



A Supplement from the...

Palm Springs Unified School District

Serving Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage & Thousand Palms

April/May 2015

PSUSD Takes Early Lead in Shifting To New Science Standards



Students in Beth Thornhill's 6th grade class at Raymond Cree Middle School explore why ice melts so fast.

Students in a fourth grade classroom try to design a way to protect their town from flooding and water erosion. Second graders experiment with materials to build a better windmill to keep a pond aerated. Sixth graders work to understand why ice melts faster on some materials than others. In eighth grade, students build, test, and pitch products based on endothermic and exothermic chemical reactions. High school biology students try to design and understand the processes in self-contained biomes. This is not your old school science class about memorizing facts. In these and many other classes, Palm Springs Unified students are learning science and engineering by doing science and by designing solutions to real-world problems.

These classes are working with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), a collaborative effort by 29 states to create coherent national science standards to produce the next generation of scientists and engineers.

The standards are a major shift from the 1998 California Science Standards in that they emphasize learning science by students behaving as scientists and engineers as they try to answer real-world questions and solve real-world problems. California adopted the standards in 2013, but the state is moving slowly to

give students, teachers, and districts the time to adapt to the new ways of teaching. Testing on the new science standards is likely three or four years out.

PSUSD is one of the districts taking the lead in both California and the nation in shifting to the new standards. PSUSD teachers are involved in two initiatives to help them better understand and teach science and engineering.

The California NGSS Early Implementers' Initiative is a privately funded collaboration between eight districts, two charter school organizations and K-12 Alliance/WestEd, a professional development provider. This effort is focused on training K-8 teachers to teach the new standards and on building a strong district plan for implementation. This effort began this year with a small leadership team of seven teachers and three administrators, but training will begin for 60 more teachers in a summer institute focused on learning science content and teaching. During the next school year, the teachers will participate in lesson studies, which are opportunities to plan and teach lessons as a team.

The other effort is Project Prototype, which is focused on teachers in grades 6-8 integrating engineering into their science classes. Project Prototype is a regional collaboration with teachers from the three Coachella Valley districts coordinated by the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership and working with scientists and engineers from UC Riverside, CSU San Bernardino, College of the Desert and local businesses and non-profits. Teachers attend summer institutes focused on local engineering challenges and local jobs and also join lesson studies as a way to bring the learning into the classroom.

For more information on the new initiatives, contact Pete A'Hearn at (760) 902-7768.

Full Day Kindergarten to Be Offered at Five Sites Next School Year

Following a successful pilot program this year at Vista del Monte Elementary School, five Palm Springs Unified schools will move to a full day kindergarten program this August.

In addition to continuing at Vista del Monte, full day kindergarten will be launched at Bubbling Wells and Julius Corsini Elementary Schools in Desert Hot Springs, Landau Elementary in Cathedral City and Rancho Mirage Elementary in Rancho Mirage. The programs will have a target of a maximum of 25 students per class, and each class will include a two-hour instructional aide to support the teacher. Transitional kindergarten programs at these sites will remain a half-day program.

The District's 2014-15 Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) established a small budget to pilot the full day program at Vista del Monte. A District committee, comprised of administrators, teachers and classified staff members, provided recommendations on expansion of the program to best meet student needs.

The full day program does not add curriculum or assessments to what is already in place. Rather it affords teachers more time to teach the kindergarten standards in all content areas in a meaningful way to ensure high levels of learning for all children.

"One of the teachers in this year's pilot said he wasn't thrilled when it started," Asst. Supt. of Educational Services Dr. Mike Swize told the members of the Board of Education during a recent presentation. "He said he did it out of respect for the principal, but he wasn't convinced about the program. Now that he has seen the benefits

(Continued on page 4)

District Digest



Assistance League Provides Hygiene Kits for Students: The Assistance League of the Palm Springs Desert Area is providing hygiene kits for elementary students in each of the three Coachella Valley school districts. In PSUSD, school nurses will use the kits as teaching tools and distribute to a total of 1,836 District fourth grade girls and fifth grade boys during Growth and Development classes this spring. The kits contain a brush, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, toothbrush holder, dental floss, shampoo/body wash, body lotion, soap, wash cloth and deodorant. Pictured above, Assistance League Project Chair Jill Beighley, left, and President Roberta Grubb show off kit contents as they are delivered to the PSUSD Warehouse prior to distribution to students.

Gift of Hearing: Thanks to combined efforts of several organizations, 25 PSUSD students and two District parents received free hearing aids (each valued at between \$2,000 and \$4,000). The event, held at the Classic Club in Palm Desert, was sponsored by the Berger Foundation and Rotary Club of Rancho Mirage. Audiologists from Hearing Aid Health Care fitted the children with earmolds, and the Starkey Foundation, based in Eden Prairie, MN, provided the hearing aids and spent one-on-one time with students and their parents to explain how they work and how to replace the batteries. Pat and Joe Manhart, who owned Advanced Hearing prior to their retirement, and members of the Rancho Mirage Rotary Club, volunteered at the event. Each student, in addition to receiving their hearing aids, were given a Starkey T-shirt, medal to wear around their neck, snacks and a teddy bear from Build-A-Bear. Pictured, Greg Novall, a consultant with Hearing Aid Health Care, explains to a student how the hearing aid works.



