WVUSD Now Accepting Enrollment Applications

Walnut Valley USD is now accepting applications for the 2020-2021 school year. Join us to learn more about District of Choice (applications accepted through Dec. 31), Parent Employment (Allen Bill), and Interdistrict Transfer programs at the next enrollment information meeting: January 22 6:30 p.m. Westhoff Elementary School

Can't attend this meeting? Applications are available online at www.wvusd.k12.ca.us/EnrollNow. For more information or general inquiries regarding enrollment, please call (909) 595-1261 or email enroll@wvusd.k12.ca.us.

Best in Class!
Walnut Valley Unified Ranks Tops in Nation

Walnut Valley USD has placed in the top 2 percent out of 10,782 public school districts in America in the recent Niche.com report. Scoring an overall A+ grade, Walnut Valley USD secured an impressive report card in numerous categories at local, state, and national levels, including ranking in the top 4 percent of all school districts in California.

The leading research website also placed Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools in the top 1 percent of over 19,000 public high schools in the nation. Additionally, the premier high schools scored in the top 3 percent of best high schools in Los Angeles County and California.

“We are excited to share this proud achievement with our Walnut Valley school community,” said Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor.

“It is a true testimony of the rigorous, engaging, and supportive K-12 student experience provided on all of our campuses.”

Niche’s annual listing is based on an analysis of academic and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education along with test scores, college data, and ratings.

To view the full 2020 report, please visit https://www.niche.com/k12/d/walnut-valley-unified-school-district-ca/rankings/.

Safety Updated on Campuses

WVUSD Rolls Out New Visitor ID System

To continue keeping the safety of our students a top priority, Walnut Valley USD began implementing a new visitor management system on November 1. The paper visitor sign-in sheets have been replaced with the LobbyGuard Visitor Management System to ensure that individuals visiting all 15 campuses are authorized to do so. “Our goal is to continue to provide a welcoming and warm environment for our parents, teachers, students, and staff while simultaneously communicating a culture of safety and security to the community,” said Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor.

Visitors will continue to be required to present identification to office staff. Accepted forms of identification include any state issued driver’s license or identification card, Matricular Consular card, Military ID (active duty or retired), and permanent resident card.

Office staff will utilize the LobbyGuard system to scan the visitor’s name and date of birth with the national database of registered sex offenders. The scan may also include a photo for comparison.

Once the visitor has been cleared through LobbyGuard, the system will print a one-day identification sticker with name, photo, and destination.

Over the summer, every classroom and department received new Cisco IP phones with the enhanced e911 feature that identifies building location for first responders.

In addition, 1,000 Meraki cameras have been installed around the district to enhance security with motion detection and heat maps.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Walnut Valley family,

“We’re gonna light the school!” It’s been a few years since that statement was made, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Our dear friend and beloved former Chief Business Official, Kenny Goodson, stormed into my office on a cool fall day and stated, “We’re gonna light the school!” Kenny has since passed, but his memory and his strong belief in a KIDS FIRST culture lives on … partially through our now annual traditions of “lighting the schools” with bright holiday lights hanging from all nine of our elementary schools from Thanksgiving through the Winter Holidays. It was Kenny’s vision that these lights would not only represent the holiday season, but also would serve as a reminder to our school community of the focus that we, as an entire community, have on educating our students.

The lights, and this season of giving, also serve as a reminder for all that I, and we, have to be reflective and thankful. Our school district continues to thrive and advance appropriately through this ever-changing world. I’m thankful for the recognitions that our schools and district receive at this time of year. This publication is full of just some of the wonderful accolades such as being named one of the top school districts in the country, state-recognized Golden Bell Awards for our schools, nationally-recognized STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), and Los Angeles County award-winning educators. These recognitions truly reflect the commitment and dedication of our employees, as well as our strong partnership with our parents and community members.

I’m also sincerely thankful for our community’s support of Measure WV. This initiative allows us to continue to enhance our school facilities into state-of-the-art learning spaces that further aid in the development of our students as modern day learners … prepped and ready for the future!

I’m appreciative of our school district’s continued emphasis on the safety and social emotional well-being of our students and staff. Further developed facilities with an increased awareness of security; a continued focus on training (in accordance and collaboration with our local state first responders), and nationally-recognized work being advanced and implemented by educators across our schools, is helping us to better address the comfort and confidence of our stakeholders.

Finally, I’m thankful for the consistent messaging of hope and observation of acts of kindness and care on the part of our kids and adults. At the core of our “business”, despite the ever-increasing demands of accountability, finances, legislation, etc., continues to be that we are in the business of people and I am so thankful for the strong relationships that we hold across our educational community and the wonderful people that make up our Walnut Valley family.

