



Happy 4th of July!



We love to make connections between what is happening in everyday life and education. Since this newsletter is coming out on the 4th of July weekend, how **Independence Day relates to an elementary education** is an obvious theme for this month's newsletter.

Our nation's independence gives us reason to be proud of our country, as it should; we are a special nation with a special place in history having been the first to form a nation ruled by its citizens rather than by a king. This **self-rule allows us great liberty** to live as we choose and pursue our goals. But with self-rule also comes **great responsibility to understand and fulfill our duties to the nation**. Because these responsibilities are so great and important to the health of our nation, Thomas Jefferson believed that the single most important feature of self-government is an educated public that understands the issues that face the nation and how the government functions when addressing those issues. In other words, **citizenship is a job** that needs to be learned. **This is why a good civics education is so important.** It is common these days to hear people lament on TV about how children are not receiving a good civics education in school. And this is true. A 2016 poll by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that **only 26% of Americans could**

name the three (3) branches of government and only 23% of 8th grade students that year scored *proficient* on the national civics exam. (I'm guessing they were the kids who could name the three branches of government.) **This is a problem** for a country that thrives on an educated and active citizenry. **Civics should be a part** of every American student's **educational experience** because we would all be stronger for it.

Of course, a traditional American government course is not appropriate for young elementary students, but we can prepare them to be great American citizens from a young age. As I say above, making connections between the everyday world and education is a theme for us at BEAS Academy. So, too, is making connection between school subjects. The natural fit for injecting an early civics education is in the area of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and character development. **The five core competencies of SEL- self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making- all happen to also be traits of a good citizen.** Practicing these competencies in the context of understanding our duties as Americans will prime young kids to get a deep understanding of their role as citizens when they arrive in their US Government or Civics course in the 8th grade.

Another active way of instilling good citizenship in young people is to **practice democratic principles in the classroom** when possible. If some of the decisions that effect the class can be made as a group in organized "class democracies" rather than by the "royal decree" of the teacher, students can experience in practice what democracy should look and feel like.

The last thing we can do is also the simplest. Reciting the **Pledge of Allegiance at the start of each school day** is a great way to teach the core ethic of being an American. The pledge is quite elegant in its brevity yet clearly states our highest moral principles as a nation.

So, BEAS Academy would like to wish everyone a happy 4th of July this year. Enjoy the fireworks, keep your dogs safe and calm, and don't let anyone tell you you're dressing your hot dog wrong. But, most of all, remember what makes us special as a nation.

E pluribus Unum

Pete Stirling, Principal

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Building BEAS Academy

Each month seems to take on its own character as we work to cover all the different tasks it takes to build a school. Our focus last month was mainly on planning and starting to put together our outdoor learning spaces, which is on-going.

This month we have shifted slightly to a greater commitment to communicating our vision to the world. To this end, we have started a weekly podcast where our Head Teacher, Barbra, and I chat about educational topics, our views, vision, and our experience building BEAS Academy. **The Podcast** is called, **BEAS Academy**, and can be found on most listening apps. We hope you will

tune in to listen. **New episodes are out on Fridays!** We will also share the **BEAS Academy podcast** to our Facebook page, @beasacademy, so be sure to LIKE us there as well.

We are having a blast creating this school and watching it take shape. We especially enjoy watching the coalition of community members interested reforming education grow with each passing month.

We are very welcoming to community members who want to join us in building a better education. **If you are interested in volunteering for workdays, offering your time in other ways, donating books and materials; or if you would like to be a financial contributor, please contact us.**

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Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, One Nation, under God, indivisible with Liberty and Justice for ALL.

About Us



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Get In Touch