Weaving stories around the old fire: Using heuristic inquiry as a path to personal and professional growth

Nancy Denise Manning

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WEAVING STORIES AROUND THE OLD FIRE: USING
HEURISTIC INQUIRY AS A PATH TO PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Interdisciplinary Studies

by
Nancy Denise Manning
September 2007
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Approved by:
Dr. Samuel Crowell, Language, Literacy and Culture Department

Dr. Robert London, Language, Literacy and Culture Department
ABSTRACT

Our stories, both personal and professional, make up the fabric of our lives and become the creative art of teaching. Through the deeply reflective process of heuristic inquiry, I have explored the nature of my own subjective experiences surrounding the Old Fire during the fall of 2003 in Southern California. By delving into the creative process using an art-oriented methodology to teach environmental science, I worked to uncover the intuitive understandings by which we, as teachers, connect ourselves and our students to profound experiences, leading to transformation and action for positive change.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deepest appreciation and gratitude go to my teaching partner and friend Dee Dee Zetlmaier, without whose passion and courage I never would have been able to weave my story. For his love and encouragement to finish this project, my sincere appreciation goes to Mark Kornfeld, my partner. Thanks also to my Seventh Cohort family who gave me light, love and the courage to teach forward. To my advisors and mentors, Dr. Sam Crowell and Dr. Bob London who have led me on a path to insight and transformation and who have given me the experience of a lifetime.
DEDICATION

To my parents who opened the doors to nature for me, and my children Sarah, Tory and John who taught me what it truly means to love.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"Stones and trees speak slowly and may take a week to get out a single sentence, and there are few men, unfortunately, with the patience to wait for an oak to finish a thought" (Keillor, 1995). I believe the natural world has great lessons to teach us, important things to say if only we can quiet our minds and hearts long enough to listen. And it is often true that life presents us with opportunities requiring us to reflect with patience on an experience ripe with possibilities to transform us. Such an experience occurred during the fall of 2003 in the mountains of Southern California.

In October of that year my community and I were presented with such a circumstance, a seemingly tragic yet deeply moving teachable moment. In the space of ten days, we were given lessons in impermanence, transformation, resilience, renewal, hope, and compassion. Saturday, October 25, dawned with a brilliant blue sky. Following a very hot and dry summer, the temperature that day started out in the 80's. Our small, rural towns of Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs, and surrounding communities were being held in the grip of an extended drought.
Millions of bark beetle devoured trees stood tinder dry and alarmingly orange in the midst of the otherwise evergreen forest. The extreme fire danger lay just beneath the surface of our collective consciousness like the memory of a reoccurring nightmare. On this day, that nightmare would once again roar to life in the form of what would become known as the Old Fire.

The statistics of the Old Fire, as we now know them, read like so many disasters we see on the front page of the paper; 80,000 people evacuated; 4,211 emergency personnel called in from all over the United States; 91,281 acres burned; 993 houses and buildings destroyed; 6 fatalities; started by an arson. But this time it was personal, close to home; not just a sensationalized abstraction on the Nightly News but a living, breathing holocaust right in our own backyards. We were the ones who needed to pack our loved ones, baby pictures and pets into our cars, frantically deciding, in what seemed to be an interminable instant, what was to be treasured and saved, and what was to be left to the fate of the flames. Our family members and friends, our parents (and parents of our students) were the fire fighters, sheriffs, and forest rangers, among many dedicated others, called on to risk their lives to save the homes and the lives of all
community members. We knew the people who lost their houses and the unfortunate ones who lost their lives. No one, including myself, was left untouched by some aspect of the Old Fire.

As teachers, my colleagues and I often find ourselves in positions where we need to help our students understand and find peace with life altering situations, such as the death of a parent or the bombing of the World Trade Center. The Old Fire and all of its extenuating circumstances put me in such an awe-inspiring position. I strongly felt the need to open the door to a meaningful experience for my students and myself so we could put our fears aside and begin healing. The idea for my project, heArts for the Forest, was conceived amid the swirling flames of emotion and the ashes of what remained in the wake of the Old Fire. As with any birth, this embryo of an idea would require faith and trust in the creative process, and would ultimately spring to life due to the collaborative energy of friends, colleagues, and most importantly, the children and families I work with every day.

The idea to use an artistic approach to deepen my and my students’ understanding of the scientific processes of fire ecology was sparked by a friend and fellow teacher,
Sherri Stange. As we talked during a local Audubon Society meeting, Sherri and I shared our stories of the recent fires that had all but destroyed huge areas of native habitat in Southern California. As teachers we were both struggling to find ways to help our students and ourselves understand what had happened to our environments, and why, exploring ideas to take action to help heal our natural communities and ourselves. She told me about a recent trip she had taken to Mt. St. Helen’s Interpretive Center in southern Washington State. Built after a massive volcanic eruption in 1980, the Center included a gift shop that sold pottery partially made from volcanic ash. The money generated from the sale of these artistic creations went toward reforestation efforts in the area. Even though I have little training in the use of art materials or ceramics, I felt certain the students, Dee Dee Zetlmaier (my teaching partner and dear friend), and I could come up with a way to incorporate ash from the burned forest into pottery and other art projects. We could sell the art pieces and raise money for reforestation efforts in our mountains. Together we could be proactive to help our environment and creative to mend our hearts by working towards a common goal. Thus, heArts for the Forest was born!
Amidst this very personal experience of the Old Fire and project itself, I will conduct a qualitative study to explore the nature of my own subjective experience using a heuristic approach. As a teacher I will explore questions such as: 1) Why did I choose to develop the heArts for the Forest project to teach ecological concepts, especially fire ecology, using an art oriented methodology? 2) Why do I consider connecting students’ knowledge of, and their relationship with, their natural environment with action for positive change as an important element of the teaching and learning process? 3) Can I use learning and logic alone to find meaning in profoundly moving experiences, and where do I turn when these intellectual realms fail me? 4) How do I find comfort, peace, and creative energy through collaboration? On a personal level, I will delve into the deeply subjective and intuitive understanding of the process of change. By entering into a self-dialogue in the form of reflective journaling, by thoughtfully reflecting on the artifacts created during heArts for the Forest, and by reviewing interviews with my partnering teacher and other educators, community members, parents and participating students, I will explore the often unacknowledged process of self-inquiry in the lives of teachers.
In Chapter 2, The Literature Review, I will discuss the relevant literature on the effectiveness of integrating art and science, specifically ecology, into the classroom. First, I will look at the importance of Arts Education, and secondly, the importance of Environmental Education. Finally, project based learning will be explored by looking at ecology and art put into action as students worked for positive change within their communities.

Chapter 3, The Methodology, will explain how I gathered relevant data by conducting interviews with colleagues and students, by keeping a personal journal as a part of my heuristic inquiry, by considering the artistic process of creating the artifacts and the artifacts themselves, and by posing questions relevant to the project and my own journey.

In Chapter 4, The Analysis, I will explore the nature of my profound experiences surrounding the Old Fire. By deeply reflecting on essential themes arising from my self-inquiry, I will discuss how these newfound understandings transformed me as a person and as a teacher.

In the Conclusion, Chapter 5, I will review my revelations and discoveries. Based on my research and
moving forward from my own internal frame of reference, I will explore the implications for my future and the future of other teachers.

I believe it is critical to connect students to their own profound experiences. In The Soul Of Education (2000), Rachael Kessler writes, “The connection among souls is ultimately what education is all about. There is no single right way to do it...but there are paths to the souls of students open to every teacher...all we need is the courage to walk these paths with our students” (p. 159).

The lessons I learned as a result of the Old Fire, both personally and as a teacher, simply began with the evacuation, the firestorm, and the return home to try and put the puzzle pieces of our hearts and lives back together. It would become my beloved family, my treasured friends, my dear students, and my mountain home that would teach me the most profound lessons of all.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The issue of teaching science, specifically ecology, and art in public schools today is a complicated and sometimes controversial one. The purpose of this project is to facilitate students learning about environmental concepts, processes, and the interrelationships of living organisms, and the ecology of the San Bernardino Mountains, using the vehicle of art. This review of relevant literature has been done to inform the project’s development, provide an historical perspective on the subject, and examine the meaningful, perhaps critical, implications of the integration of art and ecology into today’s classrooms.

This review of the literature explores the following topics. First, the importance of both art education and environmental education were researched and found to enhance problem-solving skills and emotional well-being. Secondly, I reviewed numerous projects and curricula that integrate art and ecology and studied them for their effectiveness in helping students develop an awareness and concern for environmental issues. I was specifically
interested in examples where students employed an artistic approach to educate their communities about environmental issues and sparked positive change. Finally, project based learning was explored by looking at ecology and art put into action as students worked for positive change within their communities.

For this project, various terms need to be defined to clarify the scope and intent of the proposed outcome:

1. **Ecology** is explained by Lankford (1997) to have "both biological and sociological dimensions. It is concerned with relationships among living organisms and their surroundings, including human societies and their geographical environments" (p. 49).

2. **Ecological stewardship** is further defined by Lankford (1997) to be "a robust and sustainable balance between...human needs, desires, or profits" and "restoration and preservation." He emphasizes that this kind of caring awareness "calls attention to the impact of choices on our physical and social environment" (p. 49).

3. **Biophilia** suggests, according to White and Stoecklin (1998) "that humans are genetically programmed by evolution with a need for the
natural outdoors" and "this innate, hereditary emotional attraction of humans to nature and other organisms" is "the genetic basis for human's positive responses to nature" (p. 2).

4. In two cross-cultural studies conducted by Kahn and Friedman (1995), and Howe, Kahn, and Friedman (1996), children in Houston, Texas and Brazilian Amazon, respectively used anthropocentric and biocentric reasoning when discussing their relationships with nature. Kahn and Lourenco (2002) define anthropocentric reasoning as being that which "appeals to how affecting the environment affects human beings...biocentric reasoning appeals to how nature itself has moral standing (e.g. intrinsic value or rights)" (p. 406).

5. In The Reenchantment of Art, Suzi Gablik (2002) speaks extensively of the "aesthetics of interconnectedness...an understanding of the organic and unified character of the universe" (p. 22), "...a recognition of the reality that all things are linked together in the cyclical process of nature" (p. 91).
The Importance of Arts Education

The present educational and political climate focuses on "back to basics", "multiple measures", and an overwhelming emphasis on test scores. These strategies and assessments alone are not enough to foster a life-long love of learning, develop critical thinking skills, and encourage a sense of personal responsibility toward each other and our environment. According to Hotvedt (2001), "integrating the arts in academics is one of the best ways to reach every child" (p. 73). Weinberger (1995) states, "A strong arts foundation builds creativity, concentration, problem solving, self-efficacy, coordination, attention, and self-discipline" (cited in Hotvedt, 2001, p. 73). Charles Fowler (1996) proposes "the arts introduce us to human perceptions and understanding we could not acquire any other way" and they contribute "to the development of young people in the cultivation of their emotional and spiritual well-being" (p. 53). He goes on to explain, "...the arts teach one of the great civilizing capacities—how to be empathetic...they develop our capacity for compassion and humaneness" (p. 52). Children are multi-faceted beings, not simply intellectual entities. Art indulges our (a child's) talents, explains Murphy (2002), perhaps capturing the interest and passion...
of our most at-risk students. A number of years ago, I taught a group of at risk fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. The class was small and the curriculum was individualized to meet the needs of each child. Due to their serious emotional needs and their damaged self-images, I heavily infused art into our daily lessons. Working with our audio-visual coordinator, my class painted the backgrounds for, and helped to film, our school's talent show. I also made certain the students spent a great deal of time outdoors, playing cooperative games and studying our local lake environment. These art and science activities helped to keep each of my students engaged and provided a much-needed means of expression for them. Teachers have a responsibility to teach the "whole" child, to offer a breadth of experience to make learning relevant for each student. Art provides a powerful vehicle to do just that!

