



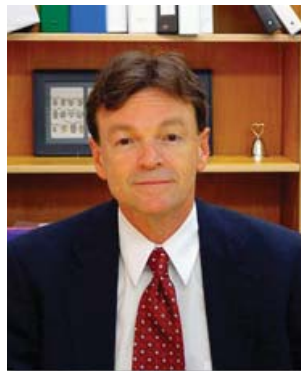
La Cañada Unified

October/November 2009

Volume 5 - Issue 1

Message from the Superintendent

by James Stratton, Superintendent



At a state superintendents' meeting earlier this month, several state legislators and education consultants spoke to us about financial issues facing Sacramento decision makers. As might be expected, the news was not good.

There was general consensus that California will not return to pre-recession financial status until 2015 at the earliest and that the severe cuts to education that we have been suffering will continue. In fact, said the experts, the 2010-11 academic year is predicted to be the worst year for public school funding.

Because the current state budget has been balanced on over \$8 billion in one time money and because the tax revenue stream is already behind schedule, we were also advised to expect mid year cuts to our current budgets. Complicating the overall situation is that there is no major part of the California economy to fall back on. The technology and the real estate bubbles have long since burst.

The consultants offered various statistical details to further illustrate the picture: in only 5 of the last 19 years has California public education been fully funded; at the height of the Great Depression educational funding in the state fell by 25% and within the last 16 months we have dropped by 18%; by January of 2010, the state will be facing a new and additional shortfall of up to \$14 billion.

To combat the crisis, the legislators spoke of possible structural changes to budgeting and governance. Two of these proposals, if implemented, could certainly benefit LCUSD. The first idea is to generate a multi-year budget process so that districts have some idea of what our future funding will be rather than to wait until late summer (if we are lucky) to learn what dollars will be available to open school in September. Coupled with this idea is a push to reconfigure which state tax revenue sources will be used to fund public education and to possibly cap the tax dollars which can go to redevelopment.

A second promising suggestion is to completely revise the voluminous state Education Code, eliminating redundancies, unfunded mandates, unnecessary reporting forms and administrative minutiae. Any initiative that could cut down on reporting expenses and superfluous programs would be a welcome cost-cutting strategy for us.



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LC Newsline

LCUSD 2nd Highest In State

The Academic Performance Index 2009 Growth scores were recently released by the California Department of Education, and La Canada Unified School District ranks second highest in the state. This milestone is an improvement from fourth place last year. While only one point separated second, third and fourth position in 2008, this year LCUSD is four points higher than the third place district and six points higher than the fourth place district. The same four unified school districts have vied for the top positions in the last several years. Currently, San Marino is in first place with an API score of 952 followed by La Canada at 926. Piedmont City is third and Palo Alto is fourth with scores of 922 and 920 respectively.

Individual schools also receive API scores. The state target is set at 800 and 1000 is the maximum. All LCUSD schools exceeded 900 this year. La Canada Elementary School had the highest API in the district at 967. Both Paradise Canyon Elementary School, at 960, and LCE grew by 14 points since last year. The most growth this year is found at Palm Crest Elementary with an API of 956, an increase of 18 points from last year. La Canada High School increased by 10 points achieving an API of 906. When comparing the performance at LCHS to other comprehensive high schools in the state, LCHS ranks as the seventh highest achieving high school statewide.

The API is the cornerstone of the statewide accountability system for California public schools. The API score is determined through a complex formula based on the results of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The most heavily weighted contributions to a school or district's API score are the California Standards Tests (CSTs) taken by virtually all students in grades 2 – 11.

There are many shining stars among LCUSD's CST performance. The district's highest performance districtwide is seen in English Language Arts. Over 90% of students scored in the proficient or advanced ranges in grades two through eight, with the sole exception of third grade, which achieved 82%. In grades two through six, 90% or more students also met or exceeded the state target in Mathematics. Fourth graders took top honors for the second year in a row in both ELA and Math districtwide. An astonishing 97% of them scored in the proficient or advanced range in ELA and 96% of them met the mark in Math.

API performance is traditionally lower at high schools than elementary schools across the state. At LCHS, the highest performance is in seventh grade Science and ELA with 91% of students meeting or exceeding the state target. Eighth graders also achieved 91% in ELA. Seventh and eighth grade math was also strong at 88% and 86% respectively. The most growth districtwide this year was found in Algebra II, increasing 14 points, although currently at 57% proficient or advanced, more improvement can be made. In English Language Arts, juniors had the lowest performance at 77% meeting or exceeding the state



Helpful Links from
the LCUSD website:

Governing Board
Meeting Schedule

<http://www.lcusd.net/board>

LCUSD Master
Calendar:

<http://www.lcusd.net/cal>

LCUSD GATE
Advisory Council

<http://www.lcusd.net/>

LCUSD Bond
Oversite Committee

[http://www.lcusdnet/
facilities](http://www.lcusdnet/facilities)

target. Two other areas for improvement are Biology at 68%, which declined by 11 points since last year, and Chemistry where only 54% of students met the mark.

Further detailed evaluation of students' CST performance by grade level and/or subject area teams will continue to take place to identify pockets for improvement. Maintaining and improving student performance is a high priority. Obviously, LCUSD's outstanding performance on the API demonstrates the commitment, energy and hard work of students, staff, parents and the community.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment and Consolidated Programs



Construction Update

The district was busy this past summer with construction projects identified in the 2004 bond language and are being funded by 2004 bond dollars. There are four projects that are in various stages of completion at this time.

The Palm Crest Elementary School multipurpose building was open for the beginning of the school year. The existing undersized building was demolished and a new five thousand square foot facility took its place. The new building features a stage for school productions and a warming kitchen for daily cafeteria use. The main interior space is able to accommodate half the school for lunch, instead of a third as the previous facility allotted. Reducing the schedule to two lunch periods has added flexibility to the daily schedule at the site. A conference room and restrooms are added amenities for the staff. The project was completed on time and came in under budget.

The Paradise Canyon Elementary School multipurpose building was completed in October and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on October 21, 2009. The building is five thousand square feet and provides space for physical education, assemblies, and school plays. The restrooms located in the new building serve as additional restrooms for students playing on the playground at recess and lunch. The front parking lot was changed to bring it into compliance with state codes. This project was also completed on time and under budget.

The LCHS Building "A" modernization project began this past summer. It is a fifteen month project that has been broken down into four phases. Through the scope of the project we will be adding two new classrooms as well as a new laboratory classroom. Classrooms will be equipped with new casework, A.V. equipment as well as upgraded flooring and ceilings. We are currently on schedule to complete the project at the end of the summer.

The LCHS North Gym HVAC project also started this summer and is projected to be completed next month. The project consists of connecting chiller piping from the 600 wing to the gym and into the air handler located on the second floor. Many fans at sporting events in the north gym will benefit from the air conditioning being installed.

- Mike Leininger, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance



Welcome to New Staff at LCUSD

As the 2009-10 school year opened, the La Canada Unified School District warmly welcomed fifteen new certificated staff members. In addition to the new La Canada High School Principal, Ms. Audra Pittman, LCHS welcomed five teachers in the areas of physics, U.S. Government and economics, Spanish, instrumental music, and chemistry. LCHS 7/8 hired two new staff members, one teaching grade 7 life science and the other instructing social studies at the 8th grade level. At the elementary sites, a new 5th and 6th grade English and social science teacher, as well as a physical education teacher, a part time school psychologist, and a part time special education RSP teacher joined the team. At Paradise Canyon, they welcomed a new part time special education RSP teacher; and La Canada Elementary added a new afternoon kindergarten teacher to its faculty roster.

Since September, La Canada Unified School District was also happy to welcome four new classified staff members. Therese Conte joined PCY in their Instructional Fine Arts position and Christina Libardoni, also at PCY, came on board as a new paraprofessional supporting Physical Education. LCE welcomed Alexandra Wood as a Kindergarten paraprofessional; and Carrie Desrosiers recently began as an English Language Development instructional aide at LCHS.

Brief biographies of all of our new certificated staff members follow, so that our entire community can get to know these outstanding educators.

- Wendy Sinnete, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

New Principal at LCHS

Audra Pittman assumed the role of La Cañada High School Principal on July 1. She came to us from Whittier Union High School District where she was the Assistant Principal of Guidance for Pioneer High School since July 2006. Ms. Pittman also served as an assistant principal at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach Unified School District in 2005-06. Prior to her years as an administrator, she served in a variety of positions at David Starr Jordan High School in Long Beach Unified School District: as Math Curriculum Coach, California Academic Partnership Program Director and Math Teacher. During her time as a teacher she taught courses in algebra, geometry, pre-calculus and consumer math. Ms. Pittman also held the position of Co-Director for the High School Algebra Academy at the Summer Math Camp of California State University, Long Beach.



In 1999 Ms. Pittman earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education/math from the University of Evansville. In 2004 she was awarded a master's degree in educational administration from California State University, Dominguez Hills. Ms. Pittman is currently pursuing a doctorate in urban leadership with Claremont Graduate University.

New Teachers at LCUSD

Eryn Corralejo is joining the LCHS staff to teach physics. She earned a bachelor's degree in physics from UCLA and a master's degree in education from Azusa Pacific University. She has previously taught physics, chemistry and physical science at Bishop Amat Memorial High School in La Puente. Eryn is a member of the National Science Teachers association and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum development. In her spare time, Eryn volunteers to read to children.

Laura Eng brings a variety of expertise to her new special education RSP teacher position at Paradise Canyon Elementary. Laura has worked as a special education teacher with both Pasadena Unified and South Pasadena Unified School Districts, as well as the Balsz School District and Isaac School District in Arizona. Laura has also worked as an education diagnostician with the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections. Prior to her service as an educator Laura worked in the medical field. She holds a bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation and a master's degree in special education from Arizona State University. One personal interest that keeps her busy is the training of service dogs.

Lindsay Horne is returning to the La Canada Unified School District, but not as a high school English teacher. She will be teaching English and social science in grades 5 and 6 at Palm Crest Elementary. Lindsay has just completed a master's degree in English at the University of Virginia. Her bachelor's degree in English was earned at the University of California, Davis. When Lindsay is not in the classroom, she is serving with a variety of volunteer and service organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, Jumpstart and Be The Change. If that isn't enough to keep her busy, she also participates in marathons.

Lea Howell is the new part-time school psychologist at Palm Crest Elementary School. Lea holds both a teaching credential and a pupil services credential in psychology. She taught kindergarten for 7 years in Pasadena and Glendale before pursuing a new course in school psychology. Lea completed her internship in school psychology at Burbank Unified School District and stayed on as a consultant. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Vanderbilt University and a master's degree in school psychology and marriage and family therapy from California State University, Northridge.

Kristina Kalb is also returning to La Canada from a stint back east. Kristina was serving as the head of a middle school in Franklin, Tennessee, but she and her family are returning here to their hometown. Kristina will be teaching AP government and economics at the high school, as well as taking on the leadership of the pep squad. Kristina has taught history, government, economics and humanities at Flintridge Preparatory School, Milliken Community High School and Pasadena High School. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Occidental College and a master's degree in education from Pepperdine University. If the name "Kalb" sounds familiar to you, it is because her mother-in-law served for a number of years in the high school as a classified staff member, and her husband attended La Canada schools.

Erin Oberosler is the most recent hire to the high school teaching team. She will be teaching three sections of Spanish. Erin has previously taught Spanish at West High School in Torrance and St. Lucy's Priory High School in Glendora. Erin earned a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary arts from Scripps College and a master's in teaching from Chapman University. Erin has also pursued cultural courses at the Universidad San Francisco in Cumbaya, Ecuador. In addition to all this, Erin has also studied and held positions in the legal field.

Margot Paine is the new special education RSP teacher at Palm Crest Elementary. Margot previously held the positions of RSP teacher and behavior intervention case manager at Thomas Starr Kind Middle School in Los Angeles. Margot has also worked at The Frostig Center in Pasadena as a special education teacher and teacher's

assistant. She is a member of the Association of Educational Therapists and holds a bachelor's degree in English literature from UCLA, as well as a master's degree in special education from California State University, Northridge.

