



La Cañada Unified

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Message from the Superintendent

by James Stratton, Superintendent



Part of La Cañada Unified School District's success in effectively managing our resources comes from careful monitoring of the key political, economic and demographic issues that shape public education. The next few months will hopefully resolve many questions related to those issues.

A key marker on the road ahead will be the Governor's late spring announcement of adjustments to his proposed 2010-11 state budget. In mid-May the Department of Finance will release an update (known as the "May Revise") on the state's revenue outlook. Based on that information, the Governor will then review and adjust the specific funding reduction scenarios outlined in his January State-of-the-State Address. We will be looking especially closely at his comments on the revenue limit, which is the amount of funding per student that we are allocated.

We know already that our revenue limit will be adversely affected by a negative Cost of Living Adjustment (projected at $-.38\%$ in January) and by a deficit factor. On top of this, the Governor proposed additional cuts of between \$201 and \$250 per student for unified school districts like LCUSD. The May Revise should help us more clearly know which figure should be used for budgeting purposes. The difference for us – almost \$200,000 per year – is significant.

May should also give us a better picture of which targeted reductions are still on the table. Back in January, the Governor recommended specific cuts to school district central administration, to county offices of education and to early child care and education. The January budget also continued the practice (begun in 2001-02) of not reimbursing districts for mandated services like audits, testing, collective bargaining, health screenings, attendance reporting, etc. The Governor's revised budget will indicate which of these variables should still be included in our own local budget assumptions.

The Governor and legislature currently have granted districts a degree of flexibility in the use of special categorical funds like those attached to instructional materials, class size reduction, supplemental instruction and professional development. We are able to move those dollars into the General Fund and to use them according to law "for any educational purpose." Increased flexibility for grades K-3 class size reduction funds (i.e., the elimination of all penalties and all class size limits) has been requested by many educators, and the revised budget will reveal



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LC Newsline

Star Testing Begins in May

Students in grades 2-11 are required to participate in state-mandated Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) assessments in May. These assessments, which are the cornerstone of state and federal accountability, will take place from May 10 – 21. The STAR testing program consists of the California Standards Tests (CSTs), the California Modified Assessment (CMA), the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA) and the Standards-based Test in Spanish (STS). Although not officially part of the STAR Program, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) multiple choice items will also be given to juniors at the same time.

The different kinds of required STAR assessments, the number of different subject areas to be tested and the importance of these assessments for the school district are almost overwhelming. All students in grades 2-11 take CST English/language arts and all students in grades 2-9 take a CST math standards test. A CST science test will be administered to students in grades 5, 8 and 10. The CST history-social science assessment is given to students in grades 8, 10 and 11. High school students will also take an end-of-course CST in math, science and social science test in grades 9-11 if enrolled in those classes. The STS is administered to Spanish-speaking English learners in grades 2-7 enrolled the U.S. for one year or less. Eleventh graders may also complete the EAP multiple-choice questions in English and mathematics.

Students with disabilities, who are unable to take the CSTs, even with accommodations, will be given either the CMA or the CAPA. The CMA has been expanded from elementary grades to grade 10 this year in some subject areas. The CAPA is available to students in grades 2 - 11. The CMA and CAPA assessments were designed for students with special needs and the appropriate test for each student is determined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team meeting and documented.

Parents and schools will receive individual reports of the students' STAR test results at the end of the summer. The test results will be sent home and will show the student's performance on each test and in each subject area.

The STAR test results are the most significant factor in creating the base Academic Performance Index (API) score upon which the overall district's growth is figured. The STAR scores are also used as part of determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the federal accountability system. It is essential that at least 95% of all students must take these tests to meet the state and federal accountability guidelines.

As always, it is important that all our students do their best on these tests. History tells us that "test fatigue" is prevalent in the 11th grade and especially those students should be reminded of the importance of doing well. Juniors should understand that college admissions officers consider the results as a strong indicator of school quality. Doing well on these assessments is one of the most important factors in maintaining the high ranking of La Canada High School in the state and nation.

