

Language Academy Expanding Next Year to Transitional Kindergarten

Palm Springs Unified School District's Language Academy at Vista Del Monte Elementary is expanding to include Transitional Kindergarten students in the 2020-21 school year.

The Dual Immersion program offers both English and Spanish-speaking students the opportunity to learn to read, write and communicate proficiently in both English and Spanish. It began in 2015-2016 with kindergarteners, and there are currently about 200 students in the program kindergarten through fourth grade.

"The Language Academy offers exciting, enriching and challenging educational opportunities," said PSUSD English Learner Programs Coordinator Mandy Gonzales. "Students will have the biliteracy skills and cross-cultural competencies needed to compete and be successful in our multicultural 21st century society and global economy. Dual language immersion programs have proven to be very successful with English and Spanish-speaking children in California for more than 35 years. Research shows impressive development of both second language fluency and academic achievement in both languages that, by the end of fifth grade, typically surpasses the achievement of students in English-only instructional programs."

Enrollment is under way for incoming kindergarten and transitional kindergarten students for the sixth year of the program, and information sessions are scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 27, and Tuesday, March 6 at 5:00 p.m. in the multipurpose room at Vista del Monte Elementary at 2744 N. Via Miraleste, Palm Springs, and Saturday, March 7 at 9:30 a.m. in the PSUSD Board Room, 150 District Drive, Palm Springs. Students enter the program in kindergarten – and new this year, transitional kindergarten -- and the program is currently serving students in kindergarten through fourth grade, with fifth grade being added in the 2020-21 school year. Parents of incoming kindergarten or transitional kindergarten students are required to attend one of the orientation meetings and can pick up an enrollment packet at that time. Limited transportation for incoming students outside of Palm Springs will be provided.

Expansion of the program to other school sites will be explored during the 2020-21 school year.

For more information on the Language Academy at Vista del Monte, call (760) 416-6080.

PSUSD Administrators to Receive Region Honors

Four Palm Springs Unified School District administrators have been named the tops in their categories in the region after being selected as District nominees by the Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA).

Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Tony Signoret and Assistant Supt. of Business Services Dr. Brian Murray will be honored by Region XIX of the Association of California School Association (ACSA) at the organization's Spring Celebration on April 22 in Riverside. Additionally,



From left, Assistant Supt. of Business Services Dr. Brian Murray, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Tony Signoret and Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. Mike Swize.

Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. Mike Swize is being honored as the Region's nominee for the Marcus Foster Award of Excellence, which is an ACSA state-level award selected from Region nominees across the state and announced later this spring. The Marcus Foster Award is named in memory of former Oakland Unified Superintendent Marcus Foster and comes with a \$5,000 grant for designated high school senior scholarships

PSLA is ACSA's PSUSD charter, comprised of the District's administrators and managers, who nominated members to represent PSLA at the region level. Other administrators nominated in their respective categories included: Desert Hot Springs High Principal Caroline Cota, Nellie N. Coffman Middle School Principal Dr. Karen Dimick, Bella Vista Elementary Principal Lisa Arseo, Raymond Cree Middle Assistant Principal Sue Hilsabeck, Bubbling Wells Elementary Assistant Principal Elizabeth Gomez, Director of Risk Management Renee Brunelle, Executive Assistant Brenda Williams, and Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Simone Kovats. Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator Barbara Anglin was selected as the District's nominee for the Valuing Diversity Award.

District Hosts First Robotics Tournament on March 10

Teams of students from PSUSD's five middle schools along with four elementary schools will participate in the District's first Robotics Tournament on Tuesday, March 10, at the District Service Center from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A total of about 140 students from eight middle school teams and 20 elementary teams from Bubbling Wells, Landau, Julius Corsini and Rancho Mirage Elementary schools will compete for top honors after working in after-school clubs for the past few months to hone their coding skills using robots to solve problems. The elementary students use Dash and Dot robotics with a curriculum by Wonderworks, and middle school students use Lego Mindstorm Robotics and code the robots with EV3 software.

The Robotics program began this year with nearly \$140,000 in funding secured by donations raised through the Foundation for PSUSD. Honors will be awarded to the highest scoring team from elementary and middle school as well as the overall school team at both the elementary and middle school. The two first place teams will receive first place medals, and the two first place schools will be presented with a trophy. Second and third place medals will also be presented, and all participants will receive team

shirts and lunch hosted by the Foundation.

In preparation for the tournament, a team from Rancho Mirage Elementary visited the Mizell Senior Center last month to demo Dash robotics and discuss coding with demo attendees. The March 10 tournament is open to the public, and the event will be livestreamed including interviews with school and site administrators about the event.

Following this first in-district tournament, the plan is to hold a robotics tournament between all three Coachella Valley school districts during the 2020-21 school year.



District Digest



Every Student Succeeding: The Palm Springs Leadership Association (PSLA), comprised of the District's administrators and managers, honored one student from each of PSUSD's schools at the annual Every Student Succeeding Awards ceremony held at Cathedral City High School earlier this month. Each school principal (or designee) nominated a student who has overcome obstacles to succeed in school. Cathedral City High's honoree, Ernie Cordero (who was not able to attend the ceremony) was selected as PSUSD's nominee at the region level for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Region XIX Every Student Succeeding scholarship award. The winner will be announced later this spring. The ceremony opened with posting of the colors by CCHS Airforce Junior ROTC, under the direction of Master Sergeant Harvey Philson and the singing of the National Anthem by CCHS choir soloist Yareli Lopez, under the direction of May LeRoy. CCHS' Ballet Folklorico closed out the evening following the awards presentation. Pictured are the honorees along with Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Board of Education members, PSLA officers and Peter Cahstrom from Congressman Dr. Raul Ruiz' office.



Top Spellers: After 11 rounds of competition, Cielo Vista Charter 8th grader Dominic Carrillo correctly spelled the word "syllabus" to emerge the winner in PSUSD's Spelling Bee of Champions this morning at Desert Hot Springs High School. Cielo Vista Charter 7th grader Luke Jin and Nellie N. Coffman Middle 8th grader Antonio Maldonado Espino were named runner-ups after both missed their word in the final round of competition. Dominic will represent PSUSD in the Riverside County Bee in March in Moreno Valley. Pictured with the winners are Board of Education President John Gerardi, second from right, and Executive Director of Student Learning Mike Walbridge.

Adopting Families At Holidays: Cathedral City High School's Annual Adopt-A-Family program concluded with the delivery of food and gift items to 23 families, bringing the total of local families served to more than 1,070 since the program's inception in 1991. Students from 25 homeroom classes along with school clubs and campus offices collected donations for two weeks and then loaded trucks and delivered the gifts a few days before winter break.



Great Book Giveaway: Members of the Palm Springs Noon Rotary Club visited Cahuilla Elementary School, their adopted school, just before winter break, to present each student with two brand new books during their annual "Great Book Giveaway," which they have done for the past several year. Members of the school's Early Interact Club, sponsored by the Noon Rotary Club, put Rotary stickers in each of the books.



Board Tours School Sites: The Board of Education along with members of Cabinet and elementary and secondary directors recently visited three school sites to learn more about programs and see teachers and students in action during the school day. The tour began a visit to Coyote Run Early Childhood Education before heading over to Nellie N. Coffman Middle School, right, and then Rancho Mirage High. The morning culminated with a gourmet lunch prepared and served by students in Rancho Mirage High's Culinary Academy of Food Exploration (CAFÉ), left.

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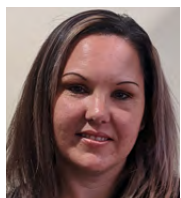


Read to Me! Any Age! Any Stage!: Palm Springs Unified School District kicked off its Early Literacy Initiative “Read to Me! Any Age! Any Stage!” at Bubbling Wells Elementary last month with student assemblies, at which Principal Jennifer Geyer read aloud to students, and each child chose an age-appropriate book and bookmark to take home and were challenged to read 40 books before the end of the school day. Similar kick-off activities will be held at each of the District’s elementary schools during February and March as part of the \$40,000 grant PSUSD received from Riverside County Office of Education as one of eight county districts chosen for the initiative. Pictured are some of the members of the Elementary Literacy Committee, led by PSUSD Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Simone Kovats, fifth from left; with RCOE’s Dr. Felicia Cruz-Delgado, third from left; and Bubbling Wells Elementary Principal Jennifer Geyer, fourth from left.



Nutrition Services Job Shadow: Some students from Rancho Mirage High School’s Culinary Academy of Food Exploration (CAFÉ) recently spent a morning with members of the PSUSD Nutrition Services team in the District Office central kitchen learning about the components of preparing for over 25,000 breakfast, lunch and supper meals per day and assisting staff members with some of the tasks.

PSUSD Staff Members Selected as District Employees of the Year



Jennifer Mattocks



Bernie Marez



Julio Omier



Eduardo Rivera



Derrick Clinton



Mark Butzko

Six Palm Springs Unified School District staff members have been selected as the District's Employees of the Year. The winners were selected by last year's honorees from nominations submitted by staff and were honored by the Board of Education at its meeting this week.

