

IUSD Today

News and Notes from around the Irvine Unified School District

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IUSD enters into historic solar agreement

Very rarely is a school district presented with an opportunity to save millions of dollars in energy costs, implement a new curriculum and substantially reduce its carbon footprint.

Yet the Irvine Unified School District has initiated a plan that will accomplish all three in the near future.

On Dec. 8, our Board of Education entered IUSD into a historic agreement with SunEdison and SPG Solar to establish



Gwen Gross
SUPERINTENDENT

energy-generating solar photovoltaic power systems – commonly known as solar panels – atop 21 of our sites.

This power purchase agreement is the culmination of 18 months of research and planning championed by board member Michael Parham along with our math and science coordinator, Mark Sontag. When the project is completed, it will be the largest solar deployment for a public school system in the state of California, and possibly the United States. More important, it is projected to save our district \$17 million over 20 years based on conservative estimates.

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MARVIN IS TOPS IN STATE

Sierra Vista Middle School's Kathy Marvin must be getting used to classroom visitors by now.

In February 2009, the science teacher was surprised by Board members and district staff, who announced she had been named IUSD's Middle School Teacher of the Year. The following May, county Superintendent Bill Habermehl dropped by to inform her that she had won the same honor at the county level. And in November, she was once again visited, this time by State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, who congratulated her on being named one of five California Teachers of the Year.

"It still feels unreal," Marvin said. "I wake up every morning and ask myself, 'Did I get that, or did I just dream it?'"

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Sierra Vista Middle School science teacher Kathy Marvin is congratulated by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell after being named one of five California Teachers of the Year.

IUSD lauded at green schools summit

The Irvine Unified School District has generated plenty of buzz with its recent plan to partner with SunEdison and SPG Solar to establish solar panels atop 21 district sites – a move conservatively projected to save \$17 million in energy costs over 20 years.

But the district has been walking a greener path for the better part of two years now with a growing number of initiatives designed to make its schools more energy efficient, reduce water usage and empower students to become catalysts for change.

For all of these efforts, Irvine Unified was honored Thursday, Dec. 10, with the 2009 District Leadership Award at the Green California Schools Summit & Exposition.

Organized by Green Technology, a nonprofit initiative designed to help government agencies achieve sustainability, the state summit took place Dec. 9-11 at the Pasadena Convention Center, bringing together school district representatives, green builders and others looking for innovative ways to preserve the environment and reduce costs.

School board member Michael Parham and Superintendent Gwen Gross accepted the Leadership Award on behalf of



IUSD board member Michael Parham, left, and Superintendent Gwen Gross, center, accept the 2009 District Leadership Award at the Green California Schools Summit & Exposition.

IUSD. Parham, Gross and Mark Sontag, IUSD's math and science coordinator, also led a pair of workshops detailing the district's many green initiatives.

MARVIN: Sierra Vista teacher among five honored

(Continued from page 1)

Every year, the state selects five outstanding educators who best represent California's teachers and symbolize the profession's contributions to quality education. This year's awards were announced following a review of each nominee's application, site visits and interviews in Sacramento.

"Of course, the rest of California is only now discovering what we in Irvine have known all along," IUSD Superintendent Gwen Gross said.

"We are so fortunate to have individuals like Mrs. Marvin in our schools, engaging our students and enriching young lives each and every day."

Marvin is IUSD's first ever state Teacher of the Year. Nevertheless, on the afternoon of O'Connell's visit, she did her best to deflect the praise.

"There are so many teachers at Sierra Vista who do exactly what I do," she said. "I can think of several off the top of my head who could have gone down this road."

Marvin has been teaching for 29 years, including the last nine as a science teacher at Sierra Vista. Along the way, she's earned a reputation for inspiring students with lessons that are both engaging and technologically advanced. Some experiments are known to occasionally dislodge her classroom's ceiling tiles, much to the delight of her students.

