



La Cañada Unified

March 2006

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Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



The power of the arts in an educational program is immense. One highly visible benefit is that the development of artistic talents contributes to academic achievement. Students who participate in the arts tend to score higher on standardized tests and to do better in school. Beyond that influence, however, is the way in which artistic training stimulates brain development.

In his book *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, Eric Jensen argues that “the arts enhance the process of learning. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning.”

To take just one of Jensen’s examples, making music activates and orchestrates neural firing patterns which connect multiple brain sites in the frontal, parietal and temporal lobes, as well as in the cerebellum. Those networked cognitive systems stimulate spatial reasoning, creativity and generalized mathematical skills. Hearing selected sounds, playing an instrument and singing help students make auditory distinctions, which in turn positively influence listening and reading. Music performance also strengthens fine motor skills and memory as well as enhances the body’s immune and stress-response systems.

In addition, there is specific positive influence on classroom environment. The arts reach students not stimulated by traditional schooling. Students in the arts develop strong interpersonal bonds. Art students learn to become self-directed and independent. Art provides challenges and a sense of discovery. Art connects students to the real world of theater, museums, and concerts. Schools with rich arts programs have less truancies, tardies, dropouts, fights and cliques.

But beyond this link to brain development and academic advancement, the arts are important in and of themselves, as separate major disciplines equal to all other subject areas. The arts encourage students to explore the human condition and the creative spirit. Art-producing students imagine new ideas and learn alternative thinking. They appreciate multiple perspectives, different cultures and opposing points of view.

Arts education in the La Cañada Unified School District is comprehensive, deep and rigorous. Students from kindergarten to grade 12 have access to visual art, music and drama. In fact, LCUSD is one of only a few districts that have a sequential elementary arts program. Thanks to funding from the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation, each of our elementary schools has a specialist in visual art and in music. Additionally, a drama specialist rotates between the three schools, spending approximately 12 weeks at each site to provide students with a wide range of theatre activities, including a full 6th grade play production.

The curriculum for elementary art, music and drama is sequential; the students learn specific skills each year that build on one another and become increasingly

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LC Newsline



Emphasis on Student Success

When the school board finalized its Core Values, it was agreed that the first two of six core values would be exclusively student-oriented while the balance would pertain to all members of the education community. Consistent with its student-centered focus, the Board has restored student recognition as a permanent feature of its Board meetings.

The success of our students in academic, artistic, athletic and other pursuits is inspiring and infectious. Since December, the Board has had the privilege of honoring the following groups of students:

- The twenty-seven member CIF-champion boys varsity water polo team, which long-time coach, Larry Naeve, referred to as “perhaps my best team ever”
- The gold and bronze award winners from the PTA-sponsored Reflections contest for literature, musical composition, visual arts and photography entries from all District sites
- The six high school students who were named to the 2006 California All-State Honor Band (a record for number of honorees from LCHS when coupled with the seven middle school students named to the All-State Junior High Honor Band)
- The team of five ninth grade students who won the 2005 JPL Annual Invention Challenge – “Strike A Match Contest” - in competition against teams with older students, resulting in the second consecutive victory for LCHS.

In addition, we look forward to recognizing the twelve National Merit Scholarship Finalists from the high school at the March 21, 2006 Board meeting. Other deserving students will be selected for recognition at future Board meetings.

One of our goals is to expand district-wide student recognition programs. Teachers, coaches, site administrators and parent/community support groups are intimately involved in promoting and celebrating student achievement. District leadership provides the support that school sites need to emphasize and ensure student achievement.

Accordingly, our school sites continue to identify new areas of participation for students including the new elementary school spelling bee, the reconstituted academic decathlon at the high school, the new speech course to be offered at



Helpful Links from the LCUSD website:

Governing Board Meeting Schedule

<http://www.lcusd.net/SchoolBoard/index.htm>

LCUSD Master Calendar:

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

LCUSD GATE Advisory Council

<http://www.lcusd.net/District/councils.htm>

LCUSD Bond Oversight Committee

<http://www.lcusdnet/facilities.htm>

Servathon 2006

Each spring parents, students, alumni and community members join forces to work for the improvement of the LCHS campus during the annual Servathon. Coordinated and supported by the PTSA, this wonderful activity harnesses the energies and talents of supporters of the school to complete a wide variety of service projects on the campus—from landscaping that includes the placement of boulders for sitting to major makeovers of gardens to the scrubbing of walls and a general clean up of our campus. Interested parties should join us at the LCHS cafeteria on the morning of March 18th at 7:00AM dressed to work. Volunteers will be assigned to one or more of the many projects set for the day. And if the reward of making a noticeable and meaningful difference at the school is not enough, there will also be food and door prizes as well to help rally all of those who participate in this great community event. We hope to see you there!

What: LCHS Servathon

Where: Meet at LCHS Cafeteria @ 8AM for assignments

When: Saturday, March 18th

the middle school, and a host of extra-curricular opportunities throughout the District.

