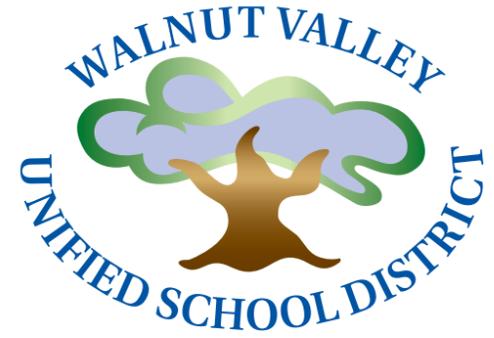


Outlook



Issue 32 FALL 2015

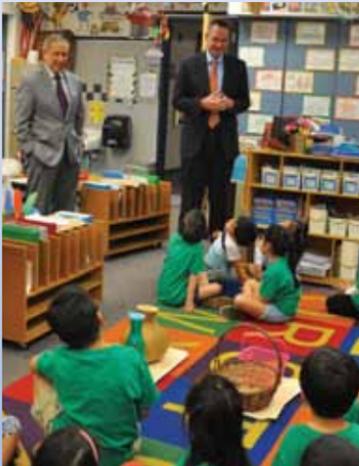
Message from the Superintendent



Happy holiday season to our Walnut Valley family,

As you read through this publication, I hope that you too experience strong feelings of pride and hope in our community, our schools, our employees, and our students. As we enter into the fall holidays, I think it's fitting that

we pause for a moment and recognize the amazing accomplishments throughout our community and school system. Our schools in the Walnut Valley Unified School District, in the midst of significant changes by state and federal oversight to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs, continue to experience high gains in academic achievement (in fact, we recently earned the highest test scores of any school district with a minimum of 12,000 students in all of Los Angeles County). Additionally, as referenced in the corresponding article, "America's Top High Schools," we are so proud of the recognition that Walnut High School and Diamond Bar High School have received as they, once again, are ranked among the very best of America's more than 30,000 high schools.



LA County Superintendent Dr. Art Delgado tours Evergreen Elementary with Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor.

As we begin to think about Ringing in the New Year, I utilize this time to think about What's Next? for our school district. I foresee us continuing to build upon our guiding vision of a Kids First philosophy and a continued focus on four key areas: Student Achievement, Strengthening Relationships, Fiscal Stability, and Leadership Development at ALL levels of the Organization.

Our educators across the district will continue to build upon the 21st Century-type of education that our students yearn for as we prepare them for the global opportunities that await them (many of which do not currently even exist!). We work every day on strengthening the strong relationships amongst all of our stakeholders and we so appreciate the support and contributions of families and friends throughout the community. The fiscal position of our school district is solid, given the funding challenges that face high performing school districts such as WVUSD.

Thanks to strong leadership from our Board of Trustees and a collaborative, supportive, and common vision with our employee associations, we continue to reach new heights in student achievement while operating as one of the lowest funded school districts in California. Thus, I believe we have a responsibility to our students and our community to continue to explore alternative funding measures that will bolster Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) opportunities for our students, as well as improve and modernize our existing (and aging) learning facilities. Finally, in the area of Leadership Development, it is encouraging to see a focus on civics education at all levels of schooling in our district and leadership concepts such as empathy being taught in our schools. I'm confident that we are building strong leaders at all levels of our school district.

Once again, happy holidays and thanks for all you do to support Walnut Valley schools!

Dr. Robert P. Taylor

Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools named America's Top High Schools

Newsweek has once again named Diamond Bar and Walnut High among the nation's best in its list of "America's Top High Schools 2015".

The latest newsmagazine ranking lists Diamond Bar High School (DBHS) and Walnut High School (WHS) among the top 500 out of 30,000 public schools nationwide. The rankings are intended to identify high schools that have the highest performance on state tests and that best prepare students for college, according to Newsweek.

DBHS scored in the top 100, ranking the 77th best high school in the nation and 8th in California.

