

EYE ON EDUCATION

A Publication of the Paramount Unified School District

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MAY 2010

Wesley Gaines School Recognized as a California Most Distinguished School for 2010

Wesley Gaines School officially became a California Most Distinguished School on April 19th.

The lengthy process leading to excellence and validation began in November. Gaines School was invited to complete and submit a most Distinguished School Application based on the school site meeting several rigorous criteria:

- First, a school must have an API of 796 or higher, Gaines had achieved 828 on STAR 2009.

- Second, Gaines met all 2009 AYP criteria, and closed the achievement gap for all of our sub-groups in Language Arts and Math.

- Third, there must be strong academic indications that the Achievement Gap between significant sub-groups has been decreased.

The next step in the process leading toward validation was for Gaines to highlight two Signature Practices that were affecting the school's outstanding student achievement. Collaboration and Intervention were earmarked as our site's two most noteworthy practices. These practices were described in detail. The completed

document appears on the California Department of Education's Most Distinguished Elementary Practices 2010 web page.

The final step in the process was to have a Validation Team visit the school site to observe the signature practices; interview teachers, staff, parents and community members, and validate that all of the cited practices, values and school culture and climate were verifiable as stated in the Application. The team validated and applauded our successes on February 26th.

State Superintendent, Jack O'Connell personally called Principal Stevens to congratulate her and the entire staff on their journey to excellence and achievement of the status Most Distinguished for 2010.

Paramount Unified School District's Board of Education congratulated all members of Gaines School at the April 27th regular board meeting.

The State of California's official Awards Ceremony will take place on Friday, June 4th at the Disneyland Hotel. The State Superintendent will present Principal



Stevens with a Most Distinguished plaque and flag to display proudly at the school site.

Gaines Teachers have completed a six-year journey leading to

Academic Excellence for students. By rigorously pursuing a strategic and targeted restructuring plan, Distinguished status has been achieved. Such dedication and

commitment for each Staff member and parent of this school community needs to be applauded.

What a tremendous and deserving honor!

Paramount High School's 3rd Annual Black Family Forum



activity where AACC students selected poetic pieces from their favorite authors. Passionate Keynote Speaker, Corliss P. Bennett-McBride, Director of USC's Black Student and Cultural Studies Department, challenged the audience to become a College Going Culture. Gregoire Franco, Assistant Principal at PHS, addressed the parents with a workshop focusing on how parents can support students academically, socially, and emotionally by providing parents with specific strategies.

Shervaughna Demiraz from the Los Angeles Office of Education focused why education matters. She was followed by none other than Lance Robert from the 100 Black Men of Long Beach, a mentoring organization for

young males. Mr. Robert inspired attendees by instilling a sense of pride and self love and respect. Dr. Eugene Allen from Dusk to Dawn Urgent Care shared the story of the journey that has brought him to become a success story in our community.

Finally, PHS Counselors Patricia Jacobo, Ariana Bates, and Anjel Gutierrez discussed NCAA and college entrance requirements to students. The day ended with lunch, an outstanding performance by JROTC, informational booths, and an African American Inventions display including priceless handmade quilts by Ms. Elizabeth Reece.

Lourdes Talamantes
Counselor &
AACC Advisor

Rain and cold air did not stop the 3rd Annual Black Family Forum from taking place on Saturday, February 27, 2010. For the last six months parents from the Black Family Forum (BFF) and students from the African American Cultural Club (AACC) met to discuss and plan this year's conference which was yet another great success.

Conference participants started the cool day with a delicious breakfast prepared by none other than PUSD's Nutrition Services, followed by a Student Voices

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING DATES

May 11, 2010 & May 25, 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

The California Healthy Kids Survey: The Results Are In!

As part of an ongoing effort to provide safe and drug-free learning environments, Paramount Unified School District administered the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) in November, 2009 to students in grades 5, 7, 9, and 11. Paramount Unified School District is required by the California Department of Education to give the CHKS as it meets the requirements of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act. Now that the District has received the survey results, the data will be made available for the schools and community to review.

The California Healthy Kids Survey asks students questions regarding the use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, violence, safety, as well as questions related to physical health. The CHKS data also reveals important information such as the percentage of students who feel they had opportunities for meaningful participation at their school. The data from this survey helps the District to better determine the needs of students and monitor the progress toward student well-being and school success.



This year Paramount Unified School District will have the CHKS results available for each individual school in addition to the district-wide report. With this information, schools will be able to address specific needs and develop targeted strategies for meeting those needs. This data, shared with parents, teachers, students, and the community, assists in identifying healthy behaviors and aids in the collaborative efforts aimed at making communities safe and healthy places for students to learn and grow.

If you would like to review the results from the California Healthy Kids Survey, you may visit the Office of Alternative Education or call (562) 602-6014.

PHS Winter Sports Finish Strong

While Pirate boys' soccer claimed much of the attention with their CIF championship run, Paramount High's winter sports season as a whole offered a lot of thrills and promise for the future. Prior to the playoffs, PHS basketball teams gave fans many reasons to celebrate and look ahead. The Lady Pirates, under first-year coach Rosheka Polk, became used to a different coaching style and endured some growing pains as they entered league play. But the ladies swept Dominguez and upset Gahr in the final league game to give the program something to build on going into the off-season. Coach Polk will now have a full off-season and summer league play to continue her efforts.

Meanwhile, the Pirate boys enjoyed one of their best seasons in many years. A string of stirring victories at home, including last-second game-winning shots by senior guard Kevin Guthrie to beat Dominguez and Gahr, put the Pirates in the league championship game at Gahr on February 11. While Paramount came up short in that game and in a first-round playoff with Los Osos, the season was a thrilling one as the Pirates became a force in league play with their teamwork and determination. Congratulations to head coach Mark McGarry, his assistants, and their charges on one of the best seasons in recent memory.

Lady Pirate soccer qualified for the playoffs for the 4th straight year under the leadership of coach Doug Tirado. Our ladies finished third and defeated league champ

Warren in the second round. At Los Amigos in the first-round of the playoffs, our ladies lost a 1-0 heartbreaker on a controversial goal in overtime. Coach Tirado and his staff have built this program into one that expects to make the playoffs every season and is on the cusp of challenging for a league title soon - great job ladies!

For the first time in his tenure, head wrestling coach Don Wakefield had a PHS wrestler qualify for the state meet in Bakersfield the weekend of March 5-6. Junior heavyweight Antonio Lopez won four of five matches at the Master's meet in late February, joining a number of other Pirate wrestlers who earlier reached the CIF individual Prelims and Finals. This achievement was one of Coach Wakefield's best moments, and the Pirates remain a strong contender in both team and individual competition heading into the off-season. Finally, Lady Pirate water polo enjoyed a great second season under coach Eduardo Osorio. Our ladies gave playoff-bound Warren all they could handle in a controversial loss and played the rest of the league very tough. Water polo coaches and officials in the area see Paramount as a formidable program that is improving every year.

Thanks to all of our winter athletes and coaches for their hard work and exciting competition - you represent your school and community with a tough work ethic and discipline.

A Shining Artist: Erasmo Benavides, Alternative Ed Student

I had no idea what Erasmo would create when I made the suggestion that he produce a sculpture for his independent study Art course. I knew he was an exceptional illustrator from his previous assignments, but I was not aware of his ability to sculpt. After some thought, and using clay as his medium, he decided to recreate an Inuit artist's minimalist depiction of a polar bear that was carved out of serpentine stone.

What started as a hunk of clay soon began to look more and more like a polar bear. After several hours of laborious work, Erasmo's bear looked extremely realistic. I was so proud of his finished product. What surprised me the most was when he returned to school a couple of days later with two more polar bears! Erasmo added some final touches and his masterpiece was complete. He decided to name his work "Family Feast," an



appropriate title for a portrayal of bears with fish in their mouths. I applaud his creativity. His work, which is displayed in the classroom, is an inspiration to his fellow students.

Amy Stanoszek
Teacher

ELAC Art Show: "My Roots"



It was a perfect evening to enjoy the arts and good company. On March 25, 2010, Paramount High School's English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) hosted the first annual student art show. The theme was "My Roots" and students were encouraged to create artwork that reflected an aspect of their heritage or personality. To bolster the students' practice of English writing, each artwork was accompanied by an artist's statement that used sensory language to describe the art.

The idea for the art show came directly from the ELAC parents, who brought forth the idea to celebrate student achievement and involve more parent participation. The evening began with a display of student artwork, all of which were accompanied by the written statements. Students in various levels of English Language Development (ELD) courses participated, and ribbons were awarded to the top entries.

Also participating in the event was the PHS Concert Choir. The students, led by their teacher Sandra Wilson-Espinoza, performed a wonderful medley of tunes that enchanted the audience. A special guest artist, Celso Barcena, was also on hand to display his amazing drawings and share his powerful story of overcoming adversity and allowing art to become a vehicle for expression.

