



ABC UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Digest

November/December 2019 - Volume IX - No 2

A Message from the Superintendent - Dr. Mary Sieu

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ABC has Award Winning Schools!

As we wind our clocks back an hour and begin to feel the fall season, it's the ideal time to reflect on the many special recognitions our schools have received. On November 14-15, 2019 both Gonsalves ES and Leal ES received the National Blue Ribbon School Awards in Washington, DC. Only twenty-five schools in California earned this national distinction as an Exemplary High Performing School. This is defined as the achievement of the students on state assessments in English language arts and math as well as disaggregated results for various student groups.

Both schools received a plaque and a flag at the National Blue Ribbon School Awards Ceremony. It was a pleasure for President of the Board Ernie Nishii and I to join Gonsalves ES Principal Robert Benko, teacher Dana Brickner, and Leal ES Principal Paul Andre White at the National Blue Ribbon Schools Awards Ceremony in Washington, DC.

Two schools in ABCUSD are also eligible to apply for the 2020 California Distinguished Schools Program. They include Carver ES and Elliott ES. Both of these schools have earned the coveted State recognition in the past but we are confident that they will be able to earn the new recognition for 2020.

At the City of Lakewood's Award of Valor on November 6, Artesia HS Secretary Bridget Perrizo was awarded the Mayor's Award by Mayor Todd Rogers and Fire Chief Daryl Osby for her heroic act of bravery. As one of the recipients said, "it comes down to compassion and choice." Congratulations to Bridget Perrizo for her compassion and choice to act when needed!

Have a wonderful holiday season coming up! ►



In This Issue

News From Our Schools and
Around The District 2-8
Community Involvement 9



Gonsalves ES and Leal ES Recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools

News From Our Schools and Around The District

Bragg ES's Team Green

Team Green is working to make Bragg ES greener. Team Green is a group of 24 fifth graders, led by teacher Mrs. Flores, dedicated to reducing the use of plastics. The group meets weekly and is working on reducing the use of single-use water bottles in school each day. To figure out the issue, the students began collecting data about single-use water bottles on campus. Team Green went to work, surveying students and families, conducting trash audits, and tallying the number of water bottles sold during lunch. They found that about 170 water bottles are sold during lunch each week and that about 84 students brought single-use water bottles to school each day.

To counter the problem of single-use water bottles, Team Green came up with a solution to sell reusable water bottles with the Bragg ES logo on them. They have also partnered with the L.A. Conservation Corps to have bottles and cans recycled, with some funds given back to the Green Team to fund future projects. Now, Team Green will start spreading the word about how their classmates, families, and Bragg ES staff can help reduce the use of plastic. They will be at school assemblies, staff meetings, PTA meetings, and will even be creating an infomercial to educate the community about the dangers plastics pose to the environment. ▮



New Measure BB Signage

New Measure BB signage has been delivered to all District elementary schools, giving the community a sense of what is going on through Quick Start projects. These projects include: updated school security, new playground surfacing and equipment, as well as water bottle filling stations, and shade structures. ▮

CodeXX

When Cerritos HS student Rahael George saw a problem, she decided it needed a solution. Rahael had read about women in computer science and wanted to see more women entering the field. Wanting to learn more about this issue, she had a conversation with her Computer Science teacher Richard Crow. He confirmed her thoughts and research. Then, she started what would be a year-long journey to help solve this problem.

She pulled a team of classmates from her AP Computer Science Principles course together. Kalista Hamad, Audry Anigbo, and Myra Anigbo joined Rahael, and soon they were putting together a non-profit organization called CodeXX.

The CodeXX summer camp team had the vision to create a Computer Science Coding Summer Camp for girls. The group developed the curriculum for the camp and found funding through sponsors to hire instructors and pay for a location. They hired two instructors, both graduate students from the University of California, Berkeley, and classes were held at the YMCA of Lakewood. In all, 18 girls attended the camp, learning how to code and computer science basics.



"The idea for CodeXX started from being observant of my surroundings. I realized there was a problem, that if left unchecked, would only have negative consequences on society," said Rahael. "So, I did everything in my power to fix the problem. I'm very happy with the success of CodeXX so far, but we are looking to have an even greater impact in the years to come."

The CodeXX team is already planning for classes next summer, instilling interest and passion in girls to pursue careers in computer science. Congratulations to Rahael, Kalista, Audry, and Myra for finding a solution to a problem. ▀

Kennedy ES Opens New Playground

On October 28, 2019, Kennedy ES held their new playground Grand Opening with the entire school. Board Member Maynard Law, Assistant Superintendent-Academic Services Dr. Valencia Mayfield II, Director of School Services Melinda Ortiz, Communications Officer Scott Smith, and Superintendent Dr. Mary Sieu joined in the ribbon cutting ceremony with Principal Melissa Valentine. Students and staff learned how to use the new playground equipment. The new playground was paid by Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) as a result of the need to reconfigure their Head Start areas. ▀



Kennedy ES Playground Grand Opening, October 28, 2019

National Merit Scholarship 2020 Semifinalists

Eleventh graders in approximately 21,000 high schools in the country entered the academic competition by taking the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Recently, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation has announced its 2020 list of semifinalist high school students who will compete for a share of 7,600 scholarships worth more than \$31 million. Winners will be announced nationally between April and July next year. In ABC, we have seven semifinalists who are eligible for the National Merit Scholarship. They include: Cerritos HS student Rachel S. Yoo and Whitney HS students Juwon Lim, Ivan Mao, Sujanya N. Narayanan, Tuyet-Nhi T. Nghiem, Jonathan Wang, and Joyce Yuan. Congratulations to all our semifinalists! ▀

News From Our Schools and Around The District

Gahr HS Marching Band

On October 26, 2019, the Gahr HS Marching Gladiators competed at the University High School Field Tournament and won 1st place in Division 5A with a score of 90.100! The Band also won the following caption awards: High Visual Performance, High Music Effect, High Visual Effect, High Percussion, High Auxiliary, and overall Tournament Sweepstakes! On November 16, 2019, the Gahr HS Marching Gladiators won 1st Place in the California State Band Championship Semi-Finals. They will be advancing to the California State Band Championship Division Finals on November 23, 2019. Congratulations Gahr HS Marching Gladiators! ▶



School District Hosts Labor Management Events

For more than twenty years, the ABC Unified School District and the ABC Federation of Teachers have enjoyed a strong partnership. Recently released data shows that this partnership, based on collaboration and communication, has benefited students. This information was shared on October 23, 2019, at the West Coast Labor Management Institute. The Institute brought school districts from across the country and the world to the Buena Park Holiday Inn to learn more about the unique nature of the ABCUSD – ABCFT partnership.

“Both the West Coast Labor Management Institute and the PAL Retreat are important events to not only our District, but other school districts from across the nation and, even, the world,” said ABCUSD Superintendent Dr. Mary Sieu. *“The partnership between the District and our labor colleagues has enabled us to create stability, which has proven over time to have a positive impact on our students.”*

The Institute featured presentations from Rutgers University Professor-Labor Relations Dr. Saul Rubinstein, ABCUSD Superintendent Dr. Mary Sieu with ABCFT President Ray Gaer, as well as breakout sessions targeted to high school, elementary school, and classified employee groups.

Dr. Saul Rubinstein, presented data gathered from over 450 schools showing a clear benefit to students when labor and management work together. The data indicates that students show over a 12 percent increase in English language arts and nearly a five percent increase in math when a labor-management partnership is in place. Strong collaboration also leads to higher teacher retention.

On October 24, 2019, many of the attendees from the Institute joined ABCUSD teachers, employees, and leaders at the Partnership with Administration and Labor (PAL) Retreat. This day featured sessions highlighting programs and opportunities where school management and staff have collaborated to institute programs on campuses and throughout the District.

One of the highlights of the PAL Retreat was the celebration of the Charter Agreement signed by the District’s Board of Education, Superintendent, and ABCFT leaders a decade ago. Recently, the ABCUSD Board of Education and the ABCFT Executive Committee signed a new agreement. This agreement spells out the mission of the partnership, as well as guiding principles and behaviors, which have led to a productive partnership.

As was highlighted at the Institute, ABCUSD and ABCFT leaders are highly sought after to share insights about their unique partnership with other districts from across the nation. Leaders have even traveled to South Africa to provide input and guidance as school and labor leaders as they work towards a productive collaboration that impacts all students.

“It’s truly amazing to see how far both of these events have come,” said Ray Gaer, President of the ABC Federation of Teachers. *“What started as training sessions for ABCFT site reps, has developed alongside the partnership the union has with the District. Today, the Institute and Retreat are seminal events showcasing the impact of collaboration on ABC students.”*

Both the West Coast Labor Management Institute and the PAL Retreat are annual events. Although both events are open to other school districts, the PAL Retreat focuses on ABCUSD. This year, over 190 attendees visited these events from across the nation, including Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Jersey. A contingent from South Africa also attended. ▀



Charter Agreement Renewal, October 15, 2019

News From Our Schools and Around The District

ABC Adult School Annual Open House/Craft & Fitness Fair

ABC Adult School held their Annual Open House/Craft & Fitness Fair at the Cabrillo Lane Campus on October 16, 2019. It was exciting to experience their flag parade representing cultures from around the world as well as the Erhu performance. Over twenty-five booths showcased products of the adult learners: cosmetology, basic medical screenings, jewelry & greeting cards, sewed items, jewelry & beads, cake artist showpieces, Christmas items, glass jewelry, and botanical watercolor & Chinese brush paintings were among the exhibits on display.

The new Adult School Dental Assistant Lab will soon be open in January 2020. It was informative to see the state of the art facility at Cabrillo Lane for the new Dental Assistant Lab. ▮



Adult School Open House Craft and Fitness Fair, October 16, 2019

Mental Health Professionals Now in All ABCUSD Schools

The ABC Unified School District has taken a bold step to meet the growing need of its students' overall health by placing mental health professionals at every school site. A total of 34 mental health professionals have been placed in the District's schools, with one at each elementary school and at Tracy HS, and two each at the three comprehensive high schools.

"Kids today have additional and more complex challenges than in the past, and quite simply schools are expected to do more," said Board of Education President Ernie Nishii. "Family challenges, financial challenges, technological challenges are all major impediments to academic performance. Education involves the whole person, and social and psychological health is a critical element to the life success that our kids need."

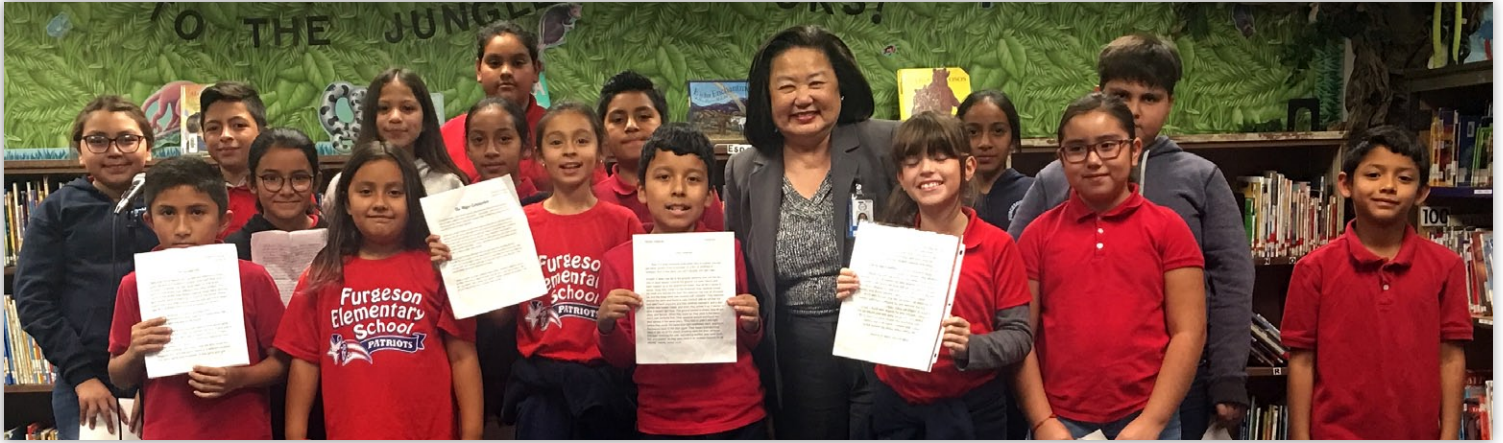
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that one in five children and adolescents experience mental health issues during their school years. These issues include: stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, learning disabilities, along with alcohol and substance abuse. So, having a mental health professional students can visit while at school is a valuable resource.

"This is clearly the right move for our students and families," said ABCUSD Superintendent Dr. Mary Sieu. "Our main focus is our students. By placing these mental health professionals in each school, we are giving our students a new resource to help them thrive."

