

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2008

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Students Get Trip to Historic Allensworth through Live Video Conferencing

State Legislator Works to Educate California's Youth

This Friday, Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas and California State Parks will use video conferencing technology to help California students learn about their past at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park.

In advance of the Centennial Celebration of the town on October 11 and 12, Ridley-Thomas will speak to students as part of the California State Parks' PORTS (Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students) distance learning program.

Senator Ridley-Thomas will participate in-person in a Los Angeles Unified School District classroom on Friday, October 3, as per the schedule at the end of this release. The legislator's appearance will include a live, two-way, interactive video conference with a Park Interpreter located in Allensworth, and the Senator located with the students at Audubon Middle School in Los Angeles. As part of a series of programs leading up to the Centennial at Allensworth, several other schools will be conducting similar live, video conferencing programs, but without a legislative appearance.

All of the schools will be video conferencing from the historic Hindsman Store at Allensworth State Historic Park. With the aid of Dr. Penny Swenson from CSU Bakersfield, California State Parks has prepared a unit of study that teaches History/Social Science Academic Content Standards in the context of Allensworth State Historic Park. The teachers and students access these resources via the State Parks' web site at www.ports.parks.ca.gov. These materials prepare the classes for their live interactive video conference with Allensworth.

Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park is located in the San Joaquin Valley northwest of Bakersfield, in Tulare County. Allensworth is a visionary community, established in 1908 as the only town in California founded, financed and governed by African Americans. This unique

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town, dedicated to the dignity of the human spirit, preserves the story of a courageous group of families and individuals who believed they could create their own version of the “American Dream.” This inspiring story of the people who came to an isolated spot in the southern San Joaquin Valley to build a place of their own—a place where hard work, dedication, and faith would allow them and their children the opportunity to control their own discrimination-free destiny – is an essential story for all Californians.

In the 2007/2008 school year PORTS served well over 20,000 California students from various parks around California. Approximately 25 percent of those students were from Los Angeles. Video conferencing allows park interpreters to look directly at the students sitting a classroom miles away, with the students likewise looking back at the interpreter in a park. Students can raise their hands and be seen by the interpreter in this two-way, visual medium. In this case, the state legislator will be with the students, joining the conversation and the period of instruction.

Schedule for Allensworth Live Video Conference Program

Wednesday October 1

8:45 – 9:30

Divisadero Middle School – 8th Grade – Ms. Cheryl Merriweather’s class
Visalia Unified School District

This class will take a bus to the Tulare County Office of Education’s Impact Center facility. The Impact Center is located across the street from the Education Building, in the Educational Enrichment Center building (formerly the County of Tulare Agricultural building).

10:00 – 3:00

Rio Vista Elementary School – Five different fourth grade classes
1451 California Street, San Bernardino, CA
(909) 388-6450
Charles Brown, Principal
San Bernardino City Unified School District

Thursday October 2

8:00

Johnnie L. Cochran Middle School (LAUSD)
4066 Johnnie Cochran Vista (Formerly W 17th St.)
Los Angeles, CA 90019
(323) 730-4300
Stephanie Carter, Teacher
Scott Schmerelson, Principal
(323) 730-4300

8:45

Wilmington Middle School (LAUSD)
1700 Gulf Ave., Wilmington, CA 90744
Veronica Aragon, Principal
(310) 847-1500

10:30 – 12:45

South Gate Middle School (LAUSD)
4100 Firestone Blvd.
South Gate, CA 90280
325.568.4000
German Cerda, Principal
Mike Albert, Teacher
salbert@lausd.net

Friday October 3**9:00 – 10:15**

Audubon Middle School(LAUSD) -- **State Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas to be with students.**
Eric F. Boyd, District Director
Office of State Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas
26th Senate District
700 State Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90037
(213) 745-6656
Eric.Boyd@sen.ca.gov

10:30 - 11:15

Bethune Middle School (LAUSD)
Daryl Narimatsu (Daryl.Narimatsu@lausd.net), Principal
(323) 541-1800, Phone

Other contacts:

1. Office of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass
Press contact – Steve Maviglio (916) 319-2408
2. Office of Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas
Press contact – Fahizah Alim (916) 651-4026
3. California Black Media
Press contact – Regina Brown Wilson (916) 319-0693

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Special note to editors, reporters and photographers

This town provides an amazing opportunity for journalists who wish to gather photographs and special stories that capture the pioneering spirit that built this unique settlement. Homes and businesses, the school and community church and many other buildings have been restored as they were in the early 1900s.

Please visit our State Parks websites for Press Pictures

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/centennial - Information about the centennial event

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/allaboard - Information about the Amtrak trains to Allensworth during the event

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/virtualtour - **Press Pictures** -- Images of Allensworth's buildings, photos are copyrighted to California State Parks but may be used for press/media use only (credit line is © 2008 California State Parks)

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/formedia - **Press Pictures** -- Information specifically for the media, including press releases, links, and information about requesting photographs for media use (in addition to and in higher resolution than those on our Virtual Tour webpage mentioned above) (Please do not release this address to public, it is press only)

About the Allensworth Restoration

Allensworth is one of the 50 State Historic Parks within the State park system. Since 1985, California State Parks has spent over \$9.4 million for reconstruction, restoration, furnishings and infrastructure at the historic park. Extensive road, utility and other infrastructure improvements have been made. More than 22 different structures have been reconstructed or restored, to include the historic Baptist church, the Hackett house, Hackett barn, Ashby house and barn, Johnson Bakery/residence, the Carter Livery Stable and the historic hotel. Today, a walk through this town and through the historic homes, businesses, the church and the school, is an experience in turning back the clock, because one sees much of this restored community as it appeared in the early 1900s.

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