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## From the Executive Director

Kathleen Hermismeyer

Dear Parents,

The holidays are a magical time for children, but can be a stressful time for parents, particularly in today's economy. What can you do if your kids' wish lists get more extravagant as your wallet gets tighter?

- Take the emphasis off gifts and onto creating or continuing family traditions. Children love family traditions. In my house, we do an advent ceremony each night of advent, with special gifts on certain nights (slippers, socks, PJs, candy.) We also watch certain holiday films together ("Eloise at Christmas" is a favorite, as is "A Christmas Story"), make Christmas ornament crafts, put together stockings for a local charity and make Christmas candy. This year, we've discovered a simple, new recipe that has quickly become a family favorite....Butter Toffee. This recipe is guaranteed to please (but you need a candy thermometer! See below)
- Focus on GIVING. Remind children, frequently, the reason for the holidays and why gift giving is so meaningful to those you love, and to those in need. Put your child's energy into selecting small gifts for their family and friends, wrapping these gifts, making cards, etc. Put time into each step! This will help your child anticipate the joy of giving. Figure out small ways to help your favorite charity and involve your kids in this.
- Homemade is love. My brother's family did an "all homemade" Christmas one year. He and his wife and their four kids made presents for each other. Mom handwrote family recipe cards and painted recipe boxes for the kids. One daughter did a scrapbook for dad. Dad, an avid guitar player, did a series of "Learn to Play" videotapes for his son. It was one of their favorite Christmases, and the least money was spent.
- Set limits in advance. Avoid the tears and disappointment by leveling with your children about the extent of the Christmas gifts they are likely to receive. I try to think about one in each category: a toy, a book (OK, maybe two or three), some clothing, a game and something special, like a locket or a cuddle toy. The kids understand that they can ask for anything and everything, but they won't get it all!

Finally, remember that a lot of the pressure we all feel at this time of year is actually generated by us...by our desire to make things perfect for our families. That goal is not reasonable, nor even desirable.

Who feels comfortable when everything is perfect? And what good is a "perfect" holiday if YOU, the mainstay of your family unit, are grumpy and stressed? Believe me, your children are most happy when YOU are happy.

I sincerely hope that being a River Springs parent makes you happy, and that we reduce your homeschooling stress. The RSCS staff and I wish you all a very joyous holiday and a happy new year!

Kathleen



### Here's the toffee recipe:

- 1 lb. salted butter
- 1 lb. brown sugar
- 2 C milk chocolate chips
- 1 C chopped almonds

Melt butter and sugar in heavy saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly with whisk until completely mixed and beginning to boil. Once the mixture is boiling, stop stirring constantly. Put aluminum foil on a jelly roll pan. Check the temperature with a candy thermometer. Stir occasionally until the mixture reaches 285 degrees. Pour immediately onto prepared pan and spread by tilting until it's evenly spread. Immediately sprinkle chocolate over entire surface. Sprinkle with nuts and pat the nuts into the chocolate with your hand in a baggie. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. When hard, break into bite sized pieces and store in airtight container. Or, for indulgent chocolate fans, flip the entire block of toffee over, peel off the aluminum foil and spread more melted chocolate and almonds on the back side, cool another 30 minutes, and then break apart. DELICIOUS!



# FIELD TRIPS



## Discovery Science Center

This year we had a record breaking attendance to the Discovery Science Center. 370 Homeschoolers and parents attended to LEARN, EXPLORE and DISCOVER. The "Grossology" exhibit was definitely the highlight of the tour with a 3D movie "Plant You". Students were able to walk through giant nostrils, slide down intestines and check out the gooey, slimy, crusty functions of the human body. It truly was eeeewwww gross FUN!



## L.A. County Fair

Wow, what an awesome turn out we had for our L.A. County Fair field trip. 830 homeschoolers, family and friends signed up to attend this day of family fun. It was good old fashion farming at it's best. Kids had a chance to try their hand at goat milking, cow feeding, lassoing, archery and much more. Several families have reported back this was one of the best trips ever.





