

Crestmont News

Crestmont School ♥ 6226 Arlington Avenue, Richmond, California 94805 ♥ (510) 237-4164

Small is Beautiful

By Lisa Raffel (Miriam, 2/3)

I am planning to work a steadier job starting in the fall when my younger child, Josiah, enters kindergarten. One of the things I'm considering is returning to the classroom as a teacher. Do I want to teach elementary school again? Adult ESL again? Or secondary social studies—which I had always wanted to do, but never have?

Since I'm on a path of exploration I've been visiting schools lately—elementary, middle, high, and adult schools. During the 1990's I spent a lot of time in a lot of different schools, doing research on issues of diversity and equity in public schools all over California. Since then I've still spent time in schools, though not with nearly the same intensity. Until of course Miriam entered Crestmont.

Over these last four years the size, scale and ratio of Crestmont has become my norm. So I was very sur-

prised to be in public school classrooms recently. One morning, I looked around the 6th grade class of 28 students and one teacher and thought to myself, "How on earth is he going to reach all of these students?" The teacher did an outstanding job—he happens to be a 30-plus-year veteran teacher with an impressive C.V. Still, with that many children, and no other adults in the room, he had to pace the lesson in such a way that some children were actually able to secretly read novels during the lesson and still finish the assignment. Yet others barely finished the assignment, and some clearly did not grasp the concepts presented.

About this same time I visited that classroom, I did the final enrollment tour of the season for Crestmont. One of the major points I make on tours is about Crestmont's size—about how the overall number of

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MAY

Thu, May 10

7-7:30p
Class Meeting

7:30p

Membership Mtg.

Fri, May 11

½ to LHS
¾ to SFMOMA

Fri, May 11

6p
K Art Show!

Mon, May 14

K Field Trip to Botanical Gardens

Tue, May 15

Alumni Kids
Talk to 4/5 about Middle School

Thu, May 17

7-9:30p
Participation Meeting

Fri, May 18

¾ Lunch

Thu, May 24

7-9:30p
Board Meeting

Fri, May 25

Flea Market

Mon, May 28

Memorial Day
No School

Thu, May 31

K Field Trip to Alvarado Park

JUNE

Thu, June 7

7-7:30p
Class Meeting

7:30p

Membership Mtg.

Wed, June 13

Last Day of School

Late Night

By Becky Shea (McAlister, 1/2)

I thought I'd write an article called the "Crestmont Snow Trip," then, considering the Saturday night potluck/frenzy, I figured "Chaos" would be more appropriate, but for me "Late Night" best sums up my snow trip experience.

Each person probably has a title to describe that part of the trip where she looked up and felt moved by the experience. For some it may be the group outings on Saturday, or communing in the hot tub. It may be the annual snowball fight on Sunday morning or Saturday evening's sing-a-long. For me it's late night.

Late night at the lodge is where I connected with people that I usually don't have the chance to get to know. We played music and sang. People danced while they cleaned up. We laughed about things we have in common. Alumni and kindergarten parents became old friends. It's amazing how people in our own community can still surprise

us. And it really is so special that we have the chance to do this again and again.

see "Late Night" on page 2



Last year, warm and sunny; this year, warm and rainy. Neither is good for snow, but does such dampen the spirit around the annual Crestmont Snow Trip? Not a chance. While the rain washed away the snow outside, the Crestmont snow trip night of potluck-sing-a-long-nail-salon-running-of-the-bulls marched brazenly on. In the predawn-after, while the revellers slept, the snow hushed the rain. With spirits refreshed by the sight of a freshly snow-painted landscape, even late-night revellers rose early with new cause for celebration.

"Late Night" from page 1

I know for some families, the snow trip is just too much, and at moments, it can be completely overstimulating. But for me, it's worth it. I get to spend time in the beautiful snow and vacation with my family. I saw my child feel confident and play in the halls with his friends. I watched Nadav challenge the adults in the World Series of Connect Four. I heard that a

dance party followed. I got to celebrate Hope's 50th birthday.

After becoming a parent, my social interactions with adults have been fewer than I'd like due to scheduling and getting kids to bed. The snow trip filled some of that space for me. Thanks again to Sara for organizing and to Camp Richardson for allowing us to wreak havoc on the lodge. ♥

Late at night, songs are sung, birthdays are celebrated, connections are made..



