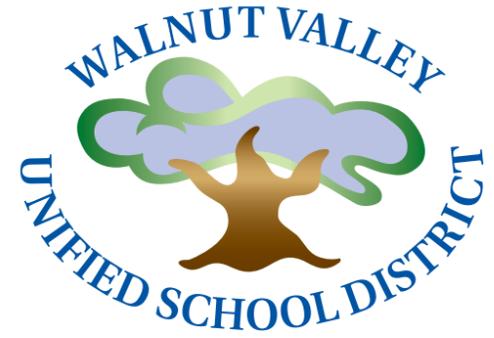


# Outlook



Issue 47 Fall 2020

**Let's Talk!** – We want to be responsive to your needs and invite you to send questions, comments, and suggestions to [www.wvusd.org](http://www.wvusd.org).

## #WVUSDStrong

**Navigating Back to School Virtually During COVID-19  
Teachers Embrace Distance Learning with Courage, Compassion, and Grace**



It's an unprecedented start to the new school year as courageous and compassionate Walnut Valley USD educators provide instruction from empty classes and home offices.

"This is going to be a school year like no other we've ever experienced," said Quail Summit second grade teacher Rhonda Barnes.

"Let's remember to give each other extra grace, generous smiles, and loads of patience."

Nearly 13,500 students are learning from home with the support of families due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I am so happy to see my students and work with them even if it is over Zoom!" shared Social Studies teacher Katy Larson from South Pointe Middle School.

"One thing is for sure, we will have many challenges ahead of us, but if we lean on each other and work together, we can get through this," said Christa Richard, a transitional kindergarten teacher at Castle Rock Elementary.

Educators are finding creative ways to engage students during distance learning, despite the occasional computer glitch.

"We've sorted out the hiccups that have come along together as a class," said Language Arts teacher Cassie Larson.

"My students love to solve technical problems and work with each other to find a solution."

"Every morning at 7:57 a.m. before we close our classroom

doors to admit our students onto Zoom, we all shout to each other (from at least six-feet apart) to have a great day and pray all the technology stuff will work," shared kindergarten teacher Dani Hawksworth at Westhoff Elementary.

Educators spent months preparing to pivot to new online learning platforms and provide students with high quality, engaging, and rigorous learning experiences in the new school year.

"Distance learning has definitely pushed teachers to try new things and grow as educators in a way none of us ever imagined," said Language Arts teacher Alexis Lujan at Suzanne Middle School.

Walnut High English teacher Marissa Beemer keeps tabs with students during a social emotional check-in at the end of each week.

"What struck me was the number of kids who said they were fine, but thanked me for caring enough to ask," she said.

"It's so necessary right now," said Social Studies teacher Eric Chin of his priority to make connections and create a strong classroom culture.

Lauren Gullotti offered her Vejar Elementary students a healthy outlet for expressing anxiety, stress, and concerns.

"With COVID shutting down schools so abruptly, we did not have the ability to offer students strategies for coping with the changes they experienced," she explained.

One of Gullotti's first assignments was having her 35 fifth graders pen letters to first responders, grocery store employees, families, and friends.

"It has helped students stay connected and express themselves in a positive, thoughtful way!"

"We're all in this together – no matter the distance!" shared Sarah Sherman, C.J. Morris Elementary third grade teacher.



## Message from the Superintendent



Dear Walnut Valley Educational Community,

As we prepare for a unique, unprecedented holiday season, and as we all experience varying struggles, anxieties, and obstacles related to the

pandemic, I recently took a moment to pause and, despite all of the current challenges, reflect on so many things of which I have to be thankful.

I'm thankful for being part of such a supportive community in which education is a top priority. Whether it be in the time committed to volunteering in our schools, participating in an education-based fundraiser, or simply offering verbal or written encouragement, it is evident that our community supports our students.

As I visit school campuses and observe the various state-of-the-art facility projects in development across our community, I am reminded of the generosity of the community in supporting our previous Measure WV campaign, thus enabling the much-needed upgrades and improvements.

