

EYE ON EDUCATION

A Publication of the Paramount Unified School District

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MARCH 2011

Welcome to Captain Ray's Corral!

Saturday morning, June 5th, 2010, several families and staff from the Collins' community arrived at school with hats, gloves, shovels, and trowels wondering what Mrs. Deogracias had in store for them. Jon Basset from FarmScapeGardens.com instructed volunteers to lay a weed cover over the base of the raised garden beds, fill them with soil and compost, set and test the irrigation lines, and then spread wood chips for pathways. Next, children planted a summer crop of zucchini, gooseneck and patty pan squashes, tomatoes, bok choy, corn, pumpkins, watermelon, strawberries, marigolds, herbs, and sunflower seeds.

Collins School garden is a resource for teaching nutrition and agriculture so that children can eat healthier by growing their own food and learn how California farmers provide much more than their food and clothing. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the garden for lessons in their core



curriculum. Our cafeteria displays the current harvest so all children can observe their food in its original state.

Mrs. Deogracias, a first grade teacher and certified Los Angeles County Master Gardener, facilitates an after school garden club on Fridays with the assistance of a parent and a teacher or two. About twenty-five students from grades one through five maintain the garden. They also learn a bit of

botany and recycle by composting garden waste.

During autumn, the children removed seeds from over twenty giant sunflower heads and filled an entire copy paper box full of seeds. They ate fresh roasted seeds for weeks. Our garden guardians nurtured a pumpkin to grow to forty-two pounds. The STAR students relished the sweetness of a vine ripened watermelon.

For the winter season, the



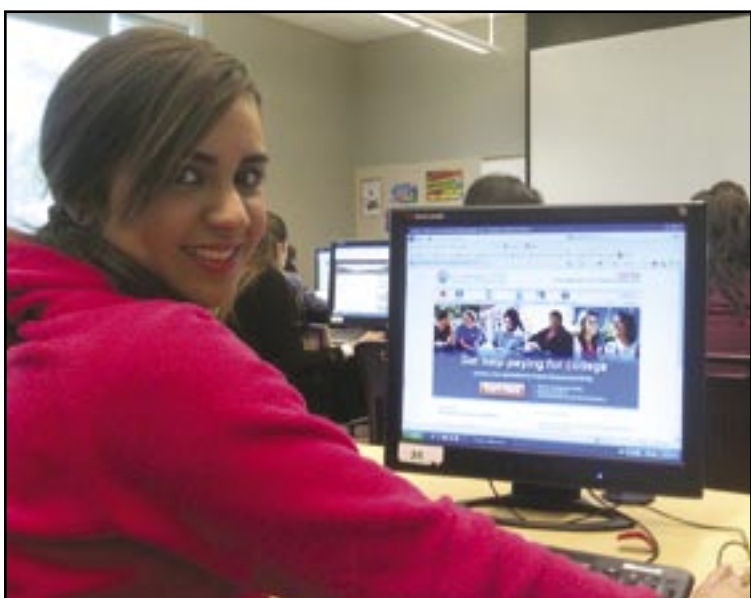
children planted broccoli, mustard greens, kohlrabi, chard, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, snap peas, carrots, lettuces, celery, and an artichoke. They enjoyed bok choy soup and quesadillas with fresh Mexican oregano and cilantro. Their families took fresh garden produce home.

Thank you Superintendent David Verdugo, Ed. D, Head of Nutrition Services Chris Stamm, Operations Supervisor Roger

Ramirez and staff, Collins PTA, Collins Third Grade Store, and all the garden donors whose contributions of time, talent, and funding enabled our garden to be a reality. Captain Ray's Corral is helping train our students to be responsible hard workers, problem solvers, and caretakers of our environment.

**Mrs. Deogracias, Teacher
Captain Raymond Collins
School**

Financial Aid for PHS Seniors



"Thank you so much for the help with my FAFSA, I thought my head would explode!" said senior Gabriela Pedroza after attending one of the on-line FAFSA Workshops in the new PHS Library Media Center.

The months of January and February find Paramount High School Counselors focused on helping all PHS seniors reach their college goals and assisting them with financial aid forms and scholarship information. According to 2010 senior exit data, 34% of PHS seniors went on to a four-year university such as a Cal-State or UC, 45% went on to a 2-year community college and 9% went on to a trade or vocational school. Counselors expect this number to grow in 2011 and that means Paramount students will need more financial assistance to help cover

their college costs.

