

Career Day at Hilldale School

By Sasha Clayton

April 11 was an exciting day at Hilldale School. We were honored to have several distinguished guests throughout the morning for our Career Day program. Our students were divided into two age groups so that our guests could tailor their presentations accordingly.

Our first guests were Dr. Oguntala from Kaiser's Teen Clinic in Daly City and Detectives Shiu and Magalong of the Daly City Police Department. Dr. Oguntala talked to the kids about following their dreams and thinking big. Several students asked her questions about life and death and about what happens when you make a mistake. She shared about her many experiences, framing her answers with great eloquence.

The detectives were also a big hit! The older students were showered with stories about exciting adventures and what the job is really like for an officer. They talked with the younger ones about safety and what to do in an emergency. They ended their presentation by handing out sticker badges and pencils, as well as coloring books for the younger students.

Next came Tina LeBlanc, professional ballerina with the San Francisco Ballet and Joan Wolff, attorney, whose office is in San Francisco. Ms. LeBlanc wowed the students with her portfolio of images and articles. She talked about how, at 40, she will soon have to begin another career because her dancing days are coming to an end! Ms. LeBlanc spoke about the life of an artist, her experiences on stage, and even the time when someone dropped her!

Ms. Wolff talked to the upper school students about the many facets of law and handed out brochures on what steps to take to achieve ambitions in law. With the lower school students, she moderated an argument between Ms. L and me over whose camera Ms. L was holding. We had a ball with this role play, and Ms. Wolff deftly left us both feeling like we were heard. The kids had a meta-cognition moment when they got to hear how and why their teachers help them resolve fights. Ms. Wolff also explained how the children could apply this process to their own disagreements.

The Daly City Fire Department was up next, but when they were about to make their way to the classroom, they were suddenly called to duty! They waited for the series of tones on their walkie-talkie before running down the office stairs, racing to their truck, and changing into their protective clothing. I was stunned and thrilled to see them rocketed into action; while I was sad to see them miss the presentations, I was thrilled to allow the kids to experience this, too! The firefighters promised to return next year for another exciting Career Day.

Steve Rubenstein, a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, was also scheduled to speak and has promised his services for next year. He was called away on assignment. Alas, this is what happens with working professionals, as we all know!

Mrs. Rizvi and I took some time during the vacant slots to talk to the kids about our former lives as professional actors/directors. Mrs. Rizvi delighted the older students with stories about being on stage, and I shared with the younger students pictures from some of my favorite children's productions that I keep in the office.

All in all, it was a delightful, exciting, engaging morning. Our students were extremely well-behaved and inquisitive. I'm already looking forward to next year!