

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 10

Summer Into Fall Edition

June, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Thank you for a fantastic year. Following is a Top Ten List of our significant accomplishments as a community of learner.

10. Service: Campus Beautification Day: We organized a joint venture with the Branch PTO, District Facilities and Maintenance, and the Arroyo Grande Valley Kiwanis Club to paint our handball wall, all the railing on our portable, and the trim on our main building (office and rooms 1-4).

9. Attendance Improvement: We improved our attendance from last year's 95.912% rate to 96.749%--a gain of 0.837--second best in the entire district (Mesa Middle School improved 1.45%). Thanks to Joanne (secretary) Darrin (custodian), and Cheryl (nurse) for your diligence in tracking data, keeping the campus germ free, and promoting positive health habits. Thanks to all our teachers and staff for implementing the positive habits and to students and parents who make school a priority.

8. Professional Development: Implemented Understanding by Design (curriculum model) to design grade level integrated science units centered on the Next Generation "Earth" Science Standards.

7. Meeting Individual Needs: Implemented a systematic intervention and ELD program. Our intervention program netted great gains for several grade level (we initially focused on grade two) in the area of reading. All students demonstrated growth and several students jumped as many as four reading levels! Our ELD students worked on developing their language skills and the sixth grade boys ultimately presented a PowerPoint presentation to the entire school on the history and culture of Mexico (as part of our Cinco de Mayo celebration). They also researched, learned, and performed traditional Mexican dance including "The Dance of the Old Men."

6. Fundraising: PTO raised over \$100,000 thousand dollars through various fund-raisers including the Branch Auction, Genevieve's, the Pumpkin Patch at Talley Farms, and the Annual Jog-a-Thon. These funds went to supporting teachers with materials, students with hands-on field trips, and several assemblies (including Zoo to You). Further, upon hearing the computers in our Technology Lab were being classified with "end of life" status this summer, the PTO stepped up and replaced the entire lab. In addition, the PTO funded a \$12,000 dollar project to bring Wi-Fi to three classrooms on campus.

5. School Climate & Culture: A PTO subcommittee consisting of parents, teachers, administration and students worked to improve school climate and culture by developing six activities (three were required) to promote kindness and to stop bullying behaviors. Branch Elementary received "No Place for Hate" status through the American Civil Liberties Union and was honored at a reception held at Cal Poly where approximately 20 students performed a skit ("It's Cool to Be Kind") and sang the Peter, Paul, and Mary song "Don't Laugh at Me."

4. Student Achievement: Branch Elementary finished first in the GATE Olympics—the third win in four years. Branch used the GATE program as a springboard for several enterprises open to all students including: Publication of The Open Gate Review a literary magazine run by Branch students, establishing a robotics team and third place finish for one of our teams in the Dana Invitational, and developing an after school robotics and drama programs.

3. Developing Community Servers: Our sixth graders continued their tradition of community service by raising \$9,872 dollars for the New Life K-9 organization. They place service dogs with veterans. Many sixth graders also spearheaded a fundraising drive for a classmate whose father passed away unexpectedly.

2. Academic Excellence: 42% of Branch 6th graders obtained such high scores on the Spring Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) test, that they are deemed “qualified” to take Algebra in grade seven. Further, 72.1% of all Branch students (3-6) participating in the MAP test met their growth goals. This was the 2nd highest rate among the 11 LMUSD elementary schools (Oceano was #1). Our improvement rate on the MAP Test was 8.7 points—first among non-title one schools and third among all elementary schools (Oceano, 9.9 & Fairgrove 9.4 filled the top two spots.)

1. Writing Emphasis: Branch had 17 First Place Winners in the San Luis Obispo County Writing Contest. Branch also had the highest scores for every grade level (4-6) participating in the District Writing Assessment!

Summer Into Fall Calendar

June

19 Office is closed for the summer.

23 LMUSD Board meeting 7:00 p.m.

July

7 Summer School @ Oceano Elementary

LMUSD Board Meeting 7:00 p.m.

