



Principal McGugan Promoted to District Office

As I write this last Principal Corner it saddens me that I will be leaving OPIS. I feel extremely fortunate for this next opportunity in my life and in my career journey. I could not pass up the opportunity for me, professionally. I will be overseeing our District of Choice program, attendance, safety, Title IX, and running two task forces geared towards the social and emotional well being of students and safety. We have had a tremendous amount of successes over the past five years and it was truly a team effort. I have made life long friends with my colleagues and the students I have met along the way.

Although well deserved, we are also losing an integral part of our OPIS foundation to retirement. Barbara Harrison will be leaving us, after giving over 13 years to our program. She has been inspirational to our elementary and middle school students. Barb has overseen all of our field trips, our beautiful newsletters, and has run our elementary literacy program. Barb will be missed, but we wish her all her best in her new adventures.

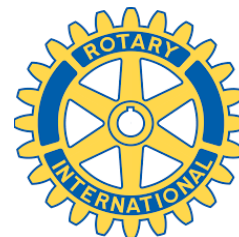
Finally, OPIS and the Oak Park community will always be a special place for me. My family and I live close by and my daughters will continue to attend our schools. I look forward to seeing many of you around town and at the Oak Park schools, when I am on campus. Thank you for all the warmth and support you have shown me while we worked together to make OPIS what it is. I truly believe you will be in amazing hands with your next principal. I spoke to him today and he is thoroughly enthusiastic and ready to work at the best independent school!!!

Thank you,

Stew McGugan



Rotary Essay Contest Winners



Winners of the 2018 Rotary essay contest, Ava Greenwald, Alexa Geyser, Kaia Mann, and Molly Vrooman, are pictured from left to right with their teacher, Barbara Harrison.

For several years, OPIS students have had a strong showing among the winners of the annual Rotary essay writing contest. This year was no exception. Addressing the topic of the 4-Way Test of the Things We Think, Say, or Do, our students covered a wide range of topics including gun violence, volunteerism, rap lyrics, plastic pollution, animal testing, and world hunger.

Each of the seventeen OPIS students who entered the contest had to address the four questions of the test: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? and Will it be beneficial to all? According to the Rotary Club, the purpose of the test for those who practice it, is to help achieve worthwhile objectives, win and keep friends, get along with others, ensure a happy home life, develop high ethical and moral standards, become successful in accomplishing personal goals, and become a better citizen and a better example for others. "The principles of truth, honesty, decency, and morality are the foundation of the 4-Way Test."

Our students and their mothers were honored at a lovely luncheon at the North Ranch Country Club on April 25th where they were presented with certificates and monetary prizes ranging from \$25 - \$175. Our congratulations to our winners this year - **Ava Greenwald**, grade 5, who wrote about her family's annual community service project of providing over 400 gift-filled Christmas stockings to all of the students at an underprivileged elementary school in Oxnard, **Alexa Geyser**, grade 7, whose story of earning over \$35,000 to provide wells in Africa took first place, **Kaia Mann**, grade 7, who explored the topic of the Parkland students' activism in the aftermath of their school shooting, and **Molly Vrooman**, grade 7, who detailed her activities as a Junior Ambassador for Children's Hospital, Los Angeles. Kudos to these girls whose stories certainly embody the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self."

Drum Circle Inspires Students, Parents, and Teachers



Chris Ramirez from **Freedom Drum Circles** facilitated a rousing, dynamic drumming experience for OPIS students, parents, teachers, and some Oak View students as well. On March 7th Chris arrived with a van full of wonderful percussion instruments including dozens of drums, maracas, claves, guiros, and various other noise-makers. There were more than enough to go around and they provided a very unique experience for us to communicate rhythmically with our leader and the group in both solo and ensemble playing. Improvisation was the key as Chris invited all to participate in question-and-answer type responses, as well as echoing and story-telling activities. From the novices to the experienced drummers, there was something for everyone in this unique presentation. It was truly a memorable event!

