HARDING ELEMENTARY NEWSLETTER

Winter Trimester, 2016–2017

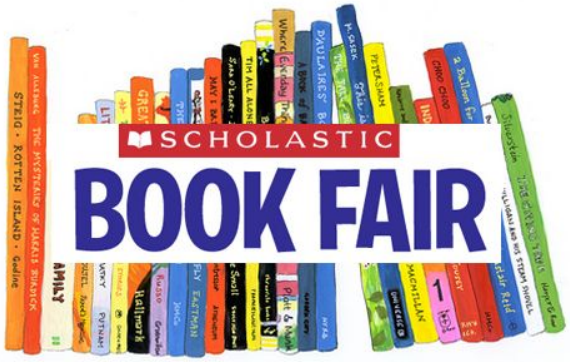
Give 'Em the Boot Classic

The 4th annual Boot Classic kickball tournament was held on January 28, and our Harding Tigers placed second. Harding's team consisted of fourth through sixth grades who competed against teams from Kensington, Fairmont, and Madera.

This year's team was coached by Ms. Ferguson and captained by sixth graders Nicky, Amelia, and Jeremiah. To fill the 25-student roster, Ms. Ferg and the captains held tryouts during recess. Each aspiring team member had to run the bases in 17 seconds or less, catch 4 out of 5 balls thrown to them, and were graded on 5 kicks and 6 throws through a hoop. The students with the highest–averaged scores made the team. Lewis, a fourth grader, spoke for many of his classmates when he said, "I wanted to be [on the team] because I really like kickball and it sounded really fun." During the weeks leading up to the tournament, the team held practices. Captain Jeremiah recalled, "We did a lot of throwing and catching. It helped build up our chemistry." Captain Nicky added "We really worked together."

Last year, Harding won the tournament and the Boot trophy, which the winning school keeps for the year. It was their first time winning, and they had high hopes of repeating their success. (continued on page 3)

The Harding Tigers placed second in the 2017 Boot Classic



The Scholastic Book Fair

The Harding PTA is holding its annual Scholastic Book Fair from April 17-20, including during Open House on Thursday evening.

The goal of the fair is to get students excited about reading by providing them with access to more books, both at home and at Harding. The fair will once again have a wide variety of titles, reading levels, and subjects for sale—many which are available at discounted prices. Harding receives half of all proceeds, which are used to purchase more books for the library.

Rachel Henderson, Chair of the PTA Library Committee, points out, "The more books the library has, the more opportunities the students have to find something that interests them and apply it to what they're learning in class."

If you'd like to volunteer to help out at the book fair or in the library, contact Rachel Henderson (hardinglibrary@gmail.com).

Message from the Principal

This school year has been extra busy transitioning to different ways of thinking and working with new superintendent Matthew Duffy. This is a good transition, as Mr. Duffy believes in greater school autonomy, thinking outside the box, and planning ahead. This winter and spring, the Harding Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and School Site Council (SSC) have been monitoring our 2016–2017 site plan and creating the 2017–2018 plan. Our goals and the path to meeting them should be ready in August, and will help us have better and more timely progress in reporting goals for next year.

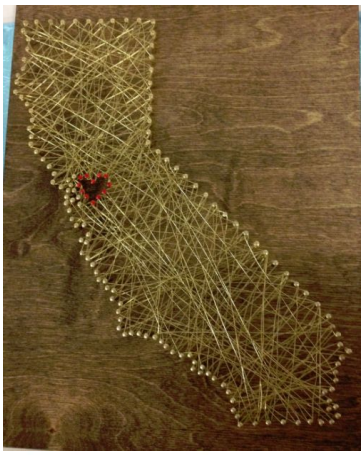
On that note, communication has been an ongoing topic at the principal coffees. I greatly appreciate the honest conversations, variety of ideas, and willingness to assist. Fourth-grade teacher and Ed Tech Lead Anne Marie Pine and I attended a tech training and planning day in March, and we've continued the staff conversation on this same topic. One of the results from our day was a Harding Twitter account. The main goal of the account is to give the community more insight and regular communication about what we do with the children all day within the context of our goals. Please be patient while we experiment and get teachers connected to our new handle: @HardingGold.

