

# anthro·notes

a newsletter for teachers



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## TEACHERS CORNER:

### ANTHROPOLOGY FOR HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS

Since the spring of 1979 at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf, hearing impaired students have been offered a new English/Social Studies course in anthropology. The theme of the course is human evolution, with a concentration on hominid origins. Some of the major questions are: What is human about different types of early man? How and where do anthropologists gather and interpret evidence? The course is now being taught for the third time.

The students are language disabled in vocabulary development and syntactical usage and comprehension. Their reading skills range between second and fourth grade levels. In general they do not relate and apply ideas and concepts to either previously learned information or new situations. The students also have poor notetaking skills and low attention spans, and lack confidence in their own learning abilities.

Because of the broad range of student difficulties, English and Social Studies are integrated during a two hour time period. The English component focuses on developing class discussion skills (watching, listening, responding, questioning, and building on each other's comments) and writing skills (logically developing an idea and writing in short, clear sentences). These skills are taught within the social studies focus on human evolution. The content ranges from primates to Cro-Magnon.



As much media as possible is used to make a basically abstract theme as concrete as possible. A series of 35 slides on hominid origins was developed to help students gain a clearer idea of what hominids looked like, the skills they possessed, and the dangers they faced according to anthropologists. The students watch "Monkeys, Apes and Man"; "Dr. Leakey and the Dawn of Man"; two Jane Goodall films on chimpanzees and baboons; and a Man, A Course of Study film, "Animals in Amboseli." The films and slides also help the students study different types of living primates in order to better understand early man. However, we try to stress the tentative nature of such comparisons. Students also view films and slides on the Tasaday of the Philippines; Bushmen of the Kalahari; and Pygmy peoples of the Ituri rain forest. The students are concerned about the current conditions of these people.

Stories from the National Geographic (i.e., "Footprints in the Ashes of Time" by Mary Leakey, April 1979) as well as information in Maitland Edey's The Missing Link vol. 2 of "The Emergence of Man" series) are re-written to assist the vocabulary and syntactical development of the students. To practice formulating and explaining conclusions, the students read and discuss "evidence sheets." These sheets list discoveries of fossils and artifacts found at a particular site, some conclusions drawn from them, and a short explanation of the logic behind these conclusions. One or two examples of questions anthropologists might ask about the evidence and questions the evidence will not answer are included. After going through some complete "evidence papers" in class, the students practice drawing

and explaining conclusions on the basis of pieces of evidence.

In addition, the students classify survival skills that different types of early man had and did not have, underline factual errors and exaggerations in various stories on early man, and decide if specific quotations are true or false. They theorize in writing and in class discussions on such topics as how bipedalism may have begun, the nature and extent of early communication skills, and the importance of hunting vs. carrying and sharing long ago.

How have the students responded to this new anthropology course? They are not skipping class. They are asking more questions, writing more than ever before, and engaging in spirited debates. They know their use of English is improving and they are pleased.

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