

The Briones Banner

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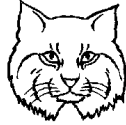
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Veteran's Day Holiday

There is no school Monday
Nov. 10 and Tuesday Nov. 11



Calendar

Mon.-Tue. Nov. 10-11	Veterans' Day – Holiday
Mon. Nov. 17	PTA Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
Thurs. Nov. 20	Make-up Day for School Pictures
Thurs.-Fri. Nov. 27-28	Thanksgiving Break

Principal's message

Assessing students across the state is no small task. We take the tests in spring, and they are scored over the summer. In late July or early August, we receive our first data report from the state, and with it comes our first impressions of how well our students have performed. But, it's not over; data analyses continue to show up on our radar throughout the fall.

The latest interpretation of last spring's assessments were made public when the 2002-2003 Academic Performance Index (API) Growth Reports were released on the California Department of Education website two weeks ago. The reports reveal that all PAUSD schools continue to maintain high levels of achievement; consistently surpassing the State's target API of 800.

For elementary schools, 80% of this year's API was based on the California Standards Tests in English language arts (48%) and math (32%). The remaining 20% of the API was based on the CAT6, a new norm referenced test that replaced the SAT9. The CAT6 weighting in the API was math, 8%; reading, 6%; and language and spelling, 3% each. Both test batteries were taken last spring.

The 2002-2003 APIs for PAUSD elementary schools are:

- Addison 911 -Barron Park 841
- Briones 878 -Duveneck 944
- El Carmelo 888 -Escondido 889
- Fairmeadow 885 -Hays 933
- Hoover 951 -Nixon 941
- Ohlone 909 -Palo Verde 864

For the first time, the CDE has also calculated an API score for entire school districts. PAUSD's score was 889, well above the 800 benchmark.

If you aren't impressed by the individual school indices or the District's index, consider PAUSD student achievement from another perspective. Nearly 90% of all PAUSD students tested on the State assessments scored at or above the 50th National Percentile Rank (NPR), and nearly 50% of PAUSD students scored above the 90th NPR. This is exceptionally high achievement, but it probably isn't that surprising given our collective expectations.

Although our own school's API grew significantly from its base of 839 to a new high of 878, it's difficult to become terribly excited about peaks or valleys in data over time given some of the variables. For example, each year, we test second, third, fourth, and fifth grade students. The fifth graders move on to middle school, and a new group of second graders enters. Since the makeup of the group changes from year to year, achievement data and the resulting API are bound to vary as well.

The general makeup of school populations can vary from school site to school site. The number or percentage of students with special needs is not always a constant at each school. However, the scores of such students, including students in the Resource Specialist Program or who are English language learners, are lumped in with general education students and can have a significant impact on a school's Academic Performance Index. For example, Albert Einstein, a German-speaking boy with disabilities taking a test in California now, would probably be a drag on a school's API. Although it is commonly done, taking an API at face value as indicator of school quality might not be such a good idea.

If you want to know more about the API and State assessments, you can access that information on the CDE's website. (<http://api.cde.ca.gov>) API and other assessment information for middle and high schools is also available there.

—Gary Dalton

President's Message

As you all may have noticed in the previous President's messages, we've had a lot to say about fundraising – both for this year (2003-2004) and for next year. I thought I'd take the opportunity to really explain the ABCs of fundraising in Palo Alto.

Traditionally, the PTA has raised funds for site-specific goals for everything from pencil sharpeners to



salaries and consequently, was really the only organization that you heard from about fundraising. We raised our own money and spent it here at Juana Briones. The Palo Alto Foundation for Education (PAFE) has been around for quite a while, but has been reasonably low key in their fundraising efforts.

Several things have happened that have changed the fundraising picture and the sense of urgency involved. First, the state budget is in crisis and school districts everywhere are fighting to retain funding. Secondly, PAUSD has adopted a new policy that governs funds raised to pay for salaries. As of the 2004-2005 school year, additional funds supplied to schools to pay for salaries must be donated through the All Schools Fund (ASF) and they must be in the bank ahead of time, in this case by March 1st, 2004. This allows the district to offer work contracts based on money known to be "in the budget". And additionally, all funds raised by the ASF must be distributed equitably – on a per student basis.

How does this affect you and your student? Traditionally, 60-70% of money raised by your PTA has been used to fund three important staffing needs: we have helped pay for classroom aides, the K-5 science teacher and for the Spectra Art teacher. These positions help us to

continue to educate the "whole child" – we are able to continue to teach science and art and to offer small group instruction so that our children have a well-balanced education. Over the past several years, this has amounted to roughly \$250-\$300 per student. The ASF campaign is targeted at continuing support at this level or higher.

So, to cut to the chase, there are three organizations in Palo Alto soliciting funds to support education and they each fill a slightly different niche. They are all equally deserving of our support and I hope that you can find a way to support them all. In the meantime, here's the guide to knowing who does what:

All Schools Fund (ASF): Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, the ASF will be the only mechanism for supporting additional staff at any Palo Alto school site.

