

Branch May/June Calendar

Monday May 2

Teacher Request forms available; return no later than May 13.

Thursday May 5

California School Recognition Program Regional Awards Ceremony Santa Clara, CA for Branch's Civic Award of Merit Recognition

Friday May 6

Assembly Magical Moonshine 10:00 am MPR

Cinco de Mayo Celebration 1:30 pm

Wednesday May 11

Student Council 8:00 am library

Thursday May 12

Kindergarten Round-Up 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Sixth Grade Parent Transitional Meeting 6:00 pm in the library; learn about seventh grade curricular options for next year.

Friday May 13

Kinder Field Trip—Children's Museum

Tuesday May 17

Handy & Sullivan Music Performance 6:30 pm in the MPR (Mr. Dean's music students)

Wednesday May 18

PTO Budget Meeting 3:30 pm

Thursday May 19

Open House 5:30 pm

Friday May 20

Field Trip Handy/Sullivan to Coldwater Canyon

Monday May 23

Volunteer Breakfast 8:30 am MPR

5th Grade Music Performance Clark Ctr 5:00 pm

Friday May 27

4th and 5th field trip to Monterey Bay

Monday May 30

Memorial Day Holiday

Tuesday May 31-June 3

Sixth grade Science Camp

Tuesday June 7

End of Year “Farewell” Assembly

Red Apple Character Awards (Lunch)

Wednesday June 8

Faculty vs. 6th Grade Softball Game

Thursday June 9

Recognition Assemblies in MPR and Kinder classroom: 1-3 9:05 to 10:05 am; 4-6 10:15 to 11:15 am; Early Bird Kinder 12:25 to 12:40 pm; Late Bird Kinder 3:00 to 3:15 pm.

Friday June 10

6th Grade Graduation Ceremony Time AM TBD

PTO Update—Cristel Penton is stepping down as co- PTP President. Amy Miner is ready to go it alone in 2016-17. A secretary is needed for next year—contact Amy or office; thanks Cristel and PTO members for your service

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 8

Cinco de Mayo Edition May 2, 2016

Hello Broncos,

As many of you may have heard, I decided to retire after thirty-three years as an educator--thirty-one in the Lucia Mar Unified School District. It is truly an honor to serve as principal at Branch Elementary School, and I have enjoyed it immensely. These are cherished days.

On the one hand, I wish my tenure could continue for years to come. On the other hand, my recent cervical spine surgery, other unrelated health issues, and the desire to see more of my children and grandchildren has impacted my decision.

I am so thankful for such talented and hard-working teachers, bright and curious students, and such diligent, devoted parents. Without the often imitated but never duplicated, world-famous Branch Auction, the Pumpkin Patch (thank you Talley Family and Santa Maria Seed), the “Genevieve’s” Fundraiser, and the jog-a-thon, Branch Elementary would be sadly lacking vitally important resources and opportunities for students. The Branch PTO is amazing, and I have so enjoyed working with this dynamic group. Thanks to the efforts of our PTO, our computer lab is new and every classroom is equipped with a presentation station and a big-screen monitor. Thanks to our Branch parents, we have Wi-Fi in the library, MPR, and three classrooms. We have four complete classroom sets of chrome books (similar to laptops) with which students can explore and investigate seemingly infinite information. Because of PTO’s support of the Science Advisory Committee, we have enjoyed several special lab sessions the past few years; this year students especially enjoyed sessions on “Light” Forensic Investigation, and Watersheds--(the trout project).