Many thanks to Harding parent Telease Washington for volunteering to be our African American Site Advisory Team representative. This new group, which was formed at the district level, is partnering with schools to bridge the Black/African-American student achievement gap by building authentic relationships and giving helpful feedback. Some of the feedback will come from a group of our parent and staff members of color and will center on how a family-friendly Harding looks, sounds, and feels. I'm excited about the increased communication on this important subject.

—Linda Takimoto, Harding Principal

Spring Auction and Raffle

The Harding Spring Auction and Raffle, the biggest PTA fundraiser of the year, is right around the corner—Thursday, April 20, to be exact. This year's auction promises something for everyone with an eclectic array of items—from local dining and performing arts to family outings like lodging at a cabin in the mountains, and various other fantastic merchandise.



Class project *Wire and Nail California* (2015)

The event will once again be paired with Open House. So after your kids wow you with the great work they've been doing all year, you can wow them with your generosity—and take something special home, too.

Students will be selling raffle tickets in advance of the event, so keep an eye out for details in your Wednesday folder. The big prize is four Disneyland Park Hopper tickets, but you've got to be in it to win it. Winners will be announced at the event, right after Principal Takimoto's address.

And no Harding Spring Auction is complete without an array of class projects, so be sure to check out these one-of-a-kind works of art that are lovingly created by students.

Last year's auction and raffle brought in close to $15,000 and helped fund programs in music, art, library, and science. Without the PTA and events like this, these programs could not exist.

For more information, or to donate items to the auction, contact Verna Bowie, Harding Auction Committee Chair (hardingauction@gmail.com).

100 Days of Harding

In case you were keeping track, January 27 was the 100th day of school, and many of the classes—particularly the younger grades—celebrated this milestone with a variety of 100-themed activities.

The first grade classes ran a 100-yard dash, blew 100 bubbles, spent 100 pennies at the prize store, counted 100 seeds, strung 100 beads, made 100-themed goggles, and much more.

The kindergarten classes made 100-eyed monsters, linked 100 paper chains, made 100-themed glasses and crowns, looped 100 Fruit Loops and Cheerios into necklaces, counted how many times they could write their names in 10 x 10 grids, and even more. Ms. Helen's class then shared their projects with their fourth-grade buddies, who rewarded their hard work by reading them stories.

Whew, that's a lot of counting. Now we all start counting down the days til summer.

(Boot Classic continued from page 1)

"We were pretty confident we would make it to the finals," said Captain Amelia. They shut out Fairmont in their first game, which built their confidence going into the finals against Madera. The final game was close, but Madera pulled away in the final inning for the win.

Harding's team provided the spectators with some exciting moments during the games. And the students had a blast. They're already thinking about next year's tournament and winning back the Boot.

Message from the PTA President

As the school year begins to come to a close, it's helpful to reflect on the mission of the Harding Parent Teacher Association: *Improve the lives of* all *Harding children and their families.* The PTA works to do this in two primary ways.

First is through raising money, which the PTA uses to pay for our enrichment programs such as dance, music, and science through gardening, and to provide much needed supplies for all of our Harding teachers.

Second, and equally important, is through our volunteers. Big events such as field days and the Fall Carnival couldn't exist without an army of volunteers. However, there are also hundreds of behind-the-scenes hours that help Harding and the PTA fulfill our mission. Things such as Wednesday folder copying, the weekly e-news, and even this newsletter are only possible with volunteer help.

The PTA appreciates all that you do to support our children, and hopes you'll continue to find new ways to get involved. Not only will your child benefit from your support, but your efforts also help build the Harding community for all Harding children to succeed and thrive. Thank you.

—Jessica Jones, PTA President

Captain Amelia makes a play at first base

Paul Haxo, Library Media Specialist

What's your role within Harding and the WCCUSD?
I work one day a week at five elementary schools within the district, including Harding. Once I start talking about libraries, I often find it hard to stop. I believe school libraries are a place where students can take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it to their own interests, and as you would expect, students have a wide range of interests.

How long have you been working in libraries?
I started out volunteering for the district approximately 20 years ago when my son entered kindergarten at Kensington. Eventually, I was hired by the Kensington Ed Fund to manage the library on the days district personnel were scheduled elsewhere, and a few years later the district hired me as a long-term sub. Eight years ago, they hired me full-time, and I've been at Harding since December 2009.

What's a book that you love?
I often punt on this question. My two answers are: 1) I love any book that makes a child really, really want to read. 2) I believe we live in an ocean of stories, and continuing to read and discover new stories is more important to me than any one story. That said, I've re-read *Treasure Island* several times.

Any new book purchases to highlight?
We're lucky at Harding to be able to purchase new books on a regular basis. I try to find books that fulfill the academic needs of the students for reports and books that students will find fun and interesting. Recently, we purchased library-bound editions of *Goosebumps* and *Geronimo Stilton*, as well as nonfiction books on animals.

Anything you've noticed as popular books among the various age groups?
For students reading chapter books, series books are the most popular—*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Captain Underpants*, *Harry Potter*, *Babymouse*, *Ivy and Bean*, as well as series written by Rick Riordan, Tom Angleberger, and Tui Sutherland.

For younger readers, the most popular books are the Elephant and Piggie books, *Fly Guy*, *Fancy Nancy*, and *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*.
Also popular are easy-to-read books like *The Book with No Pictures*, *I Need My Monster*, *Crankenstein,* and *The Day the Crayons Quit*, as well as books featuring superheroes.

What is one thing you'd like the Harding community to know about you?
Who can stop at one thing? I spent many years working in theater, as a lab technician, and as a technical writer. When I read, I try to make stories come to life. I also spent ten years on the board of directors of the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District. For fun, I like to go to the Russian River, and I am a volunteer transcriber for Project Gutenberg, which is a website that digitizes texts in the public domain.

Library Update

Paul Haxo, Harding's Library Media Specialist, makes the most of his time with the students. He's constantly finding opportunities to expose students to new books and promote critical thinking.

One such project is the California Young Reader Medal (CYRM) program where students throughout California nominate, read, and vote for the winners. The program encourages recreational reading and exposes students to new titles. Recent winners include *Dragons Love Tacos*, *The Day the Crayons Quit*, and *Dog Breath.*

Mr. Haxo focuses on the younger-grade picture books and coordinates the program with Ms. Brown so that all the K-2 grades have access to the nominated books. "I like to tell students that the program is like *Dancing with the Stars* for books, with students being the judges," he says.

Mr. Haxo also works to help students become more independent finding what they're interested in. He's constantly slipping in little bits about how the library is organized and why. Recently, after reading poetry to a couple of classes and pointing out that poetry is shelved in the nonfiction section, he segued into a useful discussion about the Dewey Decimal Classification System.

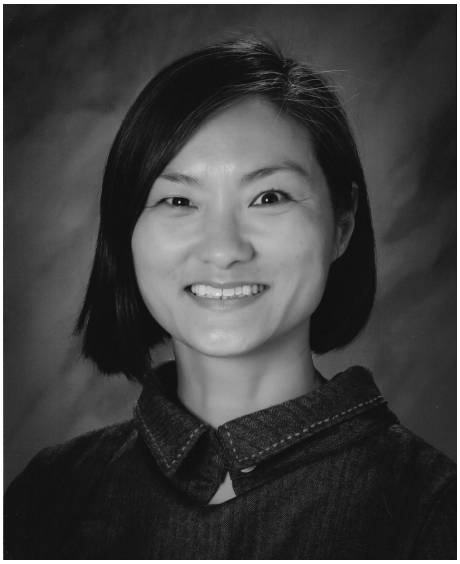
With his fifth graders, Mr. Haxo has conducted lessons on searching online library catalogs. He's also had discussion on the dangers of "fake news." He tells his students, "Don't get suckered by the headlines. Check what's really being said. Check information against other sources. And then check some more."