WHS ranked an impressive 148th in America and 20th in California.

In addition, both schools received gold stars in an equity analysis that indicates economically disadvantaged students performed at or above average on state assessments.

"We are always proud of our high schools and the work that is done to provide our students with exceptional learning opportunities," said Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor. "Our success is a team effort that includes exceptional teachers and staff, strong commitments from our students, and outstanding parent support."



Diamond Bar High School has been named No. 77 in Newsweek's "America's Top High Schools 2015" list. See the full report at www.newsweek.com/high-schools/americas-top-high-schools-2015.

2016 National Merit Scholarship Program



Walnut High (shown) and Diamond Bar High School Semifinalists will compete for scholarships next spring.

Seniors Named Semifinalists

Thirty-eight Diamond Bar and Walnut high school seniors have been named Semifinalists in the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program. The nationwide pool of about 16,000 Semifinalists represents less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors in each state.

About 1.5 million juniors in 22,000 high schools entered this year's program by taking the PSAT qualifying test. These high-performing students will now have the opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,400 scholarships worth about \$32 million next spring.

Students were recognized for demonstrating exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

Ron Hockwalt Academies

Making hope happen...

This year, Ron Hockwalt Academies (RHA) is focusing on Making Hope Happen, a new program designed to help students create a future they want.

"Our desire is to instill hope for our students," explained Principal Donna Hunter.

Hunter credits author Shane Lopez who describes hope as "action oriented, future oriented, empowerment, and targeted" in his *Making Hope Happen* book. These four areas helped form the foundation for the school plan.

As part of the initiative, staff members have begun distributing "Caught You Having Hope" cards. HOPE stands for Heart, Opportunity, Perseverance, and Excellence. Each week, faculty acknowledges the alternative high school students by highlighting their strengths and recognizing achievements.

"We are endeavoring to reshape the culture and help students, parents and community to see us for who we are – a learning community infused with care," Hunter said.



Angel Albarico proudly shares his "Caught Having Hope" poster logo.

District Teacher of the Year...

Jennifer Veneracion was recognized as the 2015 District Teacher of the Year during Salute to Teachers on October 21.

Jennifer is passionate about making connections with students, meeting their needs, and providing 21st century instruction. During her first year of teaching, she learned that being the most skilled teacher with elaborate lessons and a Pinterest-worthy classroom weren't the most important ingredients for student success.

"I needed to make my students believe these four simple phrases: I see you. I believe in you. You can do it. And I'm here," the CJ Morris fifth grade teacher said.

Jennifer, now in her 11th year in Walnut Valley, makes it a point to learn the name of each of her new fifth graders by the end of the first day of school. She connects using an "All About Me" facts including "I love the Lakers!" as a way to be able to ask them questions and learn about her new students. She often uses technology to enhance classroom learning and says her students are most excited to participate in a Mystery State Skype with other classes in the United States as a way to study geography.

"Teachers do their best to make sure that no one is left behind. They are enthusiastic, they modify lessons, they sing, dance, play, integrate technology, and even dress in costume. You name it, they do it – all to help ensure students are engaged and learning," she stated.



Jennifer Veneracion
2015 District Teacher of the Year

"What we do in our classrooms every year as educators is extraordinary. We have the power to make a difference in the life of a child."

Teaching Kindness

When Chaparral Middle School teacher Sherry Robertson turned 40, she decided to complete 40 random acts of kindness to mark the day.

"I wanted to do something original and when I mentioned it to my students, they thought it was a great idea and wanted to join in."

The educator made a spreadsheet to share her ideas with the sixth graders. Her goal was for volunteers to complete acts individually and then meet at a local shopping mall for the remaining gifts of kindness.

Ashley Jong baked chocolate chips cookies and delivered them to staff members at the Diamond Bar Library and Kaiser Emergency Room.

Classmate Noah Macalino chose to open doors for strangers. "I really like helping people and it's fun to do!" he said.

