

From the Principal

January 6, 2008

By Bob Celeste

Happy New Year!

The second half of the 2007 – 2008 school year offers our children many opportunities for learning progress through exciting classroom activities as well as school based activities. It was exciting to see our students return from their winter break refreshed and full of enthusiasm.

New Topic for the Upcoming PTA Meeting

On Tuesday evening, January 15th, the second panel discussion of the year will focus upon the issue of bullying in the elementary school. Children and adults are concerned about this topic across the grades and throughout the country. Some folks have a view of a bully as a tall, large, mean faced individual taunting and chasing a defenseless, younger classmate. This picture is not the image of bullying we are facing on the Springer campus. This panel discussion is intended to present the true picture of bullying on an elementary school campus. Also, our panel will differentiate the subtle forms of bullying to include teasing, fooling around, kidding around, and cyber bullying.

All students will confront a “bullying” situation as they function in social settings. Children need to have an understanding of the bully versus the victim versus the by - stander role. Knowledge equals power.

Once children recognize certain signs of bullying or teasing, they can develop a “toolbox” to effectively deal with uncomfortable statements made to or about them. As a result, they will be successful in being able to socialize with a variety of personalities they meet as they continue through the grades.

This discussion is targeted toward our fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. The PTA extends an invitation to you and your child to attend this panel discussion together. I hope to see you on Tuesday evening at 7:00 P.M. in the multi – use room.

Springer Gardens to Blossom with Learning

Springer School has begun planning an exciting new program - Garden Based Education. This is part of a LASD District-wide effort whose vision is to seamlessly integrate State content standards in core academic subjects with hands-on lessons using educational gardens on the school campus. The idea is for students to learn about science, social studies, math and other subjects through real-life experiments, sensory observation, measurements, planting, harvesting and tasting. School gardens are a living laboratory where lessons are drawn from real-life experiences rather than textbook examples, allowing students to become active participants in the learning process.

The Program is being designed to provide a direct service to teachers, not an additional responsibility or new area to teach. This is a critical issue due to the sometimes overwhelming demands on our teachers. A Garden Based Education Docent program is planned to start up next summer, modeled after the successful Art Docent program in operation for over 25 years in LASD. Teachers would schedule garden based lessons tied directly to curriculum, linked to adopted text books so that the garden lesson would substitute for a text base lesson. Docents could be school parents, avid community gardeners, environmental educators, senior citizens, and anyone interested in teaching children in a garden setting.

LASD has hired a consultant to develop garden-based curriculum in science and other core academic subjects for grades K-3 for next year (grades 4-6 coming next) and to work with schools to design and develop educational gardens on their campuses. By the

end of the school year, grade specific lesson plans, reviewed and piloted by teachers, and conceptual new garden plans will be in place at Springer and other schools. At Springer, professional garden designer Alrie Middlebrook, owner of San Jose-based Middlebrook Gardens and author of bestselling garden book "Designing California Native Gardens", will be developing designs for a new garden space on the far east side of campus, in back of the Abracadabra Day Care and east of the ball wall. The proposed garden plan would incorporate California native plant gardens and other theme gardens such as edible gardens, colonial gardens, sensory gardens, Native American Indian gardens and butterfly gardens along with outdoor meeting and working areas, and other features such as an outdoor weather stations, composting area, etc. Ms. Middlebrook is doing this design work free of charge as a community service through her non-profit organization the California Native Garden Foundation.

At Springer, 2nd grade teacher Melanie de Monet is leading the garden based learning efforts and welcomes any parents to provide input into the garden design process or to help with future fundraising for the eventual garden construction. A conceptual garden plan will be presented to the Springer teaching staff and PTA in early 2008 for input as well. After receiving initial input, a more detailed garden plan and cost estimate will be presented and ultimately submitted to the School Board for approval.

The District garden consultant is proposing a part-time garden coordinator responsible for garden maintenance, coordinating garden needs with teachers, school communications, garden supplies, planting and harvesting calendars, and recruiting additional volunteer and other in-kind support for the gardens to help assure the long-term sustainability of the educational gardens.

For more information or to get involved in this exciting new curriculum enhancement program for Springer School, please contact Melanie de Monet at mdemonet@springerschool.net.