Ms. Kang, Kindergarten Teacher

How long have you been teaching?
Eleven years, with eight of those years as a classroom teacher and the rest teaching TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) in Japan and Vietnam. I also taught kindergarten at an international school in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I loved traveling and living in different countries, but I am very happy to be home and part of such a wonderful community here at Harding.

What do you like to do when you're not teaching?
I love to cook and try new recipes, but I love to eat even more. I'm also a writer, and this has helped me think a lot about the teaching of writing. It's something that I'm very passionate about and when I first thought about becoming a teacher, I thought I would end up teaching English lit and writing at the secondary level, but I ended up falling in love with teaching young children.

What is a book you love?
I love *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. It makes me cry every time I read it. One of the books that was a huge influence on me when I was young was *The Neverending Story*. For adult fiction, I recently discovered Lucia Berlin, and I cannot say how much I love her writing. She was truly a master at writing powerful prose, and it's a shame that she did not get more recognition for her talent when she was alive. This year I also really enjoyed reading *The Boy Kings of Texas* by Domingo Martinez. (continued on page 7)



What's Growing in the Garden?

Our garden coordinator, Linnaea Weld, didn't let a little rain spoil the students' gardening fun during the winter months. She just had to take the garden indoors from time to time.

The younger students learned about seeds by planting beans in containers and were introduced to the plant parts through song and art. The kindergarteners, for example, labeled and colored plant diagrams while the first-graders made flip books of the plant parts. The TK class, which gardens all year long with Linnaea, made plant costumes and potato prints. They even had a special Valentine's treat of pink and red vegetables. Yum!

But there were plenty of dry days to get outside and be more hands-on. The students investigated the garden by examining flower parts and sifting through soil. They learned about pollination by playing pollinator tag and saw first-hand how stems work by experimenting with celery and colored water.

They've been busily preparing for spring—first prepping the soil and adding compost to the beds, then planting a selection of seeds both indoors and outdoors. Carrots, radishes, lettuce, kale, and brussel sprouts were among this year's selections. Various cool-weather crops are already doing well outside in the garden beds. They wrapped up their garden program by harvesting their bounty, which was nicely framed by discussions around nutrition.

The second- and third-graders start their ten-week garden program after spring break, and Linnaea can't wait to get them started. "The warmer weather means we'll get to plant more, including crowd favorites like tomatoes, melons, beans, and squash," she says.

Linnaea also plans on building flower presses for students to use during lunch, and being more involved with the school's composting efforts.

She'll be using funds from a recent grant to develop an outdoor classroom space and introduce greenhouses.

A big green thumbs-up to Linnaea and the Harding garden.

First-graders finish off their garden program with a salad

Read All About It!

The first Harding read-a-thon just wrapped up and it was a huge success. While the read-a-thon served as a fundraising opportunity, it was much more than your typical pledge-focused, money-raising campaign. The read-a-thon was all about fostering a love for reading. Over the week-long event, students were encouraged to read, both in the classroom and at home, and really got excited about books. Ms. Taylor's third-graders especially enjoyed Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth, Harry Potter*, and *Encyclopedia Brown*. In recognition of various reading celebrations (Read Across America, Dr. Seuss's birthday, and the Harding Read-a-thon), Ms. Roehl's classes revisited Dr. Seuss and compared several short movies with the book versions. Here's to a lifelong love of reading!

