



La Cañada Unified

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Message from the Superintendent

by James Stratton, Superintendent



LC Newsline



State of the Schools

As we enter into a new year and a new decade, it seems appropriate to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges that characterize the La Cañada Unified School District.

Unlike many other districts, we submitted to the county office of education a first interim operating budget that was balanced for this year and the subsequent two years. Given the devastating ongoing cuts from Sacramento, we were able to do this only by reducing staff at the classified, certificated and confidential/supervisory levels.

No major programs, however, were eliminated. We continue to maintain Class Size Reduction in grades K-3 and in 9th grade math and English; to offer a drama, music and art program at each elementary school; to provide counselors at each elementary school and to provide six counselors (with student case loads significantly lower than the state average) plus a designated college counselor at grades 7-12. In addition, no athletic teams were cut. Our robust middle and secondary school arts program remains intact with offerings in drama, dance, vocal music, instrumental music and the visual arts. Students continue to be able to select classes from a wide variety of core, honors, Advanced Placement and Regional Occupational Program offerings. We continue to offer services and support for various special needs students.

And, within this rich curriculum, our students are achieving at record-setting levels. By now, just about everyone has heard that LCUSD ranked second in the state this year in the Academic Performance Index listings and that La Cañada High School was named by U.S. News and World Report as one of the Top 100 schools in the nation.

But in addition to these well publicized honors is a wide variety of other distinctions. Six of our students were named as National AP Scholars, meaning that they received a 4 or 5 score (out of 5) on at least eight Advanced Placement tests. Fourteen seniors have been honored as National Merit Scholar finalists, 158 seniors will be Golden State Merit Seal recipients, five students were selected for the all-state honor band and eight students were chosen for all-state honor choir. The grade point average for all 2008-09 varsity athletic teams was 3.43, with

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The Newsboard

By Jeanne Broberg, President



The President's Report

For the first President's report of the year it is important to put on record the accomplishments of La Canada Unified School District in 2009.

In the 40 years my family has lived in La Canada, I have never seen such a banner year for our School District as 2009 has been. Thank you for supporting us in passing a parcel tax, the first ever, to bring the schools \$911,000 a year for five years.

During this year to remember we have used the ribbon cutting scissors four times. Two new large assembly/multipurpose buildings, one at Palm Crest and one at Paradise Canyon, stand as witnesses of the support of the community through bond dollars. With strong support from the City and user groups we have a new restroom facility on the high school girls' softball field. Also, thanks to the City and School District working together, we have the high school tennis courts refurbished and another added making 6 new courts for students and community.

While Jet Propulsion Lab is the top employer in La Canada, La Canada Unified is the second highest. LCUSD's product is well rounded, educated students. In 2009 our students ranked second in the State of California on the Academic Performance Index scores.

Also, La Canada High School, as ranked by US News & World Report for 2009, is 80th among public high schools in the U.S., 15th among all public high schools in California, and 9th among all public high schools in Southern California. We are an 'open admissions' public high school, meaning that we, of course, take all students in our boundaries. We are 1st among all "open admissions' public high schools in Southern California!

It is said that principals are pals. That describes the relationship of our 2009-2010 principals with students, parents and community. Dr. Jackie Luzak, in her second year as 7/8 principal, is a strong curriculum leader. Both La Canada Elementary under the leadership of Principal Elissa De Angelo and Palm Crest with Principal Anais Wenn have led their schools in qualifying to apply as a California Distinguished School. Under the leadership of Principal Donna Robinson Paradise Canyon Elementary already claims this honor.

Beginning in July 2009, our new high school principal, Audra Pittman, has taken the ball, actually the many balls of a high school principal, and run, run, run with them. You see her everywhere. She could not step into leadership of the high school so well, so quickly, if she were not backed up by our very strong assistant principals Kevin Buchanan and Joanne Davidson.



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/gate>

LCUSD Bond
Oversite Committee

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

LCUSD Schools Recognized

California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) has recognized La Canada High, La Canada Elementary, Palm Crest Elementary, and Paradise Canyon Elementary for their outstanding success in raising student academic achievement by naming them 2009 California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll Schools. After reviewing the student academic achievement data for every public school in California, CBEE identifies schools that stand above the rest in bringing students to grade level proficiency and making significant progress toward closing the achievement gaps among all students. There are two categories of schools on the Honor Roll. Star schools (395) are those with significant populations of socio-economically disadvantaged students that have shown significant improvement in grade level proficiency and achievement gap reduction over four years. The other group, known as Scholar Schools (909), to which we belong, are showing significant academic achievement levels, but do not have a significant socio-economically challenged population. Through participation in CBEE, California businesses recognize schools for engaging in "best practices" and attaining consistently high student academic achievement. More information about CBEE and the 2009 Honor Roll Schools can be found at www.cbee.org.

-- Elissa DeAngelo, PCR Principal

We shine in arts as well as sports. What could equal the 2008 LCHS all school musical *Man of La Mancha*? Yet 2009's *Crazy for You* did just that.

At Student of the Quarter Breakfasts sponsored by the PTSA, LCHS teachers honor students who have added to the positive climate in their classrooms. In 2009 parents and students filled the cafeteria enjoying breakfast while teachers quickly introduced these team player students before everyone rushed off to class, home or work.

The year 2009 also brought sidewalks to La Canada Blvd. After at least 50 years of attempts, the City earned a grant through the Safe Routes to Schools program. The street is safer and the neighborhood enhanced.

During our 2009 Station Fire, La Canada High School welcomed the Red Cross in hosting evacuated Station Fire families on our campus.

As 2009 illustrates, our challenges are great, and so is our school district. On to 2010!



4th Grade STAR Changes

The State Budget Act of 2009 eliminated approximately \$6.5 million from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program for the 2009-2010 school year. One of the key eliminations for the STAR Program was the fourth grade writing test, only one component of the overall California Standards Test (CST) for English-Language Arts (ELA). This assessment was formerly given in March. The fourth grade ELA multiple-choice portions of the STAR, which include word analysis and vocabulary development, reading comprehension, literary response and analysis, written conventions and writing strategies, will continue to be administered in May. The elimination of the writing task will have no effect on students' achievement of proficiency because the CST for ELA in grade four will be scaled and equated on the basis of the multiple-choice questions only.

The writing portion has also been eliminated for fourth grade students who take the California Modified Assessment (CMA).

It is important to note that the CST for Writing and the CMA for Writing will continue to be administered in grade seven. The administration of those tests in grade seven will be on Tuesday, March 2, 2010.

For more information about the STAR Program or to see sample released test items, please go to <http://starsamplequestions.org>.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Aurther, Director of Assessment



GATE After School Enrichment Program Expanded

The GATE After School Enrichment Program begins this month and continues through May. Identified gifted students in fourth grade and any fifth or sixth graders were eligible to apply. Applications were accepted in mid-January. There are 376 students enrolled from all three elementary schools. Classes take place at Palm Crest Elementary School on Wednesday or Thursday afternoons from 3:30 to 4:30. These enrichment opportunities, which extend beyond the traditional curriculum, have been expanded from 11 topics last year to 16 topics being offered this year. The sessions this year include:

Human Figure Drawing	French for Fun
Imagine Mars Project	Marine Biology
Civil War Comes Alive	Cartooning
Stand Up! Speak Out!	Money for Life
Cars and Magazines	Practical Chinese
Create a Commercial	Wildlife Biology
Acting Workshop	WordPlay
Crime Scene Investigation	Website Design

Most sessions are conducted by community volunteers willing to share their expertise with students. LCUSD is very grateful for their time and energy to make this enrichment program possible.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Consolidated Programs

Construction Update

The LCHS Building “A” modernization project began this past summer. It is a fifteen month project that has been broken down into four phases. We have just completed our second phase and will begin phase three the first week of February. In the first two phases we have added two new classrooms as well as a new laboratory classroom. Additionally we have modernized the Administration area, the nurse’s office, two existing science labs and eight classrooms. When completed, classrooms will be equipped with new casework, A.V. equipment as well as upgraded flooring and ceilings. Phases three and four will modernize the remaining science labs and classrooms in building “A”. 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 has been completed. The project consisted of connecting chiller piping from the 600 wing to the gym and enlarging the equipment in the air handler located on the second floor. The North gym now has air conditioning for the warm months.

- Mike Leininger, Assistant Superintendent

LCUSD District Spelling Bee



The 2010 LCUSD district spelling bee was held on January 28, 2010. The three elementary schools, plus La Canada Preparatory School, each conducted a school bee at the beginning of January, and sent their top three candidates to the district bee. This was the first year La Canada Prep was in competition with the LCUSD schools. Participating with a nearby district is the only way the private schools can have access to the countywide spelling competition. We were happy to host their students and they did a fine job.

There has been a change in the way the county office is conducting the bee in that we are not giving students as many words to study in advance as in past bees. Prior to this, students who were diligent at studying were better able to win the competitions. Since students do not have a large word bank to study in advance, we believe we will get students who are better at spelling. There is a huge correlation between avid reading and good spelling, since students who read a lot have more words in their visual vocabulary.

At the LCUSD bee, Palm Crest Elementary School won top honors by having the winner and the runner up. Dolores Oh, a PCR sixth grade student, was the winner and Nate Rowe, a PCR fifth grade student, was the runner up. It took us more than 12 rounds to find the winners. All the students did a tremendous job, spelling words such as “camouflage” and “rapsallion”. Dolores will go on to compete in the Los Angeles County Spelling Bee on March 19. La Canada students have traditionally placed very high or have won the county bees. We are proud of all our great spellers. Mrs. Anais Wenn, the Palm Crest principal, will be attending the county bee to see Dolores compete. Congratulations Dolores, Nate and Palm Crest!

- Donna Robinson, LCE Principal



District Updates Instructional Technology

Over Thanksgiving and Winter break, La Canada Unified School District deployed about 200 new computers and monitors around the district as part of the 2009-2011 computer refresh project. Every three years, according to the district's master plan for technology, the district attempts to refresh a large portion of its classroom and lab computers and retire the oldest computers which have reached the end of their useful lifespan (six or more years of service). The district now has over 1300 computers in use throughout its various classrooms, libraries, and computer labs. Because of the financial challenges facing the district in the current economic climate, the scope of this refresh cycle was much smaller than in years past.

The desktop computers in the highest use environments at each school - the main computer labs (the IRC at LCHS) - were replaced with new desktop computers. In the past, a new desktop computer for each classroom would also have been acquired as part of the refresh project. This time around, budgetary constraints demanded a creative approach to maximizing the limited resources available. Each district classroom received an LCD monitor instead of a new desktop computer. The older preexisting lab computers will be refurbished and redeployed into the classrooms at each school site, matched up with an old CRT monitor that was freed up by the purchase of the new LCD monitors. Instead of retiring the oldest computers, the district will continue to keep them in service, stretching out their use beyond six years. While this will undoubtedly increase the workload on the technology department to keep the technology functioning well beyond its intended lifespan, it was the best solution in light of the sacrifices that everyone is making under the current economic realities.

The district is extremely grateful for the generous support of the La Canada Flintridge Education Foundation and the various school PTAs that have funded in whole the entire refresh project so that no funds from the General Fund were taken for this project. PTAs and private donors have also provided numerous interactive whiteboard systems which have seen increased use by teachers throughout the district.

- Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology



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](#)

[/govboard - Board of Ed](#)

[/news - Newsletter](#)

[/sarc - School Accountability Report Cards](#)

[/SpecialEd - Special Education](#)

[/teachers - HS teachers](#)



LCHS Sports Update

This past season, the fall sports teams of La Canada High School have achieved much success. First year head varsity football coach Dan Yoder motivated his players to once again reach the top ranks of the Rio Hondo League. The varsity team made it to the playoffs for the first time in three years. Finishing second place in a tight Rio Hondo League, several members of the team received accolades for their stellar performances. Quarterback Rocky Moore was named Offensive Player of the Year in the Rio Hondo League and broke several school records. Josh Hanson, Jay Kolina, Brent Johnson, David Miller, and Matt Faber were names to the Rio Hondo League First Team. David Miller was also appointed for his offensive line pursuits to the Rio Hondo League Second Team, joining fellow Spartans Luke Sanborn and Stephen Hernandez. Wide receiver Josh Hanson was not only honored by Rio Hondo League, but he was also selected for the All Area Team by the Pasadena Star News.

Returning to the CIF Finals for a second year in a row, the LCHS girl's varsity volleyball team continued to dominate and demonstrate why the program has been tapped as the best public school volleyball program in the surrounding area. The team won a 7th consecutive Rio Hondo League title and enjoyed a 10-0 record in league. Senior Courtney McCutchan, who plans to attend Lehigh University in Pennsylvania on a full ride academic and academic scholarship, was selected as the All Area Player of the Year by the Glendale News Press. McCutchan was also named to the All Area First Teams by the Pasadena Star News and the Los Angeles Daily News. Senior Tara Rallis was named to the First Team All Area Teams by the Pasadena Star News, Los Angeles Daily News, and the Glendale News Press.

The boy's water polo team, under the direction of German Lopez, remained a force to be reckoned with in the Rio Hondo League. Bo Mattix and Jacke DePew were both named to the First Team All Area Team by the Pasadena Star News. Both athletes were also tapped for the highly competitive All CIF Team. Chris Louk, Aria Mauboubi and Mattix were also named to the Rio Hondo League First Team.

The pro tennis circuit may have the Williams sisters to emulate, but LCHS has the fabulous Antonoplis sisters. Senior Alex Antonoplis and her sister, junior Missy Antonoplis, were named to the First All Area Teams by the Pasadena Star News and the Glendale News Press. Varsity tennis head coach Will Moravec said, "It is a pleasure to work with these athletes. It was a great season."

The Spartans showed by their accomplishments and efforts this past season that they are beyond a doubt worthy of the Spartan legacy.

- Joanne Davidson, LCHS Assistant Principal



Superintendent

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21 of those teams in the state's top 25 scholastically and 14 of them in the top 5%. In addition, each of our four schools was recently named as a California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll school.

Dampening the good news related to our student achievement and our efficient management of our fiscal resources, however, is the 2010-11 Budget Proposal just announced by the Governor. On top of all the General Fund and special Categorical Fund cuts that we already built into our first interim budget comes the Governor's intention to slash another \$1.2 billion from school district Revenue Limits starting in 2010-11. The reduction equates to about \$201 per student. Coupled with this is a further \$24 per student cut stemming from a negative cost of living adjustment (-.38%). The combined annual additional hit to La Cañada Unified School District is about \$900,000.

If the Governor's proposal holds (and most educational consultants believe that it will), the balanced budget we just submitted to the county will obviously unravel and we will be forced to look for additional cuts. Among the strongest likelihoods will be to bump up K-3 and ninth grade class sizes (while still participating in an adjusted Class Size Reduction program and keeping averages under the grades 4-6 and grades 10-12 averages) and to consider ending grades 9-12 summer school beginning in June of 2011. These steps come nowhere close to bridging the gap caused by the Governor's latest reductions, but they are indicative of the deeper cuts we will need to make in future years.

Many districts have already abandoned their high school summer school programs. Such a move for LCUSD



La Cañada Unified School District

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would save about \$100,000 per year. In some districts which have ended summer school, non-profit support groups have stepped forward to provide fee-based classes similar to the original program. Hopefully such an arrangement could work here as well.

Clearly the Governor's Budget Proposal will cause us to look closely again at all aspects of the educational program. While we will continue to attempt to minimize impact on the classroom, these new challenges make that goal harder and harder to achieve. Additional severe reductions will occur in the near future. As always, supporting the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation and activities like its March 13 Gala helps us to better supplement our shrinking state resources.



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