

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Duarte Unified School District



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October 2023

Love to Read!



**DUSD's youngest scholars and their parents
share their favorite books at the September 21, 2023 Board Meeting.**

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SUPERINTENDENT

Striding Towards a Better Tomorrow

Duarte Unified School District celebrates yet another new school year, a fresh academic start, and a beacon of light paving the way for our scholars to succeed. The excitement was palpable as staff welcomed Duarte's bright young minds, equipping them with the tools they need to achieve. The back-to-school momentum was amplified by award-winning motivational speaker and author Kevon Lee, who imparted messages of empowerment and motivation to the on-duty staff at the 2023 district convocation. As the school year advances so does Duarte RISE2030 (Resilient, Innovative, Scholars, Striving for Excellence) the strategic plan for the district. On Sept. 19 and 20th, staff, community members, and scholars united to further develop the execution of the plan, collaborating to instill a direct vision of the district.

October brings exciting new opportunities to unite with school pride, with events like homecoming bringing the community together. We continue to cheer on our talented staff and scholars, including Beardslee Academy's special education teacher Hannah Rodriguez, DUSD's Teacher of the Year, who advances on to represent our district as a finalist for the County Teacher of the Year award. Innovation continues to remain at the forefront of the district, with new elevated school websites, the progression of the high school sports complex, a new newsletter, and more exciting updates to come as the year unfolds.

Duarte Unified School District's diverse programs and capabilities ensure that the educational needs of each and every young scholar are met, empowering them to take on the world. Duarte continues to be a place where long-lasting bonds and memories are made beginnings of bright futures.



**Dr. Gordon
Amerson**
Superintendent

Avanzando Hacia un Mejor Mañana

El Distrito Escolar Unificado Duarte celebra otro nuevo año escolar, un nuevo comienzo académico y un rayo de luz que allana el camino para que nuestros estudiantes tengan éxito. La emoción fue palpable cuando el personal dio la bienvenida a las mentes jóvenes y brillantes de Duarte, equipándolas con las herramientas que necesitan para lograr sus objetivos. El impulso del regreso a clases fue amplificado por el galardonado orador motivacional y autor Kevon Lee, quien impartió mensajes de empoderamiento y motivación al personal de servicio en la convocatoria del distrito de 2023. A medida que avanza el año escolar, también avanza Duarte RISE2030 (Resiliente, Innovador, Académico, Luchando por la Excelencia), el plan estratégico para el distrito. El 19 y 20 de septiembre, el personal, los miembros de la comunidad y los estudiantes se unieron para desarrollar aún más la ejecución del plan, colaborando para inculcar una visión directa del distrito.

Octubre trae nuevas y emocionantes oportunidades para unirnos con el orgullo escolar, con eventos como el regreso a casa que une a la comunidad. Seguimos animando a nuestro talentoso personal y estudiantes, incluida la maestra de educación especial de la academia Beardslee, Hannah Rodríguez, Maestra del Año del DUSD, quien avanza para representar a nuestro distrito como finalista para el premio Maestra del Año del Condado. La innovación continúa a la vanguardia del distrito, con nuevos sitios web escolares destacados, el progreso del complejo deportivo de la escuela secundaria, un nuevo boletín informativo y más actualizaciones interesantes que llegarán a medida que avance el año.

Los diversos programas y capacidades del Distrito Escolar Unificado Duarte garantizan que se satisfagan las necesidades educativas de todos y cada uno de los jóvenes estudiantes, capacitándolos para enfrentarse al mundo. Duarte sigue siendo un lugar donde los vínculos y recuerdos duraderos se convierten en el comienzo de un futuro brillante.


Duarte Unified District SPOTLIGHTS

Every month, a new school spotlight will take place at the Duarte Unified School District Board Meeting, highlighting the amazing moments and accomplishments that our students and staff achieve. September's "Shining a Light on School Success" focus, has the SPOTLIGHT on Duarte's Child Development Program. Our childhood development program prepares bright minds to progress through comprehensive skill-building and active engagement.

Duarte's youngest scholars joined the Sept. 21st board meeting, equipped with costumes and books showcasing their tremendous creativity and individuality. Video highlights were played



at the meeting, demonstrating the benefits of the Child Development Program. Stay tuned for more school highlights featuring another theme and school site focus.

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Beardslee *Dual Language Immersion Academy (TK-8)*

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Jennifer Romero
Principal

Beginning The School Year with Respect, Campaigns, and Performances

At Beardslee Academy we take pride in providing a culture of care and respect, and strive to create a welcoming environment that supports students' experiences. Our Associated Student Body (ASB) is just one-way students can stay involved in school. Beardslee's ASB is tasked with providing the students with fun activities and experiences that are year-round; including, dances, class competitions, and lunch activities to name a few. Students campaigned for ASB and the students, staff and parents are very proud of Beardslee's 2023-2024 ASB leadership. Beardslee is ready for a great year with Korrin Reed's (president) dedication and vision; Sophia Scarvers' (vice president) support and ability to uplift every student; Robert Jarquin's (treasurer) knowledge

of smart budgeting; Samantha Gutierrez's (secretary) organizational skills and ability to keep everyone on track; and Yahir Salinas and Emmanuel Sedano's (public relations) ability to spread the word about school events and make our school shine. Together they are going to make this school year unforgettable! We thank Mrs. Mata, ASB coordinator, and Ms. Mullin, ASB bookkeeper, for their help and support in making sure ASB is a success! The past month has been busy; however, being culturally aware is something we focus on at Beardslee, and Hispanic Heritage month was to be celebrated. One way we celebrated Hispanic Heritage month was with a beautiful performance by Beardslee's 6th and 7th grade dual immersion students by singing Cielito Lindo. It was a heartwarming performance that truly honored the rich culture and traditions. At Beardslee Academy we are continuing to focus on all our students' needs and are looking forward to a great year.





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Luis Haro
Principal

Community Partners are Invaluable

Each year, Duarte High School graduates scatter across the country gaining admission to esteemed state and private institutions such as UC Berkeley, UCLA, USC, UC Irvine, and various California State Universities. However, the financial burden associated with higher education deters some students, even with government financial aid and loans. In response to this challenge, the Duarte community has steadfastly rallied together, demonstrating its unwavering commitment and support of the graduates of Duarte High School by means of participation of the Annual Senior Awards and Scholarship Breakfast. This occasion every May is marked by an atmosphere of joy and celebration as graduating seniors and families gather to commemorate their accomplishments. It's a moment when the entire community unites to bestow much needed scholarships upon deserving students. The scholarships awarded provides substantial financial support, ranging from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars. Over the years, numerous organizations have demonstrated their steadfast generosity and commitment to students of DHS by contributing to this noble cause. Among the dedicated partners are the Duarte Education Foundation, Duarte Black Alumni Association, Citrus College, Duarte Area Recourse Team, Kiwanis, Duarte Rotary Club, Ferguson Family Scholarship, Foothill Credit Union, Edward Lancaster Scholarship, Duarte Community Service

Council, Duarte Womens Club, DUEA/CSEA, Brian Vosberg Family Scholarships, Brad Bateson Memorial Scholarship, Catalina Valenzuela Memorial Scholarship, Duarte Teen Center, Mayors Youth Council, Francisco Martinez USMC Memorial Scholarship, and more. The Senior Breakfast at Duarte High School embodies the spirit of community, philanthropy, and education, underscoring the importance of collective efforts in nurturing the future leaders of our society. Duarte High School staff, students, and parents truly appreciate the thoughtful and generous contributions and continued commitment and support from all involved in supporting the school and its students. For more information about the school or how you or your organization can also participate in awarding a scholarship, call 626-599-5701.





Sofia Valdez
Director of
Child Development
Programs

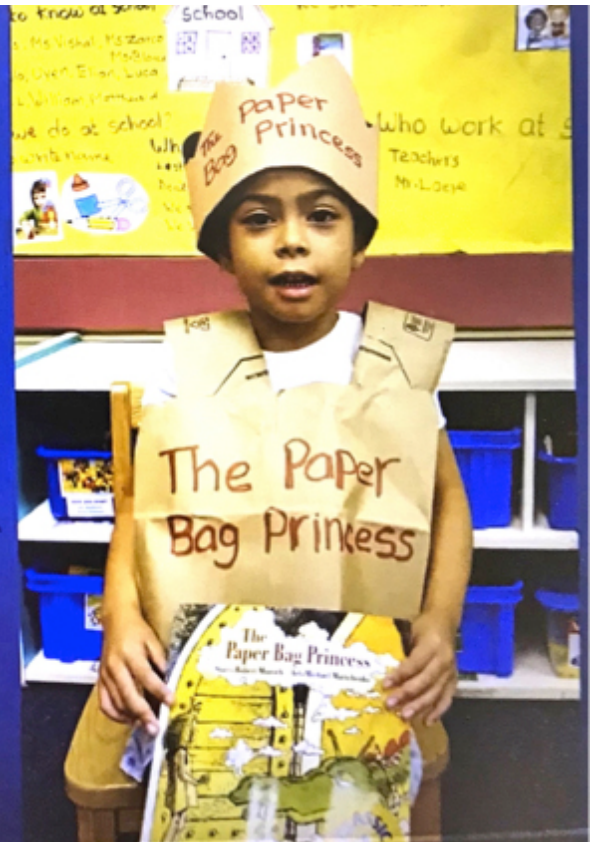
Fostering Book Comprehension & Analysis of Age-Appropriate Text in Duarte Preschool

On Thursday, September 21, our fantastic child development staff, children, and families had the opportunity to highlight “My Favorite Book Character” at the DUSD Board of Education meeting. This presentation was an excellent opportunity to share the stunning age-appropriate reading activities our passionate Early Educators intentionally plan to foster language and literacy in our youngest students. The goal is to encourage age-appropriate book comprehension and analysis of texts in preschool. At Duarte Preschool, we focus on reading experiences and activities that engage students in a deep understanding of the role of the book’s main character, the sequence of events, the setting, and the resolution of the

story’s conflict. Additionally, cultivating a love of reading by taking on the role of the main character in the book helps students develop deep comprehension and analysis skills. Children learn best from interesting, practical, and fun experiences. Hence, we provide active learning opportunities to connect concepts to children’s everyday lives, making book comprehension even more meaningful. That is what we call play-based learning in preschool!

Furthermore, our early childhood educators work collaboratively with our preschool families to empower them to involve themselves in their children’s language and literacy learning. Our Duarte Preschool teachers and their families work together to achieve the goal of developing children’s language and literacy skills.

With this, we proudly say that at Duarte Preschool, we create teaching and learning tools to help children reach their most significant potential as readers, writers, and problem solvers.





Dr. Kelly Lawson
Principal

Growing and Flourishing in Our New Wellness Center

The 2023-2024 school year is off to a great start at Maxwell Academy. We are happy to be back together and learning new things every day.

We have a new addition in the works! The Wellness Center is a space for students to focus on their social and emotional wellbeing.

It was the vision of our school psychologist,

Margaret Hughes, and our new school counselor, Wesley Loza. After dreaming of what the space could be, a team gathered to figure out how to make it happen. With the help of a Donors Choose grant fully funded by the Panda Foundation, comfortable furniture and activities are on their way!

The space will be used to promote mental health, interaction, and socializing in a productive manner. Engaging in healthy dialog, resolving conflict, and relaxing to take a break are just some of the intended benefits. It is a safe space to decompress and regroup. Social and emotional supports are available in the space with Hughes and Loza. Hughes notes, "I'm excited for the students to have a place to come and experience calm, quiet, and comfort in order to regroup and get back to learning."

The room is coming together with a futon, beanbags, fidgets, games, and even a Nintendo Switch. It offers soft lights and pillows for additional comfort. We cannot wait to invite students into the space and watch them grow and flourish in the Wellness Center.



A few Maxwell students checking out the new space and activities.

Mt. Olive Innovation and Technology *High School*

1400 Mt. Olive Dr., Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5900 • www.duarteusd.org/MIT



Kevin Morris
Principal

Hollywood Comes to Mt. Olive Innovation & Technology High School

Creating Creators' primary goals are to create real and sustainable connections to the film industry and provide authentic hands on experiences through work-based learning. The film industry is complex, complicated, difficult and purposefully tough to access. However, Creating Creators has made that access a reality for Mt. Olive

and Duarte High School's young filmmakers by opening the doors that create these networks to allow students the opportunity execute the skills learned in cinematic arts.

Career Technical Education (CTE) work-based learning is one of the keys in developing a strong CTE pathway for Duarte scholars and on September 9th, our students had the opportunity to

intern for acclaimed special effects arts Shaun Smith on his concept shoot for Nickelodeon at Mt. Olive Innovation & Technology High School. Shaun has over 20 years of experience in the film industry working as a makeup artist, makeup for special effects, puppets and props for feature films and television shows. Shaun's resume includes films like: Face/Off, Starship Troopers, Dawn of the Dead, Four Brothers, Chronicles of Narnia, 300, Tremors, Cabin in the Woods, Conan the Barbarian, and many more. He has worked with Hollywood powerhouse directors like James Woo, Drew Goddard, and Zack Snyder and actors like Nicolas Cage and John Travolta. Onset students had the

opportunity to intern as location coordinators, production assistants, grip assistants, wardrobe assistants, slating and various other film production jobs. Also, on hand were Duarte Board President Ceci Carroll, and Board members Rosa Holguin and Ken Bell who experienced this amazing opportunity for our students first hand.



