

Wishing You A Happy



Valentine's Day!

Ladera Elementary School

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE...

Volume 2, Issue 6

As we enter into March, visions of Kindergarten Registration, Middle School Orientation, new families visiting the classrooms via school tours, School Site Council members working on refining the Parent, Student and Staff surveys, and PTA/SSC Nominations being written come to mind. Just like in the retail business, the school begins to prepare for the upcoming school year as spring approaches. Projected enrollments are made in an effort to determine staffing and facility needs. Fifth grade students and parents attend the orientations to prepare for the transition to middle school. Families visit to decide upon purchasing homes in the school attendance area.

So **what is the educational program and learning environment at Ladera Elementary School you might ask?** And where is Ladera Elementary headed to ensure children are ready for the future?

Ladera is a **standards-based assessment driven** school that strives to meet the needs of the **whole child through a balanced meaningful and integrated curriculum** that is **hands-on, minds-on**. Wow! What does that mean you ask? It means that at Ladera School, we haven't thrown out the baby with the bath water! Nor have we NOT paid attention to the latest research and changed our programs, teaching strategies and curriculum in an effort to find the "next right answer". Continuous improvement is our driving force which therefore means that at Ladera Elementary School, despite high test scores, we believe we must always be looking forward and towards the future. Given the constant and quickly changing world, education must also change!

Standards-based assessment driven means that as educators we use the California State Standards and CVUSD content stan-

dards as our guiding light. Starting with the standards allows Ladera teachers to know where to begin. Given approximately six hours 180 days per year, teachers have to make important curriculum and instructional design decisions to ensure all students are ready to move on to the next grade level while at the same time meeting the individual needs of each student. **Using assessments on a regular basis allows the teachers to know more specifically what each individual student knows and are able to do.** This provides the teacher with the added knowledge needed to design lessons for small group/individualized explicit directed instruction and/or move-on or re-teach if necessary. As you are aware, there are specific academic standards to be addressed at each grade level and knowing that we all learn at different rates and in different ways, the instruction is differentiated to provide the challenge for the gifted learner, be proactive for the child demonstrating signs of possible area of academic need and/or remediate for the limited learner.

To provide the students at Ladera Elementary School with the necessary tools needed to succeed in the 21st century, **the curriculum**

LADERA STUDENTS and PTA RECOGNIZED for...

GOING ABOVE and BEYOND!
At the Conejo Valley Unified School District Board Meeting on Tuesday, February 2, 2010, the students and PTA of Ladera will be recognized

for their ongoing efforts this year in the area of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** by supporting **OPERATION SOLIDERS**



Principal's Message Continued...

Is balanced which means that students need to learn facts & big ideas to extend their current knowledge. New knowledge is built on existing knowledge and experience. But in order to continue to build a student's knowledge base and take them to a higher more meaningful level, the initial understandings must be actively engaged. Preconceptions outside the classroom that are incorrect can be dislodged by engaging students in powerful discrepant events. Also students need a foundation of factual knowledge in an area of inquiry to develop competence, understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework, and organize knowledge in ways that facilitate retrieval and application. The "big ideas" help students organize information and help students' ability to retrieve and apply factual knowledge. Finally when students are in control of their own learning they are more successful. Therefore students learn how to make goals and evaluate their own work.

Using a **hand-on, minds-on approach** to learning makes it **meaningful** because it requires students to actively test and explain what they are learning through experimental situations, class discussions, project-based learning and group work. By integrating the subject matter students are able to make the connections to the real world and every day life. Students' problems-solve, explore, observe and evaluate just like in the scientific process thus making new hypothesis and therefore new knowledge! The big ideas and facts from various subject areas interconnect to make learning powerful and meaningful.

The **whole child** means that at Ladera Elementary School we are educating not just the mind but also the physical and emotional being as well.

To be educated means in mind, body and soul thus the whole being. To educate the body, students attend physical education classes otherwise known as P.E. in Kindergarten through fifth grades. Those classes look slightly different in K-5th grades vs. middle school because of the change in attire and specified amount of time on any given day. In the elementary grades students attend P.E. for 200 minutes every 10 days. At Ladera this also means that part of this instruction is provided by a P.E. Specialist once or twice a week for 30 minutes using the state standards.

Still focusing on the body, K-5 students learn about nutrition and fitness from the school nurse/health clerk, District programs (example, Health and Development Films 4-5th, Vision and Hearing Screening, and Menu planning) and CVUSD Health curriculum. This is further enhanced by guest speakers (even our own parents) and presentations, PTA sponsored programs such as Safety assemblies that not only entice the students to wear their helmets when on bikes but also encourage them to ride for the exercise!

The **balanced meaningful and integrated curriculum** at Ladera means keeping the focus of schooling on what it was originally meant to do-schools were originally formed to teach kids to be smart and to be of good character! In today's world schooling appears to be about passing the test-passing the California Standards Test (CST); and getting good grades therefore getting A's. People judge schools based upon their API (Average Performance Index) score which according to the state needs to be 800 or better to show that the students are scoring at proficient or advance on the CST. It appears that many have forgotten that schools are



also partners with parents and the community in teaching students good character traits and learning how the world works. Schools are a mini-picture of society and an opportunity to practice many of the encounters a person will have as an adult in the community and/or workforce. Therefore **character education embedded in the daily curriculum and at the teachable moment is a big part of the educational environment at Ladera.**

Along with developing a child's IQ and character, a Ladera student's **EQ, emotional intelligence is just as important.** The workplace today emphasizes communication skills, ability to work in teams, tolerance, understanding of different cultures/traditions and innovation through teamwork. Students work in cooperative groups, have study buddies and multicultural awareness is taught through a variety of content areas throughout the school year.

Three ingredients make a successful school. Ladera has talented and dedicated **staff** as the first ingredient. The **parents and community** are the next ingredient. They contribute to the formal education of the student by supporting the teachers and involvement in the total school program. The final and most important ingredient is **the child.** His or her attitude at school helps to create an environment where learning can take place. Ladera is fortunate to have all three ingredients therefore being an extremely successful school!

Dream...Believe...Succeed!

Sincerely,

Dr. Pam Chasse