Our students continue to excel. Our MAP and CAASPP test results are at or near the top in every category. We have focused much professional development time on writing--and Branch students have clearly demonstrated excellence through their performances on district writing assessments and in local and county-wide writing contests. We have embraced the challenge of being a school that is "No Place for Hate" and have developed multiple projects and brought in talented speakers and performers to remind students that it is "Cool to be Kind." For becoming a "No Place for Hate" campus, teaching leadership principles, promoting civic involvement and integrating community service and responsibility into core content, Branch was selected by the state of California and the state judiciary as a Civic Merit Award winning school. We should know my replacement before the school year is out. Teachers and parents will be part of the interview process. Interviews take place on May 24. When I began as principal--a Branch parent (one of my former students at AGHS who is now a friend) told me frankly that at Branch, "We (parents) give a lot, but we expect a lot." Having "high expectations" is one of the keys that makes Branch such an outstanding school, and I have enjoyed embracing those expectations. I believe that the more you give--the more you get, and while I have gained much from my years at Branch, I hope I gave more than I took.

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 7

Spring Break Edition March 21, 2016

Hello Broncos,

Don't miss the opportunity to social with the Bronco Faithful at Rooster Creek Tavern in the Arroyo Grande Village. They are supporting the Branch 6th Grade Community Service Project by donating all dinner proceeds between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm on **Tuesday night March 22, 2016** for and in behalf of young Elam Mallory who suffers from epilepsy. Come enjoy a marvelous meal, socialize with the Branch faithful, and help Bronco sixth graders learn the importance of community involvement. We will be helping a great local student in the process

Thank you parents for attending our second trimester awards ceremonies and our annual Story Night on March 15. It is a pleasure to honor the hard work of our students and to hold fun family events--especially when they promote the importance of reading.

I know it can be difficult to attend ceremonies held in the middle of the working day. I am interested in feedback on award presentations in general--(philosophies and so forth) and am also interested in how you feel about the time frames offered. Send me an e-mail, give me a call, or stop by campus for a quick visit.

Our classrooms continue to enjoy salmon enhancement presentations; our eight tanks are full of "baby" trout known as "frys."

Believe it or not, kindergarten round-up has begun! Registration is partially available online! Come pick up info in the Branch office.

Let's get in shape for the jog-a-thon. This fundraiser the morning of April 8th is earmarked to raise money to provide Branch students with the latest and greatest in technology. Previous jog-a-thons have earned thousands of dollars which were used to help purchase a new science lab, chrome books for three classrooms (similar to laptop computers) and big screen monitors in every room. Let's keep our kids on the cutting edge of educational technology. A contribution for the jog-a-thon is a contribution to a bright technological future at Branch Elementary.

Finally, last week I learned I am in "urgent" need of cervical spinal surgery. I have been experiencing some strange nerve-related issues, and the doctor insists the surgery be done right away (March 23). Recovery time will keep me away from campus for at least four weeks (hoping to be back the last week of April). The district is working on finding a substitute. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you or your children. To be honest--with such a great staff and strong support from the district, I doubt we will miss a beat!

--Paul Jarvis, Principal

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 6

"Talent Show Edition"

February 16, 2016

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Tickets are on sale for the annual Branch Talent Show at the Clark Center Box Office! We will perform two shows again this year—a 4:30 pm matinee with a 7:00 pm evening performance to follow. I hope everyone in the Branch extended community of learners will support this show! While the venue is technically “free,” we still have fees and expenses associated with the show and need a good turn-out! You will not be disappointed. *American Idol*, *The Voice*, and *So You Think You Can Dance* can’t match this event as pure *Americana*! The theme this year is *Super Heroes*!

This month, we are reprising our own student-led literary magazine—*The Open Gate*. While this activity was initially designed for GATE students, it is open to all 4-6 students. Students will receive some instruction in journalistic writing and will have a chance to use the Publisher program to create their own on-line magazines. The best articles and literary pieces from the individual magazines (and from the student body at large) will be published. All students K-6 may submit writing to the magazine for consideration. We are looking for 1) Editorials (opinion stories/persuasive writing) 2) Features—including interviews with interesting people or people who do interesting things! 3) Personal Narratives (sharing, interpreting or explaining personal experiences; 4) Short fiction (we will also hold a school-wide contest for short stories of 55 words or less) 5) Poetry 6) Letters 7) Reviews—(tell us about new movies, video games, music, plays, etc.

