

#WeAreCarmelUnified

April 28, 2019

Superintendent Barb Dill-Varga, Ed.D.

April 29: Parent Evening Presentation- Dr. Susan Swick, Ohana Center



Join us as our PTA organizations combine forces to provide thought-provoking parent education events in our community.

RAISING RESILIENT TEENAGERS
Tuesday, March 19, 6:30-8 p.m.
Pacific Grove Middle School
Performing Arts Center

Parents go from "management" to "consulting" when their children enter adolescence, and some organizing principles can make this transition a little easier. Parents should leave with some straightforward ideas about what the "work" of adolescence is and some practical strategies to support (and even enjoy) their teenagers as well as guidelines for when to worry about them.

MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY IN ADOLESCENTS
Monday, April 29, 6:30-8 p.m.
Carmel High School Performing Arts Center

Dr. Susan Swick will talk about how we can differentiate between what is normal, even healthy, adolescent stress and what might represent a psychiatric problem that needs treatment. And she will offer practical strategies to help us approach stress management with all of our adolescents.

The last 30 minutes of each session will be devoted to questions. We look forward to seeing you.

Presented by Pacific Grove PTA and CHS Padre Parents

Dr. Susan Swick is the physician in chief for the new Ohana Center for Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, and she is one of our Carmel Unified parents! I have had the pleasure of getting to know her this past year and am excited about the resources this new Ohana Center will be bringing to the Monterey Peninsula. I have also discovered that Dr. Swick is a resource we can tap now! To that end, I worked with my peninsula superintendent colleagues and Dr. Swick to create two opportunities for parents this spring. These events are free and open to all parents and our CHS Padre Parents are co-hosting the event on April 29! Dr. Swick's presentation will be: "Managing Stress and Anxiety in Adolescents" on **Monday, April 29, 6:30-8pm** at Carmel High School in the Center for Performing Arts. Please plan to join us!

April 30: Reconvening the Board's Wellness Committee

Our Board of Education has five standing subcommittees: Finance, Facilities, Policy, Education, and Wellness. The Wellness Committee, active several years ago, will be reconvened this spring. The first meeting will be on April 30, 5:30-7:30pm. Wellness encompasses many possible areas for discussion and action. We had a great conversation on the topic of a Late Start Bell Schedule with students, teachers, parents and members of the public at a recent Board meeting and certainly this committee would be a place to continue this discussion and conduct an investigation into what might be possible, given our geographic size and other challenges. But I would also hope this committee would work together to look at some of our other issues of concern around the topic of wellness, including but not limited to: steps we can take to address the exponential increase in vaping we are seeing with our youth and issues around stress and anxiety and self reported chronic unhappiness/sadness. This spring we are planning to meet twice to launch our work that will continue on next year and into the future.

Vision: College Major or Life Mission?

Some of the stress and anxiety felt by our teens today likely comes from the many choices they are feeling they need to make about "life after high school." While many of us grew up with the

annual holiday dinner table questions from our parents and relatives (“What do you want to be when you grow up?”) today’s teens are almost daily bombarded by external expectations and definitions of success that are exacerbated by news headlines and social media.

The pressure to make the right post-secondary decisions no longer seems to be just owned by an individual high school student. Lately the news has been filled lately with parents who have gone to extreme, some would argue illegal, lengths to ensure their children are accepted at a particular elite university or college. This scandal about the college admissions process is revealing that some parents are using their wealth or status to secure a spot for their child in a desired prestigious college or university. As these incidents are becoming headlines, there certainly is plenty of outrage to go around. What I haven’t seen discussed is *why is this really happening* and *what are the lessons for all of us about the messages we are sending to our students* about the relationship of success and happiness to their post secondary high school options?

Here are some questions for your consideration as we work together to help our students manage today’s pressure cooker environment with questions about their future : *How do we define success? How should they define it for themselves? How much does life success depend on getting accepted and enrolling at a particular elite school or college? Is the rest of one’s life based on that single decision made in high school about getting in to a particular post-secondary destination?*

As Superintendent what I want for our students is for them to find their sweet spot, their *Ikigai* (Japanese word for “a reason for being.”) What will make one’s life worthwhile? What is the reason one jumps out of bed in the morning? This sweetspot or “Ikigai” is at the intersection of four activity categories: **What you love, What you are good at, what you can get paid for, and what the world needs.** In other words it is where Passion, Profession, Vocation and Mission intersect. If you “google” Ikigai, you’ll see a visual venn diagram that represents this idea.

So what does this have to do with the college conversation? In my humble opinion, our current conversations with our students about the college application process are a contributing factor toward the stress we see our children enduring. They are chasing grades, a schedule crammed with AP classes, and a plethora of extracurricular involvement to fill out a resume. I’m all for it if it is purpose-driven, but sometimes it is not.

Life success and personal happiness are best reached when that aforementioned sweetspot is achieved. Will I work at something that makes a difference in the world? Will I be doing something I enjoy? Will it be something I am good at and that provides me with a livable wage? While all of this might start at Stanford or one of the Ivy League schools, it certainly doesn’t have to. If the financial figures are even half right about the amount of student debt that will be carried by this generation, then other solutions might be better. There are multiple pathways to a life of satisfaction and success.

In Carmel Unified we do have these conversations with our students starting even in the youngest grades, and I am intent on us providing an even more deliberate articulation of this exploration, particularly at the high school. How does one figure out personal passions, possible professions and vocations and get to a point where the focus is on Life *Mission* instead of an intended College Major? We need more opportunities for students to do some job shadowing or even some small internships. Part time employment is often a good way to get a bird's-eye view into a career area as well as learning the value of a dollar. And it needs all of us to put the emphasis on this kind of thinking process. I worry--as a mother, a former teacher, and now Superintendent--about the pressure of our collective societal expectations on our young people when it is divorced from life purpose and meaning. I hope to continue this conversation with you and our wonderful staff as we seek to address issues around stress.

Retirement and Transitions: Update on Key Leadership Positions

Chief Business Official

As you will remember from my last newsletter, Rick Blanckmeister, our Chief Business Official, has also announced that he will be retiring on June 30, 2019. School Services, Inc., a search firm that specializes in locating CBOs for school districts, has brought us a slate of excellent candidates to be interviewed in early May. We hope to interview and bring a candidate forward, most likely at a May 15, 2019 board meeting.

Chief Human Resource Officer

We continue to search for the right replacement for Ken Griest who has announced that he will be retiring on June 30, 2019. We did interview a slate of six candidates through two rounds, but have decided to continue our search. We are enlisting the help from Leadership Associates to find our pool of candidates to be interviewed in May.

Director, Fiscal Services: Welcome Tu My Vuong!

We are excited to welcome **Tu My Vuong** as our new Director of Financial Services. Tu My started on April 22, 2019. Our current Director Jeannette Ayala is set to retire at the end of April.

Carmel High School Principal: Welcome Mr. Jonathan Lyons!

Our process for hiring the new principal at Carmel High

We had 27 applications from which we chose 8 to interview on April 1. On that date, these 8 were interviewed by two different panels, each with a membership of about 14 individuals. Panel A was populated with parents, community members, and students and was facilitated by Ken Griest. I facilitated Panel B comprised of teachers and administrators. Those two panels were asked to come to consensus on which 3 candidates would advance to the second round. On April 2, three very strong, experienced candidates were interviewed by an interview panel with representation from day one's Panel A and Panel B, plus the District Administrative Cabinet and one board member representative, Mr. Karl Pallastrini. Any one of these candidates would have been excellent choices, but we are happy to introduce you to **Jonathan Lyons** as the next

principal for Carmel High School.

