



# The Lion's Roar

## McKinley Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1  
8/13/18



## Welcome Back McKinley Lions! Check out our Upgrades!

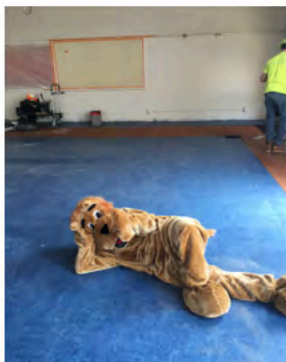
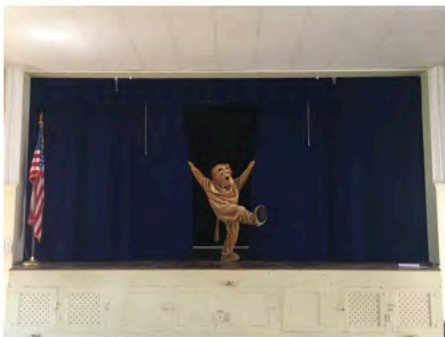
When you return to campus for the first day of school on Thursday August 23<sup>rd</sup>, you'll notice upgrades to some of our buildings:

- The Preschool has upgraded restrooms.
- The North Building has new storage casework, flooring, and paint.
- The North Building upstairs had its corridor hallway reinstated, for fire exit safety and so our students in wheelchairs can more easily access our classrooms.
- The bungalows on the big yard received new floors.
- Our Cafeteria received new floors, ceiling, and paint.
- Our Learning Annex by the library became bigger so the space can be utilized for classes like music and intervention.
- Our Auditorium stage got new curtains, sound system, lighting, and projector system.

What a great way to welcome students back!



*Please excuse us if some of our classrooms aren't quite as beautiful as usual on the first day. Construction will continue up until the first day of school, and Air Conditioning is still being installed in the Cafeteria and North Building after hours during the first few months of school. Our teachers will be doing their best to make their rooms as organized and welcoming for their students as possible. Thank you for your understanding and patience.*





# Welcome Our New Staff

## **Katy Buckner, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**

Ms. Buckner comes to us with 9 years of experience as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader teacher and 2 years as a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher. She specializes in providing engaging, student-centered instruction to culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse students. She has a BA in communication with a minor in peace studies and a MA in education from LMU. She uses her knowledge and experience to cultivate social-emotional learning through restorative justice, daily mindfulness, and responsive classroom techniques. Ms. Buckner develops students' critical thinking and problem solving skills through inquiry and project-based learning. At her previous school she served as a member of the school's WASC accreditation leadership team, a Master Teacher Mentor for novice teachers, Curriculum Director as the school transitioned to the common core state standards, and led the school's Academic Decathlon team. Also for the past 10 years Ms. Buckner has served as a dedicated volunteer at the Laurel Foundation, an organization that provides educational and support programs to youth and families affected by HIV/AIDS, transgender, and other at-risk youth populations.

## **Krikor "Koko" Mesrobian, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher**

Mr. Mesrobian is a SMMUSD alum, having graduated from Franklin, Lincoln, and Samohi. He comes to us from an urban Title I charter school in South Gate, having taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and Kindergarten for 2 years. Prior to that he worked at numerous schools in SMMUSD for 9 years, beginning his career as a classroom IA and Paraeducator in special education classrooms working with students with Emotional Disturbance and Autism, then becoming a long-term substitute teacher. He has a particular expertise in engaging STEM lessons, and in using blended learning to incorporate technology to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. He also has experience in our school site curriculum and methodologies such as restorative justice and community circles, Readers Writers Workshop, and English Learner strategies. Recognizing the positive benefits of community building events, he coordinated his school's Literacy and Math Nights, Donuts for Dads, Mother's Day Tea, and Fall Festival. He is bilingual in Armenian and English.

## **Ling Phansavath, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher**

Ms. Phansavath has taught for the past 5 years in Las Vegas, Nevada. She has experience teaching 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in a Title I and Title III school with a high population of English Language Learners and immigrant youth. Like McKinley, her previous school's focus was Academic Discourse, so Ms. Phansavath has expertise in utilizing differentiated sentence frames, questioning techniques, applying Thinking Maps, and various discourse protocols. Excelling in culturally responsive teaching and ELL instructional strategies, Ms. Phansavath served as Grade Level Chair, a New Teacher Mentor, and was selected by her school to attend the ASCD Leadership Conference in San Diego. She also trained school staff in her district's newly adopted student/parent online portal, and served as a member of the Elite Apple Team to assist teachers in how to innovatively integrate iPads and other Apple technology into instruction. She received her undergraduate degree from UCLA and her MA from Pepperdine. Ms. Phansavath is bilingual in Mandarin and English.



# Welcome Our New Staff

## **Alison Peterson, Life Skills 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Teacher**

Ms. Peterson comes to us from Georgia. For 6 years she was a special education teacher for students in grades 9-12 with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities, and has experience as an Interrelated, Resource, and Adapted Curriculum (Life Skills) Teacher. Due to her talent and expertise, she became her district's Adaptive Curriculum Specialist for the last 2 years, training teachers throughout her district how to support students with special needs and training them in the newest and most innovative curriculum. Specifically, she trained teachers of students with moderate to severe disabilities in the Unique Learning System (ULS) curriculum; SMMUSD recently adopted this program so she will be an excellent resource at both McKinley and in our district. In 2016 she was a Special Education Teacher of the Year finalist in her district, and in 2014 a Teacher of the Year finalist at her school. She has also served as a member of her school's leadership team, was a leader in incorporating technology into instruction, was a Mentor Supervising Teacher to a new student teacher, and served as a 504 Coordinator and Response to Intervention (RTI) Co-Coordinator.

## **Erika Diaz, Bilingual Community Liaison**

After graduating with a BA in Criminal Justice, for the past 2 years Ms. Diaz has worked in the Juvenile Vital Intervention Directional Alternative Program (VIDA). Operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, in partnership with community-based organizations, volunteers, schools and families, VIDA serves children between the ages of 11 and 17 to increase academic achievement, improve family relationships, and develop positive social behaviors. In the program Ms. Diaz taught youth classes, as well as translated for parent classes, and coordinated community-building events. As a first generation college graduate, and daughter to immigrant parents from Mexico, Ms. Diaz is passionate about collaborating with and providing support to parents of low-income families and English Learners. Ms. Diaz is bilingual in English and Spanish.

## **Mayra Rivas, Social Worker/Counselor**

Ms. Rivas is our new counselor from Family Services of Santa Monica. Ms. Rivas is finishing up at UCLA earning her Pupil Personnel Services and Child Welfare Credentials, has a MA in social work from CSUDH, and has a BA in social work from CSULA. For the past year she has been a Counselor Intern working with diverse students at Title I Aspire Public Schools, providing counseling services, family workshops, classroom presentations, conducting social skills groups, and taking part in IEP, 504, and SST meetings. Ms. Rivas has also been an In-Home Counselor and Therapist Intern for the Pico Union Family Preservation Network and Behavioral Health Clinic where she conducted psychotherapy sessions, behavioral assessments, facilitated a teen group, provided translation services and more. She was also a Case Management Intern for the Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System, and the Special Services for Groups Trauma Recovery Center. Ms. Rivas is bilingual in English and Spanish.

# McKinley Scores Big on the State Test

## What's New this School Year

Preliminary State Test scores are in and McKinley has made impressive gains! It's wonderful to see our hard work reflected in this end-of-year data. Great job to all our students and staff for their efforts! We expect the final public scores will be released in the next few weeks and we look forward to sharing it with you then. In the meantime, our Site Leadership Team has been able to analyze the preliminary data, and determine plans for this upcoming school year. Below are just some of the great things you can expect in 18-19.

### Continue our School Site Focus

#### **Academic Discourse**

Based on the preliminary data the strategies we applied this year (Academic Discourse, Thinking Maps, RTI) are working!

