SEP KICK-OFF WORKSHOPS WELL RECEIVED

By Jonathan Knight

SEP kicked off its ninth year on Sept. 21 with a conference in Cole Hall that included workshops and a keynote talk by renowned mountaineer and scientist Louis Reichardt. Over a hundred San Francisco public school teachers and nearly as many UCSF volunteers attended the event, which introduced participants to SEP’s role in improving science education in the city’s elementary and secondary schools.

After the opening talks, participants could choose from a menu of concurrent “break out” sessions — short seminars on specific aspects of SEP. One dealt with MedTeach, a program run jointly by the UCSF Medical Student Affairs Office and SEP, through which medical students can volunteer an hour and a half a week to teach school children about topics such as AIDS, drug abuse, birth control, and human behavior and physiology. Another session described a similar opportunity for graduate students. The San Francisco Unified School District, with support from Genentech, funds the SF Base Program, through which SEP volunteers can assist in demonstrating the tools of modern biotechnology to high school lab classes.

Prospective volunteers interested in a one-on-one interaction with a teacher found that SEP arranges individual partnerships between UC scientists and school teachers. The teachers and scientists work together to devise lesson plans that are scientifically up-to-date and that are effective for the students.

City Science Summer Institute participants explore electromagnetism—see “City Science Enters New Phase,” page 3.

Down the hall in a concurrent session, participants learned about the Women’s Triad Project, which targets middle school girls who are interested in science. The project has created all-girl science clubs to encourage girls to pursue their interest in what is often perceived as a boys’ subject.

One of the sessions most heavily attended by teachers was an introduction to the Resource Center, a clearinghouse providing everything from anatomical models to petri dishes free of charge to school teachers. The center processes around $25,000 worth of donated equipment and supplies each year, according to Liesl Chatman, Executive Director of the SEP. In addition, the Center makes a large amount of equipment available for check-out, including 40 microscopes, and numerous anatomical specimens. “You can take a brain back to your class,” said Chatman.

Other popular break-out sessions included the SEP Lesson Plan Contest, in which volunteers judge presentations by middle and high school students to their peers, (see Kick-Off, p. 2)

INSIDE
SFUSD News..........2
City Science..........3
BrainLink.............4
Interns.............4-5
Triad..................5
SEP Staff.............6
CSTA Convention....6
News From All Over7
Calendar and Ads.....8
SEP
Executive Director
Liesl Chatman
476-0337 liesl@itsa.ucsf.edu

Director
Margaret Clark, Ph.D.
476-0338 mrcsep@itsa.ucsf.edu

Core Programs Coordinators
Helen Doyle, Ph.D.
476-0300 hdoyle@itsa.ucsf.edu
Tracy Stevens, Ph.D.
502-5137 tracys@itsa.ucsf.edu

City Science
Janice Low, Project Director
476-6930 citysci@itsa.ucsf.itsa
Cynthia Gusman, Admin. Ass’t.
476-6937 citysci@itsa.ucsf.itsa

Triad Project Coordinator
Katherine Nielsen
502-6690 kmn@itsa.ucsf.edu

SEP Teacher-in-Residence
Eva Gordon
502-6689 meercat@itsa.ucsf.edu

SEP / City Science FAX: 476-9926

The Science and Health Education Partnership (SEP) is a collaborative effort between the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) and the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). Its mission is to support high quality science and health education. SEP is the organizational umbrella for the UCSF end of the partnership and is made up of a collection of core program components and specially funded projects. Core programs include equipment and supply donations to schools, various partnerships between UCSF volunteers and SFUSD teachers, the operation of a resource center, and the coordination of the SEP Student Lesson Plan Contest. Specially funded projects include City Science, The Women’s Triad Project in Science Education and summer research internships for teachers and minority high school students. SEP also provides support for SFUSD projects and initiatives including SF Base and the implementation of newly adopted K-8 science and health curricula. SEP is made possible through funds from NSF, NIH, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Genentech, Herbert W. Boyer, and the UCSF Chancellor.

News from the District

Maria Santos Named Assistant Superintendent
SEP congratulates Maria Santos on her promotion to SFUSD Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Improvement and Professional Development for grades K-12. Also, congratulations to Sandy Lam on her promotion to Supervisor and Program Director for the SFUSD Math & Science Unit. ∆

(From Kick-Off, p.1)

High School Summer Internships, which bring students into research labs for the summer, and a new program called Bone Science, Nutrition, and Exercise Physiology, a partnership opportunity for UCSF clinical volunteers.

