

# PUSD EDUCATION NEWS

A Publication of the Paramount Unified School District

15110 CALIFORNIA AVE., PARAMOUNT, CA 90723 • TEL: 562-602-6000 • FAX: 562-634-6029 SEPTEMBER 2013

## PHS Spirit Squad Excels at USA Cheer Camp



For the first time in nearly 10 years, the Paramount High School Spirit Squad attended a major USA cheer camp. While at the University of California at Irvine, 35 cheer and song leaders in grades 9-12 participated at the camp for a total of four days. "Each student had the opportunity to get a taste of college life in being able to stay overnight in the university dorms as well as eat in the school's dining commons" according to co-cheer advisor, Lourdes Aguayo. The girls learned new cheers and dances and participated in numerous team-building activities on their way in earning "Superior" ratings in all of their evaluations, which resulted in them winning the "Spirit Stick," which goes to the group that excels in the areas of sportsmanship and overall performance.

Sophomore, varsity song leader Jishaly Castillo shares that "it was an amazing experience being at the USA cheer camp at UC Irvine. Our entire team bonded and became closer as a family." When asked what she was most proud of about the team, Mrs. Aguayo shares that "I am very proud of the way the girls carried themselves and represented PHS. They worked hard, and most importantly, they worked together as a team." The PHS Spirit Squad looks forward to cheering on the PHS athletic teams for the 2013-2014 school-year as well as hosting their second annual mini-cheer camp for children within the Paramount community this upcoming October. Go Pirates!

**Grisel Vazquez,  
Varsity Song Captain**



## Keppel Summer Concert - Spotlight on Parents



Keppel School ended the 2012-2013 school year with an astounding family celebration. Especially notable is the parent collaboration piece. It is truly a representation of school and community coming together to make things happen.

The multiple acts of Performance Arts through dances, songs and narrations kept the audience in awe. Fifth graders demonstrated their talents and skills through an impressive rendition of "On the Radio" which involved nicely orchestrated staging, narration, songs and dances taught by Music

Teacher, Ms. Higgins. Equally impressive were the ballet and jazz dances performed by Abigail Fernandez, Jessica Aguilar and Liliana Flores. In addition, the fourth graders displayed their narration skills by reciting poems, one of which defined what Success is and is not. Our goal is certainly for each of the young viewers to embark on their paths to Success.

A unique feature to be highlighted of the event is the parent involvement at Keppel School to make the celebration a success. Special recognition has to be ac-

corded to the active members of the Parent Center for decorating the backdrop and performance area. In addition, Mrs. Trespacios was involved in the Choreography of a Jazz solo dance while Mrs. Ortiz took charge of the choreography of "Otra Cha Cha" by the third graders. Mrs. Vargas, Mrs. Alvarez and Mrs. Ortiz made the beautiful traditional costumes for the dancers who danced La Bamba, La Raspa, Western Mix and Otra Cha Cha. The designing and sewing skills were impressive.

Many parents helped teachers



got the students ready with their costumes and make-ups the day of the celebration. Another special participation was when Grandpa Cuellar joined grand-daughter Kiarra as she danced La Bamba. While it was important to shine the spotlights on the students who performed, the biggest spotlight is being directed to the parents who

got involved graciously. Kudos to you, Keppel Parents.

Special thanks as well to the hundreds of parents who joined us in the celebration. What a poignant memory of how 2012-2013 ended at Keppel School!

**Linda Go, Principal**

### SCHOOL BOARD MEETING DATE

**September 11 \* September 25, 2013**

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

## Alondra Middle School Welcomed New and Returning Dolphins



In gearing up for an exciting 2013 – 2014 school year, Alondra Middle School welcomed new and returning Dolphins onto campus the week before school began. Students and parents were given the opportunity to get an early start on the school year, by picking up text books, PE uniforms, and complete their lunch applications. Alondra Administration, Counselors and Staff were excited to see the smiling faces of hundreds of students and parents who were eager to get a jump start on the new school year.

