



PARAMOUNT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ENSURE LEARNING AND SUCCESS FOR EACH STUDENT BY PROVIDING A QUALITY EDUCATION

15110 CALIFORNIA AVE. | PARAMOUNT, CA 90723 | TEL: (562) 602-6000 | www.paramount.k12.ca.us

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CONTACT: Jahmal Corner
Valerie Martinez
(909) 445-1001

Paramount Elementary School Celebrates Asian, Pacific American Heritage

Paramount, CA – Paramount Unified’s Major Lynn Mokler Elementary students swayed to traditional Thai, Hawaiian and Samoan dances on May 24 as part of the school’s Asian and Pacific Islander American heritage celebration.

With presentations, samples of Hawaiian food and five dance numbers, Mokler students and teachers took audience members through an array of Asian and Pacific Islander historical figures and cultural customs.

Mokler Principal Linh Roberts welcomed more than 50 parents, students and educators to the school’s auditorium, where she shared her family’s trials and triumphs as they left a war-torn Vietnam and relocated in Iowa. Her depiction of isolation in a new country and the drive to overcome obstacles kicked off the heritage celebration to recognize Asian and Pacific Islander American contributions to society.

“It is important to celebrate diversity and encourage unity,” first-grade teacher Mariza Besina said. “Events like this create a sense of appreciation of other cultures, especially when those cultures are not widely represented.”

Besina is one of two teachers to instruct the performing arts club at Mokler, and she contributed choreography for two Hawaiian dances.

Four students were selected from among nearly 100 who created biography projects to present their research on pivotal individuals. Second-grader Evangelina Asoau shared her project about her uncle, Lolo Matalasi Moliga, who is the 57th governor of American Samoa.

Students also described the work and accomplishments of Chinese artist Seong Moy, fashion designer Vera Wang and singer Bruno Mars.

- MORE -

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First-grade teacher Cheena Sy led four of her students in a traditional Thai dance of welcoming and peace with elaborate hand movements set to the tempo of string instruments.

The performing arts club gathered on stage wearing yellow and green grass skirts and performed a modern hula dance. Besina followed her classes' number with a solo Hawaiian dance that displayed delicate movements and possessed a calming pull. She then gave parents and audience members a step-by-step instruction on basic hula moves.

A blend of current and former Mokler students presented two Samoan dances; the first featured female students and the second united female and male dancers.

"I really like the dancing and being involved in the show," said second-grader Janelle Rocha, who shared the project on Vera Wang. "Everyone is different, and it is fun learning about the different styles of clothes and the different languages."

After the show, parents walked through a gallery of biography projects in the school's library. Jackie Chan, Michelle Kwan, Chrissy Teigen and Steven Yeun were among some of the individuals showcased.

The Asian and Pacific Islander American event was the last of three cultural celebrations held this year. Hispanic American heritage was highlighted in October and African American heritage was recognized in February. The series aimed to bring multi-cultural awareness to Mokler's students and parents.

"By recognizing and honoring different cultures that make up our student population and our community, a sense of pride is instilled among those who are a part of the culture and appreciation is created for those learning something new," Paramount Superintendent Dr. Ruth Pérez said.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

060517_PUSD_Heritage_1: Lynn Mokler Elementary School first-grade teacher Cheena Sy leads students in a traditional Thai dance of welcoming and peace. The performance was a part of the school's Asian and Pacific Islander American heritage celebration on May 24.

060517_PUSD_Heritage_2: Lynn Mokler Elementary School held an Asian and Pacific Islander American heritage celebration on May 24 featuring food, dance and presentations on historical figures.

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