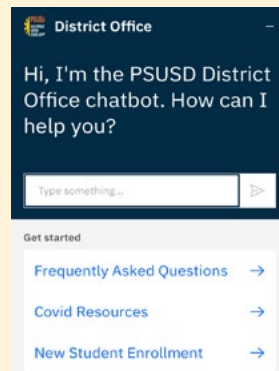


PSUSD Website Has New Chat Option for Quick, Easy Responses

Searching a large agency's website for answers to questions can be a daunting task. Quite often the information sought is somewhere on the website, but navigating through sections and pages within sections can be overwhelming.

Palm Springs Unified School District's website is now more user friendly with the addition of a new technology that allows visitors to connect with an Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot that can answer questions without having to search through numerous sections of the site. While websites traditionally employ standard search options that look at keywords that return all pages with any of the keywords without providing specific answers, the AI chatbot can provide special answers and determine what information is relevant.

"(The AI chatbot) does the work of sorting and returning the best results for you," said Teddy Daiber, founder and CEO of Otto Technologies. "Additionally, the chatbots use analytics and machine learning to train on each question asked, which makes them better over time."



Daiber's product, Otto Chatbot, became available this past spring, and PSUSD is one of the early adopters of the new program. Currently the District's website has individual AI chatbots on the

Homepage as well as under individual departments including Technology, Human Resources, Student Support Services and Business Services. Within the coming weeks, Special Education, Educational Services and Early Childhood Education will have chatbots on those department website pages as well.

"Staff and families are very excited about the technology making their lives easier," said Daiber. "For staff, we have heard about noticeable reductions in calls and emails related to information that can be found on the website. We have also heard that the chatbots are making it easier for departments to update and maintain critical information that should be available

on the website. Families have been really happy to have a self-service option that makes it easier for them to find information on the website. It saves term looking or waiting for answers, especially outside normal business hours."

Brian Guzman, PSUSD's acting webmaster, agreed that the new chatbots have been very well received.

"Our new Chatbot allows for better engagement and access to information on the PSUSD website," said Guzman. "Our website covers many pages of information for several departments, and our new feature is customizable to best present that information in a quick and neat manner. The analytics so far show that the website/chatbot engagement has increased week over week, which has resulted in a reduction of the number of general phone call inquiries to the District Office."

Daiber said he is relying on PSUSD along with a few other early adopters to help build out the technology through feedback and testing of new features. He plans to expand significantly throughout the rest of this year and beyond.

"The most exciting part about the technology is the flexibility," Daiber noted. "We've already discovered new use cases that we plan on turning into their own separate products. Our goal is to help our partners find new and easy ways to provide the best customer service possible. We focus on providing customer service solutions for specific use cases, instead of a one-size-fits all approach."

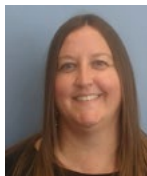
New Administrators Join Leadership Team

The Palm Springs Unified School District recently approved the appointment of existing and new District staff members to Leadership Team positions.

PSUSD Coordinator of English Learners **Mandy Gonzales** is the new Principal at Della S. Lindley Elementary School. A PSUSD graduate, Gonzales began her teaching career in the district in 2000 and has also served as a site coach and Teacher on Special Assignment before becoming Coordinator of the English Learner program in 2018.

Palm Springs High Principal **Brian Hendra** has been named Director of Certificated Human Resources: Recruitment Retention and Leadership. Hendra joined PSUSD in 2012 as Palm Springs High assistant principal and served as principal of Mount San Jacinto for one year before returning to Palm Springs High as principal in 2018. He will continue as Palm Springs High principal in addition to his new post until a new principal is named within the next couple of months.

James Workman Middle School Principal **Brad Sauer** is the district's new Director of Certificated Human Resources: Labor



Mandy Gonzales



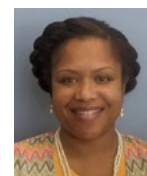
Brian Hendra



Brad Sauer



David Brashear



Kalista Combs



Jezebelle Cancino



Gustavo Ochoa



Erika Barragan

Relations. His new post will include in addition to standard HR responsibilities, emphasis on the oversight, implementation and compliance of the collective bargaining agreement and maintenance of positive labor relations. He will also continue as Workman's principal until a new principal is named within the next couple of months.

David Brashear is PSUSD's new Director of State and Federal Programs. Brashear has over 30 years of experience in education as a teacher, principal, coordinator, and director. He joins PSUSD from UC Berkeley School of Education, where he served as a coordinator, supporting several Bay Area counties with grant funding connected to leadership and coaching programs.

Kalista Combs is the district's new Coordinator for Career and Technical Education. Combs, who holds a California Career and Technical Education Credential in Education, Child Development and Family Services; Business and Finance; Health Science and Medical Technology; and Marketing, Sales

and Services; has joined PSUSD from the Amazon Logistics and Business Management Program for the San Bernardino City School District, where she served as Lead Teacher.