Similarly, I recently had the opportunity to watch the Walnut Valley Educational Foundation's 25th Anniversary Gala in which they highlighted various community members, over the past 25 years, who have made significant contributions and have had an immeasurable impact on our school district. These highlighted recipients were a great example and reflection of the type of service-oriented people that fill our community.

I'm thankful for our teachers and staff for their unwavering support of our students and their continued dedication to a rigorous teaching and learning experience throughout this pandemic. As the husband of a middle school teacher, I witness the energy, compassion, and patience that teachers are pouring into the Distance Learning experience every single day.

I'm appreciative of our parents for supporting their children academically and emotionally while managing all of their many responsibilities. As a parent of three children, I know firsthand that this is not the ideal educational environment for all kids...they miss their friends, their teachers, their activities, and their school. Therefore, I am grateful for our students in their perseverance and their understanding. Please be reminded that, for those students in need of emotional support, our schools and our district have a plethora of services available (contact your school and/or our school district for additional information).

Finally, I'm mostly grateful for people during this challenging time...my family, friends, colleagues, the staff and students in our school district, and those people throughout the Walnut Valley community. There is a clear, strong sense of togetherness and of family in Walnut Valley... and for that I'm truly thankful.

Sincerely,  
**Robert P. Taylor, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

## District of Choice Join the Walnut Valley Family!

Learn more about District of Choice (Applications accepted October 5 - December 31), Parent Employment (Allen Bill), Inter-District Transfer Permit, and Caregiver options during virtual Enrollment Information Meetings on December 10 and January 14 beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/30iSuWP>  
Meeting ID: 580 649 6923  
Passcode: 657852

Can't attend a Zoom meeting? Applications are available at [www.wvusd.k12.ca.us/EnrollNow](http://www.wvusd.k12.ca.us/EnrollNow). For more information, call (909) 595-1261 ext. 31360 or email [enroll@wvusd.org](mailto:enroll@wvusd.org).



## Senior Scholars

### WVUSD Seniors Named 2021 National Merit Semifinalists

Nineteen Walnut Valley USD seniors have been named 2021 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, taking the first step in the highly selective process to earn the distinguished finalist honor. These high achieving students represent the top 1% in the country. The students were among some 16,000 nationwide that were chosen from a pool of 1.5 million. Congratulations to the following students on this accomplishment:

#### Diamond Bar High School:

Sritaran Bondada, Emily Chen, Aaron Hao, Brandon Kam, Caitlin Lee, Camille McCurry, Celine Shen, Nathan Song, Claire Wang, Derek Wang, Benjamin Wu, Chelsea Wu, Breanna Yang, Jacob Zhi, Erin Zhou, and Luke Zhou.

#### Walnut High School:

Prabhleen Kaur, Jonathan Steele, and Nicole Zhang.

All semifinalists have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,600 National Merit Scholarship awards worth more than \$30 million, to be awarded in spring 2021.

## Ty Watkins District Teacher of the Year



"It seems pretty amazing to think that nearly 4,000 students have walked into my classroom over the years," recalls the District's top teacher, Ty Watkins.

"And every year, I hope the experience I give every student is the gift of laughter, hope, and learning!"

The 26-year veteran educator has taught American History and coached on the Brahma campus for the past 16 years.

Last year, he added a Pathways Communications Academy Leadership class to his roster organizing a successful "Face Your Fears" haunted house, a display honoring 9/11 victims, guest speakers, and activities.

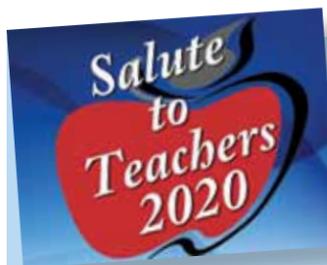
Ty said he experienced a "true learning curve" while navigating through uncharted territory at the onset of the global pandemic.

"I realized that education will never be the same and quickly learned how to Zoom with 90 summer school students to keep them accountable and engaged."

