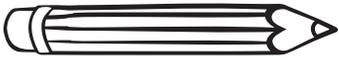


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PTA Gazette



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San Francisco, California, Fall 2015

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: A WONDERFUL START

By PTA President Kerri Spruston

We're four months into the 2015-16 school year, and time is zipping by. Our amazing school is looking its best this year: new building, fresh paint, no more bungalows, and lots of room on the yard for our kids to run and play. We said good-bye to our great construction manager, Fabi, who kept the work on time and as undistracting as it could be. Thank you, Fabi!

Now the final bit of beautification is underway. We have a \$100,000 bond from SFUSD to green our schoolyard, and we are far into the planning phase of how best to use it. The greening bond committee—parents, teachers, and administrators—is working with an SFUSD landscape architect to come up with a plan. They have decided we will use a good chunk of the money to build an education garden behind the new building, which will consist of raised planting beds, a teaching area, a dry river bed, storage, and much more. Construction on this area will happen over the 2016 summer, and it should be ready for use by the start of next school year.

Sunnysiders have been busy since the start of this year meeting new friends and getting to know their classmates. And they've been working as hard outside their classrooms as in them: This year we have several Sunnyside-only soccer teams, from kindergartners to 4th graders. This is a great way to get to know other Sunnyside families and to build our community outside of school. For the winter we have several basketball teams starting, so if you're interested please search on Taproot for "basketball." Go Eagles!

The school year is filled with fun events for students and their families. One was the annual Run to the Sunnyside in mid-October, which drew more than 130 participants. I love watching the excitement on the kids' faces as they see a tally mark being added to their arm, and the pride on their faces as they get a medal around their neck. Thank you so much to our amazing organizers Karen Zuercher and Joanna Robinson. On Oct. 30 we had our annual Costume

Carnival—one of the kids' favorite days of the year. They love the carnival games, haunted house, and costume parade. Thank you to everyone who came to help, and especially to Gina Turnbull and Joanna Robinson for organizing. In early November we held a Bike Rodeo, craft day, and garden workday all in one, spearheaded by awesome organizer Catherine Kalessis. Watch our school calendar on Taproot or on the school website for more community-building events.

It hasn't just been the kids and teachers who've been busy this fall: The PTA has been busy too. We are so thankful for all the help we have received. If we counted volunteer hours for the first few months of school we would already have hundreds! Whether you've helped with photocopying, drop zone, bringing coffee to events, tours, hanging signs, working in the classrooms, bringing snacks for teachers, at lunch or in the library, we are very grateful. Volunteers have worked beyond the school day as well—particularly with the Annual Fund. It was the first fundraiser of the year and we exceeded our goal! With your help, we raised \$76,000. We have many more events and fundraisers this year, and we'd be happy to have all the help we can get. If you'd like to volunteer your time, either during the school day or from home, please contact me at ptapresident@sunnysidek5.org and I will put you in touch with the right person.

I want to finish by saying how happy I am to be part of the Sunnyside community. We all put in what we can when we can, and this adds up to a wonderful school. I love the sense of community we have, and think it's only getting better. If you ever have a suggestion (or you just want to say hi), please contact me. I am more than happy to do what I can to continue to improve Sunnyside.

“Digital District” continued from page 2

Second, the plan recognizes the need to bring classrooms up to date. It envisions the following equipment in every room: a projector, screen, document camera, printer, up-to-date phone, audio equipment to assist students who are hard of hearing, and wifi that can support 40 devices streaming HD. At Sunnyside, thanks to the PTA tech committee, we are in pretty good shape. But across the district, only 27% of classrooms have adequate wifi and only 50% have document cameras.

In addition to making basic technology available to teachers, the plan recommends upgrading the administrative, HR, and central office systems. Here in the heart of global technological innovation, many of SFUSD’s internal processes still involve paper and Excel spreadsheets. The district will be able to function much more efficiently with up-to-date systems.