# FIELD TRIPS



## Family Kayak Adventure

175 land lovin' Homeschoolers, family and friends ventured out onto Mission Bay for an afternoon Family Kayak Adventure. On their 3 hour tour, students encountered pelicans, sea lions, jelly fish, sea slugs and other living creatures from under the sea. This trip was a fun family outing with plenty of exercise.



## Aquarium of the Pacific

Things that squiggle, things that wiggle and things that jiggle. The Aquarium of the Pacific has it all! Nearly 300 RSCS students and families enjoyed a day at the world class aquarium. Students were separated by grade levels and participated in dissecting a fish or squid, a fun educational film and plenty of hands on learning. After the classroom programs ended, families took some time to explore the aquarium.



## Santa Ana Police Dept.

Thirty-four RSCS crime sleuths and families spent the day with an investigator from the Forensics Dept. at the Santa Ana Police Dept. He gave them a tour of the facility including the chemical processing lab and the department's ammunition collection. Students had an opportunity to be fingerprinted. It was a day to make Sherlock Holmes proud.

## How to Get the Most Out of RSCS

by Nancy Branchaud, Sr. Director of Homeschool

As my thoughts turn to the holiday season I feel very blessed to work for River Springs and to be a part of your family's homeschooling experience. Thank you for entrusting your child's education to our program; we are working diligently to serve you.

I am very pleased with the variety of program options that our multi-talented Homeschool ESes offer to our families: the traditional Homeschool program, the Homeschool Transitions program for first year families, and the Keys High School program for families seeking home-education with additional credentialed teacher support.

I am also very proud of the curriculum support that we have developed for our families over the years: Boxed Set curriculum for K-8 students, featuring carefully chosen materials along with weekly pacing support; high school course packs featuring rigorous lessons for high school students; our new multi-age units, created to support parents in educating more than one student at a time, while maintaining consistency and Mom's sanity!

We continue to work to be innovators in supporting our homeschool parents with learning center class options, SPREE events and math workshops each semester, our annual Spelling Bee and Meet the Expert events, and our newly planned Writing Extravaganza, coming your way this spring. And of course our most popular Homeschool feature is our fun and inviting group field trips! We have offered a choice of 80 trips so far this year!

Of course our very best feature is your outstanding ES, who offers specialized and personalized support for each student's educational needs. They are available to support you each week as you design and implement your lessons, and can offer you sensational ideas to meet your needs as your child's primary educator.

Make sure to discuss all of the RSCS opportunities with your ES so you can experience the richness that our homeschool programs have to offer. We want to help you design a dynamic educational program for your student each semester, and we hope that you will take advantage of all that we work hard to present for you.

If you have additional suggestions to improve our support to you, please don't hesitate to send them to me at [Nancy.Branchaud@RiverSpringsCharter.org](mailto:Nancy.Branchaud@RiverSpringsCharter.org)

## A Math Moment

By Virginia Arvizu-Calvillo

Start talking math to people and you'll either hear groans or silence; groans from those who hate math and silence from those who secretly love math, but don't want to admit it. Why does math seem to cause such polar reactions? Why do some people "get math" and others claim not to get it at all? The truth is anyone can "get math", and even (dare I say it) love it. All that is needed is time to explore and time to synthesize.

This year, think about going deep into a math concept. Plan out good chunks of time to explore and play with mathematical ideas and implement lessons that follow these developmental stages of cognitive growth:

**Inquiry/Exploration:** Use concrete manipulatives to explore a concept. With exploration and play, children will begin to notice patterns or connections to other math ideas. This is the most critical piece in mathematical learning. Children need this time to play with ideas and develop their own understanding of concept.

**Direct Orientation/Guided Instruction:** Children are given tasks so that more complex properties of the math concept are explored. Once students start to notice a pattern or connection, prompt their learning with problems that will naturally move them to the next level of understanding.

**Explication:** Children begin using vocabulary verbally and in written language. If a child can communicate their understanding to another person, then they have internalized the information and are on their way to fluency.

**Practice:** Children need to practice their newly developed skills. When planning practice, more is not better, frequency is the key. In order for a child to master a math skill, they need to practice it 20 separate times.

**Integrations:** The final stage is pulling together all that was learned. This stage should focus on the application of ideas and connections to other math ideas.

