

# Newport-Mesa Recognizes Six High School Seniors for Character Traits

Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) recognized and honored six high school seniors for their character and leadership traits.

“We have a wealth of incredible students and it is gratifying to annually recognize a few of them,” said Superintendent Dr. Fred Navarro. “Getting to know students and their genuine good natured approach to life is something I look forward to each year,” he added.

The Character Trait Award Programs aims to highlight six seniors, one from each high school, who symbolize one of the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Staff members from the six NMUSD schools nominate a student for each category and the final award choices are decided on by a small committee steered by Superintendent Dr. Fred Navarro.

## **Kaitlynn Kistler, Early College High School – Trustworthiness**

Selected for the Character Trait Award of Trustworthiness, Kaitlynn is a dedicated, thoughtful, and hardworking student. She is a member of the National Honors Society and dedicates her time to assist struggling classmates and goes above and beyond to offer her support.

## **Ryan Kassel, Corona del Mar High School – Respect**

Selected for Character Trait Award for Respect, Ryan is unfailingly courteous, kind and respectful to his peers, teachers, and coaches. He is captain of the Varsity Cross

Country team and participates as an intern in the Biorobotics Lab at UC Irvine.

**Menzin Echols, Back Bay High School – Responsibility**

Selected for the Character Trait Award for responsibility, Menzin has maintained excellent attendance, stellar grades, and earned the respect and friendship of his peers as well as the Back Bay faculty and staff.

**Clarissa Barragan, Estancia High School – Fairness**

Selected for the Character Trait Award for fairness, Clarissa is good-natured, open minded and patient. She is respectful toward peers and staff and carefully listens to others viewpoints to ensure fairness among peers.

**Peyton Espley-Jones, Newport Harbor High School – Caring**

Selected for the Character Trait Award for Caring, Peyton regularly displays a caring, positive, optimistic approach to things. She is personable, compassionate, and driven to succeed. She is president of a student body of more than 2,500 students and consistently spends time and energy to improve the lives of others through her genuine caring nature.

**Nora Vartanian, Costa Mesa High School – Citizenship**

Selected for the Character Trait Award of Citizenship, Nora maintains a 4.3 GPA, while balancing her academic activities and activities outside of school. She is a member of the Madrigal Choir and the varsity cheer team. She advocates for the needs of herself and others and is active in her church and numerous community service activities.

The winning high school seniors reflect strong leadership traits and exuberate kindness.

Winners are applauded with a six foot banner showcasing their photo, winning character trait and school they represent displayed in the district lobby for one year. Students will also be recognized at a special ceremony June 7, 2016 at 6

p.m. in the Corona del Mar High School Performing Arts Theater.

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## **Students get Immersed in Signature Academies**

College Park Elementary School's Mandarin Immersion Program is accepting applications for the 2016-2017 school year. The program is available to kindergarten and first grade students who reside within the N-MUSD attendance boundaries. Enrollment is open district-wide and is not restricted to the College Park attendance zone.

Mandarin Chinese is the native language of more than 870 million people, making it the most widely spoken first language in the world. Kindergarten students currently in the program will transition to a Mandarin program in first grade, with the goal of continuing through middle and high school.

N-MUSD also offers two additional specialty elementary school programs – a Modern Scholars program at Adams Elementary and a Spanish bi-literacy program at Whittier Elementary. These programs are available for kindergarten students and first grade students (limited spaces available for first grade).

The District also offers Signature Academies at each high school, offering students a global competitiveness to better prepare them for college and career success. Students enrolled in Signature Academies receive unique curriculum options and supplemental activities that complement the core academic programs at N-MUSD high schools.

Signature academies include specialty programs centered on

key, industry leading careers and areas of study such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Arts and Math (STEAM). Each of the four N-MUSD High Schools offer unique programs, which are open to all ninth grade students within the N-MUSD, regardless of their zone of residence. [Click here for more information about the N-MUSD Signature Academies.](#)

The application deadline for elementary school specialty programs and the high school signature academies is Friday, April 15, 2016.

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## **N-MUSD Brings Home the Gold**

The California Department of Education (CDE) awarded twelve elementary schools in Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) with the California Gold Ribbon Award, in recognition of their outstanding educational programs and practices that contribute to closing the achievement gap.

The Gold Ribbon program replaces the California Distinguished Schools program during the two years that California is developing new assessment and accountability systems. The California Gold Ribbon Schools Award was created to honor schools while the California Distinguished Schools Program is on hiatus as California transitions to new assessment and accountability systems. Traditionally, the Distinguished Schools Program honored public schools that showed improved student outcomes as measured through standardized testing and reporting scores and additional measures.

