

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bettylu Smith
Sequoia Union High School District
(650) 369-1411, ext. 2361

SEQUOIA DISTRICT SCHOOLS OPEN WITH ENERGY, EXCITEMENT

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., August 21, 2009 - With introduction of new and cutting-edge courses and career technical education programs, further expansion of advanced-placement college-preparatory offerings, and opening of remarkable new facilities, the Sequoia Union High School District started the 2009-10 school year on Wednesday with a buzz of dynamic energy and excitement.

The portfolio of career technical education (CTE) programs in the Sequoia district has expanded with introduction of a green engineering pathway at Carlmont, inception of the Health Academy at Sequoia, and launch of the Green Academy at Woodside.

Much different than vocational education programs of times-gone-by, today's career technical education programs help prepare students for both college and careers through pathway programs that integrate academic knowledge with technical/occupational knowledge and experience.

The Engineering & Green Technology course being offered for the first time at Carlmont will involve a series of projects that explore engineering choices within the context of environmental stewardship. Casey O'Hara, who has both a bachelor's and master's in mechanical engineering from Stanford, teaches the new course (and is one of a team of scientists and engineers that in November will be constructing an observatory telescope 2.5 kilometers deep into the Antarctic ice sheet).

Over 150 students are enrolled in Sequoia's new Health Academy - a "school-within-a-school" that focuses on helping to prepare students for college study and careers in medicine. A key component of the Health Academy is a biotechnology course that's being taught in the school's new 4,000-square-foot biotechnology laboratory/classroom. The course is led by new faculty member Kenneth (K.C.) Jones, who advised in designing and equipping the new lab and who previously helped to create a high school biotechnology program during his work with the Salk Institute, a global leader in biological research.

With the help of a new \$265,000 HP Innovations in Education grant, Woodside's Green Academy will prepare students for further academic study and careers in energy efficiency, new energy technologies, water use, and water pollution control. The HP grant also helps fund Woodside's award-winning robotics and engineering pathway, including introduction this year of Robotics & Engineering I & II. The robotics and engineering program and Green Academy are housed in the school's 4,300-square-foot science and engineering wing that opened in the spring and a nearby outdoor classroom and living laboratory that's currently under development.

The district's Redwood High School has received funding to expand Redwood Environmental Academy of Leadership (REAL), the Stanford-funded environmental sciences program that seeks to engage students in environmental stewardship. This year, REAL students will be collaborating with peers in Central America and Europe, and green-job internships are being planned with the county's workforce development staff.

Planning for additional CTE expansion across the district is currently under way. Menlo-Atherton is planning a new program in digital media arts and a new facility that will house two state-of-the-art multimedia labs as well as digital photography and video production studios.

Woodside, too, is planning a digital media arts program and facility to complement current offerings in video, animation and web production, as well as a new program and facility focusing on energy and

environmental conservation. Sequoia is pursuing facilities and programs in the performing arts and culinary arts, and Carlmont is planning expansion of its renowned program in biotechnology.

Expanded course offerings

Myriad new courses are being offered across the district in 2009-10, including Astronomy and Space Science, Anthropology, Conceptual Chemistry, Organic Chemistry and World Cinema. Woodside is also bringing back Latin, and Carlmont is offering a dedicated journalism class for students producing the school newspaper.

Building on a reputation for some of the strongest, most rigorous advanced placement (AP), college-preparatory programs on the Peninsula, new AP courses have been added this year, including AP European History for sophomores at Menlo-Atherton and Woodside. Menlo-Atherton is also offering for the first time AP Physics C, which is comparable to an introductory course in mechanics at the college level. Woodside is also opening up its physics class to freshmen this year as a way to prepare them for participation in the school's robotics and engineering program.

At Sequoia, the International Baccalaureate program continues to experience growing enrollment while maintaining one of the highest diploma rates in the region. The Middle College, based at Cañada College, is also on path to increase enrollment, particularly among students earning both a high school diploma and associate of arts degree at graduation.

After a successful first semester last spring, Carlmont is again offering a virtual economics class for seniors. Although students are present for debates and group activities, much of the instruction is delivered via videocasts, podcasts, blogs and a range of advanced new technologies, allowing students to gain some virtual experience before college, where at least some of their classes are likely to be online or have integral online components.

Carlmont, Sequoia and Woodside are all offering BUILD elective courses - an offering for ninth graders who are interested in entrepreneurship. Students will create a business plan and a prototype product or service under the mentorship of business and industry professionals who will meet with the students each week. In the spring, BUILD students will participate in a countywide competition hosted by the business school at Stanford.

Additional student programs

The schools will also continue their successful after-school enrichment and tutorial programs with the help of philanthropic support and some state funding that has remained in tact. Every day across the district, students will be found engaged in catching up on classroom work, working out to Latin rhythms (Zumba), or enjoying a hot meal before returning home in the evening.

Dozens of major dramatic and musical performances are planned in schools throughout the district during the 2009-10 season, including public events in the new performing arts centers on the Menlo-Atherton and Carlmont campuses. Opening weekend festivities for the Menlo-Atherton center are planned for Oct. 10-11, and Carlmont will hold its grand opening when its adjoining music and arts building is completed in the spring.

Summer school graduation

Last week, before the fall semester began, the conclusion of the district's summer school program was marked with a graduation ceremony on Aug. 12. Sixty-four students from the district's five schools received high school diplomas.

Woodside's Julio Mendoza, the youngest of seven children and the first in his family to graduate from high school, was the keynote speaker. He shared with a crowd of about 200 that he arrived in the U.S. at the age of nine and, although initially excited about meeting new friends, learning English and

attending school, he says he struggled with a lack of motivation and other challenges by the time he reached high school.

Shy of credits to graduate and having fallen behind, Mendoza stopped attending school until the opportunity for a second chance came with a phone call from Noel Chavez, the district's migrant out-of-school youth and community liaison. Chavez paved the way for Mendoza to enroll in the district's Saturday School program and NovaNet online courses.

"For the first time in my life I felt passionate about continuing with my education, getting more involved with my community and setting a good example for my family, especially my younger nieces and nephews," Mendoza said in his graduation remarks.

Mendoza is currently enrolled at Cañada College and has plans to eventually transfer to a four-year university.

###