The Importance of Environmental Education

Healthy, happy, well-educated students need healthy environments in which to live and learn. They also need a firm sense of environmental ethics. "Students with poor learning abilities (in particular) profited from...fieldtrips" (Pfligersdorffer, 1984; Rexer & Birkel,
Incorporating meaningful ecological studies and outdoor experiential learning opportunities, such as Project Feeder Watch sponsored by Cornell University’s Ornithology Lab, into the regular school curriculum may stimulate success in other academic areas. According to Rivkin (2000) “The richness and novelty of the outdoors stimulates brain development and function. The knowledge gained outdoors provides a foundation for literacy and science learning and can help children to learn to care for the environment” (p. 1). The emotional and spiritual needs of the child are also met through outdoor experiences. The studies of Berlyne, 1966; Hunt, 1965; and Watkins and Marsick, 1992 were considered by Bixler (2002) who stated, “Learning about the environment is partially a function of the unique and novel qualities of wild places. The novel qualities of natural environments motivate regular exploration and produce surprise and wonderment” (p. 798). Social and self-efficacy skills may also be improved. Bronfenbrenner believes that “Childhood play also provides sociocultural rewards gained from developing competence in wild environments. Humans are social creatures, learning from each other, negotiating the
meaning of events, and seeking social approval” (cited in Bixler, 2002).

Berman and Davis-Berman (2000) looked at “the positive effects on emotional well-being of several types of outdoor education programs” and found that among a wide variety of such programs “a unifying thread seems to be the facilitation of emotional growth and well-being” (p. 2). When a student feels emotionally secure and in harmony with herself and her environment, optimal learning can occur. As discussed in our Educational Masters classes, brain based research also suggests that the optimal attitude for effective learning is relaxed alertness. Korpela, Kytta, and Hartig (2002) examined children’s place preferences and viewed these preferences as environmental strategies because they enabled “positive emotional changes and renewal of cognitive capacities” (p. 387). When a student is engaged and learning, creative energy flows. Peat (2000) states, “We must become reconnected and engaged. If we can but regain our place in the natural flow of things, we need no longer support the rigidities, and we will thereby free our natural energy for more creative work” (p. 213). The following poem by Walt Whitman illustrates this point:
When I heard the learn'd astronomer When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me, When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them, When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture room How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself, In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time, Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

This poem appeared in an abstract entitled Effective Teaching Techniques For Outdoor Education by John Cederquist, 1999. One method to create rich learning environments, engage and connect students to their own "bioregions of consciousness," and allow their creative energy to flow is for teachers to integrate the arts and ecological studies into the daily curriculum. Living in the mountains of Southern California my students and I are surrounded by a beautiful natural environment every day. However, I find even we fall into the pattern of spending too much of our time indoors, not taking advantage of the wonders of nature right outside our doors; of not, for example, "walking the lake" every day to see what new birds have stopped to rest here on their migratory journeys south or north. As teachers we need to provide a
new lens through which our students can view the natural world with wonder, reverence, and understanding.

Art and Ecology

In answer to the question, "How is art related to ecology?" Neperud (1997) suggests, "Art celebrates the joy found in nature because nature itself is art" and "art is a visual language capable of conveying strong environmental messages" (p. 18). He goes on to explain, "To others art reflects ecological history, values, and hopes for future environmental issues" (p. 18). Neperud also points out that "art and ecology are related to the concerns of the society, giving rise to a socially responsible linkage of art to ecology" (p. 19) thus reiterating Gablik's "connective aesthetics" (1995). Woodhouse & Knapp discuss the fact that progressive educator, John Dewey, promoted learning in an environmental or outdoor context more than 90 years ago. "Experience (outside the school) has its geographical aspect, its artistic and its literacy, its scientific and its historical sides. All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it" (Dewey, 1915, p. 91).
When designing curricula, decisions need to be made as to what to include and what is dispensable. Kieran Egan (1986) believes,

The early curriculum would [should] be designed to introduce children to the great stories by which we can make sense of our world and experience...These are the stories of science, technology, language, history, life on earth, the stars and planets, and so on...One of the greatest human stories is that of the elaborate creation of images...that activity we call art. The story of art can become meaningful only as we help the child see the ways in which our actions can express and make public some undefinable thing within us. (pp. 108-109)

To be meaningful and relevant, learning needs to be contextual and experiential. May (2000) claimed that "effective environmental educators apply their competencies in context" and "the teaching methods and style environmental educators frequently use are constructivist, student directed, and experiential in orientation" (p. 6). Since most of our learning takes place in the context of where we spend most of our time, that is, at home and at school, Heimlich (1994) proposed that we use these environments to teach the principles of
ecology. He explains, “The word ecology is derived from two Greek words oikos meaning house, and logos, meaning thought or study. Often we refer to an extended home, such as a habitat, an ecosystem, or biosphere” (p. 3). The most meaningful, relevant learning can begin at “home”.

Teachers can help students, and themselves, fulfill the spiritual and emotional need to respect the “essential connectedness rather than our separateness...the feeling of belonging to a larger whole” (Gablik, 2002, p. 5-6). Curricula should include opportunities to learn responsible, respectful, behavior toward the environment. In 1997, a UNESCO directive stated, “to achieve that outcome, environmental educators must provide students with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment” (cited in Ballantyne & Packer, 1996, p. 25). According to M. C. Richards, as cited in Fogarty (1991, p. 77),

Unless we educate for wholeness in person and wholeness of our earth planet, we are not really intelligent. In our school subjects, we have the opportunity to study humankind as a family, and the heart as the body of that family. We have the possibility of developing a curriculum which is like
a map of its dreams and its history, a map of interconnectedness.

All teachers should be environmental educators, integrating ecology using the voice of art into their curriculum. Fogarty explains, "A distinct advantage of the integrative model is the ease with which the learner is lead to the interconnectedness and interrelationships among the disciplines" (1991, p. 77). By integrating these critical subjects into the curriculum, teachers' open doors of meaning and access for their students. Staniszewski (1995) emphasizes the role of the teacher, "The ability to do something - the power to...create - is founded upon an individual's belief that he or she has the right to do it. An individual must have faith in his or her ability, and then, most important, there must be access to the arenas of achievement and power" (p. 128).

Ecology and Art in Action

I explored a number of models that integrated ecological principles and art in a community forum. Morris (1998), along with a local Appalachian mountain artist, designed a collaborative project integrating visual art, drama, music, and dance dealing with ecological issues in Mountain Cultural heritage and labor history. This
school-wide unit included parents, community leaders, and artists. Morris concluded, "Learning became relevant because voices were expressed and heard" (p. 19).

Another example of blending art and environmental education was found in a study conducted by Vaughn, Gack, Solorazano, and Ray (2003). A course on Scarlet Macaw conservation and natural history was conducted for schoolchildren in a Costa Rican village. Learning materials such as coloring books were used in the classroom and were taken home to engage the families in the unit. The authors "detected a high level of information transfer from children to their parents concerning Scarlet Macaw conservation" (p. 16). The authors believed "Environmental education should be a continuous learning process where individuals become aware of their environment and acquire knowledge, values, skills, and experiences to solve environmental problems for present and future generations" (p. 12).

At Pinkerington Elementary in Ohio, students studied contemporary ecological art as it related to a marsh area next to their campus. As they do each year, teachers chose a community-based theme to develop throughout the curriculum. Birt, Krug, and Sheridan (1997) describe the theme for the school year 1992-1993, "Good Education
Equals Good Earth," by saying, "The goal was to help the school community discover the unique natural beauty within their own backyard" (p. 8). Students and teachers integrated their study of the local marsh into all aspects of the curriculum, and used art projects to educate others about the marsh environment they grew to know and care about. They explained that this example and others like it "illustrate how action-oriented inquiry makes learning relevant and valuable to people of all ages through exploring the poetry of place" (p. 7).

Conclusion

The importance of integrating art and ecology into the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual framework of today’s schools is more critical than ever. As stated by Hollis (1997) "An art curriculum that deals with ecological issues can empower students with the understanding that they, as creative individuals, can have an active voice in protecting their environment and changing current devastating ecological trends" (p. 21). We want, indeed, for ourselves and our children, healthy hearts, homes and communities.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this heuristic inquiry is to reflect on my thoughts, feelings, and deeply intuitive understandings surrounding my heArts for the Forest project. By exploring the processes of my own internal mystery, I will examine my personal and professional transformation, and explore the implications for other teachers.

By conducting heuristic research I will answer these essential questions: 1) How did the experience of developing heArts for the Forest relate to a deeper understanding of the benefits of blending science education and the arts? 2) Why do I consider it critically important for students to develop an understanding of and a personal relationship with their natural environment? 3) How do students then use their knowledge to take action for positive change? 4) What is the personal value of exploring and putting into practice teaching methods not exclusively intellectual, especially when a learning community of students and teachers live through a profound experience such as the Old Fire? 5) Can collaborative teaching and learning lead me to generate creative energy...
and feel more confident in planning meaningful, positive, empowering experiences for students? 6) Did my views of teaching change or shift as a result of implementing the heArts for the Forest project?

In order to answer these essential questions at their deepest, most personal level, I will engage in heuristic research. Heuristic inquiry, as a methodology, has the phenomenological intent of looking into one's own experience. Heuristic inquiry is a qualitative reflection, exploring the relationship between the experience and the self. The goal of heuristic research is to uncover a deep understanding of our own internal processes and to bring about growth in our self-knowledge. To assist with this self-inquiry, I will draw from the sources mentioned above and described below.

Moustakas (1990) describes the process of heuristic inquiry as "...entering into dialogue with the phenomenon to speak directly to one’s own experience, to be questioned by it. In this way, one is able to encounter and examine it...until one has uncovered it’s multiple meanings...core themes and essences. One’s own self-discoveries, awarenesses, and understandings are the initial steps in the process. The heuristic researcher is seeking to understand the wholeness and the unique
patterns of experiences” (p. 16). I chose a heuristic approach for this study because it will lead me to a fuller understanding of my own profound experience surrounding my heArts project and hopefully lead me to a transformative awareness as a person and a teacher.

I plan on gathering data for this heuristic research by engaging in a self-dialogue in the form of reflective journaling. In addition, I will review and focus on artifacts created during heArts for the Forest. I will conduct and reflect on interviews with other environmental educators, Jason Meyers and Bob Reed, with the students who were an integral part of heArts, and with my partnering teacher and dear friend, Dee Dee Zetlmaier. A personal interview conducted by Mrs. Zetlmaier will also be thoughtfully considered.
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Heuristic inquiry, as a methodology, allows one to explore their internal frame of reference. It is a deeply reflective process by which a person thoughtfully examines their most personal intuitions, themes, and essences to arrive at a more genuine understanding of a profound experience. In this way, the reflective process leads to an analysis of the individual components of an experience as well as a synthesis of its most meaningful aspects. This chapter will delve into my personal journey by analyzing significant themes represented by reflections on 1) my own history, 2) personal journals, 3) personal and student-created artifacts, 4) the HeArts for the Forest project, and 5) collaborative teaching and learning. Finally, I will explore the most significant aspects of this heuristic data to characterize my transformation as a person and an educator.