Palo Alto Foundation for Education (PAFE): PAFE raises money to support teacher grants for innovative teaching projects and capital campaigns such as the High School Supplies for Science Labs campaign. PAFE is the organization that provided the grant money for last year's mural project in the MP Room.

Juana Briones PTA: Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, our PTA will be raising money to pay for school supplies, assemblies, copy costs, hospitality, etc. BUT not for staff salaries.



I hope that clears up a lot of the mysteries surrounding educational fund raising. If you still have questions, please do not hesitate to

call Suzanne McKenna (856-4192), Cindy Ziebelman (852-9797), Lynn Kidder (493-6575) or myself. We'd love to help you understand what's going on!

If you haven't yet contributed to our Direct Appeal campaign please consider doing it now!! To date, only



29% of Briones students have had contributions made to the PTA's "Direct Appeal" effort. This is our largest fundraiser of the year – it is responsible for paying for classroom aides and our science program not only for this year – but also for 2004-2005. We NEED your help! **Our goal is 100% participation.** Your contribution, in whatever amount,



signifies your support of our educational goals. Contributions in any amount --\$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, or \$100 -- are so critical and so welcomed. The more families who join the effort, the better off we'll all be! Please drop off your donation envelope at the school office, or mail it to Cindy Ziebelman, 644 Maybell Ave, 94306. Thank you! Any questions, please don't hesitate to call Cindy at 852-9797 or her co-chair Lynn Kidder at 493-6575.

And finally, I saved the best for last! Our sincere thanks go out to Ari Birger and Carol Kibler for putting on a wonderful Harvest Festival. It was a terrific event and it was great to see so many of you there! The rock-climbing wall was a huge success, the BBQ was wonderful and everyone had a great time!

Thank you to Cindy Ziebelman, Jill Bibo, Carolyn Cooper and Suzanne McKenna for a very successful Auctionette. It was a much-simplified format with mostly social events that managed, nonetheless, to

Thank You!

raise \$16,000 for the PTA!

I hope that each of you who enjoyed these events will take a moment to thank these folks for taking the time to produce these events for our enjoyment!

—Debbie Sutherland (493-1782, MarkJSuth@aol.com)

Library Lingo

Thank You's

Three huge cheers for Amy Christel and Laura Baldschun for their fantastic work on the Bookfair. They spent countless hours organizing and running this successful library fundraiser. Another thank-you to all parents who helped run the bookfair, as well as all the families that purchased books.

At the Harvest Fair, I was able to raise an additional \$225 in book donations. We appreciate all the parents who have sponsored a book this year. There are still many books looking for sponsors. Please let me know if you'd like to "adopt" one. Birthdays are a great time to sponsor a book in your child's name.

Volunteers Still Needed

I'm still looking for parent volunteers to keep the library open at lunch. It's relatively easy. Children come in to quietly read, draw, or checkout books. They are very disappointed when the library is closed.

Let's foster their love of the library by keeping it open at lunch. Please contact Debbie Clark at (650) 494-8305 or email her at dixiedebstue@yahoo.com if you're interested.

- Lunch Time Volunteers: every Monday, every other Tuesday, and every other Thursday still needed
- Parent Volunteer needed to help on Tuesdays from 12:40-1:25 (4th Grade, Room 17)
- Parent Volunteer needed on Wednesday from 10:30-11 (Room 3, Kindergarten)
- Battle of the Book Judges Needed on Dec. 15 from 12-2:40pm

4th and 5th Grade Battle of the Books

Yesterday I announced the eight fiction titles to be read by participating 4th and 5th grade



teams for the first Briones Battle of the Books, scheduled for December 15th from 12:40-2:30pm. Each team will work together to read eight titles and will then answer questions about the books during the battle. The winning team will be treated to a pizza party. All participants will receive a certificate and special bookmark. We still need more judges. Judges will be in charge of roughly 4 teams. It is helpful for the judges to

have read some, if not all, of the books ahead of time. Let me know if you would be willing to judge the battle. It is a commitment of 12-2:40pm, plus time to read the books. So far I only have 3 judges.

* I'm also looking for parents to send refreshments for a post-Battle party. Please call or email me if you can help.

* Room 14 will not be able to participate in the battle due to a field trip conflict.

* The third graders will be having their own battle in the spring.

Library Update

Grades K-2

I will introduce the concept of fiction and nonfiction books to the kindergarten classes as we compare the fiction stories with nonfiction books about the same topics. In addition, we will continue the secret letter of the week, which correlates to the weekly story. This month the first graders will do a mini-author study on Cynthia Rylant. Both the first and second graders will learn more about title pages as they try to find the first letter of an author's last name. More practice with this skill will help them to locate books on the shelves written by their favorite authors. Second graders will learn about parody this month as they look at a new version of the Boy Who Cried Wolf. Have you heard of The Wolf Who Cried Boy? Ask your second grader about this humorous story at the end of the month.