Jonathan has 12 years of assistant principal and principal administrative experience, serving currently at La Canada High School, La Cañada Flintridge, CA. La Canada High School, like Carmel High, is a California Distinguished School. It has also been recognized by the federal government as a National Blue Ribbon School. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized LCHS for “high achievement and exemplary programs”, for rich extracurricular activities, and for strong community support. It is a school with an enrollment of 1,389 pupils in grades 9 through 12, and has consistently received the maximum six years of accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

Jonathan has his Masters in Educational Leadership, his BA in Communications with teaching credentials in Social Science and English and his career has included teaching AP US History, English, and CTE stagecraft. While he clearly has experience in all of the operational facets of leading a high school (master schedule building, master facilities planning, budget oversight, etc.), more importantly he is also an instructional leader and has been involved in Challenge Success, providing critical oversight for the counseling department. His references cite among other glowing statements “his culture of care for students, his empowerment of others, and his organizational skills and attention to detail.”

I asked the final panel on April 2 to share positives they believed to be true for each candidate. Here is what they said about Jonathan: “collaborative, excellent presenter, student-centered, highly knowledgeable regarding high school operations, strength in building a powerful counseling program, designer of programs supporting student learning, constructs a schedule responsive to student needs, has been a WASC visiting team member, read our WASC report several times and his answers showed that he had researched our district, will breathe life into our school campus, understands design thinking, able to communicate complex ideas, has made improvements in mathematics instruction, and leader of teachers.”

April 15 Site Visit to *La Canada*

On April 15, Board members Tess Arthur and Annette Yee Steck accompanied me on a day trip to southern California to complete a site visit. We met with teams of certificated teachers, classified staff, site and district level administrators, parents, and students in addition to time spent with the candidate. Our team also toured parts of the campus and some classrooms and also talked with random individuals along the way about the candidate.

Board member and round two interview panelist Karl Pallastrini shared his thoughts:

“It was clear to me during the interview process that Jon Lyons would be an excellent candidate for Carmel High’s next principal. He is student-centered, a great communicator, and has a depth of experience in areas that will help us grow. While we had an excellent interview process, it was also important to me as Board president to have additional board members make the trip to *La Canada* to see for themselves what types of relationships he has had with students, teachers, and classified staff and to learn about the impact he has made in that school. Tess Arthur and

Annette Yee Steck traveled with our superintendent Barb Dill-Varga during spring break week to his high school and have gathered evidence for themselves that affirms our interview process results. I am looking forward to welcoming Jon as Carmel High's new principal!"

Board Member Tess Arthur shared these thoughts as well:

"After meeting with multiple stakeholder groups, from students to the Superintendent, it quickly became astoundingly clear how beloved, impressive, and accomplished Jon has been throughout his mere two year tenure at La Canada High School. He has an uncanny ability to galvanize his troops, while maintaining a consistent, student focused approach. Jon is solutions oriented and will be a strong leader and team player at Carmel High. He is approachable, has a commanding presence, and has proven to be a "boots on the ground" leader. I also admire the fact that his resume also includes time spent in a very low performing district in which he made huge strides to bridge the gaps. I am confident that he will succeed at CHS, and I know that he will cultivate a strong, cohesive culture of passionate learning and school spirit!"

Board Member Annette Yee Steck shared these thoughts and observations from the visit:

"I was most impressed with how Jon has personally connected to so many people: students, teachers, staff and parents, and that he is so clearly student and teacher/staff focused. We also learned from employees that Jon treats classified staff and teachers as equals. A former teacher, Jon remembers well what it was like to be in the classroom. *La Canada* High School is very high performing academically and although Jon has supported this, he also brought to the school ideas and programs that focus on the wellness and health of students. Among these are a student peer support program and the move to create a wellness center, now underway. His background from before LCHS was at schools with a majority of students with academic, language, and socioeconomic challenges, so he will be able to help us close our achievement gaps. Jon is an enthusiastic cheerleader and his infectious energy has increased student involvement and spirit. He has a deep background in ASB, and the students we talked to feel he really cares about them personally and is a reliable mentor to whom they can turn. I am very much looking forward to having Jon be the principal of Carmel High School!"

Jonathan, his wife, and three children (elementary and middle school age) are all thrilled to come to Carmel. He was present at the April 24 board meeting to meet the Board and those in attendance and they approved his employment contract at that time. There will also be other opportunities in the future to welcome our new Carmel High School principal.

Update on Master Facilities Planning Process

This spring we are completing year two of our Master Facilities Planning Process. Last year was spent seeking consensus on what educational directives should guide this process. You may remember that we worked with David Jakes whose work inspired us to realize in Carmel Unified we don't just create "lifelong" learners, but we also care about nurturing "life deep and life wide learners." We also expressed that our goal is for our learning experiences to be connected and experiential. We always want to be flexible enough to respond to present learner needs, so in a sense, these teaching moments are also "in motion."

Using that philosophical foundation and assisted by our architectural partner LPA, 1570 participants have participated in a wide range of stakeholder meetings and conversations throughout the year, representing parents and community members, students, staff, administrators and board members. These participants represent the interests of all of our active school sites ranging from pre K through grade 12.

On April 24, the School Board worked with LPA in a board workshop to identify from the stakeholder wishlists what the priorities should be going forward with some initial discussion about funding options. It is important to remember that this is a Master Facilities Plan for the next ten years. While ambitious, it is important to have a concrete idea of the ultimate vision for our district, so as we are able to fund and renovate, reconfigure, or even build new facilities, we do so as part of working on this ten year, long range plan and vision. LPA will bring back the next version of the plan to the Board at the June 15, 2019 Board Meeting for acceptance.

Safe Schools: ALICE Training for All

One of the benefits of having a District School Resource Officer (SRO) is the coordinated focus we now have on safety. You may remember that we were able to support this change through applying for and receiving a \$500,000 Department of Justice Tobacco Grant. In addition to providing information in health classes about the dangers of vaping and using illegal substances encouraged by the grant, Deputy Kevin Gross has worked with site administrators on safety drills and protocols and reviewed our sites for suggested ways to enhance security. He has also become a friendly resource for all of our students and staff on each campus!

Most recently, Deputy Gross has taken a district team to a two-day ALICE training. ALICE is the #1 Active Shooter Civilian Response training that many area school districts have embraced. ALICE stands for *Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate* and is a methodology to help all of us more proactively handle a threat of an aggressive intruder or active shooter event. ALICE training options are now the more accepted response, versus the traditional “lockdown” only or “run, hide, fight,” protocols. While we hope and pray we never need to use this training, we want to be prepared. Our recent team was trained as trainers to be able to disseminate training to all staff next fall. This protocol is one that most, if not all, Monterey County schools now follow, and one that our Monterey County Sheriff’s Department now fully supports. We will be bringing you more information as we fall approaches.

Changes in Registration and Residency for New and Returning Students

The district is excited to be switching from *InfoSnap* to *Aeries* for online enrollment. The process will more streamlined because Aeries already contains most of the data required for returning

students, and most families in grade 6 through 12 already have an *Aeries* online account. Here are some key dates in the process:

Residency Affidavits

May 1- May 31: Updated Residency Affidavits are required for new students, incoming 6th and 9th grade students, and families that have moved since the last Residency Affidavit was completed.

Online Enrollment for New Students (includes returning TK and K)

Early May through May 31: New students need to complete the Online Enrollment forms in *Aeries*. These families will receive login information from the district or school registrars in early May. (Note: “New students” also includes all TK and Kindergarten students, even if they have previously been enrolled in the district.)

Data Confirmation for All Returning Students

July 1 - August 13 will be the window for returning students to log into *Aeries* to confirm or update data such as contact information and medical conditions; grant or deny permissions for district services; and acknowledge receipt of required district annual notices. Middle and high school parents/guardians will use their existing *Aeries* account, and preschool/elementary school parents/guardians will need to set up a new account. More information will be set via email as we get closer to July 1.

State CAASPP Tests Underway

During late April through May, our 3rd through 8th and 11th grade students are taking the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The results are used to find out how individual students are progressing, as well as to gauge how well our school system as a whole is meeting our academic targets. We encourage families to support their students’ success on these tests by getting adequate sleep and a good breakfast before testing and emphasizing the value of the assessment to ensure all students achieve a high level of success.