However, data shows that listening and speaking skills, and communicating reasoning in math, continue to be areas of need for our students. Since our Site Plan focus of Academic Discourse, developed by our School Leadership Team (SLT), has been effective we plan to continue to use and refine Discourse in ELA for mastery and increased effectiveness, and also begin to more deeply apply Discourse to Math. Students will have a variety of opportunities to talk to each other in pairs and groups to explain their thinking and deepen their understanding. Students will also use sentence frames and Thinking Maps to guide their thinking and apply academic vocabulary.

Some benefits of Academic Discourse include:

- Discourse is a research-based proven effective strategy for closing the achievement gap.
- Discourse strengthens listening and speaking skills and deepens students' understanding of concepts.
- Discourse develops students' higher-order thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving skills all of which will transfer across subject areas.
- Discourse engages students in learning and in school.
- Discourse promotes a positive school culture by facilitating relationship building.
- Discourse benefits English Learners by rapidly developing academic language.
- Discourse ties directly into District, LCAP, SPSA, and McKinley goals.

### Some New Things (and more to come!)

- **Increased Performing Arts Theater** Instruction! Students will now receive 15 theater classes (up from 11) to develop their confidence and speaking skills. Lessons will be tied to ELA standards. We also **increased TK-2 Music** from 24 to 30 sessions!
- Previously 8 classes were going to fade out of supplemental science instruction. This year we have contracted with P.S. Science to bring **STEM instruction to all K-5 classes**.
- Keri King, our National Board Certified part-time Reading Teacher, is going to become a 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> **Math Co-Teacher**! As Math is an area of need in upper grades, Mrs. King will be able to provide collaborative support and student intervention. Also our 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders will now take the **aMath Fastbridge** so we can monitor students' progress and needs in math. Our LLI and Reading Teacher will continue to service all our Tier III 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders in ELA as well as provide ELD to our Long Term ELs as we **expand our Response to Intervention (RTI)**.
- Instructional Aides will now receive **monthly IA trainings** on instructional strategies and our Positive Behavior Intervention Support strategies. Noon Duty Yard Supervisors and Paraeducators will continue to receive monthly trainings.
- Our School Psych, Counselor, and SAI will be working collaboratively with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade as general ed resources, providing a research based **social-emotional skills curriculum** called Second Step. We anticipate success and hope to expand to other grades in the future.
- We are starting a new **partnership with Insight Therapy Group** (see page 6).
- All students TK-5 will have a monthly **schoolwide shared learning experience** focused on character development as they read and thoughtfully discuss a common book on the month's Pillar of Character. Students will then continue to come together at Monthly Outdoor Assemblies for Pillar presentations.



# Save the Dates

## Updated Parent Handbook and Website!

Our Parent Handbook has been updated with detailed helpful information for parents. Please read this informative document before school begins.

<http://www.mckinley.smmusd.org/pdf/handbook.pdf>

Also, many of our Website pages have been updated. Enjoy! (If you've been to our website recently you may need to refresh your browser to see the current webpages.)

## TK/K Meet and Greets

Meet and mingle with fellow families, McKinley staff, and PTA at this casual event on the K Yard.

August 22<sup>nd</sup>

10:00-10:45 TK

11:00-11:45 K

## First Day Info Fair

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, after you've dropped your child off at 8:28am, come on by the

Auditorium at 8:30am for a fun and informative Info Fair! PTA, School, and Community groups will be available with info and to answer questions.

## Back to School Nights

August 28<sup>th</sup> Grades TK-2 (Minimum Day TK-5<sup>th</sup>)

September 4<sup>th</sup> Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> (Minimum Day 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>)

### 6:00-6:30pm, Cafeteria- New Volunteer Training

- All family members who want to volunteer in the classroom, on field trips, or at school events/activities are required to attend a Volunteer Training. At this training you will learn about school and district policies, and tips for how to support students' learning.
- At this training you will be given a Volunteer Application to complete that will include a TB Risk Assessment.
- If you have already attended a training in the past, you do not need to attend again.

