



CARMELETTER

Principal's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents,

At our first "Coffee with the Principal," I invited Soma McCandless to talk about Project Cornerstone. I was happy that two dozen parents stayed for coffee and to hear about this topic. Project Cornerstone is an important part of the district's (and our) efforts to improve student connectedness and strengthen social-emotional support systems for students.

At the heart of Project Cornerstone is their **40 Developmental Assets** -- positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that youth need to grow into healthy, caring and responsible people. They represent a common core of developmental building blocks crucial for all children.

The Developmental Assets are broken down into categories of external and internal assets.

External Assets include:

- Support:** positive family communication, other adult relationships, caring neighborhood, caring school climate, parent involvement in schooling
- Empowerment:** community values youth, children as resources, service to others, safety
- Boundaries and Expectations:** family boundaries, school boundaries and neighborhood boundaries, adult role models, positive peer influence, high expectations
- Constructive Use of Time:** creative activities, child programs, religious community, time at home



Internal Assets include:

- Commitment to Learning:** Achievement motivation, learning engagement, homework, bonding to adults at school, reading for pleasure
- Positive Values:** caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, healthy lifestyle
- Social Competencies:** planning and decision making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, resistance skills, peaceful conflict resolution
- Positive Identity:** personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, positive view of personal future

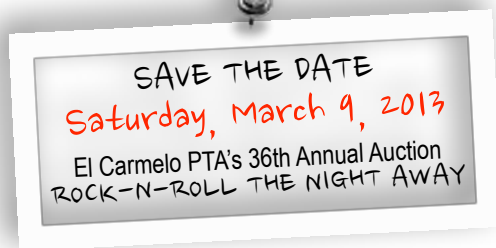
As I mentioned in the last *Carmeletter*, we have redesigned our Character Assemblies to align with Project Cornerstone. To support the assemblies, there is a group of parents being led by Katie Cicero (thank you, Katie) that are working with the staff on the Asset Building Champions (ABC) reading program. The PTA has also invited Project Cornerstone to offer one of their parent seminars at El Carmelo this winter. Please look for these and other opportunities to learn about and be involved in Project Cornerstone at El Carmelo.

Our 5th graders two years ago took a survey to help us obtain some benchmark data on student connectedness. The results are available online through our

Most current calendar at <http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/carmeletter.html>

Calendar

- Friday, October 5**
3rd Grade Bike Safety Rodeo
- Tuesday, October 9**
PTA General Membership Meeting & Parent Ed on Mindfulness, 7-8:30pm
- Friday, October 12**
Vision Screening (Grades K, 2, 5)
Ice Skating Party, 5:30-7:30pm 
- Monday, October 15**
Kinder Extended Day Begins
- Wednesday, October 17**
Coffee with the Principal, 8:25am
- Thursday, October 18**
School Picture Make-Up Day
- Friday, October 19**
No School, Staff Development Day
- Wednesday, October 24**
Restaurant Night at Pizza My Heart
- Tuesday, October 30**
PUMPKIN PROJECT DISPLAY 
- Wednesday, October 31**
HALLOWEEN PARADE, 8:30-9am
- Friday, November 2**
Hearing Screening (Grades K, 2, 5)
- Monday-Friday, November 5-9**
Scholastic Book Fair 
- Tuesday, November 6**
Stories, Milk & Cookies Night, 6:30-8pm
- Wednesday, November 7**
PTA Exec. Board Meeting 8:30am



district website (or go to: <http://tinyurl.com/czkspzs>).

Looking forward to our conversations and work on developmental assets together,

--Chuck Merritt
cmerritt@pausd.org





PTA President's Letter

Dear El Carmelo parents and staff,

This year there will be two important funding initiatives for education on the November ballot. **Prop. 30** comes from Governor Brown, and **Prop. 38** comes from Molly Munger and is endorsed (and co-written) by the State PTA. You can vote for either or both of these initiatives – you do not have to choose one.



Why these education initiatives now? Nancy Krop, the VP for Advocacy for the Palo Alto Council of PTAs has provided us with the following information.

California ranks 47th in per pupil spending. CA is 50th in the number of teachers, librarians and school nurses per student; and performs at the bottom in math, reading, and science (in science, we only outperform Mississippi). The national average classroom size is 15 students for every teacher. California has half as many high school teachers per student than the national average.

