

FREE

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Newhall School District



Volume 2, Issue 6

March / April 2021

NSD Welcomes Back Hybrid Students



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SUPERINTENDENT

Moving Forward

What a year it has been for our entire NSD family. If you would have told me back on August 11th that we would just now be moving toward launching our in-person AM/PM blended learning model, I wouldn't have believed it. Yet through all this, we continue to persevere as a community. Our partnerships with our families have grown stronger as we strive to ensure learning is moving forward for all of our students.

Looking ahead I feel like we always need to find the silver linings during times like these. A few things that stand out to me are the increased attendance and engagement at our Governing Board meetings, my Superintendent chats, and student conferences because of the new virtual component. Many of you have shared that you hope that I will continue to hold my Superintendent chats in this virtual format beyond the pandemic because you can join at home, work, or even listen in while driving home from work. As a reminder, my Superintendent chats are the 2nd Wednesday of each month and the Zoom link can be found on our website at www.newhallschooldistrict.com

As we make our way into the spring, we are once again engaging in our annual Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) development process. This year we are creating a new 3-year LCAP and continue to seek your input and feedback. Please be on the lookout for our first draft that will come out at the end of April and then a final public hearing will be held at our June 9th Governing Board meeting. Make sure your voice is heard throughout this process!



Jeff Pelzel
Superintendent

Seguir Adelante

Qué año ha sido para toda nuestra familia de NSD. Si me hubieran dicho el 11 de agosto que nos estaríamos moviendo hacia el lanzamiento de nuestro modelo de aprendizaje combinado AM/PM en persona, no lo hubiera creído. Sin embargo, a través de todo esto, seguimos perseverando como comunidad. Nuestras asociaciones con nuestras familias se han fortalecido mientras nos esforzamos por asegurar que el aprendizaje avance para todos nuestros estudiantes.

Mirando hacia el futuro, siento que siempre necesitamos encontrar el lado positivo en momentos como este. Algunas cosas que me llaman la atención es el aumento de la asistencia y la participación en nuestras reuniones de la Junta Directiva, mis Charlas con el Superintendente, y las conferencias de los estudiantes debido al nuevo componente virtual. Muchos de ustedes han compartido que esperan que continúe manteniendo mis Charlas con el Superintendente en este formato virtual más allá de la pandemia porque pueden asistir en casa, en el trabajo, o incluso escuchar mientras manejan a casa desde el trabajo. Como recordatorio, mis Charlas con el Superintendente son el segundo miércoles de cada mes y el enlace Zoom se puede encontrar en nuestro sitio web en www.newhallschooldistrict.com.

A medida que avanzamos hacia la primavera, una vez más estamos participando en nuestro proceso de desarrollo anual del Plan de Responsabilidad de Control Local (LCAP). Este año estamos creando un nuevo LCAP de 3 años y seguimos buscando su opinión y comentarios. Por favor, estén atentos a nuestro primer borrador que saldrá a finales de abril y luego una audiencia pública final se llevará a cabo en nuestra reunión de la Junta Directiva del 9 de junio. ¡Asegúrense de que su voz sea escuchada a lo largo de este proceso!



BOARD OF EDUCATION



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(Area #1)



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School Board President's Message

By Brian Walters

It was a year ago this month when our schools were shut down due to the pandemic. Since then, the Newhall School District Governing Board has considered how to best meet students' needs. For the last nine months, how to implement an in-person option again has been a standing agenda item for every regular board meeting.

After a rollercoaster of getting permission to reopen our TK-2 grades due to a state-approved waiver and then being told we could not use it, we received the very welcome and overdue news that the drop in COVID cases in Los Angeles County would allow for the reopening of all our grades.

At our official reopening on February 22nd for our youngest students, parents and students clapped and cheered as the doors literally opened to their in-person instruction for the first time in almost a year. We clapped and cheered with you.

From first attending school in the classroom with peers to learning completely virtually through a computer at home, our students bravely endured. Throughout this past year, our students, families, teachers and staff have adapted to the challenges faced and overcome them with confidence. Students completed one grade level and advanced to the next, learning new skills and practicing others.

Despite it all, students excelled. Whether now in person or remaining in distance learning, our students' education and safety, as well as the safety of our teachers, staff, administrators, and community remain our upmost priorities. We will continue to adapt as further direction is provided by various health and safety organizations.

We are thrilled to again offer our award-winning, best-in-state, in-person education to all students who walk through our doors. To enroll your child, please contact Rosana Valadez at 661-291-4163. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Mensaje del Presidente de la Junta Directiva

Por Brian Walters

Hace un año, este mes, cerraron nuestras escuelas debido a la pandemia. Desde entonces, la Junta Directiva del Distrito Escolar de Newhall ha considerado cómo satisfacer mejor las necesidades de los estudiantes. Durante los últimos nueve meses, cómo implementar una opción en persona nuevamente ha sido un tema permanente en la agenda de cada reunión regular de la junta.

Después de una montaña rusa de conseguir el permiso para reabrir nuestros grados TK-2 debido a una exención aprobada por el estado y luego se nos dijo que no podíamos usarla, recibimos la muy bienvenida y esperada noticia de que la disminución de los casos de COVID en el Condado de Los Ángeles permitiría la reapertura de todos nuestros grados.

En nuestra reapertura oficial el 22 de febrero para nuestros estudiantes más jóvenes, los padres y los estudiantes aplaudieron con alegría cuando las puertas se abrieron literalmente a su instrucción en persona por primera vez en casi un año. Aplaudimos con ustedes.

Desde la primera vez que asistieron a la escuela en el salón con sus compañeros hasta que aprendieron de manera completamente virtual a través de una computadora en casa, nuestros estudiantes aguantaron con valentía. A lo largo de este último año, nuestros estudiantes, familias, maestros y personal se han adaptado a los desafíos que se les han presentado y los han superado con confianza. Los estudiantes completaron un nivel de grado y avanzaron al siguiente, aprendiendo nuevas habilidades y practicando otras.

A pesar de todo, los alumnos sobresalieron. Ya sea en persona o permaneciendo en el aprendizaje a distancia, la educación y la seguridad de nuestros estudiantes, así como la seguridad de nuestros maestros, el personal, los administradores y la comunidad siguen siendo nuestras prioridades. Seguiremos adaptándonos a medida que las diversas organizaciones de salud y seguridad nos den más orientación.

Estamos encantados de volver a ofrecer nuestra galardonada, mejor educación presencial a todos los estudiantes que cruzan nuestras puertas. Para inscribir a su hijo, por favor comuníquese con Rosana Valadez al 661-291-4163. ¡Esperamos verlos pronto!

School News

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www.schoolnewsrollcall.com

Covering the
NEWHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



If you saw the movie Groundhog Day, you may feel like you are living it in reality. However, in this issue you will read how the teachers are motivating students during this pandemic with virtual hangouts, lunch-bunch, and so much more. Educators are innovators and they have meet this pandemic challenge.

Hopefully, soon we will be able to look back on this pandemic. In the meantime, being optimistic is key.

Thank you for continuing to include *School News* among your reading choices.

Be sure to enter our Word Search Contest (open to all ages) on page 11. Our next issue is May 19.



Meadows PTSA

meadowspsta.org

Community Partnerships

While Covid-19 has kept us from having many of our traditional on-campus events and programs, Meadows' PTSA has remained busy during this very unusual school year. PTSA greeted our students and families during the first material distribution with Otter Pops. We also held the Reflections Art Program, Veterans Day tribute, our first virtual Book Fair and are now getting ready for Women in History month and finalizing our yearbook.

This school year has been an incredible learning experience with many challenges. Our PTSA will continue to focus on supporting our students and their families and providing meaningful experiences for kids. We are so grateful to our supportive Meadows families!

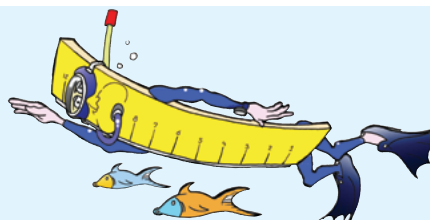
Asociaciones Comunitarias

Aunque Covid-19 nos ha impedido tener muchos de nuestros eventos y programas tradicionales escolares, la PTSA de Meadows se ha mantenido ocupada durante este año escolar tan inusual. La PTSA saludó a nuestros estudiantes y familias durante la primera distribución de materiales con paletas heladas conocidas como "Otter Pops." También celebramos el Programa de Arte Reflexiones, homenaje al Día de los Veteranos, nuestra primera Feria del Libros virtual y ahora nos estamos preparando para el mes de Mujeres en la Historia y finalizando nuestro anuario.

Este año escolar ha sido una increíble experiencia de aprendizaje con muchos desafíos. Nuestra PTSA continuará centrándose en apoyar a nuestros estudiantes y sus familias, y brindar experiencias significativas para los niños. ¡Estamos muy agradecidos con nuestras familias de Meadows que nos apoyan!



Be sure to enjoy reading during
Spring Break! Reading Rules...



Dr. J. Michael McGrath *Elementary*

21501 Deputy Jake Dr., Newhall, CA 91321 • 661/291-4091 • www.mcgrathelementary.com



Jennifer Boone
Principal

Springboard Collaborative

The key to success for students is the partnership between parents and school. McGrath has joined forces with the Springboard Collaborative to offer a 10-week program designed to help our teachers, students and parents work collaboratively with the focus of improving the reading skills of our children.

For this pilot program, 28 families from grades K–3 are participating. Parents participate in an initial family huddle, five family instructional workshops focusing on reading strategies, and weekly check-ins via phone calls, emails or texts with the teacher. The team commits to having each child read and talk together a minimum of 15 to 20 minutes nightly, and parents use the skills they have learned to support their children's reading. Parents use a different reading tip from their training and coaching each week. This keeps the reading-together time fresh and gives children a new reading skill to focus on each week.

Families complete a questionnaire to share observations of their children's reading in four key skill areas:

- Engage and enjoy (engagement)
- Figure out the words (phonics, phonological awareness, decoding and vocabulary)
- Understanding the story (comprehension)
- Sound like a storyteller (fluency)

Teachers receive professional development on family engagement, differentiated literacy and continuous improvement within their professional learning communities. The teacher collaboration with parents makes all the difference because the team is harnessing one of the most powerful natural resources in education: the love and relationship of our parents and their children.

Parents and teachers track data through the Springboard app, and each child earns incentives for the time they spend reading, attending lessons, and attending family meetings. The app provides regular reminders and personalized reading tips for parents. The Springboard app provides support in both English and Spanish and is a helpful "coach" to cultivate and sustain home literacy habits.

By setting goals together, practicing evidence-based reading strategies, measuring progress, and celebrating successes, our parent, teacher and student teams ensure that students are reaching their learning goals.

Meadows *Elementary*

25577 N. Fedala Rd., Valencia, CA 91355 • 661/291-4050 • www.meadowselementary.com



Sarah Johnson
Principal

Meadows Family Book Club

Developing a love for reading in students begins by exposing young readers to a variety of books they love and with the people they love. In honor of Kindness Week, our first Meadows Family Book Club book is *Rules*, by Cynthia Lord. We chose this 2007

Newberry Honor Book because it is a story that is both

humorous and heartwarming. The story is about feeling different and finding acceptance.

The Book Club will meet weekly. We will share ideas, incorporate art activities, and encourage family participation. The meetings will provide opportunities for children and family members to talk about our book. Sharing their thoughts and ideas about each chapter is a great way to get children excited about reading in a virtual setting.

Cynthia Lord, the author of the award-winning book, was so excited to hear about our Book Club. When Mrs. Diamond asked her to send a special message to our Meadows' students, she was delighted to record a video from her special writing shed, surrounded by her rubber ducky collection. We cannot wait to begin reading the first two chapters!



Newhall Elementary

24607 Walnut St., Newhall, CA 91321 • 661/291-4010 • www.newhallelementary.net



Jackie Tapia
Principal

Let's Hang Out!

Newhall Elementary teachers have created lively, inviting virtual classrooms to keep students engaged. They have designed tasks that engage students, selected virtual tools that are useful, like Jamboard and Nearpod, and implemented considerate schedules.

Yet many of them have witnessed how students switch off microphones and cameras in order to turn their attention to something else. To address this challenge, our Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) team decided to offer a time to hang out as a reward for student engagement. During a hangout, students get together to join a scavenger hunt, a dance party and other fun activities. Led by our school counselor and social worker, the hangouts have helped students feel connected, supported and encouraged to participate in the classroom. The positive conditions for learning created by our teachers and the opportunity to socialize have increased a sense of belonging and student participation in the virtual classroom.



Oak Hills Elementary

26730 Old Rock Rd., Valencia, CA 91381 • 661/291-4100 • www.oakhillsschool.com



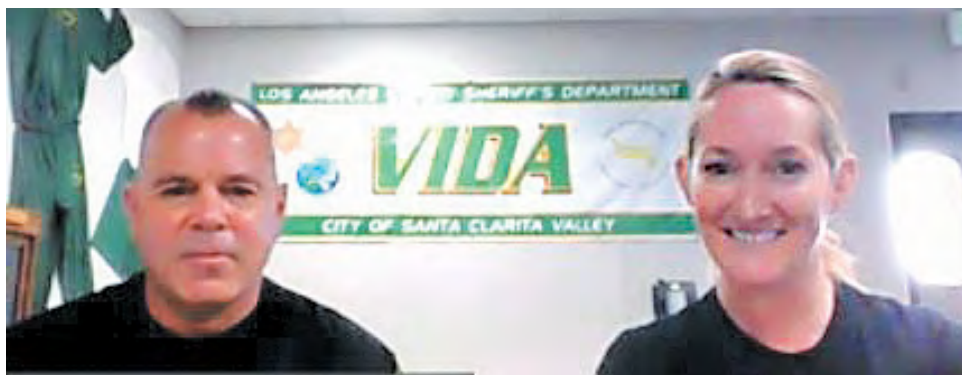
Wendy Maxwell
Principal

VIDA Program

Oak Hills Elementary School is very excited to host the Vital Intervention and Directional Alternatives (VIDA) for the Santa Clarita Sheriff's Department at our school site.

Established in February 2006, the City of Santa Clarita VIDA is a structured 16-week program for non-violent, at-risk youth between the ages of 13 and 17. Through collaboration between the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, community-based organizations, volunteers, schools, and families, this program teaches the value of effective decision-making and taking responsibility for the future.

In providing the program, the City of Santa Clarita and the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station recognize the importance of offering counseling, family action, community service, physical training, team-building, and career guidance to wayward youth in our community.



All of this is done in an effort to help redirect the negative behavior of our youth, who may be tempted to explore gang affiliation, drug use, or crime.

There have been many students who attended the Newhall School District and have been a part of this program. It holds an 80 percent success rate of students graduating and not having any trouble in their future as adults. They meet on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and all day on Saturday.

Deputy Ferrone and Deputy Templeton are shown in their new office. Oak Hills is very excited to welcome this partnership.

Old Orchard *Elementary*

25141 N. Avenida Rondel, Valencia, CA 91355 • 661/291-4040 • www.oldorchardelementary.com



Daria Ramirez
Principal

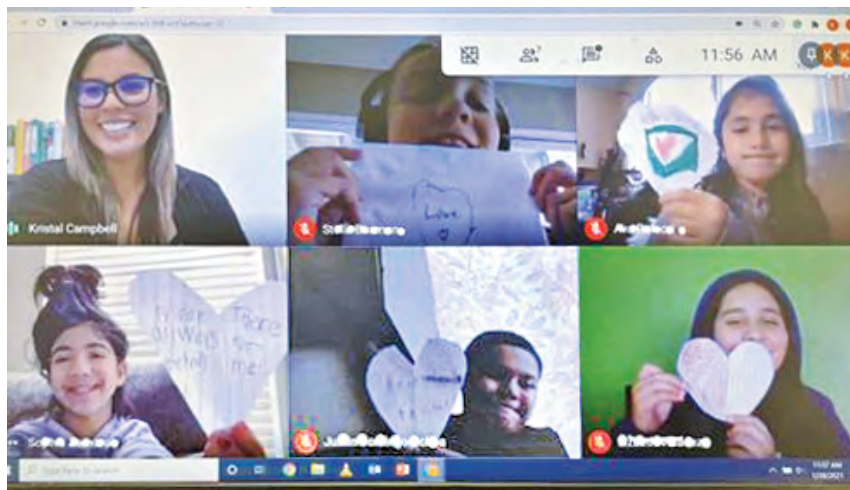
Work of Heart

It's noon, and fourth-grader Lizbeth Valdez logs on to Google Meets to join her classmates for lunch. She's been waiting all week to see Mrs. Campbell, our school counselor, for her weekly Lunch Bunch.

