

**FREE**

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Palo Alto Unified School District**



Volume 3, Issue 8

February–April 2021



**Smiling eyes looking towards a hopeful future!**



**Young Ambassadors of Hope:  
Walter Hays 5th Graders Express Gratitude and Appreciation to Health Care Workers!**

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# Superintendent of Schools



**Donald B. Austin, Ed.D.**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Hope and optimism go hand in hand. Most would agree that we have experienced a lack of positive news and energy since March of 2020. Regardless, PAUSD launched the school year with the slogan, “Ambassadors of Hope.” We believe

that school systems should always lead the way in creating a path for a better future.

Faced with enormous obstacles and challenges, PAUSD took on work many avoided. The year began with a commitment to dramatically improve the distance learning program from the spring. One hundred percent of our teachers completed a demanding professional learning series to prepare for the year. It showed! We have served more than 8,000 students through distance learning this year and have continued to improve our program during the year. Essentially, in a matter of months we created a new program to serve roughly 80% of our students. That required hope and optimism at the highest level!

We made the Herculean effort to prepare our campuses for the safe return of staff and students. Once considered impossible, our protocols and efforts are now the industry standard for those hoping to return to in-person instruction. This has included daily health screeners, contact tracing, top-level air filtration work, personal protective equipment, routine sanitation efforts, social distancing, COVID testing for employees, and adjustments to food services and transportation. We have safely returned over 2,100 students to in-person instruction at the elementary level. As a testament to the success of our return, we experienced a net increase of families selecting

La esperanza y el optimismo van de la mano. La mayoría estaría de acuerdo en que hemos experimentado una falta de energía y de noticias positivas desde marzo de 2020. No obstante, el PAUSD inició el año escolar con el eslogan, “Embajadores de esperanza”. Creemos que los sistemas escolares siempre deberían ser los líderes en la creación del camino hacia un futuro mejor.

Enfrentados con enormes obstáculos y desafíos, el PAUSD asumió el trabajo que muchos evitaron. El año comenzó con un compromiso para mejorar drásticamente el programa de educación a distancia desde la primavera. El cien por ciento de nuestros maestros completó una demandante serie de instrucción profesional para prepararse para el año. ¡Se vieron los resultados! Este año hemos atendido a más de 8,000 estudiantes a través de la educación a distancia y hemos continuado mejorando nuestro programa durante el año. Básicamente, en cuestión de meses creamos un nuevo programa para atender aproximadamente al 80 % de nuestros estudiantes. ¡Eso requirió esperanza y optimismo al máximo nivel!

Hicimos un esfuerzo hercúleo para preparar nuestras sedes para el retorno seguro del personal y los estudiantes. Una vez considerados imposibles, nuestros protocolos y esfuerzos ahora forman el estándar de la industria para aquellos que anhelan regresar para recibir instrucción en persona. Esto ha incluido evaluaciones de salud diarias, seguimiento de contacto, obras de filtración de aire de nivel superior, equipo de protección personal, medidas sanitarias de rutina, distanciamiento social, pruebas de COVID para empleados y adaptación de servicios alimentarios, así como de transporte. Más de 2,100

希望与乐观相辅相成。大多数人都会认同，2020年3月以来，正面新闻匮乏，整体活力不足。不管怎样，PAUSD开学时打出了“希望的使者”标语。我们相信，学校系统将始终引路前行，打造更美好的未来。

尽管面临巨大障碍，重重挑战，但PAUSD仍选择承担起许多人避免承担的工作。今年，从春季伊始，我们就致力于大幅改善远程学习计划。我们老师全员完成了一系列要求严格的专业学习，为这一年做好了充分准备。成效斐然！这一年里，我们通过远程学习计划，为8,000多名学生提供了服务，且在此期间持续完善我们的计划。基本上，在短短几个月的时间内，我们成功创建出一个新的学习计划，可为我们大约80%的学生提供服务。在整个过程中，最热切的希望、最极致的乐观心态缺一不可！

我们竭尽全力，为全体师生安全重返校园保驾护航。人们曾一度认为我们的协议和努力不可能实现，但现在其已成为希望重新开启当面授课之人信奉的行业标准。其中包括日常健康检查、接触者追踪、顶级空气过滤工作、个人防护设备、常规卫生工作、保持社交距离、让员工进行核酸检测以及调整食品服务和交通方式。我们小学阶段已有2,100多名学生安全返校，接受当面授课。作为我们回归成功的证明，尽管我们县已进入紫色风险（最严峻）等级，但这学期选择当面授课的家庭数量仍然实现了净增长。

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## Board of Education



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### We Dream in the Dark

Growing up in Palo Alto, I often wondered what the future would hold. As a high schooler, I was unremarkable on paper. I had below-average grades and struggled to keep up with my peers. I was stressed and exhausted. I didn't get into any of my top colleges, or, in fact, any schools to which I applied. I thought I was a failure.

Of course, there were students struggling through circumstances I couldn't fathom; but hopelessness is a greedy gremlin that draws your attention inward and throws up blinders to the world around you. Luckily, the same chronic daydreaming that had gotten me into academic trouble also saved me. And it was in no small part thanks to the efforts of PAUSD educators and the support of my Palo Alto community that empowered me to keep dreaming in reach of possibilities I thought had no hopes of achieving.

Over a decade later, I write to you as an attorney, law school adjunct professor, father, and your grateful Board President, with a reflection on hope.

Emily Dickinson might as well have been writing for us when she wrote, "I dwell in possibility." The greatest possibility that 2021 holds is universal vaccination to enable us to return to the way things were. But anticipation of the sunrise doesn't make a starry night any less brilliant.

### Soñamos en la oscuridad

Al crecer en Palo Alto, a menudo me pregunté lo que me depararía el futuro. Como estudiante de secundaria, no era nada fuera de lo común. Mis calificaciones se encontraban por debajo del promedio y tenía dificultad para seguir el ritmo de mis compañeros. Estaba estresado y exhausto. No ingresé a ninguna de mis universidades prioritarias y, en realidad, a ninguna a las que apliqué. Pensaba que era un fracaso.

Por supuesto, habían estudiantes que estaban pasando por circunstancias que no podía entender; pero la desesperanza es un diablillo codicioso que atrae tu atención hacia el interior y cierra las persianas del mundo que te rodea. Afortunadamente, el mismo soñar despierto que me había metido en problemas académicos, también me salvó la vida. Y fue en gran parte gracias a los esfuerzos de educadores de Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD, por sus siglas en inglés) y al respaldo de mi comunidad de Palo Alto que tuve la capacidad de seguir soñando con alcanzar las posibilidades para las que pensé que ya no tenía esperanza.

Más de una década más tarde, les escribo como abogado, profesor adjunto de la facultad de derecho, como padre y como un agradecido presidente de la junta, con una reflexión sobre la esperanza.

### 在黑暗中逐梦

我在 Palo Alto 长大，在那段时间里，我经常幻想着未来会是什么样子。读高中的时候，我的成绩平平。虽然总是徘徊在平均分以下，但我总是努力赶上其他同学。为此，我承受了巨大的压力，疲惫不堪。后来，我没能进入心仪的大学，事实上，我所申请的大学中没有一所录取我。我觉得自己好失败。当然，当时也有一些学生在我无法理解的环境中努力挣扎。但是，绝望这种东西就像是一个贪婪的小鬼，它让你只专注于自己的内心深处，却对外面的世界置若罔闻。然而幸运的是，我长期以来做的这个白日梦虽然导致了成绩落后，但也最终拯救了我。我要深深的感谢 PAUSD 教育工作者们给予我的巨大帮助，以及 Palo Alto 社区对我的支持，让我得以继续追逐梦想，实现那些我从未想过会有希望实现的可能性。

十年之后的今天，我以律师、法学院客座教授、父亲以及充满感激之情的董事会主席的身份写下这封信，借

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Covering the  
PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**Kay Coop**  
Founder/Publisher



Netragrednik

Happy New Year!

Some might find it difficult to consider this a happy new year; however, read Dr. Austin's message on page 2 and you will feel optimistic. He explains in detail about the PAUSD slogan "Ambassadors of Hope."

In this issue you will read how each of the schools are overcoming challenges, creating new

opportunities, and continuing to be committed to quality education. There are many reasons to be optimistic.

We converted *School News* to digital and the result has been well-received. Thank you for continuing to include *School News* among your reading choices.

Our next issue is May 19, 2021.

This student's picture is in this publication. When you find him, email the **page number** to: [Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com](mailto:Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com)

(Please put Palo Alto in the subject line)

Your entry must be received by March 30, 2021.

From the correct entries, we will draw a winner to receive a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes and Noble.

Congratulations to **Grant Saket and Yara Rawashdeh** winners of our last contest.

### Contest!



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# Full-Year Distance Learning

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## Full-Year Distance Learning

Our staff goal in Full-Year Distance Learning (FYDL) is to advocate as Ambassadors of Hope by creating a community of caring learners with Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) at the forefront. Each week,

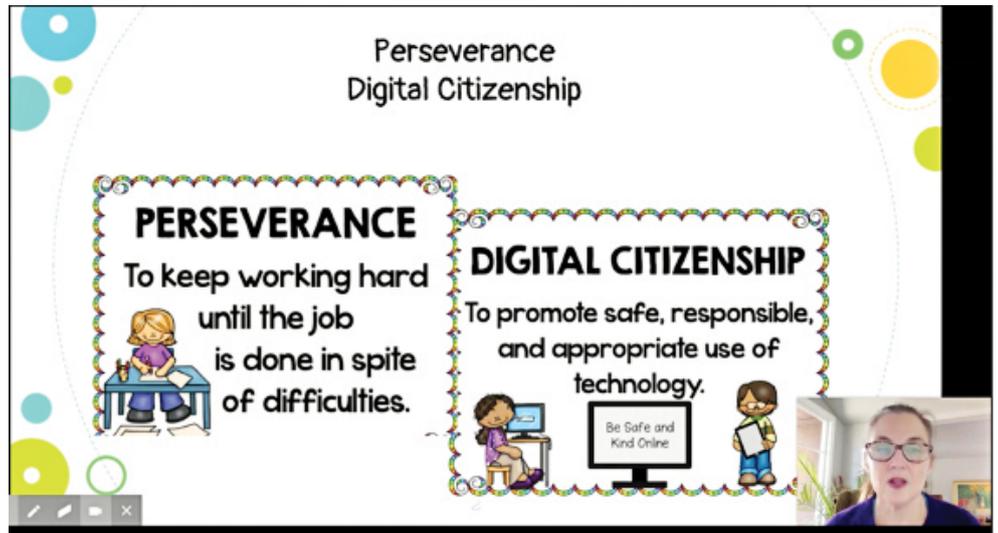
**Nikole Manou**  
Principal

teachers and students work on SEL and

community-building activities to encourage positive relationships and high engagement.

The students start the week with a character-building life-skill focus, sharing what it means, what it looks like, and how it benefits our learning and life. Each Monday morning, students can hear a screencast highlighting the life skills for the week. These skills are then incorporated into their morning meetings to develop mindfulness and self-expression.

The FYDL parent community also integrates Project Cornerstone through monthly literature-based lessons focused on improving school climate, reducing bullying, and creating a vibrant, caring community of learners. As a result of our commitment, our online community continues to strengthen and grow as we focus on hope for the new year.



**Monday Morning Announcements focus on life skills.**

## Addison *Elementary School*

650 Addison Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301 • 650/322-5935 • [addison.pausd.org](http://addison.pausd.org)



## Creating Learning Opportunities

At our beginning-of-the-year district event, Superintendent Austin welcomed a dynamic speaker who introduced the idea of being an Ambassador of Hope. At that time, I couldn't contextualize what it meant to be an Ambassador of Hope, but four short months later, I feel tremendous pride for our school and district communities who have carried out this positive vision.

In the fall of 2020, there were so many unknown answers to questions, practices, and protocols as we responded to the pandemic. As a greater district community, we had to explore whether and how to bring back our students safely to school, if allowed, and identify which families selected that option.

Our district personnel worked tirelessly to follow the rapidly developing and changing state and county guidelines. They created extensive protocols to ensure the health and safety of our community should schools open. The commitment to elementary school re-opening was

inspiring for school leaders who allowed us to follow suit, and consider our own site-based practices and protocols if the schools were to launch in-person instruction.

After the school board approved elementary re-opening, our school communities have been immersed in planning, adapting, responding, implementing, and discussing the many ways to support our students. I am so proud to work in a district where our families have the option to participate in two distinct programs, Hybrid and Full Distance Learning (FDL), that have worked well for a variety of learners. I have been amazed to work with a staff that has demonstrated tremendous resilience, flexibility, professionalism, and a growth mindset throughout school re-opening.

When I reflect upon the numerous ways that our FDL staff has learned and implemented technology, as well as the journey we took to welcome back almost 300 students and staff members weekly, I now understand the importance of being an Ambassador of Hope. This mindset has created the kind of learning opportunities for ourselves and our students that would not have been otherwise possible.

## Barron Park *Elementary School*

800 Barron Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/858-0508 • barron.pausd.org



**Eric Goddard**  
*Principal*

### Overcoming Challenges

2020 was certainly a year filled with challenges due to the health concerns in our local area, state, country, and world. We can begin 2021 with optimism and hope that better days are ahead. More school districts are planning to safely transition students back on campus in the coming months, and that is exciting to hear. I am grateful that our school district has been offering in-person instruction since October 12. A lot had to be put together for this to happen successfully, and I am glad Palo Alto Unified School District has been able to provide this. Seeing students back on campus focusing on joy, happiness, academics, and friendship with peers has definitely been a highlight for all of us.

Even though the restrictions present unique challenges in teaching and learning, I do find it quite remarkable how quickly and effective our educators have adapted to the many uncertainties and transitions that have taken place in the past nine months. There are pieces of this experience that will make us even better in the years to come. Our technology skill set has certainly expanded and is now a much more effective tool to support teaching and learning. We have also found ways to connect well with our busy, hardworking families by hosting digital meetings to support student success.

All this being said, let's stay positive in the days, weeks, and months ahead. I do look forward to the time when all of us can be back together at the same time on campus again. That is going to be one special day to look forward to.

## El Carmelo *Elementary School*

3024 Bryant St., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/856-0960 • elcarmelo.pausd.org



**Danaé Reynolds**  
*Principal*

### Ambassadors of Hope

At El Carmelo, being an Ambassador of Hope includes maintaining an open line of communication with families to ensure that our students have access to books, resources, and tools to demonstrate their learning. This also includes student leadership and empowerment. It involves our team of faculty and staff members recognizing that the world we live in and experience is a part of teaching and learning.

Our students bring their life experiences into the classroom just as we do as educators. In walking through our hybrid classes, or visiting virtually in distance learning, our collective work as Ambassadors of Hope can be observed in our intentional use of inclusive practices to address our life experiences. This year, our school-wide focus includes professional learning where staff members talk through a set of diverse books about a variety of topics. These books will be used in each classroom for interactive read-aloud purposes.

Teachers will introduce and implement targeted vocabulary related to inclusion, facilitate open and rich conversations that encourage our learners to ask questions, and share ideas by creating a space where student voices are heard. By reading stories that are centered on characters with diverse experiences, we are generating opportunities for our students to see that they are represented in what they are reading, and the content that we are learning. Through this intentional work, our students will begin to recognize the differences among people as something to be honored.

The pandemic has put a spotlight on the social inequities that have plagued our nation, as well as our difficulty in talking about these inequities. As Ambassadors of Hope, our role in educating students includes growing their skills in talking about race, diversity, and inclusion. Our investment in students who understand these topics will serve them well as they navigate our complex and diverse world.

## Ellen Fletcher *Middle School*

655 Arastradero Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/856-9810 • fletcher.pausd.org



**Melissa Howell**  
*Principal*

### Hope for 2021

The start of the 2020–2021 school year has been interesting, challenging, and yet rewarding. We may have started this school year feeling a little bit of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, but there were also glimmers of excitement. Our Fletcher Elementary School staff has been relentless in professional learning, planning and creating engaging virtual lessons, and team and relationship

building, to name a few. Our students have shown tremendous strength as they have adjusted to new learning platforms and environments. Our families have been extremely supportive of both students and staff.

As we get ready to begin our spring semester, we have mastered these new learning platforms, and we continue to build hope and relationships for a strong finish to a very “different” school year. We are looking forward to a rock-solid spring semester, where we continue to grow together within our school community.

# Duveneck *Elementary School*

705 Alester Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303 • 650/322-5946 • duveneck.pausd.org



**Leslie Crane**  
*Principal*

## Examples of Hope

Our staff is proud to be Ambassadors of Hope for our district. There are many ways to define hope. The best way I can define hope is based on the article, “Why Is Hope So Important?” from hopegrows.net, Hope is a desire for things to change for the better and to want that better situation very much. Having hope links your past and present into the future.

For students at Duveneck Elementary School, hope has involved a lot of change this year, and change requires willingness and a commitment to take the necessary actions to move in the direction you want to go. I have had the privilege of witnessing wondrous changes in our students’ lives.



**Being creative with chalk at recess!**



**A fabulous Duveneck Dragon 1st grade Student!**

They have demonstrated the ability to accept help, to persevere, and to trust the adults who are supporting them. They are learning that putting in the effort, even baby steps at first, will positively change how they see and feel about themselves as learners.



**3rd Grade Ohlone Project**



**A beautiful day to play on the playground during recess!**



**Last Day of Hybrid before the break.**



**Our librarian, Doree, getting ready to teach a lesson to our distance learning students!**

One of the most miraculous achievements of this year was implementing a viable and highly successful hybrid program for our elementary students. Duveneck was able to open 11 ½ hybrid

classrooms to serve 192 students. We also have an incredible FDL program, offering one virtual classroom per grade level, serving 141 students. Finally, we have two students participating in the Palo Alto Unified School District PAUSD+ program at Addison School.

Our ability to offer a choice of learning models to our families is remarkable. This would not have happened without the incredible effort, sacrifice, and hard work that our teachers and staff have put in to make these choices available. Duveneck is dedicated to continuing to find ways to connect, uplift, inspire, and be examples of hope, resiliency, and strength for all the students we serve.



**Recess Fun!**

## Escondido *Elementary School*

890 Escondido Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94305 • 650/856-1337 • [escondido.pausd.org](http://escondido.pausd.org)



**Marcela Simoes de Carvalho**  
*Principal*

### Ambassadors of Hope

During the spring of 2020, teaching and learning came into question when schools reacted to sudden school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools were forced to quickly redesign every aspect of education and be accountable to student learning in ways that challenged all traditional formats and placed equity at center stage.

In the Palo Alto Unified School District, we are rich in resources. Our teaching staff is the number-one most precious resource; coming together as a professional learning community (PLC) was a natural process, strengthening the learning-focused culture that was already present before the pandemic closures.

Staff worked throughout the summer months as committed professionals, reflecting on the highlights and pitfalls of the spring emergency teaching plan. Escondido teachers' discussions centered around their desire to return to school to teach in person and improve learning if there was to be a need to continue teaching and learning

in a virtual landscape. We were working through the unknown future barriers, but we were all committed—our first step in our journey to becoming Ambassadors of Hope.

The reopening plan was a framework that drew from guidelines and mandates that constantly changed throughout the months before school reopened and even once classes resumed. As a school leader, the ability to plan for the unknown future required constant flexibility, organization, collaboration and clear communication. Building the plan sought input from staff, our PTA, and the parent community, which was essential and required a school leader to always assume positive intentions from those who provided the input and feedback. Ambassadors of Hope implement a plan that reflects the needs of their diverse community.

The Escondido PLC team is committed to our number-one mission in the PAUSD: teaching and ensuring learning by the students we serve. In working as a school team to implement the 2020–21 District Reopening Plan, we are Ambassadors of Hope.

## Fairmeadow *Elementary*

500 E. Meadow Dr., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/856-0845 • [fairmeadow.pausd.org](http://fairmeadow.pausd.org)



**Iris Wong**  
*Principal*

### Ambassadors of Hope

Hope is on the horizon as we enter the new year!

I am proud to be an Ambassador of Hope here at Fairmeadow. For me, being an Ambassador of Hope means working towards a common goal of providing a robust PAUSD education for all of our students academically and social-

emotionally. We strive to support the well-being of the whole child, no matter whether the child is learning in-person or online.

Let's all continue to hope for a better tomorrow, and not take for granted all of the little things in life, especially on a school campus. I look forward to the day when we can hear the sounds of our children playing and laughing together during recess. I look forward to seeing students explore the classrooms without any restrictions as they work together hand-in-hand. And I continue to look forward to the day when we can all gather in one room to celebrate any and all joyous occasions and milestones.

Having hope on this journey makes way for a brighter future.



# Greendell School

4120 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303 • 650/856-0833



**Shannon Coleman**  
Principal

## Good to See You!

We began the 2020–21 school year with the hope that we would be able to return to our school campuses in the near future. So much had changed in our world, and we wanted our youngest learners to have the rich,

hands-on learning experiences they thrive on.

It wasn't long before we started to welcome students back to our classrooms, and what a difference it made! The children were thrilled to be back at school, and their teachers were struck by just how excited they were to learn. All of the worries about how PPE and social distancing might impact learning disappeared as the children eagerly awaited their teachers



**Being Kind and Friendly – Our Friendship Tree**

each morning so ready to learn. All the while, we continued to provide high-quality online instruction for families that chose to stay with distance learning because it was working well for their children and their families.

As we begin 2021, there is new hope with the COVID-19 vaccine's approval and distribution. In the meantime, we will continue to do our part to keep our schools and our community safe. We will keep our classrooms open for our students to learn and grow, whether in-person or through distance learning. And we look forward to seeing you all in the new year and welcoming you back to school!

# Frank S. Greene Jr. Middle School

750 N. California Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303 • 650/494-8120 • greene.pausd.org



**Valerie Royaltey-Quandt**  
Principal

## Ambassadors of Hope

An ambassador is one who carries a message, and considering our current circumstances, carrying a message of hope is even more important. Greene is now connecting with students, families, and each other more about social-emotional well-being, strategies for resilience,

and ways to strive for a balanced life.

Our counselors play a core role in the fabric of our school, weaving connections among homes, teachers, and students. With the generous support of Partners in Education (PiE) and the parent community, our counseling services at Greene are robust and well-connected. We are fortunate to have three grade-level-specific counselors that matriculate with their students so that they can get to know them and their families well over the three years of middle school.

We also have a tier-one counselor who can see all students, and both CASSY and AACI counselors for more specialized and intensive connection and duration. In addition, we have two wonderful Educationally-Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) counselors to



**Greene Counseling Team (picture taken Pre-COVID)**  
Betty Krumboltz, Susan Curry, Kylie Payne, Meghan Ben

help support our special education students who have difficulties accessing the educational environment.

Every other week at Greene, our Counseling Department sends a brief Counseling Newsletter with articles, resources, TED Talks, and strategies for our families to explore together. In December, the topic was Hope! We care about providing hope, and support strategies and resources, for our students and families at Greene. We have a fantastic team doing that work.

# Henry M. Gunn *High School*

780 Arastradero Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/354-8200 • gunn.pausd.org



**Wendy Stratton**  
*Principal*

## A Source of Strength

To serve the wellness and self-care of the students of Gunn High School, our Wellness and Reach Out, Care, Know (ROCK) program, under the supervision of English teacher Paul Dunlap, created and distributed self-soothe bags. Our ROCK students prepped 100 of these beautiful bags, which include tea, fruit candies, soft modeling clay, kinetic sand, coloring pages, fidget spinners, and bubble wrap. During and after school hours, students of all ages drove by the front of our school and received their bags. The enthusiasm of the students as they handed out the bags was probably more soothing and energizing for the students in the cars than the bags themselves.



**Students Putting Together Soothe Bags**



**Distributing Soothe Bags**

ROCK is a student-run, peer-helping group whose mission is to build connection and wellness at Gunn and in the greater community. In order to serve more students, our PTSA created more bags and continued to hand

them out during our final's week. To find out more about the ROCK program, please visit our website at <https://gunn.paloaltopta.org/sources-of-strengthrock/>.



**Soothe Bags Ready for Distribution**

# Herbert Hoover *Elementary School*

445 E. Charleston Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94306 • 650/320-8106 • hoover.pausd.org



**James Sherman**  
*Principal*

## Stay Positive and Hopeful!

Ambassadors of Hope. When I heard this a few months back, I have to admit, I was energized. What brought me to education was the opportunity to create a place where our children's hopes and dreams could be discovered, explored, and nurtured. To think of myself as an Ambassador of Hope reminded me of how proud I am to be an educator. Everyone on this campus, either in-person or virtual, feels the same way.

Each day, our teachers, specialists, instructional assistants, office personnel, and custodians create an environment that is safe, welcoming, clean, and simply good for children. They are all ambassadors as they make each day an exciting one for our students.

Every person on this amazing Hoover staff takes that job seriously. We help them see how incredible it is to be a child. We give them hope that their future is incredibly bright, and that we are their partners in creating that future.

Lailah Gifty Akita says that, "Hope is confidence." I love this! Hope lets us know that things will get better. Hope gives us the power to move forward and do great things. Hope gives us the confidence to know that we can be or do anything if we set our minds to it.

Being an Ambassador of Hope is an honor, and at the same time, an incredible responsibility. Those who choose to teach and work with children and youth are selfless. They give of themselves so that others can be successful. Rarely taking credit for their achievements in this area, they have my admiration.

I also know how difficult it is. When times are really tough like they are right now, those Ambassadors continue to make life better and more hopeful for our children.

Imagine being a child right now. How scary it must be for them! The unknowns are not just unknown to them, but to us as well. In this environment, staying hopeful and becoming Ambassadors of Hope is critical, but very difficult. Our children are looking to us, as they always do. They need reassurance, calm, and hope when we may be struggling ourselves.

I am so proud to work with our amazing staff, our Ambassadors of Hope!

## Jane Lathrop Stanford *Middle School*

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**Chris Grierson**  
*Principal*

### Building Hope In

Little moments can lead to large feelings about school, work, and life. Since we began in August, JLS staff members have been persistent in maintaining and increasing our students' engagement in many creative and enthusiastic ways. Students have been an integral part of our planning process by suggesting Spirit Week ideas, and they have also been wonderful participants through our virtual events.

Throughout the fall, we have had several online events for students to connect with others while distance-learning. Many have chosen to dress up, and they have submitted their photos and videos, which are then shared back out to our larger school community through our daily announcements.

Despite the challenges of being apart, these small, lighthearted moments add up to larger feelings of joy and



**The JLS Admin Team posed for a "Blue Monday" challenge.**

hope for everyone. While we continue to work hard, we all also enjoy playing together. Here's to a successful and fun second semester!

## Juana Briones *Elementary School*

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**Katy Bimpson**  
*Principal*

### Ambassadors of Hope

Hope, aspiration, desire, wish, expectation, ambition, aim, plan, dream—I have seen a lot of hopes dashed since the pandemic began. However, hope, along with its lofty synonyms, continues to drive us through these challenging times, so being ambassadors of hope has become one of our great responsibilities. The characteristics of effective ambassadors include passion, engagement, professionalism, versatility, and authenticity. When I think about what we, as an educational community, have accomplished as ambassadors of hope for our students, families, and one another, each of those characteristics are well represented.

The entire Briones Elementary School staff embodies what it means for our school to be a safe and welcoming place where all students can connect, learn, grow, and be valued for the unique strengths and perspectives they bring to the community, whether they are learning in

person or online. We are passionate about supporting our students' social, emotional, and academic well-being, and we engage regularly with one another and our families to keep that support strong.

Our staff has handled these unprecedented times with professionalism and versatility, flexing into each new set of regulations and program changes with creativity, resilience, and much-needed levity. One of the characteristics that stands out in particular is authenticity. I see it among staff members as they collaborate through challenges and celebrations. I see it in the daily interactions that our staff members have with students—showing empathy and striving to create connection while creating the conditions for learning—and it is clear that authenticity of spirit and care among our staff and families remains strong.

Education, in all its forms, is among the most important work in the world, and I am honored to work with such a dedicated and talented team that takes the stewardship of our learning community so seriously.

## Lucille M. Nixon *Elementary School*

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**Mary Pat O'Connell**  
*Principal*

### Many Forms of Hope

Czech writer and statesman Vaclav Havel wrote, "Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good."

The Nixon staff have been figuring out how to work for the good of our students since this pandemic sent us all home last March. In addition to the head-spinning shifts to online teaching, both asynchronous and synchronous, they have considered the social and emotional needs of our children on a daily basis and acted to support them.

First-grade teacher Kim Powell arranged to meet (socially distanced) with one of her students early in the school year while we were still doing only distance teaching. He was struggling, and she wanted to establish a relationship with the child so that he could more easily connect with her during their online lessons.

Classroom aide and noon supervisor Kim Kuelker brings chalk, mini bouncy balls, and other fun items out to the playground and helps class cohorts invent games to play together. Kindergarten teacher Stephanie Han hosts after-school play dates for her distance learners on Zoom to help them have fun and get to know each other.

Classroom aide and lunch supervisor Rachel Wheeler entertains hybrid students while they eat their lunches without talking. She has read aloud to them and taught them about composting by showing them examples from a home compost pile and a neighbor's composting worm bin.

Fourth-grade teacher Kerrie Edmonds met repeatedly online with one of her student's parents to help them develop strategies to support him at home given his specific challenges. Fifth-grade teacher Laura Schwarz has hosted regular drop-in lunchtime Zoom discussion groups for interested fifth-graders.

I could share examples like these for every teacher and staff member at Nixon. There is not enough space here to do so, but the pattern is clear. Nixon teachers and staff members care deeply, and they are finding a variety of ways to work for what is good for their students.

## Ohlone *Elementary School*

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**Dawn Yoshinaga**  
*Principal*

### Strength of Community

In this time of uncertainty and unrest, our teachers, custodians, specialists, instructional aides, and office staff have come together to create a warm and welcoming learning environment that is nothing short of a marvelous wonder. Looking back on the road we have traveled to get to where we are today, I am struck by the necessity of each jostle and bump we have endured.

There has been no other time when our home lives and work lives have intersected so intimately and abruptly.

Through the ever-changing guidelines, ongoing professional learning, and need to care for their own families, our Ohlone Elementary School staff has remained steadfast in its focus on the learning and wellbeing of students. With the changes between hybrid and distance learning, students have navigated transitions with new teachers and classmates in a short amount of time. We have had many first days of school this year! But our teachers



have gone above and beyond to prepare and collaborate with one another, learning quickly about their new students to meet them exactly where they are.

Ohlone has remained a positive and caring place for students. This consistency can be attributed to the commitment that our teachers and staff demonstrate each day to create an environment where students continue to have space to share their voice. Ohlone students continue to inquire about world events, respectfully challenge ideas, and take risks in their learning. There is still unquestionable joy

in every classroom!

Every member of the Ohlone community has been a part of making our school a physically and emotionally safe space for all students to continue to thrive. Parents have discovered new ways to build community through virtual dance parties and poetry slams. They have lifted staff morale through their positive encouragement and partnership. Through all of the challenges, our staff and parents have come together in beautiful and unanticipated ways that have made us a stronger community.

# Palo Alto *Adult School*

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**Dave Hoshiwara**  
*Principal*

## The World from Home

This winter session, the Palo Alto Adult School continues to offer a wide variety of classes for our community, both in-person and live online via Zoom. We are also excited to announce that the Adult School will be celebrating its 100th anniversary throughout 2021. To kick off our celebration, we offered two days of free single sessions on Jan. 5 and Jan. 6.

In this troubled time, we strive to offer encouragement and hope to people stuck at home. We want to help them

look forward to the positive things in life, like acquiring a new skill or perhaps to learn a little more about the world. For instance, we provide classes for English learners, parents, job seekers, travelers, hobbyists, and others who want to expand their skills. Whether you want to learn to cook, try your hand at something new, or enhance your skills, we can meet your learning needs.

Our high-quality classes have proven to be quite popular, and in fact, we are pleased to report that our lifeline learning association LERN recently awarded PAAS an international award for Most Successful Online Class for our Intermediate Genealogy class. Come check us out!

# Palo Alto *High School*

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**Brent Kline**  
*Principal*

## Love, Laughs—and Caring

Providing the Paly staff with a sense of connectedness and appreciation has been guided by our very own Ambassador of Hope: Paly staff member Mary Ellen Bena, who has

made a positive impact with a variety of activities so far this school year. Ms. Bena believes that “although we may not all be together, we can feel the warmth of association by showing this through our actions. There is a lot of compassionate generosity on this campus, and it has become quite contagious during these difficult times.”



**Mary Ellen Bena--**  
**Paly Event & Activities Specialist**

Ms. Bena’s deliberate actions of caring for others have included weekly treat bags for staff working on campus, holding an end-of-semester breakfast—takeout only, assisting the PTSA with a staff Thanksgiving gift and dinner distribution, hosting a staff Zoom Halloween party, and organizing a staff Morale Pal Program for the second semester.

Ms. Bena will tell you that a lot of love and laughs go into all the projects. Most importantly, her work inspired many of the Paly staff to join in on sharing the same love and laughter with their colleagues through distance and virtual opportunities. We are sincerely grateful for people like Ms. Bena and her dedication to the well-being of the entire Paly staff.



**Staff Thanksgiving gift and dinner distribution**



**Weekly gift bag example**



**End of Semester breakfast distribution (partnership with PTSA)**

## Palo Verde *Elementary School*

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**Annora Lee**  
*Principal*

### **Stronger Together**

What does hope look like in the age of COVID? How do we assure families, staff, and students that better days are ahead? How do we comfort those who have suffered feelings of insecurity, isolation, or personal loss?

At Palo Verde Elementary School, our method of delivering hope was simple: be present. As classes shifted to online learning, teachers and staff made it a priority to maintain connection with their students, families, and each other. We dabbled with new technology, dug for resources, and comforted students (and parents). We made calls before, during, and after school hours. Throughout

the summer, we attended training and planning meetings in preparation for a year filled with uncertainties. And now, as our school runs hybrid and distance programs in full implementation, our staff continues to adjust as needed to support the academic and social growth of our students. Despite the many twists and turns these past few months, we continue to partner with families to be a community of connectedness.

