

Family STEMCon Event Nov.10

Palm Springs Unified School District families are invited to experience science, technology, engineering and mathematics hands-on education and fun at the Family Engagement Center's Second Annual STEMCon event on Saturday, Nov. 10 at Raymond Cree Middle School.

From 2 to 6 p.m., families can engage in interactive stations and workshops that will provide opportunities to create and learn. Dinner and child care are also provided – all free of charge. Raymond Cree Middle School is located at 1011 Vista Chino Drive, Palm Springs. Reservations for the event are not required.

"Last year we held separate workshops for parents and students but found that parents really wanted to interact with their children, especially in the makerspace rooms," said PSUSD Family Engagement Coordinator Ruby Rivera. "This year we've made every workshop for the whole family and expanded time for everyone to play, tinker and create in a



makerspace setting. We see a great need and interest among families to continue hosting STEMCon and make it an annual District event."

Workshop and station topics – all in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) – include: cardiovascular health and heart dissection, internet safety, coding, thermal energy, hot air balloons, building science toys to demonstrate scientific principles, family math games, circuits, robotics and hands-on experiments. Eleven District teachers will be facilitating the activities.

"Our students are participating in STEM-related activities throughout their school day, and we want to make sure that our parents also appreciate the value of STEM learning," said Rivera. "Parents will leave with a new-found appreciation for 21st century learning and ideas to continue this learning at home. Students will also feel proud of their parents for choosing to be lifelong learners."

The Family Engagement Center will also host a family conference on April 6 at Painted Hill Middle School in Desert Hot Springs. Called "Pride and Purpose," the event is a celebration and showcase of PSUSD's departments, programs, teachers, students and parents. The Family Engagement Center also hosts smaller monthly events at the Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs locations as well as other school sites. For a full schedule of upcoming family events, as well as parent workshops on a wide array of topics, visit <https://www.psusd.us/familycenter> or call (760) 416-1374.

PSUSD to Receive State Recognition for "Cyber Champions" Program

The Palm Springs Unified School District has been selected to receive the California School Board Association's (CSBA) Golden Bell Award for a digital citizenship program that teaches students all they need to know to become responsible users of social media.

The "Cyber Champion" game was developed in 2016 by PSUSD Director of Technology Will Carr and members of the District's instructional technology team as a program for high school students, and the program is being expanded to middle school students later this year. More than 1,300 high school students have already joined in the fun and learning resulting from the development of a gamified instructional platform that is now being used in many districts across the country. The platform has evolved to monitor evidence of learning leading to micro-credentials, digital badging and continuing education credits for teachers or students. The goal is to ensure that students gain a new set of "soft skills" including: cyberbullying prevention, digital empathy, privacy management and digital identity/footprint awareness. The game consists of four modules with six activities per level that encourage students – all of whom are voluntary participants on their own time – to learn, explore and apply what they have learned. The game ends with an authentic student-created artifact that reflects what they've learned throughout the journey.

The Golden Bell Award will be presented during the CSBA state conference in San Francisco later this month. The Award, now in its 39th year, promotes excellence in education and school board governance by recognizing exemplary programs that address students' changing needs in one of 20 major categories.

"It is easy to just lock everything down and block students from everything – but why not try something that benefits them in the long run?," said Google Innovator and Educator Eduardo Rivera, who was

a leader on the Cyber Champion development team. "The real world does not block websites. It rewards those that can take advantage of such technology. Cyber Champions hopes to start preparing students for their digital lives."

"I am extremely proud of what our Educational Technology team has built for the PSUSD students and community," said Carr. "I believe that Digital Citizenship is one of the new dynamic life skills our students need!"

Students who complete the game are provided with access to District-provided internet for personal devices. All students who complete the game also get to add their phone to PSUSD's Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) network.

"Our students are facing new challenges in their digital world that previous generations have not experienced," said Assistant Supt. of Educational Services Dr. Mike Swize. "We want our students to build a set of skills to prepare them to become leaders online and offline. PSUSD is determined to create conscientious cyber citizens."



PSUSD Seeking Community Input for New LCAP

Palm Springs Unified School District is currently working on the sixth year of our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and, once again, we are seeking input from staff, students, parents and community members on changes, additions or deletions to our current plan.

