



PIEDMONT

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of the Superintendent

760 Magnolia Avenue • Piedmont, CA 94611 • 510-594-2614

June 1, 2017

Dear Families,

Yesterday we celebrated the Millennium High School class of 2017 and the Piedmont Middle School class of 2021, and in just a few hours Piedmont High School graduates will walk across the stage and receive their diplomas. This is always an exciting time of year -- a time of celebration and new beginnings. It is also a time of reflection, and this year is no exception.

During the Millennium High School graduation, a teacher read a reflection written by Sarah Thornton (MHS class of 2017), which I found very inspiring. Thornton wrote: "... toxic cycles may not begin with us singularly, but a single person can put an end to them, as change begins with one and ends with many." Thornton is not the only student this year to express the importance of standing up and standing firm to create a culture of kindness and acceptance. Throughout this school year, many students have been voicing strong feelings about inclusion, diversity and social justice. It has been a remarkably positive and optimistic time, with students seeking new and creative ways to express themselves, and embracing personal responsibility to be a force for change.

It is also a time of reflection for educators and administrators across the District. We are reviewing our initiatives to better support the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students. At the same time, we are looking forward, striving for continuous improvement.

This letter provides an overview of our initiatives and accomplishments this year. This work was made possible by the dedication and innovation of our educators and staff, our strong partnerships with school support groups, and the generosity of a helping hand from families and the Piedmont community. I am personally very grateful for this remarkable team effort.

I welcome your questions and comments at any time, so please don't hesitate to contact me at rbooker@piedmont.k12.ca.us

Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Randall Booker
Superintendent of the Piedmont Unified School District

2016-17 Year-End Report Advancing District Goals

The District's essential goals are to provide an extraordinary education and enhance learning opportunities for all students. Achieving these goals requires work on several fronts, including:

- Instructional excellence
- Support for the social and emotional health and development of students
- Flexible and adaptive facilities and infrastructure
- Budget management
- Communication and engagement with the school community

All of these initiatives contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the educational experience of students at all levels. The work accomplished by our dedicated staff expands beyond what can be listed here, but highlights of our work this year are as follows.

I. Instructional Excellence

With strong leadership by Dr. Cheryl Wozniak, Stephanie Griffin, Julie Valdez, Michael Brady and the site principals, as well as the tireless dedication from our teachers and staff, the District made great progress toward our goal to develop and deliver relevant curriculum with innovative instructional strategies and methodologies.

English Language Arts

- Purchased guided reading books for K-2 classrooms.
- Identified the essential standards in English language arts in grades 6-8 as part of the formal adoption of instructional materials to Common Core standards.
- Provided training for high school English teachers from Bay Area Writing Project.

Mathematics

- Provided elementary math coaching and time for reflection on instructional practices.
- Administered and analyzed math assessment data at all levels.
- Created new courses in Integrated Math III and Math Analysis Honors, completing the new math pathways under Common Core.

Next Generation Science Standards

- Formed an NGSS Implementation Team that met regularly to discuss curriculum, instructional practices, and materials related to the new content and practice standards.
- Piloted new NGSS-aligned curriculum in middle school.
- Approved middle and high school science pathways and developed a new NGSS-aligned biology course for all 9th graders: Biology and the Living Earth.

History Social-Science

- Integrated elementary reading curriculum into literacy workshop units of study.
- Provided training on the new history-social science framework at middle school.
- Created differentiated units in high school history courses.

Technology, Engineering, Makers Lessons

- Developed a [District Instructional Technology Plan](#) with the assistance of the District Technology Advisory Committee.
- Expanded enrollment in Computer Science courses at PHS to meet rapidly growing demand.

- Implemented new technology and digital citizenship assessments for grades 6-12.
- Piloted an Engineering Lab at PMS with small-group presentation spaces.

Elementary Visual Art & Integrated Learning

- Hired three elementary credentialed art teachers who worked to build a TK-5 art program, supplemented with arts integration lessons at all grade levels.
- Hosted the 2nd Annual STEAM Expo open to all elementary students.
- Continued the implementation of integrated learning across levels by providing professional development through the Alameda County Office of Education's offering of the Integrated Learning Specialists programs.

World Language

- Staff attended a national conference on best practices in teaching foreign languages.
- Began creating a scope and sequence 7-12 for World Language proficiency.
- Piloted teaching proficiency-based units and using integrated performance assessments to evaluate students' language development.

Instructional Technology

- Trained staff on data analysis to promote evidence-based instructional practices.
- Managed and refined the 1:1 program to ensure smooth operation of more than 3000 Chromebooks in use District-wide, particularly during CAASPP testing.
- Piloted student helpdesk support with TA's at PMS.

