

LAZEAR LEARNER

Lazear Welcomes Principal Kareem Weaver

Principal Kareem Weaver is doing triple-duty this morning: Sharing the school's vision and approach with the *Lazear Learner*, fielding requests and calls from the office, and guiding a couple 5th-graders through the materials for their student council campaigns.

Although we're in his office, it's clear he's not a "behind the desk" kind of leader. "I taught for a long time," he says. "I'm a teacher at heart, and I look at Lazear's students like they're my own kids."

As a former teacher, Weaver is committed to the complete learning picture. "We need to be high-achieving, but we cannot be so consumed with test scores that we cheat the process," he says. "Our big goal is for 90 percent of our kids to be Proficient in reading and math, while at the same time being critical thinkers who make good choices, learn from their mistakes, and have a curiosity and passion for learning itself. We want them to be able to talk about and discuss the things they learn, and teach those things to somebody younger than them."

Weaver has been inspired by the dedication of the staff, in all areas. "Lazear has the most experienced staff in the district," he says. "They have an average of 19 years in teaching and have seen it all. I'm so proud of them because they are still battling, still fighting for kids."

He is grateful to the school's families as well. "One of the reasons I chose to come here: We have a very active parent group," says Weaver. "Our library is filled with completely leveled books; the parents, librarian, and volunteers did it all. Nobody has that – but we have that. Our parents are phenomenal."

As a new principal, Weaver says it was critical that everyone be on the same page when it came to determining the school's direction. Before the school year began, parents, teachers, and former administrators wrote their recommendations in a document called the SPSA review. The common goals and ideas became the basis for our new direction. "It's the *all* that's the key," says Weaver. "That's what we need in order to be a high-performing school!"



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Lazear Watches Its Garden Program Grow

When you want to boil a topic down to its true meaning, sometimes it's best to consult an elementary school student. Case in point: 3rd-grader Juan's journal entry reflecting on the Lazear Garden:

"When you garden, new plants live. Gardening helps nature."

Juan is just one of the many kids who've connected with the garden, which has been the site of a labor of love this year, thanks to a school-wide effort led by daytime teachers Carol Lacey and Mary Tishman, with a big assist from Lazear After-School Coordinator Aurora Barajas.

The garden team has hosted two major community workdays, one in October and another in early December. On these days staff, students, families, and community members all came together to plant, weed, paint, and more. "The vibe is just amazing," says Lacey. "It's an incredible experience to work with people and share their joy. Everyone just brings their best to the table."

Already this year, the Lazear community has planted edibles (cilantro, oregano, garlic, broccoli, and more), azalea bushes, daffodils, and other decorative flowers and plants. From their garden



journals, it's clear that the kids have embraced the idea of knowing where there is coming from. "I plant with my grandma and the food always tastes better when we grow it," relates 3rd-grader Hazel.

The students are also clearly taking to heart the ins and outs of planting. Witness this entry from 3rd-grader David's Garden Journal, which reads as if a lifelong gardener wrote it: *Today I planted garlic. First you drill your finger in the dirt, but not too deep. Next you put the garlic in the hole. Then you pat the dirt, but not too hard. Finally you water it every day and wait for it to sprout. And that's how you plant garlic. It's very easy.*

Lazear students have also worked with Miriam Olivera from the University of California Cooperative Extension through a program called "Farm to Fork." This collaboration has helped kids learn about all aspects of nutrition through hands-on work in the garden. They have also benefited from a program called "Botany on Your Plate." As the year goes on, Lacey and Tishman plan to add more science-based learning to the kids' garden activities.

"The garden work is a dream come true for me," reflects Lacey. "I have been digging in the dirt since I was very young. It is one of my earliest memories."

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For Lazear's two garden days, the team has had to limit the number of participants.

"We were concerned we wouldn't have enough tools for people to use," explains Lacey. To allow our garden program to truly flourish, we need your help! Your tax-deductible donation can help us add much-needed materials and tools to our garden collection, enabling even more families and community members to take part in the process.

You can donate online at www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org (designating "Lazear") or by mail: "OSF/Lazear," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland CA 94620.

Thank you for your support!



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824 29th Avenue, Oakland, CA 94601

Kareem Weaver, Principal

kareem.weaver@ousd.k12.ca.us

(510) 879.1320 | www.lazear elementary.org



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