One of the challenges the SEP faces in recruiting volunteers, said Chatman, is that nearly a third of the students in the San Francisco school system have limited proficiency in English. Consequently, there is always a need for bilingual volunteers. There is also an urgent need for scientists of color, Chatman said, because 85% of the children in San Francisco public schools are non-white and need strong role models during their formative years.

Math-Science Center Moves to Parkside Center
The Math Science Center has a new home: it will be located in the Curriculum Improvement and Development Center formerly known as the Parkside Center. Their new address is 2550-25th Avenue at Vicente in the Sunset District, and there is plenty of parking. The phone number remains the same: 759-2767. The Center will be up and running by the end of October. ∆

UCSF Professor of Physiology, Biochemistry and Biophysics Louis Reichardt, whose conquest of the East Face of Mount Everest in 1983 inspired the film K2, opened the conference with a talk on the similarities between doing science and climbing mountains. According to Reichardt, the difficulties he faced in his ascent of Everest, such as the uncharted territory, the frequent setbacks, the slow progress toward an elusive goal, mirrored the sorts of challenges he has encountered in his pioneering work on neurotrophic growth factors. In both cases, he said, “You have to enjoy the process of getting there.”

Reichardt encouraged SEP participants to keep up their good work. “As a parent I can tell you, you have made a difference,” he said. ∆

Reprinted with permission from UCSF’s Synapse. Jonathan Knight is a post-doctoral fellow in Tom Kornberg’s lab in the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.

City Science Summer Institute participants building constructions.
City Science Enters New Phase

Local Systemic Initiative Offers New Professional Development Opportunities

Two Summer Institutes for Leadership and Beginning Teachers

Luther Burbank Middle School was a hub of City Science professional development activity when a pair of second stage local systemic change programs was launched this past summer.

In a July Math Institute, City Science’s alumni joined their SFUSD colleagues to lead and support implementation of the District’s new hands-on mathematics curriculum. Throughout this school year, the alumni will work strategically with the new math leadership teams. At this time, Mathland Curriculum materials have been delivered to all elementary school classrooms, and the teachers who attended the Math Institute are already using them. SFUSD’s three district-wide professional development days this year will focus on the new state math framework and adoption of the Mathland Curriculum.

In August, City Science Resource teachers Margo Fontes and Andy Estrin coordinated the Beginning Teachers’ Science Institute. Busy alumni teachers teamed with UCSF scientists to present one half of SFUSD’s science core curriculum units to the district’s “Beginning Teachers”. Out of the eighty enthusiastic new City Science teachers, seventy had less than five years of teaching experience.

One workshop on “Microworlds” was unique in that it was conducted in Spanish. The scientist/teacher team received positive responses from the bilingual teacher participants. A teacher commented, “The timeline, glossary, primary language discussions, science content, our scientist and adult learning have all made this experience very energizing for me. I can’t wait to get started teaching science this year.” One UCSF scientist said, “I learned a lot about elementary school education and adult education! I relearned and learned fresh material about a science topic other than the one I work on day to day.”

There will be three Saturday follow-up sessions to continue the teachers’ professional development and adult science experiences. Helen Doyle of SEP and a group of UCSF neuroscientists will conduct “Brainlink” workshops for the new City Science teachers at the first meeting. The teachers will also take part in one of the new kit clubs to further develop their expertise (see below). Next summer they will complete the second half of the science units.

Kit Clubs for Teachers Are (Almost) Here

This November, the long awaited after-school City Science Kit Clubs will begin with two pilots that will pave the way for this new professional development format. Teacher/UCSF Scientist teams and the beginning kindergarten and fourth grade teachers who worked together this past summer requested that the “Seeds and Weeds” and “Microworlds” units begin before the originally scheduled dates. In January, Kit Clubs at every grade level will be open to all elementary teachers.

The rationale behind the Kit Clubs is to provide core curriculum support in order to sustain San Francisco’s progress in science reform. In succeeding years, as teachers become more experienced at managing hands-on science teaching, teacher/scientist teams will facilitate the introduction of inquiry into the science experiences of elementary students. SEP’s Margaret Clark has been recruiting UCSF scientists to be a part of these teams.

SFUSD’s partnership with UCSF and the Exploratorium is represented in the coordinating team: Resource Teacher Margo Fontes, City Science Co-director Janice Low, and SITE Teacher in Residence Molly O’Malley.