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District Tour



Have you ever wondered what happens to waste water when it leaves your house? That was the topic of conversation on our tour of the Las Virgenes Water District Water Treatment Plant and Compost Facility on April 12th. In the first picture above, Jan Dougall, our guide, explains a visual of the path waste water takes from the time it leaves our houses through the treatment process, to the final product, compost. In the center photo she is displaying jars of water in various stages of treatment. Here in this classroom setting, we were able to see the microscopic “bugs” that actually consume the waste in our water. We saw trucks filled with these important bugs on their way to deliver them to Malibu which has recently begun treating their wastewater with them. Lastly, we took the short drive to the composting facility to see the steamy (and smelly) rooms where the waste is heated and converted into top quality mulch.



Photo courtesy of ucnr.org

Stunt Ranch - Mountain Restoration Trust

February 22 is a day to remember for several lucky OPIS families. Perfect weather, fascinating guides, and a hike through some of Stunt Ranch's 310 acres led us through five different ecosystems - chaparral, coast live oak, woodland, riparian, and annual grasslands. There are only a handful of other areas in the world where one can visit so many ecosystems in one place. Stunt Ranch is named for the family that homesteaded the area in 1885. Before that, however, it was the Chumash Indians who inhabited the site thousands of years ago. We saw evidence of their presence in several grinding rocks where the women would gather to socialize and prepare meals. One of our guides, a Chumash descendant, Oscar Ortiz, provided a wealth of information about the use of plants in the area, survival skills, the role of fire, and Chumash history. This was field learning at its best!



*At this archeological grinding rock, docent and Chumash descendant, **Oscar Ortiz**, taught us fascinating history and customs of the Chumash who once lived on this land.*

Shaili and **Elad Louk** study soil samples at the educational center at Stunt Ranch.



OSB News

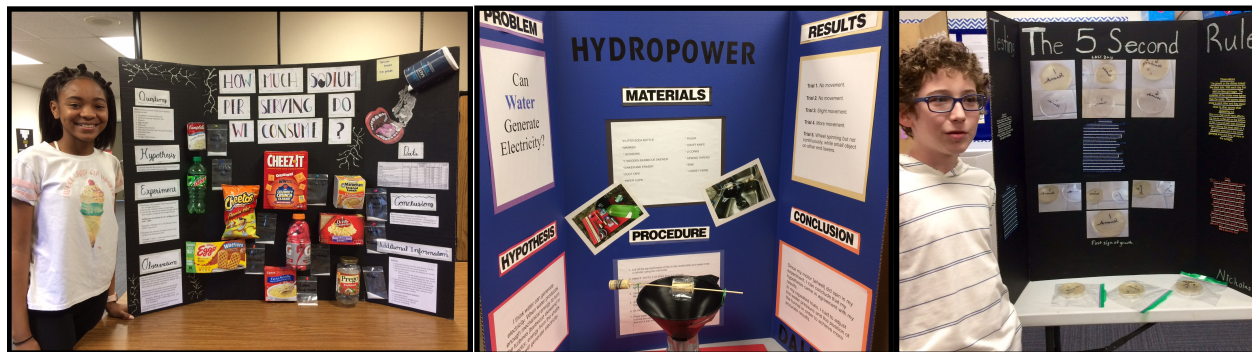
Casa Pacifica Outreach



The Casa Pacifica Outreach Program has been one of the favorite OSB activities of all time. This year was the best yet! Led by OSB advisors, Amy Kobayashi, Kate Thompson, Lori Glazer, and Samantha Lyons, dozens of enthusiastic students arrived at Casa Pacifica to engage their students in a wide variety of fun activities. Mariah, Abbey and Molly offered hand-squeezed orange juice. Lili, Lauren, Austin and Stephanie helped students make tapestries with yarn and sticks. Alexa, Reylynn, Matthew, Jasmine, and Matthew decorated cookies. There was also a photo booth, a temporary tattoo booth, and a frame-decorating booth. Both Casa Pacifica and OPIS students loved the event. It gave them the opportunity to interact with others, share interests and talents. Way to go, OSB!



