



PALO ALTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

50 Embarcadero Road Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 329-3701 Fax: (650) 329-3753

Kimberly Diorio
Principal

December 16th, 2013

Dear Paly Students and Parents/Guardians:

Season's greetings! It is hard to believe the first half of the school year is coming to a close. As I think about the second quarter, I continue to be amazed at the work and progress we've accomplished. I'd like to take a moment to share a few of those highlights:

- The best and most positive spirit week that we've seen in my seven years at Paly. Great job students on your unifying school spirit and congratulations ASB on your success!
- First annual Halloween costume contest thanks to Student Activities Director Matt Hall and science teacher Josh Bloom. CAISH! <http://goo.gl/NRiVs1>
- A new tradition at Paly, "Pajamaween," was started celebrating the November 1st early application deadline for seniors (and the many teachers who write college recommendation letters on their behalf). Thank you Paly teacher Sarah Bartlett for encouraging all of us to wear our jammies.
- Over 40 students & 10 teachers, myself included, attended this year's Camp Every Town program (<http://goo.gl/C1oWps>). It was a profound experience.
- We held our first WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) parent and student home group meetings. Special thanks to Emily Garrison, our WASC coordinator, for all her hard work.
- At our November WASC all-staff meeting, we spent time thinking about "Paly in 2020-2021" and the future of education as we prepare for "digital natives" in our schools. During the meeting, we viewed Grant Lichtman's TED talk on teaching 21st century skills for inspiration, reflection and to set the stage for conversations around developing a collective vision for our school. If you are interested in seeing the video, here's the link <http://goo.gl/Bxwqq9>
- Our teachers have deepened their understanding of the Common Core State Standards and are working on adjusting their lessons to better meet the new standards.
- Turkey Feast was a beautiful day, thanks to the performance of the Paly Jazz band and over 100 parent volunteers who helped create a warm family atmosphere and festive event. It's one of our favorite days of the year. Thank you parents and PTSA.
- In their inaugural season, the Girl's Varsity Golf team captured the CCS championship and placed 4th in the state open. Wow!
- We promoted Paly teacher Eric Bloom to the important leadership role of "School Climate TOSA" (teacher on special assignment) for the second semester. Great things to come in this area!
- Beloved Paly Athletic Director, legendary head football coach and PE teacher, Earl Hansen, announced his retirement at the end of the school year. Plans are already underway "to fill his big shoes."
- We are also saying goodbye to our dear Guidance secretary Jenny Stone and Campus Supervisor Mary Puorro, who are both retiring this month. Jenny and Mary have each worked at Paly for 20 years! We wish them the best of luck in their next adventures and hope they stay in touch.

As we look ahead, expect to see many exciting ideas and initiatives taking hold on our campus. For WASC, our third quarter focus will be on “data, data, data.” We will mine the school’s data to better understand and answer the question of “who we are right now.” As part of the WASC process, you will hear about student shadowing (where teachers shadow students), peer observations (teachers observing other teachers), and instructional rounds (similar to medical rounds, looking at systemic themes). Most importantly, we will spend time as a school community developing a shared vision as we prepare to write our 6-year WASC action plan. Parents and students will be very involved in this process.

For our students: Please be sure to read over the 2014-2015 course catalog carefully when it is published in January. You will notice exciting new courses, pathways, and blended learning opportunities that better meet your needs and interests. We will also be communicating the plan/logistics for the new Smarter Balanced field tests in late January. (The Smarter Balanced assessments will replace the STAR tests that we traditionally conducted every spring). We will be communicating additional details after the break.

Lastly, I hope you are all able to slow down, enjoy the holidays, and have some fun during this otherwise stressful time of year. With finals week upon us, please remember to take good care of yourself and each other. Please reach out and let us know if you need anything or have a concern. A good night’s sleep and a healthy breakfast before an exam are important. Over the winter break, I hope you relax, unwind and spend time with loved ones. My family and I will be doing the same as we travel back east to visit “Nana and Papa.” We are all looking forward to a work-free break and enjoying quality time together.

On behalf of the entire staff at Palo Alto High School, we wish you and your family happy holidays, and all the best in the New Year.

With Viking Pride,

Kim

Kim Diorio
Principal