

# EYE ON EDUCATION

A Publication of the Paramount Unified School District

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FEBRUARY 2010

## Youth Empowerment Conference

In early December, 58 students from Paramount High attended the Youth Empowerment Conference at the University of Southern California. The conference is organized by the Chicanos for Progressive Education organization at USC, bringing students from local high schools for a day of pre-college advising, Q&A sessions, and tours of the USC campus.

The conference opened with a high-energy presentation by its keynote speaker, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, the director of Community Coalition South Los Angeles. According to PHS student Brittany Early, Harris-Dawson's message of pursuing higher education to not only help yourself, but to also help one's community was very motivating.

Students also attended a series of small group meetings in which they were able to ask questions about dorm life, writing personal statement letters, and financial aid. The



information on financial aid was especially useful, according to student Jocelyn Pinto. "I wasn't really aware of the many ways available to help finance attending a private school like USC." She added that besides applying to UCI and UCLA,

she has also decided to apply at USC as a result of this trip.

The conference also included a campus tour. "Seeing the trophy room was pretty awesome," said Brittany Early. "It really bought USC's sports history to life." Brittany also

added the small group meetings were especially helpful, and that she would recommend attending this field trip to anyone in the future.

Many thanks are due to Mr. Lindshield and Ms. Calero-Hill, counselors at Paramount

High, for organizing and supervising the field trip. Thanks also to the City of Paramount for providing buses to transport the students to USC for the conference.

Jeff Beahn, TOSA

## Fall Production Was a "Must See" Hit



Paramount High School's Drama Department's fall production entertained many with the hilarious performance of "The High Schooler's Guide to the Galaxy." The play takes

place the night before the first day of high school. Two fairies (an author and an editor) appear on stage to offer their advice to four nervous freshmen who are dreading their first day of high

school.

Many scenes brought rolling laughter from the audience. There was the old-school veteran gym teacher who wore high-waisted polyester gym

shorts with a whistle around her neck, played by Kathryn Florimon. Her remedy for everything was "walk it off!" To the lazy student claiming he had asthma, she replied, "Walk it off!"

Another crowd favorite was as the chain-smoking cafeteria lady whom Ashley Mack brought to life. The hacking cafeteria lady wearing her bloodied butcher's apron spouted off some of the funniest lines with her sarcasm such as "If you want to see the age of 18, I suggest you start packing your own lunch."

Senior Xaviera Magallon had the crowd going with her sympathetic innocence as the school principal. She humbly tried to explain budget cuts,

missing textbooks, and why her office was relocated to the girl's restroom, third stall from the left.

And who can forget scene five where two angry teens are documented and scrutinized as if they are animals being watched on an episode of "Animal Planet." Gabriela Escobedo, playing the role of Editor, describes the teenagers' actions play by play, beginning with their spewing of nonsense.

Overall, this production was a big hit. With the cast's unforgettable performances and script's gut-busting humor, one can only say this drama certainly deserves two big thumbs up!

Irane Pulido, Senior

### SCHOOL BOARD MEETING DATES

February 9, 2010 & February 23, 2010

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

# New Middle School Program



This year we welcomed three middle schools to the Paramount Unified School District. Alondra, Paramount Park and Zamboni Middle Schools were K-8 schools last year and now enroll only students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. In an effort to provide a broader array of courses to middle school students, K-8 schools were reconfigured to enroll grades K-5 or 6-8.

In addition to having a full schedule that includes Language Arts, mathematics, science and social studies, middle school students now have the opportunity to take an elective class. Students can choose a class in technology, art, music or Span-

ish. Sixth grade students have four mini-electives, including Art, Chorus, Technology and an introduction to middle school course entitled, Middle School Preparation. The technology elective offered at each middle school teaches students to use technology programs to develop word processing skills, create Power Point presentations, develop web pages and design their own websites. The attached photo shows students at work in this new course, Computer Applications. We look forward to seeing our students benefit from a middle school program that prepares them to be successful in high school and beyond.

# Digital Storytelling Comes to Paramount Unified School District's Classrooms



The Paramount Unified School District actively promotes the use of technology in every school. To achieve this goal, the District's Technology Curriculum Specialist offers training sessions that focus on how teachers can integrate technology into the daily curriculum. At a recent workshop held at Mokler School, elementary teachers learned how to use the digital storytelling tool Photo Story 3 for Windows.

Photo Story 3 for Windows creates digital stories. It gives teachers and students the ability to arrange pictures, add text, customize motion, narrate a digital

story, add background music, and ultimately, generate a movie that integrates all of these features. In learning how to use this new program, teachers observed a demonstration lesson provided by Technology Curriculum Specialist Sam Plambeck and then created a digital story for their own classrooms. After extended practice, teachers expressed their enthusiasm for using digital storytelling in their classrooms. One teacher commented, "this training was very useful and I look forward to seeing the stories my students produce using this new tool."