Hope is inherent in the work of education. It gives us the permission to think about the promise of a new day. When I think of the work we have accomplished together in these past few months, I don't have to hope community will emerge stronger than it was before—I know it already has.

## Walter Hays *Elementary School*

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**Mary Bussmann**  
*Principal*

### **Ambassadors of Hope**

Our Walter Hays Core Values were put into action in late December. A fifth-grade class expressed their appreciation by writing thank-you letters to essential health care workers for their incredible effort and dedication to the health and welfare of

people in the Stanford University Hospital Intensive Care Unit. Their teacher delivered the letters to the hospital on Monday, December 21st.

Putting the core values to work is nothing new for these students. They demonstrated initiative by writing individual letters to give thanks; showed empathy for the sick and those that are caring for them; honored these workers by respecting this challenging work; and highlighted the perseverance and resilience these workers have exhibited for months and months during this pandemic.

The Stanford ICU called to thank our students for their letters, as their touching messages meant the world to them, our Ambassadors of Hope!



**Student Showing a Thank You Sign**

in-person at the semester, despite the county shift to the Purple (most restrictive) Tier.

Our focus is transitioning to the future. Our role as Ambassadors of Hope now includes leading the way for extended learning for the summer and an eventual reopening in the fall. We will be open for in-person instruction to the degree allowable by external agencies. Our distance and in-person programs will lead the region, primarily because our team believes in finding solutions for the most difficult problems. We are thankful that our students, staff, and community share our vision of hope. Better days are ahead for all of us. Until then, thank you to everyone associated with our movement as Ambassadors of Hope!

estudiantes han regresado al modelo de instrucción en persona en el nivel primario. Como un testimonio del éxito de nuestro retorno, hemos experimentado un incremento neto de familias que eligen la instrucción en persona en el semestre, a pesar del cambio del condado al Nivel morado (el más restrictivo).

Nuestro enfoque es lograr la transición al futuro. Nuestro rol como Embajadores de esperanza ahora incluye liderar el camino para el aprendizaje extendido durante el verano y una futura reapertura en el otoño. Estaremos operando para la instrucción en persona en la medida permisible por parte de las agencias externas. Nuestros programas a distancia y en persona liderarán la región, principalmente porque nuestro equipo cree en buscar soluciones para los problemas más difíciles. Agradecemos que nuestros estudiantes, miembros del personal y de la comunidad compartan nuestra visión de la esperanza. Más adelante nos esperan mejores días para todos. Hasta entonces, ¡gracias a todos los asociados en nuestro movimiento como Embajadores de esperanza!

向未来过渡是我们的工作重点。我们作为希望的使者，现在还需引路前行，成功开展暑期延伸学习，最终确保秋季重新正常开学。在外部机构允许的范围内，我们将开放当面授课。我们的远程教学计划与当面授课计划在该地区能独占鳌头，根本原因在于我们团队相信，再严峻的困难也必能迎刃而解。十分感谢我们的学生、职工和社区能与我们共享愿景。美好的明天就在我们面前。在此之前，感谢为我们开展希望的使者运动做出贡献的每一个人！

We can still find light in the myriad smaller possibilities we continue to realize: the safe return of thousands of students to campus, small cohorts, educational access through technology, and the distribution of meals to students.

I have been gratified to see our schools and community work tirelessly to implement new ways to support students through these challenging times. As we begin a brighter 2021, I hope we continue to dream—together.

Emily Dickinson bien puede haberse estado dirigiendo a nosotros cuando escribió “vivo en la posibilidad”. La mayor posibilidad que trae el 2021 es la vacunación universal que nos permita volver a las cosas como eran antes. Pero la anticipación del amanecer no hace que una noche estrellada sea menos brillante. Aún podemos encontrar luz en las innumerables posibilidades más pequeñas que seguimos alcanzando: el regreso a salvo de miles de estudiantes a las sedes educativas, grupos pequeños, acceso a la educación a través de tecnología y la distribución de comida a los estudiantes.

Me he sentido gratificado de ver el incansable trabajo de nuestras escuelas y de nuestra comunidad para implementar nuevas formas de apoyo a los estudiantes durante estos tiempos difíciles. A medida que comenzamos un 2021 más brillante, espero que continuemos soñando juntos.

此表达我对希望的看法。

Emily Dickinson 所著的《栖居于可能性》(I dwell in possibility) 一书像是为我们所做。2021年最大的可能性就是人们得以普遍注射疫苗，随后全世界回归到原有的模样。但是，繁星闪烁的夜空不会因为之后的日出而就此变得黯淡。我们仍然可以在不断发现的众多微弱的可能性中寻得一丝光明与希望：成千上万的学生得以安全重返校园和集体，科技手段助力教育事业，以及学生们获得派发的食物。

我很高兴看到我们的学校和社区正不遗余力地通过各种新方法来帮助学生们度过当下的困难时期。在更加光明、更加充满希望的2021年到来之际，我希望大家能够团结在一起，共同追逐梦想。