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Covering the Los Alamitos Unified School District

Volume 16, Issue 83

October / November 2019



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Better Together



Dr. Andrew Pulver
Superintendent

It is a privilege to work in Los Al with outstanding staff and for a Board of Education that is committed to providing the very best opportunities for students. Every summer, the Board of Education meets with Executive Cabinet members to assess our current needs, review a variety of student data from the previous year and sharpen a collective vision for the new year. We use this information to update our District Priority Goals. The Board ensures that the

goals represent what our families want for their children, what our community wants from its schools, and what our teachers and staff need to continue their exemplary work. Our theme this year is Better Together as we believe working together and embracing our unity makes us and our District community stronger. The five priority goals include:

1. Passionately pursue academic excellence from all students.
2. Ensure an inclusive, safe, healthy, secure, and substance-free environment.
3. Enhance communication processes to engage, inform, and educate all stakeholders.
4. Provide high quality facilities to meet the educational needs of students.
5. Manage and allocate financial resources to maximize students' educational experiences.

We are passionately committed to cultivating an inclusive culture for all students filled with kindness, compassion, empathy, and respect for one another. We want students and families to feel welcome on our campuses and know that we embrace and value them as part of our Los Al Family. We know that the more we learn and listen to other peoples' experiences and perspectives, the more we understand how better to serve our community. We believe that students cannot thrive and achieve at their best when they are not emotionally, socially and physically, safe. We have a team of mental health therapists, counselors and psychologist that are available to support our students at each site and have added programs, such as the Sixth Grade Summit, Middle School CARES, Start with Hello, PEACE Week, A for the Day, Buddy Benches and more. More work is needed, however, and we are committed to a culture of acceptance, positive change, inclusion and ongoing improvement.

Last spring, we formed a Human Relations Task Force which, in partnership with our families, staff, students, administration, community members and our Human Relations Consultant, is investigating and exploring new ideas, programs, restorative practices, and events aimed at uniting us, not dividing us. The synergy of people coming together and working together enhances our community and makes us strong. In Los Al USD, we are Better Together!

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Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



Neta Madison
Netragrednik

Welcome back to a new school year. By now the students are settled into their routines focused on literacy, building school culture, performing arts, STEM, and so much more. It is going to be another exciting year!

On page 3 Superintendent Pulver begins this issue with the District's

Five Priority Goals to continue to provide the very best opportunities for LAUSD students. On page 5 the Board of Education President, Diana D. Hill, gives you an overview of the projects underway thanks to the passing of Measure G Bond.

Our next issue is December 11.

School News

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Covering the

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FOUNDER/PUBLISHER: Kay Coop
562/493-3193 • kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com

ADVERTISING SALES: 562/493-3193

CONTENT COORDINATOR: Barbra Longiny

GRAPHIC DESIGNER/PRODUCTION:
Gerald Villaluz and Emily Ung

COPY EDITORS:

Lisa Brock, Kate Karp & Anna Zappia

SOCIAL MEDIA: Nancy Lueder

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Measure G Brings Major Gains for Students

By Diana D. Hill, President

As I travel across our District visiting our nine schools, I am filled with excitement and pride at the transformation that I see underway.

Our community gave us a strong vote of confidence last year by passing the \$97-million Measure G bond, and we have begun putting those funds to work in projects big and small that will greatly enhance the ability of our students to excel in the Four As — Academics, Athletics, Activities and the Arts.

Much of the action is taking place at our 52-year-old Los Alamitos High School campus. We have completely overhauled the aging, overburdened data and electrical systems. The upgraded infrastructure will not only support the current needs of technology-based curriculum but allow for future expansion and adaptation needed to prepare our students for successful 21st-Century careers.

The disappearance of the familiar breezeway entrance to the high school is a sign that we also have begun Phase I of building a three-story classroom building that will provide students with state-of-the-art science lab facilities and transform the appearance of the front campus. The 83,000 square-foot structure — estimated to cost \$52.4 million — is planned to open in the fall of 2022 and will include 14 science classrooms, 13 general education classrooms, and career and technical education centers for subjects such as engineering and robotics. In addition, the building will serve as the main entrance to the

campus and house administrative, health and counseling offices, and career center, as well as a media center that will be designed to encourage a wide range of student collaboration activities.

Phase II of the classroom building will begin this Spring with demolition of the administration building and reconfiguration of the parking lot on the Cerritos Avenue side of the campus.

We also are well underway with construction of a new \$9.2-million high school Aquatics Center that will feature a competition pool complex, including bleacher seating, MUSCO lighting, a 3M competition diving platform and a classroom building. The complex is set to open by the start of school next year.

Finally, we are generating plans for a second gym that, in combination with the old building, will provide three additional courts for students to practice at school instead of having to be transported off-campus as they are now.

Elsewhere in the district, Measure G is also bearing fruit. We have replaced playgrounds at Rossmoor and Weaver elementary schools and soon will replace another at McGaugh. We also are adding restroom buildings at Los Alamitos Elementary and Hopkinson.

All of us in Los Alamitos Unified take seriously our obligation to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us by our community. The Measure G projects in the works show that we are doing our utmost for our students and that we are truly “Better Together.”



Rendering of Aquatic Center at Los Alamitos High School.



Rendering of three-story classroom building at Los Alamitos High School.



Newly constructed playground at Weaver Elementary in Rossmoor.

Seal Beach Animal Care Center

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Adopting Cats and Dogs

By Murlyn E. Burkes, Cat Committee Liaison

You want to adopt a pet, but how do you decide whether it should be a cat or a dog? Are you more of a dog person or a cat person? Cats and dogs have different needs and behaviors. All need attention, regular vet visits, food, cleanup and love.

If you like to travel or be away from home for long periods of time, a dog may not be for you. Boarding can be expensive, and leaving a dog at home alone all day might leave you with an unhappy pet. They need exercise, socialization and stimulation. Dogs need to be groomed and brushed, and their teeth need cleaning.

Cats adjust better to a house if a person travels or is away for long hours. They can have pet sitters who come one or two times a day to feed, clean litter and make sure water bowls are filled. Cats are independent, but they, too, need stimulation and play. Cats can live in smaller spaces. They do need a litter box in a private spot.

Whether you are a dog person, a cat person or both, one thing is for sure: both species are amazing. Everyone should have at least one of them in their lifetime.

Common Sense Media

Texting and Driving: A Killing Combination



Teens love to text. They'll send messages any time and anywhere. But if they text from behind the wheel of a car, the results could be deadly.

Studies show that texting and driving is as dangerous as drinking and driving. If you text while behind the wheel, you're 23 times more likely to crash.

Although many states have laws making it illegal to text while driving, teens (and many parents) still do it, even though they know it's dangerous. When teens are driving, any activity besides keeping their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel -- like emailing, downloading music, taking pictures -- is a huge no no.

So how can you make sure your teen is phone-free while behind the wheel?

- **Make it non-negotiable.** Teens need to understand that keys and phones simply do not mix. Let them know that distracted driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving.
- **Set clear rules.** Tell your teens to turn off their phones and put them in the glove box before they start the car. If you're not sure your teen has the will power to do this consistently, consider using apps that specifically restrict texting while driving.
- **Download an app that disables the phone when you're driving.** If you don't trust yourself, get an app that will keep you honest.
- **Set an example.** Resist the impulse to check your own phone while in traffic. Your kids are watching what you do. And chances are, they'll copy your behavior.

There's no denying that texting is here to stay. So managing when and where your kids do use their phones is critical -- not just for their development, but for their safety as well.

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Semra Bilsel
Branch Manager

There are lots of fun and exciting programs happening at the Los Alamitos / Rossmoor Library. Come by and check it out or give us a call at 562-430-1048!

Pumpkin Decorating

Drop in from 10am to 1pm, or 3pm to 6pm, to carve or decorate your pumpkin at the library! Make a traditional jack-o'-lantern or try one of our no-carve. We've got paint, glitter, glue, and more so you can get creative. We'll provide the space and supplies. You just need to bring your own pumpkin. Ages 4-12. Oct 30th – 10:00 – 1:00 pm and 3:00 – 6:00 pm

The Craft: Teen Candy Monsters

Ages 12-18 can stop by the library to get into the Halloween spirit by creating their own candy monsters. All supplies will be provided for a ghoulish good time. October 17th – 4:00 – 5:00 pm

The Craft: Teen Spa Day Workshop

Get in the holiday spirit by making bath bombs and bath scrubs. All materials will be provided, and a movie will be on hand. Open to ages 12-18 registration not required. December 10th – 4:00 5:00 pm

Kids Book Club

Open to ages 8 – 12, grab a copy of the book club choice at the Service Desk.

September 26th – 4:00 – 4:45 pm

October 24th 4-5pm

November 21st – 4:00-4:45pm

Teen Book Club

Join us as we discuss the chosen book or whatever you're reading. Open to ages 13-18, books can be found at the service desk. Snacks will be provided.

October 10th and November 7th – 4:00 – 4:30 pm



Teen Volunteer Training

Teens, ages 13-17, needing community service hours can attend a training session to sign up for shifts. Grab an application at the service desk and return it completed to the session. Must attend a session before able to sign up for shifts. November 7th and December 5th – 5:00 – 5:30 pm

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What Makes A Pregnancy High Risk?



Michael Nageotte, M.D.,
Associate Chief
Medical Officer,
MemorialCare
Miller Children's &
Women's Hospital
Long Beach

Each year, nearly 4 million babies are born in the U.S. The majority of women experience a routine pregnancy. However, some women experience medical difficulties, making their pregnancy high-risk. Conditions that cause a pregnancy to become high-risk can put mom and baby at an increased risk for complications. Factors that increase a woman's chance of having a high-risk pregnancy, include:

- Pre-existing health problems, such as diabetes, obesity or high blood pressure.
- Use of alcohol, illegal drugs or tobacco.
- The mother's age (younger than 17 or over 35).
- Multiple babies (i.e., twins or triplets).
- Multiple prior miscarriages.
- The baby being diagnosed with a genetic condition, poor growth or a physical malformation.
- Development of preterm labor or pre-eclampsia.
- Abnormal location of the placenta, especially with a previous cesarean section delivery.
- Problems during a previous pregnancy.

When a woman is diagnosed with a high-risk pregnancy, she'll need to see a physician with special training, like a maternal-fetal specialist, also known as a perinatologist. At the Cherese Mari Lauthere BirthCare Center at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, a maternal-fetal specialist is available in the hospital 24/7 to manage complex maternity and fetal care. Just down the hall from the delivery suites is a level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Our neonatologists and an expert care team are available to care for newborns and their families under one roof.

For more information about why women with high-risk pregnancies should choose Miller Children's & Women's, visit millerchildrens.org/OneRoof.



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At 26 weeks, Stephanie's water broke and she was rushed to her local hospital. At the recommendation of her doctor, Stephanie was transported to MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach. Maternal-fetal medicine specialists and neonatologists, who are in-house 24/7, delayed delivery, and Izabell was born at 33 weeks. Izabell was taken just down the hall to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit under the same roof as Stephanie – so mom and baby were never separated during their care.



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Hopkinson *Elementary*

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Evelyn Garcia
Principal

Musical Talents

In aligning with our district vision, Hopkinson Elementary School makes every effort to focus on the four As:

academics, athletics, activities and the arts. We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated half-time, credentialed music teacher, Mrs. Suzanne McElderry, who serves all students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Mrs. McElderry provides a comprehensive general music education to Hopkinson students, which includes vocal music, music history, instrument introduction, and instruction in keyboarding and the recorder for fourth- and fifth-grade students. Each grade level puts on a yearly musical celebration at a local auditorium, which includes



singing and dancing. Students in fourth and fifth grades can also choose to participate in the Hopkinson Chorus, which meets every Wednesday morning for 45 minutes before the start of school.

This year, I am excited to share that Mrs. McElderry has composed a Hopkinson song. Our Huskies love music and are having a blast learning their new school song.

Lee *Elementary*

11481 Foster Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4540 • www.losal.org



Amy Laughlin
Principal

Fun in the Outdoors

Lee Elementary School has an amazing working garden and outdoor innovation area where hundreds of students can experience hands-on learning.

A local Certified Master Gardener, Donna Halker, also volunteers each week to keep our garden growing! Donna and her team of gardeners work with groups of students

to support our science standards and provide students with the opportunity to sample foods they themselves harvested.

Recently, Lee created a Junior Master Gardener program for the fourth- and fifth-grade students. The Junior Master Gardeners work alongside our Master Gardener to assist the primary students in digging, planting, raking, and harvesting. The garden not only teaches students about our natural surroundings, it also provides leadership opportunities and enhances teamwork opportunities for those passionate about the environment.

We are grateful to our Scouting community, because they played a large role in building the garden! The original garden beds, the perimeter fencing, and the learning benches were all built by local Eagle Scouts.



Los Alamitos *Elementary*

10862 Bloomfield St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 714/816-3300 • www.losal.org



Gary Willems
Principal

The Place to Be!

Los Alamitos Elementary School is up and running for the 2019–20 school year. We have already had our annual Camp LAE, where families joined us to sleep at LAE on the field and enjoy a night of fun activities, with more than 600 in attendance.

We also have held our third annual Family Art Night, where students can come and

create six different pieces of art to bring home. This is a free event that highlights the Arts at LAE and promotes the district priority of the four A's (academics, athletics, activities and arts).

Last, LAE celebrated our Fit-A-Thon, which teaches students to make healthy eating choices and shows the importance of exercise. In addition to Fit-A-Thon teaching about healthy lifestyles, it is our biggest fund-raiser of the year and pays for part of our Media Center and MakerSpace teacher's salary. LAE is the place to be!



Los Alamitos *High School*

3591 Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4780 • www.losal.org



Christopher Vlasic
Principal

Back to School for 2019-2020

On Wednesday, August 28th, Griffin families descended upon the campus of Los Alamitos High School for an up-close and personal experience of classroom learning. Teachers opened up their classrooms for ten-minute periods for parents and guardians in order to introduce

themselves, present classroom expectations, and outline curriculum. In addition, the Performing Arts Department showcased five of its programs: Drumline, Orchestra, Show Choir, Dance, and Jazz Band. Each program provided a sampling of what to expect for the 2019-2020 performance and competition season. The night was celebratory and well-received by all. The Griffins are off to a smooth start of the school year and have high hopes for 2019-2020.



The Los Alamitos High School's Show Choir provides a sampling of what to expect in 2019-2020.

McAuliffe *Middle School*

4112 Cerritos Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 714/816-3320 • www.losal.org



Dr. Ryan Weiss-Wright
Principal

Staff vs. Students Drama Improv!

As part of our PEACE Week activities this year at McAuliffe, our drama department hosted our first “Staff vs. Students Drama Improv Show” as part of a fun competition highlighting the themes of inclusion and diversity. This community event was a fun way to get some teachers and students “battling” in hilarious scenarios that kept everyone on their toes.



We believe that these types of staff and student connections are what make McAuliffe a great place to work and go to school!



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McGaugh *Elementary*

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Roni Ellis
Principal

It's All in a Word!

J.H. McGaugh students in grades TK through grade five celebrated Literacy Day in September. With September 8th being International Literacy Day, it was important for our McGaugh staff members and the McGaugh International Culture Club to make our students aware of the literacy issues which are facing people all over the world.

Our goal was to encourage children to view education not as a chore but as a gift, counting each teacher as a blessing and every chance to read and write as an opportunity. During this event our teachers read aloud a book by Peter H. Reynolds called *The Word Collector*.



The children had fun discovering new words and then using them in sentences and stories.

