



CA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
STATE  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

# Braille Bites

## California School for the Blind

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### Superintendent's message

By: Stuart Wittenstein

"Work hard. Laugh often. Keep your honor." Tim Russert

In the pages of this edition of the Braille Bites you will find the students and staff of the working hard, laughing often, and doing the right and honorable thing for their community, families, and each other.

Among the activities highlighted are:

Snow Day (thank you Parents and Friends Association) My colleagues in the Dakotas and Montana think it's pretty funny that we import our snow!

Squid for Kids – not the calamari you might be used to . . .

Santa in San Francisco – Julissa says it was hilarious!

Bakery 52-7 – Good home cookin'!

Guide Dogs and NFB's consumer advocacy – and have your dog check out our other bakery, the Good Dog treats! My shih-tsu, Mickey, heartily endorses them.



ECC Groups – The ECC or Expanded Core Curriculum is an acknowledgement of a whole range of learning needed by students who are blind or have low vision which goes well beyond the standard academic subject areas. Our students receive instruction in the ECC throughout their school days and into the residential program in a variety of functional settings.

So, as you can see, the students and staff of **CSB** are working hard, laughing often, and contributing to their communities in honorable ways. Enjoy our Braille Bites!

## Snow Day at CSB!!



# Thank You!



Staff and students,

We would like to thank everyone for their generous donation to the Tri City Food Bank and Animal Shelter. Your kindness was much appreciated.

Thank you **CSB** for sharing and caring!

Happy 2012 to everyone! **CSB** rocks!

Thank you,  
Luis, Marissa, DJ, Theadora,  
Angelica, Victor

## Squid for Kids

By: Barbara Maher

On December 6, the **CSB** High School mainstream class hosted a visit from Danna Staaf, a marine biologist from Hopkins Marine Station in Monterey. The students from the vision program at Kennedy High School joined our **CSB** students for some squid fun.

Danna is part of a group called Squids for Kids. Her expertise is in Humboldt squids which are found in our California coastal waters. Based on availability, volunteers from Squids for Kids will

bring a Humboldt squid to a classroom for dissection. We were fortunate to have Danna bring her knowledge and her squid.

Danna did all the cutting but provided the opportunity for hands on exploration of the parts as they were removed. Some students were more adventurous in their handling and some were happy to just have a look.

The squid eye was of particular interest, of course. The cornea of a squid is a very tough bit of tissue. The students were all surprised at how hard it was to cut through to the inner workings of the eye.

Students were able to get their hands on the ‘inner workings’ of the squid and learned about the amazing ability of squids to move at unbelievable speed when necessary to escape from a predator. This process is similar to jet propulsion and has drawn engineers into the study of squid movement.

Danna has a Ph.D. from Stanford and is a science writer, educator and artist. She has a highly entertaining blog which can be found at [www.cephalopodiatrist.com](http://www.cephalopodiatrist.com). That bit of information is for anyone who has a burning desire to read about sea creatures, great and small.



## A trip to S.F. and Santa

The trip to San Francisco was fun. We rode the cable car. I liked going up and down the hills. We took a picture with Santa Claus as well. We saw a big Christmas tree; it was about 4 stories high.

- Randy

On December 20, my class and I took a trip into San Francisco. I enjoyed our ride on the cable car very much. Taking a picture with Santa was hilarious. It was great to spend the day out with my classmates. - Julissa

Our trip to San Francisco was exciting and made me realize that the city of San Francisco is a great place to visit in California. We took several types of transportation such as BART, cable car, F line, and bus. Walking around and going into different stores was my favorite part of that day. However, listening to all different sorts of street musicians makes me want to spend my whole day there. The crowds has always been my least favorite part of any trip and the city did not make an exception. Overall, it was a great day and I can't complain. I hope that in the future we can keep having this kind of trips because it teaches us advanced O&M skills.

-Alex

On December 20, I and the rest of my class took a trip to the Emerald City, San Fran. We started with an early morning ride on the yellow brick BART. We then took a tour of the Westfield palace and after eating at the royal food court, we walked to see the wizard of Macys, Santa. Next on our list was to go to the chocolate square. It was a wonderful day filled with all sorts of magic ways to travel.

-Xander



Yesterday, December 20, 2011, our class went into the Big City. We took different modes of transportation such as, BART, trolley car, and cable car. My two favorite parts of the day were taking a picture with Santa Claus and eating pizza the way its made in Italy. All in all I had a great time in San Francisco with my classmates and teacher.