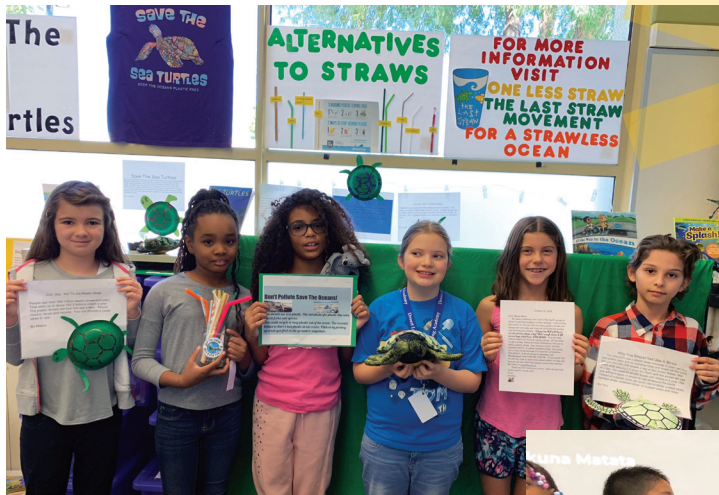
As part of the state's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), all districts in California are required to prepare a LCAP, which describes how we intend to meet annual goals for pupils, with specific activities to address state and local priorities identified. This past year, PSUSD has been able to provide many additional support programs and services for students, due to more local control of funding. As a result of the input received from stakeholders, additions funded during the past year through LCAP include:

- ▶ Academic Coaches in English Language Arts, Math, Science, & Special Education
- ▶ Additional Staff Development

- ▶ Class Size Reduction
- ▶ Expanded Access to Technology
- ▶ Increased Arts Opportunities
- ▶ Music for All Elementary Students
- ▶ Career and Technical Education
- ▶ Expanded Counseling Support
- ▶ Expanded Structured Recess Program
- ▶ Additional Support for Full Day Kindergarten

As the District prepares for its 2019-20 plan, stakeholders are being asked to provide feedback and suggestions. Two community forums are scheduled for Feb. 7 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Edward Wenzlaff Education Center, 11625 West Street, Desert Hot Springs; and Feb. 19 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Palm Springs Unified District Service Center at 150 District Center Way, Palm Springs. Each school site will be hosting a forum between Jan. 28 and March 8. The dates for those forums, along with an input survey (in English and Spanish) for all interested community members to provide suggestions for the 2018-19 LCAP plan, will be posted on the home page of the PSUSD website at www.psusd.us.

District Digest



DLA Students Say 'No More Plastic Straws:'

Fourth graders at Desert Learning Academy (DL) have joined the campaign to encourage others to stop the use of single-use plastic straws by choosing, "No Straw," or an environment friendly alternative. Students wrote letters to community members and will soon visit local businesses to put up posters about plastic pollution and the dangers of plastic to marine life. They are conducting experiments on the sustainability and calculating a cost analysis of the alternative choices. Pictured are some fourth grade students sharing their letters, plastic pollution and danger to sea turtles posters and ideas for alternatives to plastic straws.

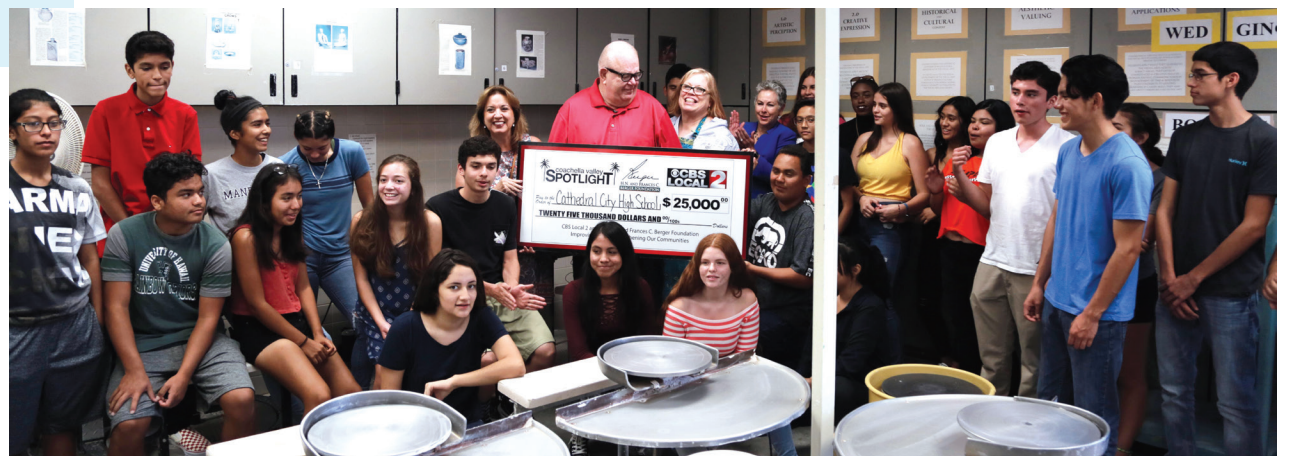


RCMS Families 'Make It and Take It': Raymond Cree Middle School parents recently made pillowcases for their children at a "Make & Take" workshop.



