



THE FACULTY CORNER

ANACAPA'S HISTORY PROGRAM

From World History Teacher Dillon Yuhasz:

History can be a very mysterious subject. In other academic areas there is often a single correct answer, whereas in history, often times the answer is, "we don't know." This is especially true when it comes to world history. Much of the material we have covered this year happened more than two thousand years ago, and while much was documented, a lot was not. Some might find this uncertainty frustrating, but I find it exciting. World history is full of mysterious moments. For example, what happened to some of the massive civilizations of the past such as the Indus Valley Civilization? From our perspective today, it seems they disappeared for no clear reason! Introducing these mysteries to my class is something that I think makes history more engaging by prompting the students to ask important questions, seek understanding, and investigate further.

I am often baffled when I hear people say that history is boring or unimportant. In the world we live in today so much of what is going on in the news can be explained by what happened in the past. This is one of the greatest lessons that history can teach us. In a world that is growing more complex and more interconnected every day, it is more critical than ever to understand why people act the way that they do. I enjoy following these connections between the past and the present and helping students do the same. An example of this came up recently while learning about the history of India. Just outside of New Delhi, a group of farmers recently cut off the water supply to one of the largest cities in the world. Gordon brought the story to my attention and we discussed in class how this conflict was caused by a caste dispute which had origins going back to the period we were studying. Without history there would be no background for understanding the motivations of this group. I hope that with stories and connections like these our students will become more informed, better at asking the right questions, and conscientious about the world they live in.

From American Society Teacher Gordon Sichi: *Drilling Down to Core Civic Skills*

7th and 8th grade students at Anacapa take a one-of-a-kind class that focuses on American government over a two-year time span. Rotating from year to year are American Society I, which studies the founding of our nation and the role of the federal government, and American Society II, which focuses primarily on state and local governments. This is our year for state and local governments, and we have been using our downtown campus to its utmost advantage by visiting local government sites for "hands-on" experiential learning opportunities. American Society II is timed to take advantage of the fact that the City of Santa Barbara has elections in odd numbered years. For years and years, our classes have followed City Council elections by inviting the candidates running for council seats to come into our class one by one to share their backgrounds, why they are running, and what the most important issues are. This gives students opportunities to interact directly with politicians. As an independent school, Anacapa can allow campaign events on our campus, which is not allowed in public schools. Leading up to the November 3rd election, eight of the candidates running in the new district elections came to meet the students in American Society class. Our students know well the transition Santa Barbara made from "at large" elections to "district" elections. It was in Councilwoman Cathy Murrillo's campaign talk that she proposed removing the parking spaces on Micheltorena Street to make bike paths to cross the City. The students were quite skeptical of this proposal, to say the least. When the proposal was to come before the City Council on February 23, our class took a fact-finding tour of the neighborhood on February 22, and they discovered, among many important facts, that Sola street was much wider and less busy and had less apartment buildings than Micheltorena. They wrote emails to the Council prior to the meeting to express their thoughts. After the proposal passed 5 to 2, our class invited Councilman Frank Hotchkiss to explain his opposition to the parking removal, and later on March 8 we met with Edward France, the director of the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition at the Micheltorena Bridge to hear his advocacy of the Micheltorena route. This "Drilling Down to Core Civic Skills" project is not over yet. The issue will be revisited by the City Council in late May, after the Transportation and Circulation Committee deliberates, and the Planning Commission also meets on the issue again. I would like the class to attend these meetings to see how the real world works. These "hands on learning" experiences empower our students to think critically, form their own opinions, ask questions, and write letters to elected and appointed officials. Anacapa's location and our many contacts with movers and shakers enable our Lower School students to become civic minded and engaged with our community. It is a rare class, and I absolutely love teaching it.