

## Happy Birthday, Diablo Valley School

Founded January 6, 1997



Celebrating 20 years!

Here are just a few things people have had the time and space to do at Diablo Valley School this year ... and for the past 20 years of Sudbury education at our school. Learn more at our Open House, March 25, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm.



Programming



Enjoying the spring weather outdoors



Splatter painting a messy masterpiece



Learning a new skill from a friend

## Not made whole (or seeing what is there)

By Joseph Moore, *Diablo Valley School parent*

I'm going to play the old guy role here, and offer some observations on being involved in Sudbury schooling for two decades. When we – the kids and their families – embrace Diablo Valley School, we must endure and reject the pressure of society, family, and friends telling us how wrong we are, how we are 'ruining' our kids by granting them freedom. This feeling of having stood up to society can make us feel very liberated. We might even convince ourselves that now, finally, we are enlightened and see things as they are.

For our kids, especially our younger children whose only experience of school is in the Sudbury model, this liberation is often profound and profoundly true. But for us, who went through 12 or more years of the traditional graded classroom model, thinking we've somehow escaped the baleful influences of all those years of control and manipulation with one moment of blinding enlightenment is a trap.

Here is an example of what I mean - look at these two pieces of art.



The first is Pablo Picasso's *Visage de Femme*, painted in 1962.



The second is *Tricoteuse* by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, painted in 1879.

Now, imagine showing these pictures to an unspoiled - unschooled - 6-year-old and asking him which he thought was the better picture. Chances are the kid will think the Picasso funny or ugly, while holding the Bouguereau to be pretty or beautiful. Yet, as anyone trained in art in the last 75+ years will tell you, Bouguereau was a dinosaur, the last representative of the overwrought and empty Academy, while Picasso is a genius and this work is a masterpiece.

Thus, art museums will proudly feature their Picassos, while it is only in the last decade or two that people have begun scouring the back rooms and warehouses to which the Bouguereaus had been consigned and bringing them back to light. Unless they have been properly schooled to hate them, museum goers love Bouguereaus. Go figure. During most of his working life, Bouguereau was considered the greatest living painter, even by the Impressionists! With the advent of Expressionism, he was forcibly consigned to the dustbin of history.

Well? How about you? Who do you believe, the 6-year-old or the art history books? Or do you trust your own eyes? Would it help if I told you that Bouguereau's reputation fell at the same time that art dealers became the

dominant way art was sold, and that they liked Expressionism because you could get a painting or two a week out of Expressionists, while you'd be lucky to get two a year out of Bouguereau? (You could get two an hour out of Picasso!)

Those who most vehemently embrace the Picasso and dismiss the Bouguereau are most likely the more highly educated people. In fact, embracing modern art is a clear signal among the Enlightened of their enlightenment. I contend that this rejection of the obvious beauty of the painting of a pensive girl and embrace of the ugliness of the fractured woman is a result - and an intended result - of years of compulsory classroom education.

Other examples abound, where opinions an unschooled child might laugh at are embraced as the height of enlightenment by educated adults. Yet children are very sensitive to what adults believe, and will more often than not shape their reactions in response to adult opinions just as soon as they figure them out - being part of a family and accepted by adults is a far greater need for a child than sticking to their own uncertain opinions.

The schools use this uncertainty to foist views off on children when they are most vulnerable and completely under their control. Those children then grow to be adults, and remain completely unaware of where they have gotten those views. That's the plan. As Johann Fichte, the founder of compulsory classroom schooling, said: the goal of schooling is to render the student unable to think anything his master doesn't want him to think. What better way to test how well this is working than to have the student believe the ridiculous?

One of the ways I try to escape this trap - the control and manipulation of opinions by means of the schools - is to ask what the schools (including especially colleges) are pushing most at the moment. Those are going to be views that serve the school's purposes,

(continued on page 3)



## Doing Nothing All Day – Film & Panel

By Alexander Müller, staff intern

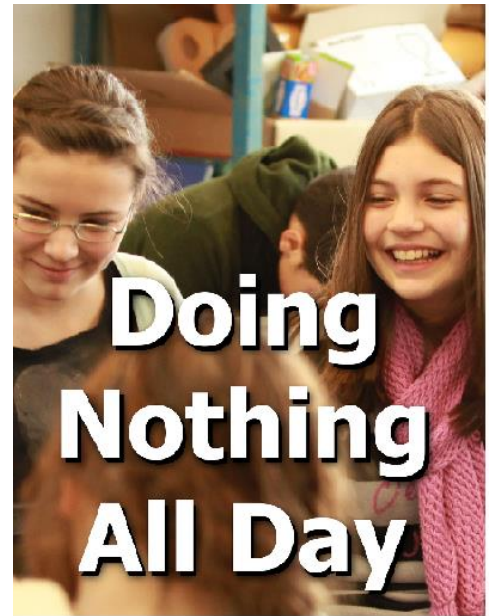
### Not made whole ... continued

not the student's and not mine. Those will also be the views held with the most fervor and least introspection, since they have nothing to do with thought or reason, and everything to do with the gut-level Darwinian need to fit in.

Here is a non-controversial (for Sudbury folks) example: standards. Schools \*love\* standards – standard tests, standard materials, performing up to standards, credentialed teachers (teachers up to standard!). They will tell you when your child is 'not performing at grade level', not meeting the arbitrary and often stupid standards cooked up by the schools. But we know that, with our real unique children, standards such as these are lies. They help the schools produce standardized products. They don't help us or our kids become responsible adults in the larger community, let alone happy and fulfilled.

Yet, talk to your typical parent, the kind of parent who will proudly put a 'Student of the Month' bumper sticker on her car – standards are what they love, and can't even hear how they make no sense. It is not a logical position, but a signal of their membership in the tribe. Thus, it is all but impossible to dislodge. For us adults, embrace of the ideals embodied in the Sudbury Model is the

*Doing Nothing All Day* is a 2015 documentary about democratic schools in England, Germany, and Israel where students have complete control over their time. No curriculum, no classes, no tests, no grades – unless the students ask for it. Students and staff run the school as a democratic community, with equal voices. While this is nothing new to friends of Diablo Valley School, it might be interesting to see democratic schools in other parts of the world and discuss the global relevance of democratic education.



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A panel of students and staff from local self-directed environments will answer your questions after the film, including students from Diablo Valley School. This event is organized by current staff member Alexander Müller in cooperation with the Liberated Lens film collective, Alternative Education Resource Organization, Alliance for Self-Directed Education and is not directly connected to Diablo Valley School.

**Time & place:** Sunday April 2, 6:30 pm at Omni Commons, 4799 Shattuck Ave, Oakland. Suggested donation \$5, no one turned away for lack of funds.

## With a chicken on my head

by Vicente López, staff



Artwork by Coco  
(student, friend, co-worker,  
School Meeting member)

I was out and about proudly wearing a piece of art that was made for me. Throughout the day I received several compliments on it. The first time I answered that a student had made it for me, and "look it has a chicken on this side." The word *student* didn't quite roll off the tongue, knowing its social construct in the mind of others. Next I tried saying *a friend*; this didn't fit either. Although I do consider some students my friends, we don't really hang out outside of school, ask each other for help moving or stuff like that. They are also co-workers. We do, after all, run this school together, arriving at difficult decisions through discussion and shared responsibilities. We challenge each others' world views constantly; this makes them my teachers as well as my students.

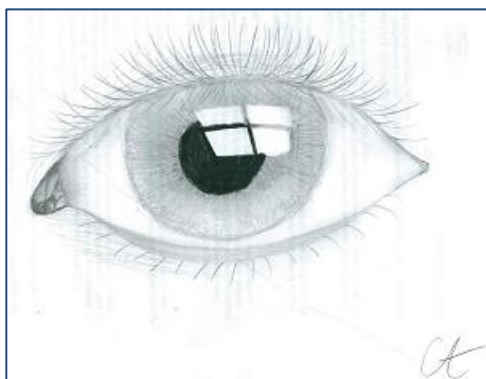
The fact is that we are fellow School Meeting members, which encompasses all of the above and then some. It's not just a title, it's a concept that only other School Meeting members in this and other sibling schools understand every day a little more; like the red pill takes you down a rabbit hole of insight that has yet to show an end for me.

**Diablo Valley School**

A Sudbury School

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Artwork by Christopher

**Thank you!***We are grateful to these wonderful supporters who have made gifts of funds or materials to help our school.*

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**Wish List**

We would be grateful for donations of any of these items.

**Art Supplies:**

Safety pins  
 High-quality sewing scissors  
 Bias tape: assorted colors, any width  
 Prismacolor watercolor pencils  
 Pipe cleaners, Popsicle sticks  
 Velcro  
 Pom-poms

**Outdoors:**

Sturdy outdoor furniture - tables, chairs  
 Soccer balls, footballs, basketballs

**Electronics:**

Digital Camera

**Music:**

Drum key  
 Crash cymbals for drum set  
 Guitar rack or wall mount

**Kitchen:**

Double boiler  
 Oven range hood  
 (call school for details)

**Diablo Valley School**

A Sudbury School

2924 Clayton Road  
Concord, CA 94519

*Meet real Sudbury  
 parents, staff, and  
 students and tour the  
 school at our*

**Open House**

*Saturday, March 25  
 11:00 am – 2:00 pm*



*Children welcome*