

## THE EMERGENCE OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY

“The ART of TEACHING,” according to Principal Mark Brown, “has been the biggest boon” to Arnold Elementary, his school in the Cypress District of Orange County. Not only has he observed the growth of those selected to be Cotsen fellows – as evidenced by their students’ achievement, he has also seen the benefits of their participation spread to other teachers on the campus. In an October interview, he shared his thoughts on why the ART of TEACHING, in its second year at Arnold, has been so successful.

Brown noted three reasons: the first being the “way the Cotsen Foundation structures the program, establishes criteria, and conducts the process, including the guidelines for mentors and fellows. Secondly, the selection of fellows: teachers Cindy Corbin, Ria Rappa, Jan Wright, and

Jeanne Wu” whom he characterized as “outstanding teachers who wanted to become better.” But, for Brown, the single biggest reason for the program’s success is Mentor Marsha Ahn.



*Arnold Elementary Principal Mark Brown  
with Cypress School District  
Superintendent Sheri Lowenstein*

Describing Marsha as “the consummate professional”, he added she’d “be good as a principal.” He expressed admiration for the way she conducts herself, speaking of her as “nurturing and intuitive, one who knows the right time to ask questions, a people person who moves you in the right direction and makes you think it’s your idea.” If a fellow stumbles, “it’s a learning opportunity” to Marsha.

Working together, Brown observed, the fellows and Marsha have made great strides. He became animated in describing the kind of student writing he was seeing in their classrooms and reported an improvement in writing assessment scores. He noted the significant increase in math scores for one particular fellow’s students. In his observations, he has

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## THE ART OF TEACHING BEGINS ITS SIXTH YEAR

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Kicking off the academic year, 234 mentors, fellows, alumni, principals and invited guests of the Cotsen Family Foundation participated in the first annual ART of TEACHING conference on September 9th at the Marina Marriott. Filling the Bayview Room overlooking the Marina harbor, new and ongoing teams, some joined by their school’s alumni, gathered to reflect on artful teaching and to consider and plan pathways to achieve it.

In the opening session, Executive Director Judy Johnson greeted the participants along with Ellen Moir, executive director of the New Teacher Center, UC Santa Cruz. Moir’s presence indicated the growing collaboration between the Cotsen Family Foundation and the New Teacher Center whose presenters have prepared Cotsen mentors for the past three years. Moir spoke of her enthusiasm for the ART of TEACHING’s mission and the New

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## COTSEN INTRODUCES NEW SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The Cotsen Family Foundation has offered funding for inquiry or study groups to alumni of the ART of TEACHING and introduced new opportunities for the students' parents and staffs of schools currently participating in the program. Three grant opportunities were presented to the ART of TEACHING community at the September 9<sup>th</sup> annual conference. The three grants include the Cotsen Library Grant and Parent Involvement Grant, for currently participating schools, and the Alumni Grant. While the Library Grants were awarded at the conference, successful applicants for the Parent Involvement and Alumni Grants were notified of their awards during the week of October 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Library Grant

Seeking to share resources with the larger school community, the Cotsen Family Foundation awarded \$1,000 Library Grants to 31 participating schools. Funds may be used for professional books and/or school library books and materials. Each school also received a library reading chair with an engraving indicating that the school is a participant in the ART of TEACHING.

### Alumni Grant

To encourage alumni to continue their work on great teaching, along with others at their school sites, or within and across districts, this grant was offered to support the development of teacher networks, starting with study or inquiry groups facilitated by a Cotsen graduate mentor or fellow. Applicants were required to submit a plan, including goals, and a draft budget and to form groups of three to six members. They were also encouraged to include teachers who have not been in the ART of TEACHING program. Each participant of the group will receive \$350 (or the equivalent in release time). Funds may be used for release time for classroom observations or conferences, fees for workshops, meeting materials and refreshments, books for shared reading, and/or for National Board Certification fees.

Seventeen grants were awarded to alumni on behalf of their study groups at 10 of the 13 schools eligible for this grant. A total of 74 teachers will participate, including 33

alumni (49% of Cotsen alumni) and 41 teachers who have not been participants in the ART of TEACHING. Some examples of the groups' selected topics are: development of writing units of study, study of Cognitively Guided Instruction, grade level work to adapt and integrate Nancy Fetzner's lecture notes to the school's selected reading series, Lesson Link (adaptation of Lesson Study), differentiation for gifted and talented students, peer observation and coaching of writing workshop, video analysis of teaching, and National Board Certification study and support.

Grant awards were made to the following alumni and their study or inquiry groups:

### Cypress

Mary Black, fellow, Landell

### Lawndale

Grace Wang Long, fellow, Addams

Trine Bacchetti, fellow, F.D.R.