Open House Showcases Students' Science Projects



Tatiana Vereen with her sodium project, Dallas Young's project, and Nicholas Fine and the 5 Second Rule

It's always fun to see what topics students chose to study every spring for their science projects and to see what they've learned as a result of conducting their experiments. There were some surprising conclusions this year! For example, **Nicholas Fine's** experiment actually showed that there is some truth to the 5 Second Rule! He grew bacteria on apple slice scrapings that had been in contact with the floor for one, three, and six seconds. He discovered that the longer the apple slice was on the floor, the more bacteria it grew! **Kaley Silva** discovered that having a ring finger that is longer than one's index finger is a sign of athleticism! **Ever Rosales** tested various liquids' reactions to dry ice and **Elad Look** experimented with the effect of various water temperatures on plants. His sister, **Shaili Louk**, tested what effect listening to different genres of music had on time and accuracy on math tests.

Baking experiments are always fun (and sometimes delicious)! **Riley Payne** tested differences in butter temperature while making chocolate chip cookies, whereas **Alexa Geyser** sought to see if her subjects could discern which of her pumpkin muffins were made with real eggs, egg substitute, or applesauce. **Rachel Bratten's** slime and **Joseph Munoz's** non-Newtonian substance were big hits among the visitors as was the egg that **Jason Mikulasek** sucked into a bottle using fire. **Olivia Munoz** grew some beautiful flowers as she tested whether worms made a difference in plant growth. **Logan Mills** created an electro magnet. **Jordan Leftwich** attempted to create electricity with fruit, and **Cayman Rhodes** tested the property of gravity. Solar ovens and grills were used for cooking by **Sofia** and **Valentino Navarro**, and **Charlotte Vogt**.

Ava Greenwald's entire family got in on the action while trying to discover if their sense of taste was affected by being blindfolded. **Amirah Johnson** performed a floating egg experiment while **Mariya Wright** tested the effects various drinks have on the color of our teeth. Ask **Hailey Hermida** if dogs are colorblind, ask **Kaia Mann** how to best preserve your Halloween jack-o-lantern, and ask **Dallas Young** how to make electricity with water. **Evelyne Tusso** proved to be an expert at layering drinks of different densities, and **Addison Koepke** invented a coin sorter. **Tatiana Vereen** examined the sodium content in a variety of foods. **Molly Vrooman** learned that plants grow better when spoken to, and **Kayla Caravelli** made an erupting volcano. Thanks to all the students for enthusiastically sharing their science projects.



WASC Surveys

The parent, student, and teacher school surveys have been tabulated, and, WOW, what fantastic responses we got! The vast majority of responders are extremely happy with the school, teachers, curriculum, facility, and the overall climate of OPIS. It is very interesting to see the myriad of reasons students attend this school, and the ways in which our flexible scheduling appeals to so many students. There was a strong sense that students are becoming independent learners and are taking charge of their education. Thank you to all who took the time to complete the survey. The results will be used to explore ways to make OPIS even better.



Congratulations Class of 2018!

May 24 is the graduation date for OPIS seniors and marks the transition from one phase of their lives into another. We salute the class of 2018 and wish them well as they continue to be life long learners. Here is a glimpse of what some of them are planning for the future: produce an album and go on tour; continue to pursue acting and modeling; attend UCLA, Boston University, Bard College, Indiana University, Cal State, Channel Islands, and numerous community colleges. Good luck to all of our graduates!



Graduation Ceremony

Oak Park High School
Thursday, May 24, 2018
6:00 - 8:30 PM

First Day of
School

Tuesday,
August 7, 2018!

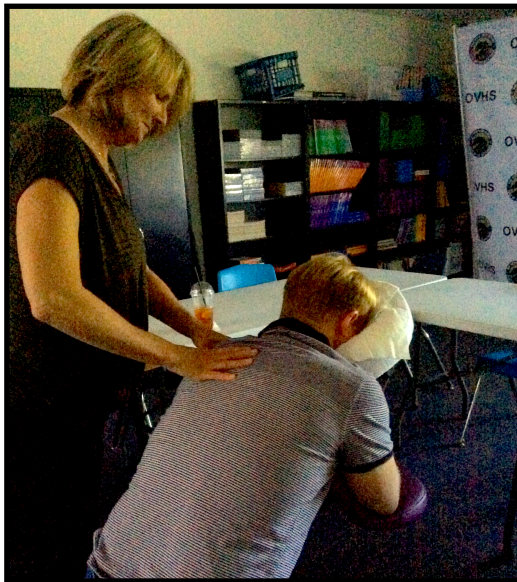


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Teacher APPRECIATION Week

May 7-11 was Teacher Appreciation Week. Thanks to the efforts of parent, Jacque Mills, OPIS teachers were really “shown the love.” On Monday teachers enjoyed a beautiful brunch as they had their bi-monthly staff meeting. On Wednesday, certified massage therapist extraordinaire, Theresa Russell, treated staff to a wonderfully relaxing chair massage. Thursday was celebrated with a fabulous lunch. Throughout the week students arrived with flowers and cards expressing their appreciation for their teachers. Thank you to all the parents and students for acknowledging the teachers in such special ways.



Ty DeLong takes a brief break from student meetings to enjoy a massage from Theresa Russell.



The staff would like to thank all the families who contributed to the **Teacher Appreciation Lunch** on May 10. Teachers enjoyed delicious sandwiches, salads, and desserts on beautifully decorated tables. Each teacher was presented with a personalized mug, plants, and very generous Amazon gift cards on behalf of many OPIS families. Special thanks go to **Jacque Mills** who organized the week's events, **Zina Geyser**, **Jennifer Vrooman**, and their children, **Logan**, **Alexa**, and **Molly**, who all helped decorate, and to the many families who make OPIS a wonderful place to work!

Reflecting Upon Retirement

Barbara Harrison

As I approach my last two weeks of teaching, I would like to thank my OPIS family for the last 14 years I have spent at this school. I have been very fortunate to have found a job in which I was so perfectly suited. Coming to school every day, meeting with students and their parents, was a joy. Seeing my students progress, overcome challenges of all kinds, and succeed in so many areas of their lives was truly rewarding and inspiring. I am heartened to know so many wonderful families who love, nurture, and support their children. It gives me hope for the future to see how capable the next generation is.

Thank you for inviting me to students' plays, dance recitals, track meets, equestrian and gymnastic events, synchronized swimming competitions, piano recitals, and *Bar and Bat Mitzvahs*. To see students actively pursuing their passions has been an education for me and helped me see them in an entirely new light. I have loved exploring new places on our monthly field trips and getting to know other OPIS students besides my own. Writers' Workshop has been a lot of fun for me to teach, especially when I see the results of the students' creativity and hard work.

OPIS would not be the great school it is without its phenomenal staff! I have never worked with more dedicated, friendly, open, and caring people. The camaraderie we share is very special. I would like to thank them for all the support and laughs over the years and wish them continued success as they head into another school year with a new principal. We all wish Stew McGugan success in his new job at the district office.

Lastly, I would like to thank all my families for an extraordinary retirement party on May 11, spearheaded by **Jacque Mills** and hosted by **Jennifer Vrooman** and her family. I will forever treasure the video that my former student, **Gaby Reublin**, made of students', parents', teachers', and administrators' testimonials with behind-the-scenes help from Danny O'Brien.

THANK YOU ALL FOR EVERYTHING!



Jacque, CeCe, Katrina, Jennifer



Lisa, Barbara, Tamika



Gaby and Debra Reublin



Students blowing bubbles

