

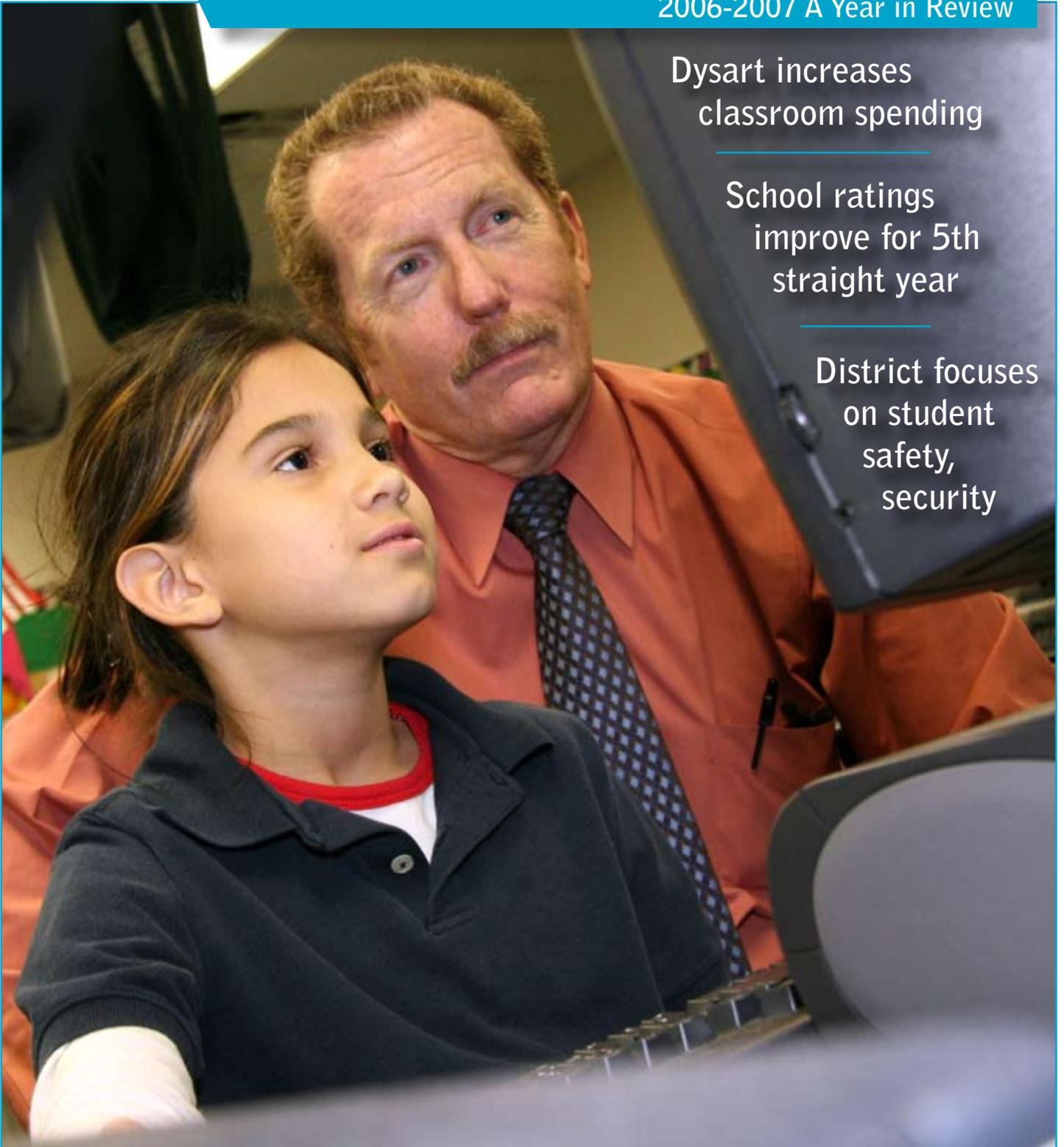
Dysart Achiever

2006-2007 A Year in Review

Dysart increases
classroom spending

School ratings
improve for 5th
straight year

District focuses
on student
safety,
security



Putting Students First to Achieve Success



Dr. Mark Maksimowicz
Superintendent

In this issue of the Dysart Achiever, we celebrate some of the individuals who are helping us achieve our goal of becoming “Premier in 5.” I would also like to share some additional successes we’ve had this year, and mention some of the people who have helped to make them possible.

First, I thank our voters for approving what is perhaps the most important bond issue in the recent history of the Dysart Unified School District. Since voters passed the bond by a 65 percent margin in November 2006, the district has been moving quickly to implement as many projects as resources permit from the sale of bonds.

Many of the items not funded by the state, such as playground equipment, carpeting and parking areas, have been added back into the plans for the three elementary schools currently under construction. For the existing elementary schools, we are focusing on playground equipment and shade structures.

At our high schools, we’ve already begun construction on a new football field and all-weather track at Dysart High, and Valley Vista High will get new bleachers for the start of the school’s first varsity season next fall.

Many other projects are in design phase and will begin construction as soon. This includes the rebuilding of Luke Elementary and the addition two more buildings at Valley Vista High. None of these projects would be possible without the support of our community and the passage of the November bond.

Another success I’d like to share is the academic ratings our schools achieved earlier this year from the Arizona Department of Education. In all, 13 Dysart schools earned the Performing Plus rating, up from six schools last year. These results are even more impressive when you take into account that we are the fastest-growing district in Arizona. Opening six new schools is challenging enough, but to demonstrate achievement



in the classroom at the same time exhibits the quality and commitment of the educators in this district. We aren’t yet satisfied as to where the district is academically, but this shows that we’re moving in the right direction.

One of the priorities of the governing board was to adopt an academic vision statement, a public recommitment to raising academic expectations and standards across the district. (It can be found online at www.dysart.org/board.) The district administration looks forward to working with the governing board and all school employees in a unified fashion to create schools that provide students with the necessary skills to compete in our ever-growing global economy.

As this school year comes to a close and I reach the end of my tenure here, I’d like to sincerely thank everyone who supports our students’ education – the parents who read to their children every night to support literacy skills, the maintenance staff member who replaces a burnt out light bulb to ensure students are working in a well-lit classroom, the retiree who gives a few hours each week volunteering in a school. As Dr. Gail Pletnick, formerly the assistant superintendent for elementary education here, becomes superintendent of the Dysart Unified School District, I am confident that the district will continue to grow and improve in dynamic ways. If we didn’t work together as a community focused on student success, Dysart students wouldn’t be able to make the strides we’ve witnessed this year.

I thank all of you who support the Dysart school system and ask that you stay connected with Dysart Schools as our quest to become Premier in 5 continues. And lastly, I thank you, the community, for the opportunity I have had in leading the Dysart Unified School District as superintendent for the past three years.

INSIDE

From the Superintendent.....	2
From the Governing Board President.....	3
Update on District Growth.....	4
Ashton Ranch Elementary School.....	6
Cimarron Springs Elementary School.....	7
Countryside Elementary School.....	8
Dysart Elementary School.....	9
El Mirage Elementary School.....	10
Kingswood Elementary School.....	11
Luke Elementary School.....	12
Marley Park Elementary School.....	13
Parkview Elementary School.....	14
Rancho Gabriela Elementary School.....	15
Sonoran Heights Elementary School.....	16
Sunset Hills Elementary School.....	17
Surprise Elementary School.....	18
Thompson Ranch Elementary School.....	19
West Point Elementary School.....	20
Western Peaks Elementary School.....	21
Dysart High School.....	22
Valley Vista High School.....	23
Willow Canyon High School.....	24
Sundown Mountain Alternative Program.....	25
News in Review.....	26
Volunteering in Dysart.....	28

From the Governing Board President

The word “now” is in the moment, the act in between the historical successes and failures of the past and the dreams of new possibilities of the future. Governing Board service in the “now” is about understanding the relationship of a school district’s political past with its contingent future.

This understanding begins with a simple, but powerful, thank you. Not in dispute is the taxpayer’s willingness to pass many bond and budget override elections to help supplement the lack of state funding for the building, maintenance, and operations of our schools. Not in dispute is the volunteer of service and partnerships between citizens of our school district and educators to meet better the increasing needs of students seeking a great quality of life in the 21st century. Not in dispute is the patience of parents in our school community yearning for higher academic standards and expectations.

In the “now,” district leadership is trying to change the historical and cultural dogmas of a once small agricultural community to match the educational needs of a growing urban community seeking respect as a political and economic force in the West Valley.

Now is the time to recommit to creating an academic culture that respects the right of all students to learn and be successful, no exceptions and no excuses. This means believing in learning environments where every child can learn and be successful, and in learning environments where each child chases their dreams and feels good about the attempt.

“Increase in Excellence,” the motto of the Dysart Unified School District, expresses our intention to establish learning environments that move toward fulfilling every student’s potential with the belief that excellence results when everyone actively participates in sustaining the educational process, the community, and family relationships.

All of this demands high academic achievement and expectations, employee accountability and a collaboration process that includes the best talent and brightest among all stakeholders that make up our educational community.

The hiring of our new superintendent is critical to these endeavors. Dr. Gail Pletnick, after spending three years as our assistant superintendent for instruction (K-8), brings the experience and talent of working to manage our student hyper-growth population explosion while leading the charge to reenergize our commitment to high academic standards and expectations. Managing hyper-growth and increasing academic expectations and standards are not mutually exclusive. Dr. Pletnick understands this.

Of equal importance, Dr. Pletnick understands what it means to successfully navigate a highly charged political climate that gives voice to a small minority of naysayers of change, and to move forward doing what is in the best interest of the youngest



members of our community. An agent for change is courageous, committed and relies on a strong sense of moral character. Dr. Pletnick owns these traits.

Everything we do in the Dysart Unified School District must be focused on the growth and education of our children. We must create a culture of high academic achievement and expectations for students, staff and community members. Education must challenge students to think in complex ways by setting higher standards and providing improved learning for all students. Rigor requires students to make a substantial investment in their learning.

We must create strong accountability systems and professional development for all Dysart School employees that support a commitment to strengthening learning environments and facilitating the learning process. Relevance will create the conditions and motivation needed to have rigor in our learning processes. We must provide opportunities in our schools for students to apply the knowledge obtained to real-world situations.

Let us move forward in our leadership together with a willingness to work together for what is in the best interest of children and not give into an explosion of Machiavellian posturing that hinders consensus building. Let us learn to practice civility in our public discourse. Disagreements will happen, but by whipping ourselves into a fever of theatrical outrage, compromise becomes outrage.

In the Dysart School District, it is time to discuss the “big ideas” of educating our children with meaning, purpose and promise. Our educational leadership is committed to a sensible, spirited, and approachable relationship with all the various communities we service that reveals our deepest sense of character and aspirations.

