



# GROSSMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT'S NEWSLETTER

From the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

## El Cajon Valley High School

Another Ribbon Cutting Marks the  
Re-opening of 12 New  
Classrooms Under Proposition H



Fire Chief Mike Scott, Police Chief Diamond, GUHSD Trustees, and Superintendent Collins look on as Principal Paul Dautremont and ASB President Abraham Malfavon officially re-open the first modernized classroom building at El Cajon Valley High School.

It's a new year and it's fitting that the first day back to school began with a ribbon cutting marking the re-opening of 12 new classrooms for teachers and students at El Cajon Valley High School.

The new classrooms have new roofing, floors, white boards, air conditioning, lighting, and are wired for the latest technology.

Police Chief Diamond remarked that the new classrooms were also safety-ready with new locking mechanisms, allowing teachers to lock doors from inside the classroom. Fire Chief Mike Scott discussed the new fire/life safety features including new fire alarms.

This project is the first classroom building to be completed at the school, and the 100 building is already under construction and is due to open four months later. That's the story throughout the Grossmont Union High School District, as **classroom buildings currently under construction, are scheduled to open in most high schools this spring and in early summer.**

## Student Engagement & Effort-Based Learning Lessons from an El Cajon Valley High School Student's Editorial



It was an editorial in El Cajon Valley High School's student newspaper, *Smoke Signal*, that got my attention. The editorial talked about "space-takers in every single school, in every classroom," referring to students who did not value education. As we discuss a strategic plan for the Grossmont Union High School District, we need also to consider the **attitudes, work ethic, respect and sense of responsibility** that every student brings to each classroom every day. Too often, strategic plans center on teachers and administrators without ever addressing student responsibilities.

Several years ago I wrote an article about why some students are unsuccessful on high school exit exams and most standardized tests. I discussed this with someone I respect greatly on the subject, Royce Mitchell from Kaplan. His response was: a major factor in students doing poorly on these types of tests has a lot to do with them "disengaging from the system." In short, these exams had no importance to them. It's the same disengagement that leads to truancy, absenteeism, failing marks and dropping out of school. **"Those space-takers are students who have disengaged."** A strategic plan has to directly address this issue. A journalism student at El Cajon remarked, "Why are there only a handful of students that have dreams that require education as their foundations, instead of all students/teenagers?"

What are the programs that will keep students engaged throughout their high school careers?

- **We certainly need to address 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students while they are still in middle school** to help them and their families understand and prepare for the challenges of high school.
- **Summer programs** for transitioning 8<sup>th</sup>-to-9<sup>th</sup> grade students can help develop skills necessary for success in school.
- 9<sup>th</sup>-grade programs that help personalize the learning environment also engage students daily in the school's instructional and activity programs.
- Students remain engaged when **relevant curriculum** addresses students' specific interests such as Career Tech Education or strong arts and electives programs.

At the same time, **effort-based learning** is all about the degree of effort a student puts forward in learning subject matter. While a school or district can develop numerous programs designed to keep students engaged, every student also has a responsibility to put forth the necessary effort to be successful. A culture of completing **homework**, strong **attendance** and **classroom participation** are a few of the indicators of effort-based learning.

Our **strategic plan** has to provide **programs and structures that engage students in their own education.** The plan also has to acknowledge the importance of effort-based learning and provide **policies that address the responsibility that every student has to put forth their very best effort.** As our El Cajon journalism student observed, it's about connecting every student's dream for their future to education as the foundation for realizing their dreams.