For the past few months, Ty has been spreading hope and perseverance among his peers with an original "This One" motto.

"It is the commitment to taking each challenge as it comes and doing what teachers do best - managing this one, that one, and every one thereafter," he explained.

He was also named a semifinalist in the Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year competition.



Our incredible Walnut Valley educators are working tirelessly to pivot, adapt, persevere, and make connections during this unprecedented time.

Congratulations to the following 15 outstanding teachers judged by their peers as shining examples of this noble profession. View the virtual Salute to Teachers awards program at <https://youtu.be/kxXK-uOa0Eg>.

- Christa Richard, Castle Rock Elementary
- Ken Weeks, Chaparral Middle School
- Thy Nguyen, Cyrus J. Morris Elementary
- Melani Garrett, Collegewood Elementary
- Ty Watkins, Diamond Bar High
- Lily Chang, Evergreen Elementary
- Amber Swartz, Maple Hill Elementary
- Rhonda Barnes, Quail Summit Elementary
- Cynthia McBride, Ron Hockwalt Academics
- Robin Wadsworth, South Pointe Middle School
- Melanie Kobayashi, Suzanne Middle School
- Jamie Highstreet, Vejar Elementary
- Janet Ahn, Walnut Elementary
- Jerry Knox, Walnut High
- Wendy Simpson, Westhoff Elementary

## In The News. . .

### Diamond Bar High Alum Jason Wright Makes History

Walnut Valley USD proudly congratulates Diamond Bar High School alumnus Jason Wright (Class of 2000) recently named president of the Washington Football Team.

The former NFL running back and business consultant becomes the first Black person to hold the league title, and at age 38 is the youngest team president in NFL history.

The popular Brahma football player and class president won back-to-back championships in 1998 and 1999 where he scored the winning touchdown to claim the CIF Southern Section Division II title and an undefeated 14-0 season. The 1999 championship team was quarterbacked by Ryan Maine who later became Diamond Bar's head coach and is now principal at Walnut High School.

Maine knew his longtime friend was destined for great things.

"He was our team captain and always one of the hardest workers," said Maine who now advises high school students to surround themselves with people who make you better.

"I look at that class led by Jason, and he was one of those people that made us all better."



WVUSD's teachers and staff are determined to connect and engage with students learning remotely.

## Distance Learning Spotlight

### Walnut High Science Teacher Engages Students with Virtual Games, Labs, Collaboration



Walnut High School science teacher Janice Zhen isn't letting distance deter her commitment to students.

"I'm doing everything I can to make sure the experience is as educational and fun as if we were in a physical classroom," the IB and Honors Biology teacher pledged.

"The biggest challenge has been hands-on experiments," said the 20-year veteran educator who has come up with a few solutions.

Zhen now conducts virtual lab demonstrations via Zoom so that students can still observe, collect data, and make conclusions.

For labs that require common materials, she asks students to search for items available at home. The teens record themselves performing experiments and then submit on the Flipgrid video discussion website. For labs that don't require materials, such as learning how exercise affects breathing rate, the class is able to participate together on Zoom.

"It makes the learning more fun!" she said.

Zhen checks for understanding using Peardeck where students answer questions using text, drawing, and multiple-choice.

"I can see their answers in real time and provide feedback," she said.

"It's a great way to engage all students and start insightful discussions."

To encourage collaboration remotely, Zhen often assigns students to Zoom breakout rooms for discussions and completing tasks. One popular assignment is the Escape Room challenge that requires students to work together while solving different levels of clues.

"Today, you'll be using the scientific method in

order to get out of this room that I trapped you in!" the chuckling teacher said.

"Students enjoy applying the information learned in class to solve the puzzles and compete with each other," she commented.

Zhen also keeps the online sessions lively with games of Jeopardy, Kahoot!, Quizizz, Taboo, and Pictionary – all via Zoom, of course.

"What is gold?" freshman Phoebe Chin quickly responded to the "What metal is heavier, silver or gold?" question.

"Congratulations, you scored 100 points!" the teacher chimed.