"The essence of mathematics is not to make simple things complicated, but to make complicated things simple." ~S. Gudder  
We can all learn to love math- what a  $\sqrt{\quad}$  idea.

## CST Test Awards

Congratulations to the following Homeschool students who received perfect scores on their California Standards Tests last year! The students were sent a handwritten note from our director, Kathleen Hermismeyer, along with a perfect score certificate from our Assessment Dept. What an awesome job!

**Mira Larsen**, student of Amy Heiman, received a perfect score on the 5th grade math test.



**Maxwell Chan**, student of Erika Nevares, received a perfect score on BOTH the 5th grade math and science tests.

**Melanie Geier**, student of Tina Angle, received a perfect score on the 6th grade math test.

**Harriette Tuntomo**, student of Jake White, received a perfect score on the End of Course test in Biology.



# A BIG THANKS TO OUR HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES AND EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS THAT PARTICIPATED IN OUR FIRST SEMESTER ROUND OF S.P.R.E.E EVENTS!

From Orange County to San Bernardino, our SPREE program was in full force this October! Our parents walked away with some extremely valuable information from their workshops. They learned that there are actually SECRETS to motivating their students! Parents were quite surprised to hear that "ASSESSMENT" is a wonderful word, and that the BRAIN really does RULE!

SPREE is not only a time to learn some great new strategies for Homeschooling, but also a time to collaborate and share your experiences with other families.

## "DETECTIVE DARING"!

In accordance with our Multi Age unit study this semester, "Daring Detective" was the theme for our student SPREE workshops this Fall. However, your student does not have to be using this program to come out and have a blast at SPREE! We had students using magnifying glasses to inspect everything from their own fingerprints to bugs! Our "CSI" students had fun making quite a mess with their Oobleck experiment! Students observed and experimented with a strange substance in an attempt to classify it. Education Specialists entertained our students with a "Mystery" Birthday Party!

Each student received a special "CSI" River Springs backpack, along with their own magnifying glass for attending the program. Our kids were just the best and they totally enjoyed getting out and spending time with their peers at this event. The proof was in their hugs!

We look forward to sharing this great event with all of our families again this spring. Our theme for students will be....

## "GOING FOR THE GOLD" - SPRING 2011

### Spree-Orange County

|  |         |   |
|--|---------|---|
| Trinity Presbyterian - 13922 N. Prospect Ave., Santa Ana | 2-11-11 | Multi Age for Parents/Going For the Gold for Students |
|--|---------|---|

### Spree-Riverside

|  |         |   |
|--|---------|---|
| Riverside Student Center - 3050 Chicago Ave, Riverside | 2-18-11 | Brain Rules for Parents/Going For the Gold for Students |
|--|---------|---|

### Spree-Temecula

|  |         |   |
|--|---------|---|
| Temecula Student Center - 43040 Margarita Rd, Temecula | 2-14-11 | Motivating Your Child for Parents/Going For the Gold for Students |
|--|---------|---|

## COME ON OUT AND JOIN US!

Sign-up on our website at [www.riverspringscharter.org](http://www.riverspringscharter.org)



## 2010-2011 GOVERNING BOARD CALENDAR

| MONTH          | TIME    | LOCATION  |
|----------------|---------|---|
| Jan 12, 2011   | 2:00 PM | Hemet Student Center - 105 N Girard, Hemet, CA 92544                                |
| Feb 9, 2011    | 2:00 PM | Magnolia Student Center - 8775 Magnolia Avenue, Riverside, CA 92504                 |
| Mar 9, 2011    | 2:00 PM | Temecula Administrative Offices - 43448 Business Park Drive, Temecula, CA 92590     |
| April 13, 2011 | 2:00 PM | Temecula Administrative Offices - 43448 Business Park Drive, Temecula, CA 92590     |
| May 11, 2011   | 2:00 PM | Murrieta Student Center Multipurpose Room - 41866 Kalmia Street, Murrieta, CA 92562 |
| June 8, 2011   | 2:00 PM | Temecula Administrative Offices - 43448 Business Park Drive, Temecula, CA 92590     |



**Welcome to Myrna Teramura, the new Site Facilitator at the Orange Co. Student Center.**

Mrs. Teramura graduated from CSU, Fullerton with a Bachelors degree in Child and Adolescent Studies and a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. She taught for Anaheim City School District in grades 1 through 4. She has been married to husband, Miguel, for over 10 years and has an 18 month-old son, Kalani.