The Gold Ribbon program is different from the California Distinguished Schools program in that it focuses on

recognizing schools that demonstrate academic progress through the implementation of the new State standards.

The seven NMUSD schools in Costa Mesa that were honored with the California Gold Ribbon Award are:

### **Davis Magnet School**

Davis Magnet School was recognized as a Gold Ribbon School for their success in closing the achievement gap, engaging parents and community and use of technology through their project based learning, which focuses on improving achievement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Sample project based learning at Davis Magnet School include a rollercoaster challenge, where students create a rollercoaster to learn about motion and force; develop a bio-waste digester, which teaches students about waste matter, renewable energy, chemistry and more. The project based approach to learning has resulted in 75 percent of Davis students meeting or exceeded English language arts standards and 74 percent meeting or exceeded math standards, based on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium data. These percentages are 39 to 125 percent higher than district, county, and state averages. Learn more about Davis Magnet School at <http://davismagnet.nmusd.us>.

### **Kaiser Elementary**

Kaiser Elementary uniquely serves students in grades three through six and was selected as a Gold Ribbon School for their success implementing their Read All Day (RAD) Program. The RAD program includes various tiers of instruction, grounded on new state standards, student assessments to determine the tier of instruction that best suits each student's need, and creating a community culture of reading.

The RAD program has resulted in a 24 percent increase in student reading proficiency. Based on 2015 Smarter Balanced

Assessment Consortium data, English learners exceed state averages by nine percent, socio-economically disadvantaged students exceed state averages by 11 percent and special education students exceed state standards by 18 percent. To learn more about Kaiser Elementary please visit <http://kaiser.nmusd.us>.

### **Killybrooke Elementary**

Killybrooke Elementary School was recognized as a Gold Ribbon School for their success in implementing a college and career readiness program centered on universal achievement (as a No Excuses University school) and technology integration.

Killybrooke has made great strides in increasing achievement of all students and closing the achievement gap for English Learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students, through six systems designed to help all students achieve, with technology (including 1:1 Chromebooks for students in grades 3-6) used as a tool to maximize student learning.

Assessments show improvement, with Academic Performance Index increasing from 667 to 867, English language arts proficiency increasing from 27 percent to 67 percent, and math proficiency increasing from 31 percent to 75 percent. Student scores exceed County and State averages. Learn more about Killybrooke Elementary at <http://killybrooke.nmusd.us>.

### **Paularino Elementary**

Paularino Elementary School was recognized as a Gold Ribbon School for their success in creating a culture of universal achievement through their program, Reading Our Way to College. Paularino Elementary became a No Excuses University school to inspire students to attend college and also implemented an Accelerated Reader program to encourage students to read independently.

Implementation of these reading programs and other programs,

focused on improving students' character virtues- such as fairness, responsibility, respect, caring, trustworthiness and good citizenship- have resulted in a 21 percent decline in the number of students reading two or more years below grade level. To learn more about Paularino Elementary please visit <http://paularino.nmusd.us>.

### **Pomona Elementary**

Pomona Elementary School was recognized as a Gold Ribbon School for their reading instruction program, which uses small group dynamics to deliver adaptive reading instruction for students to achieve academic success. Students that require intensive intervention are placed in groups as small as two, while students who have mastered grade level foundational skills receive teacher support to move beyond grade level expectations.

The reading program, which is flexible and adjusted throughout the year, has resulted in ten percent more students scoring at benchmark reading levels. STAR testing data showed an 18 percent drop in students reading two or more years below grade level. Learn more about Pomona Elementary at <http://pomona.nmusd.us>.

### **Sonora Elementary**

Sonora Elementary School was recognized as a Gold Ribbon School for their No Excuses University: We are College Bound program.

The We are College Bound program is designed to close the achievement gap between students in traditionally low-achieving sub-groups by implementing continuous data assessments to develop individualized academic intervention plans and address social-emotional and behavioral needs of students.

Sonora Elementary has twice been named a California

Distinguished School and a Title 1 Achieving School. Learn more about Sonora Elementary at <http://sonora.nmusd.us>.

## **Early College High School**

In 2015, the first year of the California Gold Ribbon Program, the California Department of Education recognized NMUSD's Early College High School (ECHS) with a Gold Ribbon Award. ECHS partners with Coastline Community College to offer students the opportunity to earn both a high school diploma and a year or more of transferable college credit.

With a 100 percent graduation rate, ECHS offers smaller classes, on-campus college classes, dual-credit classes, easier transition to higher education and financial savings of completing college credits in high school.

ECHS is top ten ranking among all public high schools Orange County and has the highest California Department of Education rating of 10/10, for seven consecutive years. Learn more about ECHS at <http://earlycollege.nmusd.us>.