



Tom Horne Reports to Educators

Volume III, Issue III March 2006

A Message from the Superintendent

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Dear Educators,

Arizona seems to have a tradition of unfair negative publicity about our public education system. One of my goals has been to emphasize the positive in public statements and to the media, and to refute false negative publicity with the same ruthless tenacity with which Inspector Javier pursued Jean Valjean. Here are a few examples.

Some newspapers foolishly carried a story that an obscure company out of Kansas designated Arizona as the dumbest state in the country. They have it backwards. Arizona students performed above the national average in the Terra Nova, the only nationally-normed test taken by essentially all Arizona students. This performance is a tribute to you. Arizona ranks 49th out of 50 states in expenditures per pupil, but even under that handicap, you have educated Arizona students to the point where they test above the national average.

I am constantly reminding the media of the performance of Arizona students on the Terra Nova.

A second myth is that Arizona is in the bottom of the barrel in dropout rates. This came from a defective "Kids Count" measure of how many people ages 16 to 19 told census reporters that they were in or out of school. That would blame us, for example, for a person who came from another country and never showed up at school, whom we had never seen, much less had an opportunity to teach. "Kids Count" also has it backwards.

Three national organizations keep valid comparative statistics on graduation rates: the Manhattan Institute, the Urban Institute, and the United Health Foundation. Their most recent figures are for 2002. They all have Arizona at the national average of about 70%, plus or minus one percent. Some states are significantly lower: New Mexico at 65 percent, New York at 64 percent, Florida at 59 percent, and so on.

Since 2002, Arizona's graduation rate has soared from 72.7 percent to 77 percent. Unless the rest of the country has had an equally dramatic increase, Arizona should now be substantially above the national average in its graduation rate.

We also seek as much publicity as we can get for our "Spotlight on Success" program, and hope that you will contribute a description of your own successes to "tribulations and triumphs." (see page 2)

Sincerely,

Tom Horne
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Tribulations and Triumphs

Title I Distinguished Schools Recognition Program
PALOMINO II INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
Mr. Manuel S. Ramirez, Principal

Since its inception in 2003, Palomino II Intermediate School has upheld the vision of having every student on grade level by the end of grade six. At virtually 100% poverty and almost 90% Hispanic second-language learners, we service a population of students of immense academic need.

Our mission from the beginning was to eliminate anything that interfered with our academic achievement goals. Our first priority was to institute the Literacy First Reading Process, a collection of strategies, structures and procedures. Our staff was rigorously trained in this process so that accurate assessments, interventions and prescribed instruction could begin. Next we tackled our mathematics curriculum and expanded our district-adopted program with "Math in a Flash," a computer software program developed to ensure that all students master grade-level facts with automaticity. We developed curriculum maps for Math and Reading Comprehension. In Writing our students progress from writing a single sentence to a solid five-paragraph product by the end of 6th grade. As we literally have students in every grade functioning at all levels, these academic pursuits have been monumental. We believe that all students can and will learn, and students at all levels must make progress each year. Teachers receive training in strategies and content to assure that even students who are already doing well continue to grow.

It should be noted that the entire staff supports our reading, writing, and math curriculum goals. Every classroom teacher and half of the special area teachers have full ESL endorsements. Special area teachers incorporate academics in music, physical education, library, art and computers. Several staff members have participated in trainings in FastForWord, Wilson Reading, DANA technology, Jane Schaffer Writing, Meta-Cognition Thinking Maps and Classroom of Difference.

We also are fortunate to have backing from neighborhood and business groups who help finance the many needs of our families: health care, clothing, school supplies, etc. Some of our partners help by sending volunteers into our classrooms and offering after school and summer activities.

At Palomino II Intermediate we believe every student has many opportunities to be successful. With the support of our district, we have added many programs such as Title I summer school and Community Learning Center summer school, Fast ForWord, Accelerated Reader, and Project Rap (Reaching All Parents). In addition to the instruction during the day, students are offered the opportunity to attend an extended academic day. This extra hour of instruction is funded by the 21st Century grant. With this group and Title I, we provide Wednesday Night Family Education Night. Learning activities for families in the areas of reading, math, and community events are offered.

To ensure a positive and productive learning climate we work very hard, with a great deal of help, to support our students and their families so that our children can come to school, dressed for success in their uniforms, ready to learn. When the school day begins we want our students to have the tools needed for self-discipline and self-direction. We want them to feel that we are a community that exists for the purpose of helping them achieve their goals in life. We always provide each child with the learning environment most conducive to promoting success. We celebrate the diversity of our community, the individuality of each child and the successful future they hold in their hands.

We are very proud of the success of our students and proud of what our school has accomplished.

Congratulations Palomino II Intermediate School!

Got a Tribulations and Triumphs story? We want to hear from you! Email us at ADENews@ade.az.gov

Are you looking for an educational, fun and philanthropic project for your kids? Then we are looking for you! The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) is an organization whose mission it is to find a cure for diabetes and its complications through the support of research. Our school system has literally hundreds of children affected with diabetes attending our schools. One out of every 400-600 children live with this disease along with 6-8 finger pokes a day and multiple insulin injections. Participating in the JDRF Kids to Cure Diabetes School Program is a great way to show them that we care and we are helping to make a difference. There are a variety of creative programs from "caps for a cure" to jeans day and sneaker icons as well as a school walk. Participation in this kind of activity teaches our children a lesson on the importance of helping others around them. It also provides them with the empowering experience that shows them that even as children, they can have an impact on others' lives. Raising money for JDRF will directly help those in our community by moving us closer to a cure! If you would like to plan an event or walk in your school or have any questions, please contact Denise McClintock at 602.224.1811 or by email at dmcclintock@jdrf.org.



Celebrating Education



Sylvia Grace
2005 Milken National Educator

If in the next few years the nation sees more women working in science-related careers, teacher Sylvia Grace will deserve part of the credit. Having worked for several years as an engineer in both private companies and for the U.S. Department of Defense, Mrs. Grace is an excellent role model for young girls as she encourages them to consider a career in science. Her strong rapport with all of her students helps her connect with them in a variety of settings, from hands-on lab activities to direct instruction and class discussions, always with a focus on real-world applications of scientific principles. Described by colleagues as a master teacher, Mrs. Grace researched, wrote and received a grant for Project Lead the Way, a four-course program of elective math and science classes that certifies students for entry into an engineering graduate program or employment as interns in the engineering field. She is not only a highly requested teacher among her students, but also mentors the school's newest teachers, sharing with them her expertise and experience. The many people whose lives have been impacted by this outstanding educator would no doubt agree: Mrs. Grace is nothing short of amazing.

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards program provides public recognition and financial rewards to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education.



From l to r:
Tom Horne,
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

Sylvia Grace, 2005
Milken Educator

Dr. Jane Foley,
Senior VP, Milken
Educator Awards

Elie Gaines, 2004
Milken Educator

Arizona Book Festival!

Saturday, April 1, 2006 - Carnegie Center

Mark your calendar
Saturday, April 1, 2006
10 AM - 5 PM



Carnegie Center
1101 W. Washington Street, Phoenix

For more information about programming on all of the Arizona Book Festival stages, check the web site at www.azbookfestival.org.

The Arizona Book Festival is presented by the Arizona Humanities Council in partnership with the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records, the Maricopa County Library District, and SRP.

Photo of the Month



March is I Love to Read Month! A young student explores the excitement and imagination of a good book.



Got a story idea, picture or celebration?
We'd love to hear from you!
Email us at: ADENews@ade.az.gov

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND MCDONALD'S OF
ARIZONA TEAM UP TO PROVIDE
ARIZONA 1ST - 3RD GRADE STUDENTS
WITH READING INCENTIVE
BOOKMARK
DURING SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH

STUDENTS WHO READ 5 BOOKS GET
HEALTHY SNACK
FROM MCDONALD'S

In an effort to improve reading achievement in Arizona, the Arizona Department of Education and McDonald's of Arizona are teaming up to provide all Arizona 1st through 3rd graders with a reading incentive bookmark during School Library Month in April. The bookmark encourages students to read 5 books from their school library and receive a healthy snack - a free Apple Dipper and Milk Jug, compliments of McDonald's restaurants in Arizona.

The bookmark will be shipped to Arizona school districts mid-March. Arizona teachers should begin distributing the bookmark to 1st - 3rd grade students beginning April 3rd in conjunction with School Library Month.

"Our organization wants to foster literacy and early reading in Arizona schools," said Mike Pegram, president of McDonald's Owner/Operator Association of Phoenix and northern Arizona. "Our restaurants are committed to the communities we serve, and investing in education is a top priority."

He stated that McDonald's owners and restaurant managers support education in many ways.

"We develop and co-sponsor local programs and host McTeacher's Night fundraisers generating more than \$100,000 for Arizona schools," he explained. "McDonald's owner/operators are key sources of support for the Ronald McDonald House Charities Scholarship Program as well. Since 1995, we have raised more than \$1 million in scholarships for Arizona high school seniors."

"As one of the nation's largest employers of young people, we are committed to educating children," said Pegram. "We are delighted to help bring this special reading incentive bookmark to Arizona's 1st -3rd graders."

McDonald's USA, LLC, is the leading foodservice provider in the United States serving a variety of wholesome foods made from quality ingredients to millions of customers every day. More than 80 percent of McDonald's 13,700 U.S. restaurants are independently owned and operated by local franchisees. For more information about McDonald's visit www.mcdonalds.com.



i'm lovin' it™

The Arizona Department of
Education, Exceptional Student
Services is excited to announce the
First Annual
Great Arizona Teach-In.

This 'One-stop shopping' event will provide comprehensive information to current and future education professionals. Schools from around the state will be conducting interviews to obtain the best and brightest to serve Arizona students. A resource room will feature information on a wide array of education career employment issues and participants will be able to obtain comprehensive information, all under one roof.



Have more questions? Email
anthony.pagliuca@azed.gov

March Professional Development Opportunities:

Key Conferences/ Events

- *Automotive Technology 2006 Updates- GM*
- *AZ Board of Regents High Honors*
- *Tuition Waiver*
- *CACFP Business Track*
- *Capacity Building Coaching Cohort C & D*
- *Character Education School - Wide Strategic Planning*
- *Curriculum Mapping*
- *Drafting / Design Technology*
- *Gr 3-6 Six Traits & AIMS*
- *Hospitality Management New Curriculum*
- *Intro to New Social Studies Standard*
- *K-8 Physical Science*
- *NSLP Computer Track*
- *OUTREACH- Response to Intervention*
- *PDLA Year 1 & 2*
- *Researched Based Summer School*
- *School Finance Budget Workshop*
- *Summer Food Service Program*

For Dates, Times, and to Register, Click Here!

Walkthroughs Offer Insights in Classroom Practices and Needs By Oran Tkatchov, Program Administrator, Best Practices Division

At the center of student achievement are the actual practices that occur within the classroom. School administrators, however, are charged with responsibilities across their schools or districts that prevent them from consistently observing the instructional practices taking place in classrooms. One way leaders can keep a tab on learning is by implementing short, periodic classroom walkthroughs. Walkthroughs help administrators become familiar with the curriculum and instructional strategies being implemented, and can establish them as instructional leaders who are committed to student achievement (Ginsberg, 2002). Walkthroughs can also give insights on the professional development needs of the school (Richardson, 2001).

Walkthroughs are brief 5-10 minute observations looking for specific and constant items during each visit. This helps create a school-wide picture of practices and needs. Leaders should be familiar with student and grade-level data before these walkthroughs, therefore keeping the visit aligned to increasing specific student achievement (Barnes, 2001).

To begin, decide what you are going to be looking for. Design questions based on the needs of your school, and focus your observations around these questions (Ginsberg, 2001). Questions could include:

Is there a clear academic focus? (Is the lesson standards-driven? Does the lesson revolve around a certain topic?)

What is the level of student engagement? (Are the students on task? Is the teacher adjusting to engage all students?)

What is the set up of the room? (Can the teacher see all students from his/her desk or teaching point? Is exemplary work posted on the walls? Is the performance objective being covered that day on display anywhere in the classroom?)

How well do the students understand the topic? (Feel free to ask a few students if they understand. Do the students appear lost or bored? Are the students asked to effectively demonstrate the skill before the teacher moves on to other material?)

If you are just starting to implement walkthroughs at your campus, schedule at least a 20 minute block each day for a five day period for observing classrooms, and keep this time sacred to the task. Spend 5 minutes in each classroom. Do not let the teachers know when their actual walkthrough time will take place. Walk the entire classroom; do not just stay at the door. Using your generated questions, walk through the classroom for the allotted time and take notes of what you are observing.

When completed, set up a time to meet with individual teachers and keep your comments simple. Discuss what was observed, compliment best practices, and offer insights on improving instruction. Keep a supportive tone, and offer mentoring or coaching if needed. Ask teachers with effective instructional strategies if they are willing to share their strategies with others.

After conducting all walkthroughs, leaders should debrief their staff on the general practices that were observed, as well as any areas of concern. This can also supply administrators with insights to the professional development needs of the school.

Once the process is complete, schedule the next round of walkthroughs. Unlike formal observations which occur only two-three times a year, walkthroughs should occur on a regular basis.

Barnes, F and Miller, M. (2001, Spring). Data Analysis By Walking Around. School Administrator. Available at:

www.aasa.org/publications/

Ginsberg, MB. (2001). By the Numbers. Journal of Staff Development, 22(2), 44-47

Ginsberg, MB and Murphy, D. (2002, May). How walkthroughs open doors. Educational Leadership, 59(8), 34-39

Richardson, J. (2001, Oct). Seeing Through New Eyes. National Staff Development Council.

What: Arizona Agriculture Day

When: Saturday, March 25th

Where: The Historic Sahuaro
Ranch
(9802 N. 59th Ave.)

Admission is Free

For more information, call (602)273-7163
or visit: www.azda.gov



2006 Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Application Deadline

The 2006 Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship deadline is fast approaching. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday March 27, 2006.

For more information, visit our website at:

www.ade.az.gov/byrd

