

PSUSD Mobile App Provides School, District News, Info

Did you know that you can access a wide array of District and school site information and resources through the touch of a button on our Palm Springs Unified School District mobile app? It's easy to download and 100 percent free to all who are interested in accessing news, calendar items, lunch menus, directories and much more.

Download the app through the Apple Store at: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/palm-springs-unified-sd/id1267434384?ls=1> or through Google Play (for android phones) at: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.blackboard.community.psusd>. Once the app is downloaded users can set up options to receive notifications immediately regarding specific school sites and/or District emergency and general information.

Through the app, users can access web and social media posts, calendars of events and meetings, Peachjar flyers, the Superintendent's monthly message blog, the Sprigeo anonymous reporting system, lunch menus and much more. Parents of PSUSD students who have a ParentVue account can also access real-time information on assignments and grades and attendance. Parents need just a single account for all of their PSUSD students. Account and login requests can be made through your child's school site office.

In addition to the mobile app, PSUSD has additional resources and information available through its website at www.psusd.us. The District also posts school and District information on Instagram ([psusdnews](#)), Facebook (facebook@psusd) and twitter (@[PSUSD](#).)



2019-20 School Year Begins August 7

Palm Springs Unified School District opens the 2019-20 school year on Wednesday, Aug. 7. All students are expected to report to classes on that day.

Parents of students who are eligible for bus transportation will be receiving a letter with assigned bus stops this week. If you believe that your child is eligible for transportation and do not receive a letter by Aug. 5, please call your child's school site for a bus assignment.

While applications for free or reduced lunch are no longer required since all district students will receive free meals, parents are required to complete an "education benefit form" for the District. Just one form is required per household.

The form is available online at <https://benefitform.psusd.us/>. Paper forms are also available at each school site.

All Palm Springs Unified School District students entering the 7th grade this school year, and all new PSUSD students entering 7th through 12th grade, must show proof of an adolescent whooping cough booster (called "Tdap") to attend school. District officials are asking that students

be immunized as soon as possible and present proof of immunization at their school site immediately.

Free Tdap shots are available at local middle schools as follows (while supplies last):

July 31 - James Workman Middle School, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Aug. 1 – Raymond Cree Middle School, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Aug. 2 – Desert Springs Middle School, 9 a.m. to noon

Aug. 5 – Nellie N. Coffman Middle School, 9 a.m. to noon

The state Legislature passed a law that went into effect on Jan. 1, 2016, that all students, other than those with a medical waiver signed by a physician, are required to be fully immunized in order to attend school. Students who are not in compliance are required to enroll in an independent study or home schooling program in order to receive a public school education.

For more information on immunization requirements, contact your individual school site or the District Office at (760) 883-2703, ext. 4805105.

Regular Attendance Crucial to Student Success

In December of the 2018-19 school year, the Palm Springs Unified School District launched a new "Attention to Attendance" (A2A) program in an effort to educate our families about the importance of regular attendance as well as to improve and increase communications between the school and family around individual student attendance issues. From the beginning of the 2018-19 school year through the beginning of December, 2018, PSUSD students collectively missed over 90,012 full days of instruction.

"Knowing that we are focused on improving outcomes for our students and that missing school correlates with lower student achievement, we know that simply getting our students to school, regularly and on time, improves their opportunities to learn," said Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon.

The first six months of the program indicate that the District is headed in the right direction, though there is a long way to go. More than 49,000 parent communication pieces were sent out during the second half of the last school year. More than 15,000 of these letters addressed truancy (a student who has three or more days of unexcused absences), more than 12,000 were about excessive absences (seven or more days of excused absences) and more than 4,500 were to parents of students with chronic absenteeism (missing 10 percent or more of the school year due to absences). The remainder of the communications were focused on educating the parents of our kindergarten through third grade students on the importance of regular attendance and commendation letters for students with excellent attendance.

Conferences were held with the parents of 561 students with

chronic absenteeism. The improvement rate among those students from the six weeks prior to the conferences to the six weeks after the conference was 26.8 percent. While the numbers improved the second half of the year, there were still more than 40 percent of District students who missed more than nine school days during the 2018-19 school year. More than 2,400 students missed between 18 and 36 days of school and 854 students who missed more than 36 days of schools.

"These numbers are unacceptable, as those absences negatively impact students' learning," said Lyon, adding that 83 percent of students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade cannot read at grade level when they reach third grade.

"These students are four times more likely to drop out of school before they graduate, and drop outs are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers with high school diplomas," Lyon said. "By sixth grade, chronic absenteeism becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school, and high school dropouts are not eligible for about 90 percent of the jobs in this country."

Lyon asked for parental and community support as the District attendance outreach work continues during the 2019-20 school year.

