

EDUCATION

DVUSD receives district-wide AdvancED accreditation

Education from cradle to career

The Deer Valley Unified School District was granted AdvancED district-wide accreditation from AdvancED (formerly North Central Association). This recognition means that the district and all 37 Deer Valley schools are recognized across the nation as being committed to meeting high quality standards, implementing a continuous process of improvement and engaging in quality assurance through internal and external review.

As part of the examination process for accreditation, the AdvancED external team reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated DVUSD's self-assessment against research based quality standards and provided invaluable recommendations for improvement. The identified opportunities for improvement include:

- Simplify and clarify district policies and practices to help deploy continuous improvement initiatives.
- Design and implement formal practices that support collaborative learning.
- Develop and implement a plan to meet the social and emotional needs of students.

These opportunities for improvement have been integrated into the 2013-18 Strategic Plan adopted by the Governing Board in May.

According to Dr. Mark Elgart, President/CEO of AdvancED, "AdvancED School System Accreditation is a rigorous process that focuses the entire school system on the primary goal of creating lifelong learners. Deer Valley Unified School District is to be commended for engaging in this process and demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement."

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, visited Phoenix and Scottsdale schools on September 12 to discuss the importance of high-quality preschools, strengthening tribal education, providing community services and supporting military-connected children.

His visit was part of the "Strong Start, Bright Future" Back-To-School Bus Tour that took him to five states in the southwestern U.S.

"The strength of America's economy is inextricably linked to the strength of America's education system," said Secretary Duncan. "This year's bus tour was an opportunity to discuss throughout the southwest how investments in education are critical to our country's future and how state and local reforms are delivering encouraging results. Our theme of 'Strong Start, Bright Future' also speaks to the importance of starting the school year off right and providing all our children with high-quality preschool to prepare them ultimately for success in college and careers."

In Phoenix, Duncan toured the Bret Tarver Education Complex, a public preschool serving more than 200 predominately Hispanic students. In Scottsdale, Duncan and William Mendoza, executive director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, visited with tribal leaders on the federal role in strengthening tribal education.

The biggest challenges in Arizona

"The biggest challenges to Arizona education are similar to those around the nation," says Duncan. "We need to make sure our children have the best education from cradle to career. We need to reduce the high school dropout rate, increase high school graduation rate and then



make sure our kids are college and career ready. And there are no easy answers. I worry about our kids' ability to compete at a national and international level for jobs if we don't invest in education."

According to Duncan, children who have rich early learning experiences are better prepared to thrive in school. Under the President's Preschool for All proposal, Arizona would receive about \$78.2 million in the first year. Combined with an estimated state match of \$7.8 million, about 9,000 children would be served. This proposal has yet to pass through Congress. Duncan is hoping the proposal will receive full bipartisan support.

Another challenge for Arizona is funding for schools. Because a large portion of the state (about 83%) is public lands and not taxable, Arizona faces an uphill

battle for school funding. To answer that challenge, Duncan says, "We have to invest in education at a national level, not just at the state level. Arizona ranks rather low in funding compared to other states, and the budgets, both national and local reflect our values and priorities. The best way to keep a well-educated work force is to invest in education early and throughout a child's school years ... cradle through career. If we don't invest on the front end in education, we will pay for it on the back end with high dropout rates, early pregnancies, illegal activities and more."

"I'm delighted to have had an opportunity to tour the Southwest," said Duncan. "It was a great chance to listen, to learn and to hear what the educators at all levels have to say."

HEALTHY LIVING

New breast cancer treatments

By Alison Bailin Batz

Did you know that more than 4,000 women in Arizona will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year?

And, as recently as the mid-90s, nearly 80% of these patients were being treated with mastectomies, far above the national average. This complete surgical removal of the breast, which is necessary in aggressive cases, is disfiguring to a woman.

"Today, there are so many more options to women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer," said Dr. Daniel Reed of Arizona Center for Cancer Care (AZCCC). "We aim to educate our patients on all of them. Knowledge is power in this on-going war against cancer."

Breast Cancer Treatment Today

According to Dr. Reed, there are three main categories of treatment for breast cancer today: surgery, drug therapy and radiation therapy.

Surgery

"Different types of operations may be used for breast cancer. A given patient will have some but not all of these surgeries," says Dr. Reed.

- Lumpectomy: removal of the cancerous lump only, also known as partial mastectomy
- Mastectomy: complete removal of the breast
- Sentinel lymph node surgery: removal of one or a few lymph nodes from the armpit area
- Axillary dissection: removal of many lymph nodes from the armpit area
- Breast reconstruction: plastic surgery to re-create a breast after mastectomy

Drug Therapy

Drug Therapy is the blanket term for drugs used to eliminate cancer from the body.

"Drugs travel throughout the body and eliminate cancer that cannot be seen or removed by surgery and radiation," says Dr. Reed.

Among the most common drug therapies are:

- Estrogen-blocking drugs, which can be effective against breast cancers that are stimulated by estrogen, a female hormone. Most are taken as a pill.
- Chemotherapy drugs, many of which are synthetic versions of plant and animal toxins. Chemotherapy is given for several months, and the drugs may be given by vein or in pill form.
- Targeted or Biologic Therapy, which attack specific proteins present in some

breast cancers. These drugs may be given with chemotherapy or as stand-alone treatment.

Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy is a type of focused energy. Radiation therapy is useful because cancers are much more vulnerable to radiation than healthy tissues. Radiation is safest when given in many small treatments over one or more weeks.

"Radiation may be given to the breast or chest area, and sometimes to the lymph node areas," said Dr. Reed. "Generally, the cure rate is higher when radiation is added to surgery for breast cancer."

Dr. Reed's colleague – Dr. Robert Kuske – pioneered one of the most exciting radiation options to women today – breast brachytherapy, which is a five-day radiation therapy alternative for women with early stage breast cancer.

The procedure, for which Dr. Reed helped introduce into and spread throughout Central and West Phoenix in Peoria, Sun City, Moon Valley, Deer Valley, Glendale and beyond, places radiation sources – usually tiny pellets the size of pencil lead, inside and adjacent to a cancer, or inside an area that may contain residual cancer after surgical removal of the visible tumor mass. Using brachytherapy, doctors can reduce the radiation exposure to nearby normal tissues that do not need – and can be harmed by – the radiation.

The beauty of breast brachytherapy lies in the laws of physics. While very close to the radioactive seeds, the radiation intensity is very high; however, just millimeters away, the seeds' radiation intensity decreases dramatically. This law of physics gives us a therapeutic advantage – if the seeds are precisely positioned in the tissues containing cancer cells, the normal tissues including the lungs, heart, ribs and skin can be avoided.

Given the level of success of this treatment option, today right here in the Valley, Dr. Kuske is overseeing the largest breast cancer radiation trial in medical history, squarely focused on breast brachytherapy. This trial, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, has now completed testing 4,300 women head-to-head on six-week whole breast radiation versus our five-day breast brachytherapy.

"We believe the results, once analyzed and presented in coming months, could inspire the biggest paradigm shift in how patients will be treated since Marie Curie herself discovered radium in 1896," said Dr. Reed.