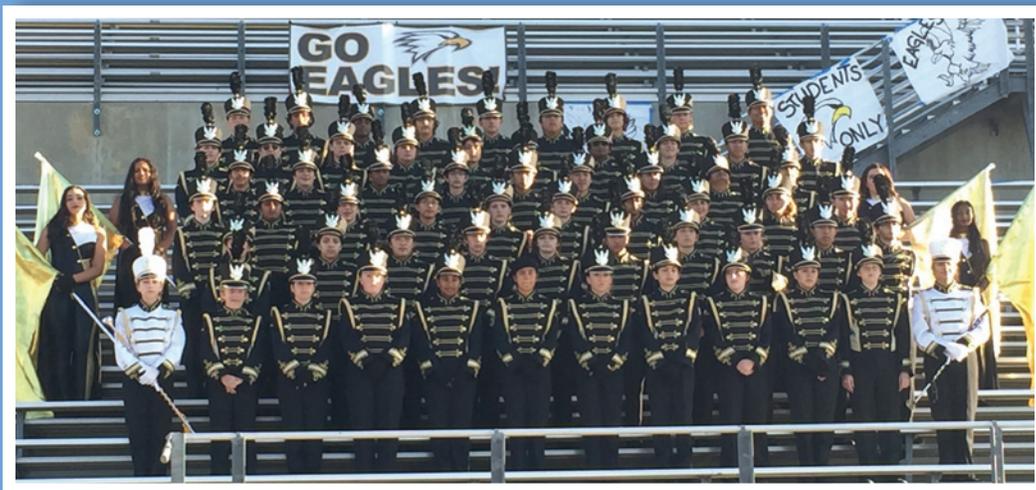


SCHOOL WATCH

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2016 Edition



MUSIC PROGRAM

Over 20% of all students at Medea Creek Middle School and Oak Park High School are taking advantage of the Music Program that Oak Park has to offer. Over 500 students are participating in multiple levels of Band, Choir, and Strings; not to mention, the plethora of other performance ensembles available: Marching Band, Color Guard, Jazz Band, Pit Orchestra, Winter Drumline, and many more. You can watch all of these fine Musicians perform at the District Music Festival this year, held on Sunday, April 2 at Medea Creek Middle School!

INQUIRY BASED INSTRUCTION

One of the major changes to Oak Park classrooms in recent years is the introduction of Inquiry Based Instruction. Inquiry Based Instruction, also known as Problem Based Learning, is a form of teaching that is based on the idea that students learn more deeply when they are able to construct meaning by solving real and complex problems. While K-12 education has long focused on fact memorization, Inquiry Based Instruction allows students to follow their curiosity and interests, resulting in more engaged and enthusiastic learners.

There is a basic cycle to Inquiry Based Learning, which provides a structure to the process. These steps are:

1. Discovery of a problem or posing of a question. Examples: Is our watershed healthy? What is the impact of water on the development of civilization? How does our environment shape our lifestyle?
2. Research background information to better understand the problem or question. Includes; safe searching for information, careful and critical reading of sources and evaluation of sources of information.
3. Devise a solution to the problem or an answer to the question. Projects and solutions are applicable to the real-world and have authentic audiences such as peers, a panel of experts, or the community at large.
4. Evaluate your thinking and make adjustments. Emphasis on ongoing assessments rather than final assessments
5. Refine the inquiry process by developing a new question based on the newly created knowledge. Inquiry is never final . . . Students learn to wonder and to question their world.

You can see how these steps create what is called a "cycle of inquiry" that continually keeps all learners interested and challenged. This type of instruction is in stark contrast to the traditional classroom model of the teacher being the expert who is responsible for conveying information to students. In this model, the teacher remains an expert, but also serves as the facilitator for thinking, collaborating, and communicating. Inquiry Based Instruction is effective in all subjects, because questions arise in all areas of the curriculum.

Throughout the past few years, over 70 OPUSD teachers have attended a week long training at UCLA called the Critical Thinking Institute (CTI). In CTI, teachers develop the understanding and skills to facilitate Inquiry Based Instruction. Since the closing of CTI, OPUSD has developed its own training program for teachers called the Oak Park Inquiry Institute (OPII). Not only do we train our own, but we offer these trainings to teachers in other districts.



A 5th grade student demonstrates a project that answered the question: How does the land and environment affect the people who live there?

OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL NEWSWEEK RANKING

The NEWSWEEK Magazine rankings of America's Best High Schools came out and **Oak Park High School was ranked #51 in the United States out of over 16,000 high schools and #7 in the state of California.** The rankings are based on a variety of criteria including; counselor to student ratios, advanced placement course participation, graduation rates, and college acceptance. This ranking is exceptional for many reasons, especially considering that many of the schools in the rankings are magnet or charter schools that have highly selective enrollment procedures, which OPHS does not utilize.