Cabot Yerxa Spreads Love, Kindness Through Concert:

Cabot Yerxa Elementary students recently spread messages of love and kindness through song and dance at the school's recent Peace-themed Fall Concert.



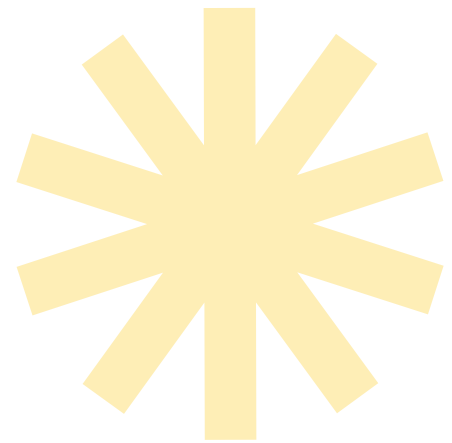
CCHS Ceramics Program Receives \$25,000 Spotlight Grant: Cathedral City High School's ceramics program has purchased a new pottery firing kiln thanks to a \$25,000 CBS Local 2 Coachella Valley Spotlight Grant, presented by the H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation awarded in September. CCHS Visual Arts Chair Nan Burlingame, center holding check, applied for the grant in 2017. Also pictured with ceramics students are Berger Foundation Program Director Catharine Reed, left, Foundation Board Member Christopher McGuire and PSUSD Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon.

CCHS Hosts Field Day for AC Students: As students at Agua Caliente Elementary await the completion of their new school (and a renewed grass area for recess due to the school relocation), Associated Student Body (ASB) and International Baccalaureate (IB) students at Cathedral City High School hosted the elementary school students for a "Field Day" opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and organized sport and recreation activities. Grade levels were bussed over to CCHS in shifts, and CCHS leaders guided the younger students in various games.





Assistance League Clothes Nearly 1,000 PSUSD Elementary Students: Members of the Assistance League of Palm Springs Desert Area recently teamed with PSUSD community liaisons to fill nearly 1,000 tote bags with school clothes and a new book for district elementary students in need as part of the organization's Operation School Bell program. Since 1991, the chapter's Operation School Bell has provided over 40,000 Coachella Valley children with new school clothes as well as 21,000 students with hygiene kits and 2,200 children with backpacks.



DHSHS Band Takes Home First Place Trophy in Season Opener: The Desert Hot Springs High Golden Eagle Regiment came home with a first place trophy in their division from the recent California State Band Championship West Valley High School Mustang Classic. The band also scored the highest of eight bands in two of six of the sub-captions across four divisions. It was also the band's highest score in a competition season opener in school history. From left to right are Regiment Alumnae Angela Rodriguez, Regiment members Juan Mendoza, Mark Navarro, and Jordan Reed, and Director Matt Ingelson.



SMART Pilot Under Way: The Foundation for the Palm Springs Unified School District recently kicked-off the Student Mentoring and Resource Training (SMART) one-on-one mentoring program with a group of 12 students and 12 mentors at Desert Hot Springs High and Mount San Jacinto High. These college-bound students have been identified as those who would benefit from additional support with the college application and financial aid process, study strategies, time management, interviewing skills and more. Pictured above are lead counselors, mentors and Foundation Director Ellen Goodman, bottom right.



RC Supt. Visits PSUSD: PSUSD Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon recently welcomed Riverside County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judy White for a recent District visit which included a tour of the new District Administration Center, an overview of District student technology initiatives, a look at Palm Springs High and Cathedral City High career academies and classrooms at Landau Elementary. Pictured above are, from left, Lyon, Director of Technology Services Will Carr and White.



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Student Interns Managing New District YouTube Channel

Three interns from the Digital Arts Technology Academy (DATA) at Cathedral City High are managing Palm Springs Unified School District's brand new YouTube channel, which showcases programs, projects and events throughout the District.

"We are thrilled to have students from DATA serving as interns in the Superintendent's Office this year," said Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon. "Their knowledge and expertise in making videos is going to assist us in getting out information about programs and endeavors that we want the community to know about in an incredibly professional and polished format."

Seniors Nia Chicas, Natalia Medina and Gina Milanovich have hit the ground running to produce the first videos that have been posted to the new YouTube Channel. Those who subscribe to the channel will receive alerts when new videos are posted. To view videos or subscribe, visit https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIR55XzcZ59AiYB_hsEalaw.

"As a senior you are already nervous due to the pressures of application deadlines and future career choices. Interning for the PSUSD provides insight on what it is really like working for the District," said Chicas, who is the lead intern in the group. "It eases the pressures of 'life after high school' for me by being able to see passionate and strong workers all striving to improve student life and education one step at a time. It has really encouraged me to meet my deadlines, further my education, and pursue a career in international business."

"I am excited for this internship because I want to produce as much content as I can during my senior as well as grow as an editor and a person before I apply to colleges," said Medina. "I'd like to major in film



Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon with interns Gina Milanovich, Nia Chicas and Natalia Medina

production and communications, and this internship is a big step in getting experience in those fields."

"I'm planning on going to an art school to major in film production and directing," said Milanovich. "Creating videos for the District helps me manage my time with deadlines and working as hard as I can. So far I have been going around meeting new people and seeing what more this District offers as well as making connections. I'm so glad to be a

part of this. I'm very thankful for this opportunity."

In addition to covering District events for the YouTube channel, the interns are also producing short videos for Employee of the Month presentations at monthly Board of Education meetings that will showcase the winners through short interviews with the nominator and video of the awardees at work. The students will also produce Public Service Announcements to be shared with the community via social and mainstream media.

"By having our students create these videos for YouTube, we not only get to convey the good work being done in the district, but we also benefit from having our students' lens on all of these topics,"

said Lyon. "Our interns' perspectives will not only enhance the final product that our community sees, but they will also assist us in thinking about how we portray information to the community and particularly how those messages and that information resonates with our students as well. It is an exciting adventure, and I know we will learn as much or more from them as they do from us."

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Accountability, Reporting Formats Continue to Change



If you are a parent of a California public school student in one of the seven grade levels who participated in California Assessment of Student Performance (CAASPP) testing last spring, you received your child's results and explanation of progress in July or August. Individual results become part of schoolwide and districtwide results for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments (also known as SBAC), which were posted in September. These results along with other accountability measures comprise the District's California School Dashboard, scheduled for release in December.

The items that make up the Dashboard components and the interpretation of them can be quite overwhelming and somewhat confusing. While each component helps us understand student progress, it is important to note that ongoing changes and adjustments to the dashboard have been made over the

past couple of years. In the next issue of our Report to the Community, publishing on Jan. 16, 2019, we will share SBAC results as well as the results of several other District Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) targets and goals.

The standardized Smarter Balanced summative tests are rigorous and designed to measure how our students are able to think critically. They are not timed, and students use multiple skills to answer the questions. These tests are an important measure that helps us assess how well our students are mastering California state standards. At the same time, no one test reflects the totality of what our students are learning or how they are progressing. Overall, this year's SBAC results in English Language Arts were flat in terms of progress with 40 percent of our students meeting or exceeding standards. Four of seven grade levels had an increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding ELA standards, one grade level reported no change, and two grade levels declined. In math, results stayed the same at 26 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards at the District level with three grade levels showing an increase, two grade levels with no change and two grade levels showing a decline. The full report of District results will be a part of the January accountability report to

the community. The results, however, are available for review now by visiting: <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2018/> default For assistance in interpreting the results visit: <http://www.testscoreguide.org/ca/>.

While we aren't seeing the year-to-year increases that we want to see, our trend over time is upward, and our trajectory is on the upswing in English Language Arts. We have more work to do in mathematics and have a heavy focus in this area, especially at the middle school level where results are not where we want them to be.

Other LCAP targets and goals that will be addressed in the January report to the community include: graduation rates, performance and reclassification rates of English Learners, students meeting A-G requirements for UC/Cal State admission and expulsion and suspension rates. It is important to note that our reported suspension rates will show a remarkable increase due to an error in the way we reported our suspensions the prior year. With the correction in reporting for 2017-2018 but not being able to correct the prior year, comparing the two years would be inaccurate because it is not comparing the same data between the previous years and last year.

There is still much work to do in improving the outcomes for our students, and the good news is that our educational and support team members are up to the task. We now have instructional maps for both elementary and secondary that lay down fundamental expectations and high-level, research-based strategies to guide our work. Our Board of Education has high expectations for all of our students, and they hold us to ensuring that we are focused not only on outcomes but also on what's best for our students in the long run.

We truly believe in our new vision statement that "Lifelong Learning Starts Here"! We will continue to forge ahead toward academic progress for each and every one of our students and thank you for your continued support and assistance toward that end.

Sincerely,

Sandra Lyon, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools