




Carmeletter

Issue 5

El Carmelo PTA Newsletter

January 18, 2008



El Carmelo Magic Show

Wednesday, February 6

1:30-2:30

Library

(please see page 4 for entrance requirements)

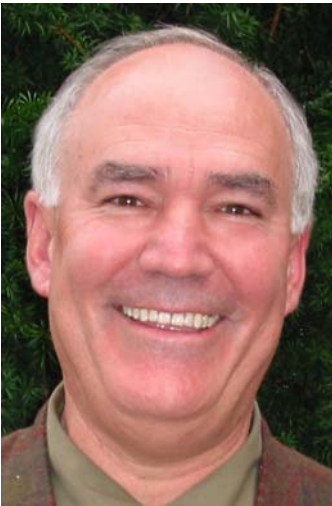
El Carmelo Calendar

Jan 21- NO SCHOOL (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Jan 31 - Carmeletter Submissions Due (2 pm)
Feb 6 - Magic Show (Library, 1:30-2:30 pm)
Feb 7 - El Carmelo Lego Night (6-8 pm)

PAUSD/Community Calendar

Jan 22- PAUSD School Board Social Mtg—
Facilities (6:30 pm)
Jan 24 - JLS "Connections" Info Mtg (7-8:3 pm)
Jan 29 - PAUSD School Board Mtg-Regular
(6:30pm)

Principal's Letter



Dear El Carmelo Parents, Students and Community,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a restful and joyous holiday break with family and friends. The children have returned to school with renewed energy and enthusiasm for tackling the rest of the year. Let's work together to ensure your child does his/her best as we move ahead.

- **Think safety:** The weather has changed drastically. It's cold and rainy, complicating the transition to and from school. Please emphasize to your child/ren the need for caution when on the way to and from school, whether on bicycle or on foot. Do ask that they take particular care when crossing the street at intersections and when going behind parked cars. Better to think defensively and be safe, than to be concerned about who was right, after the fact. Also keep these tips in mind if you drop-off or pick-up your child before and after school. Parents, as drivers, please take extra care as you drive to and from school, as well. You are the model the children look up to and emulate.
- **Landscaping Committee:** We are going to be reviewing current landscaping needs and develop an implementation plan. If you are interested and or have a specialty in this area and are willing to participate with us, please inform me via telephone or email by January 25. Please leave your contact information (day telephone and email) so I will contact those interested with times for the first meeting. I am looking forward to putting the finishing landscaping touches on our school.
- **El Carmelo going Green:** in the next couple of months you will be hearing about our efforts to improve our environment by Reducing, Reusing or Recycling articles we utilize in our daily life. Our school site council has fully endorsed this idea and we are proceeding to lay the foundation with the staff, the parents and the students. We look forward to making positive changes in this area—of course---with your support and participation!

Do stay in touch with us. Everyone is working diligently on behalf of the children and the community, but sometimes during the course of the day we do things with which you might not agree or perhaps which might not be clear to you. If that is the case, please contact our office so we can speak directly. As adults, we need to model clear communication skills for our children when there are questions or concerns. At El Carmelo, we strongly value your input and support. Let's work together!

Warmest regards,
Lupe García

Carmeletter Publication

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PTA Presidents' Letter



Dear El Carmelo Families,

Welcome back to school! We hope you had a restful break and are returning to El Carmelo with renewed energy.

As a reminder of some progress from late last year, thank you to all who came out to El Carmelo on a cold night to attend the PTA meeting on December 11. At this meeting the PTA membership voted to spend \$20,000 on level readers for all grades and \$14,600 on audio enhancement systems for the classrooms. Ten audio systems have already been installed in all 2nd grade and 5th grade classrooms and in rooms 18, 19, 21 and 22. To read more on this topic, please see Carrie Manley's article in this issue. On behalf of the PTA, Carrie is pursuing grants from PiE and the Palo Alto Weekly in hopes of obtaining the funding needed to outfit all classrooms with these systems.

