

October 4, 2019

# #WeAreCarmelUnified

From the Office of the Superintendent Barb Dill-Varga, Ed.D.

## A Successful New Tradition!

### First Cup of Coffee with the Superintendent



On September 6, from 7:30-8:30 am, about a dozen parents attended our “First Cup of Coffee with the Superintendent” at Coffee Bank, which is located at 26135 Carmel Rancho Boulevard. In addition to meeting parents from a majority of our sites, I answered questions and gathered some great ideas from parents to investigate! I invite you to consider attending any one or all of the next dates I now have on my calendar!

### Next Dates and Locations for Friday First Cup of Coffee meet-ups at 7:30am - 8:30 am:

October 11	Carmel Valley Roasting Company at the MidValley Shopping Center
November 15	Coffee Bank at 26135 Carmel Rancho Boulevard
December 13	Carmel Valley Roasting Company at the MidValley Shopping Center

### Tentative Second Semester Dates:

January 10	Coffee Bank at 26135 Carmel Rancho Boulevard
February 7	Coffee Bank at 26135 Carmel Rancho Boulevard
March 20	Big Sur Bakery, Big Sur
April 10	Carmel Valley Roasting Company at the MidValley Shopping Center

### Wellness Committee Studies Late-Start Options

I reconvened the Board’s Wellness Committee last spring for two meetings at which we 1) reviewed progress made on recommendations from the

previous committee and 2) identified some central questions around issues of Wellness.

At the September 16th meeting, we focused on using a Design School, five-step process to begin working on problem solving issues. Together we tackled what it would take to implement a different bell schedule with a later start for the high school and perhaps the middle school. We are all aware that SB328 Late Start Schedule legislation has once again secured approvals and is awaiting Governor Newsom’s signature. If the governor signs the bill, school districts have until 2022 to figure out how to make the necessary changes to implement it. Because we have unique challenges in our 600 square mile geographical area, we have decided to begin this analysis sooner rather than later.

### Three research questions

At our meeting, many questions were raised and homework was assigned. Cabinet members will research and bring back information on these topics at the **next meeting (October 21)**:

- Requirements - Instructional Minutes
- Bus Transportation Options
- Lessons from Case Studies

It is possible that a next step might involve a pilot process, though many possible changes are subject to Board approval and negotiation processes with our various employee groups. We will keep you informed via reports at board meetings and through this newsletter and other means!

### Other Wellness topics of interest

In addition to the interest in “late start,” there are still others in our community who wish to work on nutrition, student stress/anxiety, and addressing the use of illegal substances, especially vaping. Those in attendance were asked to identify their area of interest as workgroups will be formed. Achieving wellness for all of our students means that we must look at all of these areas!

**One final note:** We are also working with the Carmel Library Foundation to offer two events this winter for parents that address student stress/anxiety and related parenting issues. Keep these dates in mind and watch for further information on these event events: February 10 and March 16.

## Facilities Master Plan Update

Our Board of Trustees held a special board meeting focused on reviewing elements of the Facilities Master Plan (FMP), and identifying next steps.

### Looking back

Our FMP, developed over the last two years with assistance by the LPA architectural firm, is a 10-year comprehensive master facilities plan. We took the time in year one of the process to work with consultant David Jakes to talk about what we value in terms of teaching and learning in Carmel Unified. Jakes helped us realize that we are not just building life-long learners, but that our teachers design learning experiences which create *life-wide and life-deep* learners as well. That three dimensionality has implications for the types of learning spaces we should seek for our students, and we took the opportunity during the MFP process to dream a big inspiring dream!

### Looking forward

At the next special Board Meeting on November 15, our Board will review the short list of needs that each building administrator has culled from a much longer list. This might include making decisions about using some existing fund balance for smaller projects. At some point, the Board will be making a decision about if and when they will seek approval of a bond to support additional construction. We are also intent on addressing facilities upgrades that address school safety! The work ahead is to ensure that Carmel Unified continues to be a district preparing all of its students for the future ahead.

## Chamber of Commerce - Industry Luncheon Idea

### My passion for student career explorations

I am very interested in finding ways to help our students engage in a variety of career explorations

before they leave our school system for their post secondary options. Whether that is a short-term job shadow, internship, part-time employment, or simply connecting with a mentor in the field, I believe it is crucial for students to have this exposure!

### Connecting with local employment sectors

In late August, I was invited by Chamber Executive Director Jenny MacMurdo to talk to her board about an idea that I had been thinking about. I asked if the Chamber would be interested in partnering with me on creating some "industry luncheons" to catalyze the collaborative conversations. Each luncheon would focus on a certain employment area that is prevalent in our area. For example, one might say our "industries" include health services, hospitality/recreation, environmental, agriculture, the arts, and financial services. I'm sure there are a few more to add to that list, too.

After some conversation with school district administrators and teachers and the Chamber, we are going to start with those whose careers and employment somehow connect to the arts, so first up will be the visual arts. One chamber member was quick to let me know that there are 76 different art galleries in and around the area. Amazing! It's important to remember that one doesn't have to be an artist to find employment in a gallery, as some have the range of administrative support services that many businesses have, too. We will be sending out invitations to our visual artists and hope to have a luncheon conversation at which we listen to what the entry level skills and attributes they seek when hiring individuals. We'll share our curriculum in this field, and we'll seek to identify those who are willing to place students in job shadows, part time employment, and mentor relationships.

### A next step

Next up will be one of the other industry areas. My long term goal is that every Carmel High School student will have at least one opportunity to explore an area of interest that may help them make better choices about post-secondary education and options!

### My invitation to you

If you would like to be part of our pool of mentors and/or you have a business that students could visit, please let me know! It takes a village, as they say...

## Spotlight on Innovative Instruction

I am dedicating some of my Fridays to spending time at our various school sites to witness first hand our master teachers at work. I would like to share a few highlights from my September 6 visit to Tularcitos, my September 13 visit to Carmelo, and my September 20 visit to Captain Cooper. By selecting only a couple of teachers at each site, I know I risk the omission of showcasing many others that welcomed me to watch them at work. Please know how many wonderful teachers we are blessed to have in CUSD! And watch for more news in the months to come as well!

### Tools of the Mind at Carmelo

Anyone who has visited Carmelo preschool knows that this is where the magic begins for many of our students!! Curiosity is nurtured and questions abound. Teachers are trained in the Tools of the Mind methodology which promotes a learner centered curriculum. One classroom I visited centered around a “wondering question” students chose around the topic of apples. Students learned the parts of the apple, drew pictures to reflect their learnings, and made a wonderful apple tree. Appropriate readings were found including *Ten Apples Up On Top!* By Theo LeSieg. Our teachers are so gifted at supporting student interests and helping them to practice early literacy skills as they learn!



*Carmelo students study and diagram the parts of an apple.*



*Carmelo students created an apple tree as part of their Tools of the Mind curriculum.*

### Phonemic awareness instruction at Tularcitos

On this particular day, I was thrilled to watch Cathy Wiest provide mesmerizing instruction for all three sections of kindergarteners at the same time in one large room! There were over 60 students in the room and not one was off task! To the uninformed observer, it looked like an engaging mixture of repetitive choral sounds and movement as students were learning to recognize letters of the alphabet and associate them with certain sounds and movements in response to the teacher’s direction. I debriefed the lesson later with Cathy and was thrilled to learn that she was implementing the *Heggerty Phonemic Awareness* curriculum, a curriculum not just appropriate for those with dyslexia, but one that would benefit all students. Each kindergarten teacher was present to see Cathy model the correct approach and was pledging to reinforce the instruction frequently with their individual classes. We are anticipating that this research-based approach will help to jumpstart our young readers! It is one wonderful example of how our teachers continue to bring important pedagogical innovations to our classrooms.

## Social Emotional Learning at Tularcitos



*Ms. Bullas uses puppets to teach conflict management skills.*

I believe it is likely that every school district across the nation is focused not only on the Three Rs, but also on improving the Social Emotional Learning that occurs in our schools. I was fortunate to see two master teachers at Tularcitos — Ms. Bullas and Ms. Reimer — work with our first graders as they engaged in Kelso's Choice. Kelso and Lily are two hand puppet frogs that teachers use to act out realistic scenarios children encounter. These dialogues allow children to learn about and practice appropriate ways to talk with each other as well as how to treat each other during times of conflict and disagreement. Classroom discussion that follows is an important opportunity for a teacher to reinforce expectations and reinforce positive behavior. These opportunities also include literacy practice and different ways for individuals to express themselves whether through art, drama, or conversation.

### **A medieval experience in the Captain Cooper kindergarten**

It was a real treat to join Mrs. Zarate's kindergarten students back in time in an immersive experience as they were learning about life in the time of medieval kings, queens, and castles. Imagine part of her classroom set up to be a castle with a drawbridge and turrets. (It's amazing what you can do with large cardboard boxes that once housed kitchen appliances!) Students were assigned roles as characters from a book they were reading together set in this time period. Principal Tacconi

and I were King and Queen respectively and invited to preside over the event. The room was rich with visual literacy maps helping students make connections and acquire advanced academic vocabulary such as the *keep* and the *portcullis*! As she read the story out loud, every student was invited to act out the parts of their assigned character! Not a soul was off task! It was, yes, magical! Many years ago I learned about the work of Dorothy Heathcote, a British teacher who pioneered the use of drama to engage students in lessons across the curriculum. Heathcote would have been very excited to see this master teacher at work helping students activate their imaginations to learn and grow!



*Welcome to Medieval Times!*

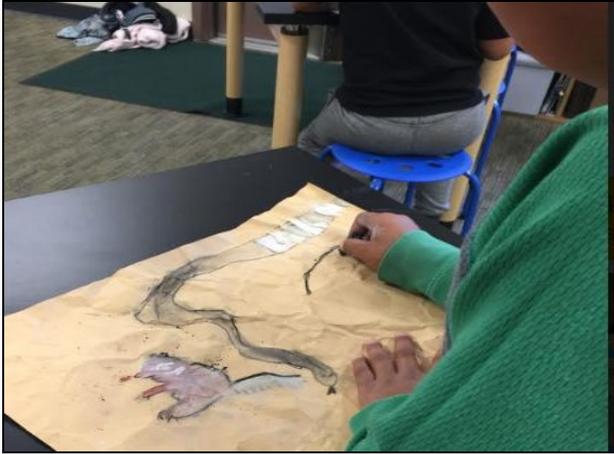
### **STEAM at Cooper**

STEAM is an instructional acronym that blends the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. Mrs. Tischio, Cooper's STEAM teacher, is a uniquely talented teacher who is not only skilled in all of these areas, but has the creative mind to find ways to develop curriculum where the disciplines seamlessly meet. Sometimes she even connects physical education to the line-up!

On the day of my visit, she was sharing with students how prehistoric man made his cave drawings using crude tools and natural sources of paint or color. She invited students to learn about and pick a local animal or bird or reptile to draw in a similar fashion, crumpling the construction paper first to simulate a stone wall and then guiding them to use charcoal and red ochre. Mrs. Tischio emphasized for students that these featured local animals have all exhibited certain traits or adaptations that allow them to survive in Big Sur's particular environment, one of the key life science lessons she was underscoring! Once again, every student on task, engaged, and learning by doing!



*Captain Cooper students made "cave drawings" with Mrs. Tischio.*



*A Captain Cooper student practices his artistic skills.*

In the coming weeks and months, I will be sharing snippets of other wonderful classroom visits from my travels to all sites!

## **Meet Our Board of Trustees**

In a recent [#WeAreCarmelUnified](#), I introduced you to our newest Board Member, Todd Weaver. In talking with some of you, I realized that it would be beneficial to take some time in the next several newsletters to introduce you to each of our other four Board Members. I am truly blessed to have such a talented group of individuals willing to serve our district with their time, talent, and energy! So with that in mind, I am going to shine the light on one Board member in each of the next several newsletters. First up: Annette Yee Steck. Next up: Tess Arthur, Karl Pallastrini, and Sara Hinds.

## **Board Member Annette Yee Steck**



Here is what Annette wrote about herself:

Public education has been the central focus of my 35-year career. As a young professional, I created the first pooled financing program for school districts with funding needs, a concept that has been successfully emulated

throughout California and now across the country. I have served as a consultant to over 100 school districts, ranging in size from Los Angeles Unified to elementary school districts with fewer than 200 students. I am one of 16 instructors in the California School Boards Association's (CSBA) Masters in Governance Program, teaching school board members and superintendents throughout the state about their roles and responsibilities. I also welcome and host new board members for their initial training at CSBA's annual conference. I am particularly proud of my service to the Carmel Unified School District. During my 26 year tenure, I have been involved as the District has moved from receiving almost no outside recognition to being considered among the leaders of the state. In that time and among other accolades, CUSD has been named a California Exemplary School District, Tularcitos was the first school in the County to gain recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School, every eligible school in the District has been recognized as a California Distinguished School, and CHS was named a nationwide Top High School in U.S. News and World Report.

In addition to my work with schools, my husband Loren and I devote our time to other community issues. We both serve on the board of Community Human Services, a local nonprofit that is dedicated to providing support to marginalized populations such as runaway and homeless youth. For fun, Loren and I annually host the gathering of Morgan sports cars during Classic Car Week, and we can often be seen driving our 1941 woodie around town and to the beach. I enjoy cooking and am only slightly addicted to those cooking shows on television. I feel lucky to live in Carmel, where I am

surrounded by wonderful caring people, and can burn off calories hiking through some of the most spectacular scenery in the world.

### **Start with Hello - Sandy Hook program begins at CHS and CMS**

During my first year as Superintendent, two community/parent members, Allyson Kavner and Robin Casey, brought to our attention the many programs offered by those involved with the Sandy Hook Promise, an organization formed after the tragic events and lost lives at Sandy Hook Elementary School. At about the same time, our Monterey County Office of Education arranged for national Sandy Hook presenters to enlighten us as to what they could offer school districts. I'm pleased to announce that this year we are finally implementing the *Start With Hello* program at our high school and middle school. This initiative depend on students to carry the work forward as we proactively work to make sure all students feel included and valued. It also provides a mechanism for students to provide support for those who do not feel part of our communities before they fall into some destructive behaviors. We are excited to continue developing these programs as part of our overall social - emotional wellness initiatives!

### **From One Parent to Another**

Some of you know that I, too, am a parent. I have been where many of you are... navigating the choppy waters of those tough teenage years. I am thankful that my son is now 27 and making his way through life as an adult! He and I have somehow both survived, and I am grateful for that.

However, in addition to being a parent of one child, I am now a superintendent and feel a keen responsibility to do what I can to keep all of our children safe and engaged in healthy behaviors. Our school administrators do their best to warn parents about non-school sponsored events/parties we learn of or suspect are occurring that are best avoided, but we need your assistance in this area.

First, please take a minute and read the attached *SafeHomes* flyer and consider having a conversation with your son or daughter, if you haven't already done so. While the conversations may be difficult, it may just be what is necessary to

help them avoid poor decisions that cause heartache, legal problems, and sometimes tragedy.

Second, if you wish to share information anonymously with us about events being planned that we may be able to short circuit, we do have an anonymous tip line 1-(800-78-CRIME) that you can access. Our entire goal is to keep our children safe. Thank you in advance for taking this seriously!

### **How to Find Out What's Going On**

- Before every board committee and regular board meeting, we send you an Invitation and Preview of Board Agenda Topics.
- Following every regular board meeting, we send you *#Board Connections*, a 1-2 page summary of the board meeting, with links to Agenda Online documents.
- *#WeAreCarmelUnified* is our regular newsletter with updates on issues and work going on within our district.
- Your site principal's weekly email newsletter has important information on upcoming events and reminders.
- [Here is a link to our District Goals](#) and [This is a link to our LCAP plan](#).

### **Important Upcoming Dates**

- [First Cup of Coffee with Supt!](#) - October 11, 2019
- Next Board Meeting - October 23, 2019
- Special Board Meeting on Facilities - November 15
- BOE Wellness Committee Meetings- September 16, October 21, November 18, January 13

# SafeHomes

A PLEDGE FOR ALL PARENTS

The Carmel Unified School District wants parents to take a stand promoting healthy choices and we're asking you to endorse the following agreements and guidelines.

## PARENTS AGREEMENT:

We will cooperate with schools, law enforcement, and young people to create a healthy atmosphere in which the use of drugs and alcohol is no longer considered the norm. In order to do this, we agree to the following guidelines:

- We will develop and communicate a clear position about drug and alcohol use.
- We will not serve drugs and alcohol to others' children.
- We will endorse a comprehensive, meaningful drug and alcohol abuse prevention program for grades K-12.
- We will promote wholesome social activities for our youth and will not sponsor or condone social activities we or our children cannot control.
- We will remember that appropriate and consistent discipline indicates concern and love.

## AS A HOST PARENT:

- Call the parents of anyone possessing drugs or alcohol or appearing to be under the influence of either.
- Call appropriate law enforcement if necessary. Do not allow anyone under the influence to go home alone.
- Be visible. Tell the guests who choose to leave the activity that they may not return.

- Encourage "invitation only" activity; do not permit crashers.

## CALL THE HOST PARENT:

- To verify the occasion and location.
- To check on continual supervision.
- To be sure there will be no drugs or alcohol served.

If the activity seems inappropriate, express your concern, keep your teenager home, and seek alternative activities.

## FAMILY COMMUNICATION:

- Know where your children are and let them know where you are.
- Be awake or require your children to wake you when they come home at night.
- Assure your teenagers that they can call you to be picked up whenever needed.
- Get to know your teenagers' friends and their parents.

## REASONABLE HOURS:

- Encourage teenagers to stay home on school nights except for school activities, community events, or adult-sanctioned activities.
- The curfew for minors in Monterey Peninsula cities is 10:00 p.m. every night, and 11:00 p.m. in unincorporated areas of the county.