PTSA parent volunteers also had a booth setup to formally initiate their 2013-14

membership drive. Many new members joined the Alondra Dolphin PTSA team during the event. Alondra PTSA will continue to actively work on recruiting new members to reach their goal of a hundred and fifty members this year. The PTSA membership is open to all parents, students, staff, and community. For only \$6 to join, members will receive a coupon for a free Double burger. PTSA members can also take advantage of various discounts in the community, so we encourage you to stop by Alondra or visit us at our upcoming Back-to-School Night and join the Alondra Dolphin PTSA Team!!!

## Using Technology to Help Students Learn Algebra in PUSD

Two trains start from the same point. One leaves 48 minutes later, travels 10 miles per hour faster than the other, and overtakes the first train in 4 hours. What is the rate of each train? Give up? Perhaps you did not, but many teenagers do. In fact, as many as 50% of students across the nation fail Algebra I the first time they take it. To help students who struggle to understand and succeed in algebra, Paramount Unified School District will introduce a pilot class called Intensified Algebra I beginning with the 2013-14 school year.

Intensified Algebra I addresses the linguistic, developmental and social psychological needs of struggling learners to help improve their engagement, confidence, and commitment to algebra. As an example, Intensified Algebra I teachers help students to become aware about the brain, its functions, and that intellectual development is

the result of effort and learning. Teachers challenge students' beliefs about their intelligence as a fixed trait. These often overlooked aspects are important when helping students to persevere when presented with challenging algebra material such as the one at the beginning of this article.

Intensified Algebra I was developed through in collaboration with Agile Mind, a web-based company that has developed a its approach to teaching based on the research of the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin. This course includes the integration of technology and interactive animations to help students learn mathematical concepts. PUSD looks forward to seeing the positive results this new, technology based course will provide our students.

Jose Iniguez, Director

## PUSD Prepares Schools for the California Common Core Standards



In 2010 California adopted new standards outlining the academic content that students in the state's K-12 schools need to learn. These standards, named the California Common Core Standards, are part of a national initiative to assure all students leave high school prepared for college and career.

In order to develop awareness of the new Standards, Common Core Lead Teachers from every K-12 school met monthly in 2012-13 to learn about the Common Core Standards and apply what they've learned to their classrooms. Lead Teachers met in grade or subject teams to plan Common Core lessons. Language Arts teachers taught a lesson using the "Close Read" process, in which students respond to questions that require they use evidence from the text to support their thinking, write daily, and complete a culminating writing assignment at the end of the unit.

Middle and high school math teachers taught lessons that required students to apply Math Practice Standards to solve open ended math problems and justify their thinking. After teaching these lessons, teachers met to debrief their experiences and share how students responded. Some of their comments were:

"My kids were very motivated to participate. They were more focused and accountable for showing what they learned."

"Students were very enthusiastic. Every student wrote daily and used the text to support their answers."

"My students kept talking about the lesson—even after it ended!"

Dr. Deborah Stark

Assistant Superintendent-Educational Services

## PTA Continues To Bloom At Jefferson School

The PTA at Jefferson School is committed to ensuring that students, staff, and families are supported throughout the school year. PTA is proud to share that this past year they were able to provide a field trip for every class. This allowed every student the opportunity to learn and grow outside of the campus. A movie day and a trip to John's Incredible Pizza were provided as recognition for students with perfect attendance. PTA also sponsored our annual Star DJ Dance for all our students that had perfect attendance during state testing. A special T-shirt was provided to every 5th grader as they went to Knott's Berry Farm.

Carnivals were also a huge success thanks to our dedicated Jefferson PTA. Families were able to enjoy games, food, and fun for all ages! We are proud to carry on the tradition of having a Fall and June Carnival every year!

As we begin the 2013/2014 school year, PTA is already being actively involved in assisting with our school opening. Parents volunteered during the summer to support the preparation of materials needed for next year. Parents worked at the school delivering books to classrooms to make sure teachers had everything they needed to have a successful start to the New Year.

Parent participation and support is always welcomed. Please come and join us in our Parent Room and see how our partnership will support the blooming of successes at Jefferson!

Please welcome our new PTA Board Members for 2013/2014.