Please reschedule any regular dentist or doctor appointments to a time other than the testing dates. Make sure your students are on time for class and have had a good night's rest and a solid breakfast prior to each day of testing. Emphasize that all students should do their best, but also help students to be relaxed and positive.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment



California Healthy Kids Survey

Every two years, each school district in the state of California is required to give students the California Healthy Kids Survey as a condition of receiving specific federal and state monies. The completed survey provides health risk and resilience information to schools, districts, and communities. In late May, students in LCUSD grades 5, 7, 9, and 11 will be asked to complete the survey. There are three versions of the survey: elementary school (grade 5), middle school (grade 7) and high school (grades 9 and 11).

The survey asks students questions regarding lifetime use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and inhalants. It also asks questions regarding harassment and bullying at school, carrying weapons on campus, and perceived school safety. There are also questions about physical activity, diet, and body image; health-related out-of-school activities; and individual strengths and assets.

You may examine the actual survey on the LCUSD web site at <http://www.lcusd.net/chks> or ask to see a copy from your child's school principal.

The survey is voluntary and anonymous. Parents have the right to request that their child not participate. Students who participate have the right to answer only the questions they want to answer. The overall results are used to provide guidance, programs and resources to meet the needs of LCUSD students beyond academics.

If a district does not administer the survey, the state and federal governments have the right to take away money funded under Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (Title IV) and Tobacco Use and Prevention Education (TUPE). La Cañada Unified School District received approximately \$18,000 from these sources.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment



Special Education Conference on Collaboration

The Foothill Special Education Local Planning Agency (SELPA) Community Advisory Committee is sponsoring a conference called "Parent/Professional Collaboration" which will be held on Saturday May 15th from 8:00 AM until noon at La Canada High School (4463 Oak Grove Drive, La Canada, CA 91011.) The Foothill SELPA is comprised of special education students and their families from Burbank, Glendale and La Canada Unified School Districts.

A wide range of topics to be covered, including autism, behavior management, transition to the world of work, and parenting skills. A special focus of this year's conference will be informing parents of changes in special education related to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004.

This year's keynote speaker is Dr. Michael Escalante, Superintendent of the Glendale Unified School District. There will also be an Exhibitor Fair with many local agencies and resources represented. All parents and teachers are encouraged to attend, especially those involved in special education. Registration will cost \$5.00, which includes all handouts, morning coffee and door prizes. The fee will be refunded at check-in.

For more information, call the Foothill SELPA office at (818) 246-5378 or go to <http://www.foothillselpa.org>.

- Tamara Jackson, Director of Special Education



Making the Move to 7/8

Many things will change for students when they make the transition from Elementary School to LCHS 7/8. One monumental difference will be the shift from having one teacher all day to having at least five teachers. Incoming 7th graders will also face the challenge of navigating between classes and organizing materials for every subject, grappling with magnified academic expectations, wearing uniforms for P.E., learning how to open their lockers and experience unstructured time at break and lunch. This time of transition evokes a wide variety of emotions, behaviors and concerns for both students and their parents.

To prepare for this period of transition, the LCHS 7/8 staff has put several supports into place. On Thursday, April 15, at 7:00 p.m. in the HS auditorium, LCHS 7/8 will host the 7th grade parent orientation. Dr. Luzak, 7/8 Principal, and Ms. Dalbeck and Mrs. Brascia, 7/8 counselors, will discuss middle school basics, academics, extra-curricular activities and school programs. A question and answer period will follow the formal presentation.

With the move to 7/8, students will encounter more difficult classes, increased homework and a rigorous set of academic standards. Teachers will expect students to take charge of learning and become responsible for their choices. To facilitate a successful academic transition, LCHS 7/8 counselors will visit the elementary schools and speak to the students about academic expectations, 7th grade course offerings and class registration. Counselors will visit PCR on April 19, LCE on April 20 and PCY on April 21.

Before the transition to 7/8, it is important for parents to be informed. In May, Dr. Luzak will attend a PTA meeting at each elementary school to address parent questions and concerns.