New for 2008, we have an addition to our noon activities for students. First grader Aska's mom, Eiko Baldwin, will be teaching cooking on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the MP room at 12:15. Eiko is looking for a variety of donations such as bowls, cutting boards, mixers, portable grills, aprons, and other kitchen items. Please let us know if you have any items that could be used in the cooking classes.

We hope to see your kids at the Magic Show on February 6 at El Carmelo. Admission is free for all families who donate to Partners in Education (PiE) in the 07-08 academic year. Thanks to PiE we are able to have twice as much aide time at El Carmelo as well as pay for many programs such as Spectra Art, Junior Museum science, counseling and math support. Please donate at the amount that is comfortable for your family.

We're looking forward to seeing you and working together in the New Year.

Ana-Maria Dias
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PTA Executive VP
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650-858-1807



Upcoming Events

Magic Show

Magic Show

Magic Show

Magic Show after School at El Carmelo on February 6

Looking for fun for your kids and an extra hour on a Wednesday for you? Look no further! **For *any* El Carmelo family that gives *any* amount to PiE by February 6, your child(dren) will get free entrance to:**

AMAZING MAGIC OF
KIM SILVERMAN

WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 6, 2008

1:30-2:30
IN THE LIBRARY



Donation forms are available in the office.

PiE funds are returned to our principal on a per capita basis and this year went to pay for:

- ◆ Jr. Museum Science
- ◆ Spectra Art
- ◆ Teacher Aides
- ◆ Counseling
- ◆ Math Support

There is no other way to cover these staff costs that serve all our kids! The Partners in Education (PiE) campaign ends on February 14!

Questions? Contact: meganfogarty@sbcglobal.net.



Upcoming Events

BOOK EXCHANGE

Save Your Books and Mark Your Calendars

The annual BOOK EXCHANGE will be **MARCH 17-20th** this year. Here's how it works:

- Students bring in previously read books of any level.
- Teachers collect books from students on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.
- Parents help sort the books so a fresh assortment of books can be distributed to the teachers to give to students on Thursday.
- Students can receive up to 5 "new" books for their donations!
- Donate 1 book, receive 1 book. Donate 5 books, receive 5 books. Donate 10 books, receive 5 books.
- Every child receives a book, even those who forget to donate.

We NEED :

- Donations of more books so every child can receive one. We especially need 4th and 5th grade reading level books.
- If you would like to clear out your books now to make space for all those new holiday gifts, please email me. I will arrange a pick-up!
- Parent Volunteers to help sort books 8:30-11:30 am and 12:00-1:30 pm Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. (Please sign up for 30 minute or 1 hour shifts!)

To volunteer or donate books contact elisaschmit@hotmail.com.

LEGO NIGHT

Lego Night at El Carmelo

LEGO NIGHT is February 7, 2008 from 6-8pm. Come join the FUN! We will be playing games, constructing "things" and displaying El Carmelo students' completed structures. Have something to contribute??? We are looking for volunteers and items to display.



Contact Michele Kasper at 650-858-1807 (mekasper@comcast.net)

Library NEWS

Happy New Year!

We have a busy few months ahead in the library. We will be enjoying the California Young Reader Medal (CYRM) books listed below. The K-3rd grades will be listening to and eventually voting on (by April 1) these books. The 4th and 5th grades will have the opportunity of joining a Book Club to read these books.

The Book Club will meet in the library at lunch on Wednesdays twice a month. A sign up sheet will be sent home soon.

There have been many overdue books lately. Please help your children keep books in a safe place and to return them on time. As always, thank you to those of you who have adopted or donated books to our wonderful library.

PRIMARY CATEGORY (K-2nd)

Dex: the Heart of a Hero by Caralyn Buehner

The Giant Hug by Sandra Horning

Henry and the Buccaneer Bunnies by Carolyn Crimi

I Wanna Iguana by Karen Kaufman Orloff

Traction Man is Here! by Mimi Grey

PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS CATEGORY (3rd)

Basho and the River Stones by Tim Myers

Dad, Jackie and Me by Myron Uhlberg

Mr. Maxwell's Mouse by Frank Asch

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY(4th and 5th in optional book club)

Each Little Bird That Sings by Deborah Wiles

Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs by Betty Birney

Worth by Alexandra LaFaye

KINDERGARTEN Registration for 2008-2009

Kindergarten registration is in progress! Children turning 5 before 2 December 2008 are eligible to register. Registration must be completed by 8 February 2008.

Visit <http://pausd.org/parents/registration/index.shtml> for registration information and forms.

Ten Mile Club

By Liz Cowie

Congratulations to Austin, Joseph, Raymond and Jeffrey! They each ran 10 miles within El Carmelo before the winter break.

Ten Mile Club is held Tuesdays, weather permitting, at lunch recess. All the students who come out and run one lap or many can be proud of their effort and determination. There are several prizes, including T-shirts, to choose from when a student reaches 50 laps, or 10 miles. They can stop by and take a look at the new prizes in the New Year.

A free bottle of water is also available to any student who runs 5 (or more) laps on a given day. The laps all have to be run on the same day to qualify for a water bottle. We want all kids to stay hydrated, so please remind your student to make liberal use of the drinking fountain at recess time.

And, as always, please remember to wear sneakers!

UPDATE from Site Council

Each school in the PAUSD has a school site council, which is an elected staff-parent committee focused on school improvements. El Carmelo's 2007-2008 Site Council meets on the first Monday of each month at 3:15 p.m in the staff lounge.

The School Site Council is composed of equal numbers of parents and school staff (4 each) who are elected to two-year terms, plus the principal, who is a permanent member. We also have a PTA Liaison, which this year is Michele Kasper. The current parent representatives are: Linda Jensen, Megan Fogarty, Maggi Smeal, and Elizabeth Maulick-Co-Chair. The staff representatives are: Denise Dauler, Diane McCoy, Kathy Chin, Leslie Bell-Co-Chair, and Lupe Garcia, principal .

So far this year the Site Council has discussed use of site improvement funds, the upcoming PAUSD bond measure, El Carmelo assessment results, and our theme for this year, Greening El Carmelo. The community is always welcomed at Site Council meetings and we encourage you to talk to any of the current Site Council members, if you have questions.

Two new parent members will be elected this spring to replace the two outgoing members. The term of the new members will begin in August of 2008. Our next meeting is on **Monday, February 4**

Help Wanted

Rainy Day Closet

NEEDED...old clothes for rainy day closet. Jen and Ginny (our office staff) have asked for gently used clothes to help kids who get wet and muddy during recess. Clothing for boys grade 1-5 and new underwear would be greatly appreciated. Please bring donated items to the office during regular school hours.

Help Wanted

Second Grade Food Drive is On!

By Robin Dosskey

The Second Graders at El Carmelo will have a food drive for the Community Services Agency of Mountain View from Monday January 14 through Tuesday, January 22. Please help by dropping off food donations in the boxes located in front of the Main Office. C.S.A. especially needs donations of:

- canned food, like tuna
- instant, non-perishable lunch items with pop-top cans, like fruit
- pudding snacks (for the homeless)
- bulk packaged foods for meals, like uncooked rice and beans

Help all the second graders beat their last year's collection total of **450 pounds** for this important community food service program!



Help Wanted



Auction Donations Needed

Happy 2008! This year's preparation for the **El Carmelo Auction, May 10, 2008**, is underway and we need your help to continue the great success of previous years. All proceeds go directly to our school and children.

There are many ways you can participate; no contribution is too small or too big! Here are just some ideas:

- ⇒ Donate services such as: babysitting, gardening, housekeeping, baking desserts, cooking dinner, massage therapy, manicures/pedicures, etc.
- ⇒ Donate tickets for sporting events or theaters. Donate gifts such as, jewelry or certificates from your favorite stores. Donate lessons in language, dance or sports, frequent flyer miles, vacations homes, etc.
- ⇒ Team up with some of your friends and host a party together, such as: BBQs, wine tasting, scavenger hunts, movie night, super bowl, martini/margarita, an ethnic dinner, etc.

The list goes on and on, so get as creative as you want!

Making your auction contribution is as easy as 1, 2, 3.....

1. Decide what you want to donate.
2. If it is an event, please choose a date you know you can do (bidders purchase parties based on this date, so every effort should be made to keep the original date).
3. Fill out your auction form completely and return it to the office by March 15, 2008 (forms can be found in the office).

We are here to help you with anything regarding your donation, so please feel free to contact your Family Donations representative:

Kindergarten through Second Grade: Elisa Schmit (324-2019)
 Third through Fifth Grade: Debra Wittenbrink (324-2835)



Debra Wittenbrink

Thank you for helping support our BIGGEST fundraiser of the year!!!!
 Debra Wittenbrink

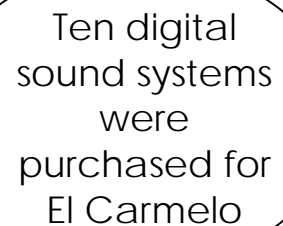
“I Can Hear Better”

By Carrie Manley

More students are now in the front row at El Carmelo, thanks to our PTA’s purchase of sound systems that, in effect, give all students the equivalent of front-row access to the teacher’s voice.

Using simple infra-red technology, a teacher wears a light-weight microphone clipped around his or her neck. A digital receiver amplifies the teacher’s voice, through four small speakers mounted strategically around the classroom. The microphone also has a “mute” button, to allow for private conversations or small group instruction. These systems assure that all students get to hear the teacher’s voice clearly, no matter where they happen to be seated in a classroom.

“In my 25 years of teaching, I would single this out as the one thing that made the biggest difference in the quality of my teaching over the years. I know it made a huge difference in student learning,” said third grade teacher Alice Ann Chandler, who first tried out this technology in her classroom several years ago.



Ten digital
sound systems
were
purchased for
El Carmelo

Ten infra-red Front Row digital sound systems were purchased. Fund-raising efforts are underway to get systems for our other eight classrooms and the library. This school-wide effort is a first in Palo Alto, and is serving as a pilot program for our school district.

Research shows that students sitting in the middle or back of a classroom miss more than 25% of what the teacher is saying, not because students are not listening, but because they literally cannot hear the teacher. “This does for the ears what a yellow highlighter does for the eyes,” explained audiologist Dimitra Loomos.

Each system also comes with a hand-held microphone for students to use. “Having them share the microphone was just so empowering” said 2nd grade teacher Robin Dosskey. “We have much longer discussions..... and much better discussions.... it takes me a much shorter time to get their attention when I need to... I love it! .”

One of Ms. Dosskey’s students said the system even helps for taking tests. “I can hear better. When we had a spelling test (before getting the sound system,) I used to hear hot instead of hop, but I knew the list of spelling words so I could guess which word I should write. Now I can hear the words.”

For more teacher and student testimonials, and additional independent research on sound equalization technology, go to www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org

This is What I Do as a PTA Board Member

by Eiko Baldwin



My mother is an Opera singer who trained in Italy and the United States. From our home in Tokyo, she traveled all over the world performing and sharing her passion for this musical art form. When my mom had the opportunity to be involved in my school, she set aside her professional Opera career and served as the Vice President of my elementary school's PTA and also became my school's music instructor. I saw her every day and everywhere at my school. Her strong spirit helped make my school better and made me feel loved and cared for. I was very proud of her.

When Ana-Maria (PTA President) asked me to join the PTA Board last year, I quickly accepted. But honestly, I was a little nervous and worried, because I thought the PTA workload would be too much. Soon after I began working with the PTA Board, I realized that the time requirements were not that demanding. In fact, this opportunity has helped me further develop my creativity and leadership skills. The PTA Board is made up of intelligent people with diverse backgrounds, which keeps the work exciting, but more importantly, allows me to learn new things that I can use everyday. I have truly enjoyed my work with the PTA Board and appreciate everyone's support.

Sure, volunteering requires some work. But to me, the satisfaction of giving my time and helping to make my son's school a better place is well worth it. My son always has a big smile on his face when he sees me at school, and I simply want him to have the same feeling I had when I was little. Through my many efforts, especially the Asian Dinner Party, I learned that El Carmelo is a great community. I am positive that all parents share the same wish – to make their little ones smile.

We need you. So, please do not hesitate if you are asked to participate in a PTA activity, as we will promise to help and support you. Let's make a difference together !!

The PTA is now in the process of putting together the Nominating Committee. The job of this committee is to find people for next year, to fill the vacant spots on the PTA board and in the various chair positions. If you would like to participate either on the committee this year or take on a PTA job next year please contact Barbara Sonner at bl.Yates@comcast.net.

Carmeletter Submissions: carmeletter@paloaltopta.org

eNews Submissions: elcarmeloPTA_enews@paloaltopta.org

Subscribe to eNews: majordomo@laki.pausd.org (with
"el Carmelo subscribe" in the message of the body)

COMMUNITY KIOSK

JANUARY 25, 2008

PAUSD Area Events

ISSUE 9

Mandarin Immersion Lottery Information Meeting

Wed., Jan. 30, 2008
7:30 - 9pm
Ohlone MP Room



If you are interested in learning more about Mandarin Immersion and the Ohlone Way and the possibility of your child entering the new Mandarin dual immersion program at Ohlone in Fall 2008, please attend! Please check the Ohlone Web site for updates on this meeting, www.ohlone.pausd.org,

Ohlone Elementary School, 950 Amarillo Ave., Palo Alto, Ca 94303

The Palo Alto Children's Library Storytelling Festival

With the reopening of the Children's Library comes the return of a much-loved annual event, The Children's Library Storytelling Festival. Adults and families with children ages 4 and up are invited to attend part or all of this wonderful event on Sun., Jan. 27 from 1 to 5pm.

A variety of talented Bay Area storytellers will each have 15 minutes in which to tell their tales. Hearing stories told—in the oral tradition—is a completely different experience from hearing them read. Both are great, of course, but if you've never had the experience of listening to a skilled storyteller please come to the festival. You'll be in for a real treat.

Museum of American Heritage

Introduction to 3-D Modeling

Brand new class and only one of its kind in the Bay Area! After learning an easy-to-use modeling program, students create their own 3-D Models with cool lighting effects. Discover how scenes and characters are created for their favorite computer games, and then design their own game using their 3-D models. Then play it! No 3-D modeling experience required, should be somewhat familiar with drawing programs of some sort (Visio, Illustrator, Photoshop, PowerPoint).

Instructors: Jeff Risberg and Brandon Risberg

Sundays, February 3 & 10 from 1 to 3pm, Ages 10 and Up, \$35 Members/\$45 Non-Members

Magnetism and Electromagnetism

Fun with Magnets! Discover magnetism and induction while learning about magnetic effects and principles. Class projects include the construction of an electric motor and an electromagnetic flashlight.

Instructors: Larry Pizzella & Jim Wall

Saturdays, February 2, 9, 16, & 23, 10am to Noon, Ages 10 and Up, \$55 Members/\$65 Non Members

To register visit www.moah.org, email admin@moah.org, or call 650-321-1004

Palo Alto City Library presents Red Panda Acrobats

Fri., Feb. 1, 7pm
Mitchell Park Community Center

Palo Alto City Library presents Firebird Youth Chinese Orchestra

Sun., Feb. 17, 3pm
Mitchell Park Community Center

Sally Ride Science Festival

Come join the fun at Santa Clara University for the Sally Ride Science Festival.

Place: Santa Clara University
Date: Saturday March 29, 2008
Time: 11am to 4:15pm

The Science Festival features

- An inspiring talk by an astronaut
- Workshops for girls, which can be given by local veterinarians, astronomers, microbiologists and more
- Workshops for parents and teachers on ways to support girls' interests in science
- A street fair with booths, hands-on activities, food, and music

Don't miss out—sign up starts in January 2008!

Visit: www.sallyridescience.com/festivals/08scu0329

Call: 1.800.561.5161



Community Events for the PAUSD Area – January 25, 2008

Music and Arts

CSMA World Harmony Chorus

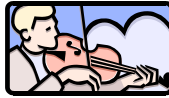
CSMA's World Harmony Chorus shares songs from around the world. Mon., Jan. 28, 7:30pm.

CSMA Family Concerts: SoVoSó, Vocal Ensemble

This a cappella ensemble mixes jazz, gospel, world and R&B music in their own unique improvisational style. Sun., Feb. 10, 2 and 4pm.

CSMA Stanford Lively Arts Informances: Turtle Island Quartet

String quartet fusing the classical quartet aesthetic with contemporary



American musical styles. Fri. Feb. 15, 6pm.

CSMA Stanford Lively Arts Informances: Arden Trio

One of the most important piano trios on the concert stage today. Thomas Schmidt (piano), Susan Ornstein (violin) and Clay Ruede (cello). Wed., Feb. 20, 6pm.

Tateuchi Hall, CSMA. 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View. Free admission. Limited seating. Tickets distributed beginning one hour before show time. For more info see www.arts4all.org.

Parent Education

Parents Place

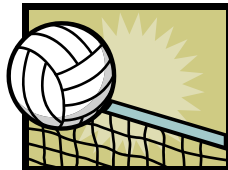
Parents Place, located at 200 Channing Avenue in Palo Alto is offering workshops of interest to elementary and middle school parents in their Winter 2008 Quarter. To register call: 650-688-3040 or for full course descriptions or online registration at: www.ParentsPlaceOnline.org.

Winter 2008 workshops include: Helping Your Child With Organization (1st-5th Gr), W, 1/30, 6:30-8:30pm with Marleen Didech, MA; Making and Keeping Friends (1st-3rd Gr), M, 2/11, 7-9pm with Denise Salin, LMFT; Setting Limits: Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk (1st-5th Gr), T, 2/26 & 3/4, 6:30-8pm with Marleen Didech, MA; Peers, Popularity and Power – Understanding Girls' Friendships, Th, 3/6, 7-9pm with Sheila Dubin, MA; and Connecting with Your Child Every Day (5 – 11 years), Th, 3/13, 7-9 pm with Susan Stone Belton, BSE.

“New Research About Reading: How To Improve Reading Achievement for All of Our Students”

Joseph K. Torgesen, Ph.D. Thurs, Feb. 28, 7-9pm, Terman Cafetorium, 655 Arastradero Rd. RSVP for childcare: Cristina Ordenana, PAUSD 329-3736

Sports Announcements



CYSA Soccer Tryouts

The Stanford Monsoon, Class 3, U12 Girls (born after July 31, 1995) is looking to add an experienced goalkeeper to the roster. If you are interested or have questions, please contact team manager Christy Wolf @ christy.wolf@yourbrandhere.com

United States Youth Volleyball League

8 Week Instructional Volleyball League
Boys & Girls Ages 7-14:

Where: Palo Alto at Mitchell Park North

Starting Date: Tuesday, April 15, 2008, 6-7pm

Days we meet: Tuesdays: 6-7pm and Saturdays: 9-10am

Register online at www.USYVL.org

Questions? Call 1.888.988.7985

Cost: *Early Registration: \$120 due by February 1, 2008*

Regular Registration: \$135 until March 1, 2008

Late Registration: \$175 until April 1, 2008

Multiple Child Discount: 2nd child or more: Deduct \$10 for 2nd., 3rd., etc...

(No registrations will be accepted after the April 1 deadline unless space permits)

Community Sports Items

For current community sports announcements, visit:
<http://palylink.paloaltopta.org/>

Community Kiosk

A bi-weekly publication of the Palo Alto Council of PTAs. The mention of any business or service does not imply an endorsement by the Palo Alto Council of PTAs or the Palo Alto Unified School District. Only short announcements of not-for-profit events of interest to PAUSD elementary school families are considered for publication. Submissions may be edited for clarity or space.

Next deadline: January 30, 2008; 5pm. Please email submissions to kioskeditor@paloaltopta.org

**Volume 53, Issue 5
February
2008**

Palo Alto Council of PTAs
25 Churchill Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Phone: 650-326-0702
Web: <http://www.paloaltopta.org>

On the Calendar

*Note: All PTA Unit President, Council and School Board meetings are at 25 Churchill unless otherwise noted. School Board meetings also on cable channel 28.

Jan 21, **Martin Luther King Holiday**

Jan 22, 6:30pm **School Board (Special- Facilities)**

Jan 23, 9am **PTAC Council Mtg**

Jan 29, 6:30pm **School Board (Regular)**

Feb 5, 6:30pm **School Board (Special- Progress Report)**

Feb 6, 9am **PTAC Exec Board Mtg**

Feb 15 & 18 **School Holidays**

Feb 19 **Staff Development Day**

Feb 20, 9am **PTAC Presidents Mtg**

Feb 26, 6:30pm **School Board (Regular)**

Feb 27, 9am **PTAC General Mtg**

Mar 5, 9am **PTAC Exec Board Mtg**

Mar 18, 6:30pm **School Board (Regular)**

Mar 19, 9am **PTAC Presidents Mtg**

Mar 21-28 **Spring Break**

Apr 2, 9am **PTAC Exec Board Mtg**

Apr 8, 6:30pm **School Board (Student Dinner/Regular)**

Apr 16, 9am **PTAC Presidents Mtg**

The Councilor

The Newsletter of the Palo Alto Council of PTAs

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: ARE WE ASKING THE RIGHT, TOUGH QUESTIONS? PAUSD's 7th Annual Community Conversation

Today we find ourselves facing a baffling and frustrating problem. Palo Alto Unified School District, with its wealth and other resources, is not doing well by all of its children. Some are thriving, others are not; and that split is more or less along racial lines, with white and Asian children at the top and black and Latino children at the bottom. And, in what has come to many of us as a shock, this achievement gap transcends socioeconomic status. So this problem is largely about race and ethnicity.

We are not alone in confronting this problem; it is a national problem. Even though we are a district with dedicated teachers, effective programs, determined leaders, innovative entrepreneurs, and a world-class university, we seem unable to make a dent in this problem. In fact, some indicators suggest that the situation could be getting worse.

Many scholars have conducted research on the "easy" aspect of the problem-that is, the disparity between well-heeled, suburban districts and poor, inner-city districts. However, ours is a different problem, one more subtle and more difficult to articulate. As parents, students, teachers and administrators we all contribute to our current dilemma. We must seek to understand the roles we play and how the dynamics in our classrooms impact the performance of children of color. We need to ask difficult questions, such as how does the Tinsley Program complicate our response to black and Latino children? To what extent is the failure to systematically collect data, to evaluate programs, and to monitor student performance responsible for our current situation? How has that failure fostered an inadequate sense of the problem and a misunderstanding of the question of equity as it applies to our school district?

Our aim is not to assign blame, or to accuse anyone of being racist, hateful, or purposely destructive. Rather, we need to focus on the complex dynamics that determine success and failure in our district.

When Elaine Ray, Linda Allen, and I started the Parent Network for Students of Color, we recognized that being parents of African American children called for certain skills not all of us were equipped with or even recognized as necessary. We knew how fortunate we were to be a part of this district; and yet we also recognized that our children needed extra protection and support in order to survive here, where they are, either invisible or seen through eyes that do not really see them.

As parents, when we send our children to school for the first time we have the usual concerns about them. Will they play well with other children? Will they sit their little bottoms down when their teachers ask them to? Will they learn to read and write well and succeed in math and science? Will they be happy and find ways to achieve their dreams?

So it comes as a surprise to those of us who haven't had to think about these issues previously-those of us who like to think that the world and the people in it are essentially at one with our thinking-when some shocking questions come out of our children's sweet mouths. "Mommy, am I black?" Or, "Are you black?" Or, "Why is my hair so curly?" Or, "Why did so and so said we couldn't play together anymore?"

They will hear our answers but they will also, on their own, try to make sense of those questions and our answers in ways they will internalize and perhaps not articulate for years. But their behavior will reflect that unarticulated understanding of who they are in this world. So, for the sake of our children and the world into which they will increasingly play a part, we need to begin to reflect again on the questions of who we are, what we are doing to affect the issues mentioned, and what we can do better to achieve our goals.

This excerpt was from the 7th Community Conversation, by Marvina White, PTAC Community Outreach Chair

The Councilor

The Newsletter of the Palo Alto Council of PTAs is published monthly.

Dan Dykwel

PTA Council President

Darice Koo

Councilor Editor

Dr Kevin Skelly

PAUSD Superintendent

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TV: If kids are entertained by 2 letters, imagine the fun they'll have with 26. Open your child's imagination. Open a book.

~ Author unknown

Parent and Teacher Educational Presentations "New Research About Reading: How To Improve Reading Achievement for All of Our Students"

Guest Speaker: **Joseph K. Torgesen, Ph.D.**, Acclaimed Researcher & Educator

Two presentations:

*For Teachers, Administrators & Staff: **Thurs, Feb 28, 3:30-5pm**, 25 Churchill: Board Rm
rsvp to: Cristina Ordenana, PAUSD 329-3736*

*For Parents: **Thurs, Feb 28, 7-9pm**, Terman Cafetorium, 655 Arastradero Rd.
rsvp for childcare to: Cristina Ordenana, PAUSD 329-3736*

Dr. Torgesen will address these key questions:

What is required for a child to become a skilled, fluent reader?

What have we learned about interventions for students having difficulty learning to read?

What does it take to get all of our children to become strong readers?

Dr. Torgesen has been an expert in the field of reading instruction for more than thirty years. He is currently the Robert and Eugenia Morcom Chair of Psychology and Education at Florida State University and is Director Emeritus of the Florida Center for Reading Research. The acclaimed author of more than 180 articles and books, his work has been supported by grants from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the United States Department of Education, and private foundations. His current professional service includes a Presidential appointment to the National Board of Education Sciences.

Dr. Torgesen is known not only for his extensive research, but also for his national leadership in translating scientific findings into best practices in the classroom. All educators and parents interested in improving reading in children will come away inspired and informed with clear evidence-based ideas, strategies and best methods for helping all children become fluent readers for life!

These 2 free presentations are sponsored by: PAUSD, PAPTAC Council, Children's Health Council, Northern California Branch of the International Dyslexia Assoc, and Palo Alto's TACKLE (Taking A Closer Kid Look Early)

Every Child, One Voice...PTA Membership is Your Voice

Happy New Year Palo Alto teachers, staff, parents, and students! A big thank you to all of you who have supported the Parent and Teacher Association, PTA with your time, donations and or membership. There are over 8,500 PTA members in our school district with a student enrollment of approximately 11,000. We have an increase in membership of approximately 2% since last year.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite teachers, staff members, parents, high school students, community leaders, caring individuals (did I forget anyone?) who are not members to contact your local school PTA membership chair or president and join. *The Parent and Teacher Association is an advocacy group to promote the welfare of all children.* We accomplish this by linking the support of parents, teachers, students, lawmakers, policy makers and our community. If you have been active in the PTA but are not a member, please join. By joining you provide the volume in our efforts to be heard by legislators and policy makers. Our tag-line is "**Every Child, One Voice.**" Help us be heard. If you haven't joined because other commitments prevent you from being an active member, you can be reassured that your membership is still needed. You do not have to be active in the PTA to be a member. Your membership would still provide that added volume to our voice and you would be supporting members who are active. Please join our voice. Help us advocate for better education, health, community and continuous improvement in our schools.

If you have any questions regarding your PTA membership, please email me.

Edita Donnelly, PTA Council Membership Chair

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