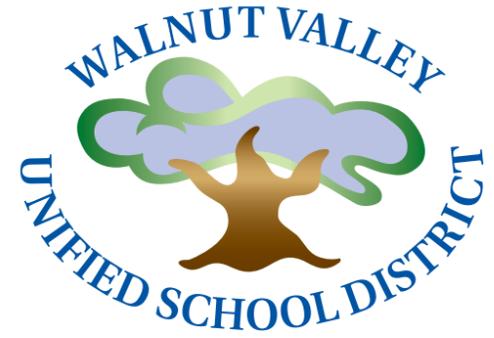


# Outlook



Issue 46 Summer 2020

Let's Talk! – We want to be responsive to your needs and invite you to send questions, comments, and suggestions to [www.wvusd.k12.ca.us](http://www.wvusd.k12.ca.us).

## Pomp and Silver Linings Walnut Valley Stages Star-Studded Grad Ceremonies



*From virtual graduations featuring Ryan Seacrest and Morris Chestnut, to drive through ceremonies, WVUSD proudly celebrates the Class of 2020!*

It was a graduation day for the record books. Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools put their heart and soul into May 28 celebrations honoring the legendary Class of 2020 after the cancellation of traditional year-end activities and commencement due to the global pandemic.

On the 76th day of COVID-19 isolation, seniors wore their caps and gowns to be recognized at home during virtual ceremonies that included synchronized musical performances, speeches, faculty tributes, turning of the tassels, and special celebrity messages.

Radio personality and television host Ryan Seacrest sent a keynote to the 589 graduating Walnut High seniors after receiving an on-air request by Principal Dr. Ryan Maine.

"You went from hearing the familiar voice of ASB president Matt Mayo saying 'Good Morning, Mustangs' to asking yourselves 'What day is it?'" Seacrest said

"What has not changed is everything that you've accomplished," the KIIS FM host added.

Actor and executive producer Morris Chestnut delivered a virtual message to 710 Diamond Bar High graduates during the 37th commencement ceremony.

"When it comes to this pandemic... don't think of it as something that's happened to you - look at it as something

that has happened for you," said the television and film star urging teens to find and seize upcoming opportunities.

During a drive-through processional, Diamond Bar High faculty congratulated students while presenting awards and diploma covers.

Principal Dr. Reuben Jones celebrated with grads after they took commemorative photos with elbow bumps before they reunited with families.

And although everyone donned protective masks, the beaming eyes, some filled with tears, and hidden smiles told the real story of the importance of the milestone event themed "Don't Let Anything Quarantine Your Passion."

That evening graduates returned to the school for a Purple Parade send-off with staff applauding, waving cow bells, pompoms, and glow sticks.

Walnut High's 50th commencement culminated with a "One Last Ride" processional through campus.

"For over three hours, our staff cheered, danced, gave personal letters, gifts, and signs to our graduates," Principal Maine exclaimed.

"The smiles, tears, and excitement on their faces made it all worth it."

## Maple Hill, Walnut High Named PLTW Distinguished Schools

Walnut High School and Maple Hill Elementary have earned the 2019-2020 Project Lead the Way Distinguished School Award for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities in computer science, engineering and biomedical science.

Walnut High is among only five schools in California to offer the rigorous International Baccalaureate Career-Related Programme/Project Lead the Way Biomedical Sciences Program.

"We are so incredibly proud of our PLTW and IBCP students who enthusiastically engage daily in hands-on activities and work together to find solutions to real-world challenges," said teacher Chiara Morgan. "The biomedical pathway immerses students in activities that do not always have a clear solution such as finding better treatments for cancer, gene editing, and evaluating the safety of community water sources. Students innovate solutions to such problems and present them to their peers, teachers, and administration."

Only 143 high schools across the country received the special recognition for increasing student access,

engagement, and achievement.

Maple Hill Elementary has also been recognized as a Distinguished School for having high participation in its hands-on learning opportunities in PLTW Launch modules.