Of course, student success takes many forms. While the District's academic, artistic and athletic programs produce many individual and team honors, there are less visible examples of student success that occur daily.

For me, one of the most moving traditions of student recognition takes place at the middle school graduation ceremony when the site presents its "humanitarian" awards. Leslie Baldwin, a middle school teacher, announces the winners with a passionate introduction that typically recounts genuine acts of kindness, a willingness to stand up for the "little guy", and helping others less fortunate.

Student recognition is a powerful initiative that the District uses to reinforce its commitment to "foster a learning environment dedicated to academic achievement, character growth and the overall health, safety and well-being of each child". [Governing Board Core Value #1]

Workshops

The District has completed workshops or study sessions that offer an opportunity for the Board and the public to discuss important issues in a public forum. Previous workshops have centered on the District's construction process and status, class-size information along with cost estimates related to possible class-size reduction for grades 4-12, and the District's staff evaluation process. The Board has set the dates for the next workshops:

- March 21 – Student Assessment
- May 2 – "Best Practice" Standards and Measurement
- June 6 – Substance Abuse Update
- June 27 – Special Education Update

All meetings will be held at the new District Office at Foothill and Cornishon. Times will be announced shortly.



CA Healthy Kids Survey

In March, the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) will be administered to students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11. The survey assesses all major areas of health-related risk behavior and resilience. There is an emphasis on preventing substance use and violence and on promoting positive youth development and well-being. The CHKS is a data collection tool sponsored by the California Department of Education. It is required to be administered biennially in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as a condition of receiving federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (Title IV) and state Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) program funding.

There are three different surveys designed for the students' appropriate developmental level: elementary, middle school and high school. Students will take the survey in their classroom. The surveys assess those health risks specifically relating to alcohol, violence, tobacco and other drug use, school violence and physical health. The last section of the survey assesses developmental assets (protective factors) which are crucial to students' healthy development and academic success.

Each parent of a student in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 received a letter describing the survey. Parents have the right to request that their child not participate and students who participate have the right to answer only the questions they want to answer. The survey is voluntary and anonymous. Anyone interested in reading the actual questions of the CHKS can find the surveys at www.lcusd.net/district/educ_services.htm.

Another requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act mandates that schools conduct an anonymous staff survey. For the first time this year, the staff at each school site will also voluntarily participate by taking the School Climate Survey. The staff survey will be taken on-line. This survey includes key questions related to academic standards, staff-student relationships, the learning environment in the school and learning supports and barriers. It will allow staff to communicate their perceptions and concerns about such topics as student risk behaviors, efforts to reduce risk factors, staff and student safety and parental involvement.

Districts are not being assessed based on these results. The results will be reported for the district as a whole, by school type (elementary or high school) and by individual school. State law also requires that the results be publicly reported. Schools will use the data to help promote student well-being and positive development as well as reduce student involvement in risk behaviors. The information will assist staff in heightening awareness of the linkages between health, resilience and academic achievement.



For More Info

CHKS Survey Questions can be found at:

http://www.lcusd.net/district/educ_services.html



Bond Projects

The district has sold general obligation bonds to improve our physical facilities and to take advantage of the state facilities matching program that allows districts to construct new buildings or modernize existing buildings with state matching funds.

The 1995 Bond for \$15,000,000.00 (\$16,802,326.04 includes interest) allowed us to do new seismic safety updating; repairs and renovation on aging and outdated electrical, heating and plumbing system; do asbestos abatement; do roof repair; replace heating and A/C systems; and add upgrade relocatables to accommodate new technology for class size reduction at the elementary schools. This elementary school work totaled \$9,829,739.04. At LCHS, we were also able to do seismic retrofit; construct the new south gym; build the new student drop off/pickup area; build the new 7/8 building with 15 new classrooms and new restrooms for student and faculty; provide technology infrastructure; and renovate and modernize bio-life science and geology labs. This work totaled \$6,972,587.36.

The 1999 Bond A, for \$2,500,000 (\$3,652,435.00 includes interest and State matching funds plus interest) gave use the opportunity to build the La Canada High School Information Resource Center. Bond B, which was an additional \$3,500,000.00 (\$9,000,619.00 includes interest and state matching funds plus interest) allowed modernization of elementary classrooms and elementary safety projects – playground, fire alarms and handrails. This totaled \$5,793,892.00. At the high school we were able to do modernization in the 600 Building with case-work, doors, floor coverings, painting, plumbing, fire protection, electrical, fire alarm system, asbestos removal. We also did modernization of science labs and restrooms. The total for this work was \$3,206,727.00.



Technology Training

Teachers and staff around the district are taking advantage of multiple opportunities to get further training in integrating technology into the teaching and learning process in the month of March. Recently four LCUSD teachers (Julie Perdisat, Sun Choe, Laura Wheeler, and Steve Zimmerman) were chosen to participate in the California Technology Assistance Project's Technology Integration Academy. These teachers are spending 5 days during the month of March experiencing intensive hands-on applications training and learning how to employ project-based/curricular activities, and instructional strategies for addressing and assessing thinking skills using technology in a standards-based classroom. We look forward to having these teachers share their new knowledge and skills with the rest of the district staff after they complete the academy.

