

You've Come a Long Way, Baby  
by Julia Zandler  
*UPC President, 2006-2008*

Sometimes it is hard to remember how far we have come. Seven years ago at one of our UPC meetings someone raised a hand and posed a question that sparked animated discussion.

The question was, "Why can't the district provide a greater variety of high school courses?" There was a pause as the group thought, then a second person piped up that her PVUSD grad, now in college, would have benefited from a grounding in basic philosophy. Heads in the room nodded appreciatively and soon a chorus of voices rang out with a wish list of classes-- humanities, accounting, Mandarin.

At that time, only district signature programs offered specialized secondary content. That was possible because these programs brought together a sufficient mass of students to fill a classroom, or as they say, "make a class".

To me, the real crux of the matter was how to implement a *new* model of instruction- one that served up specialized coursework not just to the students at one lucky site, but rather to interested learners anywhere in the district. As UPC president, I put the question to district officials.

Today, the landscape in PVUSD is different. Many positive changes have occurred in the last seven years. Students have a more diverse line up of classes and delivery methods available to them. For example, students can take a district-created online course in subjects such as art appreciation, the history of American music, and personal finance, to name a few.

What really excites me is the district's hybrid Mandarin program. This program combines face-to-face teacher instruction with online content for a robust and successful learning opportunity open to middle and high school students. It is the first of its kind that I know of in the district. As such, it serves as a model for how we could expand education opportunities in the future. Now *that* is what we were talking about all those years ago!

I am not suggesting that UPC is responsible for this development. Instead, I want to illustrate why it is important for parents to partner with schools and the district. Each party has an aligned interest in education; however, each one has a slightly different role. Parents have unique perspectives, experiences, and ideas to add to the mix. Working together, powerful change is possible.

Our district has been around for 100 years, but UPC has been here for a significant length of time too, nearly 40 years. As we celebrate the district and where it is today, I think about the UPC members who preceded me. What they worked for benefited my children, and what I stood for benefited upcoming students. That's how it is. What we do contributes to the momentum that will make tomorrow better. At UPC we really do stand for *all* children.