Art and Science

HeArts for the Forest

While participating in the Integrative Studies Masters Program, I was most fortunate to take a course led by visionary artist David Reid-Moore. During this class
David presented us with opportunities to explore how creativity, and specifically visual arts, can inform and breathe meaning into the teaching process. David always encouraged us to "ask big questions" with our art. He believes "There is a vast landscape of ideas hidden in deep questioning." for we "...see them as a validation of (our) own internal mystery". It was while taking this art course in the fall of 2003 that we experienced the Old Fire. I am certain my growth, both personally and as a teacher, was influenced by these two seemingly unrelated experiences occurring in my life at the same time. The "big questions" and challenges, for my students and I, that grew out of the evacuation and the aftermath of the fire required creative solutions. Being immersed in David’s art class at this time led me to consider an artistic, meaningful answer.

I have never considered myself an artist. My earliest recollection of doing art in school was being asked to copy an example put up on the board by the teacher. In my childish memory it seemed I could never make my picture look anything like the "real" one. To compound this lack of confidence in my creative abilities, my brothers and my father were talented artists, drawing, sketching, and painting for school assignments or as a hobby. From my
school experiences, I believed I couldn't draw as well as they did. Whenever I needed artistic help with a project I would necessarily defer to one of them for assistance; it always helped my grade! Somehow I got the notion that art was created to please others, and if it didn't then it wasn't good. Consequently, I stopped trying to create art and worked to become an avid appreciator of it!

When the idea to begin an after school art and science program first came to me, all the misgivings and childhood doubts about myself as an artist surfaced. How could I teach art when I couldn't do it? Then I remembered David's art class. As part of the class my fellow teachers and I participated in making breathtaking sand paintings, infused with creativity and love (see Appendix A). We designed and crafted mandalas visually representing our life journeys. I had experienced a change in my self-concept...I could be creative and artistic, helped along by the inspiration and support of caring teachers and partners. This experience of visualizing and artistically expressing my innermost feelings, feelings that would otherwise lie heavy and silent in my heart forever, awakened in me a voice with which to sing, a path to transformative thinking that I hungered to share with my students.
From my review of the literature, I learned art and teaching are both grounded in an active dialogue with the physical and social environment. Gablik (2002) proposed that artists must become actively involved in "...restoring awareness of our symbiotic relationship with nature..." (p. 77). Since I was a young child, I have sought meaning and comfort from the natural world (see Appendix B). My knowledge, respect and gratitude for the environment have led me to grow into the person and teacher I am today. I wanted to guide my students towards gaining a worldview of caring awareness (Lankford, 1997) and "...a recognition in the cyclical processes of nature" (Gablik, p. 91). By developing a program to teach ecological concepts using an art-oriented methodology, I hoped to, as Fowler (1996) stated, "...contribute to the development of young people in the cultivation of their emotional and spiritual well-being" (p. 53). Being honest with myself, however, my purposes were far from merely altruistic. I needed healing as much as the students. I needed to replace my fire-filled, terrifying dreams with the healing power of collective creativity, to immerse myself in acts of re-creation in the face of destruction. As much as I turn to nature for wisdom and renewal, I once
again found myself turning to the children to receive these same gifts in heArts for the Forest.

In reflecting on my students’ surveys and artwork created during heArts, I am reminded of how we came together as a teaching and learning family, vulnerable and needy; seeking in each other, and the creative process, the healing power of understanding and hope (see Appendix C). We would begin each meeting by sitting down at our common table together to have a snack ("break bread together"), visit, and share parts of our lives with each other. As we began our science/art lessons and projects, the lines would quickly, almost imperceptibly, blur between ages, grades, status, and roles. If anyone had an idea, they were free and excited to share it. If someone had an expertise or talent, they were invited to teach it. Neither teacher nor student owned the knowledge or skill by him or herself. A climate of equity, mutual respect and fairness prevailed. As our hands and hearts and minds were busy, we exchanged stories of the evacuation, of the fire, of our fears and our dreams. These simple, yet profound, moments will be in my heart forever. As author Richard Louv (2005) explained, “We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth, and to tell our stories. These are the moments when the world is
made whole” (p. 310). My students, friends, and I reveled in the awe and promise of surviving a life-altering situation together, as a community and as a family. I am forever grateful for these gifts we gave each other in heArts for the Forest.

Art as a Metaphor

In The Voice of Knowledge: A Toltec Wisdom Book, Don Miguel Ruiz (2004) reflects on how we create our communities by sharing our personal stories and our dreams. He states, “Your art is the art of creating stories and sharing stories. If I met you today, I would see the real you behind your story. I would see you as the force of life creating art through you” (p. 75). The life force in each of us makes up the threads of our existence: shining, vibrating threads with which we weave the tapestry of our lives. We weave our stories on the loom of experience, supported by the warp of faith, and connected with many other threads throughout our lifetimes. My life as a teacher has connected me to countless others. My story, my art, is inextricably woven into the lives of my family, friends, students and their families, colleagues, and my broader community, both local and global. Our lives together are involving, evolving stories, especially when we share compelling events.
Art, as a metaphor, allows our minds and hearts to reach beyond the ordinary or the obvious. When interviewed by my dear friend and partnering teacher, Dee Dee Zetlmaier, my sadness in the wake of destruction during and after the Old Fire, and my personal struggle to find understanding through scientific knowledge alone, were apparent (see Appendix D). I needed to reach beyond the ordinary and enter into an act of reenchantment. The concept of reenchantment is explained by authors Crowell, Caine, and Caine (1998) as "...a recognition that brings "self" and our relationship with Earth back into focus...it is about regaining a sense of connection and seeing that we are part of a greater whole" (p. xxi). In the process of developing the idea for heArts for the Forest and seeing it come to fruition (see Appendix E), I felt immersed in the act, the art I would say, of giving birth. The whole experience became so very much more meaningful and valuable than I ever could have thought possible or could have planned for. We spoke many times in our Masters classes about the Principles of Connectedness (presented to us like gifts by our teachers and mentors, Sam Crowell and Bob London). The mantra for our project became one of these principles - The whole is, indeed, more than the sum of the parts. I realized each of us
involved in heArts brought a part of ourselves, a thread, albeit a sad, struggling, and broken one. By our collective compassion and creativity we were able to weave these threads together to become whole again. Smiling faces covered with ash from the “Mother Log” busily drawing images of death and renewal tell a story of acceptance, healing, hope, and connection to an understanding greater than ourselves (see Appendix E). I believe art leads us to see the very essence of a thing, a kinesthetic meditation opening our awareness like a blossom to the sun.

Impermanence, Acceptance, and Transformation

The entire experience of the Old Fire and everything that unfolded as a result of it offered me an intimate lesson in impermanence, acceptance, and transformation. At this point in my life I’ve welcomed birth, mourned after death, suffered through divorce, overcome poverty and illness, rejoiced at moving forward. However, the almost complete destruction of the forest I loved, my womb, my touchstone, my place of renewal devastated my heart and shook my soul (see Appendix F). I was caught off-guard by the depth of my grief and my inability to reason my way out of such a state of mind. My knowledge of ecological concepts and environmental issues has been carefully built
over a lifetime. It gave me a sense of confidence and pride to be somewhat of an “expert” on a subject I cared deeply about. I felt that it was an honorable attribute to be a staunch environmentalist...to the point of arrogance, perhaps. It was who I am; it defined me as a person.

Reflecting on these reactions and attitudes has helped me realize just how completely I characterize myself by my beliefs, my job as a teacher, my various roles as a parent, partner, daughter, sister, and friend. This experience showed me I needed to delve into my deepest intuitions to uncover this essential knowledge. I hold on to each of these roles with a viselike grip, as if without them wrapped around me like a protective cloak, I would cease to exist. What a revelation! When my environment and my place in the community were being threatened, I fell apart. I was the tree bursting into flame. I was the mountain blackened and shriveled, dead fingers reaching desperately toward the heartwood. My body was felled by the chainsaw, loaded onto the truck and hauled away (see Appendix F). It wasn’t only the forest I was mourning; I was grieving for myself.

Being so vividly reminded of the impermanence of life, and my place as a part of it, led me to struggle with acceptance. I needed to turn to the children for
wisdom once again. My friend and fellow teacher, Lisa Wysocki, had a house in Cedar Glen, the site of a firestorm that burned hundreds of houses, including her family’s home. She shared with me that when she first returned with her children to view the devastation, all they cared about was if their friends and the animals were unharmed. Beyond that, anything else was sad, but all right. I heard children express these sentiments time and again during heArts for the Forest. They reminded me that repeating our stories, our shared vision, of the fire was a form of acknowledgement, but then I needed to bow to the quiet, intuitive knowledge of acceptance and move on.

Another friend and fellow environmentalist, Jean Fredrickson, lost her house and everything in it during the fire. I saw her soon afterwards and was overwhelmed with compassion as she told me her experience. After hearing about our art and science program, she expressed an interest in buying a portrait drawn by one of the children. The piece she chose was of a woman’s slightly smiling face appearing out of an ash-filled background. Jean said it would be the beginning of her new art collection. Her gesture of support for the children, her attitude of acceptance, and her willingness to face her loss and be transformed by it was like a gift to me. It
made me think about how I treasure my possessions and how devastated I would be without them. Yet, Jean taught me that the essence, the heart and the soul of the awesome person she is wasn’t diminished, but infused with spirit, even transformed by her experience. The natural world that both Jean and I respect and care about grows and survives by changing. To remain the same is to die. I have a deeper, more clear understanding now of how this truth is necessary and active in the world.

Action for Positive Change

From the moment I returned to Lake Gregory Elementary after the Old Fire and saw the looks on my student’s faces, I knew they were feeling the same sense of loss and fear I was feeling (see Appendix G). In my heart and mind I knew I needed to find a path for us to walk that would lead to healing. In one of Dr. Bob London’s Master’s classes called “Spirituality in Education”, we often discussed being sensitive and open to what is needed at any given moment. This takes awareness, compassion, and a willingness to adapt to do what is necessary for our students. In this situation I knew it was necessary to guide the students to take some action towards a positive outcome, instead of sitting with frightened and heavy hearts feeling like helpless victims.
Doll (1993) suggests "Purposiveness is a major part of being human, and part of purposiveness is a desire for and action towards closure, resolutions, definitions" (p. 58). As a child, I was extremely shy and hardly ever stepped beyond the straight and narrow line of what I was taught was acceptable behavior. Never make waves; fly below the radar. I now understand that this mindset prevented me from being fully human. Many opportunities to make a difference were lost to me because I was too busy keeping my head down. I was aware, and I did feel great compassion for all living things, but I couldn’t muster the courage to act against injustice or stand up for myself. It has taken me many years (in fact, I’m still working on it) but I am finally able to reflect on what needs to be done, ask for advice, and seek cooperation to facilitate positive action to make the world a better place. As a teacher, I wanted my students to experience the restorative energy, the empowerment, and the compassion that working beyond yourself can bring.