Many classrooms displayed their words proudly on their doors, or hung them from tree branches and the lunch area for all to admire. It was fun to watch the other children walk by and read these words aloud, such as “fabulous,” “remarkable,” and “inspire.” We hope that this becomes a chance for our children to not only develop their vocabulary but also recognize the power of a single word.



4th graders working with their 1st grade buddies.

Oak *Middle School*

10821 Oak St., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4740 • www.losal.org



Erin Kominsky
Principal

Busy Beginnings

Welcome back to school!

Oak Middle School's theme this year is focused on building “Unity in our Community.” At Oak, we are inclusive and celebrate diversity. Our

staff sees greatness in all students, and we actively embrace the middle school years.

To start off the year our Oak teaching staff recently spent a day learning about the hidden treasures that surround our school. Our journey included visiting the local Chamber of Commerce, Planning Commission, American Legion, Channel 3 TV, as well as several local businesses on Oak Street. Our treasure hunt ended at the Community Center, where local seniors led us in a game of bingo!

It was amazing to learn so much about our neighborhood, and Los Alamitos. Each stop along the way reminded us of how we have precious resources right in our own backyard, and that we are all a part of this wonderful community.



This sense of community continued when our students returned to school. The theme of “People Exhibiting Appreciation and Compassion for Everyone” was the focus

of our PEACE Week activities. All students attended a PEACE assembly to acquire the tools for becoming an Upstander. An advisory period was also created to allow for special lessons. Lunch-time activities brought us together with collaborative games and “mix it ups” to encourage our students to meet new friends.

The ASB led our Spirit Days during PEACE week. This event encouraged all of the students to become a vital part of the Oak community. We are off to a great start, Oak Lions! Hear Us Roar!

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Rossmoor *Elementary*

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Amy Belsha
Principal

House System

This is our second year of launching our House System for Knights! August 23 was an exciting day as all our new Knights were sorted into one of our fearless four Knights' Houses: House of Galahad—courage, House of Gawain—loyalty, House of Lancelot—integrity, and House of Percival—resilience.

After the sorting, our Knights had their first house meeting and were able to meet Big and Little Buddies that were in their same houses. They also learned a cheer that their house will use when we gather together. The house system is a fantastic way for us to build school culture while supporting Knight PRIDE across campus. Our school community works together to

create ways to motivate students in achieving within the Four A's: academics, athletics, activities and the arts both inside and outside the classroom. This is done through fun and exciting monthly house competitions, thus affording opportunities to create smaller communities within our larger school community.

Our staff awards students with Noble Knights as they go above and beyond to show Knight PRIDE! Students can donate those Noble Knights to go toward house points, as we are always engaged in friendly competition to see which house can show the most Knight PRIDE at school. Our House System has allowed us to create a sense of community and camaraderie while building strong relationships across all stakeholders on campus.



Weaver *Elementary*

11872 Wembley Rd., Los Alamitos, CA 90720 • 562/799-4580 • www.losal.org



Dr. Todd Schmidt
Principal

Great Reads!

Developing a love of literacy and reading is a big goal at Weaver Elementary. Studies show that when students leave high school nearly 25 percent of them will never pick up a book again. Through a variety of different programs and activities our Weaver students are encouraged and supported in not just how to read, but why. It can be so wonderful!

To this end, we have started the year off with some new ideas. We have also brought back a few traditions that center around books. Our Giving Tree program for instance allows parents to buy a book for their children for their birthdays. We also have small “book

talks” where we highlight some of the books that our students can choose. It is a celebration of students as well as great reads!

In addition, our new principal, Dr. Schmidt, utilizes social media to share great books. Using Facebook Live, each month Dr. Schmidt reads a bedtime story to the students. He also spends time each month reading a new book to each class.

This past month's selection, called *The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors*, led to a classroom and then school-wide Roshambo tournament! The books that are chosen also highlight a character trait to focus on and highlight. It is wonderful to see our community come together to celebrate the joys of reading. #WeAreWeaver!



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