

August 2, 2017

Dear Foothill Middle School Community Member,

I am honored to be your Technology Resource Teacher, serving teachers, educational assistants, administrators, students, and family members as we implement new technologies for learning and collaboration within our community. At FMS, we provide students a *multicultural education*, meaning that differences in culture, socio-economics, gender, race, or learning ability do not hold students back from the opportunity to learn 21st century skills (Maloy, Verock, Edwards, & Woolf, 2017). Students engage in learning activities that affirm these differences and encourage them to understand one another. Furthermore, the use of new technologies within the classroom connects students those around the world, learning from others with an entirely different perspective. These experiences will prepare students for future interactions with anyone holding contrasting views or beliefs in high school, college, and career settings (Fleischmann, Robbins, & Wallace, 2011).

We use collaborative tools to create a positive, inclusive school culture. Foothill parents, students, and teachers have used Aeries for over four years now. This online portal provides access to students’ grades, teacher emails, and upcoming class schedules. Teachers with class websites are directly linked to Aeries making it simpler to access specific class information, as well. If you have not yet set up your Aeries account, visit the following link: <http://azusa.org/portal/>.

Our newly adopted math curriculum, CPM, integrates collaboration. Students work together regularly in cooperative groups to solve a multiple-step math problem based on real-life situations; students are assigned specific, structured roles. These roles require students to listen to understand one another and teach individual responsibility. Students are trained to guide one another as they solve the problem, rather than simply seeking assistance from the teacher. For more information about the CPM curriculum, follow this link: <http://ausd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1463135339973>.

Students’ Google accounts are also opening the door to many other tools for collaboration such as Google Classroom, Google Slides, Google Hangouts, and Google Docs. Each of these apps are accessible through student accounts, connecting them to teachers and peers. Teachers are taking advantage of these tools to encourage academic discourse, academic success, and collaboration. Google Classroom connects students in each class to their teacher and one another; it provides links to class resources and offers opportunities to blog about class topics. Google Slides and Google Docs allow students to create and share a document with their peers and the teacher; this allows for collaboration in the revision process. Google Hangouts is a resource that allows students to contact one another via internet. This is beneficial to get help with assignments in real time and collaborate on class projects. Click here to learn more about these tools: <https://edu.google.com/>

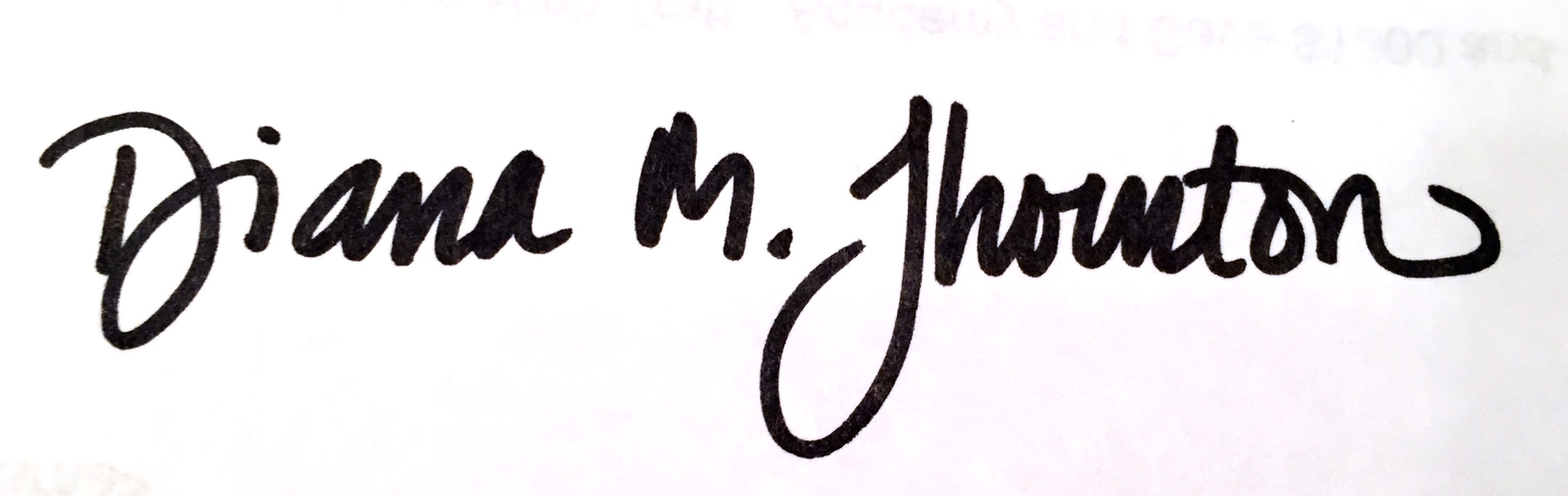
The above are just a few examples of how Foothill is creating a supportive school culture through collaborative tools, yet FMS also provides opportunities for students to increase their global awareness and diversity. This is the second year we are offering Spanish to seventh and eighth graders: Spanish I and Spanish to Native Speakers. Not only does this course offering prepare students for the A-G requirement for entrance to a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU), students also learn about the various Spanish speaking cultures around the world. Additionally, students in the reading intervention classes take part in a buddy program, partnering with our two life-skills classes. Students buddy up with other students their own age with severe physical and mental disabilities; they work together on activities such as STEM projects, reading together, and cooking lessons. Students learn that our school is a family made up of varying levels of abilities; they become keenly aware of how they can serve members of our community.

Azusa Unified School District also provides support for the varying cultural and socio-economic needs of parents and their students throughout the district. For example, every school holds monthly English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings for parents of English learners where parents learn what opportunities the district and school are providing their children, along with ways they can become more involved in supporting their child’s needs. At Foothill, we go a step further by providing a free eight-week course called Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). The institute is conducted in English and in Spanish, highlighting how parents can encourage their child to: improve academically; develop healthy relationships with parents, teachers, and counselors; and prepare for education after high school. Prior to each institute, PIQE studies the culture of the school to understand its language and cultural needs.

In closing, FMS is here to support our families and community when it comes to technology. Our Parent Center houses desktop computers, allowing parents to access the internet 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Twice a year, we provide Aeries trainings in the morning and evening. Each spring, we train parents and families on internet use and how to create an e-mail account. Check the [school calendar](http://fms-ausd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1302519910437) for these upcoming events. Refer to [Common Sense Media](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/learning-with-technology)

about ways you can support your child’s use of technology. Please feel free contact me if you have any suggestions about how we can better serve you or questions about Foothill’s use of technology with your child.

Respectfully,



Diana Thornton, Technology Resource Teacher

Foothill Middle School

References

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