The heArts for the Forest program gave my students and I just such an opportunity. It was with humility and pride that I watched all of our young artists work diligently to make their pictures and ceramics, and then sell them, ultimately raising thousands of dollars toward
education and reforestation efforts (see Appendix H). The day we were able to participate in planting beautiful, healthy new trees around our lake was the culmination of a dream. One of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead came to mind that says, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world." This day we reminded each other of how we should respect and partner with the Earth in thoughtful, positive ways. Respect means to see something again but in a different, deeper, more meaningful way. Every child, parent, grandparent, teacher, ranger, and volunteer present that day came away with a renewed respect for our environment. I felt as if I'd been given the gift of humanity and grace.

Collaborative Teaching and Learning

While once participating in an environmental education seminar, I was asked to close my eyes and visualize the first memory I had of learning something and the circumstances surrounding that memory. My memory was of sitting on my Dad's lap reading fairy tales. The way he read them, they always had a goofy, funny ending. I have loved reading for as long as I remember, and although I realized years later that he changed every ending to make it as irreverent and as silly as possible, I know I
learned my joy of stories from him. Thinking about it now, I’m certain I’ve learned everything worthwhile in my life from people I have developed relationships with and care about.

I wouldn’t be the teacher I am today, and heArts for the Forest never would have come to life if it hadn’t been for my treasured friend, mentor, and teaching partner Dee Dee Zetlmaier. Deepening my personal and professional relationship with such a compassionate, loving, patient, and energetic soul has been one of the greatest gifts of this experience. Dee Dee has taught me what it means to be loyal and supportive beyond question. Reflecting back on our journey together, I can scarcely remember where one of us begins and the other one ends! We granted each other courage in the face of uncertainty, a trust and willingness to explore possibilities together and then make the leap forward. I would never have been able to take the risks I did without her at my side. With humor and creativity, we never let the fact that we didn’t know exactly what we were doing stop us. We were able to give each other, and consequently our students, faith in the process, and the insight and determination to succeed.

Through my Master’s program and the heArts project, the way I think about teaching and learning changed. As
teachers we are often expected to be the "sage on the stage", the exclusive bearer (at least in our classrooms) of all knowledge and control. To give up this supposed power, especially to share it with students, is often viewed as threatening or even (heaven forbid!) soft hearted. From working with our Cohort to spending all of those after-school hours with the heArts kids, my most poignant memories revolve around sharing ideas, celebrating each others strengths, filling in each others weaknesses (see Appendix I). As I helped to develop these reciprocal relationships where the playing field is leveled and everyone gets to play, I experienced a sense of freedom and shared responsibility, leading me to take risks I would have not dared to take on my own.

As this reflective process has shown me, I often have experienced the most transformative learning and teaching moments in collaboration with unexpected circumstances. One of these life-changing opportunities came as I visited the Evacuation Center at Norton Air Force Base during the fire. Many of my students and their families had to go there until the extent of the fire and its destruction was known. I missed the children and was very anxious to see whoever might be there. As I walked in, I was tackled by happy kids and greeted by parents and other community
members. A palpable feeling of caring and generosity filled the air of this huge, cavernous airplane hanger. Displaced families had each gathered small groupings of cots and had created cozy burrows to wait out the evacuation in. There were medical stations, counseling facilities, a post office, preschool, video and computer rooms for the older kids, snack stands, kennels, kitchens, and even voting booths. The day I was there, the San Manuel Band of Indians was serving a turkey dinner with all the trimmings free to anyone who desired. A community, in the truest sense of the word, had been created out of mutual need and compassion. Dolly, our school custodian, had come to the Center with her family and an elderly friend who, sadly, passed away soon after they had arrived. Even in her worry over the fire and her grief over the death of a friend, she felt upheld and comforted by the kindness of strangers. This community of evacuees taught me a lesson in humility, humanity, and hope. I know my students who stayed there were all taught the same lesson by this rich experience.

Another lesson arrived unexpectedly in the mail from a fourth grade class in Florida. A box filled with stuffed teddy bears and flower seeds accompanied letters of kindness and best wishes from these wonderful students and
their teacher who we didn't even know (see Appendix J). This lesson in random kindness took on an even deeper meaning when my students voted to send the bears to Loma Linda Children's Hospital to comfort cancer patients. I was proud that my students thought of someone in need other than themselves, and felt the desire to "pay it forward". Our little teachers from Florida planted more than flower seeds by their compassionate gesture!

Collaborative teaching and learning proved to be the beginning of a long-lasting relationship when Dee Dee and I went to interview Jason Meyers and Bob Reed of the Children's Forest. Soon after starting heArts for the Forest, we realized the need for information on fire ecology to share with the students. These two gentlemen were generous with their time and enthusiastic to share their knowledge and passion for the forest with us (see Appendix K). One of their beliefs was the need for real world experiences in nature, leading to a more balanced relationship with the environment. Jason, who is responsible for the education programs at the Children's Forest, had the opportunity to incorporate an artist into a recent week-long outdoor camping experience for young adults. He found that using an artistic approach to teaching environmental processes helped the students
connect to nature more creatively and to think more abstractly about very concrete ideas. Bob also had led students into valuable learning opportunities by having students use photography to look more closely at and become more interested in native plants. I felt heartened to hear that Jason and Bob found blending art and science as exciting and successful as we had in heArts. It is very invigorating for me to share methods that spark understanding for students with a fellow teacher.

Synthesis

When teaching and learning emerge from a genuine, profound experience, insights are often revealed which change one’s personal and professional life forever. Like a butterfly emerging from its long, dark night within the chrysalis, where every cell of its existence has been ripped apart only to be reborn anew, I too have emerged from the ashes of the Old Fire a more humble person and a wiser, more compassionate educator. In an essay written by Dr. Sam Crowell (2002), the importance of self-cultivation and the development of virtue are discussed. He states, “Through the process of self-cultivation...we are able to let go of our attachments and open ourselves to a higher potential” (p. 20). My personal journey, as viewed through the lens of deep self-reflection, has allowed me to shed
many of my previously held beliefs about myself and realize greater possibilities.

By engaging myself in this heuristic conversation, I have become aware of recurrent themes running through the symphony of my thoughts and feelings. I struggle with taking risks, stepping beyond known terrain and into a visionary mode where a wealth of possibilities may await me. The natural world and my students teach me over and over again that life means changing in order to grow. I need to see myself as an artist, creating my story and helping to weave the stories of others. Making the mental and emotional shift from objects to relationships is the path to self-actualization and virtue. I can be a voice for what children need to realize their own dreams and possibilities. By partnering with others in collaborative endeavors, I am able to invite inspiration and transformation into education. By being open to moments ripe with meaning I cultivate my own heart and mind, and consequently have more to offer my students. I’ve learned through this self-reflection to have the courage to do the things I ask my students to do; reach beyond yourself, try something new, develop wisdom and compassion, and act respectfully and responsibly to make our world a more loving place.
As a heuristic researcher, I have worked to find the deepest meaning in my experiences surrounding the Old Fire of 2003. The implications of this research have been transformative to me personally and professionally, and, I believe, hold possibilities for other educators as well. Doll (1993) explains, “This hermeneutic view where we engage ourselves in conversation with our histories provides us with a concept where curriculum is not just a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, but is a vehicle for creating ourselves and our culture” (p. 131). By reflecting on my thoughts and feelings, then accepting and learning from them, I have arrived at a more genuine understanding of what it means to be a true partner in learning with my colleagues and students.

As teachers we need to be willing to create a climate of compassion, equity, and shared responsibility. Journaling and self-reflection should be an integral part of our lives as teachers. If indeed we “teach who we are” as Ashley Montague once said, we honestly must seek to know who we are. Self-reflection and metacognition, where we think our own about internal frame of reference and our
mental processes, are valuable strategies to model for our children. Realizing we, teachers and students, have the capacity to learn, share our experiences, and be transformed by them gives us feelings of competency and hope. Beyond acquiring knowledge, we must help teach our students to hunger for understanding and empathy.

We are rooted in the natural world; trees firmly planted in the Earth who never cease reaching for heaven. When we develop a caring relationship with the environment, we are also caring for ourselves. As teachers we are morally obligated to lead our children on a path of respect for themselves and our world. Working with our students to take action for positive change strengthens their confidence and critical thinking skills. It helps them believe in their efficacy as human beings. Joanna Macy wisely said, "...know that all of life is flowing through you all the time, that you are inseparable from it. Through our action in the world there is a release into our true nature, because our true nature is interactive" (Kaza & Kraft, p. 152-153). Knowing and understanding our connection to the natural world, and our part in the cyclical nature of the universe, brings our students and ourselves peace of mind and heart.
Using art-oriented methodologies across all areas of the curriculum can only aid us as teachers in reaching all students and assisting them in developing their own creative processes and imaginations. Author Amy Tan (2006) once said, "...the nature of the spirit is a freer imagination. I’ve often thought that imagination was the conduit to compassion, and compassion is a true spiritual nature" (p. 493-494). By being able to think more creatively and abstractly about concrete ideas, students will be able to find solutions to the challenges in their lives and grow to be compassionate members of society. In our roles as teachers and facilitators, we should not only dream forward, but teach forward!
APPENDIX A

PICTURE OF SAND PAINTING
APPENDIX B

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL
You have to love living in these mountains—I mean love it as you would a treasured, eccentric friend. As with any other enduring relationship you learn to accept the great times, like a pristine spring day when the dogwoods have begun to bloom, along with the difficult ones, such as driving along the Rim of the World highway in a “white-out”. It’s not always convenient, comfortable, or even the most practical choice you could make as far as a place to live is concerned. But then there is the wind, dancing through the treetops making them appear to be a choir of signers interpreting nature’s mysteries for us modern, deaf humans. And there’s the billowing fog filling the Valley below while holding up above an unimaginably turquoise sky. Or whisper walking along a well worn path after the last snow has melted, finding here a patch of baby blue-eyes and there a stand of leopard lilies. I do love living in these mountains.

How did I grow to need (hunger for) nature so much? I feel more peaceful and accepted (connected) by the seashore, in the mountains, surrounded by desert than in the grandest cathedral anywhere in the world. In nature I am in the presence of the Divine (just like when I hold my children and grandchildren). One of my favorite poems by Ben Okri wisely states:

There is wonder here  
And there is surprise  
In everything the unseen moves.  
The ocean is full of songs.  
The sky is not an enemy.  
Destiny is our friend.

