

**Interview between Adrian Behrendt (A) Tri-school Vocal Music
Coordinator and Vicky O'Bresly (V) HPC President
10/16/11**

V. Tell me a bit about your musical responsibilities for the schools?

A. Basically, I service the three Piedmont elementary schools K- 4, with weekly 30-minute classes by class. Part of my role is to connect children with songs passed through an oral tradition from this country. For me, it's important to create a fun and communal experience about the joy of making music together, whether it's singing a song about silly characters like Cotton Eye Joe or others. I teach by a process of discovery as opposed to lecture.

For the younger grades, we explore music using musical games, movement and singing. At times, I will sing songs that are just meant for listening – Stars Shinin', Fox Went Out and Hush Little Baby. In the games, we listen to each other's voices and guess each other's voices. We sing songs that have a musical thread, that children may not even be aware of at the outset. In this way they learn key lessons about rhythm, melodic element and form.

In the older grades, we discover works by other composers and how they relate to American culture. Pieces like Simple Gifts, by Aaron Copeland, Franz Schubert's Die Forelle (The Trout) and the Canadian folk song Peter Emberly.

V. How do you organize your schedule across the schools and what does your typical week look like?

A. I work with each school based on what works best for that location. At each site I have a room and instruments. I am in a portable in Emeryville, behind Ellen Driscoll at Havens and in the MPR at Wildwood. Each school has the same program and lesson plan, in line with tri-school equality across sites. I have a full schedule

V. Can you tell me something about your background, especially before you became a music/instrumental/vocal teacher for our schools?

A. Well, I'm an alum of Indiana University School of Music and graduated in '93, then got my Masters in Music Ed at Boston University. Prior to coming to Piedmont, I taught in the Bay Area (Mount Diablo) and Massachusetts.

I grew up in the New York suburbs. I played in my high school band, where Vanessa Williams was a student and later crowned Miss America. I played bass drum in her homecoming parade.

V. What has surprised you most about your work these past few years?

A. I have been very positively surprised by the community and their support of the arts – vocally and financially. CHIME and the district have helped with the purchase of Orff instrument sets for Beach, Havens and Wildwood.

V. What do you feel most proud of from your work?

A. I feel proud when the kids have had an enjoyable experience and want to come back. They ask "Can we do this next week?" or a Kindergartner will say "Can we have music every day". The most important thing is to create happiness and an environment of sharing, having fun and building a musical foundation.

V. What would you like to see, in terms of your work, going forward?

A. I would like to see a continuation of vocal. I am looking forward to evaluating our units on American History and the recorder to see how children are benefiting. We are working to build the team and an ongoing communication process between the music staff - Cathy DeVos, Dorothy Falarski and Andria Mullan.

V. Can you tell me something about yourself that few people know, until

now that is?

I like to do puzzles and just completed a 1,000 piece Pink Floyd puzzle. You can see my Beatles Yellow Submarine puzzle in the Havens room, behind Ellen Driscoll. Also, I compose pops music and do an awesome rendition of "Puff the Magic Dragon". It will make you weep!

And finally, I direct the San Francisco Boys chorus (the Jr. Apprentice Division) at the San Francisco and East Bay campus.

V. What are the best ways for people to find out what is happening with music and our students?

A. Just email me at abehrendt@piedmont.k12.ca.us if you want to know more about the class.