Natasha Gogin-Moses, fellow, Billy Mitchell

Jody Manby, fellow, Billy Mitchell

Agnes Marcos Vasquez, fellow, Billy Mitchell

### LAUSD

Cathy Furer, fellow, Open Charter Magnet

Dolores Patton, mentor, Open Charter Magnet

Denise Benjamin, fellow, Open Charter Magnet

### Long Beach

Carol Keenan, fellow, Alvarado

Jon Seratan, fellow, Alvarado

Melina Mahacek, fellow, Alvarado

Tracy Hempel, fellow, Garfield

### Santa Monica

Lindsay Light-Kananack, fellow, McKinley

Sitara Contreras, fellow, Will Rogers

Yoli Marmolejo, fellow, Will Rogers

Glen Olsheim, fellow, Roosevelt

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## THE ART OF TEACHING BEGINS ITS SIXTH YEAR, CONTINUED

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Teacher Center's role in managing the program in four Santa Cruz schools, the first Cotsen schools selected outside of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

A highlight of the opening was the announcement of three new funding opportunities: a grant of \$1,000 to each participating school's library along with a "Cotsen chair"; an alumni grant to support ongoing professional development at the school site that engages both ART of TEACHING graduates and other teachers from the school community; and a parent involvement grant to foster greater connections between parents and their children's schools.

Closing the opening session, Lloyd Cotsen briefly addressed mentors and fellows, noting that other organizations are also working with teachers but "I know we have the best teachers," a remark that brought the "best teachers" to their feet.

Mentors and fellows moved on to their selected sessions and a planning period with team members. Principals met together in a discussion led by Principal Jerry Harris who was joined by Principals Irma Lyons and Irene Gonzalez, and Director of Educational Services Maureen Bradford, all Santa Monica administrators with extensive experience with the ART of TEACHING. They shared their observations about the program and how they have leveraged the Cotsen work to enhance site-based professional development at their respective



*Participants (L-R): Jan Miles, New Teacher Center (NTC); Diane Morgenstern, Santa Cruz City Schools; Judy Johnson, Cotsen Family Foundation; Ellen Moir, NTC; and Founder Lloyd Cotsen*



*Presenter Megan Franke*



*Cotsen Mentor Chrysta Wyse with Presenter Laurie Pessah*



*Presenter Nancy Fetzter*

schools. Other principals in a second year or second round of the program participated in the discussion, addressing the questions posed by principals new to the program.

A buffet lunch in the Bayview room was followed by an afternoon session.

As is typical of professional development offerings for the ART of TEACHING, presenters were selected on the basis of participating mentors' and fellows' requests. Professor Megan Franke of UCLA spoke at two different hours, one for those new to Cognitively Guided Instruction in math, and the other for those experienced in implementing the math approach. Laurie Pessah, of Teachers College, Columbia University, presented on workshop writing for two different levels of elementary school: k-2 and 3-5. Nancy Fetzter of Nancy Fetzter's Literacy Connections also gave two different presentations: Movie Scripts to Story Writing and Lecture Notes to Expository Writing.

Mentors and fellows concluded the day on the terrace of the Marriott where the "class" was photographed before leaving to continue the process of building on their strengths, developing their goals, and getting from good to great. ■