-Robin

Our trip to San Francisco was a great experience. We got there by BART; ate good food, and walked around crowded San Francisco. However, my favorite part was riding the cable car. It was my first taste of San Francisco travel, and best of all, they allowed us to cut in front of a LONG line.

-Eduardo

## Bakery 52-7

By: Jonathan Waite

Bread has long been a food staple. The resurgence of artisan bakeries and enthusiasm for local, wholesome food has redefined the way Americans eat.

“Bakery 52-7” is operated by students in a functional academic classroom of the Transition program at **CSB**. Students aged between 16 and 22 learn the fundamentals of baking and produce bread from basic ingredients each Wednesday to sell in **CSB**’s Rocket Shop Café. Bakery 52-7 produces two types of bread, classic peasant bread containing only five ingredients and a specialty bread which changes on a weekly basis usually containing different varieties of cheeses and olives. Where possible, ingredients sourced are organic and local.



Students manage the entire process from selecting and purchasing ingredients, to invoicing and book-keeping. Key processes include weighing and measuring ingredients, mixing the dough, shaping the breads, managing the ovens, baking and delivery of the final product to the Rocket Shop Café by 12 noon on Wednesdays. The process takes a full morning and students work together in small groups with minimal staff involvement. Students started baking at the beginning of the school year and have progressed from being 20% independent to 90% independent in all aspects of Bakery 52-7’s operation.

In February, students will tour Acme Bread Company to discover what it would be like to work in a commercial bakery.

Bakery 52-7 wishes to thank **CSB**’s Parents and Friends Association for generously providing our bakery with a heavy duty dough mixer. This will enable us to make bread more efficiently and explore new baking opportunities! Please check in with the Rocket Shop Café to find out what high quality fresh breads are for sale every Wednesday when **CSB** is in session.

Eat Well and Enjoy Life!

Bakery 52-7

Cody, Ashley, Gregg, Andres, Jacqueline, Josh, and Luis  
(Students)

Jonathan (Teacher) and Mocha (Teaching Assistant)



## NFB State conference

By: Student, Cody M.

On October 13<sup>th</sup> 2011, I had the opportunity to attend the NFB State conference in Newark CA. Emily Simone, the Central California Field Manager for Guide Dogs For The Blind, spoke about guide dogs, cane travel and how important it is to keep your cane skills up. If your dog gets sick and can no longer guide you, you will have plan B in your back pocket, your cane.

Simone also talked about dog attacks and how frightening they can be, because the guide dog user cannot see the attacking dog approaching them.

When approached by an attacking dog, Guide Dogs for The Blind (GDB) does not recommend bear or wasp spray to their graduates to defend their dogs. The user can spray them self on accident. They recommend using their canes, bats, and or rocks to get the attacking dog away.

The ADA law (2011) recognizes guide dogs for the blind and deaf, as service animals. They also recognize guide horses, yes guide horses as service animals. Service animals are any dogs that provide assistance to a person with a disability. A dog can pull a wheel chair, Guide someone who is low vision or blind, and alert someone who is deaf to a phone or oven timer. Service animals must be under control, leashed, or tethered to an object.



## Good Dog Bakery

We are students at **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind. We are also part of **CSB**'s Good Dog Bakery. The students make and sell the dog biscuits for the visually impaired people who have guide dogs and those who have dogs at home.

We are located in Fremont, California. The school sells the dog biscuits on campus in the student-run store, Rocket Shop. We are trying to make the dog biscuits public, so that we can make more funds for the on-campus job program.

Try the Good Dog Bakery's Peanut Butter Dog Biscuits today! They are crunchy and make your dogs shine! They will make your dog jump for joy with a smile on their face. The biscuits have all healthy natural baking products with no preservatives.



## Dorm Bites...

- ◆ The karate program is starting to qualify students for an upcoming tournament. The students are working hard on their forms and sparring to represent the school. **CSB** has had outstanding results in tournaments in previous years.
- ◆ Students in Northridge have been enjoying a weekly movie night. The students are responsible for selecting the movies. It has become a social bonding experience among the students who participate. The students come well prepared with the snacks they purchase at the student store.
- ◆ **CSB** Student Council has clicked into high gear. The students made witch's brooms for a fall fund raiser and are working on a Valentine's fund raiser. The money that is raised goes to different charities that students choose.
- ◆ The **CSB** bowling club is doing well. Many of the students have been improving on a weekly basis. The averages of the students, Randy, Travis, Nathan and Joseph are approaching 100. The club bowls every Wednesday at a local bowling alley.