The third portion of the plan lays out a vision for a robust and redundant network to serve our schools.

All this equipment, software, staff, and training is expensive. The district has gotten philanthropic support from Salesforce and the Circle the Schools program, but a capital infusion is also needed. In 2016, a \$200 million bond will be on the city ballot to fund this ambitious vision. If the bond passes, the money will take some time to trickle into classrooms—so in the meantime, please keep supporting the PTA!

To learn more about what’s happening in SFUSD, check out my blog at sfpta.org/blog, and to learn more about how education in California works, visit ed100.org, which answers common questions about curriculum, standards, budgeting, and more.

COLLECTING RAINWATER FOR LEARNING

By Eddie Samaniego

I am excited that our building renovations are complete and construction has come to an end. This year, one of my priorities is reconnecting our rainwater catchment system, a hands-on tool for teaching watershed and water cycle science that also demonstrates stewardship and water conservation principles to students.

Every year it becomes more important for California’s youth to recognize our struggle with drought. Last year Sunnyside’s catchment system supplied our garden with a 4-month supply of water. Despite a few complaints, students filled and moved many buckets of water to the garden.

This school year SEEdS is teaming with Kat Sawyer from Tap the Sky, a nonprofit that grew out of an effort to help public schools install rainwater harvesting systems. Since 2010, Tap the Sky has worked with 20+ schools to build such systems in their gardens.

Kat and I are slowly navigating the campus installation process. Grant funders have agreed to cover the cost of her project management at Sunnyside. Now we are hoping the PTA can provide \$500 in match funding. A vote to approve the expense will take place during the PTA meeting in January. Meanwhile, Kat is working on the construction documents for approval by SFUSD’s architect. Once these documents are approved, we will hold a school workday to build the system. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me at esvisualstudies@gmail.com. I hope the rainwater catchment system becomes a symbol of Sunnyside’s commitment to stewardship.



5TH GRADE OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP

By Leah Tarlen

Read through the 5th-grade student memoirs in any past edition of *The Ray*, Sunnyside’s literary magazine, and one experience stands out—the overnight field trip. For many kids, it’s their first time camping. For others, it’s their first night away from home. For everyone, it’s an exciting time to stay up late and spend the entire night with classmates while enjoying hands-on learning.

In past years, Sunnyside’s overnight has taken place aboard a historic sailing ship or at Fort Funston. This year, teachers

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Runners take a break during the Run to the Sunnyside

"5th Grade Overnight Field Trip" continued from page 3

Kim Peters and Kenny Yee decided to take the trip to a new level: On Feb. 29, the entire 5th grade will depart Sunnyside for a three-day, two-night field trip in the Santa Cruz Mountains as part of the Wolf School's Outdoor Science Camp.

The Wolf School offers California State standards-based exploration of scientific concepts and natural history through field studies, group activities, games, and living together in an outdoor community among the coastal redwoods of Monterey Bay.

Students will hike through Nisene Marks State Park in Aptos as they learn to identify native and non-native plants, study local fauna, and create models of the internal organs of a tree. They'll complete field journals about the redwoods, study photosynthesis, observe and identify aquatic insects, and learn how plants and animals adapt to their surroundings. They'll also get to play sports, horseshoes, and ping-pong, write letters and sing campfire songs.

Ms. Peters and Mr. Yee partnered with Wolf School because they wanted to focus on science. They were impressed with the curriculum, the high level of organization, the service offered by the program, and the beauty of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Wolf School site can also accommodate both classes. (Last year's 5th grade overnight could accommodate only one class at a time.) Finally, they wanted to offer students an opportunity that was entirely new.

Another curricular goal of the overnight is learning to live together in a residential community—the basis of social growth. Students sleep in cabins and enjoy homemade food served family-style in the Wolf School's dining hall at Camp Toyon. From living together to completing showers on time, from getting to dinner to cleaning up after themselves, students will be challenged, work in cooperative groups, and grow as individuals.