President – Rachel Jijon

Vice-President – Nereyda Lopez

Secretary – Grace Guardian

Treasurer – Sandra Picasso

Historian – Kathy Garcia

Parliamentarian – Carmina Rivera

PUSD Education News is a monthly Publication of the  
Paramount Unified School District



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Herman M. Mendez

Great things are happening in Paramount Schools

PUSD Education News

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# Superintendent's Message:



Wow! What a wonderfully opening to the 2013-14 school year. During the August 14th Board of Education meeting, I shared that a lot happens during the summer and while the instructional program gears down a bit, it is not to say that a whole host of our team is idle, very much the contrary. The investment of time and energy, by the Paramount Unified School District team, in ensuring that our schools were ready to welcome our children back from the summer break was apparent in a very successful beginning to the school year.

The high level of commitment that all of our staff demonstrate in providing the best for our kids is very inspiring to me and complements our Inspire theme for the year which is captured in our moniker, "Great Things are Happening in Paramount Schools - Where We Inspire Great Learning Through Great Teaching."

I am in the process of carrying out my "Look, Listen and Learn" 100-day entry plan. The plan is designed to help me gain a deep understanding of our District and from this understanding be able to provide our Board with a report with insights and recommendations for next steps.

My plan has included hosting conversations with various stakeholders, which to date has included City and Community leaders. Now that school have opened, I will be conducting a series of three Community Engagement Focus Group meetings to connect with the parents of our students and to lend voice to their thoughts and insights regarding the educational process in our District.

I invite District parents to join me and participate at your school's local Community Engagement Focus Group. The chart below illustrates what day your school's community is scheduled for.

Location	Date and Time	Participating Schools
Paramount Park-MPR 14608 Paramount Blvd Paramount	Wednesday, September 4 at 6:00 p.m.	Hollydale, Paramount Park, Roosevelt, Wirtz, PHS-West, PHS, CDS/PAS
Jefferson School-MPR 8600 Jefferson Street Paramount	Thursday, September 5 at 6:00 p.m.	Alondra, Collins, Jefferson, Lincoln, Mokler, Buena Vista High School
Jackson School-MPR 7220 Jackson Street Paramount	Tuesday, September 10 at 6:00 p.m.	Gaines, Keppel, Jackson, Los Cerritos, Tanner, Zamboni, ECE

We also hope to see a strong community presence at the annual Paramount Safe and Smart Fair on Saturday, September 21st at Paramount Park. If your schedule permits, I would love to meet you, so please stop by and say hello.

Thank you very much,

Herman M. Mendez, *Superintendent*

## Pirate Athletic Programs Set Sail

The Paramount High School Athletic Department eagerly looks forward to setting sail in the 2013-2014 school year, and is extremely proud of the 2013 senior athletes who have earned athletic scholarships. Congratulations to Aaron Pleitez who will be attending the University of Sioux Falls in South Dakota to play baseball, and congratulations to Brian Fineanganofu who will be playing football for Utah State in the 2014 season. From the 2013 spring sports, success was apparent when Track & Field athletes Thomas Puefua, Jeneum Toalepai and Allen Pace were named as members of the Press Telegram ALL AREA team. Also, congratulations to pitcher, Ulices Moreno, who was named as a member of the ALL CIF team in his senior baseball season. "Once a Pirate, Always a Pirate!"

The summer was a busy time as teams prepared for the start of the school year. Tennis, girls volleyball, football, water polo, cross country, girls soccer, softball, baseball, wrestling and basketball teams worked diligently throughout the summer months to train for their approaching seasons. The girls' soccer program did an exceptional job competing this summer by taking 1st place in the Bellflower High School summer league. Way to go pirates!

With wonderful parents, students, faculty and fans, we hope to continue supporting our pirate athletes as their programs aspire to accomplish their goals and thrive. Please join the Paramount athletic family in supporting the upcoming fall sport home competitions:

Cross Country: San Gabriel Valley League Cluster Meets: Sept 26, Oct 17 & Nov 6 (locations TBD)

Varsity Football: Sept 13 (Home-

coming Game), 20, 27, Oct 11 & 18

Girls Tennis Sept 5, 12, 13, 24, Oct 1, 8, 10, 11, 17

Girls Volleyball Sept 10, 12, 19, 24, Oct 1, 8, 22, 29, 31

Boys Water Polo: Sept 4, Sept 30, Oct 22 & Nov 5 (located at the Paramount Park pool)