20 LMUSD Board Meeting

28 LMUSD Board Meeting

August

4 LMUSD Board Meeting

12 Branch Office is open for 2015-16 school year

17 Inter and Intra District Transfer Notification

19 Classes Posted @ 4:30 p.m.

20 First Day of classes; school starts at 8:55 a.m.

24 Late Start Monday; school starts at 9:50 a.m.

September

1 LMUSD Board Meeting

3 Back to School Night 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 9

“Open House” Edition

May 12, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Branch Elementary School had a remarkable seventeen County Writing Contest Winners this year (one student, Adilia Leiva won in two categories!) Congratulations to the following students and their teachers: **Grade 1:** Julisa Provence, Chase Porter, Gabrielle Salvador; **Grade 2:** Adilia Leiva, Revin Thomas; **Grade 3:** Torsten Johnson, Mikayla Provence, Evan Anderson, Sydney Wilkinson; **Grade 4:** Melanie Dominguez, Allison Flores; **Grade 5:** Cesar Gomez, Eva Vink; **Grade 6:** Christopher Face, Ellie Martinez, Erik Flores.

Thanks parents, teachers, faculty and staff for your efforts to ensure kids attend school! Branch presently has the highest attendance rate in the entire district at 96.5%. We also showed the greatest improvement from last year to this among all the district's schools (except Judkins). I attribute this to the following: Teachers are providing engaging lessons and are emphasizing student hygiene (hand sanitizer). Our custodian is diligent in keeping classrooms clean and germ free, and parents and staff are providing encouragement and making education a priority! We are carefully tracking attendance and the short-term independent study program. Further, maintaining a positive school climate featuring many fun activities is a priority at Branch. Thanks also for getting your kids to school for state testing! More testing on the horizon—(see the MAP testing schedule). MAP is our district's formative assessment system. Similar to the state test, it is "adaptive" and give us not only a grade level equivalent for reading, language, and math but also a nationally normed percentile score.

Paul Jarvis, Principal

PTO Bronco Broadcast

The PTO would like to give a BIG thank you to Andrea Mackey for coordinating a fabulous Cinco de Mayo day. Our kids look forward to this celebration every year and really enjoyed all the authentic food and fun activities. Speaking of food, we would also like to give a heartfelt thanks to Maria Barraza, Mizaela Beas, Maria Damian, Hermelinda Diaz, Ma de Lourdes Diaz, Elizabeth Ortiz, Aurelia Dominguez, Maria Flores, Caritina Gomez, Heidi Leiva, Alma Lopez, Marisol Palacios, Juan & Adriana Rico, Veronica Soto and Leticia Ramirez for providing another delicious, authentic Mexican experience. We are so lucky to have families like them willing to donate their time and expertise to make this day extra special for our kids.

The Kiwanis work day was also a successful event last month. Amy Filice did a wonderful job of coordinating this day, and we are so grateful to Kiwanis Club and our very own parent volunteers for donating their time to help beautify our school.

Lastly, the Jog-a-thon helped raise over \$12,000, thanks in part to a very generous \$4,000 donation from Miner's Hardware. This money will allow the PTO to fund new computers and printers for the computer lab. Way to go Shaina Jacobs and Lori Brown for coordinating such a successful fundraiser!

Branch Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 8

State Testing & Campus Beautification Edition

April 17, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

CAASPP/SBAC: State testing is upon us! Please consult the testing schedule and do your best to avoid absences! This is the first year of the new adaptive style computer test. The fifth grade science test is the last bastion for scantrons and number two pencils...we are nearing the end of an era!

Campus Beautification Day! We have several painting project and a sandbox project scheduled for Saturday April 18 on the Branch campus from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Come lend a hand! The district has helped out already by starting in by painting the fascia board on the office and rooms one through four.

District Writing Assessment: Results for the **DWA** for grades 4-6 showed the strength of our writing program at Branch Elementary School. Our fourth, fifth, and sixth graders netted *the highest average scores among all elementary schools in the district* with marks of 6.07, 7.2, and 7.44 respectively. A clean sweep for the Broncos! Congratulations to all Branch teachers and our talented fourth through sixth grade student writers!

The Write Stuff: Speaking of writing, our second annual Branch Writing Awards Evening is scheduled for May 6, 2015 at 6:45 pm in the MPR. We request students wear their “Sunday Best;” however, feel free to come in your Little League or softball uniform if necessary! This event is to honor our site writing contest winners and our district level writing winners. Invitations were sent home with students this week. Check with your child’s teacher if you have any questions.

No Place For Hate: Branch Elementary applied for and has been accepted as a “No Place for Hate” campus through the Anti-Defamation League. We, along with several other district and county schools, will be honored at a ceremony at Cal Poly’s Chumash auditorium on April 29th. We have been asked to perform a song, “Don’t Laugh at Me” and the skit we developed for our “Embracing Differences” assembly. Feel free to check it out!

