

RICHARD ELLENBURG
Camelot Elementary School, Orange County

Whether he uses animals, like “Slither” the corn snake, or a cow skull to teach one of his science lessons, his students can count on Richard Ellenburg to make science fun and interesting. “My success as an educator begins and ends each day with the simple philosophy – make learning exciting, meaningful and child centered. It may not be rocket science, but it will produce a nation of rocket scientists.” This is the guiding principal that Richard, an award-winning science teacher, has been following for the 28 years he’s been with the Orange County Public School System. The K-5 science teacher has a passion for teaching, and it shows in his students.

On any given school day, Richard can be found singing with the kindergarten students as he strums his electric guitar, challenging the third graders to lift him off the floor using a balance, or launching rockets with fifth graders at Camelot Elementary School.

His former students visit him all of the time, and many, including middle school student, Paige Lyle, credit Richard for inspiring them to be part of the Science Club. In a letter about her favorite teacher, Paige writes, “I am thinking about being a Marine Biologist when I get older. I am grateful to Mr. Ellenburg for being so excited by science and helping me get excited about it too.”

Richard not only shares his wealth of knowledge with students, but with his fellow teachers. He puts out a monthly newsletter called *The Science Corner*, which consists of a directory of Web sites, books on various teaching topics, lesson plans and learning events that are coming up in the community.

He even has his own web page where parents and colleagues find such topics as: Helpful Student Science Links, Topics We are Currently Exploring, Snapshots from our Garden, Lab Challenges and A Few Good Books. Richard instructs teachers throughout the county, and has opened his lab to fellow science teachers to share curriculum ideas and discuss effective teaching methods.