

Phone Interview and Class Visit, 6th Grade Earth Science, Hughes Middle School, Long Beach

Dates:

May 10, 2012 (phone interview)

May 24, 2012 (class visit)

Teacher: Mrs. Van Divort

Presenter: Ajay Limaye

For the phone interview, I fielded questions from one of the students. Topics included:

- Has Alfred Wegener's continental drift hypothesis stood the test of time?
- Will California break off into the ocean in the Big One?
- What are the most important skills to develop to become a geologist?

For the class visit, I covered:

- Photographic tour of the San Andreas fault in different parts of California.
- What is an earthquake and how does it relate to a fault?
- Where are earthquakes happening (showed USGS and IRIS web maps of recent earthquakes)
- How earthquakes tell us about the structure of the Earth. For this, I passed out cookies and had the students load them with stress until brittle deformation occurred, as an analogy for faulting and generation of seismic energy in the Earth's crust.

The students predictably liked the part with the cookies the best. I think it did help summarize some of the concepts we discussed as well. Overall the class asked questions throughout and was most interested in what actually happens if you're standing on a fault in an earthquake. The curriculum for the following weeks included earthquake preparedness and looking at the IRIS recent earthquake sites, so I'd recommend emphasizing things like how a geologist sees the landscape of California--something that might be harder to get out of a textbook. Mrs. Van Divort welcomed further class visits of any shape or form.