Integrated Science Projects: On Monday April 13, Branch teachers shared with colleagues their integrated science units developed using the Understanding by Design curriculum development process (Wiggins & McTighe). These units will be taught this spring and will feature inquiry, investigation, imagination, and hands-on learning experiences.

Full State Testing Schedule

ELA

4-14 9:00 Beacock, Sullivan & 1:00 Neie, Regan
4-15 9:00 Richards, Little & 1:00 Handy, Sullivan
4-16 9:00 Neie, Regan & 1:00 Beacock, Handy
4-17 9:00 Richards, Little
4-21 9:00 Beacock, Sullivan & 1:00 Neie, Regan
4-22 9:00 Richards, Little & 1:00 Handy, Sullivan
4-23 9:00 Neie, Regan & 1:00 Beacock, Handy
4-24 9:00 Richards, Little
4-28—5-1 5th Grade **Science** & ELA Make-Ups

Math

5-5 9:00 Beacock, Sullivan & 1:00 Neie, Regan
5-6 9:00 Richards, Little & 1:00 Handy, Sullivan
5-7 9:00 Neie, Regan & 1:00 Beacock, Handy
5-8 9:00 Richards, Little
5-12 9:00 Beacock, Sullivan
5-13 9:00 Richards, Little

5-14 9:00 Neie, Regan

5-15 9:00 Handy

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Daylight Savings Edition

March 16, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

Thank you PTO, parent volunteers, choreographers, and costumers, and producer/director **Kirsten Neice** for an outstanding 2015 Branch Talent Show! I especially enjoyed the Roaring 20's theme, the emcee's comments (**Stefanie Stever**) and the incredible 6th grade dance finale (**Tahirih Ellison**). It was a night for all to shine! The initial feedback I received was that two shows, though administratively challenging, was great for the kids and many families. We will further evaluate this year's shows and begin planning for next year!

Speaking of the arts, Branch is finally launching ***El Corral***, our new literary magazine. GATE students will serve on the editorial board, Donna Verbeckmoes and I will serve as advisors, and any interested students may get involved as staff writers and reporters. Students are meeting on either Monday or Tuesday mornings at 8:00 a.m. beginning **Monday March 16**. A meeting scheduling is forthcoming. Students will learn to work with Publisher software and will help produce an annual school-wide magazine. Students may also have the opportunity to create their own **digital magazines**.

Teachers are holding elections for third trimester student council representative this week and next. We will convene our new group of representatives for the first time on Tuesday morning March 24th at 8:00 a.m. in the science lab (room 3

Ava Leininger, a fifth grader in Mrs. Handy's class will be Principal for a Day on April 3, 2015. She will be sharing her agenda "It's time for Branch to be more awesome." Ava will shortly be selecting her vice-principal and will be visiting classrooms, supervising recess activities, discussing budgets, and enjoying a "power lunch" in the AG village with her vice-principal and two other trusted aides. Ava will also announce "incentive" winners from the PTO's Jog-a-Thon to raise funds for a new computer lab at Branch Elementary. Go Ava...get it done!

Branch students recently completed the winter administration of the **Measures of Academic Performance** Test (MAP). MAP student progress results, sent home with report cards on March 12, show potential growth from the fall to the winter. Our school-wide goal for MAP testing was for a minimum of 50% of our students to reach their individual improvement goal on the MAP Test. I am extremely pleased to report that 63.4% of our students met their goal! This was the third highest percentage of all elementary schools in the district!

Speaking of testing, California's new state testing program (CAASPP) will begin April 14th and will run as long as May 2. Branch 3-6 grade students will each have approximately seven hours of SBAC testing to complete in either the computer lab or the library using Wi-Fi and Chrome Book computers. Please make an extra effort to get students to school during state testing. We will shortly publish a schedule with dates of each of the tests for participating classes. The state test is adaptive (when you answer a question correctly, you get a more difficult question, and when answer a question incorrectly, you get an easier one) and will prove challenging for *all* students. Back in 2002, when the now retired California Standards Test was only in its fourth year, Branch students were 61.5% proficient in ELA and 59.0% proficient in math. By 2013, we were at 75% and 82% proficient respectively. As we adjust to the new California standards and the new computer based assessments, it will likely take some time for us to reach those levels of proficiency again. The district will shortly send letters home to parents of students —further explaining the new state testing process. I am also always happy to meet with parents to discuss MAP or SBAC testing.

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Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 6

“School Safety & Character Ed” Edition

February 3, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

The School Site Council will devote time during its next two meetings evaluating and updating our mandated school safety plan. The plan is divided into four main categories: personal characteristics, physical environment, social environment, and culture. In addition, the plan must include a series of “compliance documents” which range from child abuse reporting policies and “emergency” plans to the district's dress code and rules and procedures on school discipline.

Following are some reminders on how to ensure our campus is both friendly and welcoming to parents—but also safe.

- Many parents rely on the school office to communicate important messages including when, how (or with whom) students will be traveling home. **Please do your best to communicate personal messages as early as possible—preferably before 2:00 p.m.** The last fifteen minutes of the school day can be very stressful, and it is often difficult to get these critical messages out with such little notice.
- Please keep your emergency care information updated. If you have moved or have new contact information, please call or visit the school office. Remember—during the school day, we are only able to release students to people who are listed on the emergency care card.
- If students desire to go home with a friend, or need to alter their usual means of transportation home, they must present a note signed by their parent or guardian before the end of lunch. We will then call to verify the veracity of the note.
- If parents call to change their child's usual travel arrangements, please be patient as we verify the identity of the parent caller.

- Please remember to sign-in and obtain a visitor's pass when coming on campus within the school day. Please report any suspicious behavior or unfamiliar visitors who are not registered in the office.
- When school is out, all students will wait in the grass area in front of the office for busses or personal rides. Generally speaking, students should not be playing on campus after 3:15 p.m. unless they are with their youth sports coach, a teacher, or a parent. Please contact me regarding possible exceptions.
- Please do not leave your children unattended on campus when school is not in session. Students are allowed on campus at 9:35 a.m. on Mondays and at 8:40 a.m. on all other school days. After school supervision officially ends at 3:30 p.m. Students who are unattended will be asked to sit in view of the office and wait for their ride. The end of the school day is often extremely busy in the office. Office staff often handle last minute request

MAP Testing Schedule

2/3 Handy 9, Sullivan11, Neie 1

2/4 Richards, Neie

2/5 Handy, Sullivan, Richards

2/6 Handy, Neie

2/10 Regan, Sullivan, Richards

2/11 Regan, Make-Ups

2/12 Regan, Sullivan, Beacock

Branch Elementary Broncos

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 5

"Talent Show Auditions" Edition

January 26, 2015

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

I wish all of you a happy new year! Students returned rested, relaxed, and ready to learn! I am so grateful to be part of an educational environment that promotes safety through respectful, honest, responsible, and kind behavior. Branch kids exhibit these traits!

We will reinforce our No Place for Hate pledge and our 5 B's for Branch Broncos at an assembly on Thursday February 5th Anne Louise Sterry, will be our special guest. Her inspirational songs and stories will remind students to be kind.

Talent Show "auditions" are every day after school this week (beginning January 26)! All paperwork must be complete before students audition. Talent show packets are available in the office. Ultimately, we will be doing two shows the night of March 10th (a 4:30 pm and a 6:00 pm). Parents will drop student performers at the artist entrance at 4:00 p.m. Dress rehearsal is from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on March 9th. Student will be to the Clark Center for the rehearsal will be provided. Parents will need to sign students out following both the dress rehearsal and the live shows.

In years past, we have ordered a generous supply of yearbooks for last minute shoppers. That will not be the case this year. Please *order your yearbook* in advance for \$10 dollars. The deadline for ordering at the ten dollar price is **February 2nd**. The price goes up to twelve dollars after February 2nd. The final day to order is **March 2nd**.

Congratulations to the *Branch Robotics team* for their strong performance in their first official competition on January 17th. We will shortly begin after school robotics “classes” for Branch students and will hold some intramural competitions or perhaps even some dual meets.

Map Testing Schedule

Please try to avoid signing students out on these dates.

1/27 Little 9 & Sullivan 11, Beacock 1

1/28 Little 9

1/29 Little 9 & Sullivan 11

1/30 Beacock 9

2/3 Handy 9, Sullivan11, Neie 1

2/4 Richards, Neie

2/5 Handy, Sullivan, Richards

2/6 Handy, Neie

2/10 Regan, Sullivan, Richards

2/11 Regan, Make-Ups

2/12 Regan, Sullivan, Beacock

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 4 “New Year Edition”

December 19, 2014

Dear Branch Parents/Guardians,

I wish all of you a happy holiday season and hope you enjoy some fun and relaxing family time over the winter break.

Thanks for supporting our comedy night at the Clark Center...I am very proud of our students' performances and will work hard to ensure we have a drama program next year.

Speaking of drama and the performing arts, the legendary Branch Talent Show is scheduled for March 9th and March 10th at 5:30 p.m. each night. Complete shows will be performed each night! Tickets are \$6.00 dollars and go on sale February 9, 2015. Packets outlining all details of how to get involved in the show went out on December 15. Students must audition after school the week beginning January 26. All paperwork must be completed before students audition. When auditioning, students will perform their proposed acts and must be in costume with props. If needed, music must be on a CD the show staff can keep. Remember--school rules apply (costumes/songs).

We plan to expand our after school enrichment opportunities. Possible classes beginning in January or shortly thereafter: GATE Olympics (class to prepare for district thinking & problem solving competition), Art, Robotics, and a Literary Magazine/Desktop Publishing/Writing class.

Speaking of robotics, Branch entered two teams in the district's competitive “scrimmage” on December 14. Our teams performed admirably—one team advanced to the “finals” and finished in third place, and our other team captured the “Judges Award” for sportsmanship and ingenuity.

The Science Advisory Committee has outdone itself in developing a science lab for all Branch students on Monarch butterflies. Branch is an official “way station” for a national butterfly project and a team from Cal Poly was recently here to observe and collect data. Despite the drought, we have a relatively strong batch of monarchs this year and students have enjoyed studying these beautiful creatures.

Finally, Mrs. Zbin, grade six, out since early in the school year, was granted an extension of her maternity leave. Mr. Rich Regan will be in place for the remainder of the year! I am happy for all concerned; this is a true “Win Win.”

Congrats to Branch’s Jessie Lopez; he won a new bike as part of the district’s fund your school contest. Thanks to all who turned in free and reduced lunch information! Have a wonderful new year...see you all on January 12, 2015!

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 3 “Conference Edition”

November 17, 2014

Dear Branch Parents,

I hope every Branch parent has had or will have an opportunity to conference with your child’s teacher this month. Teachers will be able to provide helpful feedback on academic progress, student attitude and effort, and general emotional well-being. Recommendations for remediation and enrichment may also be relayed. Some teachers are using a “Student Led Conference” format which is gaining popularity around the country. The conference format generally has students show parents some of their work and explain their grades and the progress they are making towards standards. Regardless of which type of conference you experience, I hope it will be a rewarding, encouraging experience.

Remember we are on minimum days November 18-21. School will be dismissed at 12:30 p.m. Both early and late-bird kinder classes will attend our full minimum day schedules.

On Thursday November 20, we are holding an assembly to promote our school’s new *No Place for Hate* program. The assemblies will run from 9:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. for K-2 and from 10:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for grades 3-6. Students will bring home promise sheets to review with parents. We will have promise sheets for students to sign at school. Following is the No Place for Hate Promise—juxtaposed with our B’s for Branch Broncos. The assembly will feature a skit from the student council, a “town-hall” discussion featuring Dr. Jennifer Pedrotti, Psychology professor at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and at least one “sing-a-long” song (“Don’t Laugh at Me” by Peter Yarrow).

No Place For Hate Promise	B’s for Branch Broncos
I promise to do my best to treat everyone fairly.	Be Fair
I promise to do my best to be kind to everyone—even if they are not like me.	Be Kind
If I see someone being hurt or bullied, I will tell a teacher.	Be Responsible
Everyone should be able to feel safe and happy at school.	Be Respectful
I want our school to be No Place for Hate.	Be Safe

Parking and pick-up have re-surfaced as major challenges. Last year we had approximately 30 fewer students; in addition, in prior school years, all kinder students were gone prior to 3:15 p.m. With limited parking options and a crowded lot, drivers must remain patient to ensure student safety. Any time 330 people converge on the same place at the same time, one

must expect a bit of a wait. One thing to remember, the lot is generally clear within 12 minutes of the end of school bell. Following are some tips that might make our parking lot more efficient.