The future is now and dreams must be delivered. We thank the community for sharing with us its most prized possession, its children. Governing Board and school district leadership understand that it is the fruit of our labor, dedicated to the youngest members of our society that creates the future they will inherit.



Charles Otterman
President



Bridget Pauletich-Otterman
Secretary



Bill Lipscomb
Member



Christine A. K. Pritchard
Member

Growth Is Not Just About Enrollment Figures

Voters help Dysart help students

Since 2002, Dysart has enjoyed the support of its voters, first with the passage of a \$74 million bond to create equity in every school. With all of the projects completed (with the exception of rebuilding of Luke Elementary which will begin this summer), this bond has truly changed the face of Dysart.

The projects completed over the past five years include the rebuilding of Surprise and El Mirage Elementary schools, the renovation of Dysart High School, the rebuilding and relocation of the District Office, a fifth academic building at Willow Canyon High School – which contains a state of the art lecture hall, the construction of the district's first preschool building, the renovation of Kingswood and Dysart Elementary schools – which included adding a gymnasium at both campuses, the purchase of 35 new buses, and the addition of funds to both West Point and Thompson Ranch Elementary schools in an effort to supplement state funding and meet district standards.

This was followed by another successful election in 2006 for \$190 million.

Since the bond's passage in November, the district has worked to plan, design and implement as many projects as possible. This summer the district will begin construction of a new Luke Elementary School. Additionally, work will begin on shade structures and playground equipment for all schools. Once completed, this project will ensure every existing school and every new school will have shaded playground equipment for both kindergarten and intermediate levels. Finally, two metal shade ramadas will be placed at each campus to provide

more opportunities for children to take a break from the sun.

These funds also help the district continue to meet its goal of providing equity in facilities regardless of where a child attends school in Dysart. As a result, projects not completed in the past due to lack of funds are now being addressed. Examples of this work can be seen at Rancho Gabriela, Countryside and Sunset Hills Elementary. One of the primary goals of this bond was to maintain the district's standard in school construction in the face of ever-decreasing state funded dollars. For many of the new schools under construction, additional funding of \$1.5 million for elementary and \$12 million for high schools has been necessary. Finally, the district is excited to begin construction of a fine arts facility and new academic wing at Valley Vista High School.

This project will complete the campus and prepare it for its first senior class in 2008-09. While Valley Vista is being finished, the district will begin work on High School No. 4, which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009.

Together, these funds have helped the district meet the critical capital needs of our students. Because the district understands the enormous trust our community has placed in us, accountability for the expenditure of these funds while not increasing the tax rate remains a top priority. For anyone wishing more information on these or other Dysart projects, please contact Dysart's Business Services Department at 623.876.7018.

School bus wheels turn as Dysart takes over student busing

The wheels on the bus will still go round and round, but it will now be a Dysart employee at the wheel as parents and students see a change in the operation of the Dysart school bus system.

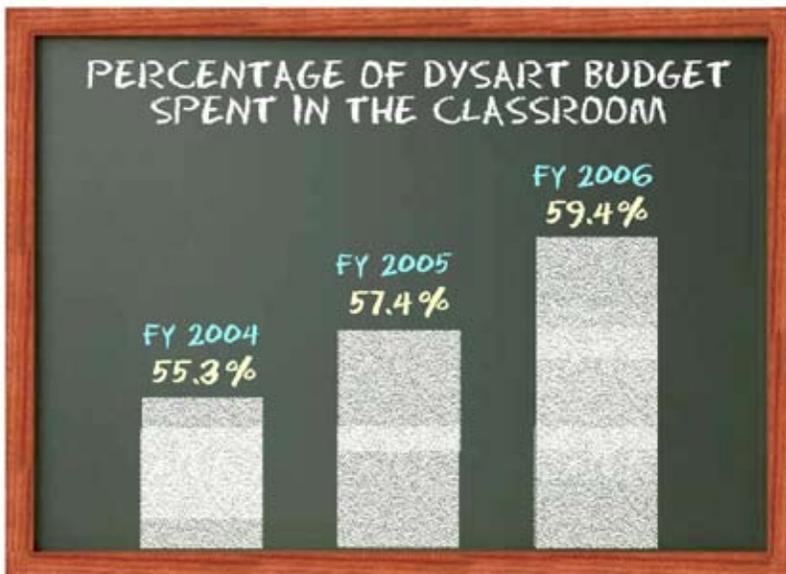
The Dysart Unified School District began running its own buses in June with the first day of summer school, and will begin full-scale operations when school starts in the fall.

This means district-employed bus drivers and district-owned buses will be providing student transportation, rather than an outside provider.

Durham School Services had operated the school's transportation system for the past three years, but schedule issues and incorrect pick-up and drop-off points drove the change.

"We're really hoping that as a district, we'll be able to better respond to parent concerns and issues than has been done in the past," said Scott Thompson, Dysart's executive director of business services. "We are committed to communicating with our parents; Durham simply was not getting this done. Effectively communicating with everyone involved in this process is our number one goal."

He said one of the biggest challenges would be to work through the initial speed bumps associated with



According to the state auditor general, Dysart has increased the amount of money spent in the classroom from 55.30 percent to 59.40 percent in three years. Dysart is above the state avg in the amount of money spent in the classroom and ranks in the top 25 percent of all school districts in Arizona.

taking on the new responsibility.

"We will never have a perfect bus system, but at least we'll have direct control and will have the ability to respond to issues in a timely and effective manner," Thompson said. "I'm sure many people will think last year's problems will be fixed immediately, but it'll take some time for us to get everything running smoothly. The first week of school will be the most challenging, but by the end of the day August 13, we will know if the months of planning have paid off. Hopefully the community will understand, work with us and know that we're doing everything we can."

Thompson said the district hopes to attract more drivers and build a stable work force by offering higher pay and a health and retirement benefits package for full-time workers.

"We want our drivers to enjoy what they do, know the kids that they drive and know the routes that they're driving," he said.

Operating its own student transportation will cost the district as much as \$500,000 more than what it paid for the contracted service.

Improving student safety – an important and ongoing task

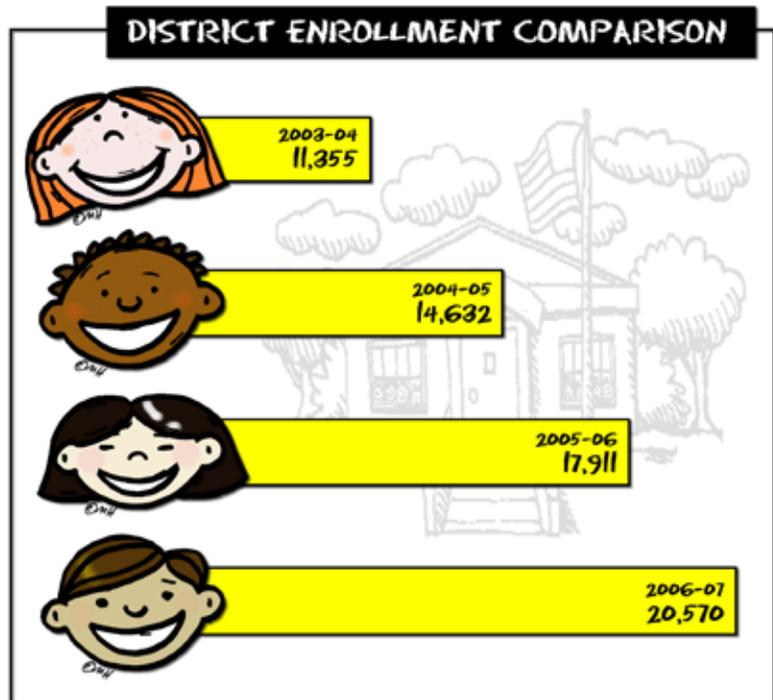
Through the emergency response and crisis management grant, as well as through the efforts of Dysart's prevention department and safety committee, there is much to celebrate with regard to school safety.

The district purchased emergency response buckets for every classroom in the district. These kits are designed to be used in the event of an emergency and include items like hand sanitizer, flashlights, batteries, plastic gloves and first aid supplies. Each school site was also equipped with several sets of two-way radios which were assigned to crossing guards, playground monitors, physical education teachers, athletic coaches and other staff who need remote communication capability.

Nearly 150 staff members were trained in first aid and CPR and all district administrators completed the National Incident Management System training. In addition, the district provided crisis response training to every counselor, many administrators and members of area agencies such as the Surprise Fire Department's crisis response team.

Through the district's community education department, Officer Randy Stewart of the El Mirage Police Department presented a series of five evening safety classes for parents which covered graffiti and gang behavior, discipline, Internet safety, bullying, and substance abuse. The presentations were recorded in podcast format and are available for listening at www.dysart.org/communityed by clicking on "Community Ed blog."

Safety walk-through inspections were completed for all of the district's 19 schools and the El Mirage Police Department coordinated mock lockdown drills



Dysart Unified School District has grown exponentially over the past few years. The above graph shows the district's end-of-year enrollment figures for the past four years.

at Luke, Dysart and El Mirage elementary schools.

As the next school year approaches, preparations are being made to update all school emergency plans, continue training staff on safety measures, holding safety committee meetings and strengthening partnerships with emergency management agencies in both the City of Surprise and the City of El Mirage.

Recruiting the best for 2007-08

One of the most important resources Dysart Unified School District has is its employees.

It is the goal of Dysart's human resources department to do everything possible to recruit and retain the most qualified individuals, ensuring the learning environment for Dysart students is the best possible.

Here are some accomplishments the department made this school year:

- Held a career fair early in the year to get a head start on hiring. A total of 175 teacher contracts to date have been issued for the 2007-08 school year.
- Assisted in the development of an in-house transportation department, hiring most of the staff needed for next school year through a successful job fair in April.
- Established new guidelines and procedures to ensure all Dysart teachers meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and the Arizona Department of Education.
- Provided customer service training to front office staff and an academy for substitute teachers.
- Implemented Benefits Connect, an online, 24/7 benefits enrollment system.

Ashton Ranch Elementary School



Ron Muench
Special Education
Instructional
Assistant

“Mr. Ronny always has a smile on his face and pep to his step as he endeavors to help students achieve their full potential.”

The Ashton Ranch community can be proud of the school’s many accomplishments in the past school year. A few of the school’s successes are highlighted below.

- Productive professional training for all teachers focused on school goals for improving student achievement in the core areas of reading, writing, and math. Led by a new instructional coach, Amanda Blake, as well as many teacher leaders, the professional development plan targeted the campus improvement plan.
- Character Counts, a character education program for all students, recognized more than 150 students on a quarterly basis for being positive examples of the six pillars that guide students on the path to being productive and caring citizens. During the third quarter awards, a production company entertained parents and students.
- Ashton Ranch’s hard-working parent teacher student association held several fundraisers during the year with the goal of raising enough money to purchase a playground shade structure. Goal met! The school staff appreciates the PTSA’s dedication to improving the school’s campus facilities.
- Many students were recognized each quarter for their academic achievements and perfect attendance. Awards went to outstanding students for honor roll (earning all As and Bs), principal’s list (earning all As) and perfect attendance. The faculty recognized honor students during a



final awards assembly during the last week of school.

• Benchmark scores in math, reading and writing indicated a positive trend in reading and math during the year.

- According to attendance data collected during the week of AIMS testing, a daily average of 97 percent of Ashton students was present during the four testing days. Students earned tickets toward the PTSA-sponsored dunk-tank event where Stephen Shouse and other brave teachers had a very wet day!
- Many students participated on the seventh and eighth grade boys and girls athletic teams. Both boys’ baseball and girls’ softball teams qualified for the district championship tournaments.
- Evening parent programs offered many opportunities to showcase effective programs involving students and their successes. Examples include a kindergarten family math night, family game night, museum night, PTSA sponsored movie night and others sponsored by grade level.
- Annemarie Lampright again organized Summa University, an online program designed to parallel the academic life that college students experience. More than 60 sixth graders enrolled in the extracurricular program, which culminated with a ceremony similar to a college graduation.
- About 15 students represented the Tech Club, organized by the school’s technology mentor, Alyssa Larson. These students used their technology savvy to help students and teachers.
- Special area teachers had students display their creative talents via music concerts and the district art show.

As can be seen, Ashton Ranch continued on its mission of “advancing responsible empowered students” during the 2006-07 school year.



Cimarron Springs Elementary School



Students at Cimarron Springs experienced learning in many traditional and non-traditional ways this year. Young children enjoyed watching seeds grow while sixth grade students experimented with mummification firsthand by mummifying their very own chicken, named King Kluck, in a step-by-step process for more than 120 days. Students, teachers and parents alike participated in investigative activities like learning about the night sky inside a star lab, sharing knowledge at math nights and line dancing at a barnyard bonanza. Participants even got to enjoy eating cowboy grub.

Children benefited from grants awarded to teachers Lidia Goodman and Julie Spindler. Students collected shadow data for a Groundhog Day project, integrating measurement, data recording and technology. The results can be found on the Web at www.globalschoolnet.org/pr where students from anywhere in the world can participate.

Technology is an important learning tool at Cimarron Springs. Student projects have included digital storytelling, PowerPoint presentations, wikis, movie making and podcasts. Additionally, eight eighth grade students built a five cubic inch satellite which was launched by a weather balloon and ascended to an astonishing 92,054 feet. The onboard camera, altimeter, temperature gauge, global positioning system and heater were all student designed and created. Pictures from the satellite can be found on Ches Gessner's teacher page on our school's Web site at www.dysart.org/cimarronsprings.

Seventh grade hosted Unity Day. Goals included learning to appreciate and celebrate people's differences, learning to take personal responsibility for one's actions and maintaining a safe community environment. The event was video recorded by the Fuji Film Corporation to be broadcast in Japan as part of an investigative news story on how the United States is promoting peaceful solutions to conflict.

The Stallions had many successes outside the classroom as well. The staff sent boys and girls to the AZTECH 5000 relay race in Surprise and they placed second and first respectively. Kahla Tompkins, Kristin Abad, Mackenzie Shamblin, Chelsey Fleming, Angelo Gonzalez, Krista Cusumano, Allison Jimenez, Zachary Garcia, Kaitlyn Goldman, and Ki'Ana Earley were accepted into the All-State Chorus. Sharena Snyder was accepted on flute into the All-State Band. Students Kirstin Shanklin, Reema Julani, Erin Corvin, Tonya Schlieff and Brianna Wagner shined in the Lions Club Peace Poster Contest. Under the guidance of Cimarron Springs' 2007 Teacher of the Year Beth Rolfe, our school has had a district winner in the competition for the past three years.

Cimarron Springs teachers Laura Bootman and Alanna Webb presented "It's Not in the Textbook – Now What? Manipulative Based Discrete Mathematics in Middle School Classroom" at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2007 Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Ga. Additionally, Ben Goodman received a Teachers First Class Blog Award and was featured in the Arizona Republic for his implementation of technology in the classroom.

Cimarron Springs students demonstrated great citizenship by generously donating to the student-run food drive, the Hike for Cancer Research and the Heifer Project. Cimarron students have raised thousands of dollars to provide four continents with livestock and other supplies.

The students, staff and community of Cimarron Springs are proud of these great achievements and look forward to the continuing pursuit of academic achievement, extra-curricular excellence and conscientious citizenship.



Beth Rolfe
Art Teacher

"Most of our teachers work hard and do extra things. Many come immediately to mind, but I believe Beth sets a standard of excellence that is unequalled this year."



Countryside Elementary School



Katie Sprouls
Psychologist

“Katie is a fine example of the commitment to the “whole child” that the Dysart Unified School District supports.”

This has been a year of reflection and growth at Countryside Elementary School. The school staff celebrated the students' and teachers' outstanding work, and focused on high academic expectations to enhance a positive culture.

Academically, Countryside is performing at or above state averages in all subject areas. The school achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and received a Performing Plus rating from the state. Each grade level developed measurable academic goals based on 2006 AIMS scores, thus creating a clear academic path for the year.

The Countryside staff implemented the nationally recognized Response to Intervention program. Students participated in a homework club which provided opportunities for collaborative work and additional teacher support. In April teachers and students celebrated accomplishments by showcasing student work at a literacy night that involved activities like singing, essay reading and Countryside's own version of "Are You Smarter than a...?"

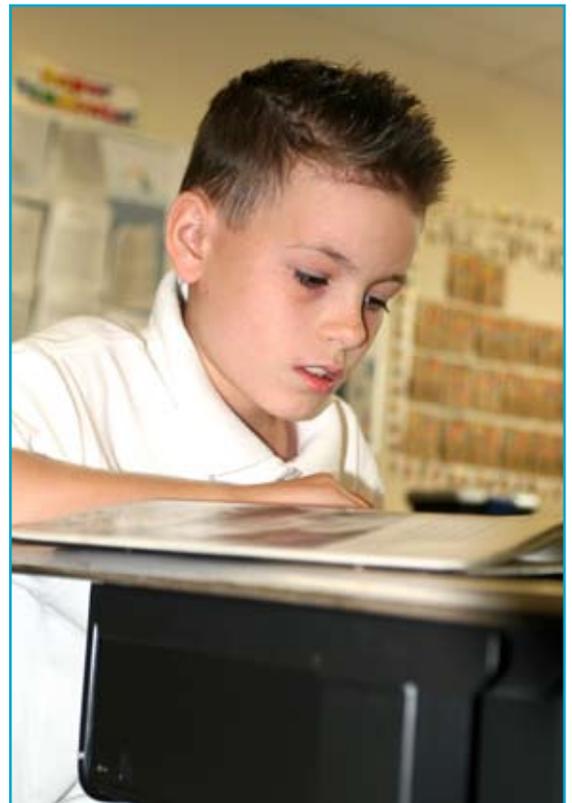
Students have been recognized for many achievements this year. Patriot Pen Essay winners included Emilio Rojas, Haley Shough, Sidne Wills and Desiree Thomas. Ginger Jordan and Nick Kerman won first and third place respectively in the Maricopa County Library Association's bookmark contest. An anti-drug poster contest included approximately 15 winners from Countryside. Adrianna Rodriguez placed fourth in the district spelling bee and Priscilla Pimentel placed second in the Arizona State Games Art Contest. A group of students were also selected to attend the National Student Leadership Conference.

The staff investigated the Four Agreements by Miguel Ruiz, as a framework for working together. Students participated in the cafeteria club, developing leadership skills in community responsibility and service. Leo Club members assisted on the kindergarten playground every day, acting as mentors and providing additional supervision to help young students play safely.

Some activities focused on character development and safety. These included a martial arts

demonstration, Mrs. B's story time, an Air Force presentation and a visit from the Great Safety Adventure.

The school community expressed support through the rebirth of a strong parent teacher organization. In addition to

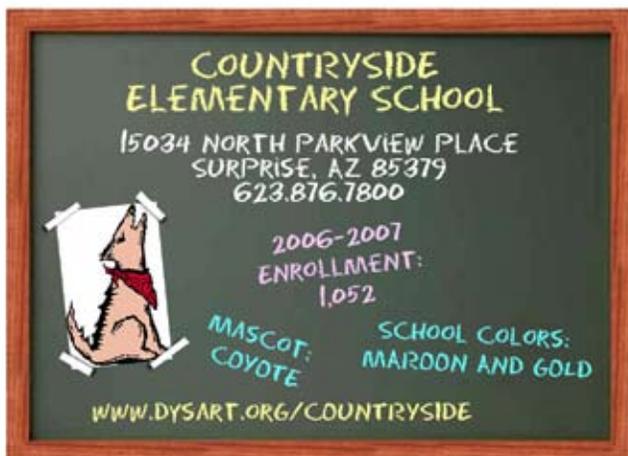


developing a board of directors, the PTO contributed through active participation in school-wide activities such as winter chorus concerts and a literacy night. They also provided dinner during parent teacher conferences and raised funds for materials needed across campus.

The school staff recognized the contributions of 43 volunteers in March with a breakfast event. Community volunteers and parents assist student learning by organizing instructional materials, overseeing student work groups, serving as field trip chaperones, reading to students and working in the library.

In addition to providing a world-class education on a daily basis, staff members have accumulated awards and honors of their own. Grand Canyon University recognized Tracey Anderson and Natalie Haney as outstanding educators. Kathy Larson received the Westside Impact Teacher of the Year award for Countryside. Librarians Barb Chase and Pat Maas received a \$2,000 competitive grant from Friends of the Surprise Library. Art teacher Mita Desai appeared on Good Morning Arizona as a recognized henna artist. On campus restriction monitor Cindy Hickey, a published author, earned first place in the inspirational category of the Great Expectations writing contest.

The faculty and staff of Countryside are grateful for the support and contributions of all. Being involved in a child's education makes great things happen!





six pillars of good character through humorous videos and interactive games. Students said they enjoyed the show and walked away as true citizens of good character.

Additionally, the staff hosted two community outreach events in which volunteers worked together, painting over graffiti and picking up trash to clean up local parks within the community.

The school's new gymnasium was completed and ready for use in April. What an awesome display of architectural brilliance! From the amazing colors on both scoreboard and flooring to the school

mascot on the wall padding to the inclusion of two additional classrooms, everyone was thrilled with the final outcome. The school's physical education teachers now have a climate-controlled environment to teach students the benefits of physical activity and well-being.

The DES staff had an opportunity to hold a McTeacher Night at McDonald's to earn money for the school. As several district schools participated, McDonald's offered an extra incentive of \$1,000 to the school that had the most inside sales. Families came from all over the district with an empty stomach and a full wallet. Dysart Elementary earned the extra \$1,000, bringing the school's grand total of funds raised to \$1,590.

Another milestone the school community experienced this year was having a Dysart Elementary student win the district-wide spelling bee. Eighth grader Vallon Daniels-Burns achieved the status of the district's spelling bee champion of the year.

Academically, the school received a Performing Plus rating from the Arizona Department of Education, exhibiting that the school is above state performance goals.



Gwen Canty
School Monitor

"In a school that prides itself on the six traits of good character, Gwen is the epitome of good character and one that all students, staff and parents can look up to."

The 2006-07 school year has been stellar at Dysart Elementary School. The school community experienced hurdles, gains, triumphs and pain, but mostly enjoyed a phenomenal year of exciting events that made the bond at Dysart Elementary even stronger.

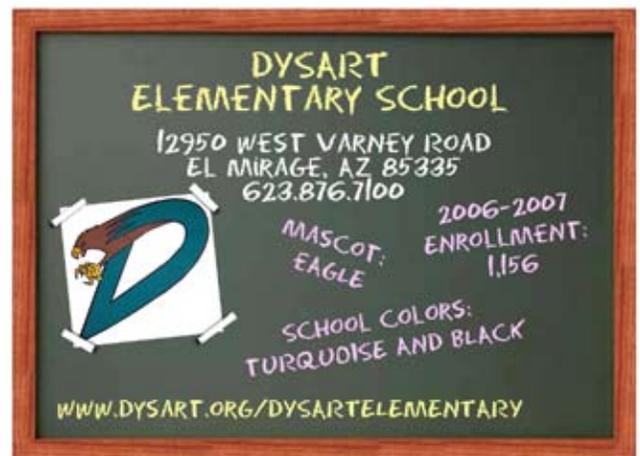
Excitement was high when the school was selected to receive a Reading First federal grant, a grant that will continue beyond this school year. Its purpose is to provide materials, resources and staff development to help educators better teach reading and comprehension skills. Since receiving the grant, data has shown a tremendous increase in kindergarten and first grade reading scores.

Assistant Principal Bill Dolezal further supported student literacy by challenging fourth grade students to read a total of 25,000 minutes during literacy month. They blew his socks off when he found out they actually read a total of more than 40,000 minutes.

Throughout the year, the staff held family events like dinner workshops and literacy nights, providing parents a chance to learn more about how to help their child at home.

The school staff focused on good character using Character Counts to improve the school culture and environment. The goal is to instill good character traits within all Dysart Elementary students. Each month, students learned about a particular character trait, and students and staff were rewarded for exhibiting that trait.

Students further learned about good character through a grant from APS which paid for Big Mouth Presentations to conduct a school-wide assembly titled "Character: The Power to Make it Happen." The high-energy presentation educated students on the



El Mirage Elementary School



Juan Marquez
GEAR UP
Support
Specialist

“Juan’s energy and cooperative spirit makes him a favorite with students and staff. He is a positive role model for students at El Mirage.”

During the 2005-06 school year, El Mirage Elementary completed and submitted the Arizona School Improvement Plan. This year, the school staff continued to implement the ASIP and worked towards achieving the goals set for the school. More teachers were added to the leadership team and professional learning teams were implemented to foster collaboration among the staff to create a model of shared leadership.

School leadership created nine professional learning teams based on the ASIP needs assessment. Each team researched best practices in their area and then reported their findings to the leadership team. The leadership team analyzed the information and acted on it or sent it back to the team for further investigation. The teams included scientifically-based researched methods and strategies, like Robert Marzano’s “Classroom Instruction that Works” and Richard DuFour’s “Professional Learning Communities,” in the action plan.

As part of the school culture restructuring, creating a school mission and a vision were a major priority for the leadership team. An essential component to this process was to include all stakeholders in the creation process. School leaders also involved the community by increasing attendance at parent teacher organization and site council meetings.

Changing school climate was another major priority. To achieve this, leadership established El Mirage Elementary as a Make Your Day school.

During the second year of implementation, the staff and students recommitted themselves to the process and teachers’ skills continue to be refined. Having a school-wide discipline program has significantly improved the school climate at El Mirage.

Leadership at the school created monthly math benchmark tests based on Arizona state standards. The results of those benchmarks were then used to drive instruction. As a result, the students made significant increases on AIMS math scores school wide.

This year, the faculty applied those same techniques to reading and expect to see similar results on AIMS reading scores. The leadership and staff of El Mirage Elementary are committed to the process of moving the school forward.



The state rated the school as a Performing Plus school for the last two years and school leaders expect to achieve the same status this year. We continue to strive toward adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind and anticipate positive results for this year.

Community partnerships and student programs that were added or strengthened this school year included the Title I tutoring program, before/after school tutoring, Lion’s Den daycare program, an after school recreation program for at-risk seventh and eighth grade students, English language learner classes for adults, Rodel Math Achievement Club program in third grade, Kiwanis Builders Club and food drives for the needy. The staff also established partnerships with Kiwanis and Rotary clubs to support our students. Collaboration with the Sun City Masons allowed the staff to initiate a Bikes for Behavior program in which students are eligible for a bike drawing based on positive behavior and academic achievement. Teachers also received recognition from the Del Sol Rotary Club as teacher of the month for their professional efforts on behalf of our students. Seven teachers received gifts and prizes from the Del Sol Rotary this year which was much appreciated.



Kingswood Elementary School



Mary Pearce
Data Records
Technician

“Mary never hesitates to go the extra mile for anybody or for any reason... no questions asked.”



Kingswood Elementary School had a busy year, some of the highlights of which are below.

The staff was pleased to accept a \$1,000 science grant from Wal-Mart which benefited our upper-grade science departments. It allowed the school to order much-needed supplies and equipment for the science program. The Kingswood community thanks Wal-Mart for its generosity.

Ten students were chosen this year from the district to attend the Arizona State GEAR UP Kick Off at the state capitol. Of the ten, four were Kingswood students: Michael Pesa, Jana Nikkila, Samantha Hyde and George Alessi. These students met with the governor on the lawn of the State House of Representatives and discussed strategies for graduation and college.

Kingswood student George Alessi was also selected as one of 40 student ambassadors for the People to People program, which was founded in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The purpose of People to People is to enhance international understanding and friendship through educational, cultural and humanitarian activities involving the exchange of ideas and experiences directly among peoples of different countries and diverse cultures. Eisenhower believed that if people of different backgrounds could come together in peace and friendship, eventually countries would as well.

Alessi represented Kingswood, the State of Arizona and the United States as he traveled to Australia June 2 for an 18-day journey. While in Australia he met with state leaders, stayed with host families and participated in educational activities, all of which earned him academic credit. To qualify for the trip, Alessi underwent a selection process that involved letters of recommendation, interviews and evaluations.

The recent Jump Rope for Heart was a huge success at Kingswood. The organizers thank all of the students, parents and staff who helped the school raise \$4,738 for the American Heart Association. Congratulations to our top five fundraisers: Felicia Kaiser, Payton Orton, Paige Orton, Aztavo Rangel and Brian Riegel. Their efforts have touched many people's lives in a positive way. Great work everyone and thank you!





Nancy Spiwak
Special Education
Instructional
Assistant

“Nancy deals with every child in her care as if they were her own. Her concern for the success of children is unconditional.”

Each school year ends with a flood of memories, and this year was no exception in the Luke community. Students, parents, faculty and staff collectively focused on academics, character education and community service.

Luke students stood for excellence in several areas. The National Junior Honor Society inducted more new members than in past years. Two Luke seventh graders took first and second places at the state level of the Foundations for Life essay contest, which allowed them to compete at the national level. The Veterans of Foreign Wars honored the writings of other Luke students in the annual Patriots Pen essay contest. Several students received a computer for this achievement. The Sun City Kiwanis Club recognized several students as Terrific Kids at their annual breakfast. Every Tuesday afternoon, there was standing room only in the computer lab as students were eager to expand their technological expertise. Outstanding musicians from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades represented Luke’s growing band program in the All State Honors Band.

The staff took the Character Counts program campus-wide this year and used it as the core of all the school’s community activities. Not only was there an after-school Character Counts club, the seventh graders developed a partnership with younger students and became ongoing character education mentors. School leaders continued the school’s partnership with the New Heart Society and helped to raise organ donor awareness by participating in the group’s annual poster contest.

Students at all grade levels sent letters to active duty military members during the holiday season. Luke’s parent teacher student association headed up a holiday drive for personal articles needed at the Thomas J. Pappas School for homeless children.



holding a food drive for the Westside Food Bank. This year, the school’s student council collected Pennies for Patients, a program sponsored by the Lymphoma and Leukemia Society.

Always looking to expand horizons, teachers and parents provided an array of opportunities to students. This year’s assemblies included visits from negro league baseball players, Opera-tunity, Smokey the Bear and Native American dancers. Read Across America Week brought in many guests who read to students throughout the day like active duty military members – we even got a surprise visit from the Cat in the Hat himself! Luke Air Force Base provided dental hygiene presentations and personnel to judge an art contest, and the Luke Jet Singers entertained families several times throughout the year. Big Mouth Presentations produced several character assemblies for the student body.

As always, Luke Elementary School had a busy and productive year. Without the parents, community members, students, faculty and staff, the school environment at Luke would not be as rich as it is. It’s wonderful to be able to look back and feel good about what was done for the students this year. Rest up over the summer because next year will be even better.



Since 1999, Luke students have an unbroken record of raising money for the American Heart Association through its Jump Rope for Heart program, as well as

Marley Park Elementary School



It was an eventful year at Marley Park Elementary School, starting with the staff and students welcoming a new principal, Dr. Lynn Miller. Also, the school had many exciting programs and clubs for students to be involved with before and after school, including student council, National Junior Honor Society, Science Olympiad, builders club, running club, art club, unity club, choir and Young Rembrandts.

Many other events were held for Marley Park families. The parent teacher association hosted McDonald's Night, a fall festival, a kids' corner holiday shop and a family Valentine's Day dance. The National Junior Honor Society and builders club hosted a movie night in the park. The featured movie was "Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit."

Parents and students joined the Marley Park community association in the annual Character Challenge 6K which raised money for the Arizona Character Education Foundation. The 98-member Marley Park team took home six pillar banners for being the largest team in the event. The banners will hang proudly at the school.

In addition to the quarterly awards ceremonies to recognize students who have achieved perfect attendance, honor roll, principal's list, most improved and Character Counts, students united during the

school's Big Mouth Presentations and Great Safety Adventure traveling assemblies. Big Mouth Presentations is an energetic, character-building, high-tech group of young people who help students learn about the importance of good character. The Great Safety Adventure is a double tractor-trailer exhibit that unfolds to create a replica of a house. It travels the country and helps teach children about home safety by challenging students to identify the home's hidden dangers.

Marley Park's student council held some impressive fundraisers for the community. Their food drive brought in more than 6,000 items to benefit the Westside Food Bank and their "Coins for Owen" drive raised \$6,000 for a 6-year-old boy who was diagnosed with bone cancer.

Marley Park staff members recognized the school's wonderful volunteers at the annual volunteer breakfast. Volunteer attendees were given a beautiful ceramic miniature bowl made by art club members and a tote bag with "Volunteers, Priceless Treasures" printed on it. Marley Park boasts 53 registered volunteers, 23 of whom have volunteered more than 1,500 hours.

The Marley Park community association coordinated a visit by Michael Josephson, the founder of the Character Counts program. Josephson toured the school and addressed Marley Park students via television on the school's Maverick Network News.

Arbor Day is always a big event at Marley Park. This year, all grade levels took arbor walk field trips in the Marley Park community. At the Arbor Day assemblies, students presented historical facts about Arbor Day, recited poetry, read theatrical works and sang Arbor Day songs.

The school year ended with the landing of Corey McCloskey and Fox 10 Arizona Morning's Sky Fox helicopter. After the helicopter landed, students, parents and staff participated in a live weather broadcast from the school. That morning was proof that school spirit is alive and well at Marley Park Elementary School!



Kathleen Andersen
Librarian

"Kathleen is a highly qualified professional who is dedicated to helping our students develop and refine their literacy skills."



Parkview Elementary School



Tricia Zito
Counselor

“Tricia’s consistently pleasant and caring demeanor, along with her effective communication style, is noticed by all.”

The school year at Parkview was filled with many successes, enduring memories and lots of firsts. The school opened its doors in August 2006 at a temporary location on the Valley Vista High School campus.

Within just a few weeks, eighth grader Anthony Vasquez designed the school’s python mascot and logo. Soon after, Parkview community members began wearing shirts that featured the new logo. Within just a few weeks, positive student, staff and parent relationships were forged and school pride began to emerge on campus.

In October, students, staff, parents and local businesses collaborated to organize the school’s first fall festival, an event that overflowed with fun games, good food, lots of laughs and an evening-ending fireworks display.

As students continued to work through the school year, the staff implemented programs that helped develop and honor community togetherness. The Positive Python program celebrated students who showed random acts of kindness. Character Counts included a teacher training, interactive kick-off assembly, character education mini-lessons and a rewards program for those who showed good character. The student council regularly planned school spirit activities to help celebrate Parkview Elementary pride.

When December rolled around, the school community held its first student-centered curriculum night. The evening began with a parent presentation on benchmark assessments. Afterwards, parents were amazed as students guided them through a variety of instructional routines. A



few weeks later, the Python PTA hosted the very popular holiday shop. Students shopped until the parent leaders dropped!

After returning from winter break, students took district benchmark assessments. The results indicated increased achievement for many Parkview students. Teachers analyzed the results, identified focus areas and developed effective instruction strategies.

As the calendar moved toward the end of the school’s first year, teaching, learning and celebrations continued at Parkview. The highlight of the spring festival was the seventh grade booth, which gave students the opportunity to toss water balloons at their teachers.

The school year zipped by quickly. As the staff begins planning for more firsts in the brand new school site, the school faculty and staff would like to extend a big thank you to our parent leaders who volunteered many hours throughout the year to support our student programs. Thank you to community volunteers who collaborated with teachers and provided opportunities for additional student learning time. Thanks to Parkview staff for coming in early, staying late, coming in on weekends and tutoring without pay, all in an effort to do whatever it took to help our students achieve success. Thank you to the students for demonstrating interest and a motivation to learn. Thank you to the administration, staff and students of Valley Vista High School for loaning out a part of their facility while we looked northward and watched our permanent facility rise with great anticipation. The staff can’t wait to continue the Parkview story, a story that is filled with teacher effectiveness, successful student learning and lasting relationships.



Rancho Gabriela Elementary School



in projects such as making an autobiography book, constructing a Native Arizonan dwelling, making timelines about themselves and growing their own plant.

Fifth grade students learned how to write expressively, have become familiar with various reading strategies and now have a strong knowledge of math concepts. They learned to adapt to change with an open mind and flexible spirit and are able to persevere through any situation that comes their way.

The sixth grade students had a rigorous academic year. They employed a practical example of the scientific method in their science fair projects. In addition to the traditional curriculum, students gave oral and PowerPoint presentations, acted in plays and researched countries using multiple media.

The school's seventh grade students achieved academically and grew socially on a grand scale. They not only demonstrated their flexibility, but also a willingness to learn to develop critical thinking skills, improve problem-solving abilities, write for a variety of purposes, work effectively in groups and develop an appreciation for life-long learning.

The school's first year with a full eighth grade team brought student education to a new level. Students experienced real-world business through math assignments, enjoyed hands-on lessons in science, thought on a higher level in language arts and began to understand their rights as United States citizens in social studies.

Overall, the year has been filled with social and academic successes. The Rancho Gabriela community continues to create a welcoming environment that is a beautiful place for children to come each day.



Viorel Rusnac
Plant Manager

“Viorel regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty – quick to respond to any situation that may arise on campus – all with a smile.”

The motto at Rancho Gabriela is “Every day, every minute counts.” Completing the school's second year reminded the staff and students that schools are made up of so much more than bricks and mortar. School is a place where life-long learning is cultivated, the “three Rs” are refined, and the social and emotional development of children is never far from thought.

Kindergarten was another grand success this year. Past teaching experience provided a foundation to teach the Arizona state standards. RG kindergarteners benefited from aligned curriculum and most students were at or above the benchmark by December.

The fabulous first graders read their way through the year. With a wonderful enthusiasm to learn, the teachers saw enormous growth in their reading fluency, addition, subtraction and writing. The students continued to grow as the teachers united the students hand in hand to make their character count.

Second grade students achieved many academic and social accomplishments. They wrote all types of genre, read numerous fiction and non-fiction books, learned to tell time to five minutes, counted money, added and subtracted with regrouping and worked on place value. They explored plants, weather, spiders, penguins and insects, to name a few.

Differentiating teaching techniques and learner outcomes allowed third grade teachers to address the many ability levels of their students. Parents were a great help, supporting teachers' efforts and working with their children at home. Third graders used the rich resources available at Rancho Gabriela to make this school year a huge success.

Fourth grade teacher collaboration ensured standards were met as students demonstrated growth in reading and math. Students participated



Sonoran Heights Elementary School



Doug Fisher
Plant Manager

“Doug’s quick response, attention to detail and positive attitude make him a pleasure to work with.”

Sonoran Heights Elementary is soaring to incredible heights. Collaboration was the key component in the success of the school’s first year. Community members, families, staff members and students worked together to create a dynamic learning and social environment. It’s an environment that also develops the emotional, academic and physical well-being of all students.

The school’s Board of Friends, made up of community businesses, partnered with the school to promote many exciting family evenings including an art and story night at Barnes and Noble, Chick-Fil-A nights and Papa John’s fundraising nights. The parent teacher organization reached out to new families, drawing the Sonoran Heights community closer. From the fall carnival and family movie nights, to book fairs and Kindergarten Round-up, the PTO members dedicated many hours in service to the school and students.

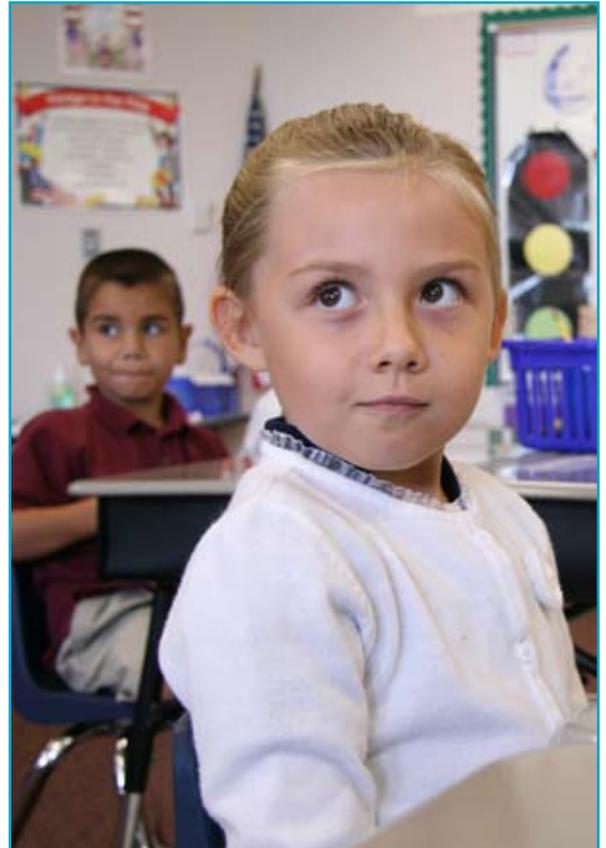
The Sonoran Heights staff endeavors to provide all students with a safe, positive and challenging learning environment. Academic excellence motivates the school community. All staff members collaborated to build success in creating a challenging and integrated curriculum. Integration of core content with special areas and articulation of standards throughout K-8 ensures that each student experiences real-life learning that fosters continued education beyond the school’s doors.

Throughout the year, students participated in many extensions of classroom learning that promoted community and world awareness. The school’s science fair encouraged students to delve more deeply into the science standards. This added depth to their learning through application of knowledge.

Student council and National Junior Honor Society spearheaded several community-based activities. Student council sponsored student-driven fundraisers and events that benefited many members of the local and state communities. The National Junior

Honor Society inducted 54 members in March and planned several events geared toward service to others and cultivating community within school families.

The faculty and staff nurtured student



expression through immersion in literacy, the fine arts, mathematics, technology and the sciences. Many programs which encouraged students to explore areas of enrichment and interest added richness to the academics provided at Sonoran Heights. The school’s art club offered students the chance to dabble in the fine arts, creating scenery and backdrops for a variety of school events and developing a deeper understanding of artistic concepts. Choir students delighted audiences at the winter concert and holiday program and prepared for the first musical at Sonoran Heights, “Believe.” Student participation rates were tremendous for these first-year programs.

Organized sports offered Sonoran Heights students opportunities to compete against peers while developing their team-building skills and physical abilities. These events also offered children the chance to reinforce good sportsmanship practices and infuse team spirit throughout the campus. Leaders encouraged the students to incorporate the skills they learned in these extra-curricular activities into their daily school lives.

In its first year, Sonoran Heights has established itself as an integral part of the surrounding community. The staff and faculty continually strive toward the goal of developing students who are able to become leaders not only on campus, but positive role models in the community.



Sunset Hills Elementary School



Sunset Hills Elementary School continued its journey toward premier during the 2006-07 school year as 1,100 students excitedly walked through the doors. The school year began with a specific focus of high expectations and achievement as the guiding forces for all stakeholders. "Excellence, Everyday" is the motto at Sunset Hills, and this was evidenced by our students' academic achievement, extra-curricular accomplishments, community participation and excellent behavior from the outset.

The Sunset Hills teaching team quickly set a positive tone for student achievement through monthly assessments of students to aid in driving instructional decisions. Instruction was geared to meet the challenges faced by all students, as well as to expand their understanding of grade-level curriculum. These instructional strategies, led by data analysis, provided a clear framework and plan for success for each student. Throughout the year, students here have gone beyond expectations in their academic achievement and excellent school behavior.

In addition, the parent, teachers, and community of Sunset Hills worked collaboratively to enhance the excellent development of our parent teacher organization. The PTO board worked diligently to provide the community with wonderful outreach endeavors and activities, tying school to community aspirations. The parents have stepped to the forefront of parent involvement in many areas. Once again, Sunset Hills was privileged to work with excellent parents who support the teachers as volunteers, through membership in the PTO and with outstanding support of school endeavors from home.

Throughout the year, Sunset Hills Elementary saw the expansion and establishment of many clubs and activities. These extra-curricular opportunities allowed

students to expand their areas of interest.

The school's football, volleyball, cheer, basketball, soccer, baseball and softball teams competed well within the district league, with the girls' soccer and basketball teams finishing second in the district tournament, and the boys' basketball and girls' cheer teams finishing as district champions. In addition, the choir and band programs began in earnest with the choir performing for the Kiwanis Club in December. Additionally, the student council and National Junior Honor Society continued their quest for excellence, allowing students opportunities for leadership. Finally, a group of second grade students partnered with the American Association for University Women, Sun City West chapter, in a pen pal exchange program throughout the year, each gaining understanding and insight into different generations, bridging the gap and imparting wisdom on each other.

It's been an excellent year at Sunset Hills Elementary School. The school's stakeholders continue to uphold the establishment of a great community for learning and the staff and faculty look forward to the coming year with eager anticipation of more student successes. Go Bobcats!

students to expand their areas of interest. The school drama club began their journey this year and culminated an excellent endeavor with the play, "Where the Wild Things Are." Our robotics club worked to build creations which perform many operations in response to student programming and command. The art club once again performed and created outstanding projects within the campus, allowing students the opportunity to explore creative endeavors and enhance their



Frank Klopping
Plant Manager

"Mr. Frank will stop what he is doing at any time to help a fellow teammate, student, or parent with any need that may arise."



Surprise Elementary School



Ann Cox
Kindergarten
Teacher

“I believe that everyone who enters Surprise Elementary is in one way or another touched by Ann.”

All of the successes this year at Surprise Elementary can be attributed to incredible teachers, support staff, parents, students and community members. Together, this team focused on creating an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, academic achievement for students and professional growth for educators. Student learning is the focus as everyone works collaboratively to improve the school.

The teachers and students at Surprise Elementary refuse to accept excuses for poor academic achievement. Last year, the school had an increased percentage of students meeting or exceeding the Arizona state standards in reading, writing and math by an average of 11 percent. Eighth grade math had a 30 percent gain. The mid-year assessments in reading and math indicated an increase on average of 25 to 30 percent at all grade levels.

Educators here believe reading is the foundation for all learning. To help the students become better readers, the faculty implemented a school-wide comprehensive reading system to address instructional needs. Strong instruction in reading, early intervention and a content-rich curriculum prepared our students for successful futures. Reading First strategies implemented in kindergarten through third grade classes helped form a successful professional learning community model.

Implementation of a school-wide behavior-management plan based on Character Counts and the six pillars of character was successful this year. The program consisted of two major components.

The first component was proactive in that it called for a campus-wide focus on one of the pillars of character for a certain portion of the year. During each of these six portions of the year, teachers conducted lessons that aligned with the current character trait. In addition, the Kiwanis Club sponsored our Terrific Kid

of The Month program, in which 20 students each month were honored for demonstrating that month's character trait.

This second component was the school-wide discipline plan, which involved the



use of Character Counts cards as a way for teachers to track students' behavior, both positive and negative. Since implementing the Character Counts plan in August, the school experienced an increase in positive behavior, which makes the faculty and staff excited for the plans to expand this program.

Parents continued to step to the forefront by assisting our students and teachers this year. The parent teacher student association did a fantastic job at fund raising and supporting the teachers throughout the year. There were some enjoyable fundraisers that brought the Surprise Elementary community together. They also hosted three successful reading nights which included reading and family fun.

Throughout the year, Surprise Elementary provided students with many extra-curricular opportunities. These activities allowed students to extend their day and expand on their area of interest. Student athletes excelled both academically and on the playing field. The boys' and girls' teams brought home championships in boys' football, boys' and girls' soccer and girls' basketball. In addition, the boys' basketball team placed third overall.

This has been a fantastic year at Surprise Elementary. The students, parents, teachers and community have worked together to build a premier place for everyone to learn, grow and succeed.



Thompson Ranch Elementary School



Veronica Vasquez
Eighth Grade Language Arts Teacher

“Veronica has proven to be a staff member who enjoys serving the community and students of Thompson Ranch.”



What an exciting year it has been at Thompson Ranch Elementary School.

The Fall of 2006 brought many activities for students. We celebrated Red Ribbon Week with activities like wearing shirts backwards to turn our backs on drugs, listening to volunteers speak about drugs and releasing balloons with the mayor of El Mirage.

In November, students sent 514 letters to soldiers stationed in Iraq through a holiday project sponsored by Salt River Project. SRP employee Ruben Robles said, “It was so heartwarming to read the thoughts and stories the students sent to our nation’s troops. These students are remarkable and should be commended not only because of the generous donations they made, but also because of the time they took to let the troops know that they are missed and that they are truly appreciated for all that they are doing for their country.”

Builders Club hosted a week-long Thanksgiving food drive. Thompson Ranch donated more than 400 pounds of food to the Westside Food Bank.

In December, Thompson Ranch students participated in Aisles of Smiles, a community outreach project sponsored by the Surprise Fire Department. Twenty-five students went to Target to spend money donated by the firefighters, their families and community members. Afterward they had a pizza party at El Mirage Elementary.

Additionally, Denise Young’s second grade class visited the Madison Retirement Home in Sun City West to bring cheer to the elderly. Each year, the Sun City West Fire Department sponsors one class and in return, brings joy to these classes with gifts of love. Residents look forward to the children’s visit. The students sing their hearts out and bring an atmosphere

of love to the home. The staff and faculty thank the Sun City West Fire Department for making this special event happen each year.

Second graders had their annual Christmas Around the World in which students learn how people in other countries celebrate the holidays. Each class learned about the customs of Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas and

Christmas, as well as facts about the countries and people that celebrate those holidays. The classes then teach the other second grade classes about the holiday they learned about.

Kindergarten hosted its annual pajama party Dec. 7. The event helps parents learn strategies to use when reading with their children.

Spring kept everyone at the school very busy. Everyone enjoyed our parents/staff vs. kids basketball game, academic family fun night, a 100th day celebration, Jaguar of the Month, honors ceremonies ... the list goes on and on. Friends of Surprise Library presented librarian Linda Johnson with a grant for \$2,000 to purchase upper-grade, high-level-interest books.

The staff and faculty thank the school’s parent teacher organization for sponsoring several fundraising events including a family spaghetti dinner, McTeacher night at McDonald’s, family fun night at Chick-Fil-A and a spring carnival.

What an exciting time it was this year. Everyone at Thompson Ranch is very proud of the students and staff who worked so hard to make this year successful.



West Point Elementary School



Sharon Eshelman

Fourth Grade Teacher

“Sharon’s dedication to her students is inspiring. She makes everyone around her want to work their hardest to help the children as much as possible.”

West Point Elementary School: Academic Excellence! Everyday! For Everyone!

The new school slogan shares what West Point is all about – holding all students to high academic expectations each and every day. This year was the sixth year as

a school community and this was the best year so far, though everyone will still strive to become an even better school in the future.

One of the main objectives this year was to learn together what it means to become a professional learning community. Part of that process meant spending time working with the community to review our current vision and mission statement. Through a year-long process and with the input from West Point staff and community members, the school staff and faculty formed new vision and mission statements that capture the essence of this learning community. The new vision statement is: “West Point is an excelling school that expects exceptional student performance. We are a learning community that cultivates a safe and positively-charged environment where all members are valued.”



Joiner placed second in a statewide Character Counts essay-writing contest.

This year was the first official year the school had the Character Counts program on campus. A group of eighth grade students drew and painted a character tree which is located just outside our multipurpose room. The school also received a grant from the Arizona Department of Education. The grant allowed Big Mouth Presentations to put on a character-building assembly for kindergarten through sixth grade students here.

West Point again made Adequate Yearly Progress and, for the second year in a row, the school was named a Performing Plus school by the Arizona Department of Education. The goal is to reach “Excelling” status, and school leadership feels the school community is headed in the right direction to make that goal. There is a continuous improvement plan in place that helps everyone keep focused on achieving all of school’s goals. As long as the community, students and staff continue to work together, everyone at the school knows the dreams will become reality and West Point will become an Excelling school in Arizona.

As summed up by one of our students, “It is fun to be here at West Point.” The faculty and staff strive to provide a safe place for all children to come on a daily basis, a place where they know they are cared about by other loving adults, a place where they can learn and others can help provide support as they reach each of their own goals. West Point truly is a great place to be.

School leadership’s illustration of this vision was the success of several of the teachers who earned mini-grants this year. Also, student Searnise



Western Peaks Elementary School



Scott Lazzell
Plant Manager

“Scott takes great pride in his work and our campus. He will do whatever it takes to get the job done and make sure it is done right.”



excellence. When students do great things they are referred to administration and recognized for their contribution to building a positive school environment. The Falcon ACE awards program acknowledges students who demonstrate good attitude, citizenship and effort. Students can be nominated by any staff

Western Peaks Elementary School has enjoyed a wonderful inaugural year. It has been an exciting whirlwind of firsts and rapid growth. It seems like only yesterday it was Aug. 19 and staff members were busily moving into the school, working to ensure we were ready to welcome students and families Aug. 21. Everyone quickly settled in with great learning activities in classrooms while construction continued on the multipurpose building. Amazingly, since opening, the school has welcomed more than 300 new students from the rapidly-growing neighborhoods.

Western Peaks enjoyed many accomplishments this year. The school's middle-level athletic teams performed well and showed great sportsmanship every season. The newly formed student council took an active role on campus and promoted many school spirit activities. They also supported several charitable causes. The parent teacher organization was active raising funds for playground equipment and providing a variety of opportunities for families to be involved with the school. Two nights of well-attended winter programming provided students the opportunity to share their many talents with parents, friends, families and the school community. The school staff established a National Junior Honor Society chapter and is very proud to have inducted the first members. The school also partnered with retired automotive engineers and Luke Air Force personnel to help seventh and eighth grade students learn hands-on science concepts through the A World in Motion program. Steve Sullivan was honored as our first Westside Impact teacher of the year.

As part of the school's commitment to establishing a positive school culture, staff and faculty instituted a referral program focused on social and academic

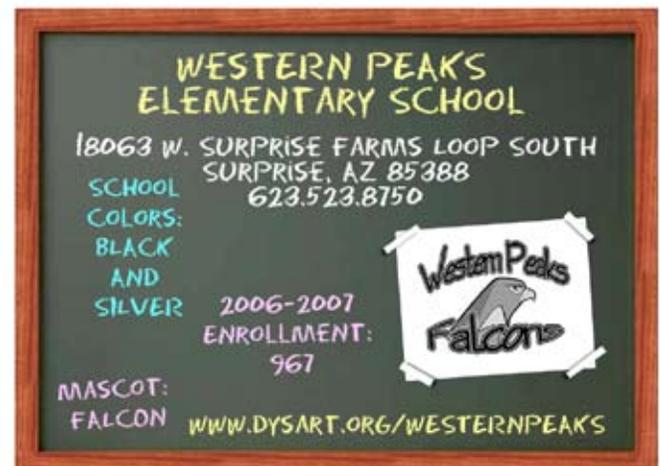
member and their name is entered for weekly prize drawings. Students at all grade levels have been recognized for outstanding citizenship and academic achievement through a series of awards assemblies.

The site council developed and distributed a parent survey soliciting input regarding programming, school climate and culture. The feedback will be instrumental in guiding school improvement efforts.

Over the summer, a number of exciting projects will be completed to improve campus facilities. A sports floor will be installed in the gym and play equipment and sunshades may be installed on playgrounds.

Everyone here is eager to see the results from the first year of AIMS testing. The faculty looks forward to using this information to guide instruction and everyone is already planning for the 2007-08 school year, looking forward to building on successes from this year.

Everyone here excitedly awaits a great second year and the many years to come serving the students and families of the Western Peaks community.



Dysart High School



Janet Knoll
School
Receptionist

“As a retired teacher, Jan understands the needs of our teachers, students and staff and is always willing to lend a hand.”

Although the fields of cotton, melons and roses that once surrounded Dysart High School are being replaced by blocks of homes, parks and businesses, DHS is still a garden for growth. Just as nature's garden produces beautiful blooms that stand out from the rest, our fertile school boasts its shining individuals, groups, programs and overall achievements.

Individuals are the building blocks of this school. Dozens of the 1,600 students here choose to work a little harder and grab onto the multiple chances to shine afforded them by Dysart High. Their four years of school work earned hundreds of thousands of dollars of scholarships. On rare occasions a student will accomplish stunning results, even when compared with every exemplary student in the nation, such as DHS 2007 graduate Elizabeth Meadows, who was named as a National Merit Scholar.

Many students come to school for social reasons. DHS capitalizes on this natural teen tendency by offering membership opportunities in clubs, teams and organizations which multiply a student's chance to become a shining star. This year, the DHS jazz band won at the state level. Volleyball, wrestling and cross-country also won their way to state competition. The DHS spirit line could fill a display case with its trophies, including top awards at the Disneyland cheerleading finals.

Dysart High's Key Club deserves its own paragraph. Under the guidance of Sue Poland, this community service club has grown over the last 20 years to become one of a couple of Key Clubs recognized at the highest international levels. The name Dysart High School evokes open-mouthed awe at all Key Club conventions. All service-minded students should consider joining the dynamic DHS Key Club.

Every educator can, and should, be some student's hero. And there are several heroes at DHS, like Arizona coach of the year Ivory Carson who inspires cross-country runners to endure sweaty discomfort and isolated effort, skills that carry over to classrooms and work sites. Or like Marilyn Babyar, named Arizona

counselor of the year by the Association for Career and Technical Education, who trains her staff and helps her students design academic pathways to dream careers. And like Dysart High's Westside



Impact Teacher of the Year Vicki Bejarano, whose exuberant style jumpstarts hundreds of freshman so they feel welcome in the classroom and strive to please a great teacher.

Despite the many rah-rah people and programs on the DHS bragging list, the primary focus here is to assure that truly no child is left behind. No one wants their child left behind. That's why Dysart High School's EXTRA after-school tutoring program and A+ credit recovery program afford struggling students a chance to be taught again (and again!) so they can choose to learn, earn credit, and "walk the line" on graduation day. While the collective chest of the school may swell with pride because of the superstars here, everyone's heart finds its reason to beat because of the triumphant graduates.

This combination of rigorous academic efforts and over-the-top achievements sets the tone for Dysart High School. That tone, along with the attainment of specific school-assessment standards, has elevated Dysart High School from "Performing" to "Performing Plus" status as labeled by the Arizona Department of Education. What does that mean? It means the school offers every student multiple chances and ways to grow smart and develop skills. The faculty and staff fully expect that every student will strive to learn and show what they know. And everyone is genuinely happy and proud when the hard-working students here stretch themselves above the garden and bloom for all to see and admire.



Valley Vista High School



In this, its first year of existence, Valley Vista High School opened its doors to more than 1,000 ninth and tenth grade students.

This year has naturally been a year of firsts on the Valley Vista campus. The start of the year brought the first freshmen and junior varsity athletic teams, included boys' and girls' swimming, cross country, volleyball, boys' and girls' golf and football. Valley Vista athletics during the winter sports season included boys' and girls' basketball, soccer and wrestling. Spring sports included boys and girls' tennis, track, softball and baseball. All of the Valley Vista teams worked hard to have successful seasons, with many sending individual athletes to regional and state competitions.

Besides athletics, the faculty, staff and students here developed many clubs and activities, including student council, Spanish club, French club, Key Club, art club, Future Business Leaders of America and diversity club, just to name a few. They provide ways for students to get involved in their high school experience. Student council sponsored spirit weeks, school dances and spirit assemblies to help build traditions. They also developed a choir, spirit line, hip-hop dance team, drama club and band to help bring performances to campus.

Valley Vista added a few signature programs to the Dysart Unified School District, including law and public safety, sports medicine and culinary arts, offering courses to prepare students for experiences in career pathways.

One of the most popular programs this year was culinary arts. To show off their newly learned skills, culinary arts students co-sponsored a dinner theater event with the theater department. Culinary students prepared food for and served more than 150 people,

while theater students enchanted the audience with a murder mystery theater program. The evening was a huge success, selling out days before the event.

Journalism students created a parent newsletter "A View from the Valley." They also developed the student newsletter "Storm Watch" and published it for the entire student body.

Marketing students opened Valley Vista's first school store. The

Storm opened its doors in April with a limited product line, but plans to expand as business grows.

Valley Vista saw academic success this year. Faculty and staff worked together to develop the school's mission statement, "Everyday Success: Preparation for Work, College, and Life!" which drove the faculty to maintain high expectations for all students. Everyone focused on active engagement and technology integration in the classroom, developing school goals with a continuous improvement plan.

During May, Valley Vista celebrated the academic success of more than 200 students with the first honors and awards breakfast. Organizers also invited qualifying students apply for National Honor Society.

To prepare for next year, incoming freshmen will participate in the USS Dysart, a summer transition program that helps students get ready for high school. We will further help incoming freshmen through a peer-to-peer mentoring program Valley Vista will implement in the fall.

The first year was exciting at Valley Vista. Please visit the campus as everyone here looks forward to future successes in years to come.



J.R. Chagolla
Plant Manager

"J.R. completes tasks in a timely manner with a smile on his face. He is one of the hardest working people I know."



Willow Canyon High School



Shawn Isler
Art Teacher

“Shawn is very strict with respect. He believes that you treat others not the way you want to be treated, but the way they want to be treated.”

Willowpride reigns here in the shadow of the White Tank Mountains. Willow Canyon High School continues to excel in student academics and co-curricular achievements. The 2006-07 school year brought a 17 percent improvement in AIMS writing scores and a 2 percent improvement in AIMS reading scores. The school is certainly on the way to amazing academic success.

This school year was filled with many awards, achievements and successes. In July, the Willow Canyon band will represent the state of Arizona at the national Independence Day celebration in Washington, D.C. The band also performed at an Arizona Rattlers game. The Wildcat band received “Excellent” ratings at all competitions they attended, including Arizona State Band Day and the state marching band festival. The Wildcat drum line received a “Good” rating at the Percussive Arts Society Competition.

The Wildcat freshman football team had a perfect season with eight wins and no losses. Seven members of the wrestling team qualified for state. In addition, the boys’ basketball team went 26-5 and won the West Valley region title with a record of 9-1. Willow Canyon’s own Andrea Hill is preparing for the Junior



and the girls’ track and field team won every regulation track meet. Everyone at Willow Canyon is proud of the athletes here.

Willow Canyon continues to partner with the community for service projects. The Key Club, named an outstanding club, donated more than \$5,000, volunteered more than 1,100 hours on and off campus and sponsored three blood drives. To better connect with the community, the diversity club hosted a culture fair which brought the diverse members of the Willow Canyon campus together to celebrate with dance, music, informational displays and food.

The school held the second annual poetry night in May. Poetry club members read along with those who entered the contest and earned top rankings. The award-winning theater department entertained audiences with performances of “A Christmas Carol,” “Seussical, the Musical” and “I Never Saw Another Butterfly.” The latter featured Ed Heisler, an Auschwitz survivor who spoke about his experiences in a concentration camp. All proceeds from the event were donated to the Westside Food Bank.

Willow Canyon staff and students take pride in their school and community. Everyone at WCHS continues to flourish academically with improvement in AIMS scores and whether it is the award-winning clubs such as DECA, Health Occupations students of America, International Thespian Society or the many Career and Technical Education courses, Willow Canyon students continue to shine. Like the alma mater states, “In the Shadows of the White Tanks...” Willow Canyon High School is a grand place to be.

