



FIRST QUARTER

# Curriculum Spotlight

FALL 2023

**IN THE FIRST QUARTER** of the school year, our goal in history class was to educate students on Manifest Destiny and explore the historical interactions between Americans and Mexicans. Specifically, we focused on Sonoma Valley, where American presence was concentrated during that time, marking the northernmost settlement of Mexican territory.

We had the opportunity to visit two locations: General Vallejo's home and Sonoma City Hall. Additionally, we were fortunate to have George Webber, an expert, join us. He played the role of General Vallejo and facilitated a group conversation, sharing insights about his life and discussing the Bear Flag revolt. By immersing ourselves in these physical locations, the students had a more tangible and engaging learning experience, stimulating their tactile and kinesthetic senses.

We began by exploring the arrival of Spaniards and Europeans, including Christopher Columbus. We then delved into the ethical aspects of their interactions, weighing the pros and cons - understanding not just the European perspective, but the native perspective as well. We shifted our focus to the California mission system and examined New Spain and its impact. The subsequent discussions centered around the relationship between Mexico and America. By connecting the material to our local history, we aimed to engage students and demonstrate the relevance of their learning. It's fascinating to consider that the events we study took place in our very own region just a few centuries ago.

During our field trip, one particular discussion stood out to me. We explored the topic of General Vallejo's relationship to Indigenous people, and how he used them as servants on his property. As we engaged in a roundtable discussion led by George Webber, who portrayed General Vallejo, we delved into the moral justifications behind



having indigenous people as servants. This theme of contextualizing history and understanding the actions of the past resonated throughout our classes. One student aptly pointed out that in a hundred years, people will likely view our present-day handling of certain issues, such as our incarceration system, with shocking astonishment. It's crucial for students to grasp the passage of time and recognize the evolution of societal norms. We must acknowledge that hidden biases and complexities exist, even as we strive to improve our collective understanding."



**U.S. HISTORY CLASS**

*"Contextualizing history and understanding the actions of the past"*

*~ Mr. Michael Giuffre*



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