Youth of the Year Award: The Cathedral City Chamber of Commerce recently honored Cathedral City High Salutatorian Chai Arnold as its "Youth of the Year." With a 4.63 grade point average, Arnold will attend Stanford University. He is a finalist for a Gates Millenium Scholarship and a semi-finalist for the Dell Scholarship. Arnold will receive a \$100 scholarship from the Chamber after successful completion of his first college semester. Pictured with Arnold are, from left, Mayor Stan Henry, Chamber Chair Valerie Ward, CCHS Counselor Julia Bartsch and CCHS Principal Guillermo Chavez.

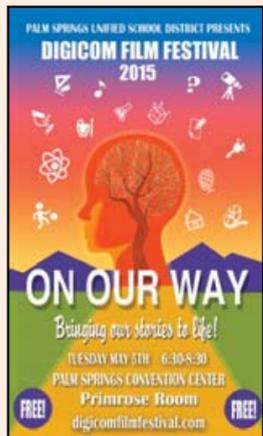


DHSHS JROTC Wins Superintendent's Trophy: The Desert Hot Springs High School's Marine Corps JROTC retained the Superintendent's Trophy at the recent Pass-In-Review Parade at DHSHS. The event featured remarks by Lt. Col. Randal M. Walsh, USMC, right, and the parade competition between DHSHS and the Air Force JROTC units at Cathedral City and Palm Springs High. Also pictured from left, Lt. Col Carl Lewke, Supt. of Schools Dr. Christine Anderson, DHSHS Principal George Bullis and Cadet Captain Jessica Cruz.



MTU Students Hit The Big Apple: The students of Musical Theatre University, who recently spent part of their spring break in New York City, visited with *Finding Neverland* star Matthew Morrison, following the performance they attended. In addition to seeing three Broadway shows and meeting some of the cast and production crew of those shows, the group participated in master classes led by Broadway actors and choreographers and performed an "MTU Showcase" at an off-Broadway theatre on the final day of the five-day trip.

'On Our Way' at DigiCom 2015: All are invited to attend this year's DigiCom Student and Staff Film Festival, themed "On Our Way," on May 2 at 6:30 p.m. at the Palm Springs Convention Center. Admission is free. For more information, visit <https://www.digicomfilmfestival.com>.



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Art Scholars: PSUSD students were recently awarded \$1,000 college scholarships from Desert Art Center. DAC Education Coordinator Don Dietz, left, and President Adele Hill, right, presented the awards to, from left, Maida Colon, Desert Hot Springs High; Isabella Castrodale, Palm Springs High; Christopher Hernandez Arellano, Mount San Jacinto; Ben Williams, Palm Springs High; Juan DeDios, Mount San Jacinto; and Cary Clarke, Cathedral City High.



Partners in Desert Friendly Landscape: Palm Springs Unified School District and Palm Springs High officials along with representatives of the City of Palm Springs, Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley and Desert Water Agency cut the ribbon on a community turf conservation desert landscape project at the corner of Ramon and Farrell. The project to convert the corner of Ramon and Farrell to a desert friendly landscape was funded by the Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley from the proceeds from its annual Garden Tour and included conversion of 6,000 square feet of turf with the installation of drip irrigation and water-efficient landscaping in this high-traffic area that would benefit not only the Palm Springs High campus, but the community at large. Contributors to the project included the City of Palm Springs Sustainability Committee, Desert Water Agency, Landscape Architect Chris Hermann, Palm Springs High School's Sustainable Garden Club, the Palm Springs Unified School District and the Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley.



Sunny Sands Runners Compete at College: Members of the Sunny Sands Track Club, including current Sunny Sands students and former Sunny Sands students who now attend James Workman Middle School, were recently among the thousands of students who competed in the Mt. Sac Relays at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut. The 41 Sunny Sands team athletes grabbed over 20 first place finishes in separate heats in the 4X100 relay, Long Jump, Triple Jump, mini-javelin, 300 meter open, 100 meter open and 50 meter open in grades 3-6.

Rotary Hosts Students for Job Shadowing: The Palm Springs Sun-up Rotary Club welcomed three of the students who participated in the club's recent first Job Shadow Day to talk about their experiences. Pictured, from left, Ted Calouri, who chaired Job Shadow Day for the Sun-Up Rotary Club; Jared Snider; Palm Springs High's Work-Based Learning Coordinator Fern Rudd; Kobe Rushing; Martin Martinez; and PS Sun-Up Rotary President Dennis Spurgin.



CCHS JROTC Named Non-Profit of Year: The Cathedral City High Air Force JROTC received this year's Cathedral City Chamber of Commerce Orion Award for Non-Profit of the Year.

Kindergarten

(Continued from page 1)

for his students, he has shared that he would not go back to teaching half day kindergarten.”