Thank you to all who signed up through the district to volunteer on field trips and in Branch classrooms. The Human Resources Department is hosting a Volunteer Fingerprinting Clinic for *new families* to the Lucia Mar Unified School District for the 2016-2017 school year. Appointment times dedicated to new families is available from May 10-12, 2016 from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm. Appointments are limited. Appointments can be arranged by contacting Courtney Booth in Human Resources: - (805) 474-3000 ext. 1194. Further contact info: Courtney.booth@lmsud.org. We have informational flyers available in the office.

Having concluded our outstanding science lab experience on light and optics, the science advisory committee has launched its new lab unit on CSI (Forensics). This unit features experiments on fingerprint analysis, animal track identification, shoe print comparisons, and microscopic examination of prepared hair and blood samples from mammals, birds, and reptiles. Some classes will be able to use

their forensics skills trying to track animals from an imaginary escape from a zoo. Kids at all grade levels will enjoy this choice experience!

Next PTO Meeting is February 26, 2016 at 9:00 A.M.

--Paul Jarvis, Principal

Hoofprints Vol. 3 Issue 5

"New Year's Edition"

January 19, 2016

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Happy New Year to all Broncos!

January will see the establishment of a new tradition at Branch—parent/student dances. The first dance is scheduled as a Father/Daughter Dance; it is on January 23rd from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. On April 9th, we will hold a Mother/Son Dance. These events, sponsored by the PTO, will prove memorable, so plan now to be there!

Believe it or not, the annual Branch Talent Show is just around the corner. 6th graders will be rehearsing after school most Mondays and Wednesdays between now and the dress rehearsal on February 29th. All of you other performers are encouraged to prepare diligently for your stage success! The talent show is on Tuesday March 1st at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts—two shows! The matinee is at 4:30 pm and the evening performance begins at 7:00 pm. For the dress rehearsal on February 29th, we will transport students with signed permission slips to the Clark Center at 12:40 pm. Students will rehearse from 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm. Tickets go on sale at the Clark Center on February 1st!

On January 21, several Branch teachers will pick up aquariums and “cooling” devices to prepare for our Trout enhancement science project. Most grade levels will be directly or indirectly involved in: 1) watching eggs hatch, 2) monitoring the “alevin” stage where our future trout obtain food from their yolk sacs, and 3) feeding “frys” who emerge from their yolk sacs and begin swimming in the tank. 4) Ultimately we will release our “finny” friends during a field trip to Lopez Lake. Classrooms that do not have their own tank will partner with another classroom or will have the opportunity to visit the tank in the science lab.

The goal of this program is to help Branch students become good stewards of all our aquatic resources—including salmon and trout. Salmon and trout are especially valued wildlife; however their wild populations are dwindling. Students will raise these fish to learn about their habitat requirements and how to keep habitats healthy.

This project will integrate nicely with science, math, art, social studies and language arts.

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 4

“Parent Conference” Edition

November 16, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

The first trimester is complete which means it is not just the holiday season but parent conference “season.” Our minimum days in November are designed to give teachers time to meet with parents. The basis for positive parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication. Both teachers and parents share the responsibility for creating such a foundation. Following are some tips courtesy of the Harvard Family Research Project—Harvard Graduate School of Education:

Checklist: Before the conference

Review your child’s work, grades, and progress reports.

Talk with your child about his or her progress in school.

Talk with others—family members, after school staff, mentors, etc.—about your child’s strengths and needs. Make a list of questions to ask during the conference. Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child’s learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

What should you talk to the teacher about? Progress. Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How is your student doing compared to the rest of the class? What do you see as his or her strengths? How could he or she improve? Regarding assignments and assessments--ask to see examples of your child’s work. Ask how the teacher gives grades.

Your thoughts about your child. Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings about your child. Tell the teacher what you think your child is good at. Explain what he or she needs more help with.