Grades 3-5

The third graders continue to work on their alphabetizing skills. Many of the students are finding this to be very challenging. We will begin working in the dictionaries later this month. I will also read Gooney Bird Greene by Lois Lowry at the beginning of the library periods.

The fourth and fifth grades will continue to practice using the online library catalog, choosing appropriate literature, and finding books on the shelves. Later this month, both grades will begin working with nonfiction reference materials.

Library Website

Have you visited the Juana Briones Library Website? On my website you will find great links to booklists and access to the online library catalog from home. Simply go to the Juana Briones website



(<http://www.briones.palo-alto.ca.us>) and click on the Library on the left side.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

—Laura Losier

Library Media Teacher

Items included in the Briones Banner are presented as a community service. The Briones PTA and PAUSD do not necessarily endorse any of the programs mentioned here. For more information about any item, please check to see if complete flyers are available in the school office or are posted on the bulletin board just outside the school office

PTA News and To Do's

Book Fair Raises \$ for Our Library

Thanks to all who purchased books at our October Book Fair and to those who volunteered time to set-up, staff, and put away the bookstore—it was a great fundraiser for our Briones



Library! Our gross sales were \$7,936, and total profits were over \$2600! Laura Losier chose 100 books from the Fair (valued at \$1288), and will receive another \$1340 in cash profit to buy books for the library from other sources—probably another 50 books. And anyone who visited the Fair at recess or lunch knows how much the kids enjoyed browsing for books and adding to their own libraries.

Book Fair Co-Chairs, Amy Christel and Laura Baldschun, would like to thank the many volunteers who contributed to the running of the store: Clarissa Miki, Jeanne Chisholm, Pamela Diken, Sawako Tajima, Rachel Paley, Nobuko Ikai, Suzanne McKenna, Stephanie Langley, Sandy Passell, Robin Boselli, Gretchen Reynolds, Pilar Badillo, Nathalie Cabili, Martha Bowden, Debbie Sutherland, Lynn Kidder, Sevgi Carefoot, Rena Allison, Natalie Toennis, Shauna Feiner, Amy Smiley, Anne-Marie Macrae, and Sally Koen! We couldn't have kept the Fair open all those hours without you! And a special thanks to Jack Younkin for his cheerful assistance with the heavy set-up work!

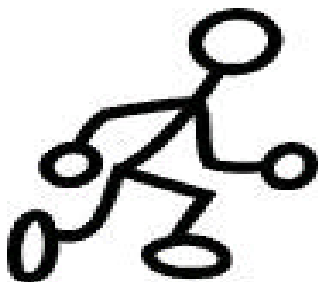
As Laura B. and Amy C. will not be at Briones next year, we're recruiting new Chairs to take over this event. The Fair is tentatively scheduled with Scholastic for next October.

Interested? Give Amy a call and she'll give you more information (852-9959) We hope this library fundraising tradition continues at Briones!

—Amy Christel

Juana Run Volunteer Needed

In response to requests from previous years' runs, we would like to offer a place for people to check their bags on race morning.



We need someone to organize some volunteers to work race morning (possibly some scouts?) to collect race bags from the runners, put the runners' race number on the bag and store them. While the race is in progress, sort the bags for easy re-distribution. Very little pre-race work other than gathering volunteers. Show up race morning from 7am-10am. This will only be for the 8K race. Bring markers to mark bags. The race is February 28th. Please consider helping with this small race detail so I can check it off my list.

Thanks

Karen Saxena 650-856-6778
heypalermo@aol.com

FYI

All Schools Fund - THANK YOU PARENTS! Because of you, the first-ever All Schools Fund Challenge was a resounding success. Elementary school parents all across town were challenged to give "Above and Beyond" the suggested amount of their annual appeals - and they did. Over 400 families contributed a total of \$152,000 to their PTA's in "Above and Beyond" gifts. In addition, the entire \$50,000 Challenge Grant has been donated to All Schools Fund - making the combined benefit to our schools over \$200,000. Thank you to everyone who went "Above and Beyond"!

Do you want to do something to improve the school lunch program?

Last spring, we published an article in the school newsletters of most if



not all Palo Alto schools, about our efforts to improve the school lunch program. We asked for help from parents/guardians and received an overwhelming response. Thank you! (We continue to welcome interest from parents.)

This project was started many years ago by several individuals who were interested in improving our children's health and welfare. When our group formed one and a half years ago we realized we all had the same vision in mind: better food for our children.

"Better food" means many things to many people. We spent last year looking at other school districts in California and around the country, and have come to the conclusion that we can provide more nutritious, fresher and better tasting food for our children.

We have also drafted a document that spells out school district policy on nutrition, and seek your input on this document.

If you would like to be involved, please contact any of the committee members listed below. We are especially looking for a parent representative from each school to act as a liaison.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

Stay healthy!

The Healthy School Lunch Committee

Penny Gertridge (Co-chair)
<pennyg1@pacbell.net>

Susan Stansbury (Co-chair)
<sstansbu@fgconline.org>

Gerda Endemann
<Endemann@healthyfat.com>

May Wang <maywang@pacbell.net>