The next category was Enzymes for 500.

"This might be a hard one," Zhen prompted, reminding students to keep their hands on the virtual buzzers.

"The next question is: List three factors that might affect enzyme activity," Zhen recited.

"Temperature, PH, and concentration," answered freshman Marcus Truong.

"That is correct!" applauded Zhen who uses a free version of BuzzIn.live that adds a "cool sound effect to the challenges" and creates online game boards with JeopardyLabs templates.

"It would not be Jeopardy without the buzzer!" she said.

Before the game begins, the biology teacher sends students an online access code. Zhen is able to see the first player who buzzes in and wins the opportunity to answer the question.

"Students love the sound of the buzzer which stimulates the competitiveness in them!"

## Service with a Smile!

### Staff Members Go the Extra Mile for Students



#### Grab & Go Meals Continue

Free "Grab & Go" meals are available weekdays at all elementary schools from 11:30 a.m. - 1:10 p.m. and at all middle and high schools from 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Our hard-working Nutrition Services staff has been supporting students with over 400,000 delicious and nutritious meals served since March.

"We miss our kids and love seeing them during pickups!" said Kathy Carreon, C.J. Morris Elementary Nutrition Services Worker.

#### Technology Support

The Technology Division has been assisting Walnut Valley families with 6,000 devices distributed and over 4,000 inquiries processed during distance learning. The "Help Desk" provides Chromebook distribution and service weekdays from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. (closed from 12 - 1 p.m.) at the WVUSD District Education Center located at 880 S. Lemon Avenue in Walnut. Questions can be emailed to [Wvhelp@wvusd.org](mailto:Wvhelp@wvusd.org).



# Construction Update

## Sky's the Limit!

Progress continues on construction projects made possible by community support of Measure WV. Thank you!



### Diamond Bar High

**New Music Building:** The 3-story instrumental music building is beginning to take shape with the installation of towering 58-foot-tall steel columns in late October. The structure's main supports - an upper retaining wall and footing - were recently completed and the main concrete footing will be soon be poured.

"We are so excited to see our school community's vision of a world-class music facility starting to become a reality," said Music Directors Steve Acciani and Marie Santos.

The project is slated for completion in early Summer 2021.

**500 Science Building:** Modernization is well underway with recent installation of interior walls, underground utilities, electrical, and plumbing. Projected completion in Summer 2021.

### Collegewood Elementary

**New Two-Story 14 Classroom Building:** Construction is nearing completion with recent installation of exterior plaster, interior doors, LED lighting, and HVAC units. Projected completion: Phase 1 Building in Spring 2021 and Phase 2 Site work in Summer 2021.

### Upcoming Projects

- Walnut High School Gymnasium
- Suzanne Middle School Gymnasium, Two-Story Classroom Building, Music Building
- South Pointe Middle School Music Building
- Walnut Elementary MPR Building, Kindergarten Building
- Diamond Bar High School 400 Building Modernization
- Evergreen Elementary Playground, Staff Parking
- Vejar Parking Lot Modifications

Performing arts pivot during pandemic

## DB High Drama Students Take Virtual Stage



In the midst of the pandemic, Diamond Bar High students have been honing their acting chops in "Get A Clue" – A Murder Mystery Experience that debuted in October.

Because the teen actors still aren't able to take the stage, they performed from their homes on Zoom.

Drama teacher Jared Kaitz wrote the "Get A Clue" over the summer while in shelter-in-place.

"It's inspired by the popular board game and movie," he said of its colorful cast of characters including Lady Raven, Colonel Dijon, Professor Magenta, Mrs. Frost, Miss Rose, Mr. and Mrs. Emerald, Mrs. Cerulean, and Ms. Marigold R.N.

Improvisation, a key component in the theatre, has become the norm as teachers and students adapt to the remote learning experience.

"Theatre in a pandemic is very difficult," Kaitz commented of the endeavor with "everything we are used to stripped away."

"It takes a ton of flexibility, commitment to learning, and time to be able to put together a virtual production."