I began my life near a place full of songs. I was born and spent the first years of my life in Santa Monica, California. My family moved to the San Fernando Valley in 1954 when I was three years old. Like all the other post WWII settlers, we move into a neighborhood carved out of old orange groves and horse ranches, which in turn had replaced the old ranchos and land grants surrounding Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana. Everyone had lots of kids, all about the same age – ex-military families staking their claim to the American Dream. Our housing tract was at the edge of the foothills of the Santa Susanna Mountains. On the days we weren’t in school, my brothers, my friends, and I would pack a lunch and literally head for the hills! No one worried about us as long as we were home by dark. We would eat oranges off the trees and track bobcat footprints through the groves. We would follow the trace of a creek bed through the eucalyptus breaks until we found a pool filled with reed and, hopefully, a frog or two. To be given this gift of freedom, the grace to explore and use our imaginations, and to just BE in nature planted a seed in my heart and soul that would grow for the rest of my life.
My family went camping every summer. My mom would fill our station wagon with "everything but the kitchen sink" (really-just ask my dad!) and we would hit the road for Carpenteria or Sequoia or Yosemite. As I grew into a teenager and became increasingly shy as the world became evermore confusing, these times spent at the beach or in the mountains were the only times I felt I could step beyond myself and be in balance. This feeling only became stronger as time went on. So after graduating from High School and spending a year in college, I went to live and work in Yosemite National Park. Yosemite is a true wonder of the world and, like John Muir, I was transformed by the spirit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The spectacular valleys, meadows, waterfalls, and high country passes have their own languages. They spoke directly to my heart of hearts, and made more sense to me than anything I had ever known. I found a stream of connection, understanding and peace in these wild places that I would return to drink from many times during my lifetime, if only in my dreams.

While living in Yosemite, I met some friends who were planning a mountain climbing expedition to the Andes Mountains of Peru. Their goal was to scale a peak called Jirichanca, hummingbird’s beak of ice! I was invited to join them and didn’t hesitate for a moment before agreeing. I didn’t realize at the time that this little “valley girl” would be stretched to her limit (and beyond) physically, mentally, culturally and spiritually by our journey into the corriderras of South America. I was ultimately grateful for yet another opportunity for transformation with mountains as my teacher.

Years later I moved once again to live in the nurturing embrace of the mountains, this time to the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California. I had been raised in a place where I could explore and be outside with the
plants and animals and I wanted the same blessing for my own children. The beauty and the cycles of nature, along with the support of a small community, provided us with a rich and nourishing home.

Old Waterman Canyon road was built along the original wagon trail leading into the southwestern slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains. Winding beside the creek, the road is strewn with large and small boulders washed down the canyon in times of heavy rain. A few homes dot the roadside, but driving along the “old road” gives you the feeling of entering a time warp back to what California was like a hundred years ago. Coastal sage scrub married with the riparian habitats that border the trace of the stream running through the canyon offer a glimpse of what nature intended Southern California foothills to be. Fire and drought-adapted plant and animal species fill the canyon except around human habitations, where non-native varieties have been planted. Neo-tropical vegetation requires lots of water and contains volatile compounds that can spread fire quickly. What price beauty! During the years I spent raising my children in the mountains I would often drive through Waterman Canyon on our way up and down “the hill”, either for the sheer beauty or serenity of this unique place or because one of the dilapidated cars we always seemed to be driving in those days was overheating. Especially in the summer we would gratefully stop at the bend in the “old road” where a community of huge alders and eucalyptus trees shade the creek. While the car engine was cooling off, I’d watch the kids splash and explore around in the chilly water. This ritual became one of my favorite, yet ultimately bittersweet, family memories for it was at this spot that the Old Fire was sparked by an arson and how the firestorm of 2003 got it’s name.

It didn’t happen suddenly...in fact we were all well aware that we were in the sixth year of an extended drought in Southern California. First just a few trees turned bright orange as the bark beetles sucked the life sustaining fluids right out of them. As weeks and months went by more and more trees fell victim, first to the effects of an overcrowded forest and not enough water, and second to a tiny insect just doing it’s job of thinning a stressed ecosystem in a time of limited resources. The bark beetle isn’t a newcomer. It has been a part of our forest ecosystem for perhaps thousands of years, at least. But as the drought continued, everyone would change their tone of voice when speaking of the dreaded bark beetles and the destruction they were seemingly causing to our thick green forest. Even those of us who had some knowledge of forest processes were amazed at the massive effect a small insect could have on a huge forest ecosystem. It reminded me of a quote by Margaret Mead, which states “Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world...” These beetles were biologically committed, as it were, to putting the forest back in balance by killing off the weakened trees so fewer, stronger trees could survive the drought conditions. Even though I understand
intellectually that this process was an important cycle of nature, I felt heartsick over the "loss" of so many trees. Like everyone else, I'd grown to love and appreciate the evergreen forests and oak woodlands, the chaparral covered foothills and jewel-like lakes.

Ours is definitely a human-impacted and nearly "man-made" environment—but it's my home, a place I moved to by choice, a community I stayed in to raise my children, a living, breathing companion and nurturing friend. And I bore witness to the destruction and resurrection of this friend as if I were watching and waiting with a family member who was going through chemotherapy, everything destroyed only to be built back up, growing healthy again, renewed but changed, infused with a wisdom and a deep understanding of the nature of transformation and our part in this cycle of life. Adapt or die.
APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEYS/ARTWORK PHOTOS
1. How did you feel about the Old Fire when it happened? It made me feel scared and angry when I heard someone did this with a machete. I could see the fire from my house. My dad was down the hill when it started. He had to go up through big bears. When we went down the way Big Bear to get to our grandfather's house and the ash was there.

2. Did you ever think that fire could be good for the forest? I never though that NEVER ever.

3. Did you like to do art? I did like to draw and paint.

4. Why did you want to join Hearts of the Forest? I like to be challenged and I love art and the forest.

5. What were you hoping to learn and do in Hearts? I wanted to learn art better. I wanted to know how to know how the Hearts works.

6. What do you feel about living in the mountain communities? I think that we the people are lucky to be here because of people and nice people that help if needed.
1. How did you feel about the fire when it happened? It felt scary. The thought of your house burning down is scary.
2. Did you ever think that fire could be good in the forest? After reading books, I learned what can be good.
3. Did you like to do art? What kind? Drawing was fun.
4. Why did you want to join a forest program? I thought it would be a cool after-school program.
5. What were you hoping to learn and do in the forest program? I expected the thing that we were doing was what we had been doing.
6. How do you feel about living in a mountain community? I felt that people on the mountain have more danger than down the hill.
I was scared, Dad and I were mad at who started the fire. It was full of questions. Would it ever see my home again? I thought fire could not be good. I loved art, clay, painting, drawing, and more. It joined us. It could escape the world, the mountain is free.
1. How did you feel about the Old Fire when it happened?
   I knew that this kind of thing happens to a lot of people, but I just couldn’t believe that it happened to me. And all the things I ever look for granted suddenly became so important.

2. Did you ever think that fire could be good?
   At that time I was thinking fire was absolutely horrible. I knew before that fire helped a lot of things grow, but at that moment I thought that all fire could do was be horrible and burn things.

3. Did you like to do art? What kind? If in anyway writing counts as art then I liked to write and I also liked to draw a little.

4. Why did you want to join heArts for the Forest?
   It looked really fun to do clay and draw with other stuff, but I also was interested in helping the forest grow again.

5. What were you hoping to learn and do in heArts?
   I was really looking forward to doing clay stuff. I was hoping to learn to draw better too.

6. How do you feel about living in the mountains community?
   I’ve never really wanted to live down the mountain so I’m happy that I live in the mountains. And I can’t imagine living without snow!
APPENDIX D

PERSONAL INTERVIEW
Questions for Nancy regarding Project

Q. When you think of the Old Fire what are some of the most meaningful, transformative memories?

A. The first transformative experience was driving off the mountain with hundreds of other people in the middle of the night. It was a silent, somber exodus of one car behind the other and people stopping to help each other when anybody needed assistance. As we got to the backside of the mountain it looked like the whole world was on fire. There were flames on both sides of the road. It was the most surreal experience; it was pitch black, completely quiet, and all you could see were cars full of people, animals and things moving along. It was alarming diving through the fire down Cajon Pass and then to Redlands where we stayed. I got out of the car and collapsed on the sidewalk.

On Tuesday, one of our friends had a pass to come up the mountain and we went with him. We drove up the hill. It was an absolute ghost town. Trees were on fire, and what was already burned was just a barren black landscape. All the coastal sage was gone. We went to our house and grabbed a few more things. The fire was roaring over the peak right above us. The sound was a low ominous roar. At that point we were running for our lives. We went over to school and grabbed the animals, put in pillowcases, cages, anything we could find to rescue them. Then we said goodbye to our home, school, neighborhood community feeling like we would never see it again. It was like saying goodbye to a dying friend. Being separated from friends and students was harder that I ever thought it could be. Listening to the news was crazy because it was not always corrected. Having to rely on the news was very frustrating. I missed everyone so much. Before we returned home we were able to meet with our Master Cohort for a class. Seeing dear friends and teachers was like throwing me a life preserver. I felt I could go on.

Q. Was your understanding of forest ecology different after the fire?

A. Yes, my understanding of forest processes was different now because we lived it. I knew there was the bark beetle situation with millions of dead trees. We had community meetings about the potential for the need to evacuate in case of a fire. I knew we probably needed a fire to take care of the dead trees due to the drought and people caused situation in our forest. So my head knew all these things, but now my heart had to deal with the reality of our "home" burning.:( It has taken me years to come to a more balanced understanding of our place in the forest environment.)
Q. How did the whole evacuation experience affect you as a person? As a teacher?

A. It made me much more appreciative of my environment and my community. My attitude of gratitude grew 1000 fold. I realized how much I need the people around me, and my job as a teacher. I thought I might not be teaching with the same people and the same students. When I visited the evacuation center at Norton AFB and saw so many of my students and families I realized that a big part of our community was still intact. I guess what makes up the fabric of our lives isn’t just the physical environment but the relationships that we hold dear.

Q. What were your thoughts and feelings as your family, your neighborhood, class/school returned home and came back together?

A. I was very anxious to see everyone, especially my students, just to know that everyone was o.k. It felt good to be concerned about someone other than myself. I was anxious to get back in to a familiar routine. I really felt the healing power of everyone around us, our community, our school, and our neighborhood.

Q. What kinds of activities/things were you thinking might help your students and you yourself deal with the aftermath of the fire?

A. I was really very concerned that the students would have lingering affects from the evacuation and were now living in a burned out environment. As a teacher I felt a strong responsibility to find out what the kids needed and to help them heal, and help myself heal. We were telling each other our stories, writing in our journals, drawing and painting daily to express our feelings. Even the quietest kids had many stories to share and questions to ask about what had happened and if it would happen again.

Q. What was the process which led you to put together an activity to help students express their feelings and help the environment (natural and social)?

A. First of all, I needed an outlet to deal with my feelings. I was having reoccurring nightmares about the fire. I was having trouble resolving my anxiety and fear. I thought I could rely on my intellectual understanding of ecological processes without the emotions. These difficulties helped me understand the fear and anxiety my students were going through. I found through storytelling and art along with lessons in fire ecology that my students and I began to feel better in our heads and our hearts.
Q. How and why did you work with a partner to design heArts for the Forest?

A. We realized that many of our students needed a creative activity beyond the classroom to feel less like victims and more in control of our lives. Dee Dee and I came up with an idea of an after-school art and science program that would involve our students and community members. We hoped to raise money by selling our art creations to buy trees to replant the forest. This seed of an idea needed the nurturing spirit of more than one person. Dee Dee has been my dear partner in teaching from the beginning, so it was just a natural fit. And so we began.

Q. How did you feel about working with Dee Dee on this project (personally and as a teacher?)

A. I would have ever attempted anything like this with anyone else. She is a loving, compassionate friend who gives me the support and courage to try new things.