The District’s plan is to expand to five or six additional sites in the 2016-17 school year and move to all sites in 2017-18. Parents, whose home elementary schools are not yet offering full day kindergarten but are interested in the program, can transfer their child to one of the full day sites if there is space available, and the parent is willing to provide transportation.

Kindergarten registration is currently open, and parents can register at their home school. If you are requesting a transfer to a full day kindergarten site, visit the District Office at 980 E. Tahquitz Way, Suite 101, Palm Springs. Transfer requests are reviewed on a monthly basis. To find out if space is available at a particular site, call (760) 416-6026.

PSUSD Foundation Hosts Valley’s First ‘Glo Run’ May 2

The Foundation for the Palm Springs Unified School District is hosting the Coachella Valley’s first “Health Glo 5K Walk/ Run” on Saturday, May 2. The event will be held in downtown Cathedral City and will kick off with a health fair at 3 p.m. on the Festival lawn next to the Imax Theater. The run and walk party begins at 6:30 p.m. with a DJ. The one-mile walk/run starts at 7:30 p.m., and the 5K begins at 8:30 p.m.

“We are holding the run as part of the District’s outreach to improve health and wellness within the District and Coachella Valley as a whole,” said Foundation Executive Director Ellen Goodman.

There will be six Glo stations along the course. At every station, the “glo crew” will be ready to splash participants with non-toxic glo paint. All participants will have the opportunity

to get covered in paint during the after party. The black lights being used are the same as those used in the entertainment business and in theater performances throughout the nation.

Event partners/sponsors include the Cathedral City Rotary Club; City of Cathedral City; the Salvation Army;

Shared Kitchen; Desert Regional Medical Center; Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians; Pacific Premier Bank; Altura Credit Union; Santa Fe Restaurant; DJ SupaJames, KMIR and KPSE TV; Univision; radio stations Mix 100.5, 97.7 KRCK, 94.7, 98.5 and 103.5; and Running Wild. The Cathedral City Rotary Club’s free Health Fair will feature screenings, education and information booths, exercise demonstrations and more. There will also be food for sale, and an after party following the event.

Registration for the 1-mile run is \$15 for children 5-12 and \$25 for ages 13 and up. The 5K registration fee is \$25 and \$35. All proceeds will benefit the PSUSD Foundation Classroom Grants program...

Register online at www.healthglo5k.com or call (760) 416-8455. In-person registration will be on Friday, May 1 from 3 to 8 p.m. or at 5 p.m. May 2, both at City Hall in downtown Cathedral City.



Message from the Superintendent

PSUSD Students, Staff, Programs Continue to Shine



As we begin to wind down the 2014-15 school year, I am reflecting upon what a great year it has been so far for the Palm Springs Unified School District on the regional, state and national level. Our students and staff members have continued to excel in many different arenas, and I thought I would share just a few of these accolades with you along with some new and innovative programming plans for the 2015-16 school year and invite you to attend a few upcoming events.

For the second consecutive year, Donielle Gerrell, a senior in the Digital Arts Technology Academy (DATA), has earned recognition from the White House for her work. Out of more than 1,500 submissions nationwide, *Sharing Success: On Our Way to Giving Back* was one of only 200 selected to

earn an Honorable Mention. For this year’s project, Donielle collaborated with DATA Freshman Jebari Wooten. The documentary, based on the theme of “The Impact of Giving Back,” centers around DigiCom founder David Vogel and his journey from entertainment industry executive to education leader and advocate.

Speaking of DigiCom, it is right around the corner, and I hope you will all join us for our 2015 festival on Tuesday, May 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Palm Springs Convention Center. The theme is “On Our Way,” and this promises to be the biggest and best DigiCom to date. You will have the opportunity to see a sampling of some of the hundreds of entries as well as be a part of the presentation of awards, prizes and scholarships for award-winning entries.

I am also proud to share that Mount San Jacinto High School was one of just 29

programs recognized by State Supt. of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson as a Model Continuation High School for providing innovative programs and comprehensive services to students who may have otherwise been at risk of not graduating.

Recent staff recognitions include James Workman Middle School Teacher Jessica Pack being named the state Computer Using Educators (CUE) Educator of the Year Award. And Jared Andresen, who is a member of our Nutrition Services team at Rancho Mirage High School, was recently named Employee of the Year by the California State School Nutrition Association.

Publication space makes it impossible to mention all of this year’s accolades. I encourage you to visit and Like our District Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Palm-Springs-Unified-School-District/550032258375171>

so you can keep tabs on all of the innovative things happening and recognitions throughout our District. Suffice it to say, I couldn’t be more proud!

New and innovative programs beginning next school year include: full day kindergarten, Cathedral City High’s International Baccalaureate program, Language Academy, Auto/Energy Academy at Rancho Mirage High, Cielo Vista Charter’s expansion to grade eight, and two district-wide science teacher training grants. And that’s just scratching the surface. Stay tuned!

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Christine Anderson

Christine Anderson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools