Dysart Schools

REPORT ON PROGRESS,
Success during 2004-2005 year
DYSART SCHOOLS  MAKING PROGRESS

FROM THE Superintendent

With the completion of the school year comes the opportunity to reflect on our accomplishments and challenges as we prepare for next year. As always, the most important accomplishments occurred in schools and individual classrooms. Students, guided by caring educators and supportive parents, mastered important curricular content and academic skills, developed greater concern and respect for others, garnered awards and recognition for their accomplishments, and demonstrated their continuing enthusiasm for learning. Teachers, administrators and other school staff members focused on student learning and success. Many parents and community members were active partners with school staff and made a tremendous difference in learning experiences for students.

This has been an important year in the evolution of the Dysart Unified School District. As I complete my first year as superintendent, I am proud of the progress we have made towards becoming a respected, premier school system dedicated to student academic development. We are focused on academic achievement, meeting and exceeding state standards, delivering content that connects with students, and engaging our community. We made important steps across many areas this year, and we recognize the work that lies ahead.

We started this school year by adding more than 3,000 new students and 200 new educators to our schools, including school and district-level administrators. We successfully opened two new elementary schools and currently have ten active construction projects, including two additional elementary schools to open this coming year. A third high school, completion of the renovations to Dysart High School and a fourth high school are all on the horizon. At the same time, we are traveling to some of the top colleges in the nation to recruit the best teachers to our district. We are meeting the challenges of growth on two fronts: facilities and personnel.

In April, we announced an exciting, year-long process to gather input from the community and begin formal discussion about what the community wants from the Dysart Unified School District. We will need the help of every community member – including parents, our neighbors, students and community leaders – to give us their input on the current status of the district and how we reach our objective of becoming a premier system. This is an unprecedented effort to engage the community, school by school, in our improvement process. This process will include small-group discussions, public-opinion surveys, data analysis and a review of each school’s climate from the perspective of the staff. By taking a multi-faceted approach through this Input and Dialog Initiative, we hope to gain a better understanding of how the community views Dysart schools, and how we can work in partnership to make dramatic improvements for every student.

This year we have also faced the challenge of improving El Mirage Elementary School, the only campus in the state to be labeled as “failing” by the Arizona Department of Education and designated as “Failing to Make Adequate Yearly Progress” by the U.S. Department of Education. Significant reforms are being made to the campus to ensure measurable improvement. A turnaround principal has been hired to guide this improvement process, and additional district resources are being allocated to provide all of the support necessary. When the school’s labels were announced, it did not come as a surprise. According to the data, El Mirage Elementary has struggled for many years. The teachers, staff and parents are to be commended for responding positively to the challenge and working in partnership with state education officials to quickly improve the learning environment on campus. I am confident that El Mirage will soon be an academically successful campus.

This has been a successful year. The Dysart Unified School District is becoming premier through a sharper focus on student learning, rigorous integration of all Arizona Academic Standards, and implementation of full-day kindergarten for all students. Our accomplishments this year have formed a solid foundation for further advancement and have prepared every Dysart educator for the work ahead.

This special edition of Dysart Achiever is dedicated to reporting the progress and successes from each campus during the 2004-2005 academic year. Great things are happening everyday in Dysart classrooms – this is just a sample.
Thank you! These simple, humble, but powerful words connect a Governing Board with the community it serves. This gratitude forges itself out of the public’s patience, understanding and support for governance trying to navigate the turbulent currents created by community hyper-growth and changing higher academic expectations. Togetherness blows our sails forward.

In October 2004, the Dysart Governing Board members revisited the district’s Mission Statement and Board Goals and Objectives. Both were outdated and did not reflect the board members’ belief that learning depends on both highly skilled teachers and learning environments that promote consistent student effort. Adoption of a new vision took place to quicken the educational reform that needed to take place to take us to the next level in academic achievement.

First, district officials need to reevaluate the talent of district employees. After identifying the talent that can improve our academic achievement, salary structures must reward and retain this talent pool.

In coordination with placing in district schools the best educational talent in the state, everyone in the educational community needs to work to reinforce safe and orderly classroom learning environments. Policies and procedures need to support proactive discipline programs to enhance student learning.

All students must be held to high academic expectations. In conjunction with this expectation, adopt a rigorous standards-based curriculum and instruction that supports Arizona Academic Standards and align instruction and assessment from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

In November 2004, a partnership between the Dysart School District and the community it serves approved a Budget Override Election to supplement Arizona state educational funding. This partnership believed in the reasonable wisdom and confident promise that expanded services to students, higher teacher salaries, all-day structured kindergarten, and lower class sizes would improve the quality of education in our school district.

Years from now, the stories told about our school district will reflect our successes or failures in managing and leading change. Today, leadership must share a vision of change caused by population hyper-growth that is tempered by a sense of fairness, justice and consistency. Leadership must share a vision of high academic expectations and achievement, while eliminating the tired litany of excuses for goals unachieved.

Let us join together in meeting the challenges of population hyper-growth by “growing smart.” Let us join together in meeting the challenges of higher academic expectations by reminding ourselves that being great starts from inside and offer the chance for greatness to every student who strives for success. Let us chase our dreams and feel good about the attempt. Let us challenge weaknesses, but praise efforts. Let us continue to prepare today to touch tomorrow’s future.

The Governing Board members serve at the pleasure of the citizenry of the Dysart Unified School District. We pledge to continue growing and developing a public partnership that creates a vision for the future to meet the challenges of educating all our children to meet the new demands of a growing mature community. Public support will be continually tested by changes that redefine the partnership that exists between the educational community and its public. We must work together to ensure that our support of each other does not waiver or falter.

Change is difficult, but for the Dysart Unified School District, change is not an option, but demanded by hyper-growth and expanding definitions of higher academic expectations. Change is demanding on everyone, and good governance must respect this. Good citizenship must reflect a flexibility and willingness for change. Good governance must reflect changes that are precise, lucid and syllogistic.

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Every student represents the hopes, dreams, aspirations and future of a community. Our community is changing, and thus, the educational needs of our children are changing. The currency used to meet the changes of a rapidly growing urban community, whose foundation depends upon a well-educated populace, is trust. We understand that your trust and confidence in us is not given, but something we must earn.

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Ashton Ranch Elementary School

At Ashton Ranch, we celebrate the successes we have achieved in only our second year, and will not be satisfied until each and every learner in our Mustang community achieves at the highest level. The stakeholders of our community have a vision to empower all students to be contributing members of an exciting future. We will not rest until we are a premier school.

The Ranch kicked off the year demonstrating our commitment to improving our culture. The incorporation of Visions Management and the six pillars of Character Counts have proved invaluable in promoting open communication and respect at school. Ashton Ranch has further committed this year to becoming a “Bully Free Zone.” The Olweus Bully Prevention program was initiated and ongoing training will enable all students to feel they are in the safest environment to learn.

Ashton Ranch celebrates the diversity in our community. With our bully prevention efforts, additional measures, including community awareness events, were undertaken to further enhance the learning environment. While it is important for us to make these strides in building school culture, this is fruitless without a dedicated and focused commitment to improve student academic achievement.

Cimarron Springs Elementary School

Academic performance is an expectation at Cimarron Springs. Two students, Dylan Martin and Andrea Cornejo, were awarded first place and runner-up in the school Spelling Bee. Dylan went on to win the Dysart District Spelling Bee and represented Cimarron Springs in the State Spelling Bee in April. Earning a respectable thirteenth place statewide, Dylan is congratulated on his success.

Teachers spent a great deal of time analyzing data from AIMS and SAT-9 test scores and adjusted their curriculum plan in order to best meet the needs of Cimarron Springs students. Expectations are high in anticipation of recent testing results.

Community service was a theme that ran throughout the curriculum this year. Students in our community collected the most cans of food in the district food drive. This project was sponsored by the Leo Club. Other projects supported by the Leo Club included year-long recycling, greeting cards for Veterans and Alzheimer patients, and care packages for our troops in Iraq. The school also participated in the Heifer Project. This worthy cause collects money in order to purchase animals for communities in need throughout the world.

The National Junior Honor Society welcomed more than 40 new inductees into the organization. Activities supported by NJHS included an Angel Tree, Kinder Round-Up, Flag Duty, Walk-A-Thon, Special Olympics, and campus clean-up.

Athletics were a large part of the extracurricular activities. The boys’ teams earned the title of district champions in flag football and basketball, and took second place in soccer. The girls’ teams participated with awesome sportsmanship.

The PTO raised money to purchase primary playground equipment. Both PTO and Student Council provided funds for student academic incentives, eighth-grade promotion and enrichment materials. The Student Council fund raising efforts this year were focused on purchasing music for choir performances, books for the library, literacy sets for the classrooms and technology equipment.

The year wound down with performances by the choir, band and grade-level music classes. The art show displayed the work of all the talented students at Cimarron Springs. Teacher Ben Goodman’s efforts in technology earned him the Teacher of the Year Award. The Fox 10 News Team featured Cimarron Springs students working on the school video news production.
This has been an exciting year at Countryside Elementary School. Here are just a few of our accomplishments:

Our Girls Basketball Team won the district championship, posting an undefeated record. The Girls Soccer Team was also named as the 2004-2005 district champions.

Countryside’s Parent-Teacher Association, under the leadership of president Kelly Argus, has been very busy this year. At the school’s PTA-sponsored Book Fair, students and parents were treated to a visit from Clifford the Big Red Dog. Countryside’s feature community partnership was kicked off in collaboration with the local Macayo’s restaurant that helped us raise more than $5,000 for our school programs.

Music teacher Eddy Winkler has written, composed, arranged and conducted all of the music programs Countryside has ever had. Particularly noteworthy were the St. Patrick’s Day musical and most recently the William Tell musical.

Art teacher Mita Desai worked diligently all year with her students in first through eighth grades. Their hard work has paid off. Three students from Countryside were awarded recognition from Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano in the Earth Day Poster Competition.

Teacher and Leo Club sponsor Kathy Miller facilitated a sock and underwear drive for the children attending the Thomas J. Pappas Regional Elementary School. The Countryside Leo Club efforts resulted in more than 500 pairs of socks delivered during the winter months to children of homeless families.

Countryside’s student population participated in a soldier correspondence program with members of the 180th Field Artillery Battalion, currently stationed in Camp Doha, Kuwait. Students sent treats and letters to members of Arizona’s Army National Guard who answered many of their questions about civilian-military service.

Natalie Moore, the science fair organizer and Countryside’s Teacher of the Year, has sponsored a Science Club and Engineering Exploratory program. West Side Impact awarded more than 50 science project awards to their Science Fair and sixth-grade student Jillian Morris took First Place overall for all sixth-grade students in the West Valley.

Four Countryside educators were awarded the AzCOTT grant to support additional classroom technology. The teachers are Alanna Webb, Carrie Pitts, Michelle Green-Vandenberg and Katrina Maurer. The Arizona Classrooms of Tomorrow Today – AzCOTT – provides professional development and additional instructional technology.
Dysart Elementary School

Dysart Elementary has always been a place where learning and collaboration for both students and staff come together to create an invigorating atmosphere for learning. The 2004-2005 school year proved to be just as dynamic, with DES enjoying many individual and group successes as well as community-building activities.

This year saw many achievements for DES staff. Two of our second grade teachers, Grace Davis and Patricia Paganelli, achieved National Board Certification. Becoming National Board Certified is an intensive process that requires teachers to be critically analyzed through portfolio entries, video tapes of lessons and a formal assessment. Four DES teachers — Linda Heck, Bev Zwick, Kim Bollmeir and Julie Orozco — were recognized by the Core Knowledge Foundation by having their units accepted for publication. Furthermore, they were invited to conduct presentations on the material at a national conference.

One focus at DES has been the teaching of effective reading strategies. This year saw the development of “The Dream Team,” a group of staff members who have taken the challenge of facilitating quality reading instruction to the next level. School psychologist Karen Lee and reading specialists Lisa Hastings and Camie Walworth worked diligently to facilitate a plan to improve in the area of literacy. Their work, coupled with the efforts of the rest of our staff, has helped take reading instruction to new heights.

This year provided wonderful opportunities for the DES family to gather, collaborate and celebrate. Core Knowledge Night allowed parents to get to know teachers and develop an understanding of the curriculum. Our school was bursting with families on Literacy Night, as special guest readers read to families and students received free books. On Read Across America Day, families filled the building for a morning of treats and good books. The DES carnival, planned by PTO president John Marr and some very dedicated teachers, was a fantastic hit. Families participated in a wide variety of activities, and were treated to presentations on the cafeteria stage.

Each and every member of the Dysart Elementary family is committed to providing a quality educational experience. Although this year saw remarkable growth and achievement for DES, we are equally excited about what the future holds!

El Mirage Elementary School

Our school year started with much excitement: we went from a campus that was founded in 1958 to a new campus that is “State of the Art.” Our opening enrollment on the first day of school was 1,130 students, but it did not stop there. Our school was so highly regarded that six additional teachers were brought on board.

Our kindergarten classes were blessed by the acquisition of a formally retired teacher, who graciously joined the team and works cooperatively as a tutor. In doing so, her role is to bring the less mature kinder kids up to grade level so that they will be ready for the challenging curriculum of first grade.

The third grade team established a unit on the democratic process. Students wrote speeches, campaigned and voted. They even elected a president and vice president (for their grade level). In addition, the third grade students built their own water purifying system to test and see the affects of pollution.

There was an exciting relationship that developed between the fifth grade class and the self-contained special education class. Typical students volunteered to assist the special needs students during some classes. This program worked to assist typical students in developing feelings of compassion, as well as thinking outside of their own needs. Thus, the special needs students are getting one-on-one assistance (skill development). They are also developing friendships outside of their own class.

Our music department would like to mention the success of a winter concert, “A Winter Wonder Land.” This included performances by our El Mirage band members, Artists of America (singers and dancers), and participating students from many grade levels. The band also shared their talent with our students when caroling through the classrooms.

The seventh and eighth grade students participated in many extra curricular enrichment events that will undoubtedly expand their knowledge and understanding. Students from the seventh grade experienced “Life at the Renaissance.” And an after school club studied “Life in Space,” where they developed their own model of a space station and studied many elements related to space travel.

Following interviews with administrators, teachers and parents, Dr. Joel Davidson will become the principal at El Mirage Elementary next year. Dr. Davidson was one of three candidates provided to El Mirage by the Arizona Department of Education, which recruited and screened the pool of applicants for turnaround principal positions.

We are proud of the West Point family, our achievements and commitment to excellence. We had a successful, productive year because of our dedicated teachers, staff, students, parents and volunteers.
This has been a great year at Kingswood Elementary School. Our main focus has been on strengthening a culture where student achievement is highly valued by all. We have also been focused on many exciting renovations to the campus.

Over the summer, our “commons” area was converted into two classrooms. This year, we have been busy planning for major construction projects. During the year, our intercom system was replaced, the fire alarm system was replaced, and new door hardware was installed in every room. The major projects have started and will continue intensely during the summer, with final completion expected in December. We will have a new library added to the southeast corner of the building. The existing library will be made into a gymnasium. The existing office and health clinic will be remodeled so that visitors have to enter the office to get into the campus.

Kingswood has undertaken several new initiatives to support and celebrate high levels of student achievement. In our sixth, seventh and eighth grades, we started a “Knights of the Roundtable” where teachers and administrators meet with each grade level once per week to promote positive decision making, celebrate student success and provide an opportunity for students to have discussions about current issues. We have also partnered with the Sun City Rotary to create a Student of the Month program.

Students in grades three through eight created superb science experiments. Students began working on their projects in October, observing, recording and discovering new information. The project rubric, which called for both a written report and display board, is aligned with the state standards to ensure both a fun and educational experience. Over 400 students participated in the science fair and their work was proudly displayed throughout the campus.

Kingswood had several great evenings with students showing off their talents. The drama club gave two great performances and we had a wonderful Talent Show. We also had great teams with the district’s athletic program.

When students return in August, there will be many campus improvements in place and an eager team of educators ready to take them to new heights of success.
Luke Elementary School


Creating a Caring Community was a school wide theme for Luke students this year. Students focused on 17 Life Skills and were given “Caught Ya” tickets if they were caught using one of these skills. These tickets were placed in a monthly drawing to have lunch with the principals.

Pat Zajac a second grade teacher, is Luke’s Teacher of The Year. Mrs. Zajac was selected by her peers and has taught 38 years. This school year she had a high energy class with musical and artistic talent. She focused on those talents to build up language arts skills. Her class sung about synonyms, antonyms, nouns and verbs. Her students have also completed literature projects that brought out their artistic side. They constructed dioramas, mobiles, accordion books and poetry puzzles.

Fifty Cent Friday has become a popular event around Luke. Students pay 50 cents, which goes to support the Principal’s Honor Roll program, and can wear their own attire as long as it meets certain criteria. This year’s Principal Honor Roll recipients were: Samantha Felix, Gaetano Florio, Kylie Stradling, Samantha Topham, Scott Peterson, Sarah Danou, LaShay Hopper, Odesha Robles, Anna Romeaneighi, Ella Gonales, Adam Pierce, Matthew Schuller and Leila Armstrong.

One eighth grader will have fond memories of Luke. Vanessa Alvarado has been at Luke since kindergarten. She vividly remembers Baney Bucks (named after former principal Marsha Baney). She recalls when there were no uniforms and Luke was a pre-school to sixth grade only campus.

At Luke, we honor and appreciate our volunteers. Fifth-grade teacher Alicia Hayes enjoys the day when her mother Bridget Sorace can volunteer in her classroom. Mrs. Sorace enjoys working in the classroom and seeing her daughter work with kids. A highlight of this year for Mrs. Sorace is when she worked with a struggling reading group. Through comprehensive reading activities designed by Ms. Hayes, students became more excited in reading and asked to know more about the stories.

Marley Park Elementary School

Academic excellence every day, everyone, has been Marley Park’s mission since our excited students and committed staff began our first year in our new facility. Our students are committed to attaining the goals of excellence in academic achievement through accountability and academic performance. We continue to achieve and maintain excellence through commitment from members of our new and quickly growing community, parents and staff. Although this is our first year of operation, Marley Park Elementary School is off and running, with high energy in every classroom and campus activity.

Our first graders are working on their culminating activities to portray what they have learned about metamorphosis, including actually watching caterpillars change into butterflies. The first graders also teamed with the fifth graders and became science buddies to successfully complete a science experiment that pertained to both grade levels. Our third graders learned what it takes to be a member of a thriving working community, building realistic communities from lunch boxes, construction paper and cardboard. Together, the third grade team had their students mastering math concepts including multiplication and division.

The correlate of High Expectations sponsored activities for students which included a Red Ribbon week, Spirit Week and Character Counts Week. Three Marley Park band students were chosen to participate in the 2005 Arizona Elementary and Junior High Junior All-State Music Festival in March. Marley Park had 79 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students, three teachers and seven parents attend the Catalina Island Marine Institute trip to Catalina, California in November. Marley Park’s Builder’s Club spent a Saturday at Arizona State University touring the campus. Marley Park inducted 41 students into the National Junior Honor Society in March. Our Student Council has been working diligently throughout the year to raise money for their school and sponsored Marley Park’s first middle school dance.

Marley Park’s PTO has raised over $12,000 this year and certainly has answered the call with their contributions to Marley Park Elementary School. They have provided both sports and playground equipment for all grade levels. Our cheerleaders were provided fund raising ideas so that all the cheer uniforms were obtained at no cost to the students.
In reviewing the past year, it is clear that we are a neighborhood, family-friendly school focused on targeting assistance that supports and promotes the academic success of our students and on improving the facilities.

You will always be greeted by a smile at Surprise Elementary School. Our office staff is always willing to help our visitors. We also look for ways to help others, such as when we participated in the Jump Rope for Heart Fund raiser and collected donations for victims of the tsunami. Also, at our Parent University, our teachers took a Saturday to offer a wide variety of classes for parents to learn how to best support academic achievement at home.

A long awaited event is going to actually happen at the start of our next school year. We will be moving out of our current facility and into our new building. Our new facility will provide a gymnasium and upgraded fields for our physical education classes, as well as athletic programs. A new access road will be created to allow safer entering and exiting of the school’s property.

The 21st Century Community Learning Grant has provided us with the resources to assist our students in various ways. For example, the Voyager Extended Reading Program in grades three through six focuses on intensive reading instruction for those students participating in the program. Collaborative Literacy Intervention Program (CLIP) is focused, small group literacy instruction designed to bring students up to grade level. And finally, Destination Reading is a web-based program that also is geared to improved literacy skills for students based on their individual needs. In addition to the grant, Surprise Elementary School has a corps of devoted volunteers. In fact, a volunteer at Surprise Elementary School was recently recognized as having logged the most volunteer hours in the entire district. These are just a few of the ways students are provided additional assistance at our school.

Students and staff at Surprise Elementary School have experienced a great year. With continued collaboration between parents, staff and community members, our students will be provided with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead productive and successful lives.
Thompson Ranch  E L E M E N T A R Y  S C H O O L

At Thompson Ranch, we believe all of us are responsible for student achievement. It takes a combined effort to produce the results we all want for our students. This year, we worked to establish a foundational layout for our journey toward academic excellence. We strived to provide a culture of achievement and responsible behavior for everyone involved.

One of the most dynamic campuses within the Dysart district, Thompson Ranch students can be seen daily in cooperative learning groups interacting together. Teachers consistently use this structure to teach students how to get along peacefully and successfully. The team concept spreads onto the playground where children can play and interact in a civil and respectful way.

As a school striving for academic excellence, Thompson Ranch teachers manage the instructional clock throughout the day in a very diligent manner. Students spend most of their day inside the classroom, fully engaged in learning activities and academic progress. The message to students is quite clear: Work ethic is essential and diligence is praised.

Several of our students placed highly in a variety of essay contests throughout the year. We have established a Builder's Club through the efforts of teacher Veronica Vasquez. The Builder's Club works with the local Kiwanis Club with activities throughout the year that promote community and service.

Our staff has evolved into a cohesive unit. Thirty new teachers to the district occupied positions at Thompson Ranch. Their efforts have produced positive results for the children. Their hard work and flexibility has allowed us to experience a very fulfilling first year.

As we blaze a trail forward into next year, our Success For All program has provided good reading data to assess our students. Our target goal was to increase our school-wide percentage of students reading at grade level and we are going to make that goal, through the efforts of the teachers, students and parents. We anticipate positive results from our AIMS/Terra Nova tests. The teachers were very proud of the effort given by the students. As we begin all day kindergarten next year, our children will become more able to reach our goal of reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

Lastly, Thompson Ranch strives to communicate to the community through a very sound PTO membership. This year, we established a well-defined and organized group.

We want to finish the year strong and provide a source of momentum for the start of our second year. We will build on our success, modify our areas of improvement and always put the students first.

West Point  E L E M E N T A R Y  S C H O O L

As the West Point “school family” celebrates its fourth year of existence, we reflect on how proud we are of being a role model in high academic performance, student behavior, and parent and community partnerships.

“Together we learn and succeed,” the West Point mission, is the basis for all staff and community working together to meet each child’s needs. Children are the center of our decisions. The staff has developed a safe and orderly environment, which encourages academic success, open communication, school pride and positive feelings.

Student achievement has always been an area of focus for us, but this year that focus has moved to a new level with the implementation of flexible grouping in math and an emphasis on reading directions and comprehending text. Support was provided to students by offering tutoring during the school day and after school in math, reading and writing.

West Point has many opportunities and events throughout the year to celebrate student success. We are especially proud of our award winning “Nose for News” Journalism Club, sporting distinctive T-shirts during weekly televised broadcasts, reports, interviews, and advertisements for school events to promote academic and social growth. These journalism students interviewed U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano. Our Own Wildcat Singers performed at the State Capitol.

This year proved to be a year of helping others with contributions to: American troops in Iraq, tsunami relief, Westside Food Bank, Jump Rope for Heart and a change drive for leukemia. The Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, Builders’ Club and individual classes have given many hours of service. The school’s sports teams generated school spirit and were driven by the “Victory with Honor” character development program. “Kids at Hope,” Safety Patrol and the bully prevention program provided a safe environment. Students have been honored each month for their academic and behavior excellence at Student-of-the-Month luncheons and an end of the year family celebration.

West Point has many events throughout the year to celebrate student achievements such as; vocal and band concerts, Science Fair, Invention Convention, Talent Show and Family Math
The Dysart preschool has been serving the community in various forms since the district was established. The preschool is made up of several separate entities with a combined enrollment of more than 250 children.

Barbara Redburn has been the director since 2000. She manages a staff of 11 teachers and 18 instructional assistants scattered over several campuses. She has also been working to establish a central preschool campus so more students may be accommodated.

Along with teaching the children, the preschool staff also provides the adult community with classes to help them become better parents. These classes include Brain Development, Mother/Father Read, and Infant development, with Common Sense Parenting coming soon.

The preschool offers an excellent educational opportunity for children from ages three to kindergarten. Preschool jump-starts the child’s academic and cognitive abilities and encourages physical development so they are better prepared for kindergarten and beyond. The teachers are all certified and college educated giving them a big edge over any day care. Along with the teacher’s superior abilities and qualifications, the child has access to any therapy or special attention he or she may need.

There has been a lot of support from the community from both individuals and organizations. The Kiwanis Club of Sun City has been a big contributor to the program, providing books and taking time out of the day to read to children. Without the help and understanding of the community including parents, the Parents Action Committee (PAC), service organizations, and concerned individuals, this program would flounder.

There have been many accomplishments. One accomplishment was the creation of the preschool mural, developed and completed with the collaboration of parents and staff to foster recognition and pride of our preschool. Another achievement was adopting the Fish management philosophy to make the work place more enjoyable and foster a more pleasant learning environment for the children. The greatest endeavor has been flexing to the continually changing environment, being shuffled from one campus to another and adding rooms to accommodate the ever growing school age population. The proudest achievement, however, is knowing that we are all playing an important role in helping our young students “Begin the Dream.”
The 2004-2005 school year will be one to remember for the students, faculty and community of DHS. The transformation of the old Dysart to the newly constructed Dysart proved to be a task that all involved were able to overcome.

What lies ahead now for Dysart High School is a future that has never looked brighter. The construction process will just about be complete as we start school next year. Students, parents and staff will notice the dramatic improvements to the grounds and of course, the new media center is going to be the educational focus of the school.

Athletically, the campus opened its new state of the art gym in April with an enthusiastic pep rally that seemed to revive the “Demon Pride.” Students, staff and administrators sang, danced and cheered, restoring a sense of ownership to the new DHS campus. Throughout the year Demon athletes were able to face the challenges of their individual sports and represent DHS with honor and good sportsmanship. Specifically, the boys golf team represented Dysart well at the State Tournament. The boys basketball team made it to the state playoffs and inspired the entire campus to believe in a team that refused to give up.

Academically, DHS students continued to challenge themselves and reach for new goals. Students involved in Key Club, a community service organization, continue to impressively represent Dysart not only in Arizona, but across the nation. The Dysart Key Club is internationally recognized for its outstanding achievements.

From Math to English, Science to History, DHS students kept their focus on doing their best. The staff at Dysart helped to encourage student academic growth and give new, exciting opportunities to our students.

Overall, this school year has been one in which the entire Dysart campus was able to develop new goals and a new look. As we move forward to the next school year, we invite you to be a part of our campus and help us to make it the best possible experience for all of our young people. We look forward to seeing you at Dysart High School.

Willow Canyon High School

The second year of Willow Canyon has continued our success from the opening. Academically, socially and athletically, our students continued to shine and develop into the young leaders of tomorrow. The creation of our Community Learning Plan enabled us to improve students’ success by ensuring that all students receive the support required. The plan outlined the tutoring opportunities available and the levels of parental involvement to support our students’ goals. This plan has resulted in improved parent contact and student academic success. For instance, 25 percent of our student body is on the Renaissance honor roll this year.

We have also completed Willow Canyon’s application for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program and are anxious to implement this opportunity. We will continue our teacher training in the IB curriculum and infuse this through our ninth and tenth grades as well.

Our students continued their athletic success with our first year of varsity competitions. Of special note, our Cross Country squad won the regional competition and competed at the state level. Our Girls Basketball also successfully competed at the regional level. Our Special Olympic teams continued their dominance over area squads.

For the 2004-2005 school year Willow Canyon was fortunate enough to be active participants in the federally funded grant GEAR UP. The grant was able to provide opportunities for students to participate in a Diversity camp, in which 60 students were involved, a Family/Career Center was established, a revamping of the Frosh Focus curriculum, a summer enrichment camp at NAU, the involvement of students this summer in the NASA Program at Estrella Community College and several workshops done on Bullying and Parent Involvement.

The Counseling Department is gearing up for next year, but it is also a time to reflect on how our year was spent. Parent Communication was a goal this year in the department and it was met with newsletters from our department to the community, Parent Nights for each class, and ongoing meetings with concerned parents about their child’s progress. The department went to all elementary feeder schools and met with the current eighth graders and shared information about selecting appropriate classes in high school. We are looking forward to their upcoming visit to our campus, when students will take tours led by student leaders at WCHS. They will be addressed by administration and the student council president to hear about the expectations for next year. Currently we are preparing for the incoming students for next year and making sure that we are meeting the challenges of a growing school in a growing community.
Everyone at Sundown Mountain School has, at least subconsciously, seen the drastic changes going on at our school. Some of the students got together to create the Year-End Review; to show just how much we appreciated what has been done.

~ Kara Wallace, Student

Sundown is much more than just an “alternative” high school. It is a school that has many opportunities. Sundown gives the option to study at your own pace and accomplish short-term goals. Students that attend here have the choice to use the computers as a tool for education. With Sundown being a smaller school, the students are able to interact with the staff and build a relationship on an individual basis. The teachers understand student situations and help them prepare for the future.

~ Nicolette Baylis and Danielle Roberts, Students

The goals of Sundown Mountain School have improved this school greatly. Throughout this past year alone, the staff has worked to get things as big as a new campus, new computers, and new leadership, to the smaller details such as vending machines, a hot lunch and even unveiling our logo. This year the Yearbook Committee grew and Student Council was added. Also, we had the First Open House and the first on-line yearbook in the district. We’re not the only ones who noticed the radical change in this school. There’s also a waiting list, which is constantly full, of eager and ready students.

~ Matthew Moore and Chris Barela, Students

Most of the students attending here have complicated circumstances, and if they were going to a “normal” high school, wouldn’t be able to make the required hours. However, teachers work with students to make sure that all will graduate. There is a one-on-one connection with our teachers. Since the school is so small, the administrators and teachers know how we learn, as well as our individual situations. The students at Sundown are just normal kids who needed a school to work around their schedule or to get a second chance. We all agree that Sundown is the perfect school for our situations.

~ Sabrina Arment and Georgia Pratt, Students
News Headlines FROM THIS YEAR

Year Starts with New Educators, Students

For the 2004-2005 school year, nearly 200 new teachers and administrators joined the ranks of the Dysart Unified School District to meet the growing needs of the community. Included in this crop of new staff are several campus administrators, a public information officer, two assistant superintendents, and Superintendent Dr. Mark Maksimowicz. At the same time, the district opened two new schools – Thompson Ranch and Marley Park – and welcomed nearly 4,000 additional students as the state’s fastest-growing school district.

Volunteers Donate 1,000 Backpacks

Volunteers from Sun City Grand donated nearly 1,000 backpacks for elementary school students in the Dysart Unified School District. The backpacks were tailored for specific age groups and filled with supplies. Sun City Grand volunteers collect funds and materials for the backpack drive throughout the year. The program was launched in 1998 by developer Del Webb Corp. as a way to support the Dysart Unified School District. Last year, residents created the non-profit School Backpack Program. Five residents lead the effort: Phyllis Prosser, Virginia Schermerhorn, Paula Forster, Sharon Gullickson and Loydine Myhre.

Dysart Receives $1.1 Million Federal Grant

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools awarded the Dysart Unified School District a three-year grant for $1,144,517 to support counseling services for elementary school families. This award will support the “Educating Through Counseling” project. This project will allow Dysart to provide children and families with services designed to support student achievement. A team of counselors, led by an advisory team, will implement and supervise programs to reduce cultural barriers between students, support local mentoring efforts, provide home-based family crisis services, and provide training for elementary school teachers.

Dysart Students Make Academic Progress

In a report released by the Arizona Department of Education, 71 percent of Dysart students made one year of academic progress in reading and 70 percent showed growth in mathematics. The state’s annual Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) reports educational growth of students in grades three through eight who attended the same school for at least one year, based on the Stanford 9 test. Across Arizona, 70 percent of students showed academic growth in both math and reading portions of the Stanford 9 examination.

Dysart Receives Financial Accountability Award

Once again, the Dysart Unified School District has received acclaim for fiscal accountability from the Association of School Business Officials. For the ninth year, Dysart has won the Association of School Business Officials International Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting. The award is presented for excellence in the preparation and issuance of the year-end 2003 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report based on a review by national finance experts.

Volunteers Stage ‘Grief Camp’ for Kids, Families

Led by a pair of school social workers, volunteers in the Dysart Unified School District, along with local nonprofit Stepping Stones of Hope, presented a one-day grief camp for children in the community. This one-day camp was facilitated by trained professionals and volunteers from Stepping Stones of Hope and the Dysart Unified School District, who assisted participants navigate through the day’s activities. The goal of the camp was to provide children and families who have lost a friend or loved one with an opportunity to meet each other and share their experiences.

With ASU West Partnership, Classrooms Take Tech Leap

A team of teachers from Countryside Elementary School have been selected to participate in an ASU West program to advance the use of technology across curricular areas. The Arizona Classrooms of Tomorrow Today – AzCOTT – provides extensive professional development for the group of educators and additional instructional technology to support student advancement, specifically in the areas of reading and math. The team from Countryside Elementary – including Katrina Maurer, Michelle Green-Vandenberg, Alanna Webb and Carrie Pitts, with the support of principal Janet Korinek – were accepted into the AzCOTT program after an extensive application process.

Dysart Teachers Earn National Certification

Two more Dysart Unified School District educators earned National Board Certification, an achievement marking them as among the nation’s best teachers. Dysart Elementary School teachers Patricia Cook-Paganelli and Grace Davis join five others in the district as meeting the high standards established for National Certification.
Dysart Students Honored with ‘I Can Do It’ Award

The Arizona Council for Exceptional Children recognized two students from the Dysart Unified School District with the annual “I Can Do It” Award. Albert Hernandez from El Mirage Elementary School and Michael J. Smith from Willow Canyon High School were honored. Bob Gacey, a special education teacher at El Mirage Elementary School, nominated Albert after having him in class for several years and observing his academic and social development. Mike, a junior at Willow Canyon High School, was nominated by special education teacher Carol Grant.

Dysart High Places at Math, Engineering, Science Event

Balsawood gliders, payload bottle rockets and windmill design projects are helping a team of Dysart High School students become future mathematicians, scientists and engineers. The team placed sixth in the statewide Math, Engineering and Science Achievement Competition at the University of Arizona. Dysart High School has participated in the MESA program for 16 years and, according to faculty sponsor Susan Poland, data shows the program’s success. “Of Dysart’s MESA graduates, 90 percent who were in the program for all four years of high school successfully graduate from college within five year. That’s a remarkable success.”

Governor Recognizes Dysart’s Energy Efficiency

The Dysart Unified School District was recognized with an award of excellence and two awards of merit by the Governor’s Awards for Energy Efficiency presented by the Arizona Department of Commerce’s Energy Office. The annual awards program recognizes energy conservation and renewable energy efforts. Projects are judged on energy savings, financial savings, impact of the efforts, innovation and obstacles that were overcome. Only five school districts from across Arizona were nominated for awards. The Dysart Unified School District was the only Valley district honored.

Dysart Launches Aggressive Input, Dialogue Process

This spring, the Dysart Unified School District launched an aggressive, year-long process to gather input from parents, students, staff and community members on the current state of Dysart schools. By using outside facilitators and researchers, the Community Input and Dialogue Initiative will help administrators identify successes and challenges as the district transforms into a premier school system. Examining the district as a whole and each individual campus, the process will form the foundation for long-range planning efforts.

Governor Honors Dysart for Meeting ‘Nickel Challenge’

Governor Janet Napolitano recognized the Dysart Unified School District for meeting her “Nickel Challenge” by increasing classroom funding by 5 cents per dollar, which equates to 5 percent of the district’s total budget. Yet, an analysis conducted by the Dysart Unified School District focused on funding directed into classrooms, state and federal grants skew the calculations by increasing the funds provided for non-instructional areas, such as after-school programs and counselors. Dysart conducted a comprehensive internal analysis after a report by the Arizona Office of the Auditor General indicated that 55.3 percent of Dysart’s budget was classified as “classroom dollars.”

Dysart Teachers Recognized as Among State’s Best

Rosalie Garcia, a teacher at Dysart’s Kingswood Elementary School in Surprise, was honored as a Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year. She is one of only 70 educators from across Arizona to be recognized as part of the annual celebration during Teacher Appreciation Week. A teacher from each Dysart Unified School District campus was recognized as a Teacher of the Year by Westside Impact. They are: Doug Jones, Ashton Ranch Elementary; Ben Goodman, Cimarron Springs Elementary; Natalie Moore, Countryside Elementary; Trina Weniger, Early Education Center; Linda De La Rosa, Dysart Elementary; Bob Gacey, El Mirage Elementary; Julie Galindo, Kingswood Elementary; Pat Zajac, Luke Elementary; Jennifer Dawn, Marley Park Elementary; Jim Grieshaber, Surprise Elementary; Bonnie Chamberlain, Thompson Ranch Elementary; Janet Disotell, West Point Elementary; Janice Koenig, Dysart High; Mollie Fussell, Willow Canyon High; and Chris Scootie, Sundown Mountain.

Final Tally Shows Strong Election Support

A final tally released by the Maricopa County Elections Department shows that voters in the Dysart Unified School District overwhelmingly approved the proposal to institute full-day kindergarten instruction while also strongly supporting an extension of the Maintenance and Operations Budget Override. Nearly 61 percent of voters supported the plan to provide all-day kindergarten beginning in the 2005-2006 school year for all Dysart students. The M&O Override was approved by a margin of more than five percentage points. More than 31,500 voters participated in the district’s finance election out of about 40,000 registered voters.
The mission of the Dysart Unified School District is to ensure that our students achieve academic success and make responsible life choices through a bold, distinctive educational system that cultivates their innate gifts, provides multiple opportunities and inspiration for unlimited learning in a safe environment and sustains effective community and family relationships.