### 6:30-7:00pm, Auditorium- Introduction

- The Principal, PTA, Ed Foundation and other school groups will provide important information about the school and SMMUSD.
- If you attend this presentation on the TK-2<sup>nd</sup> Back to School Night, you do not need to attend on the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Back to School Night as it is the same presentation.

### 7:00-8:00pm, Classroom Presentations

- Your child's teacher will explain about their classroom expectations, grade level curriculum, and communication plan.

**This is an adult-only event. Students will not be permitted on the playground as there is no supervision. Please arrange childcare.**

**Thank you for your support!**

**Parking will be available on the playground for this event.**

## Other Dates to Save

**August 23-** First Day of School and Minimum Day Early Dismissal

**August 31-** Outdoor Assembly  
8:30am, K Yard

**August 31-** PTA Meeting, 8:45am, Auditorium

**September 3-** No School

**September 7-** ELAC Meeting,  
8:45am, Auditorium

**September 10-** No School

**September 6-** Site Governance Meeting, 3:05pm, Auditorium

**September 14-** AASG, 8:45am, Auditorium

**September 19-** No School

**September 21-** Special Ed Resource Group Fall Meeting,  
8:45am, Auditorium

**September 20-** Site Governance, 3:05pm, Auditorium

**September 26-** Picture Day

**September 26-** 6:00-7:00pm Literacy Night

**September 28-** Outdoor Assembly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Respect, 8:30am, K Yard

**September 28-** PTA Meeting, 8:45am, Auditorium

## Back to School Picnic

September 7<sup>th</sup> 4:00-6:00

Pack some food and a blanket, and come hang out with other McKinley families at this casual relaxed get together. There will be music, and pizza and dessert for sale. See you at the McKinley field!





## New Partnership and Resource- Insight Psychotherapy Group

### Affordable, Accessible, and Quality Counseling for our Students

McKinley believes in developing the Whole Child, so we care about the mental health of our students. All students can benefit from having someone to talk to, but counseling can be particularly beneficial for students dealing with academic or social challenges, stress, a recent loss, life changes, sadness, or other feelings. At McKinley we do not see counseling as a “bad” thing; instead McKinley is a safe space that does not stigmatize counseling or any other support service. We teach our students that we value diversity, and recognize that we all have different needs, and that it is okay to get help and support from others as we work together as a community.

So in order to provide a resource for our students and families, McKinley has partnered with Insight Psychotherapy Group. McKinley is one of two elementary schools in SMMUSD to begin this partnership with Insight; Samohi and Lincoln have also partnered with them.

In order to make counseling more accessible to families, Insight Psychotherapy will provide therapy on campus (or at your home or their office), and will coordinate with the teacher and parents to determine therapy times during the school day (which could also be after school).

This service is available for students with private insurance, or for a sliding scale of about \$50-\$85. They can meet with students regularly (weekly, monthly etc.) for 30-45 minute sessions depending on the student’s needs.

The Associate Marriage Family Therapists (AMFTs) can provide therapy in English, Spanish, and Hebrew.

Since they are contracted with the district, teachers will be able to communicate with the therapists in order to be able to apply strategies and supports throughout the school day.

Our school counselor from Family Services of Santa Monica Mayra Rivas (congratulations to Hazel Tercero on her promotion at Family Services!) will continue to see low-income students with Medical and Medicare, and our students with more severe and urgent needs. Our School Psychologist Angelina Tao will continue to see students in Special Education who receive psychological and/or social skills services, and she is available for urgent matters and support. Insight Psychotherapy group is available for students of any parent who is interested.

More information can be found at [www.InsightPG.org](http://www.InsightPG.org)

If you are interested in your child receiving counseling, please contact our school counselor Mayra Rivas at [mrivas@smmusd.org](mailto:mrivas@smmusd.org) and she will help you to begin the referral process and will put you in touch with Insight. You can also contact our Assistant Principal Sofia Cedillo at [scedillo@smmusd.org](mailto:scedillo@smmusd.org) with additional questions.