The success of the event would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the ELD Lead Teacher at Paramount High School, Ms. Fabiola Barcena. She and students who are members of the ELD Club were responsible for the planning and set-up of the event. Thank you also to the parents and students who attended the event, which promises to be bigger next year!

Jean Law, Assistant Principal
Paramount High School

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

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Good things are happening in Paramount Schools

Eye On Education

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Special Needs Students Self Esteem Soars



Are you a local business owner who could use a little extra help—as in labor at no cost to you—while at the same time improving our community? Or are you simply someone who would like to hear a great example of how local education is succeeding and truly making a difference?

Take a look at the accompanying photo. It shows an adult special needs student learning, contributing, and taking another step on the road to reaching his goals. He's taking part in a program called Workability. Funded by a state grant, Workability is a partnership between the Paramount Adult Transition (PAT) program and local businesses.

It works like this:

PAT is located on the same campus as the adult school and is part of the Paramount Unified School District (PUSD). It serves adults with special needs up to the age of 22. A job developer employed by PUSD interfaces with local business owners. She sets up very simple agreements that will allow students to work at those sites for 3-8 hours per week.

Meanwhile, PAT students participate in work readiness lessons in their classrooms. These prepare students to master skills they'll be using in the workplace. When they meet the criteria for this stage, students begin to visit worksites for part of their school day. This helps them grow accustomed to a real world work environment. When they again meet appropriate criteria, they're ready to move on to the final stage: working at the site and getting paid to do so.

The look on their eyes and the pride on their faces when they pick up their checks is

truly a sight to see. "We all love that sense of reward, having our name on a paycheck," said PAT teacher Rene Aguilar.

It's the state grant that provides funds for these checks, not the local business. PUSD picks up the tab for the PAT instructors and job coaches, as well as the job developer and transition specialist who oversees the process.

Back in the classroom, some students continue on to related tasks such as developing a budget folder in which they use the actual cash from their checks to create a real world and workable plan as to what to do with their newly earned money.

On April 27, PAT and a group of participating local businesses will hold their second annual Workability Tour. PUSD twelfth graders and other special needs students between the ages of 18 and 22, along with their parents, will visit worksites to observe current student workers in action. This year's Tour will include TJ Maxx, Smart and Final, Café Corleone, Casa Gamino, and several PUSD school sites such as the Print Shop.

"Parents are delighted by what they see," on the Tour, Ms. Aguilar added. Businesses are also pleased with this win-win-win situation: they obtain the extra help they need, contribute to a population that usually has a 60+% unemployment rate, and forge partnerships with the school district. Hats off and thank you to all.

If you or someone you know might qualify and benefit from this excellent opportunity, contact the Paramount Adult Transition program at (562) 602-8084.

**Jerry King,
Teacher on Special Assignment**

Superintendent's Message:

Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program

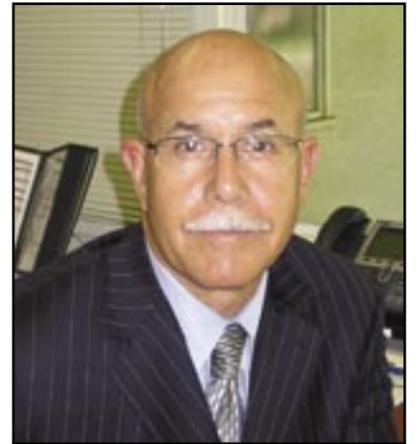
Dear Parents,

Every spring, Paramount Unified School District students join all students in California to take tests that are a part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program. In our schools the testing dates will be May 10-13th and May 18-21st. Students will take different tests in the morning of each day.

Students are tested in mathematics and English-language arts (grades two through eleven), science (grades five, eight, and nine through eleven) and history-social science (grades eight through eleven). Students and their parents receive individual test result showing how the student is meeting the state's academic standards in August after testing. The results of the STAR Program tests can serve as a tool that helps parents/guardians and teachers work together to improve student learning and also can assist the District and our schools identify strengths and areas that need improvement in our educational programs.

You can assist your child in the following ways to prepare for the STAR tests:

- Make sure your child has plen-



ty of rest the nights before testing in order to do their best on the tests.

- Plan to have your child eat a nutritious breakfast every morning on the testing dates.
- Make sure your child arrives on time to school on the testing dates.
- Encourage your child to their best on the STAR tests.
- Praise your child at the end of the day for all of their hard work at school.

I am very proud of all of our students in Paramount and I am sure the students will do well on this year's STAR tests. Every year, we have seen increased student achievement. Thank you for your support as parents and guardians of our students. I appreciate all you do to support our schools!

Sincerely,

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

ALONDRA STUDENTS SWIM INTO SUCCESS

Alondra Middle School's 6-8th grade art students experienced an abundance of creativity in this first year of the elective art course. Students began the year acquiring basic art skills and learning the elements of art. They created contour drawings, aluminum foil sculptures, autumn watercolors pieces, small patterns with oil pastels, and most recently, students designed mixed media collages.

All of the Alondra "dolphin" students were invited to participate in the Traditional Artists' Guild contest held at Progress Park in February. Alondra students experienced success in all grade levels, and won a variety of ribbons. All 7th and 8th grade art classes went on a walking fieldtrip to view the show. Students thoroughly enjoyed seeing the variety of subject matter and media presented by Paramount students and professional artists.

During quarter three, art students practiced advanced drawing techniques. Their practice culminated into a facial portrait of someone

they admire. In March, Dr. Myrna Morales, Assistant Superintendent, visited the art classroom on Open House Night, and actually recognized an art student's mother from her son's amazingly realistic drawing!

In addition to portraits, a favorite project among students included completing the other half of a famous artists' face such as Georgia O'Keefe, Pablo Picasso, or Frida Kahlo. Vice Principal Lee Besler thoroughly enjoyed viewing these "symmetrical faces", and many of them now adorn the Alondra office.

Currently the Alondra art program seeks to teach all visual arts standards with a cross-disciplinary approach. Sixth through eighth grade art students speak and write with increasing fluidity as they are required on a weekly basis to discuss and write about what they create. It is exciting to see the students' creativity abound, and as Principal Lynn Butler has stated on numerous visits to room 224, "Look at what our students can do!"

Wirtz Book Club

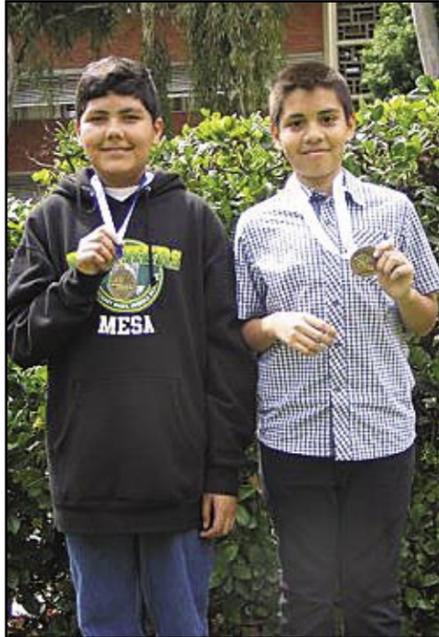
We are starting our Wirtz Incentive Book Club. All students have an opportunity to earn a free book while discovering the magic in reading. Students are provided different criteria based on their grade level.

The criteria are as follows:

- **K/1- read 20 stories and fill out 4 book report forms**
- **2/3- read 4 reading level appropriate books and a book report form for each book read**
- **4/5- read 4 reading level appropriate books and a book report form for each book read**

This Book Club was started right before Spring Break to encourage students to keep achieving and reading during their off time. This is a great opportunity to get our students excited about reading books!

MEDALS SHINE FOR PUSD MIDDLE GRADES STUDENTS AT MESA DAY



March and April are when PUSD students in the MESA Program have a chance to show their prowess at science projects and math in the annual MESA Day competition. Paramount is usually well represented in the events, and this year was no exception.

In the Preliminary MESA Day competition, which was held at Cal State Long Beach in March, the following students won medals and qualified for the MESA Day Finals: Elora Zavala, Hollydale (1st place, Model Science – Human Eye), Elideth Salazar and Isabella Vasquez, Alondra (2nd place, Popsicle Stick Bridges), Jerry Cedillo, Paramount Park (1st place, Speak Up), O'Neal Mendez (2nd place, Speak Up), Daniel Lopez and Juan Alvarado, Paramount Park (1st place, Egg Drop), Sigifredo Gastelum and Omar Gutierrez, Paramount Park (3rd place, Egg Drop), Gelsey Trujillo and Brandon Trujillo, Paramount Park (5th place, Egg Drop), and Elideth Salazar, Alondra (3rd place, Solo Math).

The MESA Day Finals were held at UCLA April 17th, and several PUSD students, all from Paramount Park, came home with medals. In the Speak Up competition, in which students prepare a three-minute speech with visual aids on a pre-assigned topic, Jerry Cedillo took the gold (1st place) and O'Neal Mendez took the silver (2nd place). Both sixth-grade boys chose viruses as their topic, and each prepared posters and Power Points as part of their presentations. Their coach was PPMS teacher Michelle Soto. In the Egg Drop competition, in

which students pack a box of limited size and shape with eggs and then see how many of the eggs survive a four-story drop to the ground, the team of eighth-graders Sigifredo Gastelum and Omar Gutierrez brought home the gold medal. Fourteen of their eighteen eggs were unbroken. Their coach was PPMS teacher Carlos Jauregui. And, in the At-Large Math competition, sixth-graders Daniel Lopez (gold) and O'Neal Mendez (bronze) excelled against the best math students from the four MESA Centers (USC, UCLA, CSULA and CSULB). Paramount Park's MESA program (and its predecessor at Roosevelt before reconfiguration) has been run for six years by math teacher Jeff Kiesel and his wife, Windy Foster, who volunteers as an Advisor and who also helped coach the Speak Up participants. This was the best showing for PUSD at a MESA Day Middle Grades Finals event that anyone could remember. Congratulations go out to all of the PUSD students who won awards and to the Advisors who run MESA at their schools.

MESA, which stands for Math, Engineering and Science Achievement, is an enrichment, outreach program for inner city school children who are underrepresented in the engineering and science career fields. PUSD has been an active participant in the program, which is run out of Cal State Long Beach, for many years.

Jeff Kiesel
Math Teacher

Preparing for Graduation



The Alternative Education Center is pleased to showcase members of their upcoming first Graduating Class. The Alternative Education Center mighty class of 2010, held it's first senior graduation meeting for all potential grads. The meeting took place on March 19th in the AEC testing center. Fifteen

out of seventeen potential grads were on hand to order cap and gowns and receive other important information regarding graduation. We are so proud of these young ladies and gentlemen. They are a perfect example of what can happen when determination and opportunity meet!

Awards - TAG Art Show



At a recent Board of Education meeting, the first place and special recognition student award winners of the 12th Annual Traditional Artists Guild Show were congratulated and introduced: Yennifer Uriarte, first grade; Noe Zambrano, second grade; Nicole Zuniga, third grade; Alexia Lozano, sixth grade; Roger Resendiz, eighth grade; Mark Penaojas, ninth grade; Amy Jiminez, twelfth grade; Alejandra Garcia, Superintendent's Award; Edgar Gomez, Parks and Recreation Commission's Award,

and Mayor Diane Martinez, Best Use of Color Award. The Board of Education members and Superintendent Verdugo recognized the students for their artistic excellence and presented them with a Certificate of Merit. Superintendent Verdugo thanked John Nowlin, Show Chairman from the Traditional Artists Guild, for his continued support of our students in the area of visual arts. Mr. Nowlin reported that over 1,100 pieces of student art were submitted for this year's show.

WEST CAMPUS CELEBRATES DAY OF THE SCHOLAR

At Paramount High School West Campus, the Associated Student Body, also known as Student Leadership, handles many different operations throughout the school year. One of these activities is the Day of the Scholar event that takes place at the beginning of the second semester every year. The event is held to recognize students who received a 3.0 grade point average on their first semester report card. According to the Principal, Mr. Kosareff, "It is a nice opportunity to recognize students who have excelled academically for their first semester." It is a particularly favorite event of students because they are able to hang out with their friends, listen to music provided by a DJ, eat a pizza lunch, and play on bounce equipment that is rented for afternoon. The event lasts about an hour and half and takes place on the softball field at West Campus.

As great as the food, games, and music are, the really hard work goes into the set up beforehand that is where ASB carries

out its work. The ASB students spend the entire morning blowing up balloons, setting up tables and chairs, and getting the field ready for the students' arrival. ASB President, Crystal Estrada, gave her thoughts on the day, "I think Day of the Scholar was a very successful day for all of the students, teachers, and staff involved. Set up was difficult and vigorous work that could not have been done without the hardworking ASB students."

Their hard work certainly paid off as both students and teachers enjoyed playing on the equipment. Mr. Bignami, a PE teacher was asked what he thought of the event, "Everyone seemed to have fun. There were a lot of jumpers and slides, the kids really enjoyed it and there was something for everyone. I am glad that the students who do well in school are recognized with this event."

-Jasmine Esparza
ASB Secretary