Counselors started off the New Year by presenting their Guidance Curriculum on Financial Aid, Funding your Future. The power point presentation was provided to counselors through Edfund and gave a comprehensive overview of financial aid programs and what forms need to be filled out in order to qualify. Counselors visited all of the senior social studies classes where 980 seniors were presented the information along with a handout outlining the key points. Students were also given information on where to find scholarship applications on School-Loop.

Seniors must file a FAFSA (Free Application For Student Aid) and a Cal-Grant GPA verification form by March 2nd, 2011 in order to qualify for financial aid. Students must apply to an

accredited school for the fall of 2011 to receive financial aid. Counselors invited all seniors to FAFSA workshops that were held in the new PHS Library Media Center.

Counselors were available to assist students and parents in these workshops by helping them complete their on-line FAFSA forms. Resources to help students and parents can be found on the new counseling website on School-Loop:

PHS Counseling Website:

<http://phs-pusd-ca.schoolloop.com/PHSCounseling>

FAFSA:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

Cal-Grant GPA Verification form:

<http://phs-pusd-ca.schoolloop.com/financialaid>

PHS Scholarship Applications

<http://phs-pusd-ca.schoolloop.com/scholarship>

**Erik Lindshield
Counselor PHS**

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING DATES

March 9, 2011 & March 23, 2011

Board of Education meetings are held at 6:00 p.m. in the Boardroom at the District Office, 15110 California Avenue, Paramount, and are open to the public

The PHS Green Club "Solstice Canyon Experience"



It's December, and holiday mode is seeping into every weary Paramount Highschooler. They want winter break to begin already. They want to be homework-free and test-free. They want to bake cookies and drink hot chocolate. They want to open presents. They want to... wake up at 7 am and go hiking for 3.6 miles? If they're fellow Green Club members, then you can definitely count on that! On December 4, Paramount High's very own Green Club went hiking in the beautiful Solstice Canyon in Malibu, part of the Santa Monica Mountains, a National Recreation Area, free for everyone to enjoy.

Thanks to our two well-trained

(not to mention, patient) hike leaders Katie and Firoza, and loyal club advisor, Mr. Hasheminejad, we were able to enjoy the picturesque sights and scenic trails to the fullest. As we arrived, we became a bit discouraged by the overcast skies. Not only this, but the beginning of the hike proved to be more challenging than we imagined. We walked uphill the entire time. Up a spiraling trail. Up a spiraling, rocky trail. Point being made, we finished this part of the hike fully energized, with our hearts a pumpin' and our bodies a hurtin'. From then on though, the hike was more forgiving on our feet and the scenery only be-

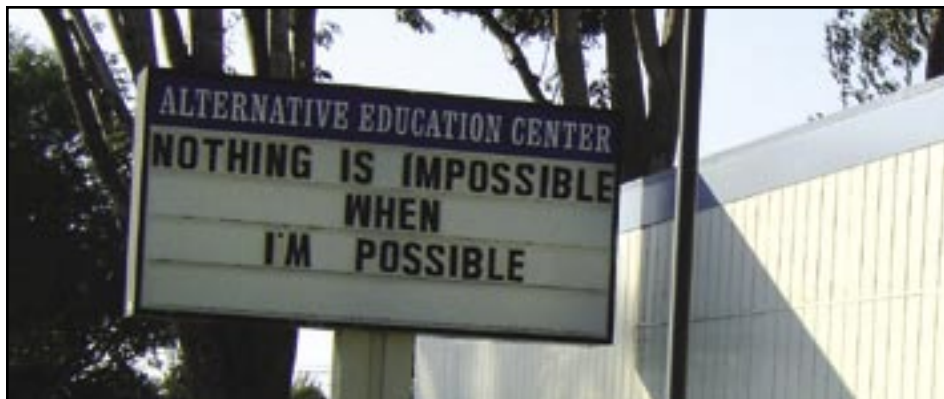
came more fascinating. We observed in delight the variety of blooming plants, verdant trees, and wispy white skies that never looked so clear. It seemed that nature perfumed the air with its very own signature scent and everyone enjoyed these deep breaths of fresh air.

The highlights of this hike had to be when we explored and ate lunch in the ruins of a burnt ranch house and visited the nearby waterfall afterward. High school students, who are known to suffer from heavy school-induced stress, were one with the harmony of nature, and what a sight that was to see! On the way back home, many

students were falling asleep, but others simply couldn't stop talking about everything they saw on the trail. One person remarked, "It was a long hike, but very fun!" John Arteaga, a PHS junior, remarked that passing through the ruins was a "historically interesting" experience. And then of course, you had perhaps the most insightful comment of them all that could have been enough to sum up the entire experience: "I fell," recalled Jessica Zepeda, PHS junior. It hurt. It was awesome!"

-Mariana Castro
11th Grade Student, PHS

The Alternative Education Center Reaching for the Sky



Incredibly, this newly established Alternative Education School is making positive strides and great leaps towards accomplishing one of its' main goals and mission: To equip self-reliant adults with problem solving skills to overcome life barriers.

Proudly we announce that for seven students', one life barrier has been solved! Congratulations are in order for seven young adults who have earned

their high school diploma. Hard work and diligence paid off for these students. These seven students lead the way for what is promised to be a trend setting year. So far this year, the school has identified 40 possible grads. The AEC is an idea whose' time has come!

Gwen Yates-
Assistant- Principal
Alternative Education Center

Hollydale Home/ School Connection

Hollydale School recognizes the importance of parents and community members as partners in learning and provides many opportunities to support parent education.

One such opportunity took place on January 20, 2011. Counselors Rosa Edwards and Charlene Ornelas facilitated a Parent Night which focused on the high school exit exam, CAHSEE, and provided information on how parents can best prepare their students for this milestone in their child's academic career. The presentation was from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. followed by a question/answer period. Refreshments and child care were provided by the school.

Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Ornelas shared that CAHSEE assesses student knowledge in the areas of language arts and mathematics. Students in ninth grade take a practice exam to provide them with an idea of what the exam entails. Students have multiple opportunities to pass the exam in tenth through twelfth grades, and support is provided for those

students who need assistance in preparing for the test.

The counselors suggested to the parents who attended the meeting that they have their students read nightly and write summaries of what they read. A five paragraph essay is required to pass the language arts component of the exam. They also shared that students must know their basic math facts if they are to succeed on the math portion of the test.

The counselors provided various handouts including homework tips, suggestions for struggling learners, and general information about CAHSEE.

Following the presentation, parents were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to clarify their understanding of CAHSEE.

Hollydale School values the role our parents and community members play in the success of our students. By working together, we ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn and to achieve.

Susan Marilley, Principal
Hollydale School

Eye On Education is a monthly Publication of the
Paramount Unified School District



Great things are happening in Paramount Schools

Eye On Education

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TAKE A BOW!



Music Center artist, Peter Kors, looks on as a Kinder student leads class in the mirror game.

Kindergarten through fifth-grade students and teachers at Los Cerritos and Mokler schools learn to 'take a bow' during a series of workshops with artists from the Los Angeles Music Center.

We Tell Stories artists and teachers facilitate and team-teach workshops that lead students through theater games and storytelling techniques bringing characters and stories to life.

As students interact with their peers, teachers and artists, they learn story structure and use critical thinking skills to describe, discuss and analyze the characters in stories during Language Arts while having fun and building comprehension simultaneously!

Some of the favorite theater games that both students and teachers enjoy are Build a Machine, Mirror Game,

Describe Mr. So and So, Bag of Masks, Character Walks and Shared Narration. When asked about his favorite, Luis said, "I like the car wash machine and when we do pantomime!"

Through the partnership with Music Center artists, all students and teachers gain confidence and are able to be creative using multiple modalities. Whether students are actors or the audience there is a positive energy in the classroom and even the shyest students are eager to participate and shine as they bring characters and stories alive. All those involved agree, learning is fun and they're ready to TAKE A BOW!

Suzanne Fraser
Curriculum Specialist

Reading Pumas Have "Chiva Fever!"



Mark Keppel School was recently visited by the Chivas Soccer Team representatives. They enthusiastically engaged our students and staff in an exciting "Kick-off for Reading" game. Competition was held between a boy and a girl's team. Mr. Lamb and Mr. Rodriguez helped the boy's team make goals, while Ms. Cuellar and Mrs. Rubio made swift goals for the girl's team. Our Principal, Mrs. Go, came in with the final goal that helped the girl's team take the lead!