"PLTW Launch provides us the platform to empower the minds of our students so that they can be agents for change," said Principal Kelly Morris. "The Maple Hill team takes great strides in providing our students with a rich STEAM program that promotes critical thinking, hands-on learning, meaningful collaboration, and fun!"

Just 404 elementary schools across the country received the special recognition.



## Message from the Superintendent

Dear Walnut Valley Educational Community,



To begin, I sincerely hope that you and your family are healthy during these most unprecedented times. I also want to say "Thank You" to our school community for the completion of a highly successful, although unique and not as we had planned, 2019/2020 school year (this publication highlights some of the many wonderful achievements of our schools, students, and staff).

As we look towards the 2020/2021 school year, please remember, as we navigate through challenging decisions, plans, and programs to address the needs of our students in the upcoming weeks and months, that we place the safety and wellness of our students and staff as our highest priority. We also understand and empathize with the many different needs and wants of our stakeholders (students, parents, employees, etc.), which vary from person to person (or family to family) and thus, we know that we cannot find a resolution that completely satisfies everyone. We will, however, strive to provide options and choices for students to the best of our ability.

As we have shared in the past, we rely on the County of Los Angeles Public Health Department (Public Health) to provide us with guidance, direction, and recommendations on how we must proceed. At this time of publication, we have not received those guidelines from Public Health. They were initially going to be released over two weeks ago, but Public Health decided to wait a while longer until they gathered additional and perhaps more up-to-date data in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we too are anxious to determine and announce what our reopening will look like, we also feel that it would be irresponsible to make those decisions prior to analyzing the guidelines and recommendations from Public Health.

What we are doing, however, is preparing for multiple scenarios so that we are ready to make an informed decision with an implementation plan for when Public Health announces its guidelines (hopefully in the next week or so). I appreciate the partnership and collaboration with over 200 members of our Task Force and Focus Groups on Re-Opening Schools, our employee associations, and our community in gathering meaningful feedback and developing high quality plans. I also appreciate the more than 6,000 parents who have completed our survey and thus voiced their opinions.

Again, while we are unclear as to exactly which plan we will implement at this time, as previously shared, we have three broad approaches that we are developing:

- Full-time, traditional, in-person instruction (while implementing Public Health recommended safety protocols to the best of our ability)
- Split-schedule approach where approximately half of the students in a particular class/school attend two days per week (the other half of the students attend a different set of two days per week), while working from home on the other days, in an attempt to minimize the individuals on campus and increase the practice of social distancing (while implementing Public Health recommended safety protocols to the best of our ability)
- 100% Distance Learning approach (adhering to new state guidelines for high-quality instruction and student accountability)

We are also implementing a plan to allow students (with health and/or family considerations) to opt into a 100% Independent Study/Distance Learning approach if we choose to implement a full-time or split-schedule in-person approach.

The other consideration is to start the school year with one of the three approaches above, but only for a relative short period of time (perhaps a month) and then reassess the data, study the effects of different implementation plans from surrounding school districts, and evaluate possible updates and revisions to recommendations from Public Health and then adjust our plan accordingly.

We know that during this time of uncertainty, as observed just in the last couple of weeks in Los Angeles County and across the state, even the best laid plans are subject to change. We recognize that this situation is extremely fluid and we are continually monitoring the data and direction of our public health officials.

Again, we hope to provide additional clarity and direction to you in the near future. As always, please feel free to contact me with questions and/or concerns.

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

## Top High Schools – Diamond Bar, Walnut High Make U.S. News' Best of 2020

After crunching the numbers, U.S. News and World Report released its annual report of top performing public high schools in the country on April 21.

And it's no surprise that Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools continue to lead the way through exceptional dedication to the success of all students.

This year, Diamond Bar High ranked #25 in Los Angeles Metro Schools, #68 in California, and #519 in the nation.

Additionally, Diamond Bar placed #77 in STEM high schools.

Walnut High scored #35 in Los Angeles Metro Schools, #84 in California, and #601 in the nation.

The U.S. News Best High Schools rankings include data on more than 24,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Nearly 18,000 schools in the country, and 1,612 in California, were reviewed for performance in state assessments,

graduation rates, and how well they prepare students for college.

Diamond Bar and Walnut offer an extensive roster of IB and AP courses to provide students with an opportunity to challenge themselves with college-level course work during high school.

Additional information at: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools>.

# Class of 2020

## CONGRATULATIONS!

We're proud to spotlight eight of our stellar students in this edition of Outlook. These students represent the best in Walnut Valley with their dedication and commitment to excellence through a wide variety of extracurricular activities.

### Diamond Bar High

**Mena Hassan**

Stanford University, 4.0 GPA

Taken 10 AP Courses, NCWIT Aspirations in Computing Award, National Merit Finalist, Society of Women Engineers president, DBHS TEDx web developer, Team Sprocket programmer, Superintendent's Student Advisory Council.

"DBHS cemented a strong work ethic, a trait that has been the key to my success. Teachers encouraged us to solve problems creatively, voice our concerns, and collaborate with each other."

**Jonathan Ho**

Carnegie Mellon University, 3.98 GPA

Taken 14 AP Courses, National Merit Finalist, National AP Scholar, President's Volunteer Service Gold Award, California Alliance for Public Education state president, DBHS Symphony Orchestra president, All-Southern Honor Orchestra principal viola.

"The connections I've made, the faculty I've worked with, and the amazing explorations we've taken in chamber ensembles and orchestra have all taught me how to raise my standards and thrive together."

**Tom Murickan**

University of Arizona, 4.0 GPA

Taken 12 AP courses, National Merit Scholar, TEDxYouth Beacon Street co-host, President's Volunteer Service Gold Award, AI-Med Club founder and president, Swim Team, Wind Ensemble, Relay for Life captain.

"I skipped a page on my AP Chemistry Free Response Questions junior year. I still managed to score a 5 on the test, which served as a testament to how one can succeed even when grave errors are committed."

**Adrienne Yuh**

University of California, Los Angeles, 4.0 GPA

Taken 11 AP Courses, CHOC intern, Symphony Orchestra section leader, UNICEF Club president, Girls League president, USA Biology Olympiad vice president, Varsity Badminton.

"My favorite DBHS memories are the Symphony rehearsals and trips. Even after hours of tiring run-throughs and lots of sectionals, it was always so rewarding to see our efforts come together and create beautiful pieces of music."

### Walnut High

**Nicole Chiang**

University of California, Berkley, 4.0 GPA

Taken 4 AP Courses, IB Diploma Candidate. FLBA Nationals 3rd and 6th Place Awards, NSPA All American Honors, Publications *Hoofprint* copy editor-in-chief, FBLA and Wishmakers Club presidents, Mock Trial captain, National Honor Society secretary.

"The coronavirus pandemic has revealed how supportive and wonderful the WHS community is, from the *Hoofprint* creating its first newsmagazine to senior signs in our front lawns. Despite the distance, the values of kindness, inclusivity, and passion for education are still very much prevalent."

**Phillip Huynh**

University of Southern California, 3.96 GPA

Taken 7 AP Courses, IB Diploma Candidate. USC Town & Gown Scholarship, Shaolin Kung Fu & Taekwondo Black Belt, FBLA Inland Section 1st Place, Martial Arts Club, National Business Honor Society, Parkour Club president, Debate Club vice president.

"My favorite WHS memory was the day I led the Martial Arts Club performance. It was a great experience being able to bring out each member's strengths, work on weaknesses, while being able to share our passion with the school. We also provided free lessons to promote physical and mental wellbeing."

**Matthew Mayo**

Santa Clara University, 4.0 GPA

Taken 4 AP Courses, President's Volunteer Service Award, U.S. & State Ambassador HOBY World Leadership Conference, ASB President, Four-year Class President, LIFT Volunteer Program founder and president, Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, VHL Club president.