(Ms. Kang continued from page 5)

Can you tell us a little about a teacher you had who you really liked?
Though I would like to say that my favorite teacher was my kindergarten teacher, I was extremely shy as a child and I didn't really connect with my teachers until I was older. I was also very lucky and had many wonderful teachers when I was in school. My favorite teachers were my middle school French teacher, Madame Jennings, and my ninth-grade English teacher, Mr. Swanson. I think what I appreciated about them so much was that I felt truly seen as a person.

Do you speak another language?

I do, but English is the only language that I am fluent in. I grew up speaking with my mother in Korean, so I can speak informal or conversational Korean. In Japan, I lived in a very small town, and no one spoke English, so I had to learn to speak some Japanese to survive. It gave me such a deep appreciation for the struggles that my parents had when they first immigrated to the U.S. and for how challenging it can be to move to another country. And I do speak a little French. I did go on to study French in high school and college. Also, I can speak tourist Spanish, Vietnamese, and Amharic.

What is one thing you'd like the Harding community to know about you?
I am often lost in thought, so if you see me around town, please say hello. I might not recognize you right away, but I will be happy to say hello to a friendly face.

Book Character Day

To relate to the read-a-thon, the Student Council chose to have a spirit day to celebrate it. Book Character Day is when you get to dress up like your favorite book character. We thought it would be a good way to wrap up the read-a-thon. And what other way to end it than by showing which book you liked best?

—Vanessa Hernandez and Eleanor Dickson, Student Council Historians

Ms. Chang and fifth graders celebrate Book Character Day

Look Back, Move Forward

Here's a glimpse at what some of the classes have been up to, and what they've planned for the home stretch.

Class	Highlights from second trimester	What we're looking forward to
Ms. Pierce (kindergarten)	We completed our second Writer's Workshop Narrative book, and celebrated with a publishing party with families.	We're planning a science unit on plants and animals where each table group will be responsible for the observation and care of sunflowers and a caterpillar.
Ms. Morse (first)	All the first-grade classes celebrated the 100th day of school. We did all sorts of 100-themed activities. See page 3 for more details.	We'll begin a new writing unit on poetry. Look for fabulous poems and songs coming out of first grade.
Ms. Taylor (third)	We practiced researching and sequencing skills by making timelines of an invention or a famous person. The students are also very proud of their informational reports—they typed the final drafts!	Can't wait for our field trip to the Berkeley Art Museum, where we'll view and also make art. We're also going to Tilden Park, where we'll learn more about adaptations.
Ms. Silkworth (third)	We did a unit on the San Francisco Bay using the Kids for the Bay curriculum. Activities included picking up litter near the school, making clay models of the bay (then adding water and learning about estuaries and how oil spills spread), a P.E. activity about pollution and its effect on the food chain, and investigating Dungeness crab and striped bass. The whole class really liked the hands-on and group work aspects of this curriculum.	We'll be watching trout eggs hatch into alevins, then develop into fry. Once they're in the fry stage, they'll need to eat, which means it will be time to release them.
Ms. Pine (fourth)	Opinionated fourth graders wrote opinion essays.	We're excited for our science fair investigations.
Ms. Souza-Oporto (fifth)	We built covered wagons that accompanied an informational writing unit on westward expansion.	In math, we'll be working on geometry. In writing, our focus will be research-based arguments.
Ms. Roehl (fourth–sixth)	We went to the Asian Art Museum and heard stories about heroes and sheroes from Korea, Japan, and India while looking at swords, paintings, and sculpture.	The class is excited to explore details about food chains. We'll see what our red worms do with the litter we provided and dissect owl pellets and squids at the Oakland Museum of California.
Maya Kwon and Cameron Smith (sixth-grade students)	The class community was easy to work with.	The class groups will work on making birdhouses for El Cerrito and Richmond birds.

You can send feedback about this or any other Harding communication to the Harding PTA Communication Committee (hardingcomcom@gmail.com). To subscribe to the weekly e-news, contact Dula Parkinson (dparkinson@gmail.com).