Support learning at home. Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn. Ask if the teacher knows of other programs or services in the community that could also help your child.

Support learning at school. Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it. How should you follow up?

Make a plan. Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child. Discuss best options for future communication. There are many ways to communicate—in person, by phone, notes, homework packets, email. Make a plan that works for both of you.

Talk to your child. The parent–teacher conference is all about your child, so don’t forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned. Show him or her how you will help with learning at home. Ask for his or her suggestions.

Student Led Conferences: A few Branch teachers use a student led conference format. In short, these are some of the benefits.

- Parents are exposed to materials and activities that students engaged in during the school day.
- Teachers can observe interactions, comment, offer suggestions, and model strategies.
- Students, parents, and the teacher are all active participants in the conference.
- Students actually **show** parents what they know and are learning in school.

Drop Off, Pick-Up News and Parking Tips:

- If possible, park on campus (limited) or on School Road. We have a pedestrian gate between room 8 and the library to allow for a safer entry to campus.
- **Beginning November 30th, we will enforce a “no parking policy” in the drive through area until the dismissal bell at 3:15 pm.** Use the drive through lane (before and after school) for loading and unloading only. If you like arriving early, please locate a parking place on campus or on school road.
- Pull forward as far as possible—stop before you hit the bus zone.
- Have car seats in position for curbside pick-ups. Be prepared for a *quick transition* (1 minute or less) from curb to car seat. If your child is not out front waiting, take another pass or park and walk in.
- Never leave your car unattended in the drive through lane. If you need to get out of the car to talk to a teacher or to find your child, park—do not use the drive through lane.
- Be courteous—especially when encountering merges; always be aware of pedestrians.
- Try approaching the school from the opposite direction on School Road.

Pedestrians

- Whenever possible, use the cross walk. Be cautious and alert at all times.
- Students should never walk in the parking lot unless escorted by an adult.

Branch PTO Broadcast:

A huge thank you goes out to Jennifer Neff and Jessica Sheridan for organizing another amazing fundraiser. They did a great job in their last year as auction chairs and we can't thank them enough for all their time and effort in organizing our last five years of auctions. In their place we welcome Michelle Loomis and Michelle Fletcher as next year's auction chairs. They are excited to take over! We would also like to thank Catie Youngkin, Kate Johnson and the decoration committee for transforming the Portuguese Hall into an inviting fall venue, and all the other auction committee members for donating their time and resources for our school. It takes a village, and our continued auction success due to generous community and family donations is proof of that. We raised over \$67,000 this year which will help continue to fund literacy tutors, our science lab, our computer aide, technology upgrades and much more. Way to support our school!

The Harvest Festival, pumpkin patch, and Genevieve's were also successful this year. The pumpkin patch, courtesy of Talley Farms and Santa Maria Seed, was especially productive again this year netting \$14,065! We appreciate Margaret McClean, Lori Brown, Shannon Montesinos and Jillian Smith for chairing and organizing these events, and donating their time. Branch wouldn't be Branch without all of our wonderful, involved families and volunteers!

A few reminders of upcoming events:

- Collections for Holiday gift baskets to help make 2-3 Branch families' holidays a little brighter will start this month. If you are interested in helping gift wrap before winter break please contact Natasha Goen or Kristi Folkrod at 235-3395 or kristihoop@charter.net
- Parent teacher conferences will be Nov. 17-20. These days will be minimum days, and will also be when the PTO puts on our Fall Staff Appreciation Luncheon. Tamara Angello and Jessica Olnick are organizing the luncheon this year. This is an opportunity to spoil all of our wonderful Branch staff by providing lunch, refreshments and treats so anyone willing to donate food or make a dish please contact Tamara at tamjoy1104@yahoo.com.
- Our December book fair is coming up! Please look for info to come home soon or contact Margaret McClean or Trina Robbins if you would like to sign up to help.
- The next PTO meeting is Nov. 19th at 5:30pm in the library, we would love to see you there.

