

Elementary Students Act Out for Project Respect
contributed by Matthew Marcis

Presenting the pro-social skills of teamwork, friendship, loyalty, and integrity to the Mariposa and Lake Don Pedro communities became an activity of oral expression and the opportunity to “act out” for many students. On Friday, December 11th at Mariposa Elementary School the after school “Kids Club” performed 3 Reader’s Theatre pieces with several narrators and characters while 6 days later on the 17th at Lake Don Pedro a performance included poems, short stories acted out by the K-3 classes, and 10 Reader’s Theatre pieces which involved the entire school.

Weekly rehearsals for these performances began in the middle of October intending to implement the basic principle of Project Respect: educating students in social-emotional skills (e.g. compassion, problem solving, anger management) can be content rich and standards based within the school day.

The goal of Project Respect is to “foster children’s lifelong learning to become healthy, responsible, and productive members of society.” Developing these skills is a known contributor to success in school and to later success in the workplace.

Reader’s Theatre “is an activity in which students, while reading directly from scripts, are able to tell a story in a most entertaining form, without props, costumes, or sets. This is a *reading* activity, and students are not asked to memorize their lines. They are, however, encouraged to use intonation and gestures appropriate to their characters and their characters’ words.” It requires practice and repetition of the script and thus improves reading fluency and confidence to the student. It is a common Language Arts content activity utilized by many Mariposa County classrooms and in most literacy programs around the country.

The two schools performed to a collected community audience of near 100 people and included over 200 student performers. Numerous parents approached the organizers of the events and expressed their appreciation for the drama program and the performances. Instrumental in organizing these performances were Alison Tudor (Mountain Crisis Services), Audrey Davis (community member and drama coach), principals Ron Henderson and Anna Lindsey-Comstock, Marty Livingston (MES after school teacher), Michele

Bebe (LDP Administrative Assistant), the teachers at both sites, and especially the encouragement of the parents --kudos to these entertaining and informing Project Respect performances.