In addition to writing grants to procure state-of-the-art teaching

tools, Marvin has created a popular science/engineering exploratory class with group projects on robotics and roller coaster physics.

"I inspire my students to become scientists by giving them the opportunities to be scientists now so they can experience discovery in its rawest form and feel the awe of it," she said.

The California Teachers of the Year program began in 1972 to pay tribute to the state's educators, the growing complexity of challenges that confront California's schools, and the need to promote collaboration among teachers to meet those challenges. The program is also designed to help draw new people into the teaching field.

The 2010 California Teachers of the Year will be honored at a dinner on Jan. 25 in Sacramento. Seven semi-finalists will also be recognized.



Kathy Marvin

Scanning our District

Woodbury kids given chance to 'Pay it Forward'

“What act of kindness would you do with \$10?”

That's the question being posed to Woodbury Elementary students, who were each given ten dollars to brighten someone else's day.

The students and staff at Woodbury recently embraced a program called Rachel's Challenge, based on the writings of the late Rachel Scott, who had theorized that small acts of compassion could start a chain reaction of kindness.

One Woodbury family liked the concept so much they pledged their own money to launch a "Pay it Forward" campaign. In December, each child received an envelope containing \$10 to make a difference in the life of another person – and the students are getting to decide how.

Examples include picking up the tab for someone at a local restaurant, paying the parking fee for another car at an event or buying a gift card and anonymously giving it to someone who works hard yet is rarely recognized.

Some classes are pooling their funds to tackle bigger projects, while others are spending their \$10 bills individually.

“Teachers and students will be generating ideas to complete as a class and families are encouraged to talk about kind

acts one can complete with \$10,” Principal ChrissAnn Shane wrote in Woodbury's newsletter. “Have your child take pictures of the activity, draw a picture, or write a short narrative. We would love to have a collection of pictures and stories to share!”

If you'd like to thank the Woodbury family who made this possible, you're not alone. Yet in the spirit of selfless giving, they have opted to remain anonymous.

Sierra Vista students check out potential careers at Microsoft Technology Center

When 20 students from Sierra Vista Middle School recently visited the Microsoft Technology Center in Irvine, Microsoft's Sam Stokes said the company wasn't looking for customers.

“We're looking for future employees,” Stokes said.

Indeed, local students got a glimpse at potential careers on Oct. 30 as Microsoft officials shared their passion for technology and talked about industry trends. Company officials said their ultimate objective was to generate interest in math and science and to encourage Irvine students to consider pursuing careers with Microsoft and other tech firms.

“I think my students gained a lot of insight to what it takes to work for a big company like Microsoft,” said Sierra Vista teacher Kris Linville, who accompanied the students. “Most of my students take my elective because they are already interested in computers, but this field trip helped them realize that they can actually do what they love for a living.”

Linville said his students were tasked with an activity that required teamwork to develop a video game.

“They not only had to come up with the concept, but they had to pitch their marketing strategy as far as what type of operating system it would be on and how it would be sold,” he said.

Additional IUSD classes will likely be invited to take part in similar field trips this year.



IUSD, Team Kids partner to teach service-learning

IUSD and the nonprofit group Team Kids have been awarded a three-year, \$86,000 grant that will allow students to serve their communities and boost their academic skills at the same time.

Funded by the state Department of Education, the “CalServe Initiative” was designed to promote service-learning, which meshes community service projects with standards-based instruction.

The grant was specifically intended to support a school district and a nonprofit partner. Team Kids was already well-established at many of IUSD's elementary schools, allowing students to connect with police officers, firefighters and other community role models to tackle real life issues, such as hunger, homelessness and the environment.

As part of the CalServe Initiative, selected fifth- and sixth-grade teachers from Alderwood Basics Plus, Deerfield,

Springbrook and University Park elementary schools, as well as Vista Verde School, will work with approximately 2,800 students this year.