## John Muir Exhibit

By: Amanda Bybee and students

**“I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”**

- from *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* edited by Linnie Marsh Wolfe, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938, republished 1979, page 439

John Muir (1838 –1914), originally from Scotland, was America’s most famous naturalist. He was also a mountaineer, botanist, inventor, and mechanic. He had lost his sight for a month when he poked himself in the eye with a file after an industrial belt malfunctioned. His short-term blindness gave Muir a different perspective on nature as he began to see the world in a new way.

The exhibit “A Walk in the Wild: Continuing John Muir’s Journey” at The Oakland Art Museum ran from August 6, 2011 through January 22, 2012 offering an interactive, multi-sensory field trip for all participants. California School for the Blind’s Parents and Friends Association (PAF) sponsored the trip request for Miss Bybee’s transition class. It gave the class knowledge of Muir’s advocacy for nature preservation as they walked through inspired wilderness at the Oakland Museum. Students got to traverse an Alaskan glacier’s crevasse similar to ones that John Muir and his friend’s dog, Stikeen, had to jump across for safety. They also enjoyed displays of touchable rocks, wafting juniper berries, not to mention the bottled scent of “steep ravine” in the gift shop. Forest sounds and smells were displayed at tables with descriptions and life-size colorful nature scenes of wildflowers in Yosemite. Students toured a replica of Muir’s cabin at the base of Yosemite Falls that offered auditory sanctuary with an actual recording of the falls. Standing inside a redwood tree trunk with crackling fire sounds and flickering flames of a forest fire, one could feel as if they were a small part of nature’s spiritual magnificence.



***“I went through a waterfall at the exhibit. I liked going inside a tree. It was really fun when I jumped through a crevasse.”***

-Miguel S.

***“I enjoyed imagining that I was in John’s world by seeing the several sights, enduring the smells, touching the many textures, and listening to the many sounds.”*** -Alissa D.

***“I felt the fur of a bear, a deer, and a rabbit.”*** -Arthur C.

***“I like smelling the scents of the forest floor.”*** -Anthony N.

***“We also got to hear the sound of the rain forest.”*** -Amy B.

## New Restaurant at CSB, Le Chez E'Sbey

By: LaWanda Vann

On December 21<sup>st</sup>, a new restaurant opened in the city of Fremont-Le Chez E'Sbey. The restaurant was only open for one night, but what a night it was. This venue offered a great dinner spacious dance floor.

Le Chez E'Sbey's dinner was prepared by the residential staff chefs for the students. The gym was magically transformed into a fine restaurant complete with white linens, flowers and fine china awaiting the students. Most of the students called ahead for table reservations, some a week in advance.

"Now I know how to get a reservation in advance," said Stuart.



Dressed in their finest clothes, the students gathered and socialized before the grand opening. They were chatting among one another, making new friends and discussing topics of their day while waiting to be seated. They thoroughly enjoyed each other's company, most smiling all throughout the wait.

"May I escort you to your table", asked the well-starched host. As students laughed and giggled

they were escorted to their tables.

"This is pretty nice", exclaimed A'Laura as she was escorted to her table "I like this better than the dining hall."

As each student walked in, they were amazed by the decor. After being seated, it was obvious they liked that staff was there to wait on them.

"I can get used to this," said Josh laughing.

The menu featured steak, chicken, a baked potato, salad, a vegetable with bread and lemonade to drink. The staff brought each meal individually to students and stood by the tables to make sure that students got their needs met.

After the main course, each student was offered either cheesecake or red velvet cheesecake for desert.

"This is the best meal, I had all year," said Ashley.

After dinner the students were treated to an evening of dancing the night away to latest tunes provided by their favorite DJ.

When the night was done, all of students asked the same question, "When will there be a Le Chez E'Sbey encore?"



## A WAY WITH WORDS:

SCRABBLE AND THE EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM

By: Alysa Chadow

For nearly 60 years, Scrabble has been the board game of choice for people the world over, along with other household favorites such as Monopoly. It's also a perfect addition to the expanded core curriculum here at **CSB**.

The game was invented shortly before World War II, but its star was really on the rise when the then president of Macy's Department Store played the game while on vacation in 1953. He returned to work only to find that Macy's didn't stock Scrabble, but the situation was soon rectified. Today one out of every three households has a Scrabble game, and 151 million people play it in just about every country, in 29 different languages.