Norma

By Judith Barish (Sasha 2/3, Rafie 1/2)

Norma Mejía came to us almost by accident, as a replacement teacher when our previous Spanish teacher, Kenya Guzman, left to get married. They knew each other through church, and they both taught Spanish at Glorieta Elementary School in Orinda. Now Norma teaches at Crestmont three days a week, and works with students in all six grades.

Norma actually grew up in the country of Belize, where the official language is English and the vernacular is Creole, a bit like Jamaican English. But her family is Nicaraguan, and her father was very strict about speaking good Spanish at home.

Her family moved to San Francisco, where they had a large extended family, when Norma was fifteen.

The best part of San Francisco was her family, since in Belize they had no family beyond their own household. But arriving in a new country in the middle of her senior year of high school was difficult: "It was horrible," said Norma, and then added cheerfully, "but we adjusted."

Norma was only sixteen when she graduated from high school.

She decided she wanted to be a pediatrician, and started attending City College of San Francisco. "But then I had to take anatomy, and it really grossed me out," laughed Norma. Her mother gently suggested that it might not be the ideal career for her. So she decided instead to become a teacher, and switched to studying Early Childhood education.

Three years ago, Norma moved to Utah for school and attended Utah Valley State College. It was a good education, but she missed her family (it was her first time ever away from her family) and she didn't love the community in Utah, which she found "kind of dead."

Norma returned to the Bay Area, and now lives in San Pablo. She enjoys scrapbooking and likes to go salsa dancing with her boyfriend, whose family comes from the Pacific island of Tonga. He works for the College of San Mateo. When she's not at Crestmont, Norma also works at a childcare center in Martinez taking care of infants.

"Crestmont is great," says Norma. "I love how the kids are so disciplined, particularly the kindergarteners," she enthused. She is impressed at the attention teachers give to the needs of individual children, which is unusual at the public schools where she has taught. Her only lament is that it can be hard to teach conversational Spanish in just one or two sessions a week. At the elementary school where she taught in Orinda, students had four sessions of Spanish instruction a week, and were able to progress more rapidly.

At 26, Norma has a lot of energy. She is planning to complete her degree in elementary education, but not right now. Meanwhile, in her free time you can find her at the Down Low dance club in downtown Berkeley. ♥



If the Earth Was in Charge

by Nora

If the Earth was in charge,
Respect would be an instinct,
Love would come naturally and
Peace would be everywhere.
If the Earth was in charge,
Animals would be worryless for
The rest of their lives,
Owls would fly freely
And cheetahs would roam the grassy
Plains without a care.
If the Earth was in charge,
People would be happy
So my wish is for the Earth to be
In charge



Wishes for the Earth

From the Kindergarten class

Matthew: Thank you for the Indians and thanks for not killing animals you don't need. Thanks for the rain, wind, sun, the animals and homes.

Sofia: I wish that grass will come up every season.

Sophie S.: I wish that Mother Earth would not have people cut down trees.

Liam: I wish that there would be more grass for the animals to eat and more meat for the meat eaters.

Maxi: I wish that the lakes and waterfalls stay clean.

Laurel: I wish that the animals would have clean water to drink and the birds would have fish.

Tallon: I wish for juicy raspberries and blackberries.

Jonas: I wish that the trees not get cut down and the rivers still be clean.

Miranda: I wish that the plants and animals and humans have water.

Elena: I wish for the earth to be clean.

Ethan: I wish people would stop cutting down trees, because that's animals' homes.

Nicky: I wish that the trees would be green, the mountains strong and the sun would shine all year long and the streams would grow clear and clean until winter.

Audrey: I wish for lots of dirt for the plants.

Sophie D.: I wish that the animals have homes to live in.



Mission Project

By Judith Barish (Sasha 2/3, Rafie 1/2)

The fourth and fifth grade students have been studying the California missions, and I was lucky enough to hear all about them from Erin and Blair.

They told me that there were twenty-one missions in California, each of which housed Spanish missionaries out to spread Christianity to the Indians.