Royal Oaks STEAM Academy (K-8)

2499 Royal Oaks Dr., Bradbury, CA 91008 • 626/599-5400 • www.duarteusd.org/roe



**Dr. Esther
Tamanaha**
Principal

Coffee with the Principal

The first Principal's coffee of the school year took place on Wednesday, September 13th in the school cafeteria. Dr. Tamanaha has scheduled four of these gatherings for parents to engage in open discussions with our administrative staff. This tradition serves as a bridge between the Royal Oaks admin team and parents. In attendance we had parents, Janel Gonzalez and Anabel Chavez who represented the Royal Oaks

PTO which provided pastries and Starbucks coffee. As the cafeteria filled with parents, Dr. Tamanaha welcomed everybody and introduced the assistant principal, Ms. Salas, and school counselor, Mr. Rybicki. Mr. Rybicki led the presentation about a critical issue affecting our

children "Drug Prevention & Awareness." Along with a slideshow, Mr. Rybicki presented the dangers we are faced with the new drugs being presented through social media to students. He encourages parents to have an open conversation about the dangers of these drugs and provided preventive tools. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet other parents, share thoughts, concerns, and ask questions. At the end, parents expressed their concerns about this topic and thanked the admin team. Mrs. Roque, a parent, said "It was nice that they are providing resources and a good reminder to check your child's cell phone." The principal's coffee, a small but significant tradition, stands as a symbol of our partnership in our student's education. We hope to see more parents at our next Coffee with the principal on December 5th, 2023.



This month's topic "Drug Prevention & Awareness," presented by school counselor, Mr. Rybicki.

Valley View Academy of Technology & Creative Learning (TK-6)

237 Melcanyon Rd., Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5500 • www.duarteusd.org/vve



Erin Fish
Principal

Dancing Dolphins

Through a partnership between Duarte Unified School District and California School of the Arts – San Gabriel Valley (CSArts – SGV), the students of Valley View Academy of Technology and Creative Learning are beginning introductory dance classes. A dance instructor from CSArts provides instruction in general movement and beginning dance to our students in weekly sessions that are tailored specifically for elementary students. Through the dance classes, our Valley View Dolphins are able to express their creativity, build their confidence, and channel their energy into a new art form. For our students, dance is more than just movement; it

is a magical journey of self-expression, physical fitness, and building lifelong skills. Dance is a fantastic way for kids to stay active and healthy. It helps improve flexibility, coordination, and muscle strength while keeping them engaged and having fun. As children learn and master new dance moves, they gain confidence in their abilities and feel a sense of accomplishment. This newfound confidence extends to other areas of their lives. These dance classes provide a supportive and friendly environment where children can engage and collaborate with their peers while building essential social skills. We are so grateful for this opportunity for our students and look forward to watching the budding artists and performers as our Valley View Dolphins explore their creativity and experience a new form of physical fitness. Keep on dancing Dolphins!



Dancing Dolphins in Action

Los Angeles County Office of Education

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Empowering the Future: Integrating Artificial Intelligence in K-12 Education to Prepare Students for Tomorrow

By Jose R. Gonzalez, LACOE's Chief Technology Officer



**Debra Duardo,
M.S.W., Ed.D.**
Superintendent

As we gear up for the upcoming school year, LACOE is leading the way to explore the fascinating world of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential impact on education. This technological wave has the potential to reshape the way educators teach and students learn, and I'm eager to delve into the insights it offers.

AI introduces the possibility of enhancing education by providing educators with new insights and tools to create more efficient and personalized learning experiences. While there may be concerns surrounding AI, integrating it into the educational landscape could be a transformative step in preparing students for a future deeply intertwined with technology.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has taken a commendable initiative to empower educators with the knowledge and skills needed to harness the capabilities of AI. Our comprehensive training program, which includes workshops, webinars, and professional development sessions, and presenting at conferences demonstrates a commitment to demystifying AI and providing educators with a balanced perspective on its potential benefits and challenges. The ongoing training sessions offered by LACOE's Instructional Technology Outreach (ITO) team are particularly noteworthy, as they address crucial aspects like ethical considerations and strategies for leveraging AI to enhance student engagement.

LACOE's active participation in influential conferences like the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), and Learning, Innovation and Technology in Education (LITE) further solidifies our dedication

to staying at the forefront of educational innovation. LACOE has made a mark by organizing an in-person inaugural AI Symposium, a testament to our commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of AI's role in education. The diverse panel discussions, featuring educators, government officials, administrators, and industry experts, underscore the collaborative effort required to navigate the integration of AI into education successfully.

It's clear that AI should not be viewed as a replacement for educators but as a powerful tool that can amplify its impact. AI's ability to provide insights, identify learning gaps, and personalize instruction has the potential to revolutionize the classroom experience. The emphasis on AI's capacity to enhance student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking aligns with the core values of education.

LACOE's approach of involving all stakeholders – parents, students, teachers, and administrators – in discussions about AI integration is praiseworthy. It reflects an understanding that responsible integration requires a collective effort. Furthermore, the focus on continuous professional development and the development of guidelines for AI usage underscores the importance of a well-informed and cautious approach.

This is an exciting journey to discover all aspects of AI and its benefits and challenges are vital. It will take collaboration between educators, institutions, and technology to shape the future of education. The responsible and thoughtful integration of AI has the potential to create a more dynamic and personalized learning environment for students, and LACOE is eager to provide many perspectives through the journey as educators navigate this transformative landscape.