# Kudos to KIDS



**Andrew Carrigan** - We're very proud of second grade homeschool student, Andrew Carrigan, age 7, from Corona, CA who won a Sweepstakes Award at the LA County Fair for his photography entry in the "People" category. He took photos of a Model T using a tripod and timer so he could be in the photo. He was invited to a reception at the fair and got to meet the judge and be recognized on stage. He also got tickets to spend the day at the fair. There were 1139 entries and 5 of them received Sweepstakes Awards. The categories were Scenic, People, Animals or Pets, Special Processes, Photojournalism, and Still Life. His ES is Michelle Sullivan.



**Gwendolynn de Graaf** - Gwendolynn has been figure skating for 11 years. She is a member of the United States Figure Skating Association and competes at the Intermediate Level. On Sunday Oct. 10 she qualified to compete in the final rounds of the Southwestern Pacific Regional competition which includes skaters from three states. She came in 10th in the final against a start of 80 girls. It was her first time competing in finals which was a great experience, and to come in the top 10 was a great accomplishment. Gwen trains at the Riverside Icetown Skating Rink under Monica Viola, one of River Springs' vendors. She is also an 8th grade homeschool student. Her ES is Beth Packer



**Kieran McCollom** - Kieran is a 10th grader at River Springs. His special interest is singing Barbershop Harmony for the Temecula Wine Valley Harmonizers. Barbershop is as American as apple pie. It was created in Tulsa, Oklahoma by Owen Clifton Cash in 1938. Barbershop is a four part harmony that includes Lead (you lead everyone else in the songs, Tenor (really high pitched), Baritone (you're everywhere on the scale), and last but not least Bass (you go really low) and does not have any instrumental accompaniments. Kieran says that all the guys in his chorus are great and every rehearsal is fun. Right now he's focusing on performing locally at the Lake Elsinore STORM baseball games and Old Town Temecula in front of the Palomar Hotel. His ES is Virginia Arvizu-Calvillo.

**Austin Eder** - Earned the lead role of Clara in the Nutcracker Suite ballet through her studio Anaheim Ballet. She is currently rehearsing and will be performing in Las Vegas in December. Her ES is Beth Condon.

**Izzy Talbert** - One of our students, Izzy Talbert, was just awarded a full scholarship to a ballet company in Huntington Beach. Congratulations to Michael Hunter's student! We love to hear of student successes!



**Jay Essel** - Jay participated in the San Diego Bike the Bay on Sunday, August 29, 2010. His day started at the San Diego Embarcadero at about 6:10 in the morning, putting on gear, checking supplies and equipment. A lot of interesting things happened during the ride. Another rider lost his phone. Jay stopped to pick it up and went from biker to biker to find the owner. Even with this delay, he still finished around 160th place out of about 2500 riders. He was interviewed by the Channel 6 News because he was one of the youngest riders. Jay said "It was amazingly fun. There were a lot of happy people there. I had a great day and will most certainly do this again." His ES is Holly Ostroske.



**Skylar and Misty Beckham** - Skylar and Misty did a great job completing a Missions project. Skylar's project was on Mission Santa Cruz. She thought it was interesting that this was the first place where an autopsy was performed. Misty's project was on Mission San Francisco Solano. She liked the fact that they built a fountain in the courtyard so they did not have to go to the river to get water. This was also the last Mission built. Both girls read books and wrote a report. They built their Missions all from scratch! This is their first year homeschooling and the girls and mom are doing an amazing job! Their ES is Anne Akins.



**Equestrian Field Trip** - ES Kari Arnson had 20 of her kindergarten through 8th grade homeschool students show up on Friday, Oct. 1 to McCall Park in Mt. Center for an equestrian "field trip". They learned how to approach and be safe around horses, how to lead them, groom them and ride! With parents, there were over 30 people and they finished just as a huge rainstorm hit. Kudos to David Natarte and Mariano Ramirez for overcoming their hesitation around horses and riding them for the first time!



