

The Journey Of Teaching

By CHIPS ROSS

Despite 6 years of teaching, Adrienne Jimmerson didn't plan to be a teacher. Her journey to teaching began with baby sitting in high school. As her mom watched how Adrienne excelled at this, she suggested teaching for her daughter. Adrienne only seriously considered this career option while working for three years in a pre-school during college. Enrolled at Humboldt State for a degree in environmental studies, Adrienne graduated in 2001 with a liberal studies, elementary education degree and a minor in English as a Second Language. A summer in Taiwan was spent in putting her degree to good use, teaching ESL.

Following graduation in 2001, Adrienne applied herself to a teaching credential from CSU East Bay. From there, she spent 4 eye-opening years teaching 6th grade in Milpitas. "Those were four great learning years," she says with a big smile. "I learned a lot about life." Part of her education was the transition from having grown up in Durham to the Bay Area. In that environment, her ESL training was a huge help.

Following her marriage to husband Bryce and the birth of her son, Kwan, Adrienne sought to be near her family and so taught 6th grade for one year at Chico Country Day. In 2009, she made her way up the hill to Forest Ranch and doesn't seem inclined to go back: "I really love it here. Everyone looks out for one another, like a big family." She remembers Forest Ranch from her days in Durham, especially driving through to get Christmas trees near Jonesville.

Her experiences with pre-school, 6th grade, and ESL have all helped develop Adrienne as the 5th and 6th grade teacher at Forest Ranch Charter School. "It's given me a good idea of the development of a child," she explains. FRCS offers Adrienne to further develop as a teacher. For four years at Milpitas, she had at least 33 students in her classroom, but at FRCS, it's 19. "It's great to develop a more personal relationship, to be able to know all of them." This personal relationships develop into helping each student learn rather than move a class through curriculum. "They have different ways of learning," she explains, "and so you have to be creative; you have to think ahead." Understanding how students develop differently leads to better understanding of how to teach students differently. And this leads to the great joy of teaching for Adrienne: "I love watching the 'aha' moment! That's what makes it worthwhile!"

While some might avoid teaching 6th grade if given the choice, Adrienne relishes the opportunity. "I love the curriculum for the 6th grade. I love how impressionable the kids are and how they understand your humor." Part of her goal in teaching is developing her students for junior high, teaching them "study and organizational skills, how to manage time, how to be self-reliant."