"I ask for your help in spreading the crucial message that attendance at every grade level matters greatly," Lyon said. "It is unfortunate that kindergarten is not mandatory in the state of California. The statistics are proof that students who do not attend kindergarten regularly are at a huge disadvantage, and experience an ongoing, uphill battle to stay on par with their peers."

District Digest



Four Students Honored with Street Signs: A Cathedral City, Mount San Jacinto and two Desert Hot Springs High outstanding seniors were recently honored with dedication of a street sign in their name. The signs, located in front of their schools, will bear their names until next spring's honorees are named. At top left, CCHS' Haley Bartsch shows off her sign with, from left, Board of Education member Madonna Gerrell, Cathedral City Mayor Mark Carnevale, Board of Education Richard Clapp, City Councilman Ernesto Gutierrez, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Cathedral City High Principal Guillermo Chavez and Councilman Raymond Gregory. In center, MSJ honoree Jesus Giron III with, from left, MSJ Principal Brad Seiple, Lyon, Carnevale, Clapp, Jesus' mom, Gregory, Gutierrez and Gerrell. At top right, Desert Hot Springs High co-valedictorian Jorge Castaneda with, from left, DHS Councilman Gary Gardner, Mayor Scott Matas, DHS Principal Caroline Cota, Lyon and Board of Education member John Gerardi. At bottom right, DHSHS' co-valedictorian Gilbert Regelado with, from left, Gardner, Matas, Cota, Lyon and Gerardi.



Student Board Members Honored for Service: Just before the close of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education honored this year's student board members for their year of service. Each received a plaque of appreciation and special sash to wear at graduation. Pictured, from left to right, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Mount San Jacinto High student board member Francisco Oros, Desert Hot Springs High student board member Aszhia McAfee, Board of Education President Richard Clapp, Palm Springs High student board member Faith Souilliere; Board of Education member Karen Cornett; Cathedral City High student board member Trinity Walker; Board of Education member Timothy Wood; Rancho Mirage High student board member Annelise Rosas; and Board of Education members Madonna Gerrell and John Gerardi.

PSUSD Substitutes 'CLIMB' and 'SOAR': The Board of Education recently honored PSUSD substitute teachers who participated in this year's CLIMB (Collaborate, Lead, Inspire, Model, Balance) and/or SOAR (Success, Organize, Achieve, Relationships) professional development on Saturdays during this school year. The sessions focused on classroom management, curriculum, emergency procedures, technology, conscious education and working with students with special needs. Honorees included Jacqueline Devereaux (CLIMB and SOAR), Marjorie Lott (CLIMB and SOAR), Rainer Luptowitz (CLIMB and SOAR), Julia Ramos (CLIMB and SOAR), Wayne Clemons Jr., (SOAR), Pedro Pelayo (CLIMB) and Vianey Ramos (SOAR). Pictured with the honorees are Board of Education President Richard Clapp, left, Director of Certificated Human Resources Dr. Denise Ellis, second from right and Board of Education member Madonna Gerrell, right.





Celebrating New Agua Caliente Elementary: It was a morning of celebration at the new Agua Caliente Elementary School as site District and elected leaders dedicated the brand new school with student performances, congratulatory remarks, refreshments, campus tours and, of course, a ceremonial ribbon cutting at the end of May. Pictured above are student representatives, District administrators, Board of Education members and city leaders as the commemorative ribbon is cut.



District Teachers of the Year: Site and District Teachers of the Year were recently honored at PSUSD's annual We Honor Our Own (WHOO) banquet at the Renaissance Marriott in Palm Springs. Pictured above, from left, are, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Board of Education members Karen Cornett, John Gerardi and Madonna Gerrell; District Teachers of the Year Kenneth Paxton, Jessica Parent and Anel Ayon; and Board of Education President Richard Clapp.



Perfect Attendance Scholar: Desert Hot Springs High senior Nyah Rodriguez received a \$1,000 scholarship for stellar attendance from Sun Community Federal Credit Union at a ceremony toward the end of last school year which honored one student in each of the three valley school districts as winners in the "Excellence in Education" initiative partnership with Sun Community and Alpha Media Palm Springs. Nyah was selected by random drawing from District juniors and seniors who met attendance criteria (98 percent perfect attendance and no tardies) from November through May. Pictured with Nyah is Desert Hot Springs High Assistant Principal Mike Grein and Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon.



Top Administrator Honors: PSUSD's Director of Classified Human Resources La Sonya Pitts recently received the Classified Leader of the Year Award from Region XIX of the California School Administrators Association (ACSA) at the organization's Spring Celebration at the Riverside Convention Center. Pictured with Pitts, center, are, from left, Supt. of Schools Dr. Sandra Lyon, Board of Education President Richard Clapp, Assistant Supt. of Human Resources Dr. Tony Signoret and Director of Certificated Human Resources Dr. Denise Ellis.



PSUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION

Richard Clapp, President • **John Gerardi**, Clerk
Karen Cornett • **Madonna Gerrell** • **Timothy Wood**

PSUSD ADMINISTRATION

Sandra Lyon, Ed.D., *Superintendent*
Brian Murray, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Business Services*
Tony Signoret, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources*
Mike Swize, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services*

This Palm Springs Unified School District report to the community is published bimonthly by the Palm Springs Unified School District.
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PSUSD Announces New, Changed Administrative Posts

As the 2019-20 school year begins, some PSUSD administrators have changed roles since the last school year while a few new administrators have joined the PSUSD Leadership Team over the summer.



Aaron Tarzian is the new Principal at Rio Vista Elementary School, replacing retiring Principal Dr. Steve Marlatt. He has been an elementary principal for the past 10 years, most recently in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District in northern California.



Lisa Todd is PSUSD's new Coordinator of Student Services. She began her career in education as a teacher at James Workman Middle School and has served as a counselor at James Workman, Desert Springs and Painted Hills Middle Schools and Desert Hot Springs High School. Most recently she served as Assistant Principal at Nellie N. Coffman Middle School.



Dr. Deanna Keulian is the District's new Director of College and Career Readiness/Linked Learning & Career Technical Education. She began her career as a special education teacher at Yucca Valley High School before joining Desert Sands Unified in 2005 where she served as a WASC Strand Leader, testing coordinator, project facilitator, and, most recently, administrator in charge of college and career readiness.



Omar Tinoco is the new principal at Desert Springs Middle School. He joined Palm Springs Unified as Assistant Principal at James Workman Middle School and most recently served as Principal at Bubbling Wells Elementary.



Jennifer Geyer is the new Principal at Bubbling Wells Elementary. She most recently served as Co-Principal at Cielo Vista Charter.



Erica Watson, who has been Assistant Principal at Desert Hot Springs High School, is the new Assistant Principal at Edward Wenzlaff Learning Center and will be overseeing all PSUSD programs at that site.

Barbara Anglin, the District's Coordinator of Professional Development will now also be serving as PSUSD's Coordinator of Visual & Performing Arts.

Alexander Kirk, who has been the Dean of Students at Desert Springs Middle School for the past three years, is now Assistant Principal at Desert Springs.

Sean Pendergraph, who has been a teacher and ASB advisor at Mount San Jacinto High, is a new Assistant Principal at Nellie N. Coffman Middle School.

Bob Spinuzza, who joined PSUSD as Nutrition Services Operations Supervisor, is now the District's Coordinator of Transportation Services.

Nathaniel Rodriguez has joined the District as Facilities Services Project Manager, and **Tammy Heo** has come to PSUSD as a new Behavior Analyst.

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Welcome to the 2019-20 School Year



It is an honor and a pleasure to welcome our parents and community members to Palm Springs Unified School District's 2019-20 school year. Our administrators, teachers and staff members are ready for a new school year and our ongoing mission of academic, social and emotional success for each of our more than 22,000 students.

To that end, our Student Services Department has formed a new committee comprised of a cross section of district and site staff and community members to review and renew discipline and social emotional learning (SEL) procedures and strategies throughout the District.

The committee, which will convene in August, will first examine current practices such as Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS), anti-bullying work, equity, inclusionary practices, counseling program development and our SEL initiatives. Members will then work to standardize expectations for relationships, behavior and misbehavior intervention across the District. Committee participants include a cross section of administrators, teachers, counselors, students, parents, community members, mental health therapists and psychologists, security staff, behavior paraprofessionals, supervision aides, and instructional paraprofessionals.

The group will meet approximately every eight weeks with the goal of each member gathering input from those they are representing. The work will be ongoing for at least the next year as they develop recommendations. There will be opportunities during the work for our families and community members to provide input.

Our Educational Services Department in collaboration with our Cabinet has created a Guiding Coalition to focus on middle schools. The needs of young adolescents are unique, and middle school can be a socially and academically challenging time for many students. A diverse group of District employees will come together to discuss the current realities in our middle schools and to identify resources to implement innovative solutions at our schools. The group will be discussing the academic, social, behavioral and psychological needs of middle school students.

The current reality is that our middle schools have lower-than-expected academic scores and higher chronic absenteeism and suspension rate data than other similar schools. These are the areas where the coalition will begin its analysis. The bulk of the coalition's work will take place this fall, after some initial data gathering and surveying that will be taking place soon. There will also be opportunities this fall for families and community members to share their input on our middle school initiatives. The District will access all of our diverse viewpoints and experiences to ensure that we develop a plan that everyone can support and implement. Working together, we can make a significant difference for our adolescents attending our middle schools.

Thank you, as always, for your support and partnership. We can't do it without you. Here's to a wonderful 2019-20 school year!

Sincerely,

Sandra Lyon, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools