

## An Appropriate Space for Freedom

For a democracy to prosper, what kind of physical environment is needed? This is not just a theoretical question. Diablo Valley School is well into the process of buying a new site for the school. We have identified a site of approximately an acre, about a mile from our current location, and are putting together an offer, interviewing architects, talking with the city planners, and collecting cost estimates for the various required improvements – in short, all the necessary steps needed to get a new site purchased, upgraded and ready for the 2010/2011 school year. These are exciting times! And of course, if you are able to volunteer your talents and, yes, money, to the cause, we need all the help we can get.

On an immediate, practical level, it seems obvious that the people who are to use the new space must be involved in its selection and design, for the school is founded on the principle of freedom through democracy and responsibility. The Site Committee is composed of parents, alumni parents, staff and students, each of whom is involved as much as they want to be. Key are the staff and student members – they are the ones who, most of all, must live with the results.

Beauty is also important, for two reasons: first, in the great tradition of American poets, we are taught that living in the midst of beauty nourishes the soul. Second, our school is part of the rest of the world's window into Sudbury education. A school that shows great care and beauty in its physical appearance conveys without words the beauty of the ideas and practices that inform and create it. A beautiful campus is not a luxury but an integral piece of a good education.

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**We are standing on the threshold of a very bright future for Diablo Valley School.**

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Finally, our site should reflect a truth perhaps too often ignored: that we each can exercise our personal freedoms only insofar as the physical world we've inherited allows. We can imagine, perhaps, that we have the 'freedom' to neglect and abuse the world around us, and, indeed, in the short term, we might be able to get away with behaving that way. But just as you will end up with no friends worthy of the name if you consistently exercise your



'right' to be selfish and cruel, your ability to enjoy your freedom in this world will be seriously curtailed if you are consistently careless and wasteful with the resources under your care. With this in mind, our new site will be built and run as 'green' as possible.

Please take a look at the insert in this Newsletter for more information. Call the school if you want any more details or have any input. As you can see, we still need significant money to get the site ready to use. Please help us with a donation if you can. We are standing on the threshold of a very bright future for Diablo Valley School, and you can be a part of that future.

*By Joseph Moore,  
Assembly President*

## Congratulations to Our June 2009 Graduates

In a festive outdoor ceremony on June 13, Diablo Valley School celebrated four new graduates. In the weeks before graduation, each candidate wishing to qualify for a diploma presented a written and oral defense of the thesis "I have taken responsibility to prepare myself to be an adult in the larger community."

Following the oral defense, the majority of our Assembly voted that they had successfully defended this thesis. See the quotes from their written theses on this page, for some of their reflections on the DVS experience.

There's something about the atmosphere at DVS that makes you want to do what's most challenging." *Alyssa*

"Being able to explore any subject, learn any skill, without the pressure of grades or competition is an amazing, rare thing." *Sarah*

This school taught me how to learn on my own and helped me become something I didn't know I could be." *Shalyn*

"I go to a Sudbury school, and would rather live my life gaining all the knowledge and experiencing all the opportunities that only having this type of education can give." *Matt*

At DVS, there is no stigma attached to having friends of different ages. ... That's because in most situations, age doesn't matter. Maturity — real maturity — is what matters." *Alyssa*



Sarah, Alyssa, Shalyn, and Matt were presented with diplomas.

At the graduation ceremony, staff and fellow students shared remembrances of each graduate's unique qualities. The graduates addressed the crowd and received diplomas. Cake, punch, hugs, and well-wishes followed as the graduates stepped into the beginning of their adult lives.



Students signed yearbooks at the end-of-year party.

### Wish List

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

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

# A Tool for Success

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## Healthy wit requires equality.

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One of the key windows that leads to accepting the Sudbury model of education as valid is the knowledge that intelligence is a complex and dynamic concept that eludes being pinpointed into an equation, a GPA, or SAT scores. Our top scientists are constantly studying the brain, how it works, and how we work with it so that they can help us find well-being as a human race. I recently read that research is being done to tailor education to an individual's genotype. Non-professional scientists that we all are, we also constantly observe, analyze, find patterns, and draw conclusions based on our interests and goals.

There are seldom problems defining the line between staff and students here. We all have our tasks and set of tools to help us go about and accomplish those tasks. In between and throughout those accomplishments a lot of human interaction takes place -- interactions that fluctuate all over the spectrum between means to an end and sheer satisfaction. When that level of focused communication is taking place, it is easy to observe the plethora of similarities between adults and children. One of those similarities is my topic for today: wit.

When I go home for vacations, one of the many anticipated great joys is hanging out with the old crew, swapping stories, and enjoying each other's company over the roll of the dice. I, and believe we all do, hold in high esteem each other's witty way of dealing with reality: the stories we

build around our lives and our capacity to fast-draw a comeback that is unexpected, breath-stopping and above all funny. The older and "wiser" we get, that battle of wits gets more refined in the respect of being powerful, without being offensive. The last thing you want for the one evening you'll spend together every couple of years is to hurt a friend.

I have observed the children play at war, play family, and many other things that both mirror the world around them and respond to an internal drive to process the data that world feeds them. As adults do, they talk about their disagreements and agreements with the intent of getting their point across, and in the process understand other's points. Wit makes this interaction interesting, thus more meaningful.

The internal drive responds to other more animalistic tendencies we carry inside as well, the same kind of dragons of Eden that have the human race shooting at each other throughout our history. We are all well aware of the pecking order common in the animal kingdom. Although this might work well for wolves and chickens, in the human world it gives life an unevolved, wild-west-like taste.

Wit provides the perfect sparring ground to test growing minds. Because intelligence is so dynamic and complex, and wit inherits those qualities, the sparring ground stays equally dynamic and complex and thus FAIR. The young learn early to control offensive language, violent actions, and pointless aggression. Their intellect and wit become sophisticated. A strength-based hierarchy creates repressed anger, while a wit-based hierarchy changes with every situation and thus begets enthusiasm to continue the dance.

Intellect, our lead tool, should be nourished and allowed to flourish, always.

In traditional education, as in a military based system, wit is bad, and that's that. Saturday detention, principal's office, thumb tacks on the chair, broken chain of command, pushups and timeouts are about as un-witty as you can get. Healthy wit requires equality. When new students come into our environment from the old school their wit can be sometimes hurtful, aggressive, looking for a weakness not a smile: crude. The energy of wit and purpose cannot be destroyed. Attempts to stomp it out only re-direct it, usually in ways that bring about the "typical" teenage aggression and disrespect towards the world around them and towards each other.

Don't get me wrong. We have constant arguments here, and we hurt each other's feelings now and then. But to us, wit is one of our lead tools for conflict resolution, not the source of the conflict. These students go out to a dog-eat-dog world with an elite trained sharp wit that will put them a cut above the rest, that will not only open doors, but create them.

As my personal show of wit I leave my original title that spawned this piece for the conclusion. I didn't want to give it away before I worked it up, or create a defensive frame of mind in the reader by dissing traditional schooling right off the bat. **Wit:** one more casualty of the old school.

*By Vicente López, staff member*

**Diablo Valley School**

A Sudbury School

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[diablovalleyschool.org/contact.shtml](http://diablovalleyschool.org/contact.shtml)

**Thank You**

We are grateful to our wonderful supporters who have made gifts of funds or materials to help our school:

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A very special thank you to those who have kicked off our new site campaign:

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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Andrea Payne                          | D. Irene Moreno           | Hal Childs | Laurie Noe     |
| Rob McKie of Common Root Architecture |                           |            | Kathleen Wothe |
| Bridget O'Shea and Philip Alston      | Joy R. Hughes and Ken Lee |            |                |

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**Open House**

**Saturday**

**October 17, 2009**

**11:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**Is it time for your family to consider Sudbury schooling? Come talk with us.**