The cost for this fantastic learning, travel, and communal living project is \$225 per student, \$160 per parent chaperone, and \$1,000 for the bus. No student will be turned away for lack of funds, and to keep this promise, many 5th-grade parents have paid to cover the costs of their own children as well as students who need assistance. We still have another \$350 to raise for student scholarships, however. Our 5th-grade students are working hard to raise the remaining funds through bake sales and other activities. If you see them selling goods or collecting donations, please lend them your support if you can. You'll be helping to create a lifelong memory of Sunnyside and a 5th-grade rite of passage.

INTRODUCING SOCIAL WORKER JENNIFER CAULFIELD

By Karen Zuercher

Have you ever wondered what an elementary school social worker does, or how that's different from the other auxiliary staff, or what makes Jen Caulfield tick? Read on.

Jen grew up in the Midwest and got her undergraduate degree in sociology from a small college in upstate New York, then her Masters in Social Work from Simmons College in Boston. She loves soccer, skiing, dogs, books, and hair bands of the 1980s and '90s (especially Guns N' Roses), though not necessarily in that order. Her three daughters—a 4th grader and twin 3rd graders—go to Starr King in Potrero Hill.

She has worked with children since college, and her earliest post-collegiate jobs were in residential facilities for adolescents. Drawn to social work because she had her own experience with it as a child and wanted to give back, she eventually became a Program Director at Fred Finch Youth Center in Oakland, a nonprofit offering mental health and social services to kids and their families. There she ran the dual diagnosis program (for kids with developmental disabilities and a mental health diagnosis), and found she loved the challenge and the great connections she made with her clients. She went on to get her license in Social Work. When she had her children, she decided to take some time off, and as they grew she began to volunteer at Starr King. Finally, she decided it was time to get paid for her work: She took a job first at Guadalupe Elementary in Crocker-Amazon, and then at Sunnyside in 2014.

As Sunnyside's Social Worker, Jen's main job is to oversee the social and emotional components of student behavior. Working with the rest of the Response to Intervention team (which also includes Dr. Marcy; Response to Intervention Facilitator Alysa Hansen, who works on the academic angle; and Instructional Reform Facilitator Derald Cook, who works with teachers), she helps students, their families, and Sunnyside staff work out the best way to help kids who are struggling behaviorally at school. She doesn't provide individual counseling, but rather checks in with kids about their behavioral contracts, observes and helps in classrooms, monitors safety on the yard, and follows up with parents and caregivers. She also helps make sure that teachers have the curriculum and training they need to support these kids, and works with various other Sunnyside and SFUSD support staff.

What she likes most about her job is how insightful kids are. "We don't give them enough credit for it," she says. She

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“Jennifer Caulfield” continued from page 4

also aims to give their resilience value. What she finds most challenging is finding enough time for staff training.

Jen hopes to set up some informational nights this year to give parents tools for handling behavioral issues. She’s working to schedule one in Fall and one in Spring. It would be a way, she hopes, to translate the work she does at school into practices families can do at home.

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DENMAN 6TH GRADERS SPEAK

We asked three former Sunnyside students, now 6th graders at James Denman Middle School, to answer a few questions. Here are their answers.

Ella Shonk

- What do you like best about Denman? What would you change?
I like the coding class. I wish we were allowed to take our phones out in school.
- What’s the biggest thing that changes from elementary school to middle school?
We get lockers and more classes.
- What do you wish you’d known about Denman or middle school before you went there?
I wish we could bring our backpacks into the P.E. lockers.

Saura Pal Sternberg

- Denman is great. I like the band program because they do more unusual instruments. For instance, I play the tuba. I think we should have sports that are not every single day, and maybe 2 electives.
- Switching classes is the biggest change. We have only 4 minutes to get to class, and we are expected to go to our locker, get water, and use the restroom. It can be very stressful, especially going to gym because no backpacks are allowed in the locker rooms.
- One thing that I would like to have known was which instruments are there.