November & December Calendar

Friday, November 13

1st Trimester Ends

Tuesday, November 17

Minimum day - Parent Conferences

Free & Reduced Lunch Incentive Awards

3:25pm Good News Club

Wednesday, November 18

Minimum day - Parent Conferences

8:00 am Student Council

3:25pm Leadership Club

Thursday, November 19

Author Assembly 10:00 a.m. (Destry Ramey)

Minimum day - Parent Conferences

REPORT CARDS GO HOME

Friday, November 20

Minimum day - Parent Conferences

Science Committee Garden Work Day

November 23-27 Thanksgiving Recess

Tuesday, December 1

Holiday Basket Drive Begins

Student Recognition Awards

1-3 9:05 am to 10:05 am

4-6 10:10 am to 11:15 am

Early K 11:30 am to 12:25-12:40

Late K 3:00 pm to 3:15 pm

3:25pm Good News Club

Wednesday, December 2

3:25pm Leadership Club

Wednesday, December 9

Student Council 8:00 am Room 3

Monday, December 7-11

Book Faire is open before school, lunch and after school.

Thursday, December 10

No Place for Hate Assembly "Stand Up!"

Family Story Night 6:30 pm

Tuesday, December 15

Fire Drill 9:10 am

December 21-January 8 Winter Recess

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 3

"Auction" Edition

October 5, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

As most of you well know, Branch Elementary is not a Title I school, and we receive little or no federal or state funding to augment our general fund budget. In order for us to obtain literacy support tutors, additional hours for our computer lab technician, funding for assemblies, field trips and additional school materials supplies (including technology), we depend on our PTO and the Branch Community of learners for support. Please help by: volunteering on the auction committee, providing or recruiting auction items, buying barbeque tickets, and bidding on live and silent auction items! It is an extremely enjoyable social event; let's send auction co-chairs Jennifer Neff and Jessica Sheridan (who are retiring their joint chairmanship after three years) off with their greatest grossing event ever. We will see you on October 24th at 5:30 pm!

State test results are officially in, and Branch is tops in the district in math and second in language arts. I am especially pleased with the consistency demonstrated across the grade levels tested (3, 4, 5, 6 in math and language arts). When compared with the other ten elementary schools, of the eight possible scores, Branch finished first in three categories (3rd grade math, 5th grade math, and 3rd grade language arts), second in four categories (4th grade math, 6th grade math, 5th grade language arts, and 6th grade language arts) and third in one category (4th grade language arts). We were on the medal stand in every tested category! Congratulations students, teachers, parents, and guardians on a job well done.

Individual California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress state testing reports will be mailed home by the district in the next week or two. Speaking of test results, our first trimester Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) test results are in. We will send these home with 3rd through 6th grade students in early October.

MAP results are used to measure a student's growth in school and give teachers valuable feedback on student strengths and areas where help may be needed. MAP uses a RIT scale (also known as a Rasch unit) to show results. It is an equal interval scale much like feet and inches on a yardstick. It is used to chart your child's progress from year to year. RIT scores typically start at the 140-190 level in grade three and progress as high as 240-300 by high school. Your student will also get a nationally "normed" percentile score. These scores range from 1st percentile to 99th percentile, with the average student score generally set at the 50th percentile. If a Branch student scored at the 63rd percentile, it means he or she scored higher than 63% of the test takers in the **norming group. One more question right or wrong can cause a big change in the student's score.** In some cases, having one more correct answer can cause a student's reported percentile score to jump more than ten points. For more info on MAP testing feel free to talk to me or check out the NWEA website at <http://www.nwea.org>.

On October 30, representatives of Branch PTO will be selling new Branch apparel (sweatshirts, hoodies, t-shirts, and hats). This will be the second of three "pre-order" opportunities for the 2015-16 school year (the third opportunity comes in February). Sample designs and sizes will be on display. Get your Branch gear on!

