

Primary and Secondary Schools on the Monterey Peninsula: Great Partners for DoD

Introduction

The quality of primary and secondary education available to the children of military service members is always of concern to military families, and to the leaders in the Department of Defense (DoD) who look out for their wellbeing. As a result, the quality of schools in the communities that host military bases is a significant consideration as decisions are made about the future of these bases.

The vast majority of the children of military families and DoD civilians residing on the Monterey Peninsula attend schools which are part of the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD). As a result of significant support from the local community, and with the hiring of a new and very capable Superintendent in 2014, MPUSD is demonstrating remarkable innovation and making rapid progress toward becoming one of the country's best school districts. All primary and secondary school students attending MPUSD schools, including those students affiliated with DoD, will benefit greatly from these improvements, with some of the advances targeted specifically to help military families.

Some DoD-affiliated students on the Monterey Peninsula attend schools within the Pacific Grove Unified School District (PGUSD) or the Carmel Unified School District (CUSD), both of which have excellent programs as well.

The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

MPUSD encompasses a total of 67 square miles and serves the communities of Marina, Sand City, Seaside, Del Rey Oaks, and Monterey. The district was established July 1, 1966, and currently operates eleven elementary schools (grades K- 5), three middle schools (grades 6-8), three comprehensive high schools (grades 9-12), one charter school, one continuation high school, a dual language immersion academy (grades TK-8), two preschools, one adult education school/program, and district administrative and support facilities. MPUSD is home to over 10,000 students and 1,200 employees, with large percentages of military-affiliated students at La Mesa Elementary School, Marshall Elementary School, Colton Middle School and Monterey High School.

In November 2010, 71.55 percent of voters within the district approved a \$110 million General Obligation Bond known as Measure P. MPUSD has issued and spent approximately \$54 million to date. In December 2016 the district's board of trustees approved a list of projects for the final two issuances of the Measure P Bond. The District was successful at securing its Series C issuance in November of 2016 for \$33 million and is actively engaged in the planning and construction of these projects now. As such, the district will be launching additional new Measure P construction and modernization projects through 2018.

In 2014, following an 18-month period without a permanent Superintendent, MPUSD hired Dr. PK Diffenbaugh to serve as the district's new Superintendent. Diffenbaugh immediately focused on identifying areas needing improvement, improving teacher and staff morale, implementing a "can do" culture from top-to-bottom, and embarking on a long-term strategy of innovation to transform MPUSD into a model for the rest of the country to emulate.

Under Diffenbaugh's leadership, MPUSD launched a number of new initiatives aimed at increasing students' college and/or career readiness:

- Early Childhood Education:
 - Full and half-day pre-school and Head Start
 - Expanded transitional kindergarten at every school
 - Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) Parent Education Program
- Reimagining Secondary Education:
 - Early College and Career (concurrent enrollment in high school)
 - Middle Years International Baccalaureate program
 - New Tech Network; 1:1 Technology
 - Project-Based Learning
 - Career Technical Education; Linked Learning Pathways
- Facilities and Technology:
 - 21st century collaborative classrooms
 - New gym at Marina High School
 - Culinary Kitchen at Central Coast High School
 - Maker Space at Seaside High School
 - Science Innovation Lab at Monterey High School
 - Play structures at pre-schools and elementary schools
 - More than 3,500 new Chromebooks distributed to students
- International Baccalaureate Program
 - Monterey High to be certified as an International Baccalaureate School in 2018
 - Colton Middle to be certified as in International Baccalaureate School in 2019
- Music and the Arts:
 - Music and art at all grade levels
 - Expansion of instrumental music at elementary schools
 - Artists in the elementary schools program
- Social and Emotional Support:
 - Investment in Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS)
 - Emotional counselor at every school
 - Partnerships with community-based organizations

In 2015, MPUSD won a highly competitive \$1.25 million five-year grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) for counselors to help with the special challenges faced by students in military households, who move frequently and often join schools in the middle of the academic year. In addition, MPUSD competed for and won a \$1 million grant from DoDEA in 2017 to fund five years' worth of Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) courses.

This project is specifically designed to help DoD-affiliated students prepare for the jobs of the future. It involves partnering with the Naval Postgraduate School and other local DoD organizations to host Saturday STEM academies, coach MPUSD STEM teachers, help craft STEM lesson plans, and provide math and science tutoring. Together, these grants reflect MPUSD's commitment to the military families on the Monterey Peninsula.

MPUSD is also home to the Monterey Academy of Oceanographic Science (MAOS), located at Monterey High School. MAOS was designed by experienced teachers and marine science experts who saw the need for a challenging curriculum within the public school system, for students with a desire and ability to excel. The MAOS program emphasizes four years of math, science and English, broadly, but not exclusively, applied to general scientific and oceanographic research. A rich variety of experiences is provided through hands-on science labs, field trips, interaction with oceanographic experts, challenging assignments and internships with local marine science institutions.

The programs and support described above, along with the revitalized MPUSD leadership, have resulted in recent successes which have been widely celebrated with various awards and recognition:

- U.S. News & World Report Bronze Medal
- Educational Results Partnership Education Excellence Honor Roll
- WestEd Exemplary Parent Engagement Award 2017 Energy Star Award
- Cenergistic Energy Excellence Award
- Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Administrator of the Year Award, 2015 and 2016
- Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) Classified School Employee of the Year 2017
- California School Public Relations Association Awards of Excellence and Merit for transparency
- Fitch Ratings - AAA Bond Rating
- Moody's Investors Service, Inc. - Aa3 Rating
- Positive Fiscal Certification— MCOE
- Pete Taylor Military Partnership of Excellence Award
- White House Turnaround Arts Initiative Award
- National Broadcasting System (NBC) Recognizing and Inspiring Student Expression in America (RISE America) award and grant, 2018.
- California Department of Education Model Continuation High School designation for 2018.
- Gold Award as a National School of Opportunity from the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), 2018.

The Pete Taylor Military Partnership of Excellence Award, presented by the Military Child Education Coalition to recognize successful partnerships and projects benefitting military-affiliated children, is particularly notable. MPUSD won this award in 2016 for its partnering

with US Army Garrison Presidio of Monterey, Naval Support Activity Monterey, and the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

The NEPC Gold Award, given to Seaside High School in 2018, is also very impressive. Awarded to only eight schools nationwide, it recognizes schools for creating a rich learning experience for all of its students. The eight newly recognized schools joined 37 other public high schools, which are part of NEPC's Schools of Opportunity network.

For more information about the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, visit <https://www.mpusd.net/>

The Pacific Grove and Carmel Unified School Districts

PGUSD encompasses the city of Pacific Grove, on the Monterey Peninsula. It includes two elementary schools (Robert Down and Forest Grove), one middle school (Pacific Grove Middle School), one high school (Pacific Grove High School), one continuation high school (Pacific Grove Community High School), and one adult education school (Pacific Grove Adult Education Center).

PGUSD has a long standing tradition of supporting high academic student achievement. A good example of this is its implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which provide a path forward towards strengthening student understanding and depth of knowledge of physical, earth, life, and environmental science. NGSS emphasize the integrated relationships that exist between these four disciplines, incorporate mathematical and engineering practices, and promote critical thinking and problem solving throughout the learning process. The NGSS framework was developed with the participation of representatives from 26 states, content experts from higher education, professional scientists, and members from the National Science Teachers Association. Science teachers throughout PGUSD have begun aligning their instruction and teaching science lessons containing these new standards.

For more information about the Pacific Grove Unified School District, visit <http://pgusd.org/>.

CUSD spans Carmel, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Carmel Valley, and Big Sur. CUSD has three elementary schools (Carmel River in Carmel, Tularcitos in Carmel Valley, and Captain Cooper in Big Sur), one middle school (Carmel Middle), and one high school (Carmel High). Additionally, CUSD has a continuation high school (Carmel Valley High), an adult school, and various child development programs.

CUSD has a long history of high academic achievement, community engagement and national-level recognition. For example, two Carmel Unified schools were once again named as "Ocean Guardian Schools" by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 2017. This was the fifth such award given to Carmel Middle School and the third award for Carmelo Child Development Center. The Ocean Guardian Awards are given to schools that make a commitment to the protection and conservation of local watersheds, the world's ocean, and

special ocean areas, like national marine sanctuaries. The schools make this commitment by proposing and then implementing a school-based or community-based conservation project.

For more information about the Carmel Unified School District, visit <https://www.carmelunified.org/>.

Summary and Outlook

Most DoD-affiliated students on the Monterey Peninsula obtain primary and secondary education through the MPUSD system. Under new leadership and with a vibrant new culture of innovation and inclusion, MPUSD is well on its way to becoming one of the finest public school systems in the country. All MPUSD students will benefit from these advances, including the many DoD-affiliated students it serves. MPUSD clearly takes its responsibility to military families seriously as it continues to implement programs designed to meet the special needs of their children.

Schools within the PGUSD and CUSD systems also offer excellent opportunities for some DoD-affiliated students on the Monterey Peninsula.

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