

Welcome to the 2008/2009 school year at the Ranch!

It is exciting to be able to share with the RBV community our past accomplishments and future plans. Only last week we learned that as a result of our students' performance on the California mandated tests taken in April 2008, our school's Academic Performance Index (API) reached 755. This number is a 21 point hike up from the school's previous performance. It is an expression of the fact that instruction at RBV is increasingly aligned with state content standards and that our students manifest growing mastery of those standards. This improved student performance also illustrates the commitment of RBV's families to students' academics work and general success. We consider our families partners in the ongoing quest to guide our students throughout their high school years. To improve communication with our families, many RBV teachers have made a commitment to establish web sites, linked to RBV's web address. Additionally, the newly implemented VUSD Parent Portal will allow parents and guardians to check on students' attendance, assignments and test results on a daily basis.

Our focus on continued academic excellence remains unwavering at RBV. The collaborative work that was begun by our teachers will continue. In Professional Learning Communities our teachers will design units of instructions and appropriate assessments. They will evaluate students' work collaboratively to analyze instructional effectiveness and whether students are in need of remediation. In fact, providing under-performing students with additional opportunities to master content will become a growing focus at RBV this year. We were fortunate to be the recipients of a grant that provides funding for student activities outside the school day, and we plan to make great use of this resource in academic support and recreational enrichment for our students.

Each RBV staff member is acutely aware of the fact that a student must feel safe and valued to be open to learning. For this reason, a focus on improved relationships and a genuine culture of care is an essential part of RBV's agenda this year. Our Link Crew program that connects incoming 9th graders to upper classmen was begun during freshman orientation day and will continue throughout the year. We are bringing back to the campus the Breaking Down the Walls program, so students learn empathy toward one another. And the Student Forum which we put into place last year will return to the campus to facilitate growing input of student voice in the life of the campus.

A year ago we began conversations among teachers, parents and students to help RBV articulate statements of Mission, Vision and Values. We surveyed these groups and gathered their unique perspectives about RBV's purpose and future. This year representatives of these three groups will come together to continue the dialogue so that by June 2008, RBV will have a clearly defined statement of purpose (Mission), a roadmap to achieve this purpose (Vision) and the commitments of various stakeholder groups to help bring this to pass (Values).

As stated above, it takes all of us—RBV staff, students, parents, indeed, an entire community—to make RBV the best school it can be!

I would like to wish every single member of the RBV community a great school year—a year of health, peace and growth, both personal and professional.

Varda Levy  
Principal  
September 2008