***THE ART OF TEACHING***  
**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR**  
**JUNE – DECEMBER 2006**

June 12	Orientation for new fellows from Santa Monica, Seeds-University Elementary, and Lawndale schools – Will Rogers Learning Community, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
June 14	Orientation for new fellows from Cypress, Long Beach, and Los Alamitos schools - Teacher Resource Center, Long Beach Unified School District
August 10-11	“Improving Student Achievement Through Teacher Observation and Feedback,” a collaboration of the UCLA Principals’ Center, UCLA Principal Leadership Institute, and the Cotsen Family Foundation, Program Director Betsy Warren, Santa Cruz New Teacher Center, for Cotsen principals and others – Loyola Marymount University
August 21-25	Mentor Training: “Foundations in Mentoring” and “Coaching and Observation Strategies” Program Director Jan Miles and Outreach Coordinator Valerie Leal, Santa Cruz New Teacher Center; “Coaching Cognitively Guided Instruction,” Cotsen Mentors Trisha Callella and Susan Normoyle, and “Coaching Writing Workshop,” Cotsen Mentor Sean Lindsay - Loyola Marymount University. Classroom observations at Weaver Elementary School, Los Alamitos
September 9	First Annual ART of TEACHING Conference – Marina Marriott
September 28	First of three-day series “Observations for Fellows Experienced In Cognitively Guided Instruction,” Cotsen fellows and colleagues – Weaver Elementary School, Los Alamitos
October 5	Follow up day: “Improving Student Achievement Through Teacher Observation and Feedback,” Program Director Betsy Warren, Santa Cruz New Teacher Center – Faculty Center, UCLA
October 9	Mentor Meeting: “Documenting Evidence of Student Outcomes,” Cotsen staff and “Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures,” Mentor Araceli Nunez-Tallman – Long Beach Teacher Resource Center (TRC), Long Beach Unified School District
October 11	First of three-day series “The Art of Conferring,” Mentor Sean Lindsay and Cotsen fellows and alumni – Alvarado Elementary School, Long Beach Unified School District
October 20	Cotsen Principals’ Breakfast: “Policy Update,” Dr. Barry Munitz, Chair, California P-16 Council and Cotsen Family Foundation Board Member, and “Planning School Visits to Share Excellent Teaching,” Principal Jerry Harris, Roosevelt Elementary School, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District – the Grand Event Center, Long Beach
November 6	Mentor Meeting: “Analyzing Student Work for Differentiation,” and “Mentoring Success,” Program Director Jan Miles and Outreach Coordinator Valerie Leal, Santa Cruz New Teacher Center – Long Beach Unified TRC
December 4	“the ART of TEACHING Professional Development Model,” Executive Director Judy Johnson, Associate Director Barbara Golding, Cotsen Family Foundation; Principal Jerry Harris, Roosevelt Elementary School, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District; and Mentor Sean Lindsay, Alvarado Elementary School, Long Beach Unified School District – National Staff Development Conference, Nashville, Tennessee
December 8	“The Theory and Application of Thinking Maps,” L. Brown – Weaver Elementary School, Los Alamitos ■

## MOVING TO MASTERY

When graduate Cotsen Fellow Glen Olsheim said he appreciated that the ART of TEACHING gave him the opportunity to become “expert” in a particular approach and content area, he reflected a sentiment of many Cotsen mentors and fellows. After a year of intensive focus, study, observation, and classroom practice of a specific content and pedagogy, fellows find they have moved to another level. This movement to an expert level, however, has not led to a sense of “been there, done that.” Rather, it has resulted in a desire for more learning and a greater refinement of the fellows’ newly developed expertise. No longer at the novice stage, many in their second ART of TEACHING year have sought out more advanced workshops, conferences, and classroom observations to help them move their practice even further on the continuum toward greatness.

On September 28th, 25 fellows began to delve more deeply into a study of Cognitively Guided Instruction, commonly called CGI, a k-3 math approach expertly and consistently implemented at Weaver Elementary School in Los Alamitos. Having studied, observed, and begun CGI in their respective classrooms in the past year, the fellows started a three-day series of day-long observations and debriefings to be conducted over the course of the academic year. The observations enabled fellows to closely listen and script the questioning strategies the Weaver fellows employ in their teaching, a critical component of the approach. Multiple visits – besides the September visit, fellows will return in February and June – will allow the opportunity to track the development of mathematical think-



*Cotsen Graduate Fellow  
Glen Olsheim*



*Cotsen Participants Observe Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) at Weaver Elementary in Los Alamitos*



*Cotsen Participants Learn “The Art of Conferencing” at Alvarado Elementary in the Long Beach Unified School District*

ing of selected students. Hour-long debriefings with the classroom teachers will then provide insight into the teaching decisions made for each child in this application of CGI that so successfully differentiates instruction.

Those fellows prepared to move into close scrutiny of conferencing with young writers, started their three day advanced series at Alvarado Elementary School in Long Beach on October 11th. Twenty-six fellows who previously attended the initial Alvarado Institute, attended the Lucy Calkins’ writing workshop at Teachers College in New York, and/or participated in Santa Monica’s Teachers College inservices, gathered in the Alvarado Library to focus on “The Art of Conferencing.” Since conferences conducted with individual students are at the heart of the workshop writing approach, experienced fellows wanted to refine and perfect this essential interaction with their students. During the first day of the three-day series, they shared experiences, watched videos of conferences, analyzed the teacher talk, and later “researched” student papers – a step in the conference that requires much of the teachers’ knowledge about both student and writing - the teachers then moved into classrooms for real-time observations of conferencing.

A special feature of the three days is the opportunity for the fellows to confer with Alvarado students about a piece of work brought to the library. Sitting at grade-level tables, each of

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watched teachers and students engage in higher order thinking, the result of deeper teacher learning and rising expectations. But because of the Cotsen mentors' and fellows' collegiality, they have not kept their learning to themselves.

In talking about the energy and enthusiasm the group has brought to their work, Brown described the fellows as "opening the door" to their practice, "not heavy-handed, never we're Cotsen." They found ways to share their new learning and "to the staff's credit, they did not let it (the Cotsen mentor/fellow designation) become a 'we/they' thing."



