

# VOA ED CENTER HIGH SCHOOL STAFF 2013-2014



## VOA Ed Center Family Informer

Phoenix SALT Opportunity – VOA High School Family

FALL/WINTER 2013

*A Note from Director, Wendy Smith*

### Great Beginnings!

Welcome to the 2013-2014 school year! The staffs at Phoenix SALT and Opportunity High Schools are happy you have chosen the Volunteers of America education programs to partner with your family. Together we will support your student so that he or she can meet the graduation requirements and envision and prepare for a bright future. Our focus is quality programming and family involvement and the purpose of this quarterly newsletter is to let you know what is happening at school and how you can become involved in your child's education!

### New Administrative Roles

This school year, familiar faces have taken on new roles this year. Mike McMahon, formerly Opportunity High School's counselor, is the new assistant director of both Phoenix SALT and Opportunity. He has a special role of overseeing Opportunity's programming and both schools' attendance monitoring. Jess Sapp, who served as Phoenix SALT's Assistant Director last year will now serve as Phoenix SALT and Opportunity's Counselor. Jess will be monitoring students' academic success, credit earning and track toward diploma. These personnel changes have allowed us to streamline the operations of both schools.

### How Important is Attendance?

What we know and love about our students is that they are very capable of learning high

school content, but this becomes almost impossible when they do not attend school regularly. If your child has an appointment, is ill, or there is an emergency, please call the school office so they may be excused. Otherwise, encourage your child to be at school daily and on-time. Missing even a few periods a day can add up to days and weeks quickly and that will delay graduation significantly!

### Let's Communicate!

We are always looking for ways to improve communication with families. We have a website, send home quarterly newsletters, call home to let you know if your child did not come to school at the start of the day, update you via automated phone calls about days off, conferences, and family events, and we call about student issues and progress. Please let us know if you are not receiving communication- it may be that we do not have current information for you and we should update this right away.

Please know that the Opportunity and Phoenix SALT staff is available to you. I invite you to call or email with concerns and feedback. We value our families and would like to make our programs strong, safe and effective with your help.

**On to quarter 2 and even greater achievements!**

Wendy Smith—Director

### IMPORTANT DATES:

**PLAN TEST (10th):** Nov. 12—Nov. 14  
**Latino Heritage Night:** Nov. 19  
**Native American Family Breakfast:** Nov. 21  
**Grading Period 4 Ends:** Nov. 22  
**Thanksgiving Break:** Nov. 27—Nov. 29  
**Grading Period 5 Ends:** Dec. 13  
**Winter Recess (No School):**  
 Dec 23 - Jan 3  
**Quarter 2 Ends (No School):** Jan. 16

### UPCOMING STUDENT TEST DATES

#### THE PLAN TEST: 10th Graders

November 12th—November 14th

ACT Plan helps 10th graders build a solid foundation for future academic and career success and provides information needed to address school districts' high-priority issues. It is a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for the remaining years of high school and beyond.



### Remember...

If your child will be out due to illness, an appointment or family emergency, please contact the school office, otherwise the absence will be unexcused.

612-375-0700

### New Faces At The VOA Ed Center

Hi! I'm Svetlana Petrovich, MSW, LGSW- the new school therapist! I am happy to provide individual, family and group therapy, skills and support groups to the students enrolled in VOA Education Center programming. I have a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work from the University of Minnesota and additional training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Harm Reduction Chemical Health Counseling, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. I've had the pleasure of working with youth and their families in community centers, public schools, and



non-profit organizations. Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns; and ideas on skills/support groups that may benefit your child's health and wellness.

Hello, my name is Muna Ahmed and I will be working at the front desk. In my short experience as a new employee for Phoenix/Salt and Opportunity High Schools, I wanted to state that it's a wonderful challenge and great experience. I'm fortunate to work with all of you and it's a great work environment.



Position	Name	Email	Phone #
Receptionist (Spanish)	Brenda Castellanos	brenda.castellanos@voamn.org	612-375-0700
Receptionist (Somali)	Muna Ahmed	mahmed@voamn.org	612-375-0700
Social Studies and Independent Study	Ben Savitt	bsavitt@voamn.org	612-767-0009
Science and Independent Study	Andrew Arlt	aarlt@voamn.org	612-767-0006
Science	Jeff McArthur	jmcArthur@voamn.org	612-767-0007
Language Arts	Laura Johnson	ljohnson@voamn.org	612-767-0010
Language Arts/ELL and Independent Study	Sara Grant	sgrant@voamn.org	612-767-0011
Counselor	Jess Sapp	jsapp@voamn.org	612-767-0014
Director, Art, and Independent Study	Wendy Smith	wsmith@voamn.org	612-767-0022
Special Education	Martha Williams	Martha.Williams02@mpls.k12.mn.us	612-767-0023
Social Studies, P.E. & Health	Kris Bulander	kbulander@voamn.org	612-767-0001
Language Arts & ELL	Erin Helland	ehelland@voamn.org	612-767-0002
Assistant Director	Michael McMahon	mmcmahon@voamn.org	612-767-0020
Mathematics	Liz Christenson	lchristenson@voamn.org	612-767-0026
Special Education	Suzanne Mears	Suzanne.Mears@mpls.k12.mn.us	612-375-0700

## Credit Make-Up for Students

VOA Ed Center offers after school classes as an option for students to earn additional credit. There are several classes which meet one day a week: FILM/LANGUAGE ARTS, SOCCER/FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL, CLIMBING CLUB, CREATIVE WRITING, ROBOTICS CLUB. All courses fulfill credit requirements for graduation. Students interested in after-school classes should talk with Jess, the school counselor.

Additionally, staff encourage every student to take part in weekend camping trips to earn further credit. Four weekend camping trips have already taken place this school year, and there is one more planned for November.

After school help is also available for students who may need additional support with their daily classwork. Teachers are available upon request to meet with students at the end of the school day. Some teachers have scheduled days available for after school help.

## Students Of The MONTH

**September:** Deondre Bradley, Shanique Williams, Bri Robinson, Dean Leach, Genevieve Surma, Marlen Malone, Chris Matos-Bonilla, Christian Ovillo, Cristobal Gomez-Rodriguez, Paloma Titla-Sanchez

**October:** Alexis Brown, Tashiana Bailey, Antonio Friend, Jahliah Holloman, Sydney Reuben, Bri Robinson, Robert Williams, Fasika Ergetu, Yanelli Rojas, Dominique Marks

*Please refrain from calling your child on their cell phone during the school day.*

*SALT has a*



## At-Home Tips to Increase Reading and Math Skills

### READING STRATEGIES

- Ask your student questions about his or her day. Ask follow-up questions that need extended answers, beyond just, "Good" or "Okay."
- Read what your student is reading, the newspaper or online, and engage him or her in discussion that requires critical thought.
- Have print (books, magazines, newspapers) around the house for your student to pick up and read for even a few minutes.
- Always praise a student for reading, whatever it is. There isn't bad reading. Any practice at reading is helpful.

### MATH STRATEGIES

- Have students calculate tips for servers and delivery drivers without using their phones (by hand).
- Play online math games.
- Practice multiplication facts.
- Have students calculate what percent and/or fraction of their money they spend on different things like gas, fast food, their phone, etc.

## 3 WEEK GRADING PERIODS

### Quarter 2:

**Nov 4 - Nov 22**

**Nov 25 - Dec 13**

**Dec 16 - Jan 16**

**Progress grades will be distributed the week after the last day of the grading period. Please ask your child to see their grades, or contact the school if you would like to receive a copy.**

## Connecting Parents to Educational Opportunities (CPEO)

CPEO is a seven week program designed especially for parents! Each session provides parents with tools to connect parents to their children, to schools and university communities, and decision making school committees.

For more information: <http://ofce.mpls.k12.mn.us/CPEO.html>

### STUDENT WELLNESS

The wellness policy of VOA Education Center can be found on the school's website at [www.voamn.org](http://www.voamn.org) as well as Minneapolis Public School's website at [www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us). Student wellness is very important to the staff at VOA Education Center and we promote a healthy lifestyle with complete student wellness for our students. VOA Education center is committed to providing a school environment that promotes healthy choices, well-being, healthy eating, and physical activity.

## Family Friendly School Improvement Goals

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a school-wide plan that defines our school goals and how we are going to meet them.

- It is based on data, including test scores and attendance rates.
- Teachers, principals, district administrators, and other school staff work with students and their families to develop the plan.
- Our school reviews and updates our SIP regularly to help us meet the needs of all children in the school

Our data tells us that our strengths are: Providing a safe environment, supporting student efforts at school and offering flexibility in scheduling for credit makeup.

Our data tells us that we can improve in the area of: Increasing student progress in reading, math and daily attendance.

### PHOENIX SALT GOALS

**Performance Target:** Phoenix SALT High School has a goal of increasing the amount of students who meet or exceed the state standard level for reading from 25% in 2013 to 35% in 2014 (measurable with the MCA II results)

**Strategies:** Phoenix SALT teachers will plan and collaborate with other VOA teachers, take part in professional development that is based on student achievement data and will focus on strategies for increasing vocabulary and reading comprehension.

**Performance Target:** Phoenix SALT High School has a goal of increasing the amount of students who meet or exceed the state standard level for math from 0% in 2013 to 15% in 2014 (measurable with the MCA II results)

**Strategies:** Phoenix SALT teachers will plan and collaborate with other VOA teachers, implement a balanced math approach, and take part in professional development that is based on student achievement data. All teachers will incorporate math strategies in to curriculum.

**Performance Target:** The Phoenix SALT staff will focus on improving student engagement, attendance, and retention. PSH is seeking to engage 50% of students in experiential learning weekend trips and after school classes for credit recovery.

**Strategies:** Phoenix SALT Staff will meet every 3 weeks to review student engagement, attendance, and retention. Staff will also meet regarding student participation in extra-credit earning opportunities offered at Phoenix SALT High School.

### OPPORTUNITY GOALS

**Performance Target:** Opportunity High School has a goal of increasing the amount of students who meet or exceed the state standard level for reading from 0% in 2013 to 15% in 2014 (measurable with MCAII results).

**Strategies:** Opportunity teachers will plan and collaborate with other VOA teachers, take part in professional development that is based on student achievement data and will focus on strategies for increasing vocabulary and reading comprehension.

**Performance Target:** Opportunity High School has a goal of increasing the amount of students who meet or exceed the state standard level for math from 0% in 2013 to 15% in 2014 (measurable with the MCA II results).

**Strategies:** Opportunity teachers will plan and collaborate with other VOA teachers, implement a balanced math approach, and take part in professional development that is based on student achievement data. All teachers will incorporate math strategies in to curriculum.

**Performance Target:** Opportunity High School has a goal of decreasing the number of students who are suspended from VOA Opportunity High School from 16 in 2013 by 20% in 2014.

**Strategies:** Staff will meet weekly to discuss student concerns and behaviors and develop individual plans to help students with areas of need.