Olympic nationals in the steeplechase event and was the region champion in crosscountry. The WCHS junior varsity cheerleaders placed third at the state competition



Sundown Mountain Alternative Program

Working as a team this year at Sundown Mountain Alternative Program, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students:

- Established mission and vision statements
- Utilized data-driven decision making
- Focused on community relations
- Focused on curriculum and instruction
- Changed curricular focus from 100 percent computer based to 50 percent classroom instruction and 50 percent computer-based instruction.
- Implemented new-and-improved procedures for safety, discipline and attendance
- Increased technology use to include using Proximas in all classrooms, using Smart Boards and implementing the Click It system
- Assessed 100 percent of our students in reading
- Implemented skills intervention for reading, writing and mathematics
- Conducted AIMS countdowns and practice exams
- Began a student council and a yearbook club
- Implemented and honored Character Counts
- Achieved and celebrated tremendous growth in AIMS scores

The students at Sundown Mountain are soaring to success. In the past two and a half school years, AIMS scores increased from 0 percent to 39 percent in mathematics, 21 percent to 65 percent in reading, and 27 percent to 71 percent in writing. One-hundred percent

of students improved from the classifications of "Falls Far Below" to "Approaches," or from "Approaches" to "Meets." This is incredible growth!

In addition, the attendance rate increased from 50 percent in the 2003-04 school year to 80 percent in 2004-05 to 93 percent in 2005-06 to 95 percent this year. This is a tremendous improvement.

On top of the above-mentioned academic accomplishments, the students at Sundown Mountain have contributed their time and energy to many causes. They've raised money for Hurricane Katrina victims and Phoenix Children's Hospital, collected toilet paper for local homeless shelters and provided holiday meals and gifts to those less fortunate.

Congratulations to all the students whose efforts have resulted in the above-mentioned accomplishments and thanks to the entire staff at Sundown Mountain and to the district office for supporting our program.



Roberta Lockhart
Principal

"Bobbie has without fanfare, with quiet reserve and clear focus, fostered a learning environment second to none in this district."



click your way to district information

www.dysart.org

DYSART'S SAFE SCHOOL HOTLINE

623
876-7009

REPORT BULLIES, THREATS, DRUGS, WEAPONS OR ANYTHING UNSAFE

Voters support bond issue

Surprise voters overwhelmingly supported the district's bond issue in the November 2006 election.

The bond allows Dysart to rebuild Luke Elementary School and open new schools to accommodate the hyper-growth the district expects to experience for the next decade. With a population that topped 21,000 students this year, the district projects an additional 20,000 students could come to the district in the next nine years. The bond won't pay for all the schools that would be required to keep up with that pace, but it will provide a good start and ensures that facilities such as fine arts, athletic facilities and shade structures can be included in the plans.

For more information on how the bond is improving the district, see page 4.

Governing board approves 2007-08 elementary school boundaries

After an intensive process, the Dysart Governing Board approved the elementary school boundaries for the 2007-08 school year.

The boundaries accommodate the opening of three new elementary school sites – Parkview Elementary near the district office on Parkview, Canyon Ridge School (formerly known as Elementary School #18) in Surprise Farms, and Mountain View School on



West Burton Avenue in the Cortessa neighborhood.

Multiple drafts of an elementary boundary map were considered. The map approved in February was a hybrid of the two previous proposals.

Hyper-growth has forced a change in the district's elementary boundaries for the past seven years. Growth will continue to be a challenge for the Dysart community. By 2010, the district is expected to have more than 30,000 students.

High school boundaries will remain unchanged for the 2007-08 school year. A copy of both the elementary and high school boundary maps can be found at www.dysart.org.

Foundation hosts golf tourney

The Dysart Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting students and teachers in the Dysart Unified School District, raised about \$3,000 by hosting a golf tournament April 21 in Surprise to fund teacher grants and student scholarships.

The Dysart Education Foundation was founded in the mid 1980s by community volunteers. The group supports graduating seniors, who would otherwise not be able to attend college, with scholarships. Each year, the foundation underwrites 10 student scholarships. In addition to student support, the Dysart Education Foundation provides mini-grants to support innovative classroom programs and projects. The programs include field trips, phonics books and reading enrichment programs, implemented in coordination with the school district's Educational Services Department.

Pletnick Approved as Dysart Superintendent

The Dysart Unified School District Governing Board has approved Dr. Gail Pletnick to become the new district superintendent.

Dr. Pletnick said she's grateful for the opportunity to serve the district as superintendent and added that her commitment to education and the district are key to her vision of excellence for Dysart. "I bring experience, passion and dedication to this position as I continue what I consider my life journey – to serve children."

Dr. Pletnick has been the assistant superintendent of K-8 education at the Dysart Unified School District since July 2004. She has been an educator since 1974 and has previously served as Director of Research and Accountability for the Deer Valley School District, principal, assistant principal and teacher. She officially begins her three-year contract July 1.

Dysart senior named National Merit Scholar, 1st ever for district

A student from the Dysart Unified School District has been named a National Merit Scholarship winner – the first time ever for a Dysart district student.

Elizabeth Meadows, a senior at Dysart High School, will receive \$12,500 per year from Arizona State University. "My passion has always been learning, which is what has driven me to do so well in school," said Meadows. "I have always looked forward to going to college, though for a long time I had no idea how I would be able to achieve that due to financial limitations. After receiving the National Merit Scholar recognition, it seems that so many doors have been opened to me, and I really feel that everything I want for my future is tangible. I strongly advise every student to take the PSAT, because the opportunities are endless."

Meadows has been accepted to Barrett Honors College, a selective, small undergraduate college at ASU responsible for recruiting academically outstanding undergraduates. "I am so excited to start college in the fall; it really is like a dream come true. I plan to study linguistics and Spanish, and one day teach at the college or university level. I would like to thank everybody at Dysart High School and in the Dysart District, as well as the surrounding community, for all of their help and support," she said.

"We're extremely proud of Elizabeth's accomplishments," said Dr. Mark Maksimowicz, Dysart Unified School District superintendent. "This achievement is a testament not only to her drive and determination to reach her goal, but also to the ability of our teachers to cultivate the academic potential they see in their students. The journey is not a simple one, but the result sets a new standard of excellence in the district, and shows our students that anything is possible."

Starting from a pool of approximately 1.4 million entrants, Meadows became one of 15,000 finalists selected from across the country. Of those, 8,200 actually receive monetary awards, and only 4,100 students receive full-ride scholarships like Meadows.

Dysart teen to attend 2nd National Teen Summit on Internet Safety

Dysart has selected Valley Vista High School junior D.J. Bruener to attend the second National Teen Summit on Internet Safety. His mother, Sandy, who is a teacher at Kingswood Elementary School, will accompany him on the trip, which is paid for by Cox Communications.

The event is sponsored by Cox Communications, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, children's advocate John Walsh and Miss America 2007 Lauren Nelson, and takes place June 27 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

During the weeks leading up to his trip, Bruner helped draw interest to the event. He appeared with Arizona's attorney general in a public service announcement on Internet safety and appeared on Pat McMahon's television show June 20.

In observance of National Internet Safety Month, high school students and their parents from Cox communities nationwide will attend the summit addressing the ways teens use the Internet. Through the summit and meetings between participants and their elected officials, the program will explore issues including teens' use of popular social networking sites, as well as ways to help improve communication between parents and their children to encourage safer use of the Internet.

Walsh, host of "America's Most Wanted," will moderate the Teen Summit, which will air on Cox's local cable channels nationwide later this summer. He'll be joined by Miss America 2007 Lauren Nelson, whose personal platform issue is Internet safety. At 10 a.m., following the Summit, Walsh, Nelson and the teens will participate in a media briefing about Internet safety. They will then go to Capitol Hill, where the students will meet with Senators and Representatives from their respective states to discuss the positive and negative aspects of Internet use from a teen perspective.

During and after the Summit and Capitol Hill meetings, the teens can blog about their experience at Cox's web log, www.DigitalStraightTalk.com. When they return home, they will be charged with educating their classmates, parents/guardians and communities about making smarter choices on the Internet.



VVHS junior D.J. Bruener was selected to attend the National Teen Summit on Internet Safety in Washington, D.C.

Volunteering in the Dysart Unified School District

Volunteers at schools in the Dysart Unified School District generously gave nearly 60,000 hours of assistance to students.

"Our volunteers have done a magnificent job of volunteering this year," said Pat Rumsey, the district's volunteer coordinator. "We had a total of 858 volunteers who gave 59,149 hours of devotion, care and instruction to the students. They are to be commended for such a wonderful job. The students and teachers appreciate your efforts."

Rumsey said this year's number of volunteer hours was 13,311 more than last year's total of 45,838 hours.

The volunteer coordinator encouraged community members looking to make a difference in the lives of children to apply to become a volunteer with the district.

"We'll accept any amount of time a person can volunteer, whether it is two or three hours per week, every other week, half a day or a full day," she said. "As a volunteer, people may work with infants and toddlers at the Child Development Center, listen to or read to elementary students, help elementary students with math or computer skills, mentor middle school students who need extra interest from a caring adult, or work with high school students who need one-on-one help with English proficiency. They could also work as an office aide, library assistant, help the nurse, assist in the various sports programs

or chaperone on field trips. Volunteers make valuable contributions to educational programs, staff support and district administration and policy."

An approved and registered volunteer is someone who volunteers on a regular basis. People wanting to help out on the occasional field trip, for a special occasion in the classroom or for one-time assistance in the nurses' office with health screenings can come in as a visitor on the particular occasion with the teacher's approval. They do not have to become a registered volunteer if they only come into the school to help out a few times a year.

Rumsey explained that anyone who cares about children and education is a potential volunteer and that prior teaching experience is not necessary.

When a volunteer expresses an interest in working at school and wants to assist with the type of jobs for which help is needed, there are district guidelines that must be followed for safety and legal reasons before a volunteer begins to work.

Non-parent volunteers must fill out an application, emergency health questionnaire and confidentiality statement.



They must then be fingerprinted and attend a volunteer orientation. A reference check will also be completed prior to the first day of volunteering.

Parent volunteers must fill out an application, emergency health questionnaire and confidentiality statement. They must attend a volunteer orientation prior to the first day of volunteering. Parents who wish to volunteer outside of their child's classroom (i.e.: sports programs, cafeteria duty, playground duty) must also be fingerprinted.

Volunteers are always needed at all the district's schools. If you would like an application or more information about volunteering, contact Pat Rumsey by emailing pat.rumsey@dysart.org or calling 623.594.2618.

Governing Board

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Bridget Paulelich-Otterman
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District Administration

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Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
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