*Cotsen participants from Arnold Elementary in Cypress (from left to right) Jan Wright, Cindy Corbin, Ria Rappa, Marsha Ahn, and Jean Wu*

He has seen a heightened interest in professional development among the faculty: "talk in the teachers' lounge has changed", acknowledging with a smile that he knows talk changes when the principal enters. As evidence of a developing culture of shared learning, he reported on the many teachers who email him about their observations in each other's classrooms, a new practice at Arnold – and one that is teacher-driven.

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## COTSEN INTRODUCES NEW SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES, CONTINUED

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### Parent Involvement Grant

The Parent Involvement Grant of \$1,000 was offered to schools participating in the program for the purpose of helping parents, as the first teachers of their children, understand school curriculum and learn ways to assist their children in their academic studies at home. Cotsen fellows currently participating in the ART of TEACHING were eligible to apply for their classroom plan, collaborations with other classrooms, or a proposal for the entire school. Fellows were encouraged to work with other colleagues at their school sites, including those not participating in Cotsen.

Grant awards were made to 24 applicants representing 17 schools and ranged from single classroom outreach to whole-school parent projects. Applicants submitted a plan, its purposes and goals, and a list of required resources. Examples of some activities that will be supported by the grant include: Family Math Nights, Family

Literacy Workshops, Parent Empowerment Workshops, Latino Family Literacy Project, many events focusing on parent participation in reading and writing activities, and the use of technology to share student lessons and projects with parents.

Schools awarded grants:

<b>Cypress</b>	Lincoln	Will Rogers – 5
Arnold	Signal Hill	Roosevelt
Cawthon	<b>Los Alamitos</b>	<b>UCLA</b>
Landell	Hopkinson – 2	Seeds, University
Swain	Rossmoor	Elementary
<b>Lawndale</b>	<b>Santa Cruz</b>	School ■
Smith	Bay View	
<b>Long Beach</b>	Gault – 2	
Burnett	<b>Santa Monica</b>	
Grant	McKinley – 2	

## LEARNING FROM JAPAN

*Cotsen alumnus Lindsay Light-Kananack of Santa Monica's McKinley Elementary School writes about her three-week experience studying the Japanese educational system:*

Konnichiwa! I recently returned from an amazing three-week study visit to Japan. My trip was made possible through the Japanese Fulbright Memorial Fund, which is fully funded by the government of Japan. The aims of this program are to increase the level of understanding between Japan and the United States and to provide a significant opportunity for professional development of educators.

The program began with 200 fellow educators traveling to Tokyo where we received an orientation and introduction to Japanese life and culture. I attended seminars hosted by government and educational leaders and visited many cultural sites. After the orientation in Tokyo, I then traveled with a group of 20 to Ikeda, Osaka where we visited local schools and teachers' colleges



*Cotsen Graduate Fellow  
Lindsay Kananack in Japan*

and met with teachers and students. We also met with the mayor of Osaka and school board officials. While in Ikeda, I also spent a week-end with a Japanese family. After our visit to Osaka, we returned to Tokyo where we had debriefing sessions, and each group gave a presentation about their city-stay.

This trip to Japan was a once in a lifetime experience. I met incredible educators, learned a lot about Japanese culture, came back with a sense of duty to bring peace education to our schools – and I learned a lot of math lessons.

The most memorable day was the day I spent in an elementary school with a fourth grade. It was fascinating to see the similarities and differences between American and Japanese educations. I saw one particular practice that I would love to bring to ours: after lunch, for fifteen minutes, all the kids clean the school! ■

## MOVING TO MASTERY, CONTINUED

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three fellows conferred with a student while other colleagues listened and scripted the conference. The debriefing at each table was followed by a whole group analysis of the process. Despite the “public” nature of the conferring – about which fellows joked – they readily took to the activity, indicating the level of confidence and safety they felt in the learning environment.

All who are attending the series at Weaver or Alvarado left the first day with great enthusiasm and a sense that the experience met their particular needs. Demonstration

teachers also were pleased that their debriefings could focus on the kinds of questions particular to those who have studied and practiced an approach over a period of time. Mentor Sean Lindsay of Alvarado said the demonstration teachers, his fellows, “felt energized.”

Teachers, like their students, need differentiated instruction too. ■

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**THE EMERGENCE OF A LEARNING  
COMMUNITY, CONTINUED**

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Concluding the interview, he told of the Tuesday afternoon writing workshop meetings in the library. Starting at 2:57 each Tuesday, the mentor and fellows invite all interested teachers to join them in a number of different activities around writing workshop. The first meeting started with around 12 participants. The most recent session was attended by 22. Emphasizing the significance of the number, Mark Brown's eyes widened. "There are only 27 people on this faculty!" ■