Along with his writing duties, Kaitz acted as the show's director, producer, costumer, prop maker, video editor, wig stylist, and more.

In the past months, he kept the program thriving by offering weekly dance and improv classes, virtual cabarets, Q & A's with Broadway professionals, and a virtual awards showcase.

"During a difficult time, we were able to keep the theatre alive and the students were so grateful!" he said.

"It not only gives the performers a sense of normalcy, but also gives our friends and family something to look forward to," said Drama President senior Allison Santogrossi.

"I've seen how excited my family is to see me in this production - even if it's in our living room wearing PJs!"

Kaitz is a 2009 Diamond Bar High graduate who joined the Brahma staff nearly four years ago. Coincidentally, his twin brother, Jacob, is the school's theatre manager and they work side-by-side on the productions.

"Being a part of this program led to my career in theatre, and I am so happy to be able to give my students their own experience!" Kaitz exclaimed.

"This job is truly a dream come true."

## "Don't Stop Believin'", Walnut Valley! DBHS, WHS bands rally together and create pure magic



At a time when students and families could use a little hope and inspiration, the Walnut High Blue Thunder and Diamond Bar High Thundering Herd marching bands have come through with a virtual performance of Journey's rock anthem, "Don't Stop Believin'".

Walnut High Band Director and 2013 alumna Katie Takahashi edited the synchronized piece, featuring 90 teen musicians, dedicated to the Walnut Valley USD community.

"Our goal was to produce something that band students could be proud of and to share a message of hope," Takahashi said.

"We are so incredibly proud of all the students who participated!"

Click to view and get ready to smile at <https://bit.ly/368QQcu>.

## Measure WV Series B Bond Sale

### WVUSD Delivers Estimated \$15M in Lower Interest Cost to Local Taxpayers

Walnut Valley USD has taken advantage of the current historically low interest rate environment with the sale of \$47.9 million in Measure WV Series B Bonds.

At a competitive sale held August 12, the District received six bids from financial institutions around the country.

Bank of America Securities was awarded the 30-year bonds at an average fixed interest rate of 1.89%, which is significantly lower than the originally forecasted 4.00% rate.

District officials estimate the financial transaction has saved local taxpayers \$15.5 million in reduced interest costs.

"These extraordinarily low interest rates can be attributed to two main factors: wise market timing and the school district's extremely high credit rating," said Financial Advisor Timothy Carty from Piper Sandler.

"That credit rating is a testament to the strength of the entire Walnut Valley community as well as the steady leadership on the part of the school district Board and Administration."

Proceeds from the sale of Measure WV Series B Bonds will continue to fund construction and improvement projects at school sites throughout the community.

Measure WV received voter approval during the November 8, 2016 election.

# Schools Honored for Outreach Efforts During Pandemic



Six Walnut Valley elementary schools have earned the 2020 California PBIS Community Cares Award for outstanding support to students, families, and communities during the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

Maple Hill Elementary produced several outreach videos featuring the “Making Lemonade Out of Lemons” school closure theme.

“We wanted to support our families with weekly messages of encouragement, read-a-louds, and suggested activities to promote social and emotional wellness,” said Principal Kelly Morris.

In one video, staff members suggested fun stay-at-home “opportunities” including

- exploring nature,
- dancing,
- playing board games,
- learning family traditions, and
- even having a backyard picnic.

“Let’s seize the day - better yet squeeze the day!” Morris exclaimed.

Evergreen Elementary fifth grade students wrote letters to assisted living facility residents during the first weeks of quarantine.

“I understand that you might not be happy and you can’t travel or eat at your favorite restaurants,” said 11-year-old Kyra Chen.

“You should always stay positive and try to have a good time!”

Vejar Elementary hosted online weekly spirit challenges, family activities, and sent daily text messages.

“We are working to make sure we continue to recognize the positive moments from our students and celebrate them during distance learning,” said Principal Whitney Prenger.