Further, on October 30, a minimum day, students will have an opportunity to come to school dressed as their favorite fictional or historical character. Since fiction essentially means "made up," students may create their own original character. If students prefer, they may "dress for success" and come to school in clothing that demonstrates a possible career choice (doctor, firefighter, football player, business professional). We will have a somewhat informal "parade" beginning at 9:15 am. Students will walk around the periphery of the playground blacktop—we will plan for two laps. We will allow some time for a few pictures following the parade.

Please be mindful of the following guidelines that will help ensure a safe and happy day.

1. Please refrain from scary or graphic outfits that might truly frighten our younger students (or even the principal). For example, gory, gruesome, or “bloody” characters are not permitted.
2. **No masks.** Masks pose both behavioral and student safety issues.
3. Please no depictions of devils or Satanic characters.
4. No full face make-up please. Only minimal make-up is permissible (for example--whiskers for a cat, rosy cheeks, or a painted on mustache).
5. Outfits should not restrict or limit a student’s ability to complete assigned work during the day—including P.E. Outfits must be safe and should not drag on the ground.
6. No real or toy weapons or dangerous accessories are permitted— (namely knives, canes, swords, guns, etc.).

Common sense and modesty must prevail. In the event that an outfit is deemed inappropriate, all students will be expected to change into acceptable clothing (if in doubt, talk to me in advance or have spare clothing available. Many wear school appropriate clothing under their character outfits). If a student’s outfit is deemed inappropriate and alternate clothing is not available, we will call parents to bring appropriate clothes.

October 30 is also our first Branch Family Picnic Day. Please be extra patient in the front lot that day; after school parking will be at a premium and the lot will no doubt be congested. We will begin at 11:55 am. Please avoid picking-up students without signing them out prior to our 12:30 pm dismissal that day.

Thank you for adhering to the aforementioned guidelines. We hope to have a fun, memorable, yet productive academic day!

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 2

“Back to School Night” Edition

September 1, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

I hope all of you will take advantage of the opportunity to meet your child’s teachers during our annual **“Back to School” Night on September 3rd at 5:30 pm.** The purpose for this event is to provide parents an opportunity to meet teachers and discover what students will be learning this year. Teachers will also outline academic and behavioral expectations and classroom protocols and policies. Many teachers will also provide information on parent volunteer opportunities. Remember that “Back to School Night” is not designed for individual conferences. Kids are ok—but ideally this event is for parents. Following is our Back to School Night Schedule:

5:30 p.m. Welcome and Introduction of Teachers....Paul Jarvis, Principal

5:40 p.m. PTO Introduction of Officers and Announcements

- PTO President....Amy Filice
- Auction Co-Chairs....Jennifer Neff & Jessica Sheridan
- Genevieve’s Fundraiser....Margaret McLean

5:50 p.m. Dismiss from MPR

5:55 p.m. Classroom Presentations Session # 1: Angell—Rm 1; Provence—Library; Whitaker—Rm 4; Wilkinson Rm 2; Johnson—Rm 9; Neie—Rm 11; Beacock—Rm 8; Richards—Rm 10; Handy—Rm 14; Face—Rm 13; Little—Rm 17; Martin—Rm 18; Barreto—Rm 12. (Presentations on class standards, policies and protocols will only be made during session 1 for kindergarten). “Late Bird” parents, in particular, are invited to attend the informal kinder room “Walk Through” during the second session. Early Bird parents are also welcome.