**Molly Rendel** - ES Teresa Moran's Kindergarten student, Molly Rendel, won first place at the LA County Fair Creative Writing Poetry Contest. Here's a picture of Molly holding the poem and her ribbon. She also got 1st place for her coloring page, 2nd for her crown decorating, and 3rd place ribbons for her stained glass window and Medieval doll.

# GUIDANCE INFO

## Advanced Placement Exams

Advanced Placement exams give students the opportunity to get college credit while still in high school. At River Springs, students may enroll in an A-G, College Prep, or Honors (where offered) level course and take the AP exam in the spring. Tests are offered in thirty-three subjects and cost only \$90 per exam. If you are interested in taking an AP exam, please contact the guidance department at 951-252-8831 or [guidance@riverspringscharter.org](mailto:guidance@riverspringscharter.org). For more information about exams offered, test preparation, or AP credit, check out College Board's website at [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html).

## Drug Free Teens Tips

Holidays offer unique opportunities to connect with your kids, but be sure to make Time To Talk with them every day of the year, so it becomes a normal part of your family communication. That way when you have an important topic to discuss, it will be more comfortable and flow more naturally. Chat it up regularly – about celebrities, classmates, the news or anything – to help maintain open lines of communication. For more information about making time to talk to your teens and using drug-free resources, visit [www.timetotalk.org](http://www.timetotalk.org).

## College & Career Training Information

### College Season

It's the time of year for college applications, scholarship opportunities, and financial aid. Don't forget to keep track of important dates in the coming months--most Cal State University and University of California campuses need applications in by November 30. Check with the enrollment departments at the college you've applied to and make sure that you are on track.

Apply early for FASFA and ask your guidance counselor about the GPA verification for Cal Grant. For more information about financial aid, visit [www.riverspringscharter.org](http://www.riverspringscharter.org), click on "Grades 7-12," then "High School," then "Financial Aid."

### CSU Fullerton offers a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) in Musical Theatre and Acting

The Department of Theatre and Dance at California State University Fullerton is implementing "New Student Auditions" for Fall 2011 for both BFA in Musical Theatre and Acting programs. "New Student Auditions" will be January 22, 2011 and March 5, 2011. Audition information can be found at [www.fullerton.edu/arts/theatredance/index.htm](http://www.fullerton.edu/arts/theatredance/index.htm).

### National Center for Education Statistics <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

This website is an excellent resource for high school students (especially seniors), who are in the process of looking at colleges and universities. Students are able to input their interests and their

location, then the website generates a list of schools and offers information on each one (the application process, financial aid, cost, athletics, security, etc.).

### 3 Days of Fashion

Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM) is hosting summer workshops for all high school students in 2011. Visit [fidm.edu/summerprogram](http://fidm.edu/summerprogram) for more information. Workshops will take place in Los Angeles (June 20-22), Orange County (June 27-29), and San Diego (June 23-25).

### Interested in becoming an apprentice?

Cal Apprenticeship has information on over forty-five categories of apprenticeship opportunities in California's workshops. Visit their website for more information. [www.calapprenticeship.org](http://www.calapprenticeship.org)

### Vocational Training

Vocational Information Center has great links to web based vocational information. Explore vocational and technical careers, check out the skills employers really want, find a trade school, research technical topics, or take a look at the current job market. Just visit [www.khake.com](http://www.khake.com).

## National History Day 2011

Friday, January 14, 2011

National History Day makes history come alive for America's youth by engaging them in the discovery of the historic, cultural and social experiences of the past. Through hands-on experiences and presentations, today's youth are better able to inform the present and shape the future. NHD inspires children through exciting competitions and transforms teaching through project-based curriculum and instruction.

National History Day motivates students to discover history by:

- Cultivating interest: students research a topic of their choice
  - Developing research skills: students act as historians discovering how to uncover primary sources, build historical context and form historical interpretations
  - Becoming experts on their research topic: presenting their research to teachers, students, and historians
  - Achieving success
- The shy student gains confidence when speaking about a topic he/she has researched
  - The apathetic student gains passion by choosing a topic of personal interest
  - The high achieving student increases his/her ability to articulate their learning through presentation

**All students are winners in the  
National History Day Program!**

For more information on National History Day visit <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/> or contact Tamara Bos, Social Studies Department Chair at [tamara.bos@riverspringscharter.org](mailto:tamara.bos@riverspringscharter.org).



# Bring The Fun Back

By Melissa Magner

Summer is over and now you are fully into the swing of homeschooling again! Is something missing? Has the passion for learning begun to dull a bit? Is every day starting to look and feel like the last? Are the kids starting to look a little glassy eyed? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it truly is time to bring the fun back into learning! Ask yourself if it is possible to live by this motto, "if it's not fun, we aren't doing it!" Your child will love you for it and definitely benefit! I challenge you to try and find some fun, or at least add some fun into everything your child learns!

The first step to bringing the fun back is making sure you really know your child's learning style. Don't assume you already know it or that it must be the same as yours. It probably isn't! Your ES can help you assess learning styles if you haven't done it recently. Just ask! Once you know how your child learns best, you can incorporate engaging activities into each lesson and enrich learning with visual aids, internet research and games!

If you haven't used Discovery Education yet, you are missing out! Ask your ES for the pass code to create your own account. With Discovery Education, educators gain on-demand access to over 50,000 content-specific segments from 5,000 full-length educational videos. You will find a plethora of digital video based learning opportunities. There are also games, puzzle makers, quizzes, and interactive activities! And if your child just wants to do some research you can explore by subject area- This gives your child the option to explore and investigate subjects in depth.

Another activity that makes learning more fun is turning board games into learning opportunities. Change the cards into ones that fit what you are teaching. Here are just a few examples how to use games commonly found at home to enhance the fun in learning:

**Life** - This game teaches budgets and familial responsibilities, chores etc.

**Risk** - Teaches imperialism!

**Monopoly** - Change the cards to fit the subject matter. Recreate the properties to be something scientific, math related, or geographically relevant to a historical event you are teaching about!

**Uno** - Teaches numbers, colors, matching. (For the younger students)

**Yahtzee** - This game is terrific for problem solving, and most basic math concepts. And who doesn't have fun yelling YAHTZEE!

Challenge your students to find the fun in each lesson. This is a good motivator as well. If they can find the fun or create some appropriate to the subject matter, then they can reward themselves by playing, which just reinforces the concept! It really is a win-win for all!

We all know there is a ton of fun to be had on the web, but how about a twist on that idea! Create a family website with your students. Have each student be responsible for their own webpage. Have them post work being created and allow other homeschool parents, families, and students to comment. This will start a support system you may have forgotten you had and a very rewarding experience for your child, while they learn valuable computer skills!

And lastly, have students create a photo montage using a video camera or a digital camera. If you are teaching about the Bill of Rights, have them create a montage representing each of the Bill of Rights using photos. One picture is worth a thousand words!

So, don't buy into the idea that some learning just isn't fun! Decide to live by the motto, "if it's not fun, we aren't doing it!" and then find the fun in each subject! ■

## The Power of Storytelling

By Gina Wickwire

What if I told you that your student could memorize and be able to explain the digestive tract by reading and writing their own interpretation of "There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly?" a classic tale illustrated by Pam Adams.

Read what one 5th grader wrote about their teacher when they were studying anatomy and the digestive tract:

Mrs. Wickwire was sitting at her desk. She let out a huge yawn and a fly was sucked into her mouth! The fly struggled to get free. However, Mrs. Wickwire didn't know that the fly was in her mouth. She began chewing, feeling something a bit fluttery in her mouth. It was too late! Mrs. Wickwire's salivary enzymes were already at work. The fly was chewed up and broken down into smaller molecules. After being chewed and swallowed, the poor fly entered the esophagus. The fly was engulfed in rhythmic, wave-like muscle movements (called peristalsis) to force it from the throat into the stomach.



Yes, sadly I was the teacher in this story, but I was so excited to see what was being learned!

It truly is no surprise how each of us can be impacted by a beautiful poem or an emotional story. We spend so much of our time listening, reading, and even going to the movies to be entertained by a good story. We find this to be so enjoyable, and yet as teachers we find ourselves reading traditional textbooks and asking our own students to memorize vocabulary (out of context) and to take tests that are no more than regurgitation of the material learned. I'm not stating that this isn't important and that we shouldn't be using textbooks. On the contrary, what if our students can take this material and apply it with imagery and storytelling that will enhance their knowledge and understanding of the material that is being learned.

Imagery and storytelling is just one of many instructional strategies that can engage the brain. Marcia L. Tate's Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites is an excellent resource that covers brainstorming and discussions to storytelling as well many other strategies that will enhance your student's learning and your own teaching ability. Learning to use these instructional strategies will also make you more aware of your student's learning styles and how you can use these strategies to address higher order thinking skills.

Begin thinking today about how you can create lessons that will incorporate storytelling. Perhaps you are beginning a unit on California's Native Americans and you are learning about the Chumash or the Mojave Native Americans. Could your student write their own story about being a Chumash child, and include the region that they live in along with how they trade and/or the type of building that they live in? Whatever your topic might be, could a good story evolve that will also help your child to learn the important information that he/she needs to memorize? Happy Storytelling! ■



# Using Primary Sources

By Stephanie Parshall

A primary source (or “original source”) is a written document, art piece, recording, or any other material resource that has been created by someone personally involved in the events or information described through the source. Primary sources are an excellent tool that can be used to teach about historical events, people, or time periods. What better way is there to learn about Christopher Columbus’ journey than to read excerpts from his journal? What better images can you use to teach about the Wright Brothers’ first airplane than to see an actual photograph? These primary sources are created from personal experience. They have not been altered by someone else’s opinion or commentary. It is the closest thing to “being there” that we can get. This is not to say that secondary sources are not helpful. It is from these sources that we learn background information, cause and effect, and multiple perspectives. Including both primary and secondary sources helps to create a complete picture.

Finding primary sources is easier than you might think. Museums are an excellent place to see real artifacts and view original documents. Most communities have multiple types of museums within reasonable driving distances. However, museums aren’t the only place where you can access primary sources. With the increasing presence of the Internet comes expanded opportunities for information. Here are a few reliable websites with primary source data bases:

- [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) (The Library of Congress)
- [www.constitution.org/primarysources](http://www.constitution.org/primarysources) (The American Colonists Library)
- [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) (The National Archives)
- [www.digitalhistory.uh.edu](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu) (Digital History)
- [www.yale.edu/collections\\_collaborative/primarysources](http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources) (Yale Online Library)

In order to use primary sources most effectively, you need to go beyond simple observation. Careful examination or thorough reading of a source is definitely necessary. However, to really glean valuable information from the source you must participate in thoughtful analysis. Below are a few questions you and your learner can begin with as you review primary sources:

- The five W’s (Who created it? What is it? When was it created? Where was it created? Why was it created?)
- What is the purpose of the document?
- What else do you know about this document?

- How does this document add to what you know or have learned about the event, person, or time period?

By adding primary sources to your history, literature, or science instruction you are adding value to learning. The visual images help to solidify memory of the information, can aid in making a lasting impression, and may lead to analytical discussions about the topic. You can also have the child create an “archive” of his own primary documents, as well! ■

## Assessments are Your Friends – Really!

By Jackie Dee

Well, I did it. I used the dreaded “A word” in Homeschool land. Unfortunately, I think many parents read that “A word” in the title and will opt to not read this article. For those of you who were curious enough to venture on, I really do think assessments can be our friends. Let’s first define assessment. One of the best definitions comes from Edutopia and says, “Substitute the word feedback for assessment...The point of assessment in education is to advance learning, not to merely audit absorption of facts. That’s true whether we’re talking about that fourth-period pop quiz, the school play, or the state test. No one ever mastered a complicated idea or skill the first -- or fifth --- time. To reach any genuine standard, we need lots of trials, errors, and adjustments based on feedback.” So let’s look at assessments as feedback. This feedback can tell us several things. It can tell us our student mastered the ideas or concepts we just covered and is ready to move on. It can also tell us our student does not understand what we may have just spent a week teaching. Perhaps, it’s somewhere in the middle, which is often the case: our student has mastered some of what was taught, but still needs additional time spent on other areas.