C.J. Morris Elementary staff members rallied together to provide supplies to support distance learning, Quail Summit Elementary shared daily wellness activities and strategies to help students handle stress, and Castle Rock Elementary concentrated efforts on maintaining the sense of community among families.



## Return to Play



Diamond Bar and Walnut High School student athlete cohorts began returning to campus in late October for conditioning. Schools worked closely with District, County, and Department of Public Health officials to establish a healthy and safe reopening protocol.

- ✓ Voluntary participation
- ✓ Health screening before arriving on campus
- ✓ Student athletes may only be involved in conditioning for one sport
- ✓ Social distancing in 12:1 or 12:2 ratios
- ✓ Everyone must wear a mask; exception during heavy physical exertion
- ✓ All activities take place outdoors
- ✓ Limited sharing of equipment between designated pairs
- ✓ Goal to establish connections, physical acclimation, and movement to prevent injuries

**Outlook**  
Issue 47 Fall 2020

WALNUT VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dr. Robert P. Taylor  
Superintendent

**Board of Trustees**  
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**Winter Break** DECEMBER 17 - JANUARY 4  
**Martin L. King Jr. Day** JANUARY 18  
**Presidents Day** FEBRUARY 15  
**Spring Break** APRIL 2 - 9  
**Last Day of School** MAY 27  
**Memorial Day** MAY 31

## 5K A Day 4 Food

### Diamond Bar High Freshman Runs 30 Days to Feed Families

*After months of being cooped up in quarantine, Diamond Bar High School freshman L'Mio Edwards decided to get moving to help make a difference during the global pandemic.*

The talented track star ran a 5K (3.1 miles) for 30 straight days in her quest to feed families impacted by COVID-19.

Step by step, her efforts totaled 93 miles while raising funds for the New Earth non-profit organization that distributes free weekly groceries.

“People need to eat, especially during this coronavirus,” the 14-year-old said.

To date, the #5KaDay4Food Challenge has netted \$10,125, surpassing her \$10K goal.

“I’ve been running since around the third grade,” she said.

“After running for so long I thought I might use it for something if I’m going to be stuck at home.”

The teen now happily sees others partnering in the #5KaDay4Food Challenge that provides assistance to food banks around the nation.

“Some people choose to run only a few days or whatever they can handle - which is equally awesome!”

She also joins 5Ks in various communities to continue raising funds for the cause.

“If you want to see a positive change in the world, it starts with yourself,” L’Mio says of her personal motto.

Visit [www.GoFundme.com/f/5KaDay4Food](http://www.GoFundme.com/f/5KaDay4Food) to support the fundraiser.

## Saturday Superheroes!

### English Learner Academy Supports K-12 Students

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff and students follow safety protocols including a health screening, maintaining social distancing, and mask wearing.

“We are thrilled to provide a safe environment for students to receive face-to-face instruction in English,” said Instructional Dean Marta Dibell, who coordinates the secondary cohort held at South Pointe Middle School.

Classes focus on the acquisition of academic English and the skills students need to be successful in their content area classes. The elementary and secondary cohorts also provide cultural and social-emotional opportunities for students to interact with each other and simply have some fun!

“Students are engaged in learning academic language by studying various science topics including plants, animal adaptations and habitats, and the solar system,” shared Elementary Learning Specialist Elisabeth Jones who leads the elementary cohort at Walnut Elementary School.

“It’s exciting to see students on campus smiling and talking with each other and their teachers!”

Walnut Valley educators are leading classes for about 90 elementary and secondary students in an English Learning Academy held every Saturday from October 17 through December 12.

## Parent Symposium Resources Available

Over 2,000 Walnut Valley parents grabbed a computer and cup of coffee for the 4th Annual Parent Symposium live broadcast held Saturday, September 25. If you missed it, a recording may be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3kUvA0z>. Access international parenting expert Michele Borba’s books and videos and Princeton Review co-founder Paul Kanarek’s presentation on the WVUSD Learning Enrichment And Resource Network website at <http://learn.wvusd.org>. For an overview of the LEARN website, visit: <https://youtu.be/Q0Fr62jG4ck>.