

# SCHOOL WATCH

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

**Fall 2013 Edition**



## **COMMUNITY CLOTHING AND SHOE RECYCLING**

All of the schools now have outdoor bins where you can deposit all used and unwanted clothing and shoes. Other items that can be included are towels, sheets, blankets, rags, purses, belts, etc. Any textile and leather goods are fine as well. The OPUSD Environmental Education and Awareness Committee will be paid for the items and the funds will be spent at the schools for gardens, recycling, and other environmental projects. The donated items will be sorted by USAgain and sold to thrift shops in the U.S. and abroad. Unsalable items will be recycled into other products here in California. The program is a win-win for everyone involved because it prevents these items from ending up in the landfills (86% of clothing and

shoes in the U.S. are placed in the trash and go to landfills), it creates jobs, and it provides needed items at very low cost for people in need. Bins are available anytime. Thank you for your support!

## **SIGN UP FOR EMAILS AND ALL CALLS**

If you would like to be added to the OPUSD email list/all-call list, please e-mail Linda Sheridan at [lsheridan@oakparkusd.org](mailto:lsheridan@oakparkusd.org) with your name, e-mail address and phone number. We send a judicious number emails about various school happenings and accomplishments of our students. We also send alerts and messages regarding public safety that are useful to parents and the community. You may unsubscribe at any time.



## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

PREPARING AMERICA'S STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN OAK PARK

By Assistant Superintendent Dr. Leslie Heilbron

California is one of 49 states throughout the country to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These states realized the need to work collaboratively to develop standards that enable all students to acquire the necessary skills to succeed in today's global society. These Kindergarten-to-12th grade standards define the educational goals for our students and a new way to ensure those goals are attained.

This is not a new concept - for decades educators and policy makers have debated the importance of articulated, ambitious common standards. In 1959 President Eisenhower discussed the advantages of a national and common understanding of educational goals to help the next generation compete globally!

In August 2010 the California Board of Education began the process of adopting the Common Core State Standards. This came in response to the changing nature of work, technology and competition in the global market and research citing the United States

is one of the few developed countries lacking national educational standards and a consistent level of achievement to determine proficiency. These Common Core Standards are internationally benchmarked and modeled after the most effective practices both in this country and worldwide. According to The Common Core Initiative's website, the standards

- Are aligned with college and work expectations
- Are clear, understandable and consistent
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build on strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Are informed by other top-performing countries so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Are evidence based

We have developed a three-year implementation process in Oak Park. Our transition process includes professional development for all staff, the purchase of additional instructional materials and additional training and funding for technology. The State is providing a Common Core Grant to each school District to be used within the next two years for training, materials and technology.

Oak Park USD is embracing the standards for several reasons, the chief of which is that the student learning experiences are focused on critical thinking skills, problem-solving, collaboration, and more authentic learning - these have been long-time District goals.



### DRIVE FOR CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES

A drive was quickly organized to raise funds for UNICEF's disaster relief efforts in the Philippines following Super Typhoon Haiyan. Students at all of the schools brought in loose change and currency for a project that is focused on the estimated 4.4 million children affected by the disaster. Our goal was to raise \$1 per student, \$4669! The drive is in progress as we are writing this newsletter. This drive and others like it help our students learn the important lessons of helping others in time of need.



### **BROOKSIDE HONORS VETERANS**

Brookside's all school assembly on November 4 was dedicated to Veterans. Fifth graders facilitated the assembly and sang patriotic songs and the student council collected "Socks & Starbucks for Soldiers".

### **RED OAK 20TH ANNIVERSARY**

We are excited to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Red Oak Elementary School this school year. Alumni, families and friends are especially invited to come for a short celebration (birthday cake included) after school at 3:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 4. Mark your calendars!



### **BATTERY AND SMALL ELECTRONIC DEVICE RECYCLING**

Don't throw away your household batteries, ink cartridges, cell phones, tablets, or other small electronic devices! All of the Oak Park Schools

will gladly accept those items in boxes that are conveniently located in the offices. The District Office has also has a box. These items can all be recycled and create a hazard when placed in the trash and end up in landfills. PLEASE PUT BATTERIES IN ZIPLOCK BAGS. Thank You!

### **OPERATION GRATITUDE DRIVE**

Over 500 lbs. of candy was collected from the schools by the Community Outreach Committee right after Halloween, sorted, boxed, and delivered to Operation Gratitude. OG will deliver the candy to troops serving in Afghanistan as a small token of remembrance and appreciation from home.