The District's Classified Administrator of the Year is the District's Wellness and Marketing Coordinator, Jennifer Mattocks, who is a semi-finalist for Riverside County honors. Mattocks, who joined PSUSD in 2015, provides nutrition and fitness education for students throughout the District as well as manages menus for District meal programs and ensures that the District's Wellness Policy is adhered to and meets all state and federal guidelines.

"Her passion for promoting health and nutrition has helped our students and staff in understanding the importance of nutrition, where our food comes from and how it is prepared," wrote Director of Nutritional Services Stephanie Bruce in her nomination letter. "I can't imagine our team without Jennifer. She is an asset to our vision and mission and is well deserving of being Riverside County's choice for Classified Administrator of the Year."

This year's Principal of the Year is Raymond Cree Middle School Principal Bernie Marez. With 21 years in education, Marez has been Cree's principal since he came to PSUSD four years ago.

PSUSD's Certificated Administrator of the Year is Rancho Mirage High School Assistant Principal Julio Omier, who has been in his current post since 2014 and previously served as a middle school assistant principal for eight years. He has been an educator for 20 years.

Eduardo Rivera is the District's Site Support Person of the Year. He has been a District Instructional Technology Specialist for the past six years and was a math teacher at Cathedral City High for five years.

PSUSD's Classified Staff Member of the Year is Information Technology Specialist Derrick Clinton, who has been with the ETIS department for six years.

Nellie N. Coffman Middle School Counselor Mark Butzko is this year's School Counselor of the Year. With 22 years in education, this is Butzko's sixth year as a counselor.

Family Engagement Center Hosts 'PSUSD Excellence' Event March 28

Palm Springs Unified School District's Family Engagement Center hosts the "PSUSD Excellence Award Ceremony" on Saturday, March 28 from 3 to 6 p.m. at Cathedral City High School in the gymnasium.

"The event will celebrate everything that PSUSD has to offer and recognize all of the excellent contributions made by those in the PSUSD Family, including students, parents, teachers and community members,"

said Family Engagement Coordinator Ruby Rivera.

The celebration will include awards presented to site and District Teachers of the Year, top 10 seniors from each high school, a "Parent of the Year Award" from each school site and awards to PSUSD community partners. Dinner and child care will be provided. Event is free and open to all. Cathedral City High is located at 69250 Dinah Shore Drive.

The event begins with a series of interactive learning centers from 3 to 4 p.m., awards at 4 p.m. and dinner and prizes from 5:30 to 6 p.m. There will also be student performances, and Spanish translation will be provided.

For more information, call (760) 416-1374 or (760) 894-4072 or visit familycenter.psusd.us.

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

'Public Charge' Rule Does Not Impact Public School Education



You may be aware of the recent United States Supreme Court decision which states that the federal government can now enforce the "public charge" rule, which pertains to the application of visas or permanent residency for some of our immigrants. I wanted to take the time to clear up some misconceptions around this ruling relative to our students and families and our role as a public school system.

The Public Charge rule makes application for permanent residency or earning of a visa more difficult for those who are receiving government aid such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), housing assistance and/or Medicaid. Public education, however, is NOT a public benefit covered by the rule. Attending any public school in the United States will NOT impact students' or family members' immigration status.

What is crucial for our families to know is that we are not in the business of immigration or anything related to it. We are here to educate ALL of our students, and we do not ask questions about immigration status. What we do ask is that each of our students attends school each and every day possible, because that is the only way we can deliver the instruction and education that every single one of our students deserve.

Further, the Public Charge rule generally does not apply to any of the school nutrition programs delivered by public schools. These programs (such as The National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program) are not considered public benefits that could impact anyone's immigration status. You might be aware that PSUSD now serves FREE meals to ALL students, regardless of economic status. That has not changed. Hungry children cannot learn, and our Board of Education and administration are committed to making sure that we do everything we can to ensure that all of our children have access to a healthy breakfast, lunch (and even supper on some of our campuses) each school day.

The changes to the Public Charge rule may be scary or overwhelming for some of our families, and we understand that. We hope that knowing that these changes in no way affect your rights and access to a free public education here in Palm Springs Unified School or in any school district in California helps alleviate some of the apprehension. Here in the Coachella Valley, the TODEC Legal Center in Coachella is also available to answer all of your questions and provide guidance and resources. The phone number is (760) 698-8787 and the website is todec.org.

Thank you for making sure that your children attend school each and every day and for your continued support and partnership in helping us to provide the best education possible for all of our students.

Sincerely,

Sandra Lyon, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools