



# The Pink Panther

## Henry J. Kaiser, Jr. Elementary School

25 South Hill Court, Oakland, California 94618 (510) 549-4900

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 19, 2010

Dear Kaiser Families,

“It’s not the answer that’s most important; it’s how you got there.” How many times have we told our children that, yet they still seem fixated on “getting it right,” or even, “just getting it done.” Their comments sound like they’re not interested in learning. In speaking with the teachers as they were reviewing the last set of progress assessments, their similar comments were that many students were in such a hurry to finish the test that they did many mistakes which were avoidable had the students worked more slowly and with more focus.

Many leaders in education now look to add *rigor* to the curriculum. We are looking for teachers and students to go well beyond simple question-and-answer learning in small bits, to deeper and more mentally challenging work. This does not mean more and longer class activities and homework assignments, rather, it means time and opportunity for students to develop and apply *habits of mind* as they navigate sophisticated and reflective learning experiences. Teachers design learning experiences which are ambiguous (there are no clear answers so students must evaluate various possible solutions), complex (there are no simple answers so students must think about different parts at the same time), provocative (no easy answers, often resulting in choosing between the lesser of two evils), and personally or emotionally challenging. When instruction is academically rigorous, students actively explore, research and solve complex problems to develop a deep understanding of core academic concepts. Students weigh evidence, consider varying viewpoints, see connections, identify patterns, evaluate outcomes, speculate on possibilities and assess value. That’s a lot!

What can *you* do?

In a situation where your child is frustrated because they can’t figure out their homework, our impulse is to help by giving them the answer. Don’t. Comfort them in their frustration by acknowledging how difficult it is. Encourage them to keep trying. Ask them leading questions to help them find the answer. And finally, congratulate them, not on getting it right, but on *working so hard*. Express faith in them that you knew they’d work until they finished.

Give them a real-life problem and let them solve it and live with their solution. For example, let your child organize their clothes drawers. Set the goals that they must be neat and that your child must be able to find things quickly. Then let them do it. What does it matter that they might organize it differently than you? They’ll learn to appraise the situation, decide a plan, carry it out, and adjust it if needed.

Invite your child into conversations about current events; they’ll learn that the world is complex and ambiguous, and that often there are no easy answers. When your child fails at something, comfort him/her, yes, and give encouragement to try again, but don’t save them (unless it’s too dangerous.) Praise your child for being committed to dealing with difficult situations. Your child will learn that he/she is strong, resilient, and persistent—hallmarks of successful adults.

When I taught older kids and reviewed math tests, kids would often want to move quickly and find out all the right answers. I often offered to sell them the answer book for \$30. I also told the kids that the answer book wouldn’t teach them how to learn, and would soon be outdated. To their credit, no one ever bought the book!

Mel Stenger, Principal

## Getting In The Know

The recent tragic earthquake in Haiti serves as a reminder to be prepared for disasters. **If you have changed your phone number recently, please let us know so that we can contact you in a disaster situation.** Most probably we will not be answering the office phone should such a situation occur.

Will your child be returning to Kaiser? We are trying to determine how many children we can take in next year at various grade levels. If you can't find the form we sent home last week, just send a note to your child's teacher and let us know of your plans.

**The Pink Panther is also available at [www.KaiserElementary.org](http://www.KaiserElementary.org).**

**The online Pink Panther includes information from our Wellness Committee**

### How to be in the *Pink Panther*

To include your story or information in your school newsletter: forward your news, questions, or article to **both** of the editors by **5 p.m. on Sundays** via e-mail:

**carriemail2001@yahoo.com – Carrie Shepherd**  
**jolie@earthlink.net – Jolie McRae**

Please put "Pink Panther" in the subject of your email to ensure that it is not deleted accidentally!

### KAISER CALENDAR

DATE / DAY	EVENT
Jan. 20	PTA Reading Night, 6:30-8:30
Jan. 21	SSC Meeting, 4-5:30
Jan. 27	PTA Board Meeting, 6:30
Jan. 29	Asian Potluck, 6:30
Feb. 1	NO SCHOOL – End of the Semester

February 1 will be an in-service day when the faculty will review how we are doing, and how we can improve. We welcome your input. Last week I attached a list of different roles and programs we have going on. If you want to leave a note for us in the office, I will convey your ideas to the staff. We're always looking for ways to improve.

### How to Reach Kaiser School

Our phone number is **(510) 549-4900**  
(includes a 24-hour message service).

To participate in the school community group, go to (and join) this website:

**[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kaiserelementaryschool\\_group/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kaiserelementaryschool_group/)**

### Pink Panther's PTA Sponsors

PTA President: Kimberlee White

### Pink Panther Staff

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