The five top performing states spend \$16,000 - \$22,000 per student. California spends \$7,800 per student, or two to three times

less. Palo Alto spends \$12,000 per student (which includes extra funds from PiE and our parcel tax). California schools need \$17 billion more per year just to reach national average spending per student.

How did California get into this situation when we used to rank among the top best? To find the answer to this question and others, you are invited and encouraged to attend one of the following presentations about the funding initiatives:

★October 4, 7-8pm, Ohlone Elementary, MP room

★October 9, 8:45am, JLS Middle School, exact location TBD

★October 18, 12pm, Palo Alto High School, ERC Room (Library)

In these presentations, you will also learn how each initiative will impact Palo Alto and our state, how much money they each raise, how they get the money and for how long, what they each do with the money, and more. You will also learn what happens if both initiatives pass, and what happens if none passes.

It is very important to get informed about the funding initiatives in the coming few weeks.

Please register, inform yourself, and vote on November 6!



--Tais Schmitt
thschmitt@pacbell.net

HALLOWEEN EVENTS AT EL CARMELO



PUMPKIN PROJECT DISPLAY

Tuesday, October 30

Children of all grades are invited to participate in this annual El Carmelo tradition. **Bring your decorated pumpkin to the front of the MP Room on Tuesday morning**, the day before Halloween, for all your friends and family to see.

Please no gory details (younger grades will view the pumpkins).

HALLOWEEN PARADE

Wednesday, October 31, 8:30-9am
"Rain or Shine"

Parents: come watch the fun!

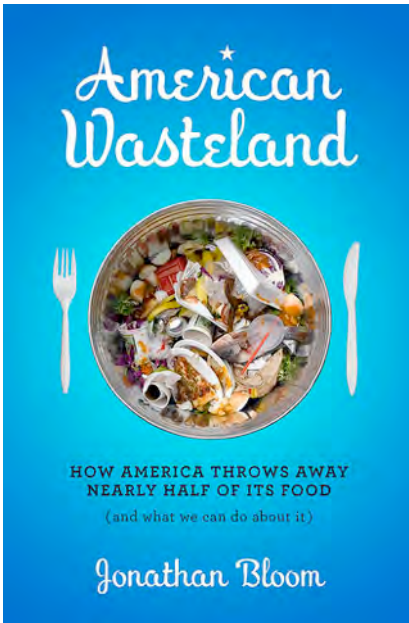
Sorry - no toy weapons or gore. Costumes must be removed after the parade, so bring extra clothes.





WASTE WATCHING

By Patricia Campbell, campbell.noroian@gmail.com (an El Carmelo parent)



food waste claims up to half the country's total food production. Much of this food is still perfectly edible, but very little of it ends up helping to feed the 49 million Americans who are "food insecure."



☀ **It contributes to global warming.** By Bloom's reckoning, the average American discards more than half a pound of food each day. Most of this food ends up in a landfill, where food waste makes up 19 percent of the total trash. When it rots, it emits methane; landfill methane emissions are the ninth-largest source of greenhouse gases.



☀ **It reflects our loss of respect for food and all that goes into producing it.** Throwing away food also means squandering the water, fuel and labor that it takes to grow, harvest, process and transport it. We can do better than this.

If you have the time, read Bloom's book for more on this important subject. Or check out his website, wastedfood.com, where he allows readers to share tips on avoiding food waste.

My friends know that I'm an avid reader and that I get very excited about whatever I'm reading at the moment. After finishing my latest book, [Jonathan Bloom's *American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of its Food*](#), I've developed a whole new relationship with my refrigerator.

Here's why you should care about food waste in America (and in your own kitchen):



☀ **Food gets wasted at every link in the country's food chain.** From farmers' fields to supermarkets, restaurants to schools and our own kitchens,



☀ **It's a waste of money.** If you were to put a dollar amount on the food that you throw in the trash or down the garbage disposal, you might think twice before letting your groceries rot in the produce drawer or languish in the back of the fridge.

Wanted: Articles by Students, Parents & Staff!!!

Do you have an idea for an article for the *Carmeletter*?



Do you want to interview your favorite teacher?

All ideas welcome:
carmeletter@palaltopta.org

THE WASTE AUDIT

On Wednesday, September 19th, our school held a waste audit, sponsored by **El Carmelo's Green Team**.

Students collected the garbage cans and recycling/compost cans immediately after lunch and dumped the contents on big blue tarps.



Above: Garbage, recycling, and compost were dumped on a blue tarp.

Then, students, teachers and parent volunteer Erich Heilman collected the items that had been tossed in the incorrect can and collected them onto the "mistake tarp" (protective gloves were worn! 😊).

At the end of lunch, we found that items students are throwing away incorrectly *include*:

- yogurt containers,
- Go-Gurt wrappers,
- cellophane from fruit containers,
- sometimes food,
- school milk cartons, and
- some foil trays from school lunches.

One way this sorting activity helped us is letting us know what to pinpoint and educate students about in our 'next step' efforts.



Above: Student sorting waste

Prior to the activity we did notice all the wonderful **reusable containers** parents and students are using in lunches to pack fruit, crackers, sandwiches, etc. **Great job!**

Why do we care if the waste gets sorted correctly or not? Well, of course it helps the

earth stay healthier, but we also know that the better job we do sorting/disposing of trash, the more money the district and our own school saves!



This year the district is saving \$21,244 per month by sorting out recyclables and compostables from the trash.



El Carmelo is doing a good job, but several schools, including *Juana Briones, Walter Hays* and *Palo Verde*, are saving even more money than El Carmelo.

WE can do better!

--Interested in El Carmelo's Green Team?

contact: Diane McCoy, Dmccoy@pausd.org or Annette Isaacson, Aisaacson@pausd.org.

El Carmelo is on...

twitter 

Follow our school (and Principal Merritt) at:

@ElCarmeloSchool



BLUE FRIDAYS

Show school spirit!

Wear **BLUE** on Fridays...

and get a **BLUE** raffle ticket for prizes!



AN EVENING OF MINDFULNESS - TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 7PM, MP ROOM



Stressed?
Anxious?
Overwhelmed?

Mindfulness may be just what you need!

Come out for an evening of mindfulness! In our short time together, we will explore the heart of mindfulness practice and how to cultivate it in your everyday life. We will touch briefly on the science behind it, its role in education and how it can improve focus and alleviate stress *not only for our kids, but for ourselves as well.* You will leave with some practical skills that can be incorporated simply into your daily life that will help reduce stress and improve your overall well-being.

Mindfulness is experiencing life moment to moment with complete awareness and acceptance. Mindfulness is attending to what is really going on, not what we think is going on. It is about being



This parent education event will begin after a short PTA meeting.

All parents/guardians invited!

Childcare available.



aware of what is happening now and not being carried away in the past or absorbed in a fantasy of the future. This attention gives us Choice: choice as to how we respond to internal and external stimuli, choice regarding our emotions, and ultimately choice on how we live our lives, moment by moment. Having this choice allows us to respond to situations thoughtfully rather than react habitually.

Mindfulness can provide a break from stressful thoughts and allow you to take a mental break and gain perspective, among other things. Some of the benefits of mindfulness include enhanced focus, reduced stress, increased self-acceptance, improved relationships and increased empathy.

--Sarah Newman, snewman@pausd.org

SPONSOR-A-BOOK



After a brief summer off, El Carmelo's library is back to being heavily used. The school library is a critical resource for our children, enriching and enlivening their experience at school and building their love of reading and their body of knowledge.

Sponsor-a-Book is your chance to donate books to the library while also honoring those who are special to your children—family members, teachers, or friends—with a personalized message.

How do you sponsor a book?

You may have already donated \$15 for each book sponsored on the PTA's One-Check form. To select the book your child will sponsor, come to the library on **Wednesday, October 10th** or a date to be determined in November (check the eNews for an exact date), after school from **1:30-2:30pm**.

Haven't sponsored a book yet but would like to? No problem. Come to the library on one of the dates designated, bringing your checkbook with you. Donations are entirely tax-deductible, and all funds go to the purchase of books for the El Carmelo library.

Can your child choose the book?

Your child can choose to sponsor a book from a number

of books selected by our librarian, Leslie Bell.

Alternately, he or she may pick a favorite title from the shelves of the library, as long as the book chosen has not previously been sponsored. An inscription will be placed in the book on a bookplate, and your child will feel proud to know that your family has supported our library, leaving a lasting legacy for the El Carmelo community.

Thanks to all who have already donated!

Your generosity enriches our children's experience.

--Questions?

contact Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons, katekagg@gmail.com or SriPriya Kannan, sripriya_kannan@yahoo.com.



EL CARMELO'S ANNUAL ICE SKATING PARTY - FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 5:30-7:30

Let's kick off a fun fall season with El Carmelo's annual Ice Skating Party at **Winter Lodge**. If you want to skate, the cost is **\$16 per skater** (includes skate rental). Family and friends may watch for free.

There will be a **separate skating rink for Kinders, 1st and 2nd graders** who want a smaller crowd.

Pizza will be available for purchase. Hot cocoa and desserts are free.

Don't miss the perfect "family photo opp" next to the cozy outdoor fireplace.

All skaters must come with a guardian.

Every skater must have a signed waiver - no exceptions.



3009 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto

--Questions?

Dee Rehbock, doreenrehbock@gmail.com;

Paulette Kamenecka, aulette_kamenecka@yahoo.com; or

Aruna Bhamidipati, arunashreeb@yahoo.com

Simplify your life...
and help El Carmelo.

Family Restaurant Night
Wednesday, 10/24



220 University Ave
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 327-9400

Dine in, take out, or
have your dinner *delivered*.

Invite your friends, neighbors,
and Grandma!

No flyer necessary - **just tell
them you're supporting the El
Carmelo PTA!!!**

30% of your purchase will be
donated to the El Carmelo PTA.

For menu or to order online:
[http://pizzamyheart.com/
Pizza_My_Heart_Home.html](http://pizzamyheart.com/Pizza_My_Heart_Home.html)

Questions?

Krissy Green

(kriselin7@gmail.com) or

Lucinda Brommersma

(lucinda@lucindabrommersma.com)

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR



El Carmelo's All Star Book Fair runs next month, **November 5-9th** in the MP Room.

The Scholastic Book Fair provides **affordable, popular titles for our children**, immersing them in reading and promoting a life-long love of books.

Scholastic also offers **many books for parents**: come browse and treat yourself to a new novel or cookbook; see what your kids are into and get started on your holiday shopping!

The Book Fair proceeds directly support El Carmelo's library and wonderful librarian, Leslie Bell. Funds from the fair expand our collection of books and other library materials. Teachers also have the opportunity to create wish lists that your family can help fulfill for the classrooms; gifts to the

teachers from those wish lists expand the selection of books your kids use in school on a daily basis.

The book fair will be open before school, during lunch and recess, and after school. The hours are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, from 8:00 am until 3:30 pm, and Wednesday, from 8:00 am until 2:30 pm.

Unable to stop in during the day? We are offering a

cozy evening of stories, milk and cookies, and shopping on Monday, November 5th, from 6:30-8:00 pm.



Many of you have already offered to help:

look for emails to sign up for set-up and staffing the book fair. It is great fun assisting the kids as they choose books. Their excitement as they browse new titles is contagious!

If you have any questions or would like to help, please contact Kate Karagueuzian Gibbons, katekkg@gmail.com or Maria Derrick, wesderrick@mindspring.com.



SEPTEMBER'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH: PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING

Research shows that youth whose parents are actively involved in their schooling are more engaged in school; but, what does this mean? We see plenty of parents on campus and at PTA events "being involved" but is that the only form it takes? Every parent, every day can positively affect kids' lives. It only takes a second.

The National Network of Partnership Schools developed a framework for **understanding different kinds of parent involvement:**

- **Parenting:** families establish home environments that support children's learning
- **Communicating:** families and schools engage in effective two-way communications about student expectations and progress



- **Volunteering:** parents directly support the classroom or school
- **Learning at home:** families help students with homework and school-related decision-making and planning
- **Decision making:** parents are involved in school decisions

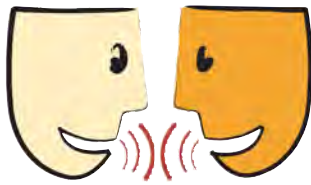
Parents whose schedules don't allow volunteering can still support their children's academic success through parenting, communication, and learning at home. However you can do it, do it. Remember it only takes a second.

To learn more: www.projectcornerstone.org/pdfs/

[September ParentInvolvementInSchool ResourceKit.pdf](#)

To get involved in the Palo Alto Developmental Assets Initiative of Project Safety Net, send an e-mail to devassetspaloalto@gmail.com.

OCTOBER'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET OF THE MONTH: POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION



Young people who experience positive family communication experience higher self-esteem, decreased substance use, less anxiety and depression, and greater school engagement. However, in Santa Clara County, only 63% of 4th-6th grade students and 33% of 7th-12th grade students reported in Project Cornerstone's 2011 survey that they and their parents communicate positively and that they are willing to seek advice from their parents.

For positive family communication to occur, all

family members must be comfortable sharing their needs, wishes, and concerns in an honest and trusting environment without fear of rejection. Establishing positive communication when children are young may help keep the channel open in adolescence.

No matter how old your children are, it's never too late to start!

The following questions can help your family.

Encourage your child to answer these questions honestly:

- ▶ Who do you enjoy talking with and why?
- ▶ What makes it easier to talk to family members, and what makes it more difficult?

▶ Which topics are easiest for you to talk about with your parents, and which are more difficult? Why?

The communication skills that young people develop in their families help set the pattern of how they'll communicate for the rest their lives. Teaching your children to communicate effectively with friends, teachers, co-workers, parents, peers, and others is a lasting legacy that parents can give to their children.

This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.





In Appreciation

Sincere thanks...



...to ALL of the parents who have already turned in **One Check Forms**. Your generous donations allow the PTA to support our teachers and provide fun activities for our children and families. If you haven't turned yours in yet, there's still time. Need a new one? Check in the office or download one from the PTA website (http://www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/documents/2011-2012/One%20Check%20Form_2page.pdf).

...to ALL of the parents who have volunteered to help with **various PTA activities during the course of the year**, as well as to ALL of the parents who **directly support our teachers and children by working in classrooms**.

...to **VP of Volunteer Services Diane Heilman** who compiled all of the information from Volunteer Forms and helps event and program chairs identify the wonderful parents who can help them with their activities.

...to **Room Parent Coordinator Cynthia Tham**, for training and supporting our Room Parents, and all our **Room Parents** this year: *Erich Heilman, Hue Tran, Kathryn Lamis, Rosanna Jackson, Ann Holum, Janet Owen, and Anne Chen* (Kinder); *Kate Healy, Erin Inan, Alison Chao, Hue Tran, Ken Chan* (1st Grade); *Kristine Mostofizadeh, Carola Vasquez Kori Shaw, Sarah Yasmin, Christine Hodson* (2nd Grade); *Lucy Tompkin, Rekha Goel, Tamara Rukhbadze, Arunashree Bhanidifali, Lucinda Brommersma, Kanwal*

Raza, Jessie Chen, Dana Roman (3rd Grade); *Yanping Ni, Carola Vasquez, Susy Kim, Sonja Froeblich, Faiza Zarroug, Simone Klass* (4th Grade); *Asmita Runge, Erica Brand, Erina DuBois, Suzanne Ogawa, Lucinda Brommersma, Laura Schneider, Kate Gibbons, Jessie Chen* (5th Grade). Room Parents will be facilitating communication and events during the year. Teachers and children really appreciate your assistance!

...to *Janet Owen, Hagit Katzenelson, and Carlee Lopez* for treating us with much appreciated, yummy **Back-to-School Night snacks**.

...to *Arunashree Bhamidipati, Paulette Kamenecka, and Davina Byrd*, who hosted a memorably tasty **Teacher Welcome Lunch**, assisted by *Maritza Ortiz, Christine Hodson and Andrea Christensen*. Teachers particularly appreciated not having to bring lunch the day after Back-to-School Night!

...to *Kate Karagueuzian-Gibbons, Carlee Lopez, Faiza Zarroug, Sharon Tobias, Karole Goldie, and Shirley Quismorio Siu*, who helped make sure **School Picture Day** ran smoothly and our kids looked their best.

...to *Kori Shaw*, for organizing the super fun **Stanford Football Game fundraiser** and tailgating.

...to *Soma McCandless* from **Project Cornerstone** for coming to our first Coffee with Principal and giving us a great overview of Project Cornerstone and the 41 Developmental Assets all kids need to thrive.

...to *Hagit Katzenelson, Rashmi Hunt, Janet Owen and Tanya Dodge* who organized, advertised, and hosted our first **Coffee with Principal**. Look for more opportunities to meet informally with Mr. Merritt and other guests throughout the year.

...to *Maria Derrick*, who helped coordinate the **Fall Class Picnics** over the past several weeks by printing all the flyers to post outside classrooms and distribute in the Friday Folders.

...to *Maria Derrick and Erik Jacobsen* for the incredibly detail-oriented job of **updating the PTA website**.



Submissions for next Carmeletter due Thursday, 11/1/12

Email editable document to carmeletter@paloaltopta.org.

For more info, see the El Carmelo PTA website (www.elcarmelo.paloaltopta.org/carmeletter.html).

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