



April 8, 2008

from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

Mount Miguel Students Sweep County Science Fair!



Mount Miguel Bio/Chem teacher Todd Linke with students Theresa Tran and Daryl Nikonowicz as they explain their science projects

All too often we hear how students don't do well in science. Too often we tend to believe that our students simply don't have the talent or ability. On Tuesday, April 1, we visited an Open House to celebrate the accomplishments of a group of science students from Mount Miguel High School.

Walking into the cafeteria, we were immediately struck by 20 students actively talking to adults and other students about their science projects. Display boards told the story of different projects, experiments, hypotheses, conclusions and recommendations. The subjects were complex, ranging from studies of cancer cells, to metallic compounds in water, to the effects of music on brain functioning.

The students expertly handled questions and explained their projects. However, as impressive as the students were, their accomplishments at the Fair were even more so.

Twenty students were invited to the Greater San Diego Science Fair. This is the highest number of entries selected from schools throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties. To put that into perspective, **12% of the Fair's projects were from Mount Miguel High School!** Morse High School had 14 entries and High Tech High School had 11 entries. All other schools had less than 10.

Mount Miguel Sweeps Science Fair Awards

Grand Prize winner Theresa Tran won an all expenses trip to Taiwan, while **Emerson Driver and Anthony Tran were Grand Prize Runners Up.** In addition, **ten Mount Miguel students were invited to the California State Science Fair** including: Emerson Driver, Merle Howard, Anthony Tran, Adella Fejeran, Jennifer Massa, Marie Nguyen, Laika Roy, Alex Santillan, Theresa Tran and Whitney Yankauskas. **13 students were 1st place winners. Four students received 2nd place recognition and three students received 3rd place.**

How did this happen? The answer lies in a dedicated teaching staff and a Biology/Chemistry teacher named Todd Linke. He organized, recruited and developed an expectation of excellence in each participating student, and the students responded. **Todd Linke** is to be congratulated and is truly a model for what can be accomplished by our teachers.

VIKING CENTER & STAFF, MISSION POSSIBLE!

On Tuesday, April 1, we had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time visiting and talking with the staff at the Viking Center. Our goal was to understand their work, students and needs. The Viking Center addresses the needs of students who are medically fragile and have severe cognitive impairments. Over half of the students are not mobile and are wheelchair bound. Most use augmentative devices to communicate.

Faced with numerous challenges, the teachers, nurses and support/classified staff at Viking are truly remarkable and provide an excellent learning environment for these students with exceptional needs.



L. to R.: Staff Members Wendy Smith, Erica Russell, Kyndel Ross, Jack Papanek and Jason Gibbs



L to R.: Special Education Aide Dee Harris and Teacher Deanna McLaughlin

Entering Viking Center, you can immediately tell that there is a **"sense of mission"** around students both in terms of commitment to an appropriate educational program, but also in addressing students' physical needs.

Evidence of that commitment is everywhere. Communication devices fill each room, providing opportunities for most students to communicate. Feeding has multiple dimensions that each teacher and staff member handles expertly. Throughout the day we watched this staff in the most extraordinary manner address each student's needs. At the same time, more needs to be done to support our teachers and classified staff. SMART boards and technology top the list of needs at Viking. This month, we will explore how we can garner resources to provide these vital supports.

PROPOSITION H TO REBUILD VIKING CENTER



L to R: Laurie Miller, LVN, Bobbi Burkett, Assistant Principal and Jack Doria, RN, discuss the architectural plans for the new Viking Center

The area of greatest need at Viking is a new facility – the rooms are too small to accommodate students and support staff. **Proposition H will provide a new Viking Center facility with construction beginning in the 2008-09 school year.** The Design Committee is currently meeting with the architect and District representatives to design the new building.