"I loved being able to bring my peers together whether it be in the ASB classroom, during a Mustang spell-out at a big game, or at a pep rally in my class section. Walnut High School will always be my home, and I'll forever bleed blue and gold."

**Melody Yu**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 4.0 GPA

Taken 12 AP Courses, IBCP Diploma Candidate. USA Biology Olympiad 36th Place in Nation, City of Hope research and surgery intern, National Taiwan University research intern, Carnegie Hall guest performer, International Concerto Competition 2nd Place, National Merit Finalist, Science Olympiad State Medalist and Club President.

"IBCP has not only enriched my fascination with the biomedical sciences, but the IBCP and PLTW teachers and peers have shown me the most incredible support and helped build me into the person I am today."

### Award Spotlight

## DBHS Senior Surprised with \$40,000 STEM Scholarship



Diamond Bar High School senior Sean Chang is one step closer to realizing his dream of becoming an engineer. In April, he was named a 2020 Edison Scholar, a prestigious award that comes with a \$40,000 college scholarship from Edison International.

A surprise announcement had been planned during Sean's fourth period orchestra class with school officials, parents, and a representative from Southern California Edison.

There would have been lots of cheers and maybe a few tears when the big check was revealed. But, it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 epidemic and resulting school closures. Sean instead received an email video notification with the news - and he's OK with that.

"This scholarship means a lot to me because it lifts a huge burden off my parents' shoulders and will grant me additional education opportunities in the future," he said.

Sean is among an elite group of 30 dynamic and innovative high school seniors in Southern California Edison's service territory to receive a total of \$1.2 million through the Edison Scholars Program this year.

"I hope to create hundreds of cost-efficient ROVs (remotely operated underwater vehicles) that are connected through a large network, that can automate and expedite the clean-up of our oceans," he said.

### Special Deliveries

## Diamond Bar High Crowns Prom Royalty with Surprise Home Visits

Diamond Bar High School made some special deliveries on a recent Saturday afternoon.

Students were missing out on end-of-year experiences due to the coronavirus pandemic, including the "Night of a Thousand Lights" Prom which was to be held that evening.

So, Class of 2021 advisors Shari DeCambra, Jazmine Silver, Lisa Arionus, with class officers Daniel Min, Philip Ma, Aileen Park, and Chris Tan quickly began brainstorming ideas.

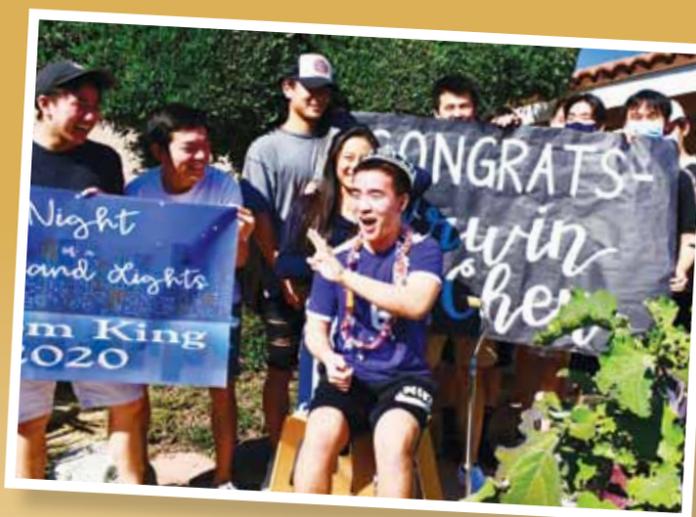
"As soon as our school was closed, staff went to work planning activities and trying to create memories for our students," said Principal Dr. Reuben Jones who joined the coronation.

With glistening crowns, personalized banners, candy necklaces, and buttons, the Brahma crew carpooled to homes and crowned the royalty right in their front yards.

"We love our students and are determined to make the most of this difficult time," he added.

King Irwin Chen, Queen Charlotte Tu - Class of 2020 and Prince Cristian Vargas, Princess Keili Ishitani - Class of 2021 were selected by student body online nominations and voting.

"It was exciting to still have a vote for prom court and honor the winners!" DeCambra said.



King Irwin Chen



Queen Charlotte Tu

# Construction Update

Several exciting construction projects are underway that have been made possible by voter approval of Bond Measure WV.

Thank you for supporting our schools!

## Collegewood Elementary –

**Two-Story Classroom Building:** Saifco Construction is 95% complete with framing of the building. HVAC, roof skylight curbs, exterior walkways, wall plumbing, classroom ductwork, electrical, and fire sprinklers are currently being installed. An elevator pit has been dug, reinforced with steel, poured, and elevator has been installed.

## Diamond Bar High School –

**New Music Building:** After the February 19 groundbreaking ceremony, AWI quickly began grading and preparation for the project. The large retaining wall has been constructed, waterproofed, and back fill has begun. The building pad has been graded and certified. Reinforced steel and building footings are being constructed and poured, with installation of underground electrical and fire, gas and water, sewer service underway.

**500 Building Modernization:** The \$14,287,000 project was awarded to Robert Clapper Construction Services with a start date of February 10. Interior and roof demolition is

now complete on the two-story building, with new underground plumbing and seismic upgrades in progress.

## Upcoming Projects –

**Evergreen Elementary:** New parent drop off parking lot and upper playfield is DSA approved and ready for bid.

**Vejar Elementary:** New staff parking lot and staff restroom building is DSA approved and ready for bid.

**Walnut Elementary:** Design of new multi-purpose room building, two classrooms, and one kindergarten classroom to be submitted to DSA in Winter 2020.

**South Pointe Middle School:** Design of new music building has been submitted to DSA in June 2020.

**Suzanne Middle School:** Design of new gymnasium and two-story classroom building has been submitted to DSA in June 2020. Design for new music building to be submitted to DSA in December 2020.

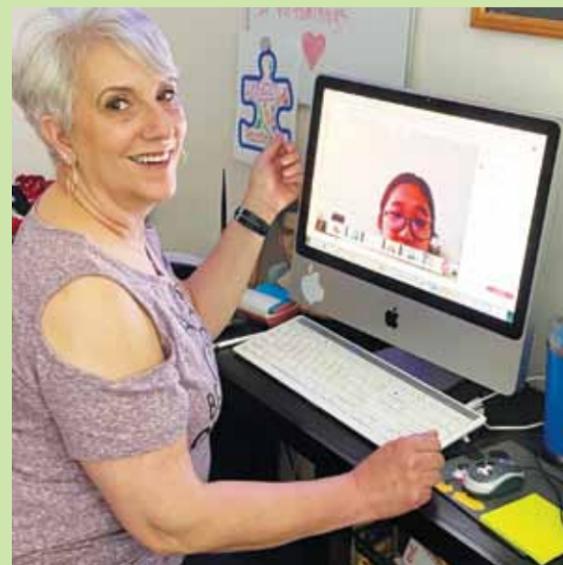
**Walnut High School:** Design of new gymnasium in progress, has been submitted to DSA in June 2020.



# Distance Learning

Virtual classes commenced as educators adapt to teaching during the coronavirus pandemic.

*Thoughts and experiences from around our schools navigating in a virtual world. . .*



Monday, April 20 was the first day of Phase 2 remote learning classes for families and educators adjusting to life during the coronavirus pandemic.

“I found myself really paying attention to my tone in the lessons and joking with the kids as if they were sitting in the classroom with me,” said Suzanne math and drama teacher Helen Papadopoulos of the new online learning experience.

Teachers can pre-record lectures, use live video chats, and hold virtual office hours for real-time interaction with students.

“They miss that closeness and support we all feel when we’re around people, and that’s why it’s so important for us as educators to connect with them as much as possible,” said Papadopoulos.

“The Social-Emotional Learning work we’re doing is not only important, but crucial for our kids.”

Students received detailed schedule information from school leaders, teachers re-configured their entire instruction system, and over 3,000 Chromebooks were distributed in preparation for launch day.

“It’s not the same as face-to-face, but it feels good to see our students again,” said Walnut High choir teacher Lisa Lopez who demonstrated pitfalls of singing live over the Internet.

She directed students to sing the national anthem or happy birthday song acapella and to watch their conductor’s hands “carefully.”

“The singing evolved into giggles because there is a lag with everyone having a different network speed!”

“Let’s make the best of our current situation and try to have fun while learning – we will get through this together,” said South Pointe science teacher Shelly Yamashiro, using green screen technology with floating sea anemones.

Yamashiro told students she wants to help and support them through the “new normal.”

“It’s OK to, feel sad, happy, anxious, or bored during this unprecedented time - I know I have,” she said.

“Look at the bright side, you can wear your sweats or PJs all day, don’t need permission to go to the bathroom, you can eat and even chew gum, and best of all, have your favorite (furry) family member by your side.”

When Zoom meetings were running long, Ami Garvin quickly learned how eager her Suzanne orchestra students were to return to class.

“They were chomping at the bit to begin the next session!” she shared.

“They were posting on Google Classroom demanding the join code during the passing period. And at one point, a student yelled in all caps: WHERE ARE YOU MRS. GARVIN?”

“Although we can’t possibly replace the genuine connections built throughout the year, I’m so grateful that we get to carry on with the relationships this school year and beyond,” said Vejar third grade teacher Jenny Kim.

“Even with school closures and strict social distancing measures, administrators, teachers, parents, and students still made learning possible, remained supportive, and focused on our vision of Kids First.”

## 3D Printers Save Lives

# Diamond Bar, Walnut High Robotics Teams Help Fight Pandemic



Tech savvy teens from Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools quietly answered a call to aide first responders during the global pandemic.

When students learned of the dire shortage of personal protective equipment for frontline medical staff and how anyone with a 3D printer could fill the void – they sprang into action.

Diamond Bar High’s DB Engineering and Team Sprocket robotics partnered with parent Joe Bloomfield, owner of Spyder3D, to design and manufacture reusable 3D printed facemasks and face shields.

Six members of the Printed Works Club created a facemask that had to be easily printable by those new to 3D printing, require little post-production work, be reusable, and accept multiple types of filters.

“Our team developed a working prototype that meets all of our requirements,” said senior Logan Tang of the facemask that can also be easily scaled to fit different face sizes.

Since the school was shuttered, Instructional Dean Gabriel Aguilar brought a bay of 3D printers home to aid the special relief effort.

“Several community partners contacted us to see how we could leverage our 3D printing and manufacturing capabilities to support the need for face shields,” he said.

“Rather than collecting dust, these machines are now producing 30 face shield frames per day, using materials donated by Spyder3D.”

WVUSD FIRST Robotics Teams joined forces with the SoCal Makers COVID-19 Response Team to create face shields using 3D printed frames and clear plastic transparency sheets.

Team Sprocket, Walnut Valley Robotics, Aluminati and 2nd Rebellion provided approximately 600 free face shields to this initiative, which has supported nearly 100 medical centers.

Walnut High’s Wolf Corp Robotics team members made DIY face shields for health care workers and those providing essential services, including Walnut Valley USD Nutrition Services staff serving weekday Grab & Go meals.

Each member pledged to construct 15-20 protective shields to be delivered to vital workers in the community.

## Challengers for Change: Suzanne Scores 2020 Civic Learning Award



Suzanne Middle School has been rewarded for engaging students in civic-minded activities with a 2020 Civic Learning Award of Merit. California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond co-sponsor the program for K-12 public schools. Suzanne is among 75 honorees celebrated for strong civics curriculum in schools and service-learning projects in their communities.

The Challengers for Change program focuses on Integrating emotional intelligence and leadership skills into the 21st century academic instruction through collaboration between students, staff, and the community.

Grade Level Summits allow students to focus on a specific topic including friendship, grit and perseverance, and emotional learning. The events highlight the school’s desire to hear student perspective, provide civic knowledge, and broach controversial issues in a safe and positive learning environment.

Students take their classroom learning and apply it to community service. C.A.R.E. Club provides assistance to local missions and foster homes. Conservation Club members engage in recycling and beach clean-up environmental activities.

“We believe students who participate in extracurricular activities not only feel more connected to our school, but they also learn that there is a value in helping others,” said Principal Dr. Amy Smith.

## Connecting WVUSD Families to Mental Healthcare and Counseling Resources

Walnut Valley USD has partnered with Care Solace to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of our students, families, and staff. Care Solace is an online resource with a live 24/7 concierge meant to assist individuals in finding local mental health related programs and counseling services. The web-based system works alongside a multi-

tiered system of support (MTSS) as a tool for school staff and families to connect with community-based mental healthcare resources and providers. The proprietary care navigation system taps into a vast database of mental healthcare resources to find carefully vetted local therapists and programs in minutes. School district staff

and families may access Care Solace services in two ways:

- #1 Call (888) 515-0595 to speak with someone from your Concierge team.
- #2 Visit your custom district link at [www.caresolace.com/wvusdfamilies](http://www.caresolace.com/wvusdfamilies).

# WVUSD Good News

As the world contends with COVID-19, Walnut Valley USD teachers and students find creative ways to take care of themselves and others:

**We Will Get Through This!**

## Singing DBHS Counselor Brings Cheer in Weekly Videos



Unprecedented times are challenging educators to go to great lengths for their students amid the global health crisis. Diamond Bar High School grade level coordinator Dave Desmond has been sending weekly video messages to homebound students using social media. From his living room, Desmond presents counseling strategies in easily digestible bites, capped off by performing a song on his acoustic guitar.

"I thought, man, if there's some way that me providing a little entertainment for my students will distract them from the general sadness of this time for a bit, well, that would be cool," the 27-year veteran educator said.

"And hopefully they're listening to the counseling as well!"

His colleagues are also reaching out with regular communications via videos, newsletters, and emails.

Each week, Desmond clicks through a PowerPoint presentation with topics ranging from goal setting and college applications to financial aid and preparing for SATs.

Knowing that students are facing increased anxiety due to COVID-19, Desmond admitted that he's also struggling while living in quarantine on the May 10 broadcast.

"Just like you, I've been having a tough time and I think it's good for all of us to find ways to relieve that stress."

He suggested using DBHS online mindfulness resources including meditation, listening to waterfalls, drawing, music, and even a koala cam.

Then Desmond pivoted to a doorway to demonstrate a few pull-ups, sprinted to the backyard to hit golf balls, and pull some weeds.

"Maybe you can help your parents clean up the house a bit," he suggested to the high schoolers.

"But, one of my favorite things to do to manage stress is playing a tune," he said wrapping up the segment. And with that, he picked up his guitar and belted out "Everybody Hurts" by R.E.M.

"Hold on, Brahmas, we're going to get through this!" he exclaimed with a fist pump to the camera.

## Outlook

Issue 46 Summer 2020



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Superintendent

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@WVUSD\_Tweet



@WalnutValleyUSD



**First Day of School** MONDAY, AUGUST 10

**Labor Day** SEPTEMBER 7

**Veterans Day** NOVEMBER 11

**Thanksgiving Break** NOVEMBER 23-27

**Winter Break** DECEMBER 17-JANUARY 4

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### Comfort Food

## C.J. Morris Elementary Teacher Learns Bread Baking



Jennifer Veneracion, a Title 1 Specialist has joined legions of homebound bread bakers during the coronavirus pandemic by deciding to learn a new skill at the onset of stay-at-home orders that began in mid-March.

"Bread making seemed fun to do as well as something the entire family could enjoy, and it could carry on after the quarantine," Veneracion explained.

After combining the fermented starter and flour, she methodically kneaded the mixture into a silky dough. And when the oven timer sounded, out came the steamy, crusty loaves of success.

