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CONTACT: Kate Strauss
Community Relations
Buena Park School District
714-514-0523
kstrauss@bpsd.us

"INNOVATION VANGUARD" EDUCATORS TREK TO APPLE TOWER THEATRE IN DTLA FOR TRAINING, INSPIRATION IN REVITALIZED HOLLYWOOD TREASURE

Buena Park School District road trip yields new classroom technology and apps for cross-disciplinary use

Buena Park, CA — On a cold Saturday in March, a group of educators from the Buena Park School District heads into Downtown Los Angeles to explore an old Hollywood landmark and discover a new classroom app while they're at it. Called the "Innovation Vanguard," these educators have spent the last two years learning about different educational apps from the district's Apple Coaches and then sharing that knowledge with their respective school site teachers. Today, the Apple/ Buena Park partnership continues at the repurposed Tower Theatre, already established as a beacon of technological innovation when it became one of the first cinemas to be wired for sound. Almost a century later, the art deco interior of marble columns, Tiffany glass, and a 100-foot clock tower become the backdrop for an app lesson.

A spirited Apple educator named Von plays the part of the tour guide before launching into today's activity. Once an actor featured in an Apple commercial with over 20 million views, Von now directs a lesson about an app called "Swift Playgrounds." App developers use "Swift Playgrounds" to make other apps for iPhones and iPads. For this lesson, the Buena Park educators are asked to code an interactive "About Me" app by following the directions and adding information about favorite foods, favorite hobbies, and fun facts. All the attendees successfully code their own apps and then share out on a screen that takes up one entire wall of the Tower Theatre.

Dr. Yvette Cantu, Interim Superintendent of BPSD, has come along on the field trip and is thrilled with the new app that she successfully coded. On the big screen, we discover that her favorite fruit is cherries as she shares out to the rest of the group. Of the partnership with Apple, she says, "This collaboration has greatly expanded our ability to connect with students and has given an added dimension to our STEM programs."



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Andy Osborn is the district Technology Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) who organized the field trip, and he sees a lot of potential uses for this app in the classroom. “Students in ELA could make an ‘About Me’ for a character in a novel, or a math teacher could have students make an interactive ‘About Me’ to parse a math problem and show different ways to solve it,” he says. “Everything is customizable.”

The partnership between BPSD and Apple has yielded a host of innovative teaching tools over the past two years. “Swift Playgrounds” provides teachers with yet another interactive tool to engage students across the disciplines. The most recent monthly meeting of the BPSD “Innovation Vanguard” featured an app called “Free Form” – a brand new app included with all iPhones and iPads – which functions as a graphic organizer tool. “Free Form” allows students to organize their thoughts and find disciplinary linkages by creating thinking maps and word clouds. Enthusiasts may see iterations of this new app in just about any discipline across the district, engaging more learners in making meaningful connections.

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Von introduces the “About Me” app by Swift Playgrounds.



The Innovation Vanguard educators of the Buena Park School District.



BPSP staff poses with Von before the presentations begin.