So what is it that makes this word game such a must for the expanded core curriculum? First and foremost, the game is easily adaptable for the blind. Anyone with even a passing familiarity with Scrabble knows how the board is laid out. It's a grid, with spaces for lettered tiles. Adapted Scrabble boards have plastic grids that can be readily felt, and the tiles fit in snugly. There's no chance of tiles moving to other parts of the board, or being lost.

Spelling and math skills are strengthened through the playing of Scrabble. The former needs no further explanation. The latter can be combined with a technology goal, such as using the Braille Note's calculator to total letter values, and even create records of players' scores (one of my own students has such a goal on his IEP).

Like all challenging board games, Scrabble develops problem-solving skills. Players must answer questions such as "Which part of a word already on the board can I work from?" or "How many letters should I use in a word for a triple letter score?" They must become more and more creative as the board fills up with words, and the letters in front of them aren't always a good fit.

Scrabble can even increase O & M skills. Words can be formed either horizontally or vertically, and students will quickly learn left from right and up from down if they already have not. Last, but certainly not least, nothing beats the honing of social/emotional skills like a good game of Scrabble (happy playing).



## The ECC Groups Program

By: Gina Ouellette

This school year **CSB** has launched a new program: Expanded Core Curriculum Groups. The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) refers to the variety of skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs. The ECC includes, among other things, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), social interaction skills, independent daily living skills, recreation and leisure skills, technology skills, and self-determination. While instruction and experiences in these areas are infused into each student's school day, **CSB** staff were interested in finding creative ways to offer additional learning opportunities for our students.



In the past different staff members have attempted to combine students from different classrooms in order to offer specific ECC-related instruction or experiences. Finding a common time that different groups of students are all available has proven to be extremely difficult, as students' schedules are packed with direct services, such as O&M, Braille and Adapted Physical Education, that take them out of the classroom and make them unavailable for such groups. The ECC Groups Program was born out of the desire to find a way to combine students into groups without the constraints of their various schedules. To facilitate this, one period per week was designated as "ECC Group Time" and it was requested that staff not schedule lessons or activities for this period. This ensured that all students would be available during that time and students from different classes could be combined for specific lessons and activities.



Session I of the ECC Group Program began in mid-October and ran for eight weeks. Some of the groups that were offered included BrailleNote GPS, Adapting to Vision Loss, Yoga, Safety Skills, Social Skills, Family Life, Cooking and Crafts. Students also had the opportunity to participate in evening O&M lessons, explore **CSB**'s Apartment Living Program, and learn more about interpersonal relationships. These groups were led by teachers, O&M instructors, school psychologists, a speech therapist, teaching assistants, administrative staff and even a community volunteer.

Donte M. participated in the Adapting to Vision Loss group run by Jennifer Oden, School Psychologist, and Amanda McKerracher, School Psychology Intern. In this group, students spent time sharing their feelings about their vision

loss, listening to others' experiences, and learning coping skills. "It helped me to hear about other kids because when I first woke up without my sight I was thinking I was the only kid who couldn't see," Donte said. Donte reported that in the group he learned how to cope with his anger about losing his vision. "Ever since we started the class, I haven't been worrying about my vision. I use the things I learned to calm down."



Another student, Luis C., took part in the Apartment Living Program exploration group, which was led by Marcia Vickroy, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, and Connie Wright, Teaching Assistant. Luis reported that he learned about cooking, budgeting money and paying bills. He also learned about different components of the Apartment Living Program, such as planning trips and working out living costs with roommates. Luis noted that the group "was a wake-up call for me... No one's going to be there to hold your hand or always bail you out... You have to be responsible for your own stuff."

Luis also reported that former and current Apartment Living Program students who came to the group as guest speakers. "They told us about their experiences in the program and encouraged us not to make the same mistakes they did, especially in financial matters."

At the end of the eight-week session, all students participated in a school-wide assembly where they were given an opportunity to talk about their ECC Group experiences and give suggestions for future groups. The students were enthusiastic about what they had done and had a number of great ideas for upcoming sessions.

The next session of ECC Groups will start in mid-February. Some of the groups that will be offered include Body Awareness, Stress Management, Games, Money Management, Gilly Club, and Transition to Adult Life, as well as a group for teen boys and another for teen girls.

Annie Foyle and James Rudder, administrative staff at **CSB**, will be running a community service group called Preemies for Preemies. Several students who were born prematurely will be making blankets to donate to preemies who are currently hospitalized in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The ECC Groups are a work in progress but have already allowed **CSB**'s students to participate in a variety of new experiences. We look forward to future sessions and new opportunities for learning!



If you would like to contribute a future article for Braille Bites, please send it to: [jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov](mailto:jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov)