



SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS

SOLANA BEACH SCHOOL DISTRICT
VOL. 4, SOLANA HIGHLANDS SCHOOL • JANUARY 2020

Student Voice and Choice at Solana Highlands

BY PRINCIPAL SHAWNTANET JARA

The input and expertise of Solana Highlands students help shape their classrooms, our school and, ultimately, their own learning and growth.

Students have organized and developed a news broadcasting channel for Solana Highlands in collaboration with Mrs. Lefkowitz, our media center teacher, Mr. Triplett, our computer teacher, and Mrs. Burney and Mrs. Stone, our instructional aides. With the help of technology resources, such as iPads, a green screen, and video-editing software, our students produce a show each week. Students use this platform to share their voices on a variety of topics, from science and animals to reminders about creating and maintaining a positive school environment.

At Solana Highlands, we seek out student voices by creating focus groups to discuss recess activities; and then ask for students input on ways in which we can offer more recess activity choices. *(cont.)*



Photos: (left) Solana Highlands students record an episode of the Dolphin News Network (DNN); (top right) Students use the lunch period for physical and creative activities, like hula hoop and chalk art, with the help of volunteer student leaders.

“

I love building stuff
in the TinkerLab.”

Raya

Kindergarten student

“

I like the TinkerLab,
because I love
engineering and
building.”

Lily

Kindergarten student

Student Voice and Choice (cont.)



Thanks to student feedback, we have developed daily opportunities for students at all grade levels to experience physical activities and creative outlets, such as chalk art, Lego building, Origami, and board games, just to name a few. This creates a positive balance between academics, exploration, and physical activity during the school day, while offering students a number of leadership roles in activity prep and cleanup each day.

Students are also responsible caretakers of Solana Highlands' garden, a powerful environmental education tool. Through gardening lessons, our students engage in agricultural practices on a smaller scale, learning about the responsibilities and impacts of land cultivation.

Our Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STREAM) team, with the support of our Solana Beach Schools Foundation, has created a student environment in which big ideas can flourish. It is called the TinkerLab. Here, students and staff celebrate imperfection, experimentation, serendipity, and the creative journey. Our goal is to facilitate each student's self-expression through a variety of projects, such as sewing, inventing, experimenting, designing, and building. Solana Highlands students are naturally gifted creators, so we believe opportunities to nurture those gifts are essential.

Photos: (left) Students grow their own food from seedlings in the Solana Highlands garden; (top right) students create art in our school's TinkerLab.

