

The PDK-USC Kappan

The Official Newsletter of the University of Southern California Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa International

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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of Phi Delta Kappa shall be to promote quality education, in particular publicly supported education, as essential to the development and maintenance of a democratic way of life. This purpose shall be accomplished through research, service, and leadership in education.

From the Constitution of Phi Delta Kappa International



2006-07 PDK-USC GOVERNING BOARD

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PDK-USC Web Site

<http://www.pdk-usc.org>

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Join us for the Annual PDK-USC Stoops Lecture Dinner Meeting

Friday, January 26, 2007

6:00 p.m.

USC UPSTAIRS COMMONS DINING ROOM

Guest Speaker: Dr. Maria Gutierrez Ott
Superintendent, Rowland USD

Inspiration by Dr. Edward Robillard, VP Programs
PDK Educator-to-Educator Program in China

To RSVP, see page 3

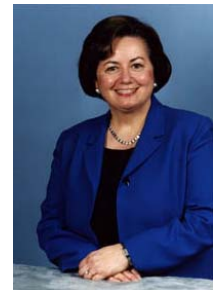
Meet the Speaker...Dr. Maria Gutierrez Ott

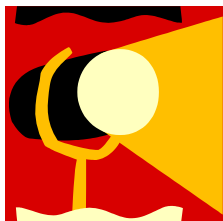
Dr. Maria Gutierrez Ott took the helm as superintendent of Rowland Unified School District in July 2005. This district, which serves over 18,000 pre-K through adult students from the east San Gabriel Valley, has achieved numerous distinctions under her leadership as well as recognition for its ongoing efforts to improve student achievement and attract high-quality teachers.

According to the district Web site, Rowland USD is recognized by the California Department of Education as "one of the leading mid-sized school districts in California . . . [earning] more California Distinguished School and Golden Bell awards than any other school district in the region." The district boasts 16 California Distinguished Schools, 10 California Golden Bell awards for program excellence, five California Title I Achieving Schools, one California Middle School to Watch, and one model continuation high school. In addition, the district's schools have garnered national attention and praise through two National Blue Ribbon Schools, two National Title I Achieving Schools, one National PTA Award, and designation of three of its five secondary schools as demonstration sites for the National Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program that engages students in rigorous preparation for college and post-secondary opportunities.

Initiatives have been launched to improve school programs, facilities, and community relationships. Voters recently approved a \$118 million bond for school construction and modernization. The district has also undertaken efforts to improve wellness by launching a new Web site and related programs and to increase funding for music instruction in elementary and intermediate schools. In addition, the district remains focused on school and student safety. Quoted recently in the district's newsletter, *Rowland Futures*, Dr. Ott commented on the school safety outreach program Connect-ED, which allows schools to contact parents via an automated telephone system for important school events and in case of emergencies. "Improving communication between schools and families," she said, "results in higher student achievement and helps us continue to keep our kids safe."

Previously, Dr. Ott served as the Senior Deputy Superintendent for educational services for the Los Angeles Unified School District, Superintendent of the Little Lake City School District, and was a teacher, principal, and administrator in Los Angeles for more than 20 years.





Member Spotlight

By Dr. Ed Robillard and Rosa Robillard

We recently returned from a fabulous Phi Delta Kappa Educator-to-Educator 10-day Professional Development Tour to the People's Republic of China. We were both fortunate to receive a Gerald Howard Read PDK International Travel Scholarship which helped defray the cost of the trip.

The trip was highlighted by visits to the Ministry of Education. We also visited several public and private schools of every grade level in three different cities: Beijing, Xi'An, and Shanghai. Striking was China's traditional approach to education with class sizes of 40 to 50 students at every school we visited. This, coupled with the introduction of



Dr. Ed and Rosa Robillard in China

capitalism and China's booming economy over the past 20 years, is

beginning to put pressure for change on China's education system. One example of change is that the Chinese government is now trying to implement the teaching of creativity into the curriculum.

There was plenty of time to visit China's famous attractions, such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, and Tiananmen Square. Dr. Young Zhao, University Distinguished Professor and Director of the U.S.-China Center for Research on Education Excellence at Michigan State University, planned and accompanied us on the trip. Participants included PDK President JoAnn Ota Fujioka along with 30 other superintendents, college



Rosa Robillard with students from an elementary school.

This Just In . . .

Meg Palisoc, PDK-USC President, has been selected to participate in the 2007 PDK Educator-to-Educator Professional Development Tour to Finland. We hope to hear many stories and see fabulous pictures at this time next year. Congratulations!

Share your Member Spotlight information!

Send your exciting news to:
Lisa Regan, Newsletter Editor
at lisa.regan@lausd.net.



Dr. Ed Robillard visiting with the principal of Shanghai Nanyang High School in China.

professors, administrators, and teachers from around the country. In summary it was a wonderful, rewarding, and worthwhile professional development tour. We recommend all PDK-USC members participate in future International Travel Program trips. ☺

2007-08 PDK-USC Election of Officers



The best way to get involved in Phi Delta Kappa is to become an officer on the PDK-USC Executive Board. The 2007-08 slate of officers for the USC Chapter will be announced at the March 9th Dinner Meeting. If you wish to nominate yourself or another PDK-USC member for any Executive Board position, please send your nomination to Dr. Marilyn Fukuda, PDK-USC Advisor, at pdkuscchapter@aol.com.

The election and initiation of officers, in accordance with Article IX, Section 903 of the Chapter Bylaws, will be at the May 4th Dinner Meeting by simple majority of those present and eligible to vote. The vote shall be by secret ballot. All current PDK-USC members in good standing are encouraged to participate in the election process.

If you did not volunteer to serve on the Board this year, think about expanding your role in PDK-USC next year. If you have any questions about participating as a Board member, feel free to ask one of them at the next meeting! ☺



2006-07 USC Phi Delta Kappa CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January

- 18** – PDK-USC By-Laws Committee Meeting, WPH 900, 4:30 p.m.
PDK-USC Board Meeting, WPH 900, 5:30 p.m.*
- 26** – **PDK-USC Stoops Lecture Dinner Meeting**
Speaker: Dr. Maria Gutierrez Off
USC Upstairs Commons Dining Room, 6:00 p.m.

March

- 9** – **PDK-USC Dinner Meeting**
(USC Ed.D. Student Presentations)
USC Upstairs Commons Dining Room, 6:00 p.m.
- 15** – PDK-USC Board Meeting, WPH 900, 5:30 p.m.

May

- 4** – **PDK-USC Dinner and Awards Meeting**
Installation of 2007-08 Officers
USC Upstairs Commons Dining Room, 6:00 p.m.

June

- 7** – PDK-USC Board Meeting, WPH 900, 5:30 p.m.

Happy 104th Birthday Emery Stoops!

Stoops Lecture Raffle Benefitting PDK Educational Foundation

This month's prizes feature PDK International-themed gifts. Tickets cost \$1 per ticket or \$5 for 8 tickets. Recruit a new member and win a free ticket! Every PDK-USC member who sponsors a new initiate gets a free raffle ticket for that night's raffle. New initiates get a free raffle ticket, too! Download a membership application from www.pdk-usc.org.

Chapter Dinner Meetings are in Bold.

Everyone is welcome at the Board and Committee Meetings.

A map of the USC University Park Campus can be found at
http://www.usc.edu/about/visit/upc/driving_directions/

* The Board Meeting originally scheduled for February 8 has been rescheduled to January 18.



Save The Date!!!

PDK-USC STOOPS LECTURE DINNER MEETING
USC UPSTAIRS COMMONS DINING ROOM
(2nd floor of the Student Union Building – STU on Campus Map)
FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

DINNER RESERVATION DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, JANUARY 19.

Name(s): _____ Total # Attending: _____

PDK Membership # (if applicable) _____ Phone #: _____

Meal Choice: Chicken Beef Vegetarian

Mail your check (made payable to PDK-USC Chapter) for **\$30.00*** per person with this form.
It must arrive before Friday, January 19th to:

PDK-USC Chapter
c/o Nick Nichols
2910 W. 235th Street, #7
Torrance, CA 90505

*This amount does not include parking. Parking on campus costs \$7.00. Parking is no longer available through Gate #2. Please enter through Gate #3 off of Figueroa Street and USC McCarthy Way to park in Parking Structure X.

Questions about Dinner Meeting Reservations? Contact Nick Nichols, VP Projects, at nick.nichols@lausd.net

PDK Dinner Meetings Move to USC Davidson Center Beginning September '07

The PDK-USC Executive Board has decided to move all Dinner Meetings to the USC Davidson Executive Conference Center beginning in September 2007. This venue, located in the northeast corner of campus near Gate 4 on Jefferson Boulevard, features an expanded menu, beautiful accommodations, closer parking, and greater accessibility. The Board is currently working to keep costs close to the 2006-07 level and include a parking benefit. Pictures of the new location will be on display at the January 26th Dinner Meeting. Members who have questions or comments about the new arrangements are welcome to contact Meg Palisoc at megpalisoc@hotmail.com. ☺



Beginning in September 2007, all PDK-USC Dinner Meetings will be held at the USC Davidson Executive Conference Center, located in the northeast corner of campus near Gate 4 on Jefferson Blvd.

Critical Thought in a “Survey Says” Era: A Reflection

By Teresa M. Miller
Research Representative

Too often I find myself correcting the students in my classroom who base their “facts” on supposition, gossip, and cultural norms. As a dedicated teacher, I remind them to look to the source of their facts to help establish the credibility and accuracy of their findings, however difficult that task may be. However, I realized my own trust in research is often as simplistic as my students’ after reading Alfie Kohn’s article “Abusing Research: The Study of Homework and Other Examples” in the September *Kappan*.

The topic of homework is a controversial issue within my own school. The current wisdom seems to imply that what the “survey says” must be sound practice, without any further investigation. In my personal experience, homework can be useful when the criteria are present: original student work, sincere effort and diligence, and critical thinking skills.

In this article Kohn questions the accuracy and validity of research findings that promote the positive results of homework. Kohn lists his “taxonomy of abuses” that center on five themes of inappropriate or inaccurate dependence on research: excessive reliance, myopic reliance, insufficient reliance, pseudo reliance, and selective reliance. He also reiterates the importance of carefully distinguishing the difference between research *results* versus heavily biased researcher *conclusions*. The article encourages us to look beyond what is presented in order to be critical readers and disseminators of research findings. Kohn’s article reminds us to think beyond the lemming lifestyle of blindly accepting research findings as definitive facts. ☺

The PDK-USC Kappan
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Address Correction Requested