Veneracion has cooked up traditional Filipino Pan De Sal bread, loaves, sandwich breads, tortillas, cinnamon rolls, and more. She has also discovered the restorative magic of the experience.

"Now that I've learned a lot, bread baking has become a form of therapy for me," she said.

"Teaching remotely and getting my three kids on track is rough, so unplugging and working on a recipe is both relaxing and rewarding."

In the end, Veneracion's family decides if each bake is a winner.

"My kids are pretty honest and will tell me if the bread is a hit – with reactions ranging from 'Mom, this is amazing' to 'Welp, it's bread, I guess,'" she said.

"Either way, I'm hoping they see the importance of learning a new skill, celebrating the successes, and powering through the failures."

### Flat Miss Gomez

## Vejar Elementary Teacher Goes On Adventures with Students

Vejar Elementary first grade teacher Lisa Gomez had been struggling with being away from the youngsters, but what "broke" her was learning that they were pretending to be strong too.

"It's so hard when 6 and 7- year-olds look you straight in the eye and tell you they miss you so much," she shared.

So, the teacher devised an out-of-the box solution to stay connected with students that didn't violate the social distancing protocol - Flat Miss Gomez.

Gomez downloaded her personal Bitmoji digital character, printed up copies of the four-inch paper doll, and mailed one to every youngster.

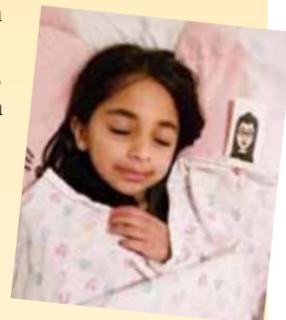
"Mini Miss Gomez, as they like to call her, can listen, be there with them, and play all day."

With that, the students began sharing photos swimming, biking, dancing, playing games, and staging a fashion show with their stand-in teacher.

"I eat with them, they read to me, and at night they find ways to tuck me in, and take care of me."

"And they even keep me safe with a mask and by washing my hands," she added.

"My teacher heart is full, it still hurts, but these photos bring a smile to my face just like these kids did every day in my classroom!"



### Weaving for hunger relief

## Quail Summit 3rd Grader Feeding America One Bracelet at a Time

During quarantine, 8-year-old Anjelica Liu learned a new hobby that will help provide over 5,600 meals to families affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Quail Summit Elementary third grader has been weaving tiny rubber bands into bracelets and 3D charms using a Rainbow Loom. And the items have been selling like hotcakes on social media to families and friends.

Anjelica is donating 100% of fundraiser proceeds to the Feeding America network of food banks.

"I feel very happy that I am able to help people who are dealing with difficult situations during COVID-19," she said.

To date, the sale of over 70 colorful items has raised nearly \$200, and will be combined with matching funds from her parents, and her mother's employer.

The nationwide Feeding America hunger relief organization provides ten meals to families in need for every dollar donated.

"Anjelica is an example that no matter the age, you can make a difference!" said Principal Frances Weissenberger.



### Knit Yourself Calm

## Chaparral 8th Grader Knits Students Together During Closure

When Chaparral Middle School eighth-grader Aslin Choi learned of the "Be A Helper" digital challenge, she grabbed her knitting needles. The age-old pastime has caught the attention of even the Gen Z crowd with its winning combination of creating beautiful projects with yarn while reducing stress at the same time.

In the early days of quarantine, Choi turned to the steadfast, repetitive diversion that requires undivided attention when things got a bit scary.

"Knitting has been a very calming experience for me, so I wanted to show other students a way to relax that might help them," she said.

With supplies in hand, the 14-year-old offered up a step-by-step lesson using the double loop cast-on method.

"I'm going to teach you all how to knit since I'm sure you guys are going stir crazy being cooped up in your houses," she shared in the video.

"This is a nice way to stay chill, be relaxed, and keep out of your parents' hair."

"Aslin continues to shine and share her efforts to make our Chaparral community a better place!" said Principal Ron Thibodeaux.