



CARMELETTER

Principal's Letter

Dear parents and students of El Carmelo,



This is a historic month for education. Schools around the country will be taking their first ever Smarter Balanced assessments. These tests replace the old STAR or CST (California Standards

Tests) and introduce many new, interesting features to testing. I have been talking to parent groups about this throughout the year. Here is a summary of some of the innovations coming.

☐ Starting this year, **only grades 3-5 will need to take these standardized tests.**

Grade 2 will no longer be tested.

☐ The tests are **based on the new Common Core State Standards** and therefore emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving to an unprecedented extent.

☐ The new tests, called SBAC, will be **completely computerized.** We have been testing our laptops in March to make sure that they are ready for kids to use.

☐ **This first year, no one gets a score on the test.** *Instead, the test results will be used to calibrate the tests,* allowing the test writers to rewrite, or even throw out questions that don't work.

☐ One of the ways that we are preparing for this new type of testing is to train ourselves and then the students in the digital format of the test. All of the teachers have had an opportunity to see sample tests already. The tests are kind of cool!

☐ Our IT specialist at El Carmelo, *Frank Gonzalez*, has not only prepared our equipment here but is also the lead trainer for the district. He will work directly with classes at El

Calendar



Monday to Friday, March 31-April 4
No School, Spring Break

Saturday, April 12
INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK, 3-5:30pm

Monday to Friday, April 14-18
Earth Week

Tuesday, April 15
PTA General Meeting, 8:30am
Family Restaurant Night @Pizza My Heart

Wednesday, April 16
Walk 'n Roll to School
Parent Ed: Bringing Up Bicyclists, 7-8:30pm

Wednesday, April 23
Coffee with the Principal

Friday to Sunday, April 25-27
5th Grade Ship Trip

Saturday, May 3
May Fete Parade

Monday to Friday, May 5-9
Bananaseed Book Fair

Carmelo during the first week of testing in order to get us on the right track.

El Carmelo's testing window runs the two weeks starting April 28 through May 9. Your students' 3rd through 5th grade teachers may communicate with you directly about the specific class testing. Remember, no one is getting a score this year, and the tests' purpose is to calibrate the test itself.

Welcome to the new world of assessment!

--Chuck Merritt

cmerritt@pausd.org

Submissions for next *Carmeletter* due
Thursday, 5/1/14.

Email carmeletter@paloaltopta.org.



PTA President's Letter



Dear El Carmelo community,

Spring is here along with many activities at El Carmelo.

Our Nominating Committee has been hard at work filling the PTA Board positions for 2014-2015. Thank you to *Cynthia Tham, Davina Byrd, Janet Owen, Lucinda Brommersma, and Andrea Christensen* for putting together a slate of great candidates for our board and for finding returning and new chairpeople for our activities throughout the year. *We still need a few slots filled, so if you have an interest in helping with an event in the next year, the PTA needs you!*

Join us at our **final PTA General meeting on April 15 at 8:30 am in the MP Room** to vote in our new board and share new ideas for the next school year!

This year as PTA President, I have been able to attend most of the events we host as a PTA. One of the many things I have learned is how generous so many parents are in sharing their gifts and talents with our community. Thank you all for sharing your time and energy with El Carmelo! **The Auction was one example of many parents coming together to create a fabulous community-building and fundraising event.** We had parents greeting us at the door and parents behind the scenes working their magic with Excel spreadsheets and rapid-fire tabulation of bids. We had a team of parents who gathered donations from both the parents and teachers and also merchants in the community. We had an informative catalog prepared and distributed. We had parents emceeding our live auction, along with a lively auctioneer. We had a smooth check-out process and upbeat music to dance away the night. We had a fun live auction with bidding on wonderful trips and events and new picnic benches for our upper grade kids. We had a full silent auction with food, parties, services, and events for all interests. We had creative decorations and costumes for the Olympic theme and delicious

food representing different cultures and countries. The event brought us all together to chat and laugh and celebrate being a part of the El Carmelo community. The organization of the auction was impeccable thanks to *Amy Love* and her dream team! Thank you to the community for bringing your gifts to benefit our school. **There is still time to sign up for kid and adult parties and buy other auction items.** Go to <http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/auction/auctioncatalog.html> OR look in eNews for the link to available auction items.

These same kinds of gifts are evident in the classrooms around El Carmelo each day. **Every day we have many parents in the classroom enriching our children's educational and learning experience.** Many classrooms rely on the hands-on help from parents in Math Lab and writers' workshop to give kids that one-on-one attention that helps them thrive. Readers come in monthly to share books about how children can be upstanders and increase kind behavior at school. Parents shuttle kids to the library and help stuff Friday folders. Room parents organize parties, staff appreciation activities, and keep us all informed about upcoming events. In whatever ways you help, our teachers and children are benefitted when you share your time and talents with El Carmelo.

As the school year winds down, I want to **thank you all for making El Carmelo a truly collaborative and wonderful school.** Each of you create community by sharing your time and gifts with our children and each other!

Enjoy the last two months of school and have a restful Spring Break with your family!

—Julia Jacobsen

juliacjacobsen@gmail.com





LIBRARY NEWS

It's hard to believe that we are already in the month of March. You may have heard that we recently got a **new library system**. We are trying to get all books checked out on the old system (before February 18) turned in ASAP. You can see our new catalog by going to <http://elc.opals.pausd.org/bin/home>. Some students have written their own book reviews, which are posted on the new catalog!



Monday, March 3 was **Read Across America Day**. Stanford Football players came to read in some classrooms, teachers swapped classrooms to read, and there were special activities in the Library at recess and lunch.

K-2nd grades have been hearing the **California Young Reader Medal books**, which can be seen at <http://californiayoungreadermedal.org/nominees.htm>, and will be voting soon.

April is **National Poetry Month**, so we will be focusing on poetry in books and lessons.

We will be getting some wonderful new books in the library soon. *Many thanks to all who have helped make this happen!*

--Teacher-Librarian, Leslie Bell (lbell@pausd.org)

FINAL PTA GENERAL MEETING - TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 8:30AM

Please join us for our final general PTA meeting! At this meeting, we will be electing the El Carmelo PTA Board 2014-2015.

Proposed 2014-15 El Carmelo PTA Board

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| President | Kathryn Lamis |
| Exec. VP | Janet Owen |
| Secretary | Krissy Green |
| Treasurer | Maria Derrick |
| Auditor | Lifang Zhao |
| Corresponding Secretary | Ronna Edwards |
| Historian | Rosanna Jackson |
| VP Fundraising | Lucinda Brommersma |
| VP Communications | Jen Wiener |
| VP Membership | Sharon Tobias |
| VP Volunteer Services | Ann Holum |
| Parliamentarian | Julia Jacobsen |
| Principal | Chuck Merritt |
| Teacher | Leslie Bell |

\$2,500. Six staff members from El Carmelo have applied to attend. Depending on acceptance to the program, we propose to spend up to \$15,000 from the Strategic Initiative Fund to send up to 6 teachers of to this seminar.

Carts: We propose to purchase up to 3 carts for our new Chromebooks. These carts will be approximately \$1,500.

Picnic Tables: We propose to allocate spending for Redwood picnic tables. We have approved spending from the Strategic Initiative fund for 10 tables, and the Auction Fund-a-Need will purchase 6 or 7 tables, so we may need 1 or 2 more tables to be approved at a cost of \$700 per table.

Enrichment: We propose to approve up to \$10,000 on enrichment activities for the 2014-2015 school year.

We will also be voting on proposed spending from our Strategic Initiative Fund. We have **four proposals for spending**.

Writing Seminar for Teachers: The Columbia University Teachers College Writing Institute is a highly respected professional seminar on the latest techniques in teaching writing for the Common Core. El Carmelo has applied to send a group of teachers to the June session. Air, room & board, and registration for each participant is about

We would love for every voice to be heard.

So please come to our PTA General Meeting, vote on the proposals for the Strategic Initiative Fund, and elect the new PTA Board for 2014-2015.

Hope to see many of you there!

--President, Julia Jacobsen

(juliacjacobsen@gmail.com)





FAMILY RESTAURANT NIGHT - TUESDAY, APRIL 15



Take a night off of cooking dinner... and help the El Carmelo PTA at the same time. You can **DINE IN, TAKE OUT**, or order **DELIVERY!!!**

WHERE: Pizza My Heart

(220 University Ave., downtown Palo Alto)

WHEN: Tuesday night, April 15, 4-9pm

HOW: Just mention the "El Carmelo PTA" (*no flyer needed*).

--Family Restaurant Night co-chairs:

Peggy Hu (yupeik@hotmail.com) &

Rose Callaghan (callaghan.rose@gmail.com)

30% of our purchases will be donated to the El Carmelo PTA!

In Appreciation

THANK YOU for making these events a great success!

Bingo Night: Under the wonderful leadership of *Christine Hodson*, Bingo Night was a huge success! Thanks also to *Lorna Thornton, Bruce Woodley, Grit Denker, Maria Derrick, Melanie Gurunathan, Andrea Jelks, Lucinda Brommersma, Sharon Tobias* and *Jim Leontis* for helping to make the night fun.

Math & Science

Exploration: *Jenny Schmidt, Maria Derrick, Scott Thomas*, and *Melanie Gurunathan* helped with the Family Engineering event during our Math & Science Exploration Day. *Mr. Merritt* brought us the materials and the ideas for this afternoon of engineering exploration. The kids had the opportunity to explore several engineering concepts using everyday materials that make it easy to grasp sophisticated ideas. They also worked in teams with their families to build a free standing tall structure and their own motorized, lit, and decorated "Hex Bugs."

Teacher/Staff Appreciation:

Janet Owen coordinated a wonderful week of celebrating our staff. A huge thank you to all our wonderful parents and students for making it so fantastic! Our amazing staff enjoyed delicious baked goods, a taco luncheon, cards, flowers, hugs and lots of "thank you's" during the week. A great big thank you to all our *Room Parents*, and all the thoughtful parents who brought in food for our teachers and staff. Thank you for making our school such a wonderful place!

Stories Under the Stars:

Rosanna Jackson and *Lorena Ruelas* co-chaired this lovely annual event with books and treats. Many thanks to *Ann Holum* and *Irmelin Bergh* for their help. It was wonderful to hear stories from our principal, *Mr. Merritt*, and some of our new teachers, *Eileen Laughlin, Bruno Colchen*, and *Heather Stone*.

Auction: *Amy Love* chaired the El Carmelo PTA's most

important fundraiser for the 3rd time!!! The El Carmelo community can't thank you enough for your extraordinary event planning skills.

Message from Auction Chair Extraordinaire *Amy Love*:

What a fun and successful night we had at our auction. It could never have been done without the help of all of the families from El Carmelo.

I would like to especially thank *Maria Derrick* who always bends over backwards to be my right-hand woman and to do anything and everything she possibly can. *Maria* is a very special person to our El Carmelo community.

Thank you to: *Melanie Gurunathan, Sarah Cornwell, Susy Kim, Cynthia Tham* and *Alli Wong* for all your help with donations; *Grit Denker* and *Medha Nanal* for set up; *Maya* and *Mahesh Venkatraman, Jennifer Chu, Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons, Sripriya Kannan, Sherwin Wong, Davina Byrd, Susy Kim*, and *Maria Derrick* for running the show the night of the auction; *Jayne Pearce* for our awesome auction catalog cover; *James Pearce* for DJ-ing; and *Diane Heilman* for emceeding.