1. Never block the entrance gate while waiting in the “drive through” lane. Wait until you can pull in against the curb.
2. Always pull as far forward as possible.
3. If using the “drive-through” lane, never abandon your car. The drive through lane is not a parking spot.
4. When possible—park and walk to pick up your child. Use the drive-through option on an “as needed” basis (for example ball practice starts at 3:45 p.m. at Paulding).
5. Remind your children to be efficiently waiting in the pick-up area. It holds up traffic when we have to track down a student who decides to go play in the sandbox. (I will remind the teachers to excuse students promptly).
6. Limit use of the “second lane” closest to School Road for exiting the campus. It likely exacerbates “bottlenecking” of traffic in front of room 10. Please follow directives from our custodian Darrin who usually controls the traffic flow in that area.
7. Come early to park in the lot or on School Road, but don’t necessarily come early to “park” in the drive-through lane—it is for loading and unloading only.
8. Stagger arrivals...for drive through, I don’t mind if you come a little later—the lot is much more fluid at 3:22 than it is at 3:16. Finally—be safe—drive carefully.

New Branch Elementary School Mission and Vision Statements

The mission of Branch Elementary School is 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.

Our Vision for Branch Elementary is to provide a safe, supportive, engaging environment where school, family, and community collaborate to:

- Provide a rigorous, relevant, student-centered, standards-based curriculum with a climate of high expectations for success.
- Develop an overarching science focus to enhance student understanding and application of scientific principles in all core content areas.
- Allow students to “own their learning” and to “construct” meaning for themselves.
- Encourage teachers to be coaches of “understanding” and facilitators of projects, authentic assessments, and learning experiences in real-world contexts.
- Inspire students to begin thinking about and preparing for college and the world of work.
- Embed 21st Century Skills including: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and problem solving into the core curriculum.

Calendar

November 17	Late Start Monday; Student Council: 9:00 a.m.
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November 18	Minimum Day; Student Council: 8:00 a.m.
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November 19	Minimum Day; No ILT; Student Council 8:00 a.m.
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November 20 Minimum Day; Facilities & Maintenance Meeting 8:00 a.m. (Paul/Darrin)

No Place for Hate Assemblies: K-3 9:15 to 9:45 a.m. and 4-6 from 10:15 to 11:00 a.m.

Please note: **Drama Practice is from 12:40 to 2:40 p.m.** because of the minimum day.

November 21 Minimum Day

November 24-28 Thanksgiving Recess

December 1 Holiday Basket Drive Begins

December 8-12 Book Faire

December 9 Branch Drama Show @ Clark Center 5:30 pm; Get tix from cast or @ Clark Center.

December 11 Story Night in the library (tentative for 6:00 p.m.)

PTO BROADCAST:

A huge thank you to Jennifer Neff, Jessica Sheridan and the auction committee for all their hard work in making this year's auction another successful event. Thanks goes out as well to all the volunteers for their help, as well as everyone who attended the auction. We couldn't have done it without you! The money raised will help continue to fund literacy tutors, our science lab, our computer aide and much more. Way to support our school! 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 Kristi Folkrod at 235-3395 or kristihoop@charter.net
- Parent teacher conferences will be Nov. 18-22. These days will be minimum days, and will also be when we put on our Fall staff appreciation luncheon. Kasey Zepeda is organizing the luncheon this year. We like to show our appreciation for all the wonderful Branch staff by providing lunch, refreshments and treats during this time so anyone willing to donate food or make a dish can contact Kasey at akagloz@gmail.com.
- We will be having a book fair Dec. 8-12. if you are interested in helping please contact Denise Peterson/Kasey Zepeda at 801-5005 or dnbpete@msn.com.
- The next PTO meeting is Nov. 21 at 9:00am in the library, we would love to see you there.
- The PTO budget meeting is Dec. 10 at 6:00pm, in the library.

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 2 “Auction Edition”

October 16, 2014

Dear Branch Parents,

Thank you so much for the diligent efforts on behalf of our famous (often imitated—never duplicated) **Branch Auction** on Saturday October 18, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the Portuguese Hall in Arroyo Grande.

Jennifer Neff and Jessica Sheridan, event coordinators have done a fabulous job overseeing this endeavor. The generosity of Branch staff and parents and the community at large is overwhelming! See you at the auction. Remember—it is not a formal affair, but the theme is “Black and White” so dress accordingly!

We have a **minimum day on October 31** (for staff development). School is out at 12:30 pm. October 31 is also Character Dress Up Day. We will hold a costume parade on the blacktop at 11:15 a.m. with a spooky musical soundtrack! Following the parade, the **family picnic** will occur from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. For those new to Branch, the family picnic is a long-standing tradition. Many working parents use their lunch hour to come to the campus, spread out a blanket or break out some beach chairs and dig into to a large picnic basket! It is a fun time to visit and celebrate the success of our students and our school!