### **ENERGY SAVINGS**

As schools are being repaired and modernized under bond Measure R, OPUSD is installing cool roof systems, energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, double-pane windows, and 'smart' irrigation systems that receive data from weather satellites to determine when and how much water to apply. These measures have resulted in significant savings of water and energy. For example, in July and August of this year, we saved over 1.5 million gallons of water as compared to last summer. In terms of energy, we are using about 284,000 kwh less of electricity per year as compared to 2008/09, even though we have nearly 1000 more students. That is the equivalent of approximately 300,000 lbs. of CO2 emissions per year.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE – Oak Park Ranks in Top 10**

The 2013/14 school year is off to a great start. Recent student performance data issued by the state ranked Oak Park USD in the top 10 school districts out of 1000 in the State of California. Our elementary school children rank in the top 3 in the state in reading and mathematics achievement. The data continues to show that Oak Park has a special chemistry that results in student achievement and success that is extraordinary. The API or Academic Performance Index of the District is 929 this last year and our average SAT score for graduating seniors was 1835, which is higher than many of the most prestigious private schools in the area and 334 points higher than the state average. The College Board just this month named Oak Park USD as one of 477 school Districts in the United States on the Annual AP Honor Roll List. This is being conferred because of our high pass rate on Advanced Placement exams. Since 2011, the school has increased the number of students participating in the AP program by 20%, while improving the percentage of students earning AP exam scores of 3 or higher by 16%. While Oak Park USD strives to ensure all students are able and prepared to attend a four-year college upon graduation, more importantly, we work to help students find their passions in life and the appropriate pathways to take them to meaningful life work.

Oak Park Schools have continued to offer more advanced classes and provide more opportunities for students even in the face of massive state budget cuts for several reasons. These include, keeping the school populations at their optimum levels through the District of Choice program, the Measure C Parcel Tax, Measure C6 and Measure R bond programs, support from our educational foundation, Friends of Oak Park Schools, support from parent-teacher organizations at each of the schools, and through the many fine volunteers that work in our schools each day.

The Ventura County Transportation Department has started the new Kanan Shuttle to help alleviate traffic on Kanan Road at peak school hours and to provide a public transportation access route in and out of the community. The shuttle is free through November and December and a nominal fare may begin after the first of the year. We owe much gratitude to supervisor Linda Parks for her dedication to this project. The Shuttle is attracting over 400 riders a day and an additional shuttle was recently added!

Dr. Tony Knight  
Superintendent  
Oak Park Unified School District

## **OAK PARK USD IS CHEMICAL-FREE**

OPUSD does not use any synthetic chemicals in our gardens or landscaping. No Round-Up, no high-nitrogen chemical fertilizers. Why? Mainly because we care deeply about the health and well-being of our children and staff and we do not want to expose them to known or potentially harmful substances. Another reason is that Oak Park is located at the head of the Malibu Creek watershed and chemicals distributed on landscaping typically end up in the creek from run-off, either from the rain or from excessive watering. Medea Creek (the creek – not the school), for example has issues with algae blooms, which are often caused by too much nitrogen and phosphates in the water. OPUSD also uses only organic fertilizers on turf and landscape, which are considered much safer for the students who play on the turf and also for the watershed. The Landscape Committee of the Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) has currently asked the landscape company who maintains the medians to use alternative methods for weed control as a pilot program and so is Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks.

How about helping Oak Park go completely CHEMICAL-FREE?

For homeowners you can ask your gardener not to use these chemicals and to use alternatives or buy them yourself and provide them to him. If you care for your own yard, organic fertilizers are commonly available and you can help your yard to thrive at the same time as helping the creek and watershed. If you feel you need a weed killer, you can buy organic weed killers such as BurnOut online easily. For those of you in condos, maybe this is something to bring up at your next association meeting?

A group of students at Oak Park High School is working on this project, learning about the local watershed, testing water quality in the creek, and offering resources for residents. To learn more about this, you can visit their booth at the Sustainability Fair that will be held on Super Saturday, February 1, at Oak Park High School.



## CAMPUS SECURITY

Campus security and situational awareness will be greatly improved by the installation of video surveillance cameras at each school without the need to resort to costly, unsightly, and impersonal fencing. The District is in the process of pilot testing a new internet connected high definition video surveillance system at the District Office that will allow campus supervisors and administrators to monitor what is going on wirelessly through their iPads. Some of the surveillance cameras will have built-in infrared illuminators to allow night vision over critical parts of the campus. Preliminary results are very encouraging and the District is working with the vendor to create a proposal for extending this system to every campus in the District.

Additional Campus Supervisors have been added to each school so that schools have supervisors patrolling even when students are in class. All staff now wear easily identifiable ID badges and we will be installing new kiosks in each school office that will produce temporary ID badges for visitors and volunteers after a scan of a drivers license is made.

As a community, the best way to improve safety at our schools is vigilance....

## ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Oak Park High School has been invited for the first time ever to participate in the Anti-Defamation League's Grosfeld Family National Youth Leadership Mission. Five of our current juniors were chosen to join 100 student delegates from 10 ADL regions across the country to take part in the mission at the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., from Sunday, November 17 to Wednesday November 20th, 2013. In 1998, ADL's Chicago office launched the annual National Youth Leadership Mission. This innovative program brings a diverse group of high school juniors to our nation's capital to learn about the Holocaust and ways to fight prejudice in schools and communities. The centerpiece of the Youth Mission is a guided tour of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. In addition to dramatically portraying the events of the period,

the Museum provides a backdrop for exploring issues of bigotry and extremism in America today. As a means of motivating students to fight prejudice and intolerance in their own lives and schools, they also examine historical and modern-day examples of moral courage, and visit with prominent national and community leaders as well as with activists. Each speaker addresses specific ways students can work to promote pluralism and equality in their communities. We are very proud to share with you the recipients of this incredible honor and opportunity. They each went through a rigorous interview process and have distinguished themselves as true leaders and worthy ambassadors of Oak Park High School. We congratulate these five amazing young people; Maris Paden, Michelle Velasquez, Rachel Cohen, Ben Winck, and Russell Tagawa.

## TECHNOLOGY IS PERVASIVE IN OAK PARK USD CLASSROOMS

By Enoch Kwok,  
Director of Educational Technology



The Technology Department has been busy this fall with several new initiatives. In line with the Technology Master Plan, all teaching staff across the District were given training and issued temporary "loaner" iPads over the summer to begin familiarizing themselves with this new mobile computing tool. Technology Leader teachers (also known as TechLITEs – Leaders Integrating Technology into Education) have been identified at each school (16 in all) and receive extra training

and support so that they can be coaches, trainers, and technology integration resources for the staff at their site. This is just the first step in building the infrastructure necessary for moving toward a student 1-to-1 mobile computing initiative.

The TechLITEs at each site have been sharing a single Learning Center set of iPads (10 iPads) as they begin to explore and identify high quality apps and develop best practices for how students can use iPads to improve learning and engagement. The District is in the process of purchasing another round of iPads (approx. 400 units) to broaden the distribution of an iPad Learning Centers to each TechLITE, and to allow the teachers to receive the latest generation iPads .

Once the TechLITEs have had time to develop their own proficiency with iPad Learning Centers in their own classrooms, the next steps involve plans to make another round of iPad purchases (about 600 devices) to expand the distribution of iPad Learning Centers into additional classrooms. We recognize the best learning takes place when the iPads are in the hands of the students, and not only the teacher. More information about the District's iPad deployment program can be found at the District's iPad Resources webpage at <http://www.oakparkusd.org>.

Alongside the iPad rollout, the Technology Department has been working to define and design a network infrastructure that will be able to support an eventual 1-to-1 mobile computing initiative. The District is honing in on an upgraded wired network design, which will then enable it to subsequently deploy a next generation wireless network capable of handling over 4700 mobile devices District-wide.

The upgraded network will also service two additional new initiatives that are currently undergoing pilot tests. The District desperately needs to upgrade its aging and failing telephone system and will be testing out a new hosted Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system by Jive Networks in early December. If the Jive system passes the pilot, the District may move forward to deploy the hosted VOIP telephone system District-wide in July 2014. Not only will the new VOIP system provide advanced features such as email integrated voicemail messaging and sophisticated auto-attendant and call routing features, the District will shift the burden of maintaining costly equipment to the hosted provider while saving significant sums of money required to procure and operate a traditional on-premise telephone system.

Finally, the technology department has been keeping a constant watch over the technology requirements for Common Core testing which will be debuting this Spring and will be working with teachers and administrators to ensure that there are enough computers of various types to conduct the testing while also preparing students for the new rigors and skills required to succeed with the new testing regime.



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