Q. What do you consider the benefits of collaborating on projects and collaborative teaching?

A. The whole is so much more than just the sum of its parts. Two or more hearts and heads are better than one any day. What one doesn't think of the other one will. You have someone to bounce energy and ideas off of. Working collaboratively gives you a courage and insight beyond just yourself. You each bring your unique talents and views to the mix. Whatever each of us thinks we are lacking, the other one has the compassion to fill in.
APPENDIX E

HEARTS HISTORY
heArts for the Forest: The Beginning

When we said goodbye to our students on Friday, October 24th, 2003 we anticipated seeing them the next Monday. Our intentions, however, were waylaid by the news of the Old Fire and the need to evacuate our mountain communities. Little did we know that it was going to be three weeks until we would see their sweet faces again.

Three weeks later, all of the staff of Rim of the World Unified School District met at the high school. There we heard the Superintendent, the Fire Chief of the San Bernardino County, and counselors speak to us as a group about crisis counseling due the fact that many of our students and their families, and some teachers, had lost their homes in the fire. We anticipated the students would still be anxious about the fire, being displaced during the evacuation, and coming home to a transformed forest. The student's most basic ideas of what was familiar and safe had really changed. As teachers, we knew school was often a common ground where students feel safe and secure. We were thankful the fire damaged none of our schools.

We met as a staff at Lake Gregory Elementary for lots of hugs, and telling our stories to each other. We were reestablishing our family ties as a staff. One of our teachers did indeed lose her house in Hook's Creek, which brought the situation that much more close to home. We were able to get our kids home phone numbers so we could call each one and tell them how much we were looking forward to seeing them back at school the next day.

Our homecoming with students the following day at Lake Gregory was heartfelt. Students and teachers were glad to be back in a familiar and regular routine. The students really needed to tell their stories just as we had to. During the first day we had our students write and draw about their experiences during the evacuation and about their homecoming. We put aside time everyday for the kids to tell their stories. There was something very cathartic in each of us telling our personal adventures of what we saw, where we went, where we stayed, and what we found when we got home. We had a school-wide assembly inviting our local heroes such as police, sheriff, and fire personal. However, all of our ideas of who was a hero changed. Now heroes included S.C. Edison, The Gas Co., Water Companies, even regular people who chose to stay at our local “watering hole” The Stockade, which stayed open for calls and information. The local officials spoke, and were treated to rousing applause and cheers from everyone in attendance. Students even were asking them for their autographs. Many of these community helpers were parents of our students. Our sixth grade teacher, Penny Bassford, made a huge tree surrounded by a character representing each agency that helped save our community. Each student traced and cut out their hand on which they wrote a message of gratitude. These hands covered our Gratitude Tree,
like so many leaves of different sizes, shapes and colors. This tree remained up in our cafeteria for years afterwards. There was a sense of community that wasn't there before. Community pride was at an all time high.

As the weeks went on we could tell that the students were still carrying a lot of anxiety about the fire and its aftermath. Every time we would hear the siren of an emergency vehicle students would get visibly upset, some to the point of crying and wanting to contact their parent immediately. Their body language told us as teachers of their worries and fears. There were so many students to talk to our school counselor was overwhelmed. We knew there would have to be another outlet for students to express their thoughts and feelings. Also, we wanted to think of a way to empower students to positive action rather than simply feeling like helpless victims in the aftermath of this destructive fire.

We talked to a colleague at the Audubon Society about ideas for reforestation efforts where students could be involved. She told us about visiting the Mount St. Helen's Visitor Center after the eruption and purchasing a ceramic vase with the volcanic ash incorporated in the glaze. Proceeds from the sales of these ceramics went towards replanting trees on the mountain slopes. That gave us the idea to have the students create ceramic pieces incorporating the ash from the burned trees.

The students would then sell these pieces to the public, to raise money for purchasing trees to replant the burned areas.

We wanted to include as many students as we could in this effort. We decided to design an after-school art and science program. The program would include local community members who could teach the students' art techniques and fire ecology principles. We wrote a grant to the Rim Education Foundation for start up funds to buy clay, glaze, paint, paper, brushes and other art supplies. A meaningful and catchy name had to be thought of so of course we went to the students for their input. Thus, one of our fourth grade students Jennie Piorlo suggested Arts for the Forest. Since we needed to heal our hearts as well as help the forest we named our program "heArts for the Forest".

We began talking to students asking if they would be interested in such a program. Their feedback, we felt, would be an integral part of how the program would be designed, developed, and implemented. The students were enthusiastic and excited. We presented our ideas to our Principal, Laurlee Hopper, who was supportive and thrilled at the prospect of a creative after-school opportunity. We also presented at a staff meeting to gain the support of the other teachers. Permission slips went home with a letter explaining our after-school program and the goals for heArts for the Forest. We had an overwhelming response!
Beginning in February 2004 we started our program. Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon from 2:30 until 5:00 p.m., we met in our fourth grade common area. We, along with volunteer parents, provided a nutritious snack while we all discussed our project for the day and the direction in which we wanted to develop our program. We started out with 40 enthusiastic students, which grew to 70 by the end of the school year.

Traveling out to the most affected areas of our forest to collect burned pieces of trees felt like going to the funeral of a dear friend. Our colleague, Bernadette Fuller, brought in a large burned log from her daughter’s home in Cedar Glen destroyed by the fire. The kids named this log, “The Mother Log”. We provided these burned pieces to the children and invited them to begin drawing anything of their choosing. It was immediately apparent what was on their minds and hearts. Pictures were drawn of Highway 18 on fire, houses burning, families evacuating and smoke filled forests. As the children were creating their drawings the room was a buzz with their stories being retold to each other over and over again. We realized one means of creative self-expression often leads to another healing opportunity.

We needed a logo for our program. We wanted to design t-shirts with our logo on them for students and volunteers to wear in our annual parade. Once again we wanted student input, so we had a contest. We invited the students to submit designs that reflected our name and goals. Twelve designs were received and as a group we voted on the one that we liked the best. The winning entry showed a tree with a heart in the middle and was designed by a mother and son team. They were so pleased! Their family was going through some very difficult times, and this creative, positive effort brought them closer together.

As the weeks went on the students developed their own techniques by experimenting with the materials provided. One such technique involved rubbing the burned wood between their hands and then onto a sheet of paper. They would use erasers to remove the ash, which created a negative picture. The burned forest, once something to be avoided and feared, was now the means used by the children to create masterpieces expressing what was lost and what could be gained. The students were literally immersing themselves in the ash of our burned trees by lifting their hands from the surface of the paper and anointing themselves by covering their faces and arms with the ash. They had a grand old time!

Our school is very fortunate to have a kiln for firing ceramics. When we started to work with the clay we gave the students creative freedom to make anything they wanted and to experiment with including the ash. This really became a powerful opportunity for them to take chances using their imaginations. There was no one right way to do it; everybody could be successful and the students
became the teachers. As we progressed, the children put the ash into the glaze. They were so excited to see the transformation of each of their pieces after being fired. Their creations came to life!

We gained the support of many organizations and community helpers. Some of our heArts members went to the Rotary Club and spoke about our program. This effort on the part of the students won us some much-needed financial backing. The Mountain Arts Association, made up of professional artists in our community, offered to host a showing of the student’s work at a local gallery. The money raised from the sale of the artwork went back into the heArts for the Forest fund. We were the subject of articles in the local newspaper. The Rim High film class students visited our after-school program and included our kids in a video documentary about art in schools. This documentary was shown at a district-wide meeting and was met with great approval. The students were invited to sell their art pieces at numerous craft fairs, Earth Day celebrations, and the 4th of July Bizarre. HeArts students were even included in the Crestline Fourth of July Parade. We were very proud of our kids and their efforts!

A sense of community was strong in our heArts. We grew in so many ways. Before we all took what we had for granted. Now we were meeting new community members that taught us that we were not alone. Bill Boone has been a mentor at our school for years helping kids in need. As a member of the Rotary and an avid bird watcher and botanist he volunteered to join us on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Our student’s parents Kim Wright, Diane Garcia, and Rene Stephens volunteered with art and housekeeping. Other community volunteers included Cheryl Nagi from The Children’s Forest, Misty Burrel from the Mountain Art Association, Linda and Richard Guill, local crafters, Bernadette Fuller from our Meet the Master's Program, Cheryl Shaw, a fellow teacher from Lake Arrowhead Elementary, Sarah Klingensmith, a teacher and fellow Masters Cohort member, Diane Bruns, a fellow teacher from Grandview Elementary, and Greg Pirolo, parent and fellow teacher who photographed students work, just to name a few.

As teachers we are able to donate a portion of our salary to the Rim Education Foundation, which funds grants for projects in our school district. Our initial working capital was getting low and the students had not started to sell their artwork as of yet. We applied for a Rim Education Grant and received $800.00; the following year we were granted $1,000.00. On the night we received our first grant, we presented our program to the Superintendent and the School Board. Much praise was expressed for such a unique and creative learning experience for our children.

A group of our heArts kids prepared a speech and presented our program at our Lake Gregory PTA meeting. With their support, and under the umbrella of
their non-profit status, our students began to sell their artwork during lunchtime, and at various school functions. They were quite the sales people! They were responsible for setup and handling of money. They did an excellent job and raised $1,500.00 the first year! The parents were so grateful for having a place for their students to go after school and they were amazed at the heartfelt art that their children were creating. Led by parent, Susan Pirolo, a spaghetti dinner and art auction was held in our school cafeteria. Numerous parents and community members attended and some of the artwork sold for over $100.00. Our heArts kids felt like stars. You can go into many homes and business even today and see their creations hanging or sitting there. Home Depot donated materials and displayed the kid’s works on a bulletin board at their store. We experienced such a transformation; we started out like sad puppies with our tails between our legs, facing a scorched landscape that we saw everyday and worried that it would happen again. Now the teachers and the students were excited to come to school and proud to be part of a creative community who was making a difference.

As soon as school started in 2004 the students were relentless in wanting to start heArts for the Forest up again. It wasn’t until February 2005 that we were able to begin. Our group of students had changed somewhat and we had grown in numbers, so we decided to have a more directed approach to the art itself. Local teachers and artists, like Sarah Klingensmith, came to our after-school program and taught ceramics and various techniques. She even brought the middle-school students from her class to help teach. It proved to be a rich experience for everyone. We met with similar success as the school year ended and for the second year our heArts kids made a grand showing in the Crestline Fourth of July Parade.

The fall of 2005 brought to heArts new opportunities. Crestline Communities Development Alliance/Mountain Beautiful invited us to join the Regional Park at Lake Gregory to participate in a tree-planting day. Families showed up and were so excited. We had grandparents, aunts, uncles, parents and kids of all ages wielding shovels, pushing wheelbarrows full of manure, and moving rocks to prepare a site for 20 new trees. When everyone took a break the ranger gave us all a lesson in forest and fire ecology, and explained why we were planting so many different kinds of trees native to our mountain region. The kids took true ownership of the tree they were planting. Sentiments were voiced about showing their grandchildren their trees 50 years from now and the fact that every time they walk around the lake they can say “hello” to their own tree. One student even named her tree “Eileen”, because it had a definite lean to it! More than ever, this experience helped us all heal by allowing us to rise from the ashes, use our creative voices, and reestablish a personal and caring relationship with our forest.
Trees, by their very nature, are so hopeful—roots firmly grounded in the earth, branches faithfully reaching for heaven. The sun is their food; the tears of the sky their life sustaining water. Even in death their quiet arms grasp for the heart.

