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Schools

Magnet School Eyed for Aliso Viejo

The idea has caught the eye of a dean and professor at two local universities, who vow to help launch the Capistrano Unified school, which would focus on science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

By **Penny Arévalo** | **Email the author** | October 10, 2012

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Related Topics: **Capistrano Unified School District** and **Magnet Schools**

A new magnet school emphasizing the sciences may open by next fall in Aliso Viejo for **Capistrano Unified School District** students, and university professors are jumping at the chance to be a part of it.

Although the plans are just conceptual at this point, the K-8 school may feature a year-round schedule, students sticking with the same teacher for two years and be more project-oriented, according to a presentation at Monday's Board of Trustees meeting.

School officials said Aliso Viejo, with its vibrant tech industry, may be a good place to locate the school.

The school would focus on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, or STEAM as it is often referred to.

"Arts will have a unique place in the school," said board President Gary Pritchard, who led the first half of the presentation even though the school and related STEAM initiatives have been routinely championed by Trustee Lynn Hatton.

Pritchard said he envisions partnerships with the business community.

Meanwhile, members of academia are also interested, said Julie Hatchel, assistant superintendent of education services. She played a video **Gregory Washington, dean at UC Irvine's Henry Samueli School of Engineering**, made just for the trustees.

In it, he said a growing global population is creating unique challenges, especially in the area of providing utilities, such as power, to the world's peoples.

"We have a population that exceeds 7 billion. In 10 years will increase by another 1 billion," he said. "We need new solutions to deal with the influx of the additional people. … A STEAM-based education gives us the skills to do that."

He closed his video with a vow: "We will work with school board officials and the school to make it a reality."

Hatchel made sure those in attendance picked up that.

"Did we all hear that?" she asked, and a cheer broke out.

Next up was a professor from Cal State Fullerton, **Michelle Vander Veldt**, who said she's willing to take a sabbatical from teaching so she can help launch the school.

"We're looking at that idea of collaboration, nNot only partnering with the school but the community as well," Vander Veldt said. "We need to put our heads together and plan this together … at the grassroots we're coming together."

Hatton was overwhelmed at the presentation.

"I've wanted to cry that this is finally coming to fruition, although I know it's just the beginning," she said.

Some ideas the district is considering:

- Hatton recommended the school be textbook-free, relying on technology instead.
- Pritchard said he envisions a day when students wouldn't have to fill in bubbles on a **Scantron** for standardized testing, but Hatchel said that the new school would still have to comply with state and federal mandates for testing.
- Trustee Anna Bryson asked that the district consider using **Singapore Math**, considered the top mathematics curriculum in the world, she said.

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OC Mom   Flag as inappropriate
3:49 pm on Wednesday, October 10, 2012

Is this going to be a High School or K-8 School? I'm excited to hear more about it.

Reply

Penny Arévalo   Flag as inappropriate
4:35 pm on Wednesday, October 10, 2012

K-8. Apologies that this version didn't get that inserted.

AVResident2   Flag as inappropriate
4:21 pm on Wednesday, October 10, 2012

This is exciting and I agree that Aliso Viejo, with its concentration of tech firms, would be the perfect location for the new school.

Reply

M   Flag as inappropriate
2 hours ago

Lynn Hattan has done a great job reaching out to companies, rather partnering with companies in Cusd!

Reply

Ross Chun   Flag as inappropriate
2 hours ago

Thanks for covering this story, Penny. I also want to mention that many Orange County businesses have expressed interest in participating in this program, not just as potential funding sources, but as contributors to the project-based learning programs that Trustee Hatton described. This school will bring an exciting and engaging aspect the CUSD.

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