The teachers will first be trained in the principles of service-learning before developing a menu of potential projects. Each will then be eligible to apply for “mini-grants” to support the site-based projects. At the end of the year, a team of participating instructors will write a district curriculum and instructional plan for future years.

In the second and third years of the grant, the program will extend to additional schools, including middle and high schools, with teachers from the first year serving as mentors.

Assuming the initiative is successful, IUSD will become eligible for another three-year grant to sustain the program, creating opportunities for all IUSD students to participate.



“providing the highest quality educational experience we can envision.”

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Got a story?

Have an idea for an *IUSD Today* story or a submission? Contact Public Information Officer Ian Hanigan at ihanigan@iusd.org or call (949) 936-5002.

Don't forget to learn more about the Irvine Public Schools Foundation at www.ipsf.net

The Irvine Unified School District

SOLAR: A win for our kids, budget and planet

(Continued from page 1)

Board member Parham summed it up best after the vote.

“We are excited about the opportunity to educate our students with a real-world project that conserves both energy and money,” he said. “This enables the district to ‘practice what we preach’ as we lower electricity costs by more than \$17 million and reduce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to taking 12,000 cars off the road for a year – a win-win-win for our kids, pocketbooks and planet.”

Under the terms of deal, the Irvine Unified School District will incur no upfront capital costs. SunEdison will finance, build, operate and maintain the solar power systems, enabling the company to take advantage of tax credits that public agencies can't utilize. IUSD will, in turn, purchase energy at a reduced rate that is predictable long-term.

Installation is expected to begin at Rancho San Joaquin Middle School in the first half of 2010, and all 21 sites are slated to be completed within three to four years.

Over 20 years, these systems will generate more than 120 million kilowatt hours of solar energy, enough to power more than 11,000 homes for one year. At the same time, the systems will silently offset a projected 127 million pounds of carbon dioxide. That's equal to removing more than 12,000 cars from the road for a year, based on an average of 12,000 annual miles per vehicle.

While the savings and the environmental impacts are reasons enough to celebrate, our core mission in IUSD is student learning. So we are particularly excited to announce that solar energy will become part of the district's curriculum through this unique deal. Specifically, our students will utilize Internet-based

monitoring to track solar energy production and consumption at their schools in real time. In addition, kids will learn how solar panels work and how weather impacts energy production.

In this fiscal environment, with state revenue continuing to drop precipitously, our district is pulling out all the stops to get the most out of every penny. Recycling programs have been ramped up districtwide, conservation campaigns are being led by our students, parents and staff, and new schools are utilizing the latest energy efficient technologies.

Going solar was the logical next step. While we initially considered installation at a single middle school, we ultimately began looking at how best to utilize the 2.5 million square feet of roof space in our district. We found that, with the right partners, we could exponentially expand our access to energy that is clean, less expensive and renewable.

For all of our “green” efforts, IUSD was presented with the 2009 District Leadership Award at the Green California Schools Summit & Exposition, which was held at the Pasadena Convention Center Dec. 9-11.

It was inspiring to attend this event and to meet so many others who are seeking ways to reduce emissions, educate students and save money at the same time. While our district was singled out at the summit for taking a leadership role, we recognize there is more that can be done to promote sustainability, particularly as new technologies emerge.

After all, creativity and innovation are renewable resources. And as long as the Southern California sun continues to shine as brightly as our students, we have the power to do just about anything.

Extra! Extra!

Want to access more news and information about the Irvine Unified School District? Check out the District NewsFlash page at www.iusd.org/newsflash.

While *IUSD Today* does its best to chronicle district events, it's only published about once every two months. Meanwhile, there are a lot of important — and fun — stories going on in IUSD.

NewsFlash was created to fill the void, with new items posted frequently at the top of the page.

Also, those looking for the latest on the state budget and its impact on IUSD are encouraged to read the Dec. 17 edition of *Budget Notebook* on our Budget Watch page, at www.iusd.org/budget_watch.