Fire Escape

quiet dawning realization
leaving hearth
leaving home
deciding which part of yourself you can do without forever
...if it comes to that
the time of heat and fire
gives way to fog and snow
    until the next
On The Way Out

dark
silent mountains
resolutely awaiting their
fate
like bodies on a funeral
pyre
breathlessly anticipating the
flame

Shut Up and Don't Cry

We left not knowing
how long, how dangerous
A chance offered
to save my friends
I wouldn't, couldn't
say no
Even though it meant
Stepping into the jaws of
the beast
So I shut up
(like a chrysalis bound
larva)
And I didn't cry
(like the smoke filled
sky)
For a very
very
very long time
Gratitude Food

What gift can repay
selfless courage
humility at death's door?
Only
thanks more than words
food of our hands
bread made
bread broken
Communion
at the table of love

Mother Log

Giving tree
Giving all of thee
Body and bark
Soul and heart
From sprouting spark
To dying dark
We take whats left
And anoint ourselves
At the alter of creation
Life Cycle
the fire storm
  has reaped its
grim harvest
  again and
again
the forest cathedral
  is blackened bare
silence
  again and
again
  yet...
again
  and again
embryos sleep
  cradled below
  until the rain
Waiting
ashes of what once was
cover the mountains
rain down upon
upturned faces, hearts, heads
anointing, waiting, waiting
for the fated fire to declare
its final judgment

Log Truck Dirge
beautiful fallen friends
meeting your destiny
ash to ash
for your gift of shelter
for your gift of air
for your gift of shade
for your gift of green
i Am grateful
heArts

dream forward
using the ashes
   the trust
   the love

to create a new day
and never forget

Random Acts of Kindness

   sent our way
...but they don't even
know us
a child's voice expresses
   innocent wonder
perhaps the memory of
   the universe
whispered to them of
   our pain
and led them to compassion
Heroes

in the eyes of the children
dragonfly wings
and
red waterfalls
comforting arms
and
helping hands
saved us, spared us
taught us

Up The Hill

The places of our hearts
are site specific
In our little corner
of the world
We remember...
-walking to Heart Rock in
the snow
-the Little White Church
during the in-between
time
-the roaring beast over
Strawberry Peak
-watching the meteor shower
at the 4,000 ft.
Road
-him proposing at Red Rock Wall
-silence at the Eye of God
-waiting for the school bus
at Five Points
-cutting Christmas trees at
Thousand Pines Camp
-getting our tongues stuck
to the North Pole...
APPENDIX G

RETURNING TO SCHOOL
FIRE EVACUATION: Rim of the World Unified schools open for classes again on Monday.

BY KATIE GRLOFF
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE.

LAKE ARROWHEAD—Mountain school employees filed into the Rim of the World High School gym Wednesday, shook off umbrellas and exchanged hugs. They filled the bleachers and started their first day at work since the Old Fire chased most of them off their mountain home last month.

The staff meeting for Rim of the World Unified School District employees Wednesday reunited them for the first time since mountain communities were evacuated after the Old Fire broke out Oct. 25. They discussed the fire, congratulated each other on pulling together during the crisis and then planned for the coming months.

They described their feelings as overwhelming, wonderful and just like at Christmas. But what they really want is to bring mountain youth back to the world they know so well — school.

"I know I'm looking forward to Nov. 17, when we can open up our schools, and our little cheroke can jump off the bus and tell us what they've been up to the last few weeks," Superintendent Clint Harwick told the staff.

Mission accomplished
That staff met as a group in the morning and broke into individual school site meetings after lunch. Today they will hold a staff development day and on Friday each campus will hold an open house for students and parents.

Also Wednesday, fire and sheriff officials lauded the community for an efficient evacuation — roughly 60,000 residents were evacuated over three winding two-lane mountain roads over three days.

School meetings

Where: 6 p.m. Thursday
Where: Elementary In Crestline, Mary P. Henck Intermediate In Lake Arrowhead, Charles Hoffman Elementary In Running Springs.
When: Parents, students and school staff.

Why: Discuss the Old Fire, community services, emotional needs and school schedules.

It was the biggest single evacuation in California history, they said:
"The real success is not in our planning, but in what you did," San Bernardino County Fire Division Chief Thom Wellman said.

Sheriff's Captain John Hernandez urged residents to continue to plan for future disasters, including another fire.
"Catastrophe can hit at any time. An earthquake can hit as easily as a fire, and we're not out of the woods yet," Hernandez said.

A time for heroes
Photos projected on a screen showed images of smoke- and fire-filled mountains, fire fighters and district personnel.
Certain phrases drew applause and cheers — "Blue Jay still stands," "losing was not an option" and "This is a time for heroes... be one."

The district faces some logistical challenges. Students will have missed 14 days of class when they return Monday. State Superintendent Jack O'Connell has promised a waiver to compensate for the missed 14 days. Other details are more tricky.

The dates for the High School Exit Exam and next spring's Advanced Placement tests will likely not change, said Assistant Superintendent Paul Loesch.

Dealing with trauma
And teachers will have to adjust their lessons to make up for lost time. But extending the school year by three weeks is not an option, Loesch said, because it would overlap with the district's summer school schedule.

For many teachers, lessons will take on a new, post-fire angle. Diana Teeter, a sixth-grade teacher at Lake Arrowhead Elementary, said she has been thinking about lessons to help students address lingering stress.

Students and parents alike deal with the trauma of leaving homes behind with just a few belongings packed into their cars. They will need to talk about it, write about it or create art projects related to it, she said.

"Even though the vast majority survived without major losses, you can't imagine psychologically what this does," Teeter said.

Nancy Manning, a fourth-grade teacher at Lake Gregory Elementary, said her students may plant wild flowers or erect nesting boxes for birds.
"We don't want our kids to feel like victims," Manning said. "We want them to feel in control of what happens."
RIM OF THE WORLD: As officials plan for making up lost time, students share their experiences.

BY KATIE ORLOFF
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

CRESTLINE—After three weeks of worry and disruption caused by a wildfire that chased them from their mountain homes, Nancy Manning’s fourth-grade class gave thanks on Monday. They filled their seats at Lake Gregory Elementary School, raised their hands and gave their reasons.

SCHOOLS

CONTINUED FROM 1:

Some firemen that he knew and

gratitude and relief. Others felt the shock of losing a home. Ryan Machal, 10, was happy not to worry about his house or his friends’ homes anymore. His family spent their evacuation time at his grandmother’s home in Banning, he said, until he and his sister started to fight too much. Then they moved to a hotel.

“Some people said my house burned, but my dad talked to some firemen that he knew and they said they were keeping the house up. It’s still there,” Ryan said.

Shadie Beeson, 9, recounted the long drive down the mountain cramped in the back seat with the family’s Great Dane. She said evacuation was scary, but coming home and finding everything safe was a relief.

“My fish was dead. That’s what I didn’t like,” Shadie said. “It was so cold in our house because we didn’t know we were going to be evacuated.”

Many of the less lucky also came to school Monday.

Sitting quietly with his classmates at Lake Arrowhead Elementary School, second-grader Jake Jones said he saw his Hook Creek home burning on television while at the San Bernardino International Airport evacuation center with his family.

“My house is OK,” Jones said. “I got to sleep in my own bed.”

“Our school didn’t burn,” said Brandal Brichta, another fourth-grader. And they returned to a teacher who was thankful for many things — friends and family, her students’ smiles, the sight of their faces changing as they listened to others, at story time.

Students at Rim of the World Unified School District schools returned to class Monday for the first time since Oct. 24. That Friday marked the last day before the Old Fire started and traveled from San Bernardino toward the mountain communities served by the district.

About 60,000 residents evacuated down three windy, two-lane roads over three days after the blaze broke out. Among them were thousands of children who attend Rim of the World schools. They faced many of the same stresses their parents did, including the uncertainty of leaving most of their belongings and their homes to possible destruction.

On Monday, they shared much of the same feelings. Some felt gratitude Others felt worry and disruption caused by high-stakes testing and about their parents’ enrollment. “Whatever it takes to do that, we’re doing it,” State Superintendent Jack O’Connell promised to move the state’s standardized tests back by the same number of days and offer waivers so courts do not lose funds tied to the missed days.

But schools still must teach the year’s lessons in less time. At Lake Gregory, Principal Judy Devens-Seligman said teachers would find ways to cut down on class trips to the library in favor of more lessons or to hold events such as annual book fairs after classes instead of during school.

“We realize that we’ve only got a certain number of days, and this monumental task that the state has given us, the state standards,” Devens-Seligman said.

Reach Katie Orloff at (909) 826-3054 or korloff@pe.com
APPENDIX H

TREE PLANTING PICTURES
APPENDIX I

HEARTS
Rotary Club Aids Students in Reforestation Effort

by Douglas W. Motley

Enthusiastic students at Lake Gregory Elementary School are using ashes from the Old Fire to create objects of art. Money raised from the sale of their art wares will be used to help replant the forest.

What do you call 40 enthusiastic kids who are up to their elbows in red clay and black ash? At Lake Gregory Elementary School, in Crestline, they're called the 'heArts for the Forest' (not a typo). The Forest, with the emphasis on 'Arts', is an after-school group that meets at the school from 2:30 – 5pm every Tuesday afternoon to create art projects, which are then sold to the public to raise funds, so they can purchase seedlings to plant in the burned areas of the San Bernardino National Forest.

What is unusual about these youngsters' art creations is that they are made using burned debris from last fall's Old Fire. Charcoal is used by children to draw pictures, while ash from the local burn area is infused into red clay to create pottery and other ceramic art objects. LGE fourth grade teacher Nancy Manning explained the voluntary, after-school program allows students to express themselves creatively and at the same time raises money for reforestation efforts.

The Crestline Lake Gregory Rotary Club has stepped in to lend a helping hand to these budding artists, soon to be modern day Johnny Appleseeds. Members John Bandak and Bill Boone were on hand at last Tuesday's session to present the group of young artists and conservationists a check for $200 to purchase four of the children's creations, which will be auctioned off at the Rotary Club's Casino Night, in September, to raise even more funds to help keep the program going. Then they stuck around, as they often do, to aid the children in crafting their works of art.

Rotary Club President John Bandak indicated that his organization donated $2,000 to the school's Meet the Masters program last year. "Because of budget cuts, the school was going to eliminate the program, until Rotary stepped in with donations to keep the program going," said Bandak. Then he added, "Now we're raising money with these kid's art, to help replant the forest."

Crestline resident Bill Boone, a longtime Rotary Club member, has been volunteering his time at the school for three years, assisting teachers with classroom instruction, and is now staying after school to help with the 'heArts For The Forest' program.

Boone stated, "I'm just giving back to the community a small part of my time. I enjoy working with kids, and I get more out of it than I put in."

'heArts For The Forest' was the brainchild of Lake Gregory Elementary School teachers Nancy Manning and Dee Dee Zelniker, who noticed that some of their students were still suffering, long afterwards, from the effects of last fall's fire. Manning indicated..."
Students in Reforestation Effort continued

that the after-school program is
designed to educate children
about the natural ecology of the
forest, while at the same time act
as an emotional release to help
them cope with the fire's afteref-
facts. She said, "It helps the chil-
dren get their feelings out, after
the fire, in a creative manner."

Manning explained that many
parents, community members
and local artists have come
together to volunteer their time
and offer their skills with the
children, who are coming from
several other schools in the dis-
trict to participate in the pro-
gram. The entire group went on a
field trip to Bayless Park on
May 18th, to learn about the
cycle of fire and its role in regen-
eration of the forest. "While we
were there, the children practiced
their sketching to get ideas for
future art pieces," explained
Manning. She said several of the
students have already sold their
art wares, which include draw-
ings, pottery, pendants,
machrame, cups, beads and jewel-
ery, to the Rotary Club,
Chamber of Commerce and the
Audubon Society.

Eleven-year-old LGE student
Jennifer Pirolo said, "I think this is
really fun...you get to experi-
ence what others create," as she
proudly displayed her charcoal
sketch of how the fire is going up in
smoke. Twelve-year-old Rachel
Blancur stated, "I like to paint
and do crafts, and I learned how
long it takes the mountain to re-
grow." Emma Garcia, age 10,
said, "I like coming here because
there are so many things to do,
like ash-pottery, machrame
and glazing pots." Emma beamed as
she explained how her picture of
a smiling sun fetched $100 from
one Rotary Club member. When
asked what she planned to do
with the money, she explained
that it will go towards the
program's replanting efforts during
the upcoming summer vacation!

Princi Pal Judy Evans-Seligman,
who has been very supportive of
the after-school program since its
inception, in February, thanked
the Rotary Club for their support.
She said, "We still have children
dealing with issues, after the fire.
This program not only benefits
the children, but it also lifts the
morale of our teachers." Indicating
that there have been a
number of school programs
reduced or eliminated due to
recent budget cuts, the school's
principal said, "We're fighting to
keep a balanced program.
The students' artwork is avail-
able for purchase at the school's
student store, and will be on dis-
play at some upcoming arts and
crafts fairs on the mountain this
summer. On June 6, they will
have a display at Shining Starz
Dance Studio, and their creations
will be available for purchase at
San Moritz Lodge, in Crestline;
on July 6th.
APPENDIX J

SEEDS AND BEARS FROM FLORIDA
Kids Helping Kids
Lake Gregory Elementary
Receives ‘Care Packages’

Students from Nancy Manning’s fourth-grade class display some of the gifts sent by Southwest Elementary School in Lakeland, Fla. From left are Julia Bauerschmidt, Jake Ellis, Jessica Sanchez and Brandon Carpenter.

As a result, students at Lake Gregory Elementary School have been the recipients of an outpouring of gifts and kindness from school children from as far away as Illinois and Florida. These gestures have also come from closer to home.

Last week, members of the student council of Lake Gregory Elementary School found themselves in an unusual position — deciding how the school should best spend $1,500 that had been given to the school as a gift for the children.

The student council of Valencia Valley Elementary School in Valencia, Calif., decided to raise the money by taking up a collection for Lake Gregory students after hearing about the Old Fire and learning that students had lost their homes. Five students and one teacher lost their homes in the Old Fire.

THE KINDNESS OF KIDS

Valencia Valley Elementary School in Valencia was much closer to the fire in Stevenson Ranch than they were to the Old Fire. “It was interesting that the kids decided that they wanted to connect with a school up here in the Rim School District,” said Lake Gregory Elementary School Principal Judy Devens-Seligman, who was first approached by Valencia Valley Student Council Adviser Judy Upham about the plan.
Sixth-grader Adam Durrer
felt playground equipment
would be a good use for the
money. Fifth-grader Tommy
Hoh would like to see the mon-
ey spent on new physical edu-
cation equipment. The chil-
dren also suggested during
their meeting that some of
the money be spent on disas-
ter preparedness supplies.

The students will also re-
port to the Valencia Valley El-
ementary Student Council
their ideas and then ask
the council to make an
important decision
about how they
think
the money
should go.

It presented us with a
dilemma, because there were
half as many Teddy bears as
kids,” Manning said. She
asked the children to think
about it for a week. The next
week the children had several
suggestions, including putting
them on fire trucks to be given
to accident victims.

One student, Brandon
Pease, whose 5-year-old friend
has a brain tumor, suggested
they be given to young cancer
patients. “I just looked at them
and said, ‘Oh you guys have
just reinforced my belief in
children’s wonderful generos-
ty,’” Manning said. The chil-
dren voted to give the Teddy
bears to the cancer center at
Loma Linda University
Children’s Hospital.

Student Bryson Logan said,
“When we received the gifts, it
made a lot of the kids feel re-
ally nice inside.” Alexis
Smithson said, “It made me
feel good that someone was
thinking about us.”

Mr. Baldy School collected
approximately $400 worth of
canned goods, cash and toys
for Lake Gregory Elementary
School, where Devens-Seligman’s
two children attend, is a public K-8
school that has about 90 stu-
dents. Every year during the
holidays the students take up
a collection for charity. This
year, Lake Gregory Elementary
School was chosen as the charity some of the donations
went to needy families.

Sleepy Hollow (Ill.) Elementary
School sent three large
boxes of school supplies to the
district office. Lake Gregory
Elementary received one of
the boxes. Devens-Seligman
gave first choice of the sup-
plies to children in the school
who lost their homes. The rest
will go into a prize box to be
chosen by children who earn
“gold cards” for doing good
deeds.

“The students will also report
to the Valencia Valley El-
ementary Student Council
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“gold cards” for doing good
deeds.
Art Show
sunday
June 6, 2004
12 - 4 pm
23382 Crest Forest Drive

Featuring:
"heArts For The Forest"

"heArts For The Forest" is an after school arts program hosted by Lake Gregory Elementary School. Young artists from our mountain community have joined together to make works of art using ash from the "Old Fire" in hopes of raising money for art education and forest restoration. Please join us in recognizing how our young artists of the community have turned tragedy into triumph and hope.
RIM OF THE WORLD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Post Office Box 2151
Lake Arrowhead, CA 92352

MINI GRANT APPLICATION

Project Title: heART For The Forest

GOALS:

Student's knowledge, self-esteem and performance at school will improve as they develop a meaningful connection to their creative abilities, their community and their environment by participating in Project heART For The Forest at Lake Gregory Elementary. After studying fire ecology and it's recent effects on our Mountain, the students will implement cooperative group skills by working with community professionals and fellow students from Y.O.E., M.P.H. and R.H.S. to create ceramic art pieces incorporating ash from a local burn area. Leadership, math and organizational skills will be fostered as the students design fundraisers to sell their ceramics at local craft fairs to raise funds for re-planting efforts.

OBJECTIVES:

- The students will demonstrate knowledge of the natural processes of our forest environment through essays and posters.
- The students will demonstrate cooperative group skills by working with students from various grade and skill levels.
- The students will express themselves creatively by learning and using ceramic techniques to produce art pieces.
- The students will practice math and organizational skills by designing and implementing fundraisers to raise money for reforestation projects, like Project Cornerstone Tree.
- The students will demonstrate mastery of technology by creating fliers, posters and price sheets for the fundraisers.
ACTIVITIES:

1. Approval for heART For The Forest will be obtained from the principal and/or School Student Council.

2. Presentation to Lake Gregory P.T.A. of heART For The Forest project for their support as our treasury.

3. Solicit core group of students based on teacher recommendation to begin the project as our student mentors.

4. Hold first meeting with students to develop project design.

5. Contact V.O.E., M.P.H. and R.H.S. to recruit interested students.

6. Order startup supplies with money from previous donations.

7. Begin weekly meetings with local artisans and students to start art projects.

8. Permission slips will be distributed for ash collection at Skyforest Ranger Station.

9. Arrange for bus transportation and ranger guide.

10. Travel with students to ranger station for tour and collection.

11. Continue creating art pieces on a weekly basis.

12. Students calculate price list, design and product price sheet, posters and flyers on the computer.

13. Students write letters for booth space at local craft fairs.

14. Write and distribute news release to local papers.

15. Arrange transportation and staffing for all craft fairs.

TIMELINE:

1. Approval for heART For The Forest will be obtained from the principal and/or School Student Council.

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BUDGET:

Ceramic Supplies (Clay, glazing) ............... $100
Bus Transportation ...................................... $150
Shelving Units ........................................... $100

Total .................................................. $350
Dear Parents and Students,

In the interest of connecting students to their local community and their environment, we are again starting a voluntary after-school program, which will allow students to express themselves creatively and ultimately raise money for reforestation efforts. We will be studying fire and flood ecology and its recent effects on our mountain, and then we will be creating art pieces incorporating ash and other natural material from sites. We will meet every Tuesday afternoon from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. in the fourth grade commons at Lake Gregory Elementary. A snack will be provided. Parents need to provide transportation for their students to and from L.G.E. on those afternoons. Please pick up your student promptly. **We will start February 8th.**

This is a wonderful opportunity for children to work cooperatively with other students across grade levels, as we are inviting students from other schools. We will be starting with a small group who will learn art techniques that will act as student mentors to teach the others what they have learned. We expect students to come ready to work hard, have fun, and be responsible.

We are extremely excited about this project and we hope your student will be, too. Please sign and return the permission slips below if your student is interested in participating in this program. Our project is called *heArts For The Forest!*

Sincerely,

Nancy Manning
Dee Dee Zeltmaier

P.S. If you would like to donate cookies, crackers, fruit or punch, it would be greatly appreciated! ©
Art and Science Classes for Kids

When: Sunday October 30th, 2005
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Where: Lake Gregory N/W Parking Lot off Lake Drive.
Why: Tree Planting!!!!!!!

heArts for the Forest kids have been creating and selling their art for two years now. We have been granted an opportunity to work with the Parks and Recreation Dept. and help our community by replanting native trees around Lake Gregory. Students and families are invited to roll up their sleeves, grab a shovel, put on some work gloves and join in the fun. You dig? 😊 Please dress for the weather, as it can be unpredictable this time of year.

***************************************************************************
[] Great, We will be joining you on Sunday
[] Sorry, We can not attend, but we are interested in the after-school program.

Student Name ____________________________
Parent Name ____________________________
Dear Ms. Manning and Mrs. Z,

Thank you so much for giving Amanda and I such an awesome experience! I'm sorry to say that we cannot attend anymore because I have enrolled in summer basketball which takes my Tuesdays. Both myself and Amanda will miss coming and will definitly try coming when we're free of school and sports. We've had such a good time realizing our inner talents and watching the kids come up with great stuff for our community to buy. Our hearts will always be with the forest and you. Tell the kids hi and we hope to come when we can. We love coming and using our time on Tuesdays to help the mountain become more beautiful than ever. Thanks again for letting have a great time! We'll miss it.

Hope to be back soon,
Mercedez and Amanda
REFERENCES


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Heimlich, Joe E. (Sept 1994). *Using the Child’s Environment to Teach at Home and School.* ERIC/CSMEE Digest.


Hotveldt, Rebecca (2001). *In the Arts Spotlight.* Educational Leadership, Oct. 59 (2) 70-73.