6:25 p.m. End of Session # 1

6:30 p.m. Beginning of Session # 2 and Kindergarten Room 1 Walk-Through

7:00 p.m. End of Session # 2

Principal’s Talking Points

- Thank you for driving carefully in the parking lot. If possible, park either in the lot or on School Road. If you are opting for the “drive-through” method, please pull up as far as you can (stop before the bus area) before opening the door to pick up your students. Try to place car seats on the curb side (right side) of your car. Be prepared for a quick enter and exit transition!
- Please drive with extreme care in our parking lot. Pedestrians—please use the cross walk whenever possible. Students should never walk out into the parking lot to meet a parent alone. Find the principal or another adult to escort you. Whenever possible, parents should escort their own children. I am working on obtaining a pedestrian gate in front of the library. Please never abandon your car—especially if you are near the fire hydrant out front.
- All parents interested in participating in the School Site Council, please contact the Branch office. Council members help oversee Branch’s categorical budget and develop the Single Plan for Student Achievement, and School Safety improvement plans.

PTO

- The Genevieve’s fundraiser is off and running! Please do your utmost to help Branch Elementary raise funds for field trips, assemblies, school materials, supplies, and technology for the classroom. The drive ends on September 10th!
- Please get involved with our PTO! We need volunteers for several upcoming projects including: The Pumpkin Patch and Harvest Festival; The World-Famous Branch Auction; Jog-a-thon; and Teacher Appreciation Week. **PTO meets next on September 24th at 5:30 pm.**

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 3 issue 1

Back to School Edition

August 20, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the 2015-16 school year! Our theme this year is: **Mission Possible**: Inquiry, Investigation, and Imagination. We will focus on our new site mission—“...to inspire learners through inquiry, investigation, and imagination in student-centered classrooms where collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication are emphasized to promote student understanding and transfer of learning.”

Preliminary state testing results put Branch at the top of the school district in math and tied for second in language arts! In a year where schools expected to see their proficiency rates cut in half (or worse) with the new, more challenging state tests, Branch managed to reach proficiency in six of eight tested grade levels (Grades 3-6 in Math and Language Arts). We were proficient in all language arts grade levels and proficient in two of four math grade levels. (We narrowly missed proficiency in two grade levels for math—coming up just three and five points short respectively).

Our school-wide math percent proficient is, “unofficially” **59.25%**. Other non-title I schools tallied percentages of 57.75%, and 49% proficient respectively. The district’s average percent proficient for elementary math was **37.75%**. We fared better in language arts scoring **62.25%** proficient (tied with another non-title I school). The remaining title I school scored 66.25%. The district’s average percent proficient for elementary language arts was **45.25%**. Scoring 21.5% above the district average in math and 17% above the district average in language arts is noteworthy! Thanks Branch teachers, staff, students, and parents for your stalwart efforts on the state test.

In order to ensure high student achievement, it is vital that teachers and parents communicate openly and frequently concerning student progress. Please be proactive in communicating with staff; please review the Parent-Student Compact (enclosed) and sign and return it no later than September 3rd (Back to School Night). Check the school website for an up-to-date calendar of school activities. Facebook (link on school website) and Twitter (@BranchBroncos) are also great vehicles to stay connected to all Branch activities and events.

Thanks to the PTO, we have Wi-Fi in rooms 16, 17, and 18. With PTO and LCAP funding, I ordered 54 Chromebooks and hope to add more as the school year progresses. Improving student access to technology has been an important focus for me as principal, and I am grateful for all the parent help and support in this regard. In other news, the district completely replaced our septic system.

Copies of the Branch Elementary School Parent-Student Handbook will be available online (www.luciamarschools.org); parents may request a hard copy in the school office. The handbook is designed to acquaint you with the school’s programs, services, policies, and procedures. If situations arise which are not covered in the handbook, please check with the school office or with your child’s teacher.

Following are school holidays for the 2015-16 school year: Labor Day--Monday 9/7; Veterans Day--Wednesday 11/11; M.L. King Day-- Monday 1/18; Lincoln’s Birthday Observed--Monday 2/8; Washington’s Birthday Observed--Monday 2/15; Memorial Day--Monday May 30.