The Chivas helped to encourage our students to read and reach their grade level goals! Goals range from 10,000

words for 1st graders to a challenge to be in the "Millionaires Club" for 4th and 5th graders. Students are eyeing on the great prizes awaiting them. The Chivas have joined the Keppel Reading Fever and will be awarding game tickets to students who reach their goal. Students will get to meet the players and receive an opportunity to walk on a professional soccer field! The Reading Pumas caught the "Chiva Fever!"

Linda Go
Principal
Keppel Schol

Superintendent's Message:

March as Arts Education Month

During the past two years, the Paramount Unified School District's Board of Education has set a goal in conjunction with our school principals, teachers, and parents of developing a meaningful and vibrant "Visual and Performing Arts" program for our students.

Arts education, which includes dance, music theater, instrumental music, and visual arts has become an essential part of our basic education for all students, kindergarten thru grade twelve.

Through well-planned instruction and activities in the arts, children develop initiative, creative ability, self-expression, self-reflection, thinking skills, discipline, as well as a heightened appreciation of beauty and cross-cultural understanding.

Our Board of Education joins the State Board of Education in proclaiming the month of March 2011 as Arts Education month



and encourages our educational community to celebrate the arts and gives recognition to our students, teachers, and principals for their dedicated and collective interest and support of "Arts".

I am very proud of the many accomplishments, high quality programs, and comprehensive arts education that now exists for our students in the Paramount Unified School District. Thank you to our parents who support and focus on the value of arts for all students.

Sincerely,

David J. Verdugo, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Paramount Wrestling Finishes 2nd in CIF

The end of the 2010-11 Winter sports season at Paramount High provided some predictable results and one major surprise as the Pirate wrestling team finished as the CIF Division 6 runner-up in the team tournament at Monrovia High on February 12. Unheralded as the 2nd place team in the San Gabriel Valley League behind league rival Downey, the Pirates marched through three matches to reach the Finals, including a stunning 33-30 upset of 2nd-seeded Santa Ynez in the semi-finals. Paramount then encountered Downey again in a rematch of a January league dual meet that hadn't been decided until the final pair, with the Pirates falling, 37-33. The CIF team final echoed that earlier match as, again, the two teams were evenly matched until the final pair. Unfortunately for the Pirates, the results were the same, but the team walked away from the competition with their heads held high and a CIF Runner-Up plaque in their possession. Coach Don Wakefield has rebuilt the Pirate wrestling program to not only compete for league championships but also to be a force in CIF competition. Congratulations to Coach and all the Pirate wrestlers who made this season a special one.

Paramount boys' and girls' soc-

cer teams also earned CIF playoff berths. The Pirate boys, defending league, CIF Division 3, and Southern Regional Division 1 champions, secured another SGVL title with an 8-0-2 record and earned a #4 seed in the playoffs. As of this writing, Paramount was set to open at home against Valencia. The Pirate girls finished 3rd in SGVL play and fell to a tough Calvary Murrietta team, 2-1, in a CIF wild-card match on February 15. Paramount's basketball programs and girls' water polo will look to improve in the off-season and try to get into the playoff mix in 2011-12.

With Spring sports just around the corner, the athletic department is looking forward to a summer move into new digs in the nearly-completed Field House. It's going to be a busy and exciting time as new locker rooms, a wrestling practice room, a 3,000 square-foot weight room, new training facilities and storage, and a new band room become an integral part of the Paramount landscape. Thanks to all those responsible - from the people of Paramount to PUSD Board members to Dr. Verdugo and his staff, Dr. Conroy, Patti Cummings, PHS administration, and McCarthy Construction - for this remarkable addition to our facilities. We can't wait!

Poetry In Motion



Pictured are Board President Tony Peña, Assistant City Manager John Moreno, Board members Alicia Anderson, Linda Garcia and Superintendent David Verdugo.

Mr. John Moreno, City of Paramount Assistant City Manager presented the Board of Education with a donation of a framed photo piece of the Sculpture that is displayed outside the PHS Delores Stephens Library. The

Sculpture is titled "Poetry In Motion" and contains an inscription by T.S. Eliot "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

Academic Counseling

This is a busy time of year at Paramount High School West Campus as students are ending the first semester and preparing to earn High School credits. With that in mind, the counseling department is heavily focused on outreach and academics- specifically on academic counseling.