ALEKS, the online math supplement, offers us a great example of how feedback (assessment) can be used to help direct our teaching. When the student first signs into ALEKS, he/she is walked through a quick tutorial showing how to use the program. Next, the student takes a quick 25-30 question “assessment.” The assessment is made up of questions covering different strands such as measurement and geometry, fractions, percentages, probability, etc. Once the student has completed the assessment, ALEKS generates a pie chart

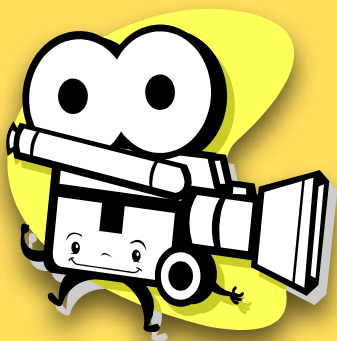
divided into the different strands for that student’s grade level or course. Each piece of the pie has a different color. If the green piece represents decimals, it will show a dark green for the percentage of mastery the student has attained in decimals. The lighter green in the piece represents how much more the student has to go to attain full mastery in that area for his/her grade level. Now, here’s the beautiful part of this assessment. If Johnny’s fraction pie piece is totally full, that means this is an area that he has mastered and he doesn’t need to spend additional instruction time in this area. Of course, he will want to go back and occasionally review. Johnny’s pie piece for algebra is only 45 % darkened. Now we know where we need to spend some time on instruction. Johnny can click on this piece of the pie and complete practice questions, as well as ask for explanations and instruction for problems he does not understand. Mom will also want to spend additional time on instruction and practice on algebra until grade level mastery is achieved.

ALEKS is just one example of an assessment that offers feedback to the parent and student, showing what has been mastered and what still needs to be learned. There are all sorts of other assessments, both formal and informal, that we can use to obtain feedback on our student’s learning. Some of the formal assessments we are all familiar with are Scantron, STAR, and chapter tests that come from a textbook. Informal assessments are those you may not even realize are assessments. When your student reads a chapter in a book and you ask him/her to tell you what happened, that is an informal assessment. You are obtaining feedback on how well they understood or comprehended what they read. Your ES can share all kinds of formal and informal assessment ideas with you to help you get feedback on your student’s learning. Your ES is also a great resource for showing you how to target your instruction for your student based on both formal and informal assessment feedback.

So, assessments can really be our friends! If Johnny hadn’t completed the initial quiz on ALEKS, Mom would have never known he already understands fractions and may have spent hours and hours more on those fraction chapters in his text than they both needed to spend. Now that she has feedback from ALEKS, she can tell Johnny he only needs to complete every third problem on fractions as review. They can both now spend that extra time on something new that Johnny wants or needs to learn. ■

# RSCS IS PROUD TO PRESENT!

## The Inspired Learner Expo and Talent Show



**Date:**  
**April 15, 2011**

**Location:**  
Temeku Hills Master Association Banquet Room  
41687 Temeku Drive, emecula, CA

**Time:**  
1:00-4:00 PM  
Auditions: In order to be in the Talent Show, you will need to audition.

**Event Description:**  
The Inspired Learner Expo is an event, combining a Talent Show with the "Meet the Expert" event. This is for all grade levels and is a chance for students to "show off" a special talent or a completed project! Students may participate in one or both areas of the Expo.

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Please visit our website at [www.riverspringscharter.org](http://www.riverspringscharter.org) for more information and registration.

## Thanksgiving Feast

By Synnove Tyo

We just had a get-together with 4 homeschool families in our mountain area and celebrated Thanksgiving with a little more traditional food than usual. All the families read the book Eating the Plates: A Pilgrim Book of Food and Manners by Lucille Recht Penner with their children ahead of time. This book discusses some of the hardships faced by the early pilgrims, as well as what type of food they ate, and how many of their manners were different from what we are accustomed to today. We then made our feast with things like corn pudding, succotash stew, cornbread (with butter made by the kids themselves), and apples baked inside a pumpkin. The kids enjoyed most of the unusual food, and it was a fun learning experience all around.

River Springs students in the picture:  
Miranda Claypool, Gabriel Claypool, Laura Claypool, Robert Tyo, Emily Tyo, Hannah Tyo



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