After they learned about the history of the period, each student in Laura's class chose one mission to study and build in miniature. Blair recreated the first mission, San Diego de Alcalá, while Erin built a model of San Rafael de Arcángel.

I wondered how they knew how to build them. "Laura gave us a floor plan," explained Erin.

"And she gave us some hints," said Blair. "We did the research, with our parents, you know, but *technically* on our own." Then they secured building material ranging from foam core to Legos to lasagna noodles and assembled their model missions.

"The fun part was splattering paint," said Erin. "I liked spray-painting the roof," Blair added.

The missions are amazing, and my kids came home from school talking of little else after getting a tour of the fourth and fifth-graders' work. But it turned out that building the missions was only one piece of their history project.

"We're doing mission crews," explained Erin. "We all picked ships and each of us is a sailor on a crew." I wasn't sure what this meant, but Blair explained.

"We pretend to be traders from Boston, sailing around Cape Horn to trade with the missions."

"We keep a ship's log of our voyage," Erin added.

"And we make up stories about what happened each day," Blair concluded.

Erin and Blair are sailors on the Black Pearl (they borrowed the name from the Pirates of the Caribbean), along with Nora and Jennifer. At the time we spoke, the ship was still in the ocean in its imaginary trip, loaded with goods from Boston: axes, ploughs, cloth, salt, sugar and other supplies the missionaries might want.

What do they want to trade in return? "Cowhides!" said Erin. "Otter hides!" said Blair. Anyone who wants to learn what they buy on their journey can stop by and look at the mission map on the wall of the 4/5 classroom. ♥





4/5 Poems

by Laura Darrah

The poems on these pages are from a field trip called “Poets in the Galleries” at the DeYoung museum and the Legion of Honor. Our guide in poetry and art was giovanni singleton (no capitals). Giovanni took us on two tours of the Legion of Honor (we made two visits to the museum). She walked the kids around and introduced them to different pieces of art and led them in discussions about the art and how they can describe it using their five senses. At the end of each tour the kids had about 10–15 minutes to choose their own piece of work and write a poem about it.

Each one was written about (or to, or from the perspective of) a particular piece of art (sculpture, painting, furniture, etc.). The first set of poems (these two pages) were all about paintings. The second set of poems the kids wrote actually had to make the shape of what they were writing about and could be anything they felt compelled to write about (next two pages). There is one poem in there that was written by Sammy in our classroom (he missed our second field trip). It’s about a hedgehog, which happened to be visiting our classroom that day. ♥

Looking Beyond by Blair

I look
out over the
ocean, and
see a ship
coming, com-
ing to take
me to distant
lands. The wind
rustles my
hair and tells me,
you are in this moment,
and this moment
is best.

Still Life by Valencio

Weeds everywhere
Little animals hiding in places
Frogs jumping all around the place
Mice gathering seeds and nuts
Hedgehogs everywhere
But just sit there
Lonely very lonely

View of the Falls by Kyle

Water crashes to the ground
echoing throughout the canyon
the mellow breeze makes the trees
dance with joy and happiness
the sound of water is so peaceful.

A Poem About a Hedgehog by Sam

A very cute
hedgehog, he looks like
a potato. He is just
sitting on a hill alone
but he is in a very cheerful
mood, he’s having a very
good day. But now he is
hungry. He goes back to
his hut and fixes up
some breakfast. Now he is
done. He goes back
outside and when he
goes outside he has
friends waiting
for him,
he is very happy.

Untitled by Erin

Looking on far away
Waiting for someone to come
Waiting on
Looking far into nothing
The only thing she sees
Only what’s in her mind
Only nothing
Beauty but not courage
But not so.



Gazing upon a Man*by Alice*

Looking distance away
 poor but happy
 wild hair in the wind
 gazing upon a man
 thinking he must be wonderful
 having a great life with wonders ahead.

A Portrait of a Gentleman in White*by Danny*

I am not happy or sad.
 I do not want to be here though I am.
 I glare at my painter like I am mad.
 I am a gentleman in white and that's what I am.

View of the Falls at Vallombrosa*by Tommy*

Far in the distance long I stood
 I let my ears do the seeing,
 hearing calm
 rushing blue falls gently from above.
 Dogs running children laughing as they passed by
 I see dark green trees all around me
 garden in the ground.
 The soothing breeze passes by me
 I look up and see the gentle sky moving around me
 This is the place I've been searching for
 and this is the place I want to stay.