The shift to online learning in the wake of the pandemic has brought change and challenges to our students, but one thing has remained constant: the warm smile on Mrs. Campbell's face as she welcomes students to her virtual weekly lunch sessions. This time provides students the opportunity to connect with their peers, showcase their strengths, and feel a sense of belonging.

Students are more successful in school and their daily life when we support their social and emotional well-being. Students at the elementary grade levels begin to develop their self-concepts and establish their feelings of confidence and self-worth. Mrs. Campbell has helped set the tone for developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for our students to become healthy, competent and confident learners.

School counselors serve as the heart of the school. At Old Orchard, Mrs. Campbell is vital to our school's positive and supportive school culture. She provides individual



and group counseling services, helping students navigate their emotions and find their voices. She advocates for resources and services for families who are most in need by developing community partnerships. Families experiencing grief or trauma receive support from Mrs. Campbell as she guides them through the healing process with compassion and empathy. As a Helping Hearts team member and trainer, Mrs. Campbell also provides staff training around trauma-informed practices for schools.

Old Orchard is proud to recognize Mrs. Campbell and our team of counselors across the district for their incredible contributions and efforts to support our school communities. During National School Counseling Week, we honor and thank our school counselors for their work of heart.

Peachland *Elementary*

24800 Peachland Ave., Newhall, CA 91321 • 661/291-4020 • www.peachlandelementary.net



Diana Stenroos
Principal

Title 1 Explained

Often, parents ask why our school is referred to as a Title 1 school. They wonder what this means and how it makes us different.

Well, let me explain it a little bit. Title 1 is a funding source that we receive from the federal government to use in our school to supplement the school's existing programs. With these funds, we can identify students experiencing academic difficulties and provide them with timely assistance to help the students meet content standards. These funds are also used to purchase supplemental staff, programming materials and supplies. Additionally, we can conduct parent and family engagement meetings, trainings and activities.

Peachland qualifies to receive these allocated funds based on the total number of children who come to us from

low-income families. As a site, we have used the funds to provide small-group interventions with part-time teachers, offer professional development to our teachers and staff, and provide teachers with instructional-collaboration time. We also purchase necessary copies and supplies for the classrooms.

As a site and as a district, we continue to track the progress of our students, using grade-level assessments as well as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). Teachers and administrators are regularly looking at student performance to decide on the best teaching strategies and practices in order to drive student achievement. We encourage parents to engage in these important decisions by attending our School Site Council meetings, English Language Advisory Council meetings and PTA meetings. We are all here for our children!

Pico Canyon *Elementary*

25255 Pico Canyon Rd., Stevenson Ranch, CA 91381 • 661/291-4070 • www.picoelementary.com



Tammi Rainville
Principal

Active Parents

At Pico Canyon and across the country, our students are being asked to show resiliency and approach real-world issues which were unimaginable just a year ago. More than ever, we are

tasked with educating the whole child, including competencies that will assist our students in being more independent and resourceful. We want our students to be of sound mind and body; we want our students to be connected to a school and to the greater community, and we want our students to demonstrate compassion and civic-mindedness.

A wonderful example of the kind of child/student described above knocked at my door just before the holidays. Brian Jackson is a former Pico student (class of 2014-15) and Eagle Scout. He is one of four siblings that have been or currently are a part of the Pico school community. Brian's dad heads All Pro Dads here at Pico, and Brian's mom is our school site council chairperson.



His parents were also the creators of our PTA Multicultural Night, an annual celebration of our diversity at Pico. Suffice to say, it was not a surprise that this young, civic-minded youth would want to reach out and give back to his elementary school via an everlasting installation.

As you will see in the pictures I have included, Brian transformed a previously unused space in the front of our school into a new learning environment for children. Thanks to Brian's work, our students now have an outdoor space that is both practical and inviting. This is by no means a small gift, as there has never been a more important reason to carve out these spaces in our schools than during COVID-19.

We are truly fortunate at Pico to have such thoughtful alumni! Brian exemplifies the kind of student and individual we hope to have a part in forming over the many years in which we will include these young children in our elementary school family!

Stevenson Ranch *Elementary*

25820 N. Carroll Ln., Stevenson Ranch, CA 91381 • 661/291-4070 • www.stevensonranchschool.com



Chad Rose
Principal

Moving Forward with Technology!

With all of the challenges that the pandemic has put in our everyday lives, it may be hard to realize that there have been some positive outcomes too. The practical use of technology has moved forward quickly in ways that did not seem to happen before.

For parents, our district has elevated access to student information through the use of the AERIES Parent Portal. This allows parents

to review and correct student information as well as access test scores and report cards.

Just launched is a new system for communicating with our parents called ParentSquare. This modern way to communicate allows for parents to customize how they receive information, and it opens opportunities for two-way information sharing not previously available. Shortly, our district will be replacing paper enrollment packets with an online enrollment system as well.

Student and staff use of technology has also grown significantly. Teachers prepare interactive lessons, meet with students, and assign and collect their work all through the computer. Student use of technology is at an all-time high, a given since our classes meet live online and the students complete and submit their work through Google Classroom.

Students are taking the examples set by their teachers and are applying those experiences to their own activities outside the classroom. As the sponsor of our school's student council, I was curious to see how the students would interact and collaborate digitally. I have been nothing less than impressed with the way our student leaders come to meetings prepared with interactive slides for group work. They also apply the same management routines that their teachers model for them at the student council meetings. Our students continue to show that they are productive and successful online.

Valencia Valley *Elementary*

23601 Carrizo Dr., Valencia, CA 91355 • 661/291-4060 • www.valenciavalleyelementary.com



Amy Gaudette
Principal

Counselor in Our Corner

In the fall, the Valencia Valley community was introduced to our new full-time counselor, Raquel Horowitz. In her short time with us, she has already made a huge splash!

Mrs. Horowitz runs counseling groups, conducts individual counseling, and consults with teachers on individual students—but that is just the beginning. She provides classroom lessons for students in her Counselor Corner, including bullying prevention and kindness. In fact, she took the lead on The Great Kindness Challenge, providing students with a short lesson and resources to focus on kindness in their lives.



Mrs. Horowitz crafts a monthly newsletter, sharing with parents ideas around social-emotional learning and mental health. Looking to the future, she will be working with the NSD Trauma Team, Helping Hearts, to provide professional development and support to staff to become a trauma-informed school in partnership with LACOE. With Mrs. Horowitz in our corner, families and staff will continue to grow in our social-emotional learning.

Mrs. Horowitz holds office hours by appointment on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. She can be reached at rhorowitz@newhallsd.com.

Wiley Canyon *Elementary*

24240 La Glorita Circle, Newhall, CA 91321 • 661/291-4030 • www.wileycanyonelementary.com



Tim Lankford
Principal

Virtual Schoolwide Lunch Break

The PBIS team at Wiley Canyon Elementary has developed Virtual Schoolwide Lunch Break. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. We want to foster collaborative and trusting relationships among our school community.

Research indicates that SEL leads to positive student outcomes that are important for success not only in school but also in life. SEL has never been so critical for our students. At Wiley Canyon, we want our students to feel connected to their entire school, and that is how we came up with Virtual Schoolwide Lunch Break. On Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays at lunchtime, students have the opportunity to meet with their classmates, librarian, administrators, school counselors and special guests and participate in a read-aloud, an art lesson and a fun Friday activity. Our librarian, Ms. Gutowski, shares her love of reading; Assistant Principal Mrs. Soni walks students through an art lesson; and our counselor, Miss Inda-Ramirez, provides a variety of fun Friday activities such as virtual games and community circles.



Virtual School Wide Lunch Break

We are excited to have this opportunity for our students here at Wiley Canyon!

NSD Digital Learning Academies

<https://www.newhallschooldistrict.com>



Building and Celebrating Community, Virtually

By: Katrina Stroh, Janette Van Gelderen, and Melissa Wilson, Lead Administrators

While the pandemic has caused many of our regular routines to change or even be eliminated, building and celebrating our community in the Digital Learning Academies is going strong! Within all three online campuses student connection, communication, and celebration of students is at our very core.

Students in the TRAIL-BLAZE Academy strive for perfect attendance at all of their online classroom meetings. In addition to classroom recognition, students have the opportunity for a monthly drawing that could land them a yard sign and socially distanced pictures to celebrate their commitment. In the SOAR Academy, students enjoy daily live interactive meets for physical activity, art, a good book, breakfast club, or a game of “Among Us” kids versus teachers.

Students from the EXPLORE Academy also enjoy daily “lunch-bunch” meets for all grade levels. Students join for a chance to play games, go on virtual scavenger hunts, attend dance parties, attempt tower building contests,



and conduct science experiments. We are so proud of all of our students, and we know the importance of creating a community that brings us near, even if from afar.

Lacrosse–Word Search Contest

Rules!

One word in the list is Not in the word search.

When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that word you email to:

Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com

(Please put Newhall in the subject line)

ATTACK	MOUTH GUARD
CLEATS	NET
COACH	PLAYERS
CREASE	RULES
DEFENSE	SCORE
FIELD	SHAFT
GOAL KEEPER	SIDE LINES
HEAD	STICK
HELMETS	TEAMS
MIDDIES	UNIFORMS

Congratulations
Sophia and Greyson Quest
winners of our October contests

Entries must be received by April 30, 2021

From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes & Noble.



Word Search by Kai Coop

Leading Literacy



Leslie Zoroya
RLA Coordinator

Storytelling, especially as an oral tradition, is as old as time. Oral storytellers have been looked to as the center of communal life, telling and retelling the history, traditions and knowledge critical to preserving cultures and serving the needs of communities.

Fast forward to the 21st century – storytelling is still alive and well, especially in the information age. Along with blogs and vlogs, video channels and social media platforms, podcasting is a great way to reach a wide audience of listeners and share not just stories, but contextualized information that can enlighten, entertain and certainly, open hearts and minds.

Our podcast [Leading Literacy](#) began as a way to do all of those things. We were interested in presenting conversations with experts in the field that offer sound literacy research, insights, advice and practice.

Oddly, the pandemic has given us access to experts we might not have otherwise had. [Episode 3](#) with NYU professor and literacy researcher and practitioner Dr. Carolyn Strom was particularly noteworthy in offering strategies for closing the gaps between research and practice, especially in our earliest learners.

[Episode 8](#), with esteemed reading guru Dr. Louisa Moats, was nothing short of a thrill. Her 30-plus years of advocating for the science of reading research has shaped the field of reading instruction in indelible ways. Having her share what works with our listeners gave life to the theory, grounded in solid practice.

Leading Literacy has also allowed us to explore a variety of aspects of literacy instruction. Critical media literacy is an area of utmost concern in this Digital Age. In a time of rampant misinformation, propaganda and just a sheer avalanche of information to shift through, students need to have the skills of discernment. Questioning sources and bias analysis are absolutely essential for students to learn, as they seek to preserve our democracy and participate as informed citizens.

[Episode 7](#) features UCLA professor Dr. Jeff Share, an expert in the field of critical media literacy. His personal journey as both a classroom teacher and photojournalist abroad provides a unique lens through which to offer practical ways to teach these skills.

Our other primary goal with the podcast was also just *to listen*. We wanted to hear the voices of our own LA County teachers and students and give a platform for how they have coped in this unprecedented time and what they have learned about themselves and their work.

[Episode 11](#), Teacher Roundtable, pulls back the curtain on what our teachers on the frontline have experienced as they pivoted from the traditional classroom to distance

learning. It is a compelling story of resilience and hope – one that we felt was sorely needed. An upcoming episode will feature the voices of students in LA County as they share their experiences as well.

Storytelling is a powerful medium and podcasting has been a wonderful way to expand the literacy stories in LA County as we seek to support and enlighten the educators we serve.



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