**Eye On Education is a monthly Publication of the  
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*Good things are happening in Paramount Schools*

**Eye On Education**

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# LA 84 Track and Field Coach's Education Clinic



Willie Banks with PHS track athletes Michael Wright, Will Mangram, Mike Carradine.

On January 9, 2010, Paramount High School hosted the Los Angeles 84 Track and Field Education Clinic for high school coaches. This was the first time Paramount High has hosted such an event, and Paramount's track coach, Christine Barboza, was the site coordinator. Coach Barboza was very proud to show off Paramount's new state of the art track stadium, especially considering the clinic's presenters represented top track and field programs from the high school and university level, including track star Willie Banks. Willie Banks was a member of the 1980, 1984, and 1988 U.S. Olympic teams. A world

record holder in the triple jump from 1985 to 1995, Banks was inducted to the Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1999.

Approximately 150 high school coaches from Southern California attended the clinic, and their overall evaluation of Paramount's track facility was extremely positive.

This clinic is usually held at Mount San Antonio College, but the positive feedback regarding Paramount's stadium from coaches and presenters expressed a strong desire to return next year. Paramount High and its new stadium are certainly on the map!

## Students Eager to Learn in New Band Program



Alondra School and Jenna Currey, the band teacher, are pleased to report that our new band program is alive and thriving! Students who had no musical training prior to the beginning of the school year can now play their instruments, read music, and have performed four times for their peers, parents and the community. The band was honored to perform at the October Harvest Festival after only two months of playing their instruments. The band was asked to perform again in the December Winter Performances, where they excited audiences with complex music, including an arrangement of

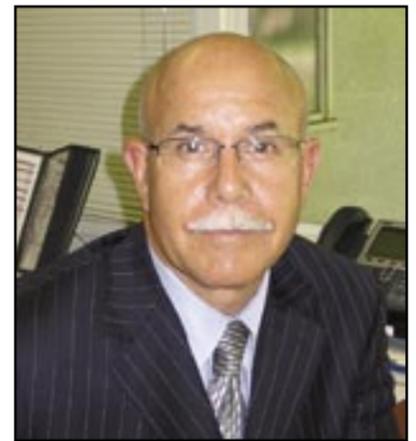
Jingle Bells that featured each section of instruments.

Alondra Middle School band classes combine to more than sixty students and they are as excited to be in band as the school and the community is to have them. It is truly rewarding to see beginning players advance and excel as naturally as these students have, and we look forward to showcasing them again as they continue to develop their repertoire of notes, rhythms, and music theory.

**Jenna Currey**  
Alondra School Band Teacher

## Superintendent's Message:

### Governor's Proposed Budget State Budget Crisis 2010-2011



The State of California is once again facing an unprecedented budget crisis. The governor has now acknowledged that a combined shortfall or deficit of \$19.9 billion over two years exists. This will again have a serious and negative impact on the children in school districts across California.

Based on the Governor's proposal, Paramount Unified School District anticipates a reduction in State education funding of approximately \$3.4 million for the upcoming 2010-11 school year. The loss of funds may rise even higher if any of the Governor's proposed solutions to this fiscal crisis are not realized.

The Governor's proposal to close the most recently projected budget deficit involves spending cuts to virtually every segment of State government. While the Governor has emphasized that education is a "top priority" and that he is "protecting" K-12 education from cuts, his

plans continue to include on-going targeted "cuts" to school districts. The Governor has continued to use semantics and the fact is he is not protecting our children, our teachers, our school districts, nor is he protecting our future.

It is my intention to keep all of our educational community informed as we anxiously wait for the State to make budget decisions. I also intend to reconvene our work on our District's Fiscal Stabilization Plan to begin examining how we can deal with the magnitude of these budget cuts.

Sincerely,

**David J. Verdugo, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

## Paramount Schools Gain Recognition

Three additional Paramount Schools were recently recognized by the California State Department of Education as having made good academic progress in the 2008-09 school year as defined by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Those schools were Roosevelt, Tanner, and Zamboni. Previously, seven Paramount schools had been named as showing good progress for 2008-09: Gaines, Hollywood, Jackson, Jefferson, Keppel, Lincoln and Los Cerritos.

On the state measure for educational progress, the Academic Progress Index (API), which is an overall indicator of academic growth in a school or district, Paramount Unified has gained more API points over the last seven years than any of the 47 unified districts in the County, and 29% more points than the second greatest gaining unified district in the County! During that period, it has moved past six other districts in its overall API score, moving past more districts in this ranking than any other district. [Note, a "unified district" is one that has elementary, middle and high schools in the district; some districts have only elementary schools or only high schools.]