Academic counseling is a process that involves any student with a D or F in a class. The students are divided up into two main groups depending on the number of D's and F's. Those with 1, 2 or 3 D's and/ or F's meet with their counselor in small groups to identify the problem, choose ways to improve the grade and to set specific academic goals. This process is then revisited with the student before the end of the first semester to reflect on whether or not the goal was achieved. Those with 3 or more D's and/ or F's are invited to our "Back on Track" presentation which is a collaborative effort between Buena Vista High School and the West Campus. This presentation consists of current Buena Vista students sharing their personal stories with over forty of our most

under-supported students in the hope that the power of peer influence will help motivate our current students to make positive changes in their school and personal lives.

Strong Start is another form of outreach that is happening at the West Campus that involves staff and students. Teachers voluntarily participate by serving as a mentor for an incoming student who was indentified as under-supported from his or her previous school. This is anonymous as the student does not know that he or she is a strong start candidate and the teacher is paired up with a student who is already in their class. The West Campus staff continues to be very supportive and eager to maintain this program as we currently have over fifty staff members and one hundred students participating.

These are just a few of the many exciting interventions happening at the West Campus. We are all eager to help our students conquer their quest for success!

**Sheryl Ramirez, Counselor
PHS-West**

WALKING SAFELY

These student safety guidelines were developed by Paramount Unified School District. Please review the following safety precautions with your children:

- Do not speak to strangers.
- Do not walk alone, particularly in isolated areas not intended for walking, especially along the railroad tracks.
- Use the appropriate dismissal gates, ones where there is supervision.
- Walk in areas where you can be seen by others.
- Travel in groups whenever possible.
- Report any suspicious behavior school authorities and the Paramount Sheriff Station at (562) 220-2002, Lakewood Sheriff Station at (562) 623-3500, Long Beach Police at (562) 570-9800 (Collins School) or South Gate Police at (323) 563-5400.

Please remind your children to be careful and constantly aware of their surroundings.

Coffee with the Counselor at Jefferson School



At Coffee with the Counselor, parents enjoyed working together on a cooperative learning activity.

Getting along with others is not always an easy task, whether it's your friends, neighbors, family members, in-laws, or co-workers. As adults we have all experienced a time where it was difficult to get along with someone. Adults, however, have learned to utilize certain social skills to assist in this process. Children must also acquire these skills in order to get along with their peers. Parents are a child's first teacher. In our Coffee with the Counselor meeting, Jefferson parents explored strategies for teaching their child How to Get Along with Others.

Parents had a wonderful time as

they engaged themselves to work with other parents in some cooperative learning activities. They learned hands-on what it's like for their child to practice how to share, listen, be patient, practice tolerance, and be open to other people's point of view. Parents look forward to these meetings to reflect on the various skills and strategies that will support their child in their personal and social development.

**Ayanna Holland
Counselor
Jefferson School**

A Learning Community

Alondra Middle School Special Education department is focused on the success and growth of each student by cultivating a learning community rooted in a functional curriculum and supported by a positive, respectful, and nurturing environment.

The students have been focusing on skills that are functional to them in becoming independent. The areas that they have been focusing on are life and personal-social skills. Both of these areas assist the students in becoming self sufficient and independent enough to maneuver within and outside of the community.

During the month of December, students had the opportunity to travel to the Lakewood Mall where they practiced their like skill of money management through making a purchase at one of the retail stores and then purchasing their own lunch from the food court. This was a great experience as the students were able to put into action the skills and knowledge they have been learning in the classroom within the community based instructional setting. It allowed for all students to exhibit independent behavior, while making decisions and communicating with others.

Furthermore, they also had the opportunity to utilize their personal-

social skills when they were able to interact with their peers from Paramount High School Senior Campus and Adult Transition. A festive Holiday gathering was held at Alondra which enabled students to make arts and crafts, decorate cookies, listen to Holiday music, and socialize with those around them. Another great way for students to practice what they learn in the classroom.

Finally, the students have been working closely with their general education peers. Our students are mainstreaming in such classes as music, physical education, and science. Through these experiences, our students are able to build and develop friendships, practice life skills as maneuvering themselves within their school community from one area of instruction to another, and communicating with others as they explore and discover new experiences had outside of their main classroom setting.

*"Everyone has a gift;
you let it take you as
far as it can"*

Lynette Woodard

**Scott Rangel, Teacher
Alondra Middle School**