



# ACTON·AGUA DULCE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2018 EDITION

Meadowlark School • High Desert School • Vasquez High School • Charter Schools

## A WARM WELCOME!

By Lawrence M. King, Superintendent

I am very excited to serve the District as its Superintendent of Schools, a role I feel privileged to accept. Coming from outside the district, I want to tell you about myself and some of my qualifications and life experiences that I bring to the job.

First and foremost, I am a husband and a father. My wife and cherished partner, Timi, and I just celebrated our 28th year of marriage. She also is an educator, serving as a middle school math and science teacher. We have two daughters, Hannah, 23, and Brittini, 21. Both of our daughters are hard-working, kind, caring, individuals.

My parents, who were present for my introduction at the AADUSD School Board meeting on August 24, taught me many things as I was growing up. By their example, they instilled in me the importance of family.



While the formal lessons I learned while attending a community college, UCLA, California State University, Fresno, and Azusa Pacific University, were valuable and meaningful, nothing can replace life experience. After receiving my Bachelor's degree in psychology from UCLA in 1987, I served

in the U.S. Army for four years. It was during this time that I developed my understanding of servant leadership, teamwork, courage, and perseverance.

As an educator, I have taught grades 4-8 for a total of 10 years. Additionally, I have spent 15 years serving students as an assistant principal, principal, director of personnel services, director of facilities and long-range planning, assistant superintendent of personnel services, and for the past year as an associate superintendent.

The people I have met living in and around Acton and Agua Dulce have made me feel right at home. I spent one weekend earlier this year at an Airbnb property in Acton to get a feel for the climate and culture of the community. As an animal lover, it was very refreshing to be on a ranch. The hosts were exceptionally accommodating as were the people I ran across at the local restaurants. While walking in the park in the morning, I had a great conversation with a gentleman who trains Arabian horses. My preliminary visit showed me this is a beautiful place to raise and educate children, offering fresh air, blue skies, a supportive community, and small class sizes.

I look forward to getting to know each of you. I value the importance of parents and family members attending school events and supporting each and every student on their individual path. I will continue to share with you our District's goals, vision, and accomplishments through my Superintendent's newsletter.

## A Special Thanks To Our BOARD OF TRUSTEES

I would like to thank our Board of Trustees for their ongoing support and trust as we navigate and become familiar with each other as a team! I recognize that as individuals you are in your position for the right reasons; you care about the Acton-Agua Dulce community at large and specifically, the students, staff, and parents we all serve.



Michael Fox



Ed Porter



Ken Pflanzgraf



Larry H. Layton

ACTON-AGUA DULCE USD

# LEARNING

To Make

# Friends



School friendships can grow to last a lifetime, but unless you know how to make friends and also how to nurture those friendships, school can seem like a very lonely place.

One program at Meadowlark School focuses on learning friendship skills and response from students indicates they are enjoying the opportunity. Called the Friendship Club, the program also provides a platform to teach social skills.

“The reaction from the students has been very positive,” said Correna Lairson, school counselor, who oversees the Friendship Club. “It’s also for kids who sometimes feel they are not making connections on the playground, kids who are a little shy at reaching out.”

The Friendship Club is open during lunchtime for three different age ranges: kindergarten and first grade, second and third grades and fourth and fifth grades. The club is optional, and attendance is not taken. The club meets twice a month in campus classrooms.

“Each time we meet I remind the students of the general rules of being kind to each other,” said Lairson. “Usually we have an activity, such as a game. The basic rule is, everyone is friends, and everyone is included. Everyone is welcome.”

Lairson said she’s there to facilitate the interaction. She helps guides students to learn such steps how to start a new conversation, to take turns and to listen to each other.

Are kids enjoying the Friendship Club?

“Very much so,” she answered. “They are constantly asking, when’s the next Friendship Club going to meet?”

# Kudos!

“To Tim Reed, VHS graduate and journalist, thank you for spending your evenings covering the business of the school board.”

- Board Member Ken Pfalzgraf

“Dimas Linares, you have been a great part of the district family for the last 14 years, you will be greatly missed. We wish you all the hope and kindness that you have always given to us.”

-Meadowlark School

“Thanks to (Principal) Ty Devoe for being such a great mentor. His patience, guidance, and leadership make Vasquez a safe place to try something new, experiment with our teaching practices, fail and try again. Thank you, Mr. Devoe, for allowing us all to be creative in our classrooms.”

-VHS Teacher Sally Mostafa

“Keri Owens, you have been such a big part of our students’ lives for so long. I can always count on you to give me insight into my kids; if I hit a wall with a student, I know after talking it over with you, I will find a window or way in. Thank you!”

-VHS Teacher Sally Mostafa

“To our PTO, Booster, PTSO and ASMO members for your tireless efforts and hours spent with our district schools to raise funding to enhance our programs for the kids!”

-Larry King

“Kudos to Ms. Katie Mitchell for taking the lead on organizing our first annual Holiday Program on Dec. 21st at 6 p.m. We are excited for students to bring holiday cheer to our families and community. Thank you Ms. Mitchell for your efforts and for your hope of making this an annual tradition!”

-Samantha McConnell

Congratulations Mervat on completing the Joshua Tree Half-Marathon and getting 1st place for your age group! You’re Amazing! Next up, Yosemite Half-Marathon. Go Mervat!!!!

-Natasha Williams



# A LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT



I would not have been able to find my love of math in that course nor passed it without Ted's help and support. But, the one thing I did have, although it was slow to emerge and only surfaced at certain times, was a GROWTH MINDSET. I often had a fixed mindset, telling myself such messages as "... I am dumb... why are they all so smart... why don't they have to study... why is the teacher so confusing..." But over time I realized I had attributes such as will, tenacity, and GRIT!

How many times has a student wiped out on his skateboard until he or she could finally successfully navigate a ramp and do a 360? A teacher finally figured out how to facilitate a lesson that for years was presenting a challenge to most students. A mother thought this kid will never learn to drive and one day it finally clicks of hours of spending time together in the car. We all need to reward each other for grit! The ability to persevere despite the odds; to not give up. This is something that many of us learned through our life experiences. Many of our parents and/or grandparents who lived through the depression, came to the US with a dream and 5 dollars, fought in wars, and so on. It is not uncommon to find people who demonstrate grit.

True Grit; Experts are now saying what many of us have known for years; that hard work and perseverance are a large part of what makes the difference between those who feel "stuck" and those who find a way through, over, or around an obstacle

How does a mother leave an abusive situation with her three young children and no income? How did Michael Jordan become an athletic phenome after being told he did not make the high school varsity team following tryouts during his sophomore year?

I often have thought, since a very young age, that things never came particularly easy to me. Both in kindergarten and first grade there were discussions between my parents and classroom teacher. "We think we should hold your son back a year." Each time it was decided to move me along. I struggled with reading and mathematics.

Teachers commented throughout my K-12 years, "... needs to pay more attention in class... often becomes distracted... could do better if he applied himself..." There were also nice things said about my personality, but it was evident school wasn't easy for me as is the case for many students.

It was my father who taught me the value of using emotions to find the "something" inside me to fight for whatever is I wanted. I failed my first pre-algebra class in 8th grade. I actually enjoyed math very much, but my success depended heavily on the teacher's ability to engage me and present the instruction in a manner that made sense to me. At Pierce Community College I was failing College Algebra even though I was putting in the time.

I wanted to understand math more than anything and loved the way it felt when the light bulbs went off! I sought out an old friend of the family, Ted Snyder, a long time master math teacher and educator.

I would venture to say we've all experienced not giving up and working hard at something. Our book for the year that many of us are reading as educators is Growth Mindset by Carol Dweck. I strongly encourage you to pick up a copy.

## STAY GOLD!

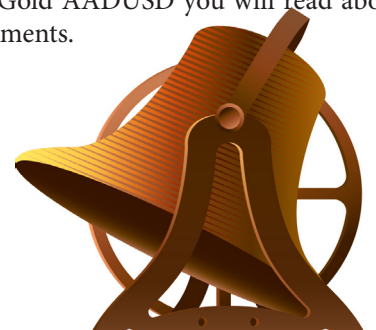
Stay gold is a concept that I developed about a year ago while reflecting about education over the summer. You may recognize the quote from the Outsiders, "Stay Gold Pony Boy." Or the poem that was read in the same movie, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," by Robert Frost. I have been sharing the idea of Stay Gold with AADUSD staff, students, and parents.

Sometimes a Stay Gold moment aligns with time you showed real grit and determination. However, sometimes it is a moment that is memorable because it has certain degree of personal meaning. That moment may be sad, happy, or angry. Regardless, Stay Gold moments are truly personal and many of us have begun to share our stories. In each issue of Stay Gold AADUSD you will read about people and their Stay Gold moments.

Stay Gold Acton-Agua Dulce!

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. King  
Superintendent of Schools





# VASQUEZ

## JOURNALISM STUDENTS VISIT KTLA NEWS

Vasquez High School Broadcast Journalism students visited the KTLA studios in Los Angeles on December 4 to tour the facilities and observe live production of the 3 p.m. news broadcast. The field trip was part of an expanding district effort to strengthen the bridge between the classroom and professional careers.

“The intensity of the live broadcast brought out the demands of modern media for the students,” said Teacher Heather Lundquist. “A special thanks to KTLA for opening up this experience for us!”

The students of Mustang Television produce a weekly broadcast that includes news, weather, sports, and feature segments. Vasquez students handle all aspects of production, including article research and composition, script writing, filming, sound and video editing, post-production processing including Chroma Key, and final publication.

Lundquist, who founded the video production program at High Desert Middle School over a decade ago, launched a similar program at the high school when a local bond measure yielded a new campus that could accommodate the necessary facilities and equipment.

The Vasquez Studio features an array of digital video, lighting, and sound equipment as well as both Apple and PC platforms using the industry-standard Adobe suite of software for composition and design.

“Throughout this entire year I have discovered new things and love the chance to try new editing techniques and styles,” said senior Garrett Musil.

Packaged in an entirely digital format, Mustang Television broadcasts are stored on a website from which students and community members can view current or past episodes. The website can be found at <https://mustangtelevision.github.io/>

# HIGH DESERT <sup>Their</sup> Loves *Happy Feet!*

High Desert School is pleased that the Dancing Feet Ballroom Dance Program is continuing for the third year. Dancing Feet provides instruction in the art of classic ballroom dance and offers opportunities to practice etiquette and social skills.

During the year all 6th-grade students participate in lessons to learn ballroom dances and several line dances. The school also has a Dancing Feet Performance Team, comprised of 6th through 8th-grade students, who practice for several hours each week in preparation for the annual Dancing Feet Competition in spring.

Before the competition, students participate in a pancake breakfast fundraiser and a Dancing Feet Winter Dance event. Students love dressing up, meeting Dancing Feet students from other schools, showing off their dance and etiquette skills.



High Desert students have been recognized the past two years by the judges for their impeccable manners, dedication to dancing, and team spirit with the Dancing Feet Spirit Award. We are so proud of what High Desert students have accomplished thanks to our 6th-grade teachers Mrs. Millar and Mrs. Spiegel.

# Helping Students REACH <sup>THEIR</sup> Potential

At the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District, we are committed to a vision of developing our youth into productive and creative individuals who can reach their highest degree of potential.

AADUSD finds the district vision to be consistent with charter school law, which was intended, among other things, to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems and to provide rigorous competition within the public-school system.

The district vision and charter school law share a common purpose designed to improve student achievement. AADUSD supports the intent of charter school law and actively supports the development of district-authorized charter schools that provide innovative, high-quality learning opportunities.