, administration, staff and the role of each department. Students were then paired with a department head to research an issue to present at the mock Town Board meeting. During this time, each student met individually with his or her Town advisor to refine and research their action item for presentation to the Town Board. The students were also asked to attend or watch one Town Board meeting on television.

Students in Government Day was planned by Betty Kilsdonk, Director of the Town of Estes Park Community Services Department; John Guffey, Eagle Rock School Service Learning Instructional Specialist; Ryan Plantz, Eagle Rock School Service Learning Fellow; and Kristin Ehle, Estes Park High School Social Studies Teacher and Student Council Liaison.

“Big Picture” - Continued from Page 10

could give everyone an opportunity to learn more about each other, the talents present within the community, and serve as a springboard for initiating new initiatives at Eagle Rock.

Overall, the conference reminded participants of the great things happening in other schools and the importance of sharing successful practices. By participating in the retreat, Soguero, Manzella, and Ikegami have been able to expand their thinking about what is possible in education. By participating in events like these, Eagle Rock can continue to deliver on its mission of being a leader in innovative school renewal and reform.
As an Eagle Rock student, Ashanti Hassan was always full of jokes and laughter, making people smile wherever she went. Recently when I spoke with her on the phone I noticed that she still has a great sense of humor, but it’s obvious I was speaking with an adult who is continuously working to make herself a better human being.

Ashanti came to Eagle Rock in the fall of 1999 from Riverside, California. Her home life was very difficult and she needed a place where she could remove herself from those troubles and get her education. Being an Eagle Rock student was not easy, but the opportunities, relationships, and support made the struggles worthwhile. “Being at Eagle Rock is hard, but if you stick it out, you will be so proud. Be determined. It is one of my biggest accomplishments to this day!,” she exclaimed. Ashanti also recommends taking full advantage of the opportunities available at Eagle Rock and focusing on learning versus speeding through the process.

Some of Ashanti’s favorite memories include spending time with friends, going out to lunch, school trips to soccer games with Head of School, Robert Burkhardt, dancing in the lodge with fellow student, Sarah Baker and former Director of Professional Development, Lois Easton, participating in the Close Up program in Washington, D.C., and community meetings. “I really miss the fact that at Eagle Rock I had a voice and it counted. As a community, everyone’s voice counted and we cared about how people felt about things. Now, I’m just one person in a huge world,” said Ashanti.

She attributes her compassion, discipline, and integrity to her time at Eagle Rock and recognizes that all of these traits are a constant work in progress. She also learned a great deal about herself during her stay here; Ashanti grew to be more comfortable in her own skin. “You have the right to be who you want to be. It’s okay to be who you are,” she explained.

Since graduating in the summer of 2002 Ashanti has been very busy. She began school at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington and was a student there for two years. After the realization that Evergreen’s pace didn’t fit her personal learning style she moved on to other professional opportunities.

After moving around the US (Michigan and Las Vegas), Ashanti settled back in California working with the Northern California Backcountry program in the California Conservation Corps. After her stint in the backcountry, Ashanti was offered a position with Outward Bound (OB) in Ely, Minnesota. She took the position and ran logistics for the courses. She also worked with at-risk and adjudicated youth in the OB Intercept program where they participated in kayaking courses. More recently Ashanti was offered a position working with inner-city youth at OB in Pasadena, but due to a long commute she wasn’t able to take the position. Instead she has been working at group homes with the developmentally disabled.

Currently Ashanti is back in school at Riverside Community College. After completing some early childhood education classes, she hopes to work with preschool-aged children while she continues her education. Ashanti hopes to transfer to the University of California Riverside. Overall she would like a career working with youth who have been through similar challenges as her.