Differentiated Learning and Instruction

- Hired a K-12 differentiated instruction specialist to provide classroom coaching.
- Site/Level GATE coordinators met regularly to support teachers in serving their gifted and talented students
- Piloted the use of Dreambox to personalize math instruction and provide intervention and support for students with specialized learning needs.

Learning Interventions

- Expanded the use of assistive technology tools to meet student learning needs.
- Developed and presented a Transition Workshop for parents whose students are considering transitioning to MHS.
- Provided reading resource and resource specialist teachers with training in Orton Gillingham practices and provided training on dyslexia and best practices in identifying and supporting students with reading difficulties.

Elementary Programs

- Approved extended-day kindergarten to be implemented beginning in fall of 2017.
- Evaluated the elementary scheduling for specialists and revised the art, music, library, and computer science/technology schedules for 2017-18.

Standardized CAASPP Testing

Over the last two years, California has phased in new standardized tests for K-12 public school students. The new tests -- called the "California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress," or "CAASPP" -- are designed to be a more meaningful assessment of learning and skill development than previous standardized tests such as the STAR Test. The CAASPP is administered to students in grades 3-8 and 11,

in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. District staff analyze and use the CAASPP results in order to improve instruction.

- In ELA, the District ranks #1 in Northern California and #3 in the entire state among unified (K-12) school districts.
- In Mathematics, PUSD is ranked #1 in Northern California and tied for #1 (with San Marino Unified) in the entire state.
- PHS ranks #1 of all high schools in the state in ELA, and #7 in Mathematics.

II. Support for the Social and Emotional Health and Development of Students

All students should feel physically safe, emotionally cared for, and academically and socially included in their school environment. What follows is an overview of our initiatives to promote the social and emotional health and development of students.

Health and Social and Emotional Learning

- Incorporated new mandates related to the California Healthy Youth Act (AB 329) into the 10th grade Social Psychology course.
- Implemented the MHS advisory program at all grade levels.
- Revised the content of the annual high school Consent Assembly and trained staff and students to facilitate conversations following the Assembly.

Inclusion

- Trained elementary paraeducators in facilitation of play to promote social inclusion of students during recess.
- Provided training on gender identity for staff and students at Beach, Havens, Wildwood, and PMS, to support transgender students.
- Held school-wide assemblies at PHS and MHS, student forums at PHS to address incidents of hate speech in the school community, and restorative circles for students and staff.

Physical and Mental Health

- Reviewed current practices and established guidelines for referring students for educationally-related mental health services.
- Created and implemented food allergy guidelines to promote student safety.
- Improved collection of student health and medical data as part of annual registration, to promote efficiency and student safety.
- Provided for more than 2400 visits from middle and high school students at the District's Wellness Center.

Physical Safety

- Conducted a "Vulnerability and Physical Security School Site Assessment" for each school site. This led to development of a comprehensive Piedmont Safe Schools Plan and individual plans at each site, in collaboration with Crisis Management Solutions, and Piedmont Police and Fire Departments.
- Provided training for approximately 200 people in emergency procedures and implemented staff emergency text messaging system.
- Created Board Policies on sexual assault prevention and suicide prevention.
- Implemented an automated Visitor Management System at school sites

Reducing School-Related Stress

- Evaluated the PMS Late Start Bell Schedule and the PMS Homework Policy and created a final exam schedule at PMS to avoid overloading students.
- Designated a testing Center for PHS and MHS and established protocols for teachers to leave assessments for students to make up, retake, or finish.
- Established a 9:30 PM curfew at PHS for all school co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

Digital Literacy & Digital Citizenship

- Refined and expanded programs to promote digital literacy and digital citizenship.
- Presented a series of information nights for PMS families to discuss digital citizenship.
- On November 8, 2016, the Education Speaker Series presented *Screenagers: Growing Up In The Digital Age*, followed by panel discussion led by Wellness Center Clinical Director Alisa Crovetti.

Parent Education

- Continued to promote engagement within the school community through parent education. Piedmont's Education Speaker Series, which just concluded its fifth season, presents a range of topics related to raising healthy children and young adults, and offers workshops for educators and student assemblies that dovetail with the parent education programs. The Series is a planned in collaboration with parents, educators and students. This year's Education Speaker Series included:
 - September 13: Alison Briscoe-Smith: *Talking With Your Kids About Race*. This was followed by a staff development program for elementary teachers led by Dr. Briscoe-Smith.
 - October 3: Sarah Ward: *Executive Functioning*
 - October 18: Ron Lieber: *How to Talk With Your Kids About Money*
 - November 8: *Screenagers: Growing Up In The Digital Age*, followed by panel discussion led by Wellness Center Clinical Director Alisa Crovetti. This was preceded by a showings and discussion of the documentary at PMS.
 - January 17: Julie Lythcott-Haims: *How to Raise An Adult*
 - February 14: Peggy Orenstein: *Girls and Sex: How Hookups, Pornography, Alcohol, Celebrities and Social Media are Impacting the Intimate Lives of Girls*. This was preceded by a lunchtime forum with Ms. Orenstein for high school students.
 - March 21: Rick Lavoie: *Supporting a Student Who Struggles in School*. This was preceded by a professional development workshop for educators presented by Mr. Lavoie.

