



A Message from Superintendent Tom Johnstone

Winter 2013-2014

Wiseburn Family of Schools

Elementary Schools

Juan de Anza
Elementary School

Juan Cabrillo
Elementary School

Peter Burnett
Elementary School

Da Vinci Innovation
Academy (K-8)

Middle School

Richard Henry Dana
Middle School

High Schools

Da Vinci Communications
Da Vinci Design
Da Vinci Science

Wiseburn School District

13530 Aviation Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(310) 643-3025
www.wiseburn.k12.ca.us

Dear Wiseburn Community,

Since 1896, the Wiseburn School District's goal has been to provide the very best education possible for Wiseburn families. Today, Wiseburn is blessed with some of the best schools in both the state and region. All Wiseburn schools provide a world-class education in a small and personalized learning environment -- and this includes Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design, and newly established Da Vinci Communications that operates under the Da Vinci Design charter.

After eight years invested into the unification process and remaining uncertainty about how or when unification would occur, in 2008, the Wiseburn School District Board of Trustees authorized the creation of the Da Vinci charter schools to provide a high school education *in* Wiseburn *for* Wiseburn residents. By forming our high schools through a separate non-profit organization, we were able to leverage three critical pieces in the Wiseburn success formula: strong leadership, operating flexibilities and opportunities available to independent charter schools, and \$1.2 million in federal new school start-up money.

The main focus at Wiseburn/Da Vinci high schools is college and career readiness for all students. The academic program at Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Communications is a great fit for all students regardless if one does not have a specific interest in engineering, design, or communications. These are focus areas, but approximately 85% of the curricula are general studies that exceed high school graduation, UC/CSU, and college admission requirements. If we were to start over and build high schools from scratch today, it would be difficult to replicate the quality and results that Da Vinci Schools have achieved with a five-year head start.

In just under five short years, Da Vinci's work in college preparation and real-world learning has attracted unprecedented industry support and national recognition with a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Da Vinci's first full graduating class, the Class of 2013, achieved a 98% graduation rate, 78% of whom were accepted into 4-year universities and 98% of whom fulfilled their "A-G" requirements for admission to University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) schools. This last statistic is especially striking when compared with other local high schools:

Da Vinci Schools	98%
Mira Costa	84%
El Segundo	61%
Torrance	50-60%
Redondo Beach	42%
CA State Average	34%
LAUSD	15%

The Wiseburn School District Board of Trustees and I are enormously proud of the teaching and learning taking place at Da Vinci Schools. The high schools' culture of small learning communities, personalization, engaging curriculum, and outstanding college-prep results are a continuation of the exceptional work taking place at Anza, Burnett, Cabrillo and Dana. Da Vinci Schools *are* Wiseburn's high schools, offering tremendous opportunities for *all* students, including special education and gifted and talented students.

*“Da Vinci Schools
are among the very
finest I’ve seen”*

Dr. David Brown
Executive Director
Western Association
of Schools & Colleges



Da Vinci Class of 2013 College Acceptances

All 9 UC schools
All 23 Cal State Universities

Boston University
Brown University
Columbia University
Dartmouth College
Georgia Tech
Harvard University
LMU
MIT
New York University
Stanford University
USC
Wellesley College
Yale University
...and many more!

An Evolving Plan

The Wiseburn community has long coveted a high school of its own. In 2001, Chief Petitioners launched a drive for unification to make Wiseburn a K-12 unified school district. On Nov. 2, 2010, Wiseburn residents overwhelmingly approved Measure AA to build a Wiseburn High School. The original plan was for the District to “adopt” Da Vinci Design as the seed for a full-service Wiseburn High School.

Over the last several years, the District’s original vision of how best to provide a comprehensive high school experience for students has evolved. Experience and research make very clear that school size does indeed matter. Small learning communities lead to higher achievement levels, more engaged students, personalized teacher-student relationships, higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and higher college completion rates. Supporting students in small learning communities does not mean they must forgo athletic programs and extracurricular activities. Rather, we have the opportunity to take advantage of small learning communities and to offer a comprehensive array of extracurricular opportunities, including CIF sports and visual and performing arts, all under one roof in our future Wiseburn High School facility. This includes having CIF sports in world-class facilities in which **all** high school students will be eligible to participate under **one** team name: Wiseburn High School.

While our mission to provide the very best education possible for Wiseburn families has not changed, we have adapted our strategy to better utilize the strengths, resources and expertise of each partner. Our present best thinking for Wiseburn High School is to create “schools within a school,” leveraging the benefits of a larger school of approximately 1,200, while maintaining small learning communities within. This plan will allow for the continuation of the outstanding work that is presently underway at Da Vinci Schools, while allowing for the expansion of programs in sports and visual and performing arts for all students at Wiseburn High School.

Da Vinci Schools are Wiseburn’s high schools, both now and into the future. With a partnership that leverages the very best opportunities for our students, the District will continue to provide complete oversight in the areas of finance and legal compliance.

The Best of All Worlds

The Wiseburn School District Board of Trustees and I are in agreement that our new facility should be built for 21st century learning, which is one of the guiding tenets of the Da Vinci Schools.

In 2013, the Wiseburn School District engaged the global architecture firm, Gensler, to design a modern, 21st century Wiseburn High School facility that will house the Wiseburn Unified School District offices, Da Vinci CMO Home offices, Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Communications to meet the needs of students for which Science and Design may not be the best fit.

Having a similar school culture with continuity of staffing and programs will be vital to our success. Wiseburn residents will always receive guaranteed enrollment at Wiseburn High School. I encourage you to visit and see first-hand the outstanding students, passionate teachers, and rigorous, relevant and engaging curriculum in our high schools.

We have an outstanding and bright future ahead of us with exciting work to be done. I invite you to help us create a legacy that will live on and serve many future generations to come.

With appreciation for all of your support!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Johnstone".

Dr. Tom Johnstone
Superintendent



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the status of Wiseburn High School?

The Wiseburn School District will not open a new or different Wiseburn high school upon unification. Da Vinci Schools are Wiseburn's high schools and have been since they opened in 2009. Da Vinci Schools offer a college preparatory curriculum for the 21st century and an array of electives, seminars, college classes, clubs, sports and arts that are expanding each year. The Wiseburn Unified School District offices, Da Vinci CMO Home offices, Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Communications will occupy the new Wiseburn High School facility offering the benefits of both small learning communities and broader programs in visual and performing arts and sports. The new facility will be named Wiseburn High School.

What will be the relationship of Wiseburn Unified School District and Da Vinci Schools moving forward?

The Wiseburn School District Board of Trustees believes in building a 21st century high school. Da Vinci Schools have given us a five-year head start toward this goal. Da Vinci Schools have a college preparatory real world curriculum, personalized teacher-student relationships, "early college" classes, internships, public-private partnerships with industry and higher education, a laser focus on preparing students for college admission, and more. The Wiseburn Unified School District will continue to provide complete oversight in the areas of finance and legal compliance. Da Vinci Schools are Wiseburn schools in the truest sense: Chet Pipkin, the Founder, Chairman, President and CEO of Belkin and a Wiseburn native, serves as Da Vinci's Board President; Dr. Don Brann, Wiseburn's former Superintendent, serves as Vice President of Da Vinci Schools' Board of Trustees; and Dr. Matthew Wunder, Da Vinci Schools' Executive Director is the former principal of Dana Middle School. Additionally, former Wiseburn board member Brian Meath and Wiseburn residents Israel Mora and Jennifer Morgan serve on the Da Vinci Board to ensure strong community involvement.

Projected Opening 2016-17

When will the new high school facility open?

The Wiseburn School District recently engaged the global architecture firm, Gensler, to design a modern 21st century Wiseburn High School facility. At this time, we are targeting the 2016-17 school year for the building to be fully operational, but there are a number of key issues still to be resolved.

What special features will the new facility offer? What about sports and arts?

The new high school facility will feature performing arts space and a music program, a gym, sports fields, galleries, studios, specialty labs, indoor/outdoor learning spaces, flexible meeting and collaboration spaces, wireless technology, natural light and ventilation, and many other amenities. The new facility also will feature community access for the gym, a competition swimming pool, and performance space.

What about students who are not "design" or "science" oriented?

Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Communications offer a challenging, well-



rounded, and personalized liberal arts education for all students. We appreciate that most children have not yet figured out what they would like to do with their lives. Helping students in this discovery process is a signature practice of how Wiseburn/Da Vinci prepares students for the world they will inherit. Da Vinci Schools are full of students who wish to become doctors, lawyers and business leaders to name just a few careers beyond engineering and design. All Wiseburn/Da Vinci schools have a laser sharp focus on ensuring that every student is eligible for college admission – if that is what they choose. By the time students graduate from high school, they will have completed the necessary coursework for admission to a UC or CSU school.

What is project-based learning?

Project-based learning (PBL) is a “learn-by-doing” curriculum model that integrates core subjects with real-life problems to be solved. Teachers work in teams with one another to identify key Common Core content standards and skills that need to be addressed at the grade-level. Then, teachers work backwards to plan their curriculum, striving to create engaging, interdisciplinary projects that center on a big idea and a real-world connection that is rigorous, relevant and meaningful to students' lives. Current research demonstrates that students engaged in project-based learning obtain a deeper knowledge of subject matter, have increased motivation, improved problem solving skills, teamwork and presentation skills. Da Vinci Schools' community partners play a vital role by helping to align projects to industry expertise and career-ready standards. Project-based learning is occurring in all Wiseburn schools to some degree.

Who can attend Da Vinci Schools?

While all California students are eligible to attend charter schools pursuant to state and federal law, students who live within the Wiseburn School District boundaries are guaranteed enrollment at Wiseburn High School.

What about students on permit in the Wiseburn School District? Do they receive admission priority?

Wiseburn residents always have top priority and a reserved space at Wiseburn/Da Vinci high schools. Beginning in 2014-2015, students who have been attending Wiseburn K-8 schools on permit will receive admission priority in the following order: Students on permit who joined the District in grades K-5 will receive the first priority, followed by students on permit who joined the District in Grade 6. There will be no preference given for students on permit who joined the District in 7th or 8th grade.

I'm not sure if Da Vinci Schools are the right fit for my children. They seem a little “out there” – trying to be too innovative instead of covering the basics.

With a laser sharp focus on college and career readiness, Da Vinci Schools have been out in front of a national movement in favor of small learning communities, project-based learning, and 21st century learning, but they are not outliers. High schools across the state and nation are struggling with truancy, high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and poor college readiness. Just getting kids to show up can be a monumental challenge, but not at Da Vinci Schools. The attendance rate over the past four years is 98% - which is unheard of for a high school. Strong leadership, engaged students, personalized attention, caring and dedicated teachers, a rigorous and relevant “learn by doing” curriculum, and a safe learning climate all boost student achievement.

Will Wiseburn High School be my “home school”? What if I choose to attend a different school? Will I need to get a “release”?

The Wiseburn School District has always espoused parental choice in education. We believe that the Wiseburn Family of Schools offers outstanding choices for all students in the Wiseburn community. However, if your family chooses to attend a different public school district, we will release you. We strongly believe that parents should have the right to choose the best school for their child/ren.

Who do I contact if I have questions about Wiseburn High School or any of the subjects discussed in this letter?

For more information about the new high school facility renovation and project, please visit www.wiseburn.k12.ca.us or email your questions to whs@wiseburn.k12.ca.us.