During the summer, incoming 7th graders will be invited to attend a student-only school orientation. At that time, students will meet the administrators, counselors, support staff and their classmates, tour the school, have the opportunity to purchase P.E. clothes and receive student I.D. cards. The orientation will take place in the LCHS auditorium on Wednesday, August 25, from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

The transition to LCHS 7/8 can be made easier with your help. Begin now by talking with your child about 7/8 and the positive aspects of attending middle school. Take time to familiarize yourself with the school website, accompany your child on campus tours, read the student handbook and review the rules and requirements. Know your child's interests and encourage him/her to get involved in middle school. We are all here to ensure that every child has a positive 7/8 experience.

- Dr. Jackie Luzak, LCHS 7/8 Principal



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](#)



PCR Recognized As California Distinguished School

In early November, Palm Crest Elementary School received an invitation to apply for the California Distinguished School Award. As part of the application, PCR needed to describe two signature practices which had been implemented for 3-4 years and have helped to increase student achievement. The Every Student Succeeds Plan (ESS) and the use of technology in the curriculum were the two practices selected by the staff. They took this opportunity to reflect on these practices and analyze data to support the positive impact on student learning.

The writing team worked hard to put a draft together in a short time and actively solicited feedback and suggestions from the district support staff as well as parents and other community members. The written portion of the application was submitted in early December and successfully passed the first stage of the process in late January. The school was contacted in late February by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) for a validation visit to complete the process. The validation team was on PCR's campus on Monday, March 15 and had a wonderful time visiting all the classrooms and conducting interviews with staff, students and parents. They were impressed with what they observed and heard and found the experience very rewarding. More than twenty parent volunteers helped out with the logistics of this visit and met with the visiting team for an interview. The students and staff welcomed the visitors and were eager to show them the different programs and activities described in the two practices.

On April 15, 2010 principal Anais Wenn received a congratulatory phone call from State Superintendent O'Connell recognizing Palm Crest as a California Distinguished School. Mrs. Wenn will be attending the 2010 Distinguished School Awards Ceremony in June at the Disneyland Hotel. Congratulations to Palm Crest Elementary School staff, students, parents and the community!

- Anais Wenn, PCR Principal



PCR Sends 6th Grader to State Spelling Bee

January 28, 2010 was a very exciting day for Palm Crest's 6th grader, Deborah Oh. She won first place in La Canada's District Spelling Bee. She was thrilled to have the opportunity to compete at the Los Angeles County Spelling Bee on March 19th. Surrounded by her immediate family, her English teacher, Mrs. Healey and her principal, Mrs. Wenn, Deborah competed against 29 fellow champions from many school districts and private schools and finished second in the county spelling bee. She received a trophy and a \$500 savings bond.

As a top finisher, Deborah will be moving on to the state competition which will take place on May 15th at Sonoma State University. She has been working hard to prepare for this competition by "looking at lists and studying all the time." Deborah added that her father suggested "reading cookbooks to learn the spelling of foreign dishes." She certainly sets high expectations for herself and strives to meet them. Palm Crest is very proud of her and wishes her good luck at the state competition.

- Anais Wenn, PCR Principal



LCHS Winter Athletic Teams Dominate

The winter sports season was fantastic. Coach Barry Ritson led his talented varsity soccer team to an undefeated season, earning a Rio Hondo League title. Mr. Ritson was named All Area Coach of the Year by the Pasadena Star News. Matthew Cannata was named Player of the Year. Cameron Meeker, Diego Ruano, Ryan Upton, and goal keeper Jack Hale were all named to Pasadena Star News All Area Roster.

Not to be outshone by the Boy's Soccer Team, the Girl's Soccer Team also earned accolades. Junior Megan Siepler was named to the All Area First Team, while Talia Saleh and Haley Austin were named to the All Area second team. "I enjoyed the season immensely," said long time LCHS Soccer Coach Louie Billowitz. "The girls were united and enjoyed themselves. We had a great season."

Another highlight of the winter season was the performance of the wrestling team under coach Gavin Williams. Thirteen wrestlers qualified for CIF. David Wyatt and Austin Devine were named to the All Area Team. Wyatt was actually one match away from qualifying for Masters. The overall team record for the season was 17-7. "We have a young team that was led by very mature and strong seniors," said Williams. Williams' goal is to continue to build the program. LCHS alum and assistant coach, Connor Ulf has organized a wrestling club program. "The Wrestling Program will be strong for years to come," contends Williams.

