

THE SANTA MONICA STAR

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Where Local People Are Celebrities

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Destination: West L.A.

Daniel Webster Middle School to Enrich Academic Programs

By Chelsea Brandwein

"Webster is definitely a community school," the school's Principal Peter Benefiel said of the Webster campus environment. "It feels unique because a lot of the people who attended school here still live in the community." The school opened in 1954.

Principal Benefiel says he sees generations of families come through the halls, which makes for a tight knit bond between the school and its surrounding neighborhood. In fact, Principal Benefiel is inviting alumni to form an association this year.

The Daniel Webster school boasts teachers and staff members wholeheartedly committed to the school, well-regarded interscholastic and intramural sports teams, and a music department to brag about.

The Webster music department offers students an opportunity to begin their careers in choir, orchestra, or band during their time at Webster. Many often choose to continue their musical studies at the high school level.

In addition to the distinguished music program, Webster's electives program reaches out to students in other ways. For example, an elective robotics course sparks the interest of budding mechanical engineers and the horticulture elective course gives students the opportunity to tend to the large Webster garden and with parent and teacher help, analyze the soil and the plants.

"It's about pathways and trying to latch students onto things that they have a passion for," Principal Benefiel says of Webster's elective program.

Webster also has a notable School for Advanced Studies (SAS) which provides students gifted in reading, writing, and math an intensive learning environment where they can meet like-minded students and together take on rigorous course material. Students test into this program through the District and undergo a portfolio review including teacher recommendations.

Additionally, Webster has implemented the use of iPads in the classroom. At the beginning of the year, every student is assigned an iPad for note-taking and electronic collaboration between students. Principal Benefiel hopes that this new technology will allow the school to go as paperless as it is able, and to equalize the learning process.

Principal Benefiel is perhaps most excited about the Science Technology Engineering Arts and



Peter Benefiel is the new principal at Daniel Webster Middle School. He has many plans for new academic programs.

Math (STEAM) Academy pilot program that Webster is getting ready to welcome to their sixth grade curriculum this year, and then their seventh and eighth grade curriculums in the years to follow. STEAM will place an emphasis on helping students develop the 21st Century job skills of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication among others. All instruction will continue to be aligned with the Common Core Standards which have been adopted in 43 states to lay out specific learning goals for students as they prepare for high school, college, and beyond.

"It's not so much what you know, but how you can explain what you know," Principal Benefiel said of the Common Core Standards.

The STEAM Academy will play host to project-based learning activities such as the iSquad tech team which will be a group

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Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

(Answer on Page 11)



Six Santa Monica Sister City Association 2015 Student Ambassadors met at a barbecue to discuss their upcoming adventures. These high school students participate in a home stay-cultural exchange program. The Japanese students will be in Santa Monica for about two weeks. Then, all of the students return to Fujinomiya for the celebrations honoring the 40th Anniversary of the Santa Monica/Fujinomiya Sister City collaboration. From left, Daiju Fujiwara, Sam Grossman, Kanan Ogawa, Olivia Chu, Amanda Welsler and Mari Ichikawa.

Photo by Mark Lawson Shepard



Deb Burgin, new development director of the YWCA Santa Monica / Westside, nominated her interns to be recognized this month by the Fairmont Miramar Hotel. From left, Deb Burgin, Erin Kurtz, Jacqueline Rioux, Fairmont Miramar Hotel Public Relations Director Jackie Kerns, Ashley Alfonso, and Caitlyn Cole.

Fairmont Miramar Hotel Recognizes Interns From the YWCA Santa Monica / Westside for Their Community Service

Deb Burgin, the new development director at the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside shared her positive feelings about her summer interns. "I am fortunate to be working with these young women here at the YWCA."

"Jacqueline Rioux is my marketing/communications intern. She just finished her second year at UCLA. Ashley Alfonso is my public health intern. She just finished her first year of her MPH program at USC. Caitlyn Cole is the chair of our Junior Board. She is the Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Lifestyle at Victorious. Erin Kurtz, is the director of On Air Promotions at OvationTV. She is also a member of the YWCA Santa Monica / Westside Junior Board."

To read more about Deb's programs at the YWCA Santa / Westside, go to Page 7.

Each month the Santa Monica Star works with the Fairmont Miramar Hotel to recognize young people in the community doing outstanding work. If you would like to nominate someone, please contact us at 310-613-3899.

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