Violin and Rose*by Nikola*

The violin just laying there with no one to play it.
 The rose laying there with one petal off.
 How sad, the violin and the rose.

Untitled*by Nora*

Why must
 you hurt me why
 can't you just leave,
 Why must I
 be here you're
 not helping me
 Let me go. Let
 me jump
 & have some
 fun, let
 me free
 can't you
 see
 you're
 not
 help-
 ing
 me

Beautiful Girl*by Emily S.*

A little girl walking her dog in a fine dress.
 She's as beautiful as a rose.
 Her dog looks formal and astonishing.
 The shoes she's wearing with a silver beauty.
 Her smile could make anybody smile and feel happy.
 This girl is cute, gorgeous, and her beauty could be spread
 with her rosy cheeks and deep deep lips.
 What I think she is is beautiful.

The Broken Picture*by Aya*

The girl stares at me with a melancholy
 expression on her face.
 A cold breeze tosses her hair into unkempt wisps.
 Her hands clenched tightly, she looks at me with her deep, dark eyes.
 They are like deep wells, filled with memory.
 Her skirt goes down to her ankles,
 with wrinkles creasing the well worn fabric.
 She sits alone, on a wind beaten block of stone,
 utterly alone.

Pain Among Us*by Marisa*

A fire has begun. A young mother and her husband and their child run
 from their farm house to a field. Her husband has been shot and is in
 pain, her child is crying with fear. She looks back at the farm frantically.
 She sees the cows running with fear in their eyes, the flames in her home
 and the pain in her husband.

Pokal*by Rebecca*

I hold nothing but air in my delicate arms.
 There's a child standing still looking around for danger.
 And on the rim there's a layer of swimming gold,
 making a complete circle of kindness.

The Falls at Tivoli*by Luke*

I am rushing down the rocks into a clear crisp river inside of a vast
 rocky canyon. And soon I am floating downriver through forests and
 into the desert and soon evaporated up to the clouds.

At the Fountain*by Tino*

I am the gray horse.
 My friend the mare is very fond of being ridden.
 We trot together with our riders on our backs.
 We meet up with the other horses and their riders
 at the fountain.
 My rider carries a pistol with him and so does everyone else.

Mantle Clock*by Marisa*

An image that blossoms your mind.
 Flowers are blooming everywhere but only on one tree.
 Flowers any color any shape blossoming here today.
 Waiting to be picked to give you joy and happiness.
 A lively bunch of flowers.
 A rainbow in your home.
 In the morning and the night it will shine bright for you
 An extraordinary sight
 Laughter and love coming to your home every day.

A Still Life with Fruit and Flowers*by Sam*

A basket of fruit lying there,
 just waiting for one of them to be picked.
 A pot of flowers with dazzling colors,
 one of the flowers bragging about how beautiful she is.
 A fruit hanging on a vine,

A very sad fruit waiting, alone.

Please Come Play with Me*by Erin*

I want to hear your great songs of music on my ivory keys
 I love to play the music
 it reflects the song of my heart
 You may share this satiny pillow with me.
 You won't—oh please no one can play better than you.
 I feel great despair
 It is my destiny to find a partner
 to share this wonderful song
 Who will I pick if it's not you?
 You taught me to listen to my heart.
 Well now I teach you follow your destiny
 No matter where it leads.

Stangenglas*by Tommy*

I'm the stangenglas
 I'm no one except myself
 I do my duty as a glass cup,
 the stain of lips all around me,
 I show my design
 but they ignore
 Why do I even try
 why do I even bother
 I am who I really am
 and nothing can ever change me,
 and nothing ever will

The Diamond Chandelier*by Alice*

I
 am a
 chandelier
 diamond
 listening to the
 people who talk
 around me thinking
 about my life
 loving it and having
 a great adventure
 ahead

Chandelier*by Luke*

I
 hang here
 on a chandelier
 shaped as a frozen
 tear drop. Just waiting
 to fall and crash
 to the ground. And
 hoping that
 that time will
 never come.