Student Ethan Yee presented a surprise gift card to a hard-working waitress and made a charity donation while on vacation with his family.



The do-gooders took photos of their kindness acts to document the day. "Every act included a note with the social media hashtag #RAKbirthday2015 so people could check out the pictures," Robertson said.

In total, it took over eight hours to complete the 40 Random Acts of Kindness..

Robertson is happy that she offered a lesson in kindness to mark her milestone birthday.

"I'll always remember that these kids went out of their comfort zone to help spread kindness. I'm so proud of them."

2014-15 Teachers of the Year

Congratulations to this year's top teachers who represent Walnut Valley's outstanding educators with exemplary dedication, classroom practices, and commitment to excellence.

Judy Ameluxen, Castle Rock Elementary

Jeanette Hooton, Chaparral Middle School

Jennifer Veneracion, Cyrus J. Morris Elementary

Sherry Truong, Collegewood Elementary

Howard Alcosser, Diamond Bar High

Mabel Woken, Evergreen Elementary

Eunice Lee, Maple Hill Elementary

Anna Chung, Quail Summit Elementary

Judy Olmos, South Pointe Middle School

Marla Rickard, Suzanne Middle School

Pam Acosta, Vejar Elementary

Deanne Rodriguez, Walnut Elementary

Dr. Buddy Clements, Walnut High

Hyeyon Park, Westhoff Elementary

Walnut High School Teacher Named Educator of Distinction



"There's nothing that impacts my heart more than to get acknowledged for something that I love to do!"

Teachers always hope they're making a difference, but don't always know who they're helping or who actually made a connection, according to Walnut High's Jennifer Maletz.

"Sometimes you just hope with fingers and toes crossed," said the English teacher who recently received the Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction award by The National Society of High School Scholars.

Junior Tiffany Casillas nominated her teacher for outstanding dedication and commitment to excellence in the classroom.

"Ms. Matletz always helped me and made the lessons really interesting," the honor student shared.

The veteran educator received notice of the award at the beginning of the new school year.

South Pointe – An Insightful Exchange of Cultures

South Pointe Middle School is looking toward the future in preparation for its first class of dual immersion students to arrive in the fall of 2017.

WVUSD launched the first Dual Language Immersion program at Walnut Elementary in 2010, with students studying both Mandarin and English. That group of students is set to enter middle school next year.



To learn more about the culture and education in China, South Pointe sent a team of three teachers to visit its sister school, Cashi, located in Hangzhou China.

"Our goal is to develop strong relationships and a deeper understanding of the cultures and educational practices of one of the most dominant subgroups at South Pointe, while preparing to become Walnut Valley's first dual immersion middle school," said Principal Susan Arzola.

In exchange, South Pointe hosted three educators from the Hangzhou school for three weeks in September.

"We learned both educational and cultural insights that enriched my view of Chinese education and culture," said South Pointe teacher Lauren Guzzino.

A message of personal thanks from . . . Alex Morgan, Soccer Star and DBHS Alum

About 1,400 staff members celebrated the new school year during a Welcome Back event held August 12 with a special "guest."

For the past 12 years, employees from every school and department have gathered together after the summer break for a breakfast and opening ceremony at Calvary Chapel in Diamond Bar.

This year's Welcome Back featured a surprise video message from soccer star and Diamond Bar High alum, Alex Morgan. Morgan, an Olympic gold medalist, played forward for the U.S. women's national soccer team which won the FIFA World Cup Championship in July.

"We were well represented in Walnut Valley by Alex Morgan," said WVUSD chief Dr. Robert Taylor as he introduced the tribute at the culmination of the event. "Alex is a hero and international super star. We are so proud of her!" Taylor added.

"I wish I could be there in person today, but I'm with my team supporting them in Kansas City," Morgan shared

via video. The soccer pro recently signed as a forward for NWSL Orlando Pride.



Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor introduces a surprise video message from soccer star and Diamond Bar High alum Alex Morgan during the Welcome Back program on August 12.