Involvement in High School Athletics first begins with academic success in the classroom. The Athletic Department is incredibly pleased that over 200 student athletes were named as "Scholar Athletes" in the 2013 school year. Get involved in athletics as Paramount High School proudly offers the following sports:

- Fall Sports (Head Coach)
- Cross Country (Joseph Peterson)
- Football (Matthew Howard)
- Girls Tennis (John Konrad)
- Girls Volleyball (Anna Yasuhara)
- Boys Water Polo (Arthur Cunningham)

### Winter Sports

- Boys & Girls Basketball (Mark McGarry & Rosheka Liwanag-Polk)
- Boys & Girls Soccer (Juan Navarro/Rafael Villasenor & Douglas Tirado)
- Girls Water Polo (Arthur Cunningham)
- Wrestling (Don Wakefield)

### Spring Sports

- Baseball
- Softball (John Guggiana)
- Swimming (Roberto Guerrero)
- Boys Tennis (John Konrad)
- Track & Field (Christine Barboza)
- Boys Volleyball (Jimena Vargas)

## Adult School Prepares for New GED®

Big changes are coming to the GED® certification process...and Paramount Adult School (PAS) has positioned itself to help students succeed at it. Just what is the GED® and what are the changes?

According to the California Department of Education website, "The General Educational Development test is for adults who do not have a high school diploma. Those who pass the test receive a California High School Equivalency Certificate." Its battery of five tests covers these subjects: language arts/reading, language arts/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. It has been around since World War II and was originally developed for returning soldiers who hadn't had the opportunity to finish high school because of their military service. Paramount Adult School has long held GED® preparation classes and served as a testing center. In fact, 194 students earned their GED® through PAS this past year. Thirty-two of them participated in the graduation ceremony across from the adult school this August. If you missed it, you missed a truly inspiring event, highlighted by a moving speech by the new superintendent of PUSD.

So...what are the big changes?

First of all, as of January 2014 the tests will only be administered online. The elimination of paper-and-pencil tests means that students will not only need to master the content—that is, understand the course material—but also possess a minimal amount of computer skills. Paramount Adult School has recently completed the

necessary changes and is in the process of becoming an official testing center: a bank of new computers has been purchased and installed according to the GED® specifications, an adjacent classroom has been updated to accommodate the testers, and professional development has begun for the instructors. The final step will be for Paramount Unified School District and Pearson VUE (the company that owns the GED® process) to reach a written agreement.

Other changes include the fact that testers will be able to register online and the new testing center at PAS will have much more extensive hours of operation so as to meet student/testers scheduling needs. Content of the tests themselves has been updated and modified to help move learners into the 21st Century. Finally, fees will be standardized for all sites, in all 50 states.

PAS is currently offering GED® preparation classes to all learners, but only offering the old paper-and-pencil test to individuals who have begun the process of testing—since they would need to start all over again if they don't earn their GED® certificate by the end of 2013.

If this information has piqued your interest in starting or completing your GED®, or if you have questions about the process overall, we look forward to hearing from you at (562) 602-8080. You can also stop by the Paramount Adult School office at 14507 Paramount Blvd. Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. and Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

# Advise to Freshmen from Former Freshmen

Welcome Class of 2017 to Paramount High School West Campus. This will be your first year in high school, and you will discover it is one of the biggest steps in your life. This year, you will soon find out that it is going to be tough in many ways. For many, it gets stressful; for some, it's just pure fun. Yet whatever this year may be to you, you will remember that you have reached high school, but you still have a long way to go.

One thing that you should always remember is to never give up. Many things will be expected from you. Your teachers, friends, and family will all want something different from you, and as part as your responsibilities, you have to give everyone

what is expected. From exceptionally good grades to having a good attitude or showing up to school every day, you have to do it. Always remember that the faculty, staff, and family who motivate you to do something, do it because they care about you and are looking ahead at your future. I found this out the hard way after all the stress and tears.

You may also be wondering if everything others told you is true, well it is, and by the way, high school is way different than middle school. Not only is 9th grade academically more challenging, but it's also exciting because you make new friends and form brand new relationships. I know from

experience that making new friends beyond middle school friendships is important, and more than half of you are looking forward to having new friends. A little advice: don't be scared when you enter the two big doors in the front not knowing what you will find inside because those doors hold new teachers, classrooms, and experiences. At first, you will feel lost looking for people you know, but don't forget that everyone else is feeling anxious and nervous like you. Once you get over your fears, you will have so much fun that you will not remember the first day of school.

High school experiences will change how you feel about school because you can

become involved in clubs and sports. The Paramount Pirate sports program is divided into three different seasons of fall, winter, and spring. You may choose to try out for any sport, such as football, cross country, tennis, volleyball, soccer, wrestling, basketball, track and field, swimming, softball, and baseball. Also, you can join clubs, such as MESA, Science Club, Chess Club, and Beautification Club here at the West Campus. Joining a club or a sport is a great opportunity to become involved in school. If you are looking for a way to become involved, sports and clubs should be on your list, plus if you are thinking ahead, they will look good on your college application.

## Howard Tanner School Students Complete Summer Projects



This summer we encouraged our students to continue learning while on vacation. For a summer project we asked students to go on a field trip with family or friends and write about it. Students could go anywhere they wanted to.

Many families already planned wonderful summer adventures. Students and parents were given a list of local places to go that were fun and economical just in case they needed some additional ideas. Many of them were free local attractions. Students used a circle map thinking map to formulate their ideas and then wrote a summary of their experience. Students also expressed their creativity by making posters, picture collages, dioramas, or picture cubes that added a visual representation to their writing. Some students went to far away places like Honduras, Belize, Mexico, and Hawaii. Others chose local fun attractions like the zoo, Universal Studios, science museums, and other theme parks.

Students were eager to share their great work. We will encourage students to develop clear writing skills throughout the year using additional school wide projects.

**Patricia Brent-Sanco, Principal**

## Howard Tanner School Staff, Exploring New Horizons



The theme for this year at Howard Tanner School is "Exploring New Horizons with Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships". As we develop an understanding of the Common Core Standards we are truly exploring new horizons. Teachers and other staff members joined us this summer in a summer institute on Common Core Standards.

Our staff worked together to gain an understanding of what Common Core Standards are and our plan to implement them. Each grade level team worked together to plan the first four units of study in Language Arts. Each unit plan included key aspects of Common Core Standard implementation, Thinking Maps, hands on experiences for students, and a art and theater connection. Teachers also planned ideas about how they were going to establish a positive relationship with each student in their class starting the first day of school.

We are excited about the new school year and look forward to our additional planning times as a team.

Go Tigers!

**Patricia Brent-Sanco, Principal**

## Paramount Unified School District Mental Health Team

The District has acquired state funds to provide mental health services for students through Assembly Bill 114 previously known as Assembly Bill 3632. The new funds support the hiring of one Educationally Related Mental Health Psychologist and two Behavior Intervention Specialists. The team will support students who qualify through a referral process that will provide the student and their family counseling services.

**Kimberly Cole, Director  
Special Education/Early Childhood Education**

## School Attendance is Vital to Success

Attendance is an important issue in our schools and it is imperative that all students attend school regularly. Students with poor attendance struggle to keep up with their coursework and maintain consistency in their study habits. Students with poor attendance often receive failing grades and encounter other difficulties in school. All students are expected to attend school every day and more than three unexcused absences and/or nine tardies in a school year is considered excessive. In order to support our students and parents in maintaining excellent attendance, please refer to some of the suggested strategies outlined below:

- Let your child know you expect him/her to attend school every day
- Ensure your child arrives on time
- Avoid taking family vacations during school term time
- Schedule appointments for your child after school
- Attend all meetings and conferences concerning your child at school
- Call the attendance office periodically to inquire into your child's school attendance. Parents of students in grades 9-12 can check attendance by establishing a School Loop account.
- Meet the principal, assistant principal, counselor and teacher to find out how they can help your child.

Paramount Schools continue to demonstrate excellent growth and our school staffs work to ensure that all students reach their full potential. We are confident that by working together, Paramount Unified School District students will continue to excel in all areas of their academics. Please contact your school's office for further support and strategies to help your child maintain excellent attendance.

## 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.