Also, California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) recently announced two current Paramount Unified schools on their 2009 Honor Roll. The 2009 Honor Roll includes Califor-

nia public elementary, middle and high schools that have been recognized by California's business community for having demonstrated consistent high student academic achievement and have made significant progress toward closing achievement gaps among all their students. Gaines and Lincoln are among 395 "STAR" schools statewide that were recognized as having significant populations of socioeconomically disadvantaged students that have shown a significant increase in grade-level proficiency and achievement gap reduction over four years. "These schools are the bright spots of hope in efforts to raise student academic achievement and close persistent achievement gaps," said Kirk Clark, executive director of CBEE. "By highlighting them, recognizing their achievement and giving them a voice we hope other schools can learn from these proven practices and we can begin to take their success to scale throughout the state."

Lastly, Gaines School was invited by the California Department of Education to apply for a "Distinguished School" award, given annually by the state to a small number of schools that have made great academic progress in the last year. The final list of those schools receiving the award will be released in a few months.

Congratulations to all of our fine public schools in Paramount!

## Wirtz Wizards Explore Their Neighborhood

First graders at Wirtz School embarked on an exciting adventure learning about, and meeting, the community helpers in their neighborhood. Students and teachers together shared all their experiences about people and businesses in the neighborhood. Classes developed lots of artwork and information that was proudly displayed in their rooms. They all have first hand experience with many people and places, from the crossing guards to the cafeteria workers, the big chain stores to the local fast food restaurants, and even the clinics, dentists and mechanics that help their families.

To enhance the children's knowledge, Ms. Teng and Mrs. Valdez invited two very exciting visitors. First, Station 31's apparatus truck visited. Captain Steve Powell and his crew came to show their equipment and talk about their job in the neighborhood. Students were able to see all the compartments on the big rig and see the firemen dress out in their turnouts and SCBA gear.

They asked many questions and squealed in excitement when the siren wailed.

The second special visitor was police officer Mike Abbot who is assigned at Paramount High School. Officer Abbot showed the students many of his special tools he uses at his work. He also let them all climb through his patrol car's back seat. Ms. Valdez modeled the latest in bullet proof vests to the delight of the children. They had many, many questions and Office Abbot was more than happy to take the time to answer them.

After the visits the students discussed and wrote thank you letters to their guests. They learned a lot about the important jobs the firemen and police do in their neighborhood. Ms. Loza remarked that many of the children have declared they want to be firefighters when they grow up! Learning is fun and exciting at Wirtz School.

**Heather Tompkins, Teacher**

## Leona Jackson School's "Make-n-Take" Math Night



On the evening of December 10, 2009, parents, students, and teachers of Leona Jackson School celebrated mathematics in a "Make-n-Take" Math Night held in the multipurpose room and computer labs. The games and activities that were introduced helped students to practice computation skills, integer concepts, and graphing coordinates in an entertaining way. Students and parents were also able to work with teachers in the two computer labs that were set up for this event. One computer lab introduced websites that assisted students with their Pre-Algebra and Algebra skills while the second computer

lab was geared more for 4th-6th grade mathematics.

Upon entering the multipurpose room, parents were given a packet of materials and directions for each of the games and activities so that after learning how to use them that night, they could continue using them at home. Prizes were awarded to students who were able to make the best estimate of items in the 'Estimation Jars' that could be found at each of the centers. The evening was a great success with everyone, including parents, learning about math concepts in fun and new ways!

**Laura Donato**  
4th-8th Math Coach

## Epic Boys' Basketball Win Accents Early League Slate

With the PHS winter league schedule in full swing, the early returns have been encouraging, with all Pirate teams comporting themselves well. Some traditional powers are holding their own while newcomers still hold the possibility of a playoff run in early February. Time will tell if the players and coaches of our Winter programs can take the necessary steps to keep playing after the regular schedule concludes on February 12.

History was made by the Pirate boys' Varsity basketball team on January 22 as it defeated Dominguez, 73-71, for the first Pirate win over the Dons since 1993. In a see-saw battle that kept a great crowd on the edge of its seats from start to finish, the Pirates battled back from a late deficit to tie the game at 71; then, with 3 seconds left, senior guard Kevin Guthrie took an in-bounds pass

under the basket and muscled in a layup to clinch the epic win. Congratulations to Coach Mark McGarry and his squad for demonstrating the mental toughness and "Pirate Pride" needed to make the San Gabriel Valley League competitive again.

The Pirate boys moved to 2-2 in league play with the win, and the other Winter programs are also showing some success: Lady Pirate basketball stood at 1-3, Pirate boys' and girls soccer were both 2-1 as of this writing, and Lady Pirate water polo was holding its own in every match. The wrestling team lost a heartbreaker by 3 points to Warren on January 21 and is trying to get healthy for league finals on February 6th at Gahr. For all our programs, second-round games and matches loom that will tell the tale about playoff competition in February. Good luck Pirates!

## 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.