I hope that you and your family enjoy a restful and rejuvenating holiday season. Thanks for all you do to support our kids!

Robert R. Taylor, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Pre-K through 12th Grade

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Seven Walnut Valley Schools receive noteworthy PBIS Awards

Seven WVUSD elementary schools have earned 2019 California PBIS Coalition Awards for successfully implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. Congratulations to collegewood, Maple Hill, Quail Summit, Westhoff - Platinum level; Vejar - Gold level; Evergreen, C.J. Morris - Bronze level. PBIS is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success.

Because the theater is for everyone!

Walnut High Stages Sensory-Friendly Performance

Walnut High School of the Arts welcomed audience members with autism, sensory and communication disorders, and learning disabilities during a special showing of “Almost, Maine” on November 2. During sensory-friendly performances, the theater lights are not darkened entirely, loud and jarring sounds are softened, and strobe lights and other effects are not used—all in an effort to make the shows enjoyable for people with heightened sensitivities.

Sign language interpreters were available for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Parents of children on the autism spectrum didn’t need to worry about their child clapping at the wrong time, singing along loudly, or needing to stand up and move their bodies. The theater lobby also had quiet activity stations, staffed by Best Buddies student volunteers, for kids and adults who needed to stretch their legs. The school plans to continue its new tradition with a special performance of “High School Musical” this spring. Now everyone can enjoy the production in their own way!

Kindness week dance party

Maple Hill Elementary students celebrated Kindness Week during a high-octane assembly with Diamond Bar High alumnus (and classmate of Principal Kelly Morris!) Danny Vuong-Batimana on November 19. The former professional choreographer and high school teacher, who was dedicated to bringing his “Happiness is Now Experience” dance party to schools throughout the state. The Filipino-American proudly shared childhood memories, enticed students to break away from their comfort zone to dance, and even recruited student staff members to perform on stage.

Danny is dedicated to leaving his audiences feeling empowered, inspired, and happy!
CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

A Groundbreaking Day at Collegewood

Flanked by golden shovels, a pair of construction trailers, and a towering 100-ton bulldozer, Walnut Valley USD celebrated the groundbreaking of a two-story, 14-classroom building at Collegewood Elementary on November 6. Educators, students, parents, community members, and local officials gathered at the site of the new 21st century educational center to be constructed at the northwest end of the Walnut campus.

“Our community is not just gifting us with a building, they are giving us a space to come together and change the way kids learn,” said Principal Dr. Mary Wendland.

The nearly $10 million transformational project, made possible by voter approval of Bond Measure WV, will lay the groundwork for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education at the school. “I can hardly wait to invite students into this state-of-the-art learning space where their thinking will be challenged and friendships will be fostered,” Wendland added.

The long-awaited project will also include a new playground, amphitheater, exterior covered canopy, and removal of 14 outdated portable classrooms.

Construction will take part in two phases and is slated for completion in July 2021. Wendland said students had been “captivated” as construction crews began digging on the campus earlier in the week.

“All the kids are excited for the changes coming to our school,” said fifth grader Westley Matavo.

“This is a dream come true!” said retired educator Jane Dyer-Smith who shared of milestone Collegewood ceremony.

“I’ve been a Collegewood Cougar for most of my life and have seen and experienced many changes here, but the one thing that will never change is the love for teaching and dedication to students, parents, and the community,” she shared.

Thirty seniors from Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools have been distinguished as 2020 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists. Congratulations to the following students who have been recognized for demonstrating exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

“This is such a special moment!” exclaimed Diamond Bar Principal Dr. Redden Jones as the teens gathered with the school’s administrative team on September 11. “We’re here to give you a round of applause and celebrate this tremendous accomplishment.”

“We are very proud of all of you – put yourself on the back and just be proud of yourself and each other!” added senior Grade Level Coordinators Marc Natividad and Ginger Auten.

“You are the elite eighteen!” Auten said.

Walnut High Principal Ryan Maine and school leaders surprised the dozen top scoring seniors with a snapshot with their teachers out here,” said counselor Chris Sandoval. "I saw smiles, emotion, and lots of donations - so today’s a beautiful day that came from tragedy,” he said. Special guests in attendance included Bryson’s parents, James and Kelly Yang, and his sister, Breanna, a junior at Diamond Bar High.

“We are hoping to raise awareness that someday there will be a cure,” Breanna said. "I'll always remember my brother’s words, ‘no child deserves cancer,’” Breanna said. “Together we can make this a reality.”

“I'm emotional at the support with all our 1,000 kids and teachers out here,” said counselor Chris Sandoval when asked about the $20,000 raised that will go to St. Jude’s Children's Research Hospital.

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To contribute to a new toy during the Sunshine Club holiday drive, please email dbhs.sunshine@gmail.com.

A Morning of Sunshine

One dollar, one day, one lap spreads pediatric cancer awareness...

On November 20, Walnut Valley USD successfully went to market and closed the sale of new 2019 refinancing bonds. In the process, old bonds from Measure S that carried an average interest rate of 5.00% were replaced with new refinancing bonds carrying an average interest rate of 3.05%. This refinancing will save local taxpayers about $5.18 million over the next 21 years.

Six different financial firms from around the country submitted bids during the competitive sale. The successful refinancing is due to District’s high “AA” credit rating, strong financial position maintained through prudent management, and adoption of a strong minimum general fund balance.

Bond Refinancing Yields Taxpayer Savings

30 WVUSD Seniors Named National Merit Semifinalists

Diamond Bar High School:
Courtney Chan, Sean Chang, Tiffany Chang, Valerie Chang, Michelle Chao, Joshua Chung, Mena Hassan, Jonathan Ho, Yewon Lee, Ryan Lou, Catherine Lu, Tom Mirickian, Mason Pan, Karen Shao, Keshav Sehram, Jessica Yen, Jolynn Zhang, and Justin Zhang.

Walnut High School:
Kevin Chen, Yaoyue Jiang, Denise Kao, William Lin, Jocelyn Lu, Teresa Maung, Chamine Tran, Amna Tsao, Wyan Wan, Evelyn Wu, Tyler Xu, Melody Yu.

These high scorers rank among state’s top 1% grads

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Your Measure WV tax dollars at work!

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NOTEWORTHY

Westhoff celebrates milestone anniversary

Westhoff Elementary staff, students, and families celebrated the school’s 30th birthday (1989-2019) during the annual Culture Fair held October 11 with decades of photos and logo gear on display and chocolate cake, of course.

Day of hope

Ron Hockwalt Academies teens participated in a “Day of Hope” on November 15 analyzing the various masks they wear throughout life and discovering why they allow themselves to be controlled by them. “The goal is to provide an opportunity to understand the power of personal stories and to encourage students to embrace who they really are - awesome, dynamic, and spectacular individuals who can move mountains,” said teacher Marla Rickard. Presenter Dee Hanksins challenged participants to explore any negative labels and to live out a “life” word. “When life throws you curve balls, you still can hit a home run!” he said.

Hands Off Drugs

C.J. Morris Elementary students joined daily Red Ribbon Week activities including making “Hands Off Drugs” posters and memorizing a pledge to stay drug free. “They promised to keep their dreams alive and be all they can be!” second-grade teacher Carol Martindale said.

Good day for a hug

South Pointe Middle School eighth grader Jordan Rivera found a way to incorporate love of animals into a Girl Scout Silver Award project. She organized a Cuddles for Cannies holiday blanket and towel drive for local animal shelters held November 14. “I just wanted to make a difference for them,” the 15-year-old said. In just one day, students filled three large collection boxes that will be sorted and delivered to boost holiday adoptions. Jordan also surprised her classmates with a therapy dog visit during lunch. As soon as the dog entered the room, students let out cheers and wrapped their arms around it. “These science lessons are hands on and really teach them why they allow themselves to be controlled by them.”

Structure and Function

Westhoff Kindergartners Design, Build “3 Little Pigs” Houses

Westhoff Kindergartners watched what happened when a Big Bad Wolf leaf blower attempted to topple their “The Three Little Pigs” houses on November 1. During a three-day engineering challenge, the children designed and built tiny structures using toothpicks, popsicle sticks, or craft bricks fastened together with modeling clay. “The Structure and Function unit has been getting kids thinking about how things around them are made and what purpose they serve,” according to teacher Roxanne Dennen.

Surprise Homecoming

Vejar Elementary sisters surprised with dad’s return from deployment

C. J. Cordova, a second-grade teacher at Vejar Elementary School, pulled off the surprise of a lifetime for daughters Abigail and Hannah on August 26. Their father, Staff Sergeant Julio Cordova, returned home three days earlier after nine months of deployment in Afghanistan. But, the clever parents kept the big news under wraps until it was revealed during a schoolwide assembly.

He presented them with cuddly stuffed camels with camouflage hats that matched his uniform. Hannah, a kindergartner, squeezed her dad’s neck as she quietly looked into his eyes streaming with tears. “I just started running and thought I was going to faint!” Abby exclaimed.