

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Valerie Martinez

Juliette Funes

(909) 445-1001

Pomona Unified Welcomes 25,000 Students, New Programs for 2015-16

POMONA – The Pomona Unified School District kicked off the 2015-16 school year on Aug. 12, welcoming more than 25,000 K-12 students, while launching full-day kindergarten programs at all of its elementary schools and new dual-language immersion programs.

“Everyone at Pomona Unified – principals, teachers, staff and administrators – is so excited to welcome new and returning students to another school year and help guide them on a path toward academic and personal success,” Board of Education President Andrew Wong said. “I encourage students and parents to take advantage of the new programs we have implemented at Pomona Unified, which prepare students to compete successfully in a global economy.”

One of the programs that made its debut this year is the English-Mandarin Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Program at Pantera Elementary School, where a class of 25 kindergarten students is learning to read, write and communicate effectively in both languages.

“At this age, children are able to learn a foreign language much easier than they would if they were older,” said teacher Jie Gao, who has been teaching students how to say and read numbers and take classroom directions through song, dance and hand movements. “They need to be immersed in the language to really grasp it, and they’ve been doing a great job so far.”

This new program is in addition to a Spanish-English DLI program that launched at Montvue Elementary School. The same program was expanded to first grade at Westmont Elementary School, which successfully completed its first year in 2014-15.

Each program follows a 50:50 model, where 50 percent of instruction occurs in the target language of Mandarin or Spanish and 50 percent of instruction is in English, including 30 minutes of daily English language development dedicated to English learners. The class comprises native English speakers and native Mandarin or Spanish speakers, enabling both sets of students to interact and learn new vocabulary skills.

Students enrolled in the DLI program have the opportunity to earn a State Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diplomas.

The programs were expanded as part of the District's 2015-18 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

The LCAP also calls for new programs to improve literacy, expand support for arts and music programs, add spending for secondary athletics, and boost online Advanced Placement courses. There will also be an increase in the number of nurses, counselors, school site specialists and math coaches to better support students' needs. Funding for technology devices and additional computer technicians will also be increased to boost student and adult learning.

“Last year was filled with innumerable accomplishments, academic successes and points of pride for everyone in the Pomona Unified family,” Superintendent Richard Martinez said. “Helping our students become all that they are capable of and embracing new and innovative educational opportunities, with the dedication of all of our staff and families, will help make 2015-16 an extraordinary year.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

PROGRAMS1: With the help of English-Mandarin Dual Language Immersion teacher Jie Gao, left, students engage in kindergarten activities aimed at bolstering language development on the first day of the inaugural program at Pantera Elementary School on Aug. 12.

PROGRAMS2: English-Mandarin Dual Language Immersion teacher Jie Gao, right, teaches a class of kindergarten students phrases through song and dance on the first day of the inaugural program at Pantera Elementary School on Aug. 12.

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