Speaking of "strong programs", our Boy's Varsity Basketball Team continues to be one of the premier sports programs in the Pasadena area. Coached by one of the most successful high school basketball coaches in the state of California, the boys enjoyed another Rio Hondo League title. Junior Mike McGlashan was named to the All CIF First Team and was named Co-Most Valuable Player, along with Senior Omar Rady, in the very competitive Rio Hondo League. Mason Holle, Jeff Grigg, Rocky Moore, Matt Faber, and Dario CiVon were also named to the Rio Hondo League Team. The team earned a 23-6 record and played in the CIF Quarter Finals.

Varsity Basketball player Courtney McCutchan was named Co-Most Valuable Player in the Rio Hondo League and was also named to the Pasadena Star News All Area Team. Tia Chen was awarded for her exceptional athletic performance as well. Tia was also named Co-MVP of the Rio Hondo League and named to the All Area Team. The team played phenomenal ball this year and won 10-0 in Rio Hondo League play. "The girls did an amazing job this season," said long time Head Coach Tamar Hill. Shannon Denney broke the single game scoring record with 42 points in one game. Tia Chen ended her high school career as the 3rd leading scorer in school history with 953 career points.

Girl's Water Polo players Riley Kessler and Mary Reardon end their high school careers by being named to the San Gabriel All Area Team as well as the Rio Hondo All League Team First Team. Rita Neat was also named to the San Gabriel All Area Team.

As we wrap up another winter season here at La Canada High School, it is safe to say that our winter athletes and coaches certainly prove one thing to be true: Rain or shine, the LCHS athletic teams dominate the competition!

- Joanne Davidson, LCHS Assistant Principal



LCE Named California Distinguished School

At La Canada Elementary School, one of the highlights of the school year has been receipt of the news that we were eligible to submit an application for the 2010 Elementary Distinguished School Program. The purpose of the California School Recognition Program is to identify and honor those schools that have demonstrated educational excellence for all students and have made progress in narrowing the achievement gap. In order to apply for the Distinguished School Award, schools must meet a variety of eligibility criteria, including state and federal accountability measures as specified on the Adequate Yearly Progress Report (AYP) and on the Academic Performance Index Report (API). Schools must also meet one of three eligibility criteria for “Closing the Achievement Gap.”

Out of approximately 6000 elementary schools in California, approximately 600 schools were eligible to apply. The written application, which was due to the CDE by December 18, 2009, included an overview of our school and a detailed description of two of our most successful signature practices: The Development and Implementation of a Core-Standards-based Curriculum and The Every Student Succeeds Plan. As stated in the narrative, both of these practices have been developed over a period years as a result of the vision, effort, and teamwork of administrators, teachers, parents, and community members to provide an excellent education for all students.

In January 2010, we were notified that our application was received and that we had qualified for a site visit by a team of educators who would validate the information in the application. On March 9th, after several weeks of anticipation and preparation, the Site Validation Team arrived at LCE. All members of our staff, members of the PTA and the Site Council, School Board members, District Administrators, Educational Foundation members, and members of our community greeted the Team warmly and enthusiastically. To validate the information, the Team visited every classroom. They interviewed the Principal, the Leadership Team, parent and student representatives, and members of our teaching and support staff. In addition, they reviewed assessment materials, content standards, curriculum materials, pacing guides, the school plan, plans for professional development, student work samples, and data files.

At the end of the day on March 9th, after all the planning and hard work, our school community came together to bring to light a truly remarkable picture of dedication and commitment to educational excellence for all our children.

On April 15th we received the call from state Superintendent Jack O’Connell informing us that we have been named a “California Distinguished School.”

- Elissa DeAngelo, LCE Principal



Elementary Open House

On Thursday, May 27th the three elementary schools will be hosting Open House between 6:30 and 8:00p.m. Students, parents and community members are invited to visit the classrooms and enjoy the display of student work. Bulletin boards, display boards, science experiments, art or technology projects are used to showcase individual student work or whole class activities. Often, student portfolios or booklets are prepared to highlight themes or units studied during the year. Students may act as guides or hosts to escort visitors through the displays, and in some cases, visitors may be asked to participate in an activity or respond to a questionnaire. At Open House, all students are valued and appreciated for the work they have completed under the guidance and instruction of our outstanding staff. Please join us on this special evening.