The District has a strong track record of assisting students and families with mental health services through existing programs. Through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program, a multi-tiered system of support is offered to support the academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional needs of students. The District's continued partnership with interns, both Masters of Social Work and Personnel Services Credential, support the work of the School Mental Health Professionals. ▮

Open MIC at Furgeson ES

On November 1, 2019, it was wonderful to learn from the students at Furgeson ES during their 2nd Open MIC Series. Over forty students participated by writing and reading their scary stories. However, it was their storytelling drama in front of their classes that was exciting! ▶



Open MIC at Furgeson ES

Whitney HS MUN

Members of the Whitney HS MUN Independent Study participated in the UC San Diego Triton MUN Conference on October 26, 2019. They had a lot of fun debating issues such as Peacekeeping Reforms, Protecting the Rights of Journalists in Conflict Zones, and discussing the New Agenda for 2040 Energy Transition. A group even recreated the Protestant Reformation in which, due to infighting, the Holy Roman Empire collapsed and Europe was overwhelmed by the forces of Islam! Whitney students receiving recognition were: Rhea Raman, Best Delegate and Research Award, The World Health Organization; Abhinav Ganguly, Best Delegate, The UN Development Programme; and Pauline Kang, Research Award, UNESCO. It was a great start to the MUN year! ▶



Whitney HS Anti-Bullying Message

Season 13 American Idol contestant Casey McQuillen performed for Whitney HS students and delivered a powerful anti-bullying message as part of her "You Matter" Tour, which is recognized by the UN Foundation. Casey followed her performance at Whitney HS with an appearance on the Kelly Clarkson Show which aired on October 10 on NBC. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOWyHNAlh8w&authuser=0> ▶

News From Our Schools and Around The District

PTA Presidents and Principals Dinner

The PTA Presidents and Principals Dinner was held at Artesia DES Hall on October 21, 2019. Thank you to President Ernie Nishii, Vice President Dr. Olga Rios, and Clerk Sophia Tse for attending the event along with other Cabinet Members. The PTA District Council adopted our theme this year on “Leading with Heart”. Each principal and their PTA president or officer created an artistic symbol of “Leading with Heart” at their school. These pieces will be displayed alongside the Student Reflections Artwork at the Cerritos Mall in May 2020. ▶



PTA Presidents and Principals Dinner, October 21, 2019



ABC Adult School offers great classes and programs!
Check out our website at www.abcadultschool.edu

Visit our website for ABCUSD schools' addresses, contact info, enrollment boundaries and more!

www.abcusd.k12.ca.us

Community Involvement

4th Annual ABCUSD District-Wide College Fair

On October 19, 2019, the Career Technical Education (CTE) and School & Community Partnerships Office hosted the 4th Annual ABCUSD District-Wide College Fair. Over 1,000 students and family members attended this year's event which was hosted at Whitney HS. Eighty colleges attended this year's fair, representing UC's, CSU's, Private, Out-of-State, Ivy League, Community Colleges, Military, ABC Adult School, and Trade/Technical Schools. In addition, specialized support service tables were in attendance, which included an ABCUSD high school counselor table to field questions about the college process; ABCUSD AVID Program and the ABCUSD Prep Academy for SAT and ACT (PASA) which supports students representing special populations. Throughout the morning, college fair attendees were invited to attend any of our three college workshops: Financial Aid 101, Competitive College Essay Writing, and Cerritos (College) Complete Program. ▶



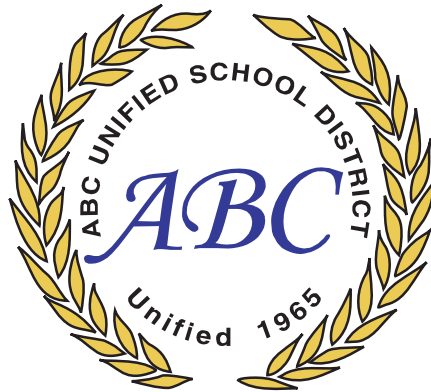
Congresswoman Sanchez Visits Tracy HS

Congresswoman Linda T. Sanchez visited Tracy HS on November 6, 2019, to learn more about this award-winning school. She spent time on campus learning about the school's programs, and was interviewed by the Tracy HS TV (THSTV) team. Board Clerk Sophia Tse joined Principal Ricardo Brown in providing the Congresswoman a tour of the campus. ▶



Visit to Tracy HS by Congresswoman Linda Sanchez





Board Members

Ernie Nishii - President
Dr. Olga Rios - Vice President
Sophia Tse - Clerk
Chris Apodaca - Member
Maynard Law - Member
Leticia Mendoza - Member
Soo Yoo - Member

Superintendent

Dr. Mary Sieu



ABC Unified School District's **District Digest** is published bimonthly by the Superintendent's Office.

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