Morgan said she dreamed of becoming a professional footballer when she was just 7 years old. Becoming a world champion was "definitely an accomplishment and an honor" she had worked toward her entire life, she noted.

Morgan told the Walnut Valley team how important they were in shaping who she is today.

"I want to say a personal thank you for helping me and for always putting the kids first. It's time to recognize you and celebrate what you're doing."

The Diamond Bar native also attended Maple Hill Elementary and Chaparral Middle School.

"Your selflessness, hard work, and sacrifice doesn't go unnoticed," she said during the heartfelt tribute.

The ceremony also included Mary Harms, the 2014 Classified Employee of the Year and Jennifer Veneracion, the 2014-2015 District Teacher of the Year, who both took the stage to deliver poignant messages to their peers.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction and modernization projects made possible by your support of Bond Measures S & Y.



Modernization Wraps Up at Chaparral Middle School

The modernization of the main education and office building is nearly complete at Chaparral Middle School. The 14-month construction project is slated for completion in late November with students beginning classes after winter break.



Recent items include:

- Carpet and paint
- Doors and hardware
- Casework in teacher's workroom and lounge
- Book detection system in library
- Signage
- Projectors and screens in classrooms
- Acoustical ceiling tiles
- Light fixtures, plugs, and switches



Chaparral Music and Food Service Building

Construction is also wrapping up on the new 10,000 square-foot Music building scheduled to be finished in November. The new 1,200 square-foot Food Service building is slated for completion in early December.



Food Service Building:

- Rough electrical and plumbing
- Drywall
- Salad bar equipment
- Tile installation in kitchen
- Landscape behind building



Music Building:

- Acoustic wall and ceiling panels
- Roof canopies
- Exterior painting
- Restrooms
- Light fixtures
- Carpet



Walnut High School Swimming Pool Renovation



The \$2.3 million pool renovation project began in July.

Recently completed work:

- Reinforced steel installed
- Concrete poured at bottom of pool
- Shotcrete (sprayed material onto forms) installed for sidewalls
- Reinforced steel and gutter
- Rough underground plumbing
- Pool drain piping
- Rough electrical in restrooms and mechanical room



The Walnut Valley Educational Foundation supports our students and schools in so many ways! Recent activities and donations include:

- 2015 Golf Tournament raising over \$20,000 for athletic grants, including Middle School Athletic Transportation Grants and Walnut High School Girls Golf Team Grants
- Walnut Solar Car Project Grant
- Transportation Grant allowing fifth graders from Castle Rock, Collegewood, Evergreen, and Walnut Elementary schools to attend Community Kids Day at Industry Hills Charity Pro Rodeo
- Horse Day Field Trip for CJ Morris special needs students
- 2015 Summer School Enrichment raised over \$15,000 for student scholarships while providing stipends to each host school
- 2015 Teddy Bear Tea funding over 70 classroom mini-grants

Excelling in Performing Arts. . .

Students Perform with Young Americans



Thirty-five drama students from Suzanne Middle School have joined the phenomenal *Turn it Up So Cal*, a first-time ever event with the Young Americans.

Over 2,000 students from eight Southern California schools and 250 internationally acclaimed Young Americans will come together and perform a one-hour show on December 1 at the Citizens Business Bank in Ontario.

"Seeing how excited my kids are and watching them interact with the Young Americans is amazing!" said drama teacher Helen Papadopoulos. "This is an experience they will never forget, and neither will I!"

DBHS Orchestra Plays at CSBA conference

A Saxophone Octet from the award-winning Diamond Bar High School Orchestra, under the direction of Steve Acciani, will be featured student entertainment during the 2015 California School Board Association Annual Education Conference on December 4. Talented performers from around the state vied for the coveted invitation to perform before thousands of members of the education community.

