



# PRESS RELEASE

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Contact Sharon Raffer, Communications Director

## **Poway Unified Superintendent Welcomes Parents to the New School Year** *Preparing Our Students for Their Future*

*The following letter was sent to the Poway Unified parents of the district's 34,000 students by PUSD Superintendent John Collins:*

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year. Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit a number of school sites and as always was totally impressed, if not amazed, at how smoothly our first day of the school year went. At Valley Elementary School, Abraxas Continuation High School, Los Penasquitos Academy, and Black Mountain Academy where the new school year has been underway since early in August, the excitement of creating enriching environments for learning is in full swing.

Approximately 34,000 students arrived on our campuses yesterday, and were greeted by our incredible teachers and staff members who were well prepared, organized, and excited to welcome them.

It is an honor for me to serve as your superintendent. The commitment of the teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and business community to the students of PUSD continues to be an outstanding factor in the success of our students. The dedication of our professional staff provides a focus on college readiness and academic growth for each student while ensuring positive and caring relationships for all.

I believe that our schools have a major and important role in preparing our students for their future. During these constantly changing times, we must provide our students with the skills to think critically, solve problems, demonstrate learning, and compete in a global society.

Some of the accomplishments of our District last year include: 99 percent of our seniors passing the California High Exit Exam; the highest graduation rates in San Diego County; more than \$13 million in scholarships accepted by our high school graduates; 27 National Merit Scholarship Finalists; all schools having an Academic Performance Index (API) above 800 (the State's target for 2014), 22 schools having API 's above 900, and a district API of 883; and continued growth in student achievement as demonstrated by last year's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) results.

These are exciting times for students to be learning. Their natural curiosity is fueled by the incredible ways information can be received. Words come to life with dramatic videos of the elaborate rituals of a garden spider, the wonders of the earth's tallest mountain peaks, and the remarkable trail of a shooting star. All this and more now is found with the click of a mouse or the light touch of a finger. The role of education today is more important than ever. Preparing our children for their future means looking at school under new lenses. They need to know how to listen well, think critically, access and evaluate information, work together as a team, and solve problems. They need opportunities to use the electronic tools available in our digital world to enhance learning and to inspire knowledge.

I believe that the commitment of our staff to ensure that each student learns is the driving force to make our schools the best they can be. In these times of changing ways of receiving information, I will be working with the staff to look at the ideas and strategies needed to create vibrant learning communities where all students are authentically engaged.

I look forward to another great year of working with each of you as we focus on each student's achievement and success. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to Poway Unified School District.

Sincerely,

John P. Collins, Ed.D.  
Superintendent