Please be patient in the parking lot. We prefer that parents park and walk students to or from cars. We do allow for a “drive through” protocol for parents who cannot get out of the car. Please pull up as far as possible by the curb. Do not block the front gate. Never abandon your car if you are in the drive through lane. Feel free to pick up your children at 3:25 pm if you prefer avoiding a jammed parking lot. Remember, that once school is out, the whole process lasts approximately 12 minutes. The parking lot is generally clear by 3:25 pm and certainly clearly by 3:30 pm. Remind students to wait in the grass area in front of room 1 and to pay attention for their ride. Students are not allowed to play on the playground after school unless accompanied by a parent—or unless special arrangements have been made with the principal.

The following dates will be minimum days during the 2015-16 school year: 10/30, 11/17, 11/18, 11/19, 11/20, 2/19, and 6/16. Students are dismissed at 12:30 pm on minimum days. Make special arrangements with Arroyo Grande Recreation if you need childcare on minimum days.

The Arroyo Grande Recreation Department provides child care before school from 7:00 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. as well as after school care from 3:15 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Additional hours during the school day for late birds and early bird kindergarten students will also be available. For information, stop by the MPR or call Arroyo Grande Recreation at: 805-473-5474.

Regular attendance at school is extremely important. Teachers prepare lessons so that material is taught in sequential order, and it is difficult for students to grasp subsequent material when they are absent. Students receive the full benefit of

classroom instruction only when they attend on a regular basis. We request that students be kept home only when it is necessary for a medical reason, and we also ask that school day appointments be kept to a minimum. When these appointments are necessary, please return the student to school as quickly as possible. Each day that a student is absent, whether excused or unexcused, the district loses funds. Please avoid unnecessary absences.

If your child must be absent, please call the school office, send a written note to the office, or *send an electronic note via the link on the webpage*. The only absence or tardy that can be marked “excused” is one due to a child’s own illness, a doctor’s appointment or a death in the immediate family. Following are our regular and late start Monday bell schedules.

Branch Regular Day Bell Schedule	Branch Late Start Monday Bell Schedule
8:40 Students allowed on campus	9:35 Students allowed on campus
8:55 School Begins 1-6 & Early Bird Kindergarten	9:50 School Begins
10:40-10:55 K-3 Recess	10:40-10:55 Early Bird Recess
11:00-11:15 4-6 Recess	11:20-11:30 Late Birds allowed on K playground
11:20-11:30 Late Birds allowed on K playground	11:30 Late Bird Kinder begins
11:30 Late Bird Kindergarten Begins	11:30-12:10 Early Bird Kinder Lunch/Recess
11:30-12:10 Early Kindergarten Lunch & Recess	11:40-12:20 1-3 Lunch/Recess
11:40-12:20 Lunch/Recess 1-3	12:10-12:50 Late Bird and 4-6 Lunch/Recess
12:10-12:50 Lunch/Recess Late Bird & 4-6	1:35 Early Bird K dismissal
12:40 Early Bird Kindergarten Dismissal	1:40-1:55 Late Bird and 1-3 Recess
1:40-1:55 K-3 Recess	2:00-2:10 4-6 Recess
2:00-2:10 4-6 Recess	3:15 Late Bird and 1-6 dismissal
3:15 Dismissal	
-	

I urge all parents to find a way to be involved in the Branch community. We have a very open, active and supportive Parent Teacher Organization, a Science Advisory Committee, an English Learner Advisory Committee, a No Place for Hate Committee, and a School Site Council. We are looking for volunteers to support PTO activities, and fundraisers, to work in classrooms, to help with our science lab program, and for developing our school garden as an outdoor classroom. Regular volunteers (regular means more than two or three times per year) must go through a clearance process. Once a parent is cleared, the clearance is generally good for “life.” If you are not cleared to volunteer, access the Human Resources Department and make an appointment through the district website: www.luciamarschools.org

Have a wonderful school year. I look forward to meeting all of you and doing my utmost to serve the Branch Community of learners! Paul Jarvis Principal