Kyle Smith is joining the performing arts faculty at the high school as an instrumental music teacher. This will be Kyle's first year teaching, after having earned a bachelor's degree in music education from California State University, Fullerton in May. While at CSUF, Kyle won recognition for his performance both in academics and lacrosse. He is a member of the California Music Educators Association, the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association, and the Music Educators National Conference.

Andrea Stalder is the new kindergarten teacher at La Canada Elementary. She comes to us from Willard Elementary in Pasadena Unified where she taught a combination of first and second graders. While at Willard she served as the second grade department chair and the technology point person. Andrea earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Azusa Pacific University and pursued coursework for her teaching credential at Point Loma Nazarene University. In her spare time she plays and teaches the flute.

Megan Washburn has come to La Canada High as a chemistry teacher. Just before coming to us she taught chemistry at Westlake High School in Conejo Valley Unified School District. She holds a bachelor's degree in international studies with a minor in chemistry from Pepperdine University. She spent one year of her college studies in Heidelberg, Germany. Megan was just married last summer.

Christine Werner, the new seventh grade life science teacher, is a long-time resident of La Canada. For the past nine years she has taught life science and physical science at Sierra Vista Middle School in Covina. Prior to that Christine worked as a respiratory therapist at Huntington Memorial Hospital. Christine earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of California, Riverside. Her volunteer work has included serving in the medical clinic at the Union Station Homeless Shelter in Pasadena.

This will be **Stacy Yung's** first year as a full-time teacher, serving as an eighth grade social science teacher at LCHS 7/8. Stacy was awarded a bachelor's degree in social science and a master's degree in teaching at the University of California, Irvine. Stacy has experience in the educational field as a teacher's aide, in-classroom tutor and after-school tutor. For the past two years she has served as a judge in the Orange County National History Day.

Tiffany Zupan is the new PE and adapted PE teacher at Palm Crest Elementary. This will also be her first year of teaching. She holds two bachelor's degrees in athletic training and adapted physical education, both from California State University, Long Beach. For the past ten years Tiffany has worked as a lifeguard and pool manager for Los Angeles County. She has also given swim lessons at the YMCA and acted as assistant diving coach at Pasadena City College. Tiffany has volunteered in several physical education venues with Long Beach Unified School District and California State University, Long Beach.

- Danielle Newcom, Human Resources Assistant



Website Shortcuts

<http://www.lcusd.net>

[/lchs - High School](#)

[/lchs78 - Jr. High](#)

[/lce - La Canada Elem](#)

[/pcr - Palm Crest Elem](#)

[/pcy - Paradise Canyon](#)

[/cal - District Calendar](#)

[/classlink - teachers
classlink websites](#)

[/govboard - board of Ed](#)

[/news - Newsletter](#)

[/sarc - School Account-
ability Report Cards](#)

[/SpecialEd - Spe-
cial Education](#)

[/teachers - HS teachers](#)



Superintendent

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A third concept offered up by the legislators, however, is to institute a weighted funding formula which would be based on need or demographics or student learning profiles and would fund districts at different rates. In effect, this would more firmly entrench and institutionalize our current complex mechanism of revenue limit plus specialized grants that favors low performing schools. Weighted funding, as generally described by the legislators in attendance at the conference, is not a proposal that I support.

So, as our state fiscal situation remains turbulent, LCUSD continues to try to stay the course. By utilizing our strong reserves, transferring special fund dollars, maintaining lease income, adding new parcel tax dollars, relying on strong additional funding from the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation and implementing a series of multi-year cost reduction strategies, La Cañada Unified School District is working creatively, aggressively and proactively to weather the storm.

And, as our outstanding API, SAT and Advanced Placement results indicate, our students continue to achieve at exceptionally high rates. As much as possible, we are attempting to preserve the core strength of our academic, artistic and extracurricular programs despite the ongoing and escalating cuts from the state.



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New Multi-Purpose Room at PCY

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