Additionally, it was a banner year for the Class of 2016. Check out these stats!

- 65.4% 4yr college attendance rate - highest in OPHS history
- 97.8% attending 4yr or 2yr college - highest in OPHS history
- 87.9% completed the UC "a-g" requirements - highest in OPHS history
- 1839 average SAT - highest in OPHS history



Rancho Simi Parks naturalist leading hike in our Oak Canyon Park as part of Oak Park's 50th Anniversary.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF OAK PARK

We celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Oak Park community on September 18 with festivities at Oak Canyon Park and on Oak Park History Night earlier that week. We learned that Oak Park was the scene of countless films both prior to and after development. These include; Of Mice and Men, A Walk in the Sun, The Red Pony, The Man from the Alamo, Texas Across the River, Firecreek, Little Big Man, The Thing with Two Heads, Nickelodeon, Back to the Future III, 3 Ninjas, Role Models, Faster, and Just Go

with It. All of the schools engaged students in a variety of activities about the history of Oak Park.

The Board of Education is recognizing Harry Medved with the Partner in Education Award at the October school board meeting for his work, along with that of OPUSD Board member Derek Ross, in putting these events together, and helping our children learn about the history of their community.

STATE TESTING RESULTS

This is the second year of the new state testing program for all California public schools. Our students are now required to be tested using computers or tablets on their progress toward meeting the New California (Common Core) Standards. **Oak Park students scored the highest in Ventura County and produced some of the highest scores in the state.** 72% of our students meet or exceed the standards in Mathematics and 79% meet or exceed them in English/Language Arts and Literacy (ELA). As a comparison, the county averages were 38% in Math and 48% in ELA, and the state averages were nearly identical to the county.



California Assessment of
Student Performance and Progress

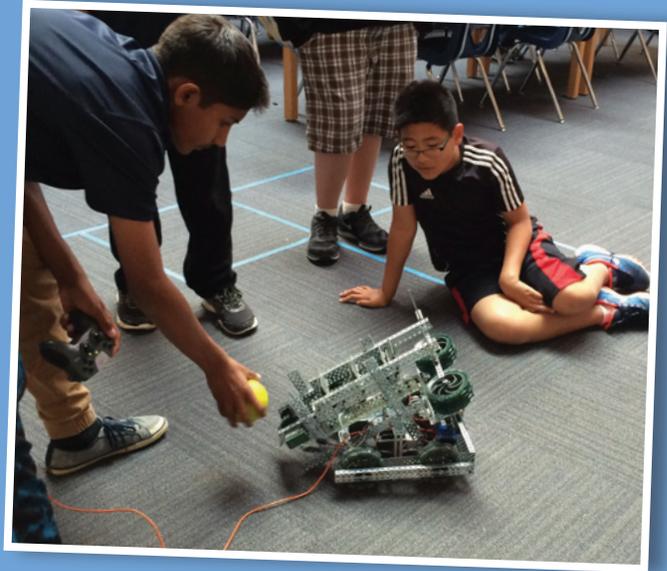
NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS TEACHER TRAINING

K-5 teachers took part in the first day of a 3-part series of professional learning aimed at the instructional strategies and lesson design principles associated with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The training was led by Kurt Holland, an ocean expert, curriculum developer, and teaching veteran. The series is built on a foundation of inquiry and environmental literacy. The day included a trip down to Medea Creek for some outdoor education and engaging in scientific practices.



ROBOTICS!

OPUSD started the year with Dot and Dash robots at every elementary school. This was possible due to the generous donations from our Parent Teacher Organizations and the exemplary coaching of our Technology Teachers on Special Assignment. The students have quickly learned to code the robots and are very enthusiastic and engaged while learning with them across all subject matters. This supports our efforts to have students coding in elementary grades, and integrating technology into the curriculum. At Medea Creek Middle School, the robotics teams have doubled from three to six with two all girls teams. Students are designing, building, and programming with VEX robots under the coaching of experienced high school robotics team members. The high school and middle school teams will be hosting our first VEX robotics regional competition on February 4th, 2017 at Oak Park High School.



WHALE WATCHING TRIP

On Saturday, September 17, 120 intrepid eleventh-grade students who are studying *Moby Dick* in Mrs. Kathy Schultheis' AP English class set out to find Moby Dick. The whale-watch event, orchestrated by Dr. Tony Knight, took the students from a port of call in Santa Barbara all the way to West Santa Cruz Island where the students sailed into one of that island's mysterious caves. All along the voyage, much wonderful ocean life was seen. Highlights included twirling dolphins and playful sea lions. But the whales were rather demure on that beautiful Saturday, September day, hiding their vast beauty from the eager eyes of those who have read Melville's classic sea yarn.

But except for a touch of sea-sickness, a good time was had by all. Principal Kevin Buchanan came along on the voyage. This year in English, we're trying to remember why Melville wrote the Great American Novel: to honor the whales and the whalers. So, in that spirit, we tried to experience, if only for a few hours, what it is really like to board a vessel bound for a destination. 120 students stepped back on terra firma with a greater respect for the ocean, its mystery and the mighty creatures for whom it is home.

GOLDEN SEED AWARD

The Oak Park USD Student Nutrition program has been awarded the **Golden Seed Award from the California Farm to School Network** for our innovative healthy cafeteria programs. Our students are served the healthiest and most delicious food on a daily basis thanks to our caring and creative cafeteria staff. We believe that the school cafeteria is one of most important classrooms in our schools because students can learn how to maintain a diet that will help them lead long, healthy, enjoyable lives.



WORLD FOOD DAY

The United Nations World Food Day was October 16 and we had activities in the schools throughout that week. The Environmental Education and Awareness Committee, Wellness Council, the OPHS Our Future student club, and the MCMS ASB all worked together on this year's theme of **Food Waste**. Over 40% of the food produced in the world goes to waste, while millions of people continue to suffer from starvation and food insecurity. Lessons were presented that outlined the problem and generated solutions. Our cafeterias offered free sample bowls of Imperfectly Perfect Vegetable

Soup and raw imperfect vegetables. Imperfect veggies may have visual flaws but are perfectly delicious. Growers, markets, and restaurants throw away tons of these each year and we often do this at home as well. The OPHS Our Future club students have been participating in farm 'gleaning' projects, where they volunteer to collect fruits and vegetables left after the harvest and donate them to families in need. Families were invited to participate in an online survey on the topic. Many secondary students donated to a local food bank when they purchased their lunches.



TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Oak Park Unified School District completed some major projects this summer, which has enabled us to start the school year off with unprecedented levels of access for students to mobile computing technologies. The refresh of 10-year-old classroom network switches and the expansion of the district's WiFi network, which allows every classroom to have its own dedicated WiFi access point, caps a three-year project to completely revamp the district's data networks to provide a solid foundation for student centered mobile computing.

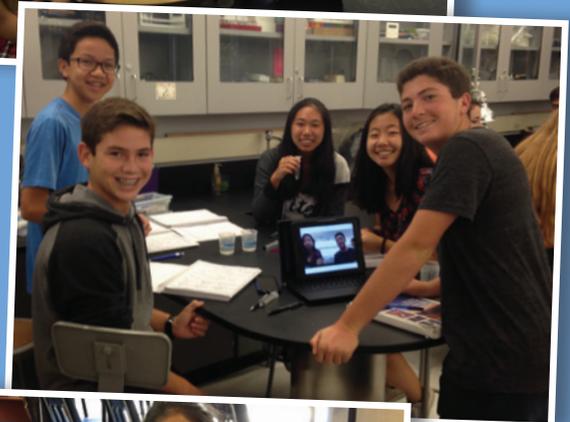
With the addition of 1000 more Chromebooks and iPads this summer, the district began the year with most classrooms having access to sets of computing devices that reside in the classroom:

1. All elementary classrooms K-5 have at least 10 iPads in a mobile learning center
2. All middle and high school English classrooms have Chromebook carts enabling each student in those classes to access their own Chromebook during class (1-to-1 Chromebooks)
3. All high school science classrooms have 1-to-1 student mobile devices, either Chromebooks or iPads

4. All TechLITE teachers (Technology Leaders Integrating Tech into Education) have 1-to-1 mobile computers in their classrooms (either iPads or Chromebooks)

Teachers around the District are utilizing technology to provide innovative, engaging, and collaborative lessons with increasing frequency due to the support of dedicated instructional technology specialists. These specialists go into classrooms alongside the teacher and help them to identify, design, and deliver lessons that utilize the capabilities of the new technology in powerful ways. The District has set up a twitter feed @oakparkusd and using the hashtag #opshares to showcase the fantastic new learning opportunities and experiences that students are engaging in.

Oak Park USD students, teachers, and administrators are grateful for the support of the community which has made all of this innovative teaching and learning possible.



JACQUI IRWIN VISIT

Assemblymember, Jacqui Irwin recently visited Oak Park High School. She toured the school and visited our Computer Programming and Animation class as well as our Journalism class. She was interested in our new 'I' buildings that were installed under Measure R. These seven classrooms are made from recycled

shipping containers and replaced six aging portable classrooms. The project finished on time, on budget, and the classrooms generate as much energy as they use making them 'net zero buildings' due to ultra high-efficiency designs and the use of solar panels on the roof.

CHALLENGE SUCCESS NIGHT

Everyone is invited to a special presentation by Stanford University Challenge Success speaker, Margaret Dunlap on Monday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m. at Oak Park High School Pavilion. The program is entitled, The Well Balanced Student.

The Well-Balanced Student

Today's high-pressure, fast-paced culture can interfere with healthy child development. When we are too focused on test scores, performance, and grades, we may deny kids the time and energy they need to effectively tackle the demanding work of growing up. This workshop examines the tensions that can occur between students, parents, and educators over issues such as homework, grades, and the culture of competition. We'll offer parents research-based strategies to create healthier home and school environments.

In this presentation, you will learn:

- How students today are coping- or not- with the academic pressure they face
- Ways you can reduce academic stress without sacrificing achievement or engagement in school
- Strategies to increase resilience, creativity, and well-being for your child

Target Audience: Parents of kids in grades pre-k through high school

Margaret Dunlap, M.A. is Schools Program Director for Challenge Success. She oversees the operation of the schools program, providing coordination, resources, and management to Challenge Success schools. Additionally, she plans the bi-annual Challenge Success school conferences and supports coaches and school site teams to promote best practices and policy reform. She has extensive experience in professional development, supervision, evaluation, and intensive coaching for teacher leaders, coaches, and novice teachers. Margaret has held various roles in education leadership and program management within public and private education for over 20 years.



SUICIDE PREVENTION

September was Suicide Prevention Month at Oak Park High School. Counselors at Oak Park High School coordinated the following activities promoting suicide prevention awareness and education. Suicide Prevention bracelets with Strength & Hope written on them, as well as a suicide prevention facts flyer, were distributed to students and staff. Weekly announcements that provided suicide prevention facts. Banners were hung around campus with positive affirmations. Students and staff wore **Turquoise and Purple**, which symbolizes suicide awareness and prevention.

Guest Speaker, Norine Vanderhooover from Engage Therapy, came to speak to students and parents educating them on warning signs and how to help others who may be at risk of suicide.

THANK YOU BARRY MYERSON!

Barry Myerson is the founder of our education foundation, Friends of Oak Park Schools and chair for the last ten years. Barry is a true visionary and has provided outstanding leadership of the foundation. Friends has raised over \$1 million to support Oak Park schools. Barry is stepping aside as chair and turning the gavel over to Ryan Rosen this fall.

The Board of Education recognized and thanked Barry at the October Board meeting.





SOLAR POWER SAVINGS ABOVE PROJECTIONS

The solar shade structure at Oak Park High School and the solar panels on the seven new iBuilding classrooms facing the Great Lawn are generating more solar power than originally projected. So far, this year alone, they have saved \$26,000 in electrical costs by generating 182,368 kWh of electricity. According to the EPA this converts into 282,553 lbs. of CO2 saved, or enough energy to power 19 homes for a year, or the amount of carbon sequestered by 121 acres of forest in one year.

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

This summer, OPUSD earned the Sustainability Award from Senator Fran Pavley for the 3rd time! This time it was for our new **Integrated Pest Management** program adopted by the Board in June. The new policy restricts the use of any herbicide, insecticide, or rodenticide at any of our campuses. Instead, new methods that involve prevention are being implemented and so far, with great success. All teachers and staff have been instructed in how to use safe and natural methods to deal with any issues and have been provided with a tool kit. Oak Park USD is concerned about the health and safety of our students, staff, local wildlife and the ecosystem. Many thanks to Poison Free Malibu and the National Park Service for their help and advice. Important to Note – never use rodenticides to try to control rats and gophers. Many wild animals including birds of prey and mountain lions have been sickened and killed from re-ingesting rodenticides from sick or dead rodents.



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BRING US YOUR RECYCLING!

You may always drop off small electronic waste items such as; old cell phones, tablets, other electronic devices, printer ink, toner cartridges, and household batteries (place in a Ziploc bag) at all of the schools. These items should never be placed in the trash as they contaminate the environment when dumped in landfills. We will see that they are sent for proper recycling.

Used clothing, any fabric, shoes, belts, and/or purses may be placed in the USAgain bins at all of the schools. Did you know that over 80% of used clothing ends up in landfills? USAgain ensures that usable items find new homes and items beyond use are recycled into something new.

Is your flag looking faded and tattered? You may deliver your flags to the school offices and we will send them to a special recycling center. Flags should not be burned for disposal due to the many chemicals that are used in their production these days. Of course, the American flag should never be denigrated by placing it in the trash for disposal.

STAY CONNECTED WITH OAK PARK SCHOOLS

OPUSD wants to connect with you! Follow us as we highlight the great work taking place on our campuses.

Be ready to be awed and inspired by our staff and students.

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