III. Flexible and Adaptive Facilities and Infrastructure

During 2015-16, the District conducted a comprehensive facilities master planning process, to assess the condition of facilities and determine whether the facilities adequately support educational programs. This year, the District:

- Proposed a \$66 million school facilities bond measure to address the most critical needs identified in the Facilities Master Plan. The measure was approved by 74% of Piedmont voters in November 2016.
- Developed plans to modernize or replace the most antiquated high school facilities, and build new, specialized labs for Science, Technology and Engineering.
- Developed plans to add elementary classrooms for extended-day kindergarten.

- Made non-structural improvements to PMS, including the replacement of non-functional “movable” walls with permanent classroom walls, to improve ventilation, climate control, sound insulation, and the overall learning environment.

IV. Budget Management

Fiscal planning and stewardship are examples of District initiatives that, although seemingly indirect, impact the educational experience of our students. This year, the fiscal initiatives included:

- Aggressively managed the budget to reduce spending by \$200,000.
- Met with State Assemblymember Tony Thurmond (15th Assembly District) and State Senator Nancy Skinner (9th Senate District) to discuss the impacts of inadequate school funding and the rising cost of employer-paid benefits.
- Continued engagement with the Budget Advisory Committee to promote understanding of the complexity and nuances of the District budget.
- Continued engagement with the Parcel Tax Advisory Committee regarding the need for increased local funding to support core educational programs.
- Collaborated with the Piedmont Education Foundation and parent clubs to establish funding priorities.
- Refunded \$15.6 million in seismic safety bonds originally issued in 2006, saving taxpayers approximately \$1.16 million over the life of the bonds.
- Continued to overhaul contracting and budgeting procedures to ensure consistent and best practices. The procedures used to develop this year’s budget provided greater transparency, specificity, and clarity of supporting information.
- Continued participation in Federal discount program for certain technology purchases.

V. Communication and Engagement

- Primarily through the Local Control Accountability Plan Advisory Committee, a broad range of stakeholders helped refine District goals and priorities. As a result, the District has clearly articulated goals and metrics for measuring progress toward their accomplishment.
- The District facilitated meetings of the Budget Advisory Committee, District Technology Advisory Committee, and Special Education Advisory Committee in order to provide information and solicit feedback for continuous improvement in the areas of budget management, technology initiatives, and special education services.
- The District held three workshops for the Board of Education and community, on the Next Generation Science Standards (facilitated by middle and high school Science teachers), on Advanced Placement Courses, and on the District budget.
- The District promoted awareness and understanding about the facilities bond program and the options for new and improved high school facilities by creating a website (www.measureh1.org), a short animated video (<https://youtu.be/IOhWHostJYc>), and two public service announcements.
- The District held three community town hall meetings (on April 1, 6 and 18, 2017) to engage the community in a conversation about concept designs for new and improved high school facilities. Roughly 130 parents, teachers, students, and members of the Piedmont community participated. An online feedback form was created for anyone who was not able to attend one of the meetings.
- The District actively partnered with parent clubs, Piedmont’s Appreciating Diversity Committee, and the Piedmont Police Department to strengthen our commitment to equity, diversity and social justice across the District.

VI. Administrative and Other Initiatives

Instructional Leadership

- Hired new PHS Principal Adam Littlefield.

- Initiated the process to hire a new MHS principal and new Piedmont Adult School Principal. Selection is expected in July 2017.

Honoring Government and Public Service After High School

- In partnership with parent and community groups, helped create the *Wall of Honor*, a tribute to more than 1,200 Piedmont Alumni who served in the US Military and the foreign service from WWI to the present. The *Wall of Honor* exhibit will be an extension of the Ambassador Christopher Stevens Memorial collection at the PHS Library.

Professional Development

- To fully implement the new instructional calendar, which provides for fewer professional development days, the District implemented a new flexible professional development program.
- 97% of certificated staff participated in 18 hours or more of differentiated professional learning that was tailored to meet their specific learning needs.

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There are inherent and continuous challenges in leading a school district. These include: keeping curriculum and instruction relevant; enhancing opportunities for students; supporting the social and emotional needs of students; and providing a safe, appropriate, and inclusive learning environment. I am very proud of the work we accomplished together this year.

I welcome your questions and comments at any time, so please don't hesitate to contact me at rbooker@piedmont.k12.ca.us

R.B.