- Elissa DeAngelo, LCE Principal



Every 15 Minutes

On May 25 and May 26, 2010, La Canada High school will conduct an anti-drunk driving program known as Every 15 Minutes. This program is designed to discourage our students from drinking and driving and will challenge them to think about consequences and making choices that best serve them. The dates of this year's program were intentionally scheduled as a precursor to the upcoming Junior-Senior Prom, which will take place on Saturday, May 29th.

This program was developed in order to address the fact that approximately every fifteen minutes someone dies in an alcoholic-related traffic accident nationwide. On May 25th, the entire 9-12 student body and faculty will view a staged vehicle collision on Oak Grove Drive. Selected students will participate in the drunk driving collision. One of the students will actually be arrested for drunk driving after being given a field sobriety test, and will be taken to court later in the day where a simulated court case will be heard in front of a Superior Court Judge. Selected students will also be escorted out of their classrooms by the "Grim Reaper". An obituary will be read to the classes of "deceased students" by a Los Angeles County Sheriff Deputy. The eighteen selected students will participate in various activities to broaden their knowledge of the negative impact of drunk driving, including attending the court appearance of their fellow classmate who was arrested earlier in the day for drunk driving. The students will also attend an overnight retreat where they will hear personal accounts of people who have been victims of drunk drivers or who have been arrested for drunk driving. On May 26th, the entire 9-12 student body will come together for a debriefing assembly in the north gym. Students will hear speeches and testimonies as well as watch a visual recording of the previous day's events.

La Canada High School was the recipient of a \$10,000 grant given by the California Highway Patrol to help finance this event. The La Canada High School PTSA is also financially supporting this impactful program.

We also appreciate the time and effort contributed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's and Fire Departments, California Highway Patrol, and the City of La Canada Flintridge.

- Joanne Davidson, LCHS Assistant Principal



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)

Superintendent

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whether the Governor has been listening and agreeing.

A recent report by the state controller concludes that California has collected more in taxes than expected. For the current fiscal year, in fact, the revenue stream exceeds predictions by \$2.3 billion or about 4%. The Governor's May decision making on many of the issues above will undoubtedly be influenced by this revised tax revenue projection.

In addition to voting on the Governor's budget, state legislators in the coming months will also be considering a variety of bills that could significantly impact K-12 education. We will be watching the progress of legislation that could push forward the cut-off birthday requirement for kindergarten and first grade admission, could curtail districts' ability to contract for classified services, could reconfigure funding formulas for state construction dollars and could alter state open enrollment guidelines.

The Governor himself plans to bundle a series of labor reform proposals into a single bill and to submit that legislation to the state assembly and senate. These reforms would affect teacher seniority, lower substitute costs for laid-off teachers, extend timelines for layoff notices, extend the time period for probationary status for new teachers, eliminate the administrative hearing requirement associated with layoffs, eliminate the requirement to grant full pay to teachers on suspension or mandated leave and eliminate any time limits for evidence presented in teacher dismissal hearings before the Commission on Professional Competence. Needless to say, these proposals are dramatic game changers and will be closely tracked as they make their way through Sacramento.



La Cañada Unified School District

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Locally we will also be carefully monitoring enrollment patterns over spring and summer and will be adjusting our budget projections accordingly. We continue to graduate large senior classes and to admit much smaller kindergarten classes. The senior class of 2010, for example, is just under 400 whereas next year's kindergarten class is currently at 170. To help address the resultant budget shortfall and to keep all three elementary schools open and fully functional, we will continue to follow Education Code provisions and to enroll (where space is available) the children of parents who work within the boundaries of LCUSD.

Many of the above political and economic issues are beyond our immediate control, but we do have direct influence on local revenue streams like the funds raised by the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation. That is why we are so grateful for the annual contribution of over a million dollars to the district's General Fund and why it is so important for everyone to support the Foundation through memberships and donations. The health of the district relies on this support.



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