Raymond Cree Middle

School counselor **Gustavo Ochoa** was named as a new Assistant Principal at Nellie N. Coffman Middle School. During his tenure at Cree for the past seven years he served in various leadership roles including administrator designee and summer school principal.

Jezebelle Cancino has joined PSUSD as its Coordinator of Wellness and Marketing. Her experience includes designing meals based on the nutrition care process, recipe and ingredient forecasting and determining food costs as well as providing training on cafeteria safety protocols and preparing informational material on healthy living.

Erika Barragan is the Executive Assistant to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mike Swize. Prior to joining PSUSD over the summer, Barragan served as Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director and Governing Board for the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE).



Sites Welcome Back Students in Person:

After more than a year in full distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic followed by a hybrid program where some students returned two morning a week in person, all PSUSD campuses to full in-person instruction with the start of the 2021-22 school year on Aug. 4. Banners, signs, balloons, school mascots and other regalia welcomed students back to their sites including here at Cahuilla Elementary.



MTU Receives Surprise \$10K Grant: The Berger Foundation and KESQ News Channel 3 recently surprised PSUSD's Musical Theatre University (MTU) with a \$10,000 check from the Coachella Valley Spotlight Grant. Pictured above are, from left, KESQ General Manager Jerry Upham, PSUSD Foundation Director Ellen Goodman and MTU Founder and Artistic Director David Green.

District Digest



New Student Board Members Take Oath of Office: Board of Education member Karen Cornett, right, recently administered the oath of office to this year's Student Board of Education members. Pictured with Cornett at left are student board members Ramon Salado, Keona Corona, Stephanie Romero and Sophia Gonzales. Missing from photo is student board member Christopher Vega.



Students, Staff Engage in Spirit Week: It was a week filled with pride and fun as PSUSD students and staff members embraced this fall's "Spirit Week" as part of Attendance Awareness Month in September. Activities included Door Decorating, Sunglasses Day, Mix It Up at Lunch, Mismatch Day and School Pride Day. Trophies were awarded to Raymond Cree Middle School, right, for having the highest participation rate at the middle school level and Bella Vista Elementary, left, for having the highest participation of any district school.





COVID-19 Clinics Continue:

PSUSD continues with COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics during the months of November, December and January. The next one will be on Nov. 20 at the PSUSD District Service Center at 150 District Center Drive, Palm Springs. Over the past several months, PSUSD has co-hosted over 55 vaccine clinics for COVID-19 (and now both COVID-19 and flu) with community partners. As of the middle of October nearly 2,300 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered along with nearly 250 flu vaccines.

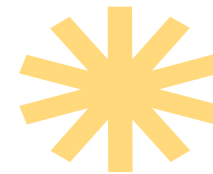
PSUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION

Timothy S. Wood, President • **Madonna Gerrell**, Clerk
Karen Cornett • **Sergio Espericueta** • **John Gerardi**

PSUSD ADMINISTRATION

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 Brian Murray, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Business Services*
 Tony Signoret, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources*

This Palm Springs Unified School District report to the community is published bimonthly by the Palm Springs Unified School District.
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Phone: (760) 883-2701 • *Email:* jboiko@psusd.us • *Website:* www.psusd.us



Community Liaisons Assemble Clothing Packages:

PSUSD Community Liaisons assembled about 800 packages of clothing, shoes and hygiene supplies for students in need at seven district elementary schools thanks to donations from Assistance League Coachella Valley's annual Operation School Bell program. Packages will soon be assembled for students in need at PSUSD's remaining elementary schools.



Cougar Den Dedicated:

District, Board of Education and Nellie N. Coffman Middle School leaders recently dedicated the new Cougar Den Innovation Center which includes spaces for coding, eSports, robotics, a sound booth and more.



Six Elementary Schools Participate in Walk to School Day:

Students and staff members from Bella Vista, Bubbling Wells, Cabot Yerxa, Cathedral City Elementary, Julius Corsini and Two Bunch Palms Elementary Schools participated in International Walk to School Day earlier this month. Pictured at right, Cabot Yerxa Elementary Assistant Principal Jody Diaz rallies the group prior to their walk to school.

PSUSD's Equity Conference Set for Dec. 2

Palm Springs Unified School District's Family Engagement Center will host the district's second Equity Community Conference "Putting Equity into Action" on Saturday, Dec. 4 from 2 to 5 p.m. Held in a virtual platform, the event will offer participants the opportunity to discuss the experiences of historically underrepresented students and ways all can work toward more equitable outcomes. Presenters will include PSUSD staff and community partners along with contributions from parents and students.

"Anyone interested in learning more about topics related to equity is welcome to join us," said Family Engagement Coordinator Ruby Rivera. "Educators, families, students and community members can all add value to the conversations that will be had during the conference and are invited to participate."

Topics to be addressed include Understanding our Bias, Colorism, Supporting African American students in PSUSD, Supporting LGBTQ students and Trauma Informed Care. The conference Zoom link will be available closer to the event date and can be found on the Family Engagement Center page of the PSUSD website: <https://www.psusd.us/Domain/36> or on District social media platforms.

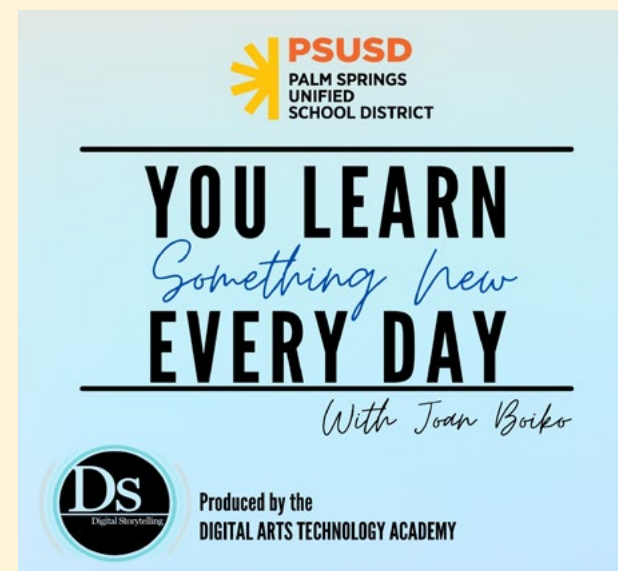
For more information, call (760) 416-1374 or (760) 894-4072 or email familycenter@psusd.us.

'You Learn Something New' Has New Radio Home

Palm Springs Unified School District's "You Learn Something New Every Day" has a new radio home. The weekly program, which has been running as both a 30-minute radio show and podcast for the past several years, now airs as a monthly segment as part of Alpha Media's "Community Round Up" on the second Sunday of each month at 6:15 a.m. on six local radio stations. The weekly 30-minute show continues on its podcast platform and is free to all who would like to download individual shows and/or subscribe to receive the new podcasts each week here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/you-learn-something-new-every-day/id983829745>.

Produced by Digital Arts Technology Academy (DATA) interns Emely Martin and Brianna Meza and hosted by PSUSD Coordinator of Communications and Community Outreach Joan Boiko, "You Learn Something New Every Day" highlights District people, programs, activities and events with a new podcast each week. A portion of one show per month airs at 6:15 a.m. on KPSI Mix 100.5 FM, KDGL Eagle 106.9 FM, KDES The Bull 98.5 FM, KCLB The Rock 93.7 FN, KKUU U-92.7 FM and KDES-HD2 MOD 107.3 FM on the second Sunday of each month.

For more information on "You Learn Something New Every Day," email jboiko@psusd.us or call (760) 883-2701, ext. 2.



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

'Mornings with Mike' to Launch in Coming Weeks



As Palm Springs Unified School District's new Superintendent of Schools, it is my goal to connect with as many of our families and community members as possible to engage in two-way dialog about current issues affecting our schools and students and obtain input and feedback from our valued collaborators who help us succeed in our quest for academic, social, and emotional success for all our students.

To that end, I am pleased to share that we are going to launch a series of upcoming gatherings called "Mornings with Mike" to be held at local coffee shops in the various sections of our district during this school year. We don't have dates or details yet, but our preliminary plan is to invite anyone who would like to stop by

to chat over a cup of coffee or whatever beverage or breakfast you'd like to purchase. I will spend a few minutes providing some updated information on topics of general interest or that have generated questions or concerns, and then I will open it up to questions from any attendees. If I can't answer any questions on the spot, I promise to get the answers to you in a timely fashion. We are planning on holding one "Mornings with Mike" per month from 7 to 8:30 a.m. and will rotate the locations within Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Springs, and Desert Hot Springs. You can feel free to stop by for a few minutes or stay the whole time. It would be my honor and pleasure to meet as many of you as possible.

Details will be coming soon via Auto Dialer, Peachjar and our social media platforms. In the meantime, if you have a topic you would like to have addressed, please email jboiko@psusd.us, and we will get you an answer or talk about it at our first "Mornings with Mike."

Speaking of keeping in touch and connecting with constituents, it was truly gratifying

for our Board of Education and Cabinet members to spend an hour with many of our elected officials at the local, state, and national level during our recent Legislative Update gathering. What a privilege it was for all of us to spend the time with our elected officials to share what is happening in our District and be able to express our gratitude for their continued support of our students, staff, and families. We look forward to continuing our smaller meetings with representatives from our cities, county, state, and United States Congress to keep working together to provide the best services possible for our communities.

This is the first message in a very long time that didn't begin with information about COVID-19. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that the pandemic is still with us. At the same time, if you're like most of the people I know, you are past exhausted by the laser focus on COVID-19 every day. So, all I want to do at this point is to tell you that we continue to have the same safety protocols as we did when we started the school year in an effort keep our students and staff as safe as possible. The efforts are working as our daily case rates continue to decline every week. The hope is that before long we won't have any positive cases in or around us, and we can continue toward additional traditional activities without worrying about the risk level. I thank you all for your continued patience and cooperation and ask that you hang in with us just awhile longer until our county and state health officials give us the green light to lighten up the restrictions.

Sincerely,

Mike Swize, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools