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School News

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Covering the Monrovia Unified School District

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Getting Focused to Achieve Our Goals

By Dr. Katherine Thorossian
Superintendent

The final stretch of the year in the Monrovia Unified School District is a time when we look back to gauge progress while looking forward to plan ahead. Witnessing the intentional and engaging lessons taught by dedicated teachers is a constant source of pride. Building on that solid foundation, our school leaders remain urgent about instilling a continuous cycle of improvement to increase the achievement of every student. Our educators live in a world in which their work is literally never done, and a relentless approach to improvement has to become the driver of their professional pursuits.

In support of this important work, each of our schools has been participating in monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to explore and establish a common leadership framework. In this edition of *School News Roll Call*,



MUSD staff members are lifelong learners.

our principals will share some significant parts of their improvement stories and invite their learning communities to join them. Their hope is to ensure that every student, parent, staff member, and community member gains some insight into how to support the efforts on each campus to make powerful and exciting learning experiences happen in every classroom every day.

The framework is centered on a concept called an “instructional focus.” In short, the idea is that schools often struggle because they are trying to do too much; thus, are spread too thin and need to narrow what they are doing to get the best results. Following lessons learned from the most effective schools across the country, the leadership team at each school has led their staff to identify and implement a school-wide instructional focus this year. You have likely seen evidence of this work starting to show in the halls and classrooms of your child’s school. Be sure to ask your son or daughter about the focus at his or her school.

We are excited about the work in each of our schools and invite you to read on to learn more. We greatly value the learning that occurs at home, outside the school day, and want to build a strong partnership with the families of our students. Together we can build a great future for Monrovia—one child at a time.

Honoring Our Teachers

By Dr. Arturo Delgado, Superintendent
LA County Office of Education

On May 11, educators around the state marked the 34th anniversary of California’s Day of the Teacher.

California’s Day of the Teacher is patterned after the celebration of the traditional El Dia del Maestro, which is observed in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

It arose out of legislation authored by Sen. Joseph Montoya and co-sponsored by the California Teachers Association and the Association of Mexican American Educators in 1982.

At the Los Angeles County Office of Education, we honored our teachers who work very hard to instill in our students an appreciation of our society’s cultural diversity, a love of learning, and the skills to pursue productive lives.

I started my career in education as a teacher, and the occasion reminded me why I became one. I became a teacher because I had amazing teachers who were able to shine a light of hope and inspiration in my young life.

Most of us remember the special teachers who touched our lives. We recall the way they made us feel and how they encouraged and challenged us. They helped us become who we are today.

Teachers care for their students well after the school day ends. They put in long hours finding new ways to make lessons come alive. They work hard to build relationships with students’ families to make sure the students have the support that they need at home.

These are just a few examples of how teachers go above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in their students’ lives.

As one of our past Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year, Rebecca Mieliwocki, who went on to become the 2012 National Teacher of the Year, said: “A schoolteacher is the best tax-dollar bargain you will ever get. If you want to see tax dollars hard at work. Come into a classroom and see what’s going on.”

With headquarters in Downey, the Office is the nation’s largest regional educational agency, providing a range of programs and services to support the county’s 80 public school districts and 2 million preschool and school-age children.



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Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



In this issue about critical thinking, family literacy night, the importance of reading with children at home, and much more.

It is hard to believe we are nearing the end of another school year. Thank you for including School News among your reading choices. We look forward to next year bringing you the excellence directly from the classroom. Our next issue is September 14. Have a wonderful summer!

Congratulations Class of 2016!

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Bradoaks *Elementary*

930 East Lemon Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2100 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Aimee Dyrek
Principal

Read! Read! Read!

Bradoaks Elementary School continues to promote our instructional focus. The Bobcats are roaring readers and future leaders! This theme was kicked off on national Accelerated Reader Read Quest Day and Dr. Seuss' birthday! On this day, our staff, students, and families started off with a flag ceremony, in which we rolled out our theme, complete with confetti canons. Children spent the day doing various reading activities. The school community dressed up in costumes inspired by literature or in pajamas. Banners are now displayed on campus promoting our school-wide slogan and defining our instructional goal.



Our staff has committed to ensuring that daily instruction will be purposeful and focused on fluency, comprehension, critical thinking, and problem solving. Our goal is to see substantial growth through multiple measures, Standardized Testing And Reporting (STAR), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), common assessments, and the California Assessment Student Performance and Progress (CAASP). The Bradoaks staff is reaching these goals by implementing best practices; cooperative learning strategies, Sustained Structured Silent Reading, direct instruction, and data-driven intervention.

We are proud of each student's growth so far! Families can support this progress by reading at home daily, visiting the library, and dialoging about what the children are reading. We thank the community for all the support! Read! Read! Read!

Canyon Oaks H.S./Mountain Park/ Monrovia Community Adult

930 Royal Oaks Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-3000 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Get On the Bus!

On March 15, the district's Alternative Education Programs (Canyon Oaks High School, Mountain Park School, and Monrovia Community Adult School) hosted a fantastic evening that invited students, parents, community, and Board members to "Get on the Bus!" The event was our opportunity to highlight the great Vocational Pathway programs currently being offered at Monrovia Community Adult School.

Each portion of the program highlighted classes students could take in preparation for the programs while in high school as well as the classes required to take to complete certification in each program. Presentations also included the many employment opportunities available to students who complete the programs.

Those in attendance visited classrooms including pharmacy technician and video production. The wonderful event finished off with a physical bus ride to experience the classroom setting for construction.

Canyon *Early Learning Center*

1000 South Canyon Blvd., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2001 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Mariana Sanchez
Director

Spring has Sprung

While the weather has been a little unpredictable lately, it has not dampened our children's excitement and energy!

Spring is the perfect time to introduce children to the life cycles of a variety of plants and animals. It affords them the opportunity to explore the changes in their natural environment by observing the blooming of flowers, the ladybugs in the gardens, and the sprouting of seeds.

Our children are learning about the life cycle of plants through books, planting seeds, nurturing seedlings, and charting growth. They've learned to identify and label the different parts of the plant, and discussed what plants need to help them grow.

The children have also learned about the life cycle of a butterfly from its beginning as an egg, then to the caterpillar stage, then chrysalis, and finally a butterfly. They have documented this metamorphosis through drawings, paintings, books, and playdough. The three-year-old children also had the added pleasure of releasing the butterflies into our garden!



Clifton *Middle School*

226 South Ivy Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2600 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Jennifer Jackson
Principal

Critical Thinkers

We, at Clifton Middle School, have developed an instructional focus statement in response to the ever-changing needs of our learners with the full implementation of the Common Core Standards.

As a staff we are committed to having students become critical thinkers who use evidence in their writing in every class in order to respond to real world scenarios.

We encourage families to engage their child in conversations about real world issues that allow them to state an opinion and support that opinion with relevant facts as often as possible.

Clifton Middle School welcomes families to reach out to teachers with questions and/or concerns in addition to asking students about themes and topics they are focusing on in their classes.



Monroe *Elementary*

402 West Colorado Blvd., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2300 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Cynthia Lathrop
Principal

Today a Reader, Tomorrow a Leader

The instructional focus at Monroe Elementary School is reading comprehension. We believe that academic success requires strong proficiency in reading. To that end, Monroe teachers collaborate to ensure that all students fluently read, understand, analyze, and respond to grade-level text in Spanish and English. Student success is monitored and measured frequently by performance on district, site, and state assessments. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade are demonstrating steady improvement on these assessments.



First grade readers at Monroe

Parents can help. Read every day with your child at home. Provide your child with a variety of reading materials. Visit the library regularly.

Monroe School has opened its doors to promote family literacy. Our school library and computer lab are open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Monroe's librarian and a bilingual teacher are available to help families and give them access to books and computers.

Monrovia *High School*

845 West Colorado Blvd., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2800 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Kirk McGinnis
Principal

Critical Thinkers, Problem Solvers

At Monrovia High School, the campus, classrooms, teachers and students are all showing a schoolwide focus to creating "Critically Thinking Scholars and Champion Problem Solvers". A coordinated effort among all staff on campus to provide opportunities to develop these skills in our students has become the topic of conversations among students and is the topic of professional development for teachers. By focusing our instructional efforts into three areas—critical thinking, academic vocabulary and perseverance—we will be ensuring

that our Wildcats are prepared to excel in life. We know that these are the skills that colleges and employers are demanding in the leaders of tomorrow, and our goal is to create a learning community that supports the teaching and practice of these skills.

One strategy that is in every classroom that supports critical thinking and problem solving is Accountable Talk. Recent research supports a deeper understanding of classroom content when students use academic language and engage in classroom-based discussions with their peers. This style of teaching and learning prepares our students to meet the varied needs of the 21st century classrooms and workplaces.

So, when you come across a Monrovia High School student, expect to have a great conversation!

Mayflower *Elementary*

210 North Mayflower Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2200 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Dr. Tamar Kataroyan
Principal

Celebrating the New Season

Spring has officially begun, and the celebrations at Mayflower continue to blossom!

As we continue to embrace the Common Core Standards, our staff has identified the school's instructional focus: Mayflower Elementary will collaborate to ensure that all of its students will "Read Actively and Think Critically" through evidence-based practices.

Student success will be measured by CAASPP performance levels, Dibels, and SRI assessments. Our teachers and students have been working extremely hard in the classrooms to help get ready. We are confident that, with the support of our Mayflower families, this will result in increased student achievement and growth.

In March, we hosted a beautiful open house for all of our families. Here we showcased the amazing work that the students demonstrate in our classrooms every day. In addition, our student leadership teams also led the school in a fun-filled College and Career Week. Each day included several activities and demonstrations that focused on college and career awareness.



Kids having fun at annual walkathon!

We also had a blast embracing "NCAA March Madness" fever at Mayflower. We want to thank our staff, parents, and fabulous PTA for their time, dedication, and love for our school. With such a strong backbone, there isn't anything we feel we can't accomplish. Let's Celebrate 365!

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Wild Rose *Elementary*

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Stacy Ayers
Principal

Where Great Things are Happening

In May, Wild Rose Elementary School will receive a Gold Ribbon Award from State Superintendent Tom Torlakson. Our school is now decorated with new banners that show off our instructional focus of “GRRR.” This stands for “Growing in Reading, Reasoning, and Responding,” and we will soon have the new Gold Ribbon validation over the main hall doors as well!

Wild Rose has the goal of 100 percent of its students showing growth in reading. As such, every second- to fifth-grade student will be taking the Scholastic Reading Inventory, which measures Lexile Levels. Likewise, the K-2 students are also taking diagnostic reading assessments. Wild Rose is proud to report that 99 percent of the students are showing growth in reading!

Our families are also being encouraged to support reading growth by trying these powerful strategies:

For reading, exercise 30 minutes of Drop Everything and Read Time. Everyone in the house should pick up a book and read either silently or together.

For reasoning, ask your child “How” and “Why” questions about the books



they read. And for responding, have your child share their information about the book in complete sentences, and then have them write these sentences in a special reading journal.

The Wild Rose Library is open to our families on Family Literacy Lunch Days. Our families are welcome to check out books and receive information about how to support our instructional focus. Our librarian, Mrs. Angie, is available to help your child choose books at their reading level. Every student will also have summer homework to further support our reading goals.

Plymouth *Elementary*

1300 Boley St., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2400 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Suzanne Heck
Principal

Family Literacy Night

With Plymouth’s school-wide focus on reading deeply, as well as daily writing in detail, our students are becoming proficient writers. Each of them has shown growth on our most recent writing exam, and our writing scores have improved at each grade level. Some grade levels actually exceeded the district average!

To celebrate and encourage a culture of writing at our school, we recently decided to have a family literacy dinner in February. Writing consultant and educator Charlotte Knox, along with our Plymouth PTA, provided 40 of our families with dinner and a night of literacy learning. While the families dined on a delicious dinner, the students and parents were given a “bare book” to create a family volume of their own that emphasized literacy at home.

The students and parents had access to markers, stickers, tape, and magazines for collaging. The families were also asked to bring in family pictures to use as illustrations for their family book.

Charlotte emphasized the importance of a parent’s role in promoting a culture of writing at home. She encouraged parents to have their children write for a purpose, such as making lists, retelling a family event, making family slide shows, or writing thank-you notes. Also, when building literacy at home, make sure that you and your students have a variety of materials and photos. And of course, have fun and be creative!

Please contact your child’s teacher to find out more about writing at Plymouth, and how your child is progressing.

Santa Fe *Middle School*

148 West Duarte Rd., Monrovia, CA 91016 • 626/471-2700 • www.MonroviaSchools.net



Dr. Caroline Sweeney
Principal

Help at Home

In the age of the 21st-century learner, Santa Fe Middle School is focused on making our students into critical readers, writers, and thinkers. How do we do that? By honing their critical-thinking skills through the writing process.

Santa Fe’s instructional focus is a school-wide effort to have all students use evidence to support claims through document-based questions, formulaic writing, sentence frames, and lab analysis. Benchmarks, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium testing, and common formative assessments will be used to measure growth in all students. By getting students to focus on proving their position in all content areas, students are able to go beyond surface recall and delve deeper into material.

What can parents do to help their students? Ask them what they read today. Get them to verbally tell you what they are understanding, so they can eventually respond in writing. Review their homework to ensure that they have answered their questions by using the strategy of: Turning the question into a statement; Answering the question; and Proving it by providing evidence (TAP).

You can also review their Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) reading score and ensure that reading is happening every day at home. Students are analyzing what they read. The more they read, the more they know. Check School Loop to determine if your student is fully participating at Santa Fe. Teachers are always available to speak about your child’s progress and to give you tools you can use at home.

We would love for you to come and see how Santa Fe incorporates evidence-based claims into its everyday classrooms. Our Open House is Thursday, May 19, and all are welcome. Hope to see you there!

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Owl Singalong



Kate Karp

Adult Beluga Grads whose younger lives were enriched by Raffi's music will be very happy, particularly if they're parents, teachers or involved in any way with children. The beloved artist and children's advocate emerged from a 12-year hiatus in 2014 with his collection *Love Bug*, and he's following up with another planet- and child-centered theme in *Owl Singalong*.



The album was inspired by Raffi's little grandniece, Lucie, and her owl stuffed toy and also by the chorus of live hooting critters in his backyard. Those birds open the title song, a jaunty little melody inviting us to sing along. Choruses of human children and one or two adults join in on standards such as "The More We Sing Together" and other beloved songs that he's monkeyed—or verb-formed other animal species—with: "The Lion Pokey" and "The Dog on the Bus" are rendered with Raffi's brand of gentle silliness that has always endeared him to children.

Raffi presents his versatile voice in so many different ways, whether it's imitating a gruff lion, crooning like Rudy Vallee on "See the Moon," or entertaining with Pete Seeger's celebrated retelling of the South African folktale "Abiyoyo."

And as always, Raffi will leave gentle lessons for little Belugas and Grads of any age: "Green Dream" is his wish for the future for all his young listeners. And from "I'm Not Small": "I carry the world on my back. When it turns, I'll turn, too."

So simple, so wise, and so very Raffi.

Kate Karp is an editor for *School News Roll Call* and a freelance writer and editor.

Magical!



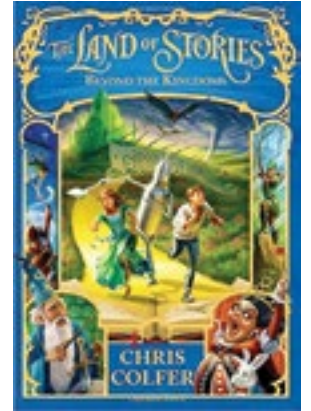
Lucy Davis

The Land of Stories – Beyond the Kingdoms

Author: Chris Colfer

The Masked man uses a portal potion to jump from story to story to recruit a powerful army of the worst fairytale villains!

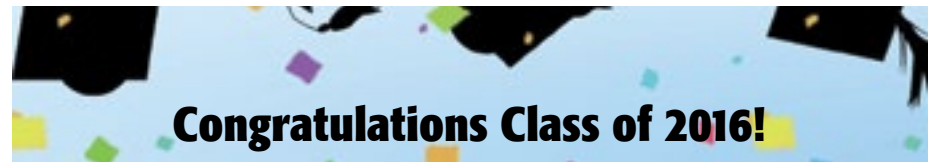
Alex has been un-godmothered, so she and Conner are in trouble. No one believes her except Mother Goose. Conner, Alex and Mother Goose along with a few other friends they make along the way, follow the Masked Man through some of literature's most loved fairytales. Meanwhile, Bree discovers a family secret that you just won't believe.



The author delivers another MAGICAL book, while using different fairytales than the first three books of the Land of Stories series. The book jumps back and forth from one setting to another so you must pay attention to what's happening. For those that haven't read the first three, I encourage you to do so before reading this book.

Another five bookworms out of five, it's a brilliant read!

Lucy Davis is a 4th grade student. Besides reading, she enjoys riding her bike, theatre, and playing guitar. Lucy will rate the books 1 to 5 bookworms with 5 being the best.



Summer Fun Word Search Contest

Rules! One word in the list is NOT in the word search. When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that word you email to: Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com (Please put Monrovia in the subject line.)

Entries must be received by June 15, 2016
From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes & Noble.

- | | | |
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| Awesome | Lessons | Sunscreen |
| Barbeque | Lifeguard | Surfing |
| Beach | Picnics | Swimming |
| Fireworks | Pool | Vacation |
| Fun | Popsicles | Volleyball |
| Hot | Sand | Water |
| Ice Cream | Summer | Wave |
| Lemonade | Sunny | |

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Winner of the April Word Search Contest!



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