Sports Highlights

Diamond Bar High: Girls Golf repeated as undefeated Palomares League champs; Kailie Vonsaga won League individual championship. The team finished 2nd at CIF Divisional. Josephine Chang and Crystal Wang advanced to the Southern California Regionals. Paul Abdo finished 6th at Palomares League finals in Cross Country, qualified for CIF Prelims. Paul set the school record for the Mt. SAC course.

Walnut High: Girls Golf is the undefeated Hacienda League Champions, CIF Northern Division Champions, and took 2nd Place at State Finals in Pebble Beach. Scholarships awarded to Meagan Ho Allison Chang. Girls Volleyball finished 3rd and Girls Cross Country took 1st place League. Freshman Chloe Arriaga broke school record for the Mt. SAC course. Girls Tennis, Boys Water Polo undefeated League champions.



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IMPORTANT DATES:

Winter Break, December 21 - January 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 18
President's Day, February 15
Spring Break, March 25 - April 1



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School and District News @WVUSD_Tweet

Cultivating Critical Thinkers

Evergreen, a Project Lead the Way Launch school



Evergreen Elementary is building a culture of critical thinkers, collaborators, and creative problem solvers through Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Launch, an innovative, hands-on program implemented last year.

Third graders design unpowered gliders using an engineering app in the Science of Flight lesson. After completing plans, they build model aircraft for a "real world" simulation that could be used to bring basic supplies to an area hit by a natural disaster.

In another class, kindergartners work together designing "tall and strong" *Jack in the Beanstalk* structures from pipe cleaners. The young scientists request help from peers during Think Tank discussions to solve design dilemmas.

"Students love the program, become totally engaged in the learning activities, and develop more rigorous skills and knowledge while having fun!" comments Principal Carolyn Wills.

PLTW is the nation's leading provider of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education for schools.

"These PLTW activities are instilling the necessary life skills in children which they will benefit from at every step in their life," adds parent Rajesh Gupta.

Evergreen is the first WVUSD elementary school to offer the PLTW Launch program that continues in middle and high schools.

Vejar Builds Values

Students work hard to be part of a learning community that is responsible, respectful, and safe.



Taryn Schilz, 1st grade, and Sebastian Lawrence, kindergarten, deposit Vejar Values reward tokens. Vejar will celebrate its 50th birthday during Open House on March 24. Community members are welcome!

"Our school encourages these values in every area and every interaction," says Vejar Elementary Learning Specialist Jodi Yim.

The children who are taught to follow the Vejar Values – Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful – are aware of the behavioral expectations (e.g. walking feet and voice volume) from the moment they enter the campus each day.

Youngsters are rewarded for their actions with verbal praise and Vejar Values tokens.

One by one, they proudly deposit the prized gold coins in a plastic jar kept in the courtyard.

When the token jar is filled, usually once a month, children enjoy fun school-wide celebrations, including Hawaiian Day and Bring a Toy to School Day.

"It takes a team effort to establish a positive school culture with academic and social successes for all our students," Yim adds.

All nine Walnut Valley elementary schools currently implement the Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS), piloted at Vejar, with success tokens used as positive reinforcement.

Quail Summit

Meteor! Author Inspires Students to be Kind

Patricia Polacco's books are chocked-full of powerful messages for students about being kind and careful with their words. Quail Summit Elementary rolled out the red carpet for the acclaimed children's author on October 12.

Polacco delighted students with nostalgic stories of her ancestors and childhood experiences that inspired many of her books. The master storyteller weaved accounts from three popular books – *Meteor!*, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, and *The Keeping Quilt* during three assemblies. With thrilling sound effects, Polacco mesmerized the children re-counting the true-life tale of a falling star that landed on her great grandparents' farm in rural Michigan.

At the end of the presentation, students got the chance to touch a piece of the original 200-pound magic rock and make a wish.

Polacco shared personal childhood struggles with multiple learning disabilities, including dyslexia. Using her own experience as a teachable moment, she asked students to be kind to classmates.

"She inspires kids to not only think more deeply, but to be better human beings," said second grade teacher Kathy McLean whose shelves are filled with Polacco favorites.