Scientists Contribute to City Science Teams

By Liz Conley

This past summer I took part in our City Science Summer Institute for the first time as a facilitator. I worked with a small group of 5th grade teachers, facilitating their exposure to one part of our District Science Curriculum, the FOSS Variables kit. The purpose of this kit is to teach 5th grade students the importance of controlling the variables in a scientific experiment. The activities are all based on physics. While I have successfully taught the material to 5th graders several times, I had never before shared it with adults. Although I have had some exposure to basic physics, I did not feel well enough informed to explain the physical laws involved to my peers and answer their complex questions.

I was extremely fortunate to be teamed with Kent Nybakken, a scientist from UCSF. He immediately identified the fundamental physical principles involved in the activities in the unit and, by devising more examples and experiments for us to work through, he was able to build on them to enhance the participants’ (and my) knowledge. I cannot overestimate the contribution that Kent made to our City Science Institute. He helped the teacher participants become “science literate” in the curriculum area we are required to teach our students, enabling us to go back to our classrooms better prepared to answer our students questions.

Being able to team with and have access to the knowledge of a practicing scientist was invaluable to me and, I believe, a tremendous support to the participants in my segment of the institute. I came away from the experience with a great feeling of success due in no small part to my able and flexible partner.

Liz Conley is a teacher at Golden Gate Elementary School.
Summer Intern Program a Big Success

On August 30, the SEP Summer Intern program concluded with a poster session and reception at UCSF during which the interns displayed their summer projects. The poster session was attended by the interns, their mentors, teachers, families, and SEP staff. In addition to their summer research projects, the interns participated in tours of different areas of the University and field trips to the Exploratorium and to Genentech. The interns also had the opportunity to discuss diverse research areas with several speakers, including Biophysics graduate student Sarah Gilmor, Biochemistry and Biophysics Professor Cynthia Kenyon, and Dr. Charles Wilson of the Department of Neurosurgery and the Brain Tumor Research Center. We’d like to send thanks to these speakers for their time and effort, and to the other UCSF people who took time to give us wonderful tours: graduate student Diane Brown of the Hooper Foundation, graduate student Brian Williams of the Anatomy Department, and Clinical Nurse Parry Dent of the Birth Center. Also thanks to Paul Herzmark for helping out with coordination.

For their hard work this summer, SEP would like to thank the interns: Oscar Acevedo of Mission HS; Janel Tate and Lumas Helaire of Burton HS; Stephanie Ruffin and Rayannah Salahuddin from John O’Connell HS; Xiu Qing Tan from Washington HS; Anne Chen, Michelle Lau, Judy Lam, Joyce Oloresismo, and Candace Fong, all from Lincoln HS; and teachers Rosa Haberfeld and Kristin Sorensen from Hoover MS and Francisco MS. We wish them good luck in their future endeavors. Big thanks also go out to the mentors who worked with our interns: Charlene Bayles, Jan Bibel, Brad Taylor, Chris Franklin, Anita Sil, Ramon Tabtiang, Jeff Letsin, Bryan Tolliver, Peter Hwang, Lily Hu, Steve Griffen, Maho Niwa, Andrea Hayes-Jordan, John Souza, Tony Shermoen and all the other scientists who helped the interns. And of course thanks to the principal investigators of the labs that hosted interns: Raza Aly, Allan Basbaum, Jim McKerrow, Ira Herskowitz, Keith Yamamoto, Paul Berger, Bob Fletterick, Dennis Deen, Michael German, Peter Walter, C.C. Wang, and Pat O’Farrell. We hope you all will participate again next year!

Finally, we’d like to remind SFUSD High School teachers that nominations for next summer’s program will be due before winter break. Please keep your eyes open for students that are excited about science and that you think will thrive in a UCSF research lab. Call Helen at 476-0300 for information.

BrainLink Workshops Underway

We are now in the middle of the Decade of the Brain, and teachers, students, and scientists have the chance to learn more about this exciting and mysterious organ by participating in the BrainLink Project. SEP is a regional dissemination center for the BrainLink Neuroscience Curriculum, which was developed by the Baylor College of Medicine. SFUSD middle and elementary school teachers are invited to attend one or more FREE workshops to learn how to bring BrainLink to their students. UCSF scientists and clinicians will be helping out at the workshops, and may be available to visit the classroom as well. Workshops for other Bay Area teachers will be scheduled in the Spring or by special request.

Highlights of the BrainLink workshops and curriculum:

- BrainLink is divided into four units: Brain Comparisons, Motor Highways, Sensory Signals, and Learning and Memory.
- Each unit includes a story book to introduce the topic, an activities book, and a magazine to take home for family use.
- Material is available in Spanish.
- Curriculum materials will be FREE to those teachers who want to become BrainLink facilitators themselves.
- Materials are available for check-out from the SEP Resource Center and the SFUSD Math and Science Center.
- Workshops are FREE for SFUSD teachers.
- Workshops on Unit 1 are scheduled for November 8 and 18; and for Unit 2 on December 2 and 6. Don’t miss your chance to get to know your brain better! Call Helen at 476-0300 to sign up or for more information.

Intern Stephanie Ruffin from John O’Connell High School discusses her research project on gene regulation in yeast with Ira Herskowitz, Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.
Triad Celebrates in Golden Gate Park

The Women’s Triad Project in Science Education closed its first year with a day-long event in Golden Gate Park. Girls and family members from Triad Science Clubs at Giannini, Francisco, Martin Luther King, Jr., and San Francisco Community Middle Schools came together with club sponsors, SEP staff, and interested teachers and scientists to enjoy hands-on science activities, nature walks and a barbecue. Cathy Christensen, teacher-sponsor of the Giannini club, kicked off the day’s events with some active team-building games that got everybody’s blood moving. Then the clubs set up displays of activities they had enjoyed during the year, and the Giannini club taught everybody how to make kites. Kelly Allman brought the Tarlton Institute’s Whale Bus and led the girls through activities about marine mammals, including the reconstruction of a baby whale skeleton. Tricia Dundas from Girls Inc. took the girls on interpretive walks in the park. The girls experimented with magnets, sound, color and perception with exhibits from the Exploratorium Snack Book, and the day concluded with a little kitchen science: making ice cream with liquid nitrogen. A good time was had by all, and nobody got hurt. △

The Making of a Scientist

Comments on their experience from three summer interns:

I remember someone told me that doing experiments is not as boring as reading a chemistry book. During my summer internship, I found this to be true. I usually fall asleep when I read the school’s chemistry book. Performing experiments is more recreational, though it requires some caution and seriousness. Every step in any experiment is critical, and thus, requires some thinking. Experiments can turn out unexpectedly. Books can only serve as a verification to explain the results of an experiment. If the experiment doesn’t match what the books state, we might have discovered something new.

For me, I think experiments and hands-on experiences are the most essential things in science. By doing experiments you can make discoveries. With a lot of experience you can learn to correct problems that occur. Luckily, I was able to enter the SEP Summer Intern Program and to obtain both skills and experience in doing experiments.

It has been a great summer for me, and I owe my gratitude to the SEP program and my mentor, Peter Hwang, and other scientists of the Fletterick Lab. I learned and matured a lot. I learned that science involves commitment. For example, I can not give up on the project that I’m working on just because I haven’t found the result yet. I learned that science is something that you have to play around with, and if you’re lucky, you discover something. If I were to receive this opportunity again, I would be very pleased to accept the chance. I hope, however, that other students who have as strong an interest as I do will have a chance to experience this great program.

--Anne Chen

I have also learned that research often involves many disappointments, coming across problems that seem almost unsolvable and very time consuming. That is why I admire researchers, who have the drive and the patience to work so hard even if it means making only a small step to completely understanding whatever they may be studying.

--Judy Lam

I can not predict the future accurately, but with this valuable experience that I’ve gained, and more hard work, I will achieve my dream of becoming a researcher for genetic and/or acquired diseases. Thank you very much for believing in me, and for giving me a chance to learn more than I expected to. Thank you for guiding us and letting us explore the mysteries of science without limitations that schools tend to have. Programs such as this one are what would make young people like us hopeful for our future.

--Joyce Oloresisismo
SEP Welcomes New Staff Members

SEP is pleased to welcome Tracy Stevens, Katherine Nielsen, and Eva Gordon to our staff. After a national search this past September, Tracy has been named SEP Core Programs Coordinator and Katherine, the Women’s Triad Project Coordinator. Eva Gordon is SEP’s long-awaited SFUSD Teacher-in-Residence, a position made possible through special funding from the Genentech Foundation for Biomedical Sciences.

Tracy Stevens

Tracy is no stranger to UCSF nor to SEP. She came to UCSF in 1990 as a postdoctoral fellow in immunology with the Tony DeFranco lab. It wasn’t long before she got involved with SEP through the Lesson Plan Contest. One thing led to another, and she soon established herself as an ace volunteer. Over the course of her volunteer work with SEP, Tracy has served as a City Science Summer Institute scientist, presented DNA workshops, volunteered in classrooms, and presented workshops at conferences. In January of 1995 when SEP needed an interim coordinator for the Women’s Triad Project and for SEP core programs, Tracy was the logical choice.

She did an outstanding job in the role of interim coordinator.

Throughout her involvement with SEP, Tracy has demonstrated a love and enthusiasm for science, dedication to scientific literacy, and a true talent for sharing scientific phenomena with non-scientists. The SEP staff has also come to appreciate her organizational talents. She has also brought with her a love for botany and small creatures, at times filling the conference room with plants in varying stages of dissection or bringing in jars of caterpillars ready to pupate. Don’t believe Tracy when she says that she’s left the bench; her research-bent mind is in full bloom here at SEP.

Katherine Nielsen

While new to SEP, Katherine is familiar with the science education community in the Bay Area. She has worked as an Explainer for the Exploratorium, performed research in science education at Stanford University under Drs. Rachel Lotan and Elizabeth Cohen, and co-directed the Sea Turtle Restoration Project at the Earth Island Institute here in San Francisco.

Katherine’s interest in women’s (See SEP Staff, p.7)

SEP Welcomes New Staff Members

The California Science Teachers Association (CSTA) held its annual meeting September 29 through October 1 in San Jose. On the day before the conference, a special Partnership Day, sponsored by the California Science Implementation Network (CSIN), Scope, Sequence and Coordination (SS&C), and Teacher Education in Biology (TEB), was attended by over 360 participants. The day’s keynote panel featured the UCSF/SFUSD collaboration with panelists Bruce Alberts, Maria Santos, Liesl Chatman, and Len Poli highlighting their partnership experiences. Breakout panel sessions followed on a variety of topics. Many discussions focused on language and cultural differences between partners.

Scientist Jennifer Dockter and teacher Judy Logan represented The Triad Project on a panel on access and equity, teacher Russ Janigian and Prof. Dick Shafer represented SF Base for a panel on cultural differences, and SEP’s Margaret Clark and teacher Julia Dixon from City Science participated in the panel on professional development. Partnership Day was organized by Lane Conn, TEB/S.F. State; Kathy Di Ranna, CSIN; and Helen Kota, SS&C.

The CSTA conference included a strong biotechnology strand with a variety of workshops for teachers on hands-on biotechnology activities for the classroom. Former SEP volunteer Cindy Murphy-Erdosh facilitated a panel discussion on partnerships with Margaret Clark and Len Poli from the SF Base program. SEP staff members Tracy Stevens and Helen Doyle presented a workshop on “Genetic Onioneering” at 8:00 am Sunday morning. This was the low-tech end of the biotechnology strand, using household items to extract DNA from onions. Expecting a sleepy group of 10 to 20 teachers, Helen and Tracy were a bit overwhelmed when 80 teachers showed up! The biotechnology strand as a whole was a great success, and teachers from all over California took new tools back to their classrooms.

SEP Staff members from left to right: Cynthia Gusman, Margaret Clark, Tracy Stevens, Eva Gordon, Katherine Nielsen (back row); Helen Doyle, Liesl Chatman, Janice Low (front row).
SEP Visits CSIN

CSIN, the acronym for the California Science Implementation Network, is a statewide professional development program. It assists elementary and middle schools with the planning and implementation of quality science programs. CSIN is a component of the California Alliance for Mathematics and Science (CAMS). CAMS is the state systemic initiative funded by the National Science Foundation and a collaborative effort between the Governor’s Office, the California Department of Education, the University of California Office of the President, FarWest Labs, and local schools. According to Kathy DiRanna, CSIN Director, “CSIN is a process and it exists because it is practical. The teachers and principals involved help to evolve and meet the needs of the schools.” At the invitation of Judi Wilson, North Region CSIN Teaching Consultant, SEP Exec. Director Liesl Chatman visited the CSIN2 Summer Institute at California State University, Sacramento.

To learn more about their work from a school perspective, Liesl sat in on a session of participating administrators. Many were concerned with sustainability, changing teaching philosophies, and isolated projects. As one person put it, “We can’t keep going on with the supermarket approach: picking packages off the shelf but not seeing what you get until you’re at the check-out counter.” Many people urged more communication between state subject matter frameworks. “It is incumbent on us to look for the liaisons, to help schools with how they do literacy through science, or social studies through science,” said DiRanna.

If you are interested in finding out more, write to CSIN; Univ. of California, Irvine; Science Education Programs; School of Physical Sciences; Irvine, California 92717-4680. Δ

Curriculum from the Stanford Human Genome Center

The Stanford Human Genome Center is developing three high school curriculum units designed to integrate genome science with the ethical, social and legal issues surrounding the Human Genome Initiative. The first unit, “Dealing with Genetic Disorders,” is in its final draft form and ready for national field testing. National release is scheduled for Autumn 1996. The second unit, on DNA typing, entitled “DNA Snapshots: Peeking at Your DNA,” is currently being locally field tested in five to six schools in San Francisco, San Mateo and San Jose. Development of a third unit on screening for genetic disease will begin in November. Each unit has hands-on, laboratory based activities within the context of a storyline and is designed to address both basic biology and the societal issues that will arise as scientists map the human genome. The first unit is available in draft form for $50 (copying cost) from Lane Conn at California Ave, Palo Alto, CA 94304, (415) 812-2003. The developers would welcome feedback from teachers. Δ

Eva Gordon

Ushering in a new level of collaboration, Eva has joined the SEP staff as the first SEP Teacher-in-Residence. She joins us after teaching in the district for nine years: she spent two years at Washington HS and seven at Burton HS. While at Burton, she sponsored the Martial Arts Club and the Science Fiction Club, and participated in SF Base. “I’m really enjoying SEP; it’s refreshing to work with scientists—but I miss the students!”

During the coming year, Eva will work with SEP staff to provide more orientation and on-going support for classroom volunteers. She’ll also work with school sites to implement mechanisms to effectively work with volunteers. To work toward these tasks concretely, she’ll be working with the SF Base program, MedTeach volunteers, and the Resource Center. Eva is excited about this residency as it offers a learning experience and an opportunity to get involved with science curriculum reform. “I’m surprised at feeling like we can have a big impact on science education. It’s great to be at the forefront.” Δ

Studies has been both formal and personal. She had a transforming experience when she took two intensive women’s self defense courses. “You have to believe that you are worth defending—sadly, many women do not have that belief.” Katherine believes in education’s power to transform society, and sees the Triad Project as being able to address societal issues of gender and under-representation of women in science. “However, change also needs to be brought into men’s lives; boys need to be encouraged to go into traditionally female jobs as well.”

Since coming on board, Katherine has already visited several middle schools including Everett, Aptos, and the new Gloria R. Davis Middle School. Like many SEP staff members, Katherine enjoys the outdoors, particularly bike riding and swimming, and has been enjoying her harvest of cucumbers, tomatoes, and squash from her plot in a community garden.

SEP NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 23, 1995

(From SEP Staff, p.6)
Want Ads

WANTED: MACINTOSH computers (especially LC and II models), monitors, modems, and external floppy or hard disk drives—for schools and the SEP office.

WANTED: IBM computers (especially 386 models) for schools.

WANTED: Blood pressure cuffs for the SEP Resource Center.

WANTED: Plastic petri dishes, any size for teachers.

WANTED: Calipers for measuring body fat for the SEP Resource Center.

WANTED: Anatomical models for the SEP Resource Center.

Resource Center

SEP's Genentech Teacher-in-Residence Eva Gordon is now at the SEP Resource Center full time to assist SFUSD teachers in finding science and health materials and curricula for their classrooms. She can help you find whatever you need with the help of the SEP Resource Center database. Eva will soon be on the “net” to help with finding other “cool” science resources. Also, when you come in to use the Resource Center, don’t forget to ask about free give-away materials. Freebies can include everything from pamphlets to incubators, depending of course, on availability. The Resource Center is located on the UCSF Campus in the Woods Building at the SEP office. The address is 100 Medical Center Way, which runs over the hill between Parnassus Avenue and Clarendon Ave. If you are making a special trip, call Eva at 502-6689.

Supplies and Equipment Giveaways!!!

Monday November 6th through Friday November 10th, SEP will open its storeroom to SFUSD teachers. Come between 3:30 and 5:30 pm and take away laboratory equipment and supplies. First come, first served. Everything goes!

Events Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEP Equipment Giveaways</td>
<td>November 6-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>BrainLink Workshops, Unit 1</td>
<td>November 8 and 18</td>
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<td>SF Base Workshop</td>
<td>November 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday—SEP Closed</td>
<td>November 23-24</td>
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<td>BrainLink Workshop, Unit 2</td>
<td>December 2 and 6</td>
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<td>SFUSD Winter Break</td>
<td>December 18-January 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Break—SEP Closed</td>
<td>December 25-January 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. M.L. King Jr. Birthday—SEP Closed</td>
<td>January 15</td>
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