Regarding dress up day, we encourage students to come as a favorite character from literature, film, the stage, or television. Following are some guidelines for student attire:

- 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.
- No masks. Masks pose both behavioral and student safety issues.
- Please we respectfully request no depictions of devils or satanic characters.
- No full face make-up please. Some make-up is permissible (for example--whiskers for a cat or a painted on mustache—maybe some light white streaks for a vampire or a not too gruesome zombie).
- 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.
- No toy weapons or dangerous accessories are permitted— (namely knives, canes, swords, guns, etc.).

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 students will likely 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.

Red Ribbon Week

Red Ribbon Week is October 27-31. We are encouraging students to be “drug free” by having themed dress up days all week

Monday October 27

Theme: “Join the Fight Against Drugs”

Dress: *Camouflage Day*...go camo!

Tuesday October 28

Theme: “Team Up Against Drugs”

Dress: *Team Jersey Day*...represent your favorite team!

Wednesday October 29

Theme: “Sock It To Drugs”

Dress: *Crazy Sock Day*...the more crazy and colorful the better!

Thursday October 30

Theme: "My Future is Great Without Drugs!"

Dress: *Career Clothing Day*...doctor, football player, businessperson, fireman, etc.

Friday October 31

Theme: "Show your character...Don't Use Drugs"

Dress: *Favorite Character Dress Up Day*...Dress as your favorite character from a book, play, or movie.

School Goals

Following are Branch's School Goals for 2014-15. They are aligned to district goals and also reflect the needs of the Branch learning community. The School Site Council is designing its school improvement plan based on these goals:

1. Branch instructors will demonstrate effective implementation of the new Common Core Standards in language arts and mathematics by: A) teaching to and communicating common core derived learner objectives; B) implementing instructional strategies and structures to help ensure mastery of common core standards; C) designing units of study that embed college and career readiness and 21st Century Skills; and D) Leading students to conceptual understanding of common core standards in mathematics and language arts. (See District Goals 2, 3, 6).
2. Branch Elementary School will develop a systematic, data-driven, school-wide intervention plan to meet the needs of all at-risk learners including foster kids, English Language Learners, and students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. (See District Goal 1)
3. Students will begin the ongoing process of mastering 21st Century Skills, particularly in the area of critical thinking, communication, and collaboration by adjusting instructional strategies and structures to A) promote conceptual understanding, B) allow students to "own their learning" and "construct" meaning and C) apply (or transfer) understanding and new meaning in novel situations. (See District Goal 3)
4. Branch Elementary School will increase communication and parental involvement in our school community by improving our outreach to and communication with parents, students, guardians, and community members. (See District Goal 7)

Communication

Please check out our new Branch Website. While we are still developing the content, the calendar is active and is being updated weekly. Our Auto-Dialer, Facebook and Twitter are also great avenues for staying in touch. 93% of respondents said they strongly agree or agree that they are kept well-informed about what is happening at Branch School. While that is a strong showing, we are always looking for ways to improve!

Kids on Campus

Branch Elementary should be an inviting place for parents and their children. Please remember to sign in when you visit; however, keep an eye on your preschoolers. Please do not leave them unattended!

MAP Testing Info Night

Branch and all other elementary and middle schools in the district at grades 3-8 are implementing a new testing program to inform subsequent instruction and help us more effectively gauge learner progress. The Measures of Academic Progress Test (MAP), taken online, generates much data and a variety of reports. If parents are interested in learning more about this test there is a parent meeting on October 29 at 7:30 p.m. in the AGHS multi-purpose room. We plan to utilize one or more of these reports during parent conferences in November.

Branch Pumpkin Patch

Please continue to support the pumpkin patch—open daily 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and 10-5 on weekends!

HOOFPRIENTS volume 2 issue 1

September 12, 2014

Dear Branch Parents and Guardians,

We are off to a great start; thank you for supporting our Back to School Night on September 4th! Following are topics that may be of interest to you.

Pick-up, Drop off and Parking lot: Please continue to be careful when entering the parking lot area. I appreciate those who park (either in the lot or on the street) and walk in to pick up kids. For those using the “drive through” method, please never abandon your car and always be alert to push forward as far as possible. I am supervising out front until at least 3:30 p.m. For those with older kids and who are frustrated by the heavy traffic and lack of parking spaces between 3:10 p.m. and 3:20 p.m., I suggest arriving at 3:20 p.m. or 3:25 p.m. The lot is fairly clear by 3:25 pm, and I am on supervision duty until 3:30 p.m. By staggering our arrival times, our pick-ups will be even more efficient.

Late Start Mondays: Late Start Mondays are occurring district-wide. Granted, they are very hard on parents, but they provide teachers with valuable time for professional growth and development. If any parents are interested in attending some of our staff trainings, let me know!

Absence Awareness Month: September is absence awareness month. Please remember that the only legal excuses for missing school are medical and bereavement. Personal days for family trips or to help deal with emergencies are “unexcused.” The district does not receive its per pupil funding from the state when students are absent. More importantly, when students miss school, they miss out. It is difficult, especially in subjects like mathematics to get “caught up” when you have missing mastery of key concepts. Please excuse *all* absences by phone, or in person. We also have a new option for excusing absences (see Absent Note Icon).

Absent Note Icon: On the new Branch web page, you will see a large section labeled “Absent Note Icon.” If you click on this icon, you will have the opportunity to send an e-mail to the site secretary and clear your child’s absence.

Branch--Beyond the Curriculum: September 24, 2014, at 6:30 p.m., we will hold a Branch Parent Information Night either in the library or the MPR. The following topics will be covered: 1) School Achievement--especially for at-risk students. 2) The Gifted and Talented Education program with separate presentations on Destination Imagination, the Maker’s Movement, and our developing robotics program. (These programs are not exclusively for GATE students--all students will have the opportunity to participate if at all possible. We may also have information about our drama production to be performed in the Clark Center in early December. 3) Student Council & Lunch Intramural Sports.

We are fortunate to have a volunteer group on campus (Science Advisory Committee) that will oversee our science lab experiences (which began September 9--see photos on Branch Facebook page). We also have a fourth and fifth grade music appreciation program and band for students in grades five and six.

Reduced Lunch Applications: Please turn in free and reduced lunch applications (regardless if you are eligible or not). The district will shortly be launching a contest, and students throughout the district can win wonderful prizes including bicycles! If the form asks for information you are not comfortable providing, leave

that section blank. Please know that these forms are confidential; nobody see a list of free and reduced lunch kids--except a few key district employees.

MAP Testing: Our students are taking an on-line assessment called “Measures of Academic Progress” (MAP), and it is a well-respected, long-standing, adaptive test that will provide your child’s teacher with key data on areas of relative strength and weakness in relation to California’s Common Core Standards. Armed with this data, we will target students for both extra help and enrichment. More info will be forthcoming on results and parent reports.

Calendar

- September 9 Assembly for grades 1-6 on Acceptance and the world’s sport...Soccer
- September 9 MAP Testing begins for grades 3-6.
- September 11 Genevieve’s fundraiser concludes...sell, sell sell!
- September 12 No Place for Hate Parent Committee @ 8:40 a.m. in staff lounge.
- September 15 School Picture Day & Drama Assembly
- September 19 Principal’s Breakfast for K-3 at 7:45 a.m. @ McClintock’s in the AG
Village. Students are nominated by the teachers for demonstrating the 4 B’s for Branch
Broncos: Be Respectful, Be Honest, Be Responsible and Be Kind.
- September 23 Drama Auditions
- September 24 Parent Information Night: Beyond the Curriculum at 6:30 p.m.
- September 24 Help Branch Elementary by volunteering to participate in the **PTO**
Pumpkin Picking “Party” at the Tally Farms Pumpkin Patch site. Gather pumpkins
to sell at the Harvest Festival **PTO** booth!
- September 25-26 Volunteer for or visit the Branch booth at the Arroyo Grande Harvest Festival.
- October 3 CELDT Testing for English Learners. Test well and be reclassified
“Fluent English Proficient!”
- October 4, 5 Branch Pumpkin Patch Open at Talley Farms. Families are needed to
volunteer! Contact **PTO**.
- October 9 Hearing Screening
- October 16 Multi-Media Anti-Bullying Assembly 1:30--2:15 (K-3) and 2:30--
3:15 (4-6)
- October 18 **PTO** Branch Auction @ Portuguese Hall!

While we work to develop our new web page, please also follow Branch activities on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BranchSchool) and Twitter (@BranchBroncos).

There is a link to our Facebook page on the web page. Branch Web page:

<https://sites.google.com/a/lmusds.org/branch/home>

I try to keep both social media outlets filled with pictures and examples of what is going on in Branch classrooms. If you do not want your child's picture on Facebook, the Branch webpage or Twitter, please notify the Branch office.