

Apache Junction Unified School District

FOCUS IN SCHOOLS

Science, Math, Technology Emphasis Needed to Fuel Future

It is a known fact that the best career opportunities in the future will be in the fields of science, technology and math. In fact, employment opportunities in these areas are increasing at three times the rate of all other occupations.

This is partly due to the fact that nearly 50 percent of the current people doing this work are getting close to retirement. Add to this the tremendous growth in technological areas such as computers, and recognition of the increased demand for health care professionals to serve those retiring.

It is easy to see that there could be a crisis looming. The question is: will there be enough American young people to fill these jobs or is the U.S. going to lose its competitive edge in aerospace, technology and medicine to countries overseas?

The goal is to motivate the best young minds in America to pursue careers in science, engineering and technology. In order to meet this challenge, educators, business and the U.S. government are working together to raise children's interest in these areas and encourage those students who are showing aptitudes and skills.

Where Science Rocks!

This spring, Isaac Newton's Three Laws of Motion were put to a hip-hop beat in a professional presentation sponsored by NASA and Honeywell. The two aerospace giants joined forces in 2004 to promote strategies to engage U.S. students in the wonders of science, technology and math through innovative education programs.

The show, "FMA Live! Where Science Rocks" tours several months each year visiting 150 middle schools in 100 communities with one mission - to demonstrate that study in the areas of math and science can be fun and can lead to creative, rewarding career fields. The show uses music, humor and live student and teacher participation to teach about the three laws.

Students at Desert Shadows Middle School were fortunate enough to be among those chosen to view the exciting, interactive program. The students at Desert Shadows Middle School "loved the program," according to Principal Dottie Hunt, and a packet of thank you letters from students is on its way to the show's sponsors.

Elementary: To Light the Spark

Educators are realizing that an interest in science often starts early and are focusing efforts on offering exploratory elementary



Desert Shadows Middle School students were among a select group of teens chosen nationally to see the roadshow FMA Live! Where Science Rocks, a multimedia presentation designed to generate enthusiasm for science and technology.

school science learning experiences and activities. Last year, a summer school program focusing on hands-on science and math activities was held at Peralta Trail Elementary School. Unfortunately, lack of funding kept the successful program from being repeated this summer.

A tuitioned, one-week, hands-on science summer enrichment program, 2008 Camp Invention for first to sixth grade students,

was held last week at Desert Shadows Middle School. Camp Invention is a summer program of the National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation in partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Curriculum is aligned with state and national standards. Some scholarship aid was available.

Peralta Trail Elementary School is also almost finished constructing an outdoor classroom that has

been built primarily with grants and donations.

PUSH Ahead at Apache Junction High School

Once the spark has been ignited, how can students best be helped in maximizing their opportunities to excel and "PUSH

Ahead" in these areas during their high school careers? This is what guidance counselors at Apache Junction High School discussed this spring.

The result is the inauguration of a special event tailored to assist interested incoming freshmen students and their parents in charting a four-year course of study that will provide challenging, relevant college preparatory courses and extra opportunities in math and science. The event will be held on Wednesday evening, August 13, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in the Apache Junction High School north gym.

Among topics to be discussed will be AJHS course offerings, the availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, AJHS Math Club. Also discussed will be opportunities offered by Central Arizona College including the First Step program that gives students an opportunity to take college courses at no charge during the summer, and Early College allowing juniors and seniors a chance to earn college credit with no expense except books and transportation.

Free Immunizations Available

Families of Apache Junction children are urged to take advantage of free immunizations that will be available from the Apache Junction Fire District on Saturday, June 28, 2008 and Saturday, July 26, 2008 from 8:15 a.m. until 12 noon, and also on Tuesday, August 5 from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. (the day before AJUSD school begins).

All clinics are held at the City of Apache Junction's Multi-Generational Building at 1035 N. Idaho Rd. Immunization records must be brought along. No appointment is necessary. All of the state-required immunizations for school children will be available free of charge.

For more information, call 480-982-1110, ext. 2014.

Public Events Committee Awards Fine Arts Mini-Grants

The AJUSD Public Events Committee is the volunteer group of citizens who support the staging of numerous widely-attended educational and entertainment events each winter under the banner of the Arizona Lecture Series and the Public Events Series.

The proceeds from these shows are used to furnish scholarships for Apache Junction High School seniors wishing to pursue a course of study in the Fine Arts, and also to fund an annual series of mini-grants enabling fine arts educational experiences for AJUSD students.

This year, almost \$4,500 in mini-grants was awarded to be used for the following purposes:

- Building a library of performance music at Four Peaks Elementary School;
- Student art group that would create painted trashcans for the FPES campus;
- Art supplies for the kindergarten students at Desert Vista Elementary School;
- Materials and supplies to heighten the visual arts experiences and education of kindergarten students at Peralta Trail Elementary School;
- Specific art supplies for students to experience using during a 5-week "Express Yourself" themed art class;
- Costumes and supplies for a Dramatic Arts Center to be established at Gold Canyon Elementary School;
- Musical CD and a "color carpet"

- to be used for dance in Special Education classes at Thunder Mountain Middle School;
- Bookmaking supplies for Language Arts Classes at Thunder Mountain Middle School;
- New musical arrangements for the student band at Thunder Mountain Middle School;
- Books on music and musicians for the Apache Junction High School library;
- A performance by the theater

- group "Childsplay" for the student body at Desert Shadows Middle School;
- Additional art supplies for students in art classes at Desert Shadows Middle School;
- Modern Square Dancing instructional materials and dance accessories to form a student dance group at Four Peaks Elementary School who will perform in public.

Pick Up Extra School Goods For Project HELP

While out doing your Back-to-School shopping for your family, consider throwing into your shopping cart an extra package of socks or underwear for a child not as fortunate as your own. Project HELP is badly in need of new socks, underwear, shoes, jeans, and shirts and also school supplies for students (K-12) whose families cannot afford to purchase them.

New Back-to-School goods (including clothes, socks, shoes for children K-12 and school supplies and backpacks) donated by members of the community will be gratefully accepted beginning

on Monday, August 4. Applications for aid to families with children attending AJUSD schools will be taken starting Thursday, August 7. Qualified students will be eligible to receive Back-to-School clothes and goods after the student has attended school for two full weeks. The Project HELP facility is located at 195 E. Superstition Dr. The phone number is 480-288-2955. This facility will again begin to accept gently used clothes and hard goods beginning Monday, September 3.

IMPORTANT DATES

DO OUR SUMMERS SEEM SHORTER? TAKE A LOOK. THEY REALLY ARE.

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| June 30-July 11 | All School Offices closed (District Office open) |
| July 8 | Governing Board Mtg. (Governing Board Room) |
| July 23 | New Teachers Report |
| July 30 | All Teachers Report |
| August 6 | School Starts |

? Where Are They Now ?

Tayna (Porter) Loftis
AJHS Class of '91



One doesn't have to look far to find one 1991 Apache Junction High School graduate who has returned to contribute to a community and a school system that had "such a large impact" on her growing up. Tayna (Porter) Loftis, will officially begin her duties as an Assistant Principal at Apache Junction High School on July 1, 2008.

Tayna, who got her degree in Education from Arizona State University and originally planned to teach elementary education, did her student teaching at Apache Junction High School, got involved in coaching girls' volleyball and decided that high school teaching/coaching/administration was her calling. She has spent the last 10 plus years teaching and coaching at Apache Junction High School and each year got more involved in leadership roles - sitting on the AJHS Site Council, working as Department Head for Career and Technical Education (CTE), serving as Morale Committee Chair, and working on the North Central Accreditation and School Improvement Plan Committees. In 2007, she obtained her Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Phoenix University.

In addition to all of her professional duties and pursuits, Tanya is raising a family here in Apache Junction, the town she grew up in. She and her husband, Darren, have two daughters, 6 and 8, who attend Superstition Mountain Elementary School.

Tanya is happy here and excited about starting her new position. She said, "To me, this is not just a job, this is MY school and community!"

Free Summer Lunch Available for all Local Kids

Attention all Kids and Parents! The Apache Junction School District, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and the Arizona State Department of Education, is currently offering the Free Summer Lunch Program - free nutritious meals for all children 18 years of age or younger who live in this area.

Lunch is served from 11 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Sites are:

- Four Peaks Elementary School, 1785 N. Idaho Road;
- Apache Junction High School, 2525 S. Ironwood Drive;
- Superstition Mountain Elementary School, 550 S. Ironwood Drive;
- Mountain Shadows Education Center, 2805 S. Ironwood Drive.

Lunches will continue to be served Monday through Friday,

through July 18 at the first three sites. Because of construction at Apache Junction High School, please use the far east entrance at the back of the cafeteria for entry.

Lunch at Mountain Shadows Education Center will only be served Monday through Thursday. Children can be brought to the sites for free lunches by parents or caretakers. Adult meals can also be purchased for \$2.50 if the adult wishes to eat with the child/children.

On Tuesdays, children can enjoy a free lunch at Four Peaks Elementary School and go next door and see a kids' movie at the A.J. Library at 1 p.m. For more information, call 480-982-1110, x 2014.

AJUSD Summer Hours and Schedules

Summer hours are currently in effect at all school offices and the District Administrative center. Office hours are 6:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. All AJUSD offices will be closed on Fridays until the week beginning July 21, 2008.

All offices at the individual schools within the Apache Junction Unified School District will be closed the first two weeks of July to allow for staff vacations. The District office is the only exception and will be open Monday through Thursday 6:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. School offices will reopen on

Monday, July 13, 2008 and will be open through the start of school on Wednesday, August 6, 2008, for student registration and school business.

Regular office hours will resume for the District office and all school offices on July 21, 2008. The regular office hours at the District Administrative Center are from 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Hours at the schools vary. But they will be open five days per week.

For more information, consult your school office or call 480-982-1110, ext. 2014.

Don't Forget, the 2008/2009 School year starts on Wednesday, August 6.

For the complete calendar for the 2008/2009 School Year go to the www.ajusd.org website and open to "Calendar."