Grandfather Clock*by Nora*

I am the Grandfather Clock
 Tick tock tick tock
 You watch me as I watch time
 Tick tock tick tock
 My gaze does not lock
 Tick tock tick tock
 I know how time flies by
 Tick tock tick tock
 And now you say goodbye
 Tick tock tick tock.



Sunset by Blair

Where the mountains meet the valley, there is a river, a clear, crystal river. Above it, mountains tower and animals play. All living things greet the sun, and hide in the shadows. This is their home, their destiny, and where they belong.

Goblet by Aya

My slender neck curves to my thick coarse rim. My glimmering surface depicts a woman standing with a bird perched on her hand. Flowers and trees dot the landscape. I stand here, silent, tranquil, unmoving, as I always shall be.

Goblet by Kyle

I started plain then I was given life my roaring red and gold vines running through me my body has been carved scratched and made

into something with life.

Tear Drop by Nikola

Chandelier
Chandelier how cool you are.
Chandelier chandelier
How sparkly in the light. Hang by yourself.

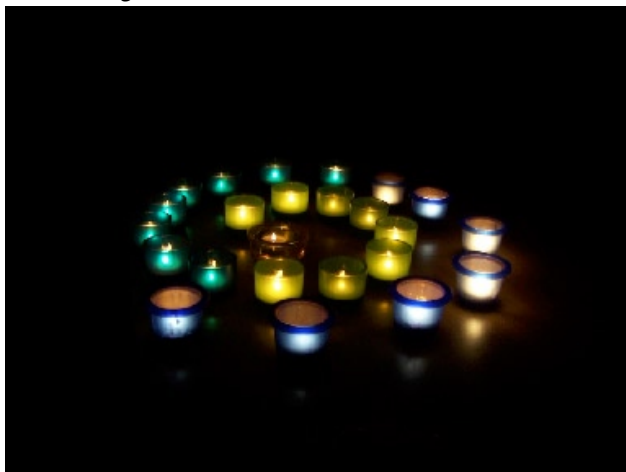
Tear Drop by Emily S.

I was upon someone crying. I imagine someone with tears that freeze into ice. I remember I have seen something like that before. My memory has a picture of this. What I see is pure beauty of a... chandelier.

Potpourri Vase by Danny

I glimmer in the light
Golden black with blue cracks.
I shine with beauty.
At my bottom where I stand
There are flowers small and grand.
Two handles on each of my sides
I am a vase.

Festival of Lights



"Small is Beautiful" from page 1

students and families is small enough that every child is able to know every other child at the school. About how every staff member knows every child well—well enough to support her or him to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, etc. And how most family members know most or all of the children and other families, depending on their level of participation. I also talk about the incredible ratio we have, one adult to five children in kindergarten, and one adult to 8.5 children in grades 1 through 5.

So I have found myself thinking a lot about Crestmont's size lately, and about how wonderful it is for our children. There is a significant movement in education to create smaller schools, especially at the high school level. Researchers agree on the fact that smaller schools lead to higher student achievement, increased safety and a decrease in disciplinary problems.

A research report came out several months ago (August 2006) on small schools at all levels (in rural settings). The findings reminded me of Crestmont:

- ✔ Kids feel they belong
- ✔ Small class size allows more individualized instruction
- ✔ Good teaching methods are easier to implement
- ✔ Multiage classes promote personalized learning and encourage positive social interactions.

(From 'The Hobbit Effect: Why Small Works in Public Schools,' by Lorna Jimerson, for the Rural School and Community Trust.)

So, thanks for allowing me the chance to share my thinking. I still don't know what I will do come September. But whatever I choose, I am hopeful that it will be in a small classroom with a ratio as great as Crestmont's. Suggestions are welcome! ✔

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C a n d y



H o u s e s



A World's Fair to Remember

by Scott Gelfand (Rose, 2/3)

My friend who came to Crestmont's first World's Fair and Silent Auction asked me, "how can you have so many cultures in one little school?" I told him we could have had 20 to 30 more booths, more countries, and I took him to Susan Weiner's room to show

him the map! The World's Fair theme came from the Diversity meeting in November, and was Claudia's brilliant idea. I personally feel proud that such a small school can represent such a unique and worldly community. ♥





Flea Market