Ryan McGrath

Dear 5th graders,
Hi, my name is Ryan, and I’m a 6th grader at James Denman Middle School. For elementary I went to Sunnyside like you guys, and I loved it. At the end of 5th grade I was sad because I was not going to see all my friends that I had since kindergarten, and I was also nervous because I was going into middle school. I was scared of having to switch classes in a big new school, having different subjects and many new

teachers, getting graded on my new subjects, having a locker, and having to change in front of everyone before going to P.E.

After my first day I realized it was not scary at all. On my first day of middle school I was super nervous, but the Denman staff and the 7th and 8th graders helped me find my way to my classes and locker. All my teachers are super nice, and I’m enjoying my new subjects. After a week I could find my own way to my classes and locker, and changing before P.E is not that big of a deal.

Another amazing thing about Denman is the sports program. We have baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and track. I play on the baseball and soccer teams, and this year our baseball team made it all the way to the semifinals.

The thing I like the best about Denman is that on Fridays we listen to music at lunch. I hope what I told you about my experience at James Denman helps, and if you do come here and you see me around the school, please come say hi.



Riders line up for the bike rodeo



Artwork from Ms. Tucker’s 2nd graders

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN 2016-17

By Michael Miller

After-school programming has always had a special place at Sunnyside. It serves two main purposes: enriching the school-day curriculum with extracurricular learning and providing a safe haven for students whose families cannot pick up their children right after school. In recent years this programming has been provided in two forms. The aftercare school provider agencies are the Mission YMCA and Bay Area Community Resources/ExCEL, who provide care, enrichment, and academic support all afternoon. The ExCEL program is subsidized through state grant funding that is renewed every three years if the school remains eligible for the funding. Additionally, the PTA coordinates a large number of individuals and organizations to run enrichment classes during the hour right after school.

For next year, during the 2016-17 school year, Sunnyside is exploring options to restructure the after-school activities into a more streamlined program. There are several drivers for exploring these changes:

1. The state funding for the ExCEL program is not guaranteed after June 2019. In order to sustain the program services for Sunnyside families, we have to consider a fee-based structure for all families.
2. Families overwhelmingly want a single program, where all students can interact with each other, rather than two separate programs.

The YMCA and BACR are working together to propose a streamlined program with options for students to attend on select days for just the first hour of enrichments. The details of the plan—including how to transition from our current system to a new system, and what roles the PTA will retain in enrichment programming—are currently being discussed.

The school, with the help of the parents on the PTA and the leaders of the after-school agencies, recently surveyed the Sunnyside parent community in three languages to understand priorities for after-school programming. The responses will guide the next round of design for the program. We expect that the plan will become more specific and concrete through January and February, with continued opportunities for input through the SSC and PTA. The school, the PTA, and the after-care providers are all committed to making the after-school program fulfill the goals of the Sunnyside community:

1. Ensuring the safety and security of Sunnyside students after school. It has proven difficult to keep track of hundreds of Sunnyside students moving between three independent

programs, all held on campus. With one program it will always be clear which adults are responsible for each child.

2. Maintaining affordable and equitable after school activities despite increasing costs. The district charges after-school programs rent for use of the classrooms. These fees are substantial, and have increased over the years.

3. Developing an enrichment program that is sustainable in terms of volunteer hours and cost. Organizing dozens of individual providers for our wonderful enrichment program takes an enormous amount of time, and really requires the attention of paid staff. Additionally, for the last several years BACR has subsidized our enrichment program by paying the facilities fees and providing personnel services (like documenting each provider's health certification).

The PTA is eager to continue participating in running a high-quality enrichment program, but can't do it on a purely volunteer basis. Consolidating enrichment programming with aftercare will increase efficiency, allow for both paid staff and volunteers to help organize enrichment classes, and make the most of grant funding.

BACR and the YMCA are refining a proposal for a consolidated program that merges their two aftercare programs and the enrichment classes currently coordinated by the PTA.



Teachers and 4th graders in the costume carnival