Several teachers and administrators are also attending the Computer Using Educators conference in Palm Springs. This annual conference brings together K-12 educators from around the state of California to share best practices, demonstrate new tools and techniques, and collaborate on how to best employ technology in the classroom.

At the end of March, the Tech Ed International Conference and Tech Exposition comes to the Pasadena Conference Center (March 27-29). This annual conference showcases educational technology for grades K-20. LCUSD has been able to secure free conference registration (normally costing \$265 per attendee) for all of the district teachers and administrators to attend the conference exhibits and sessions. Teachers and administrators who register will be able to attend after the school day is over since the conference extends into the late afternoon. District staff can obtain their free registration by signing up at <http://www.techedevents.org/lcusd>.

The Second Interim Budget Report

California school districts are required by Education Code section 42130 to submit two reports to the governing board each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) following the Board's initial adoption of the original budget (required by June 30). This article discusses the second interim report required by this statute. The second interim report reflects the actual budget activity from July 1, 2005 through January 31, 2006. The remainder of the year, February 1 through June 30, 2006, still reflects estimates and projections for the last portion of our fiscal year.

Once the report is completed, it is submitted to the Los Angeles County Office of Education for review and verification of the certification status. There are three levels of certification. A Positive Certification means that the District can meet its current financial obligations for the current and upcoming two school years. A Qualified Certification means that a district may not be able to meet its financial obligations in the current or the upcoming two school years. A Negative Certification means that a district is not currently able to meet its financial obligations in the current year. La Canada Unified remains positively certified (the highest rating) in our current second interim report.

The New User Friendly Budget Book

In our continuing efforts to communicate with our key stakeholders and community, at the February 28 Board Meeting, the Business/Fiscal Services Division presented a new, user friendly budget booklet. This booklet was developed in conjunction with a subcommittee of our Board to try to more fully explain and disclose the complexities found within the many layers of a school district budget. While this first edition will continue to be refined and "fine tuned" in subsequent editions, the first edition is also available on our District website to provide interested persons additional information regarding the financial situation of LCUSD.

Basis of Operation: Surplus or Deficit

The Second Interim report indicates that District continues to expend more than it takes in in revenues. The difference between revenue and expenses is reported to be (\$1,417,930) for 2005-06, which is \$40,120 greater than reported in the first interim report. The deficit compared to the total revenue expressed as a percentage is approximately 4%. That is, our expenditures are approximately 4% greater than our revenues. Although current year expenditures are greater than current year revenue, the district does end the year with a positive balance. This is due to several factors including some one time funds that have been carried over from previous years. We can also note that the ending balance for the year exceeds the 3% reserve for economic uncertainty required by law.

The Continuing Budget Cycle

Having completed the second interim report, the District will continue our operations for the last portion of the year while simultaneously beginning the drafts and preparations for the 2006-07 budget that our Board must approve by June 30 as previously noted above.

The public will be presented with the opportunity to comment on the new budget at an upcoming Board meeting this Spring before the budget is approved, and you are welcome to join us on that evening. Please check the June Board meeting agenda later this year to see which Board meeting the budget will be adopted by the Board.

Part of the 2006-07 budget development process involves processing information received from the State in the Governor's January Budget Proposal. This information and data is updated and presented again in the

Governor's May Revise Budget. During this cycle, we continue to incorporate the budget forecasts as the initial stages of creating the new budget. Upcoming newsletter articles will address these developments later this Spring.

Going Forward

As we begin the period of finalizing the 2005-06 fiscal year, and begin the process of building the 2006-07 budget, we must keep a few things in mind. First off, there are large infrastructure needs that remained unresolved. Currently, the District is paying down on a loan agreement with the City of La Canada Flintridge of approximately \$400,000 for sewers at Palm Crest Elementary. Additional sewer fees related to Foothills Intermediate School (FIS) remained unresolved at this time.

It is also important to note, that in 2008 LCUSD will have to comply with the edicts of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in regards to Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) and their concomitant liabilities. This is commonly referred to as "GASB 45," and requires school districts to identify the liability that is incurred by supplying post employment benefits to employees. As LCUSD does provide post employment benefits, we will have to address this issue. How we in LCUSD will financially address this liability other than our current "pay as you go" method will be both a policy and financial matter that will need to be analyzed and discussed.

Summation

In conclusion, while we continue to have a positively certified budget, we must continue to exercise caution. The District's reserve level has continued to diminish over the past several years as a result of reduced funding due to the State's financial condition, declining enrollment issues, and increasing costs in several key budgetary areas.



7/8 Investigates "Best Practices" in Math Curriculum

On March 2, 2006 the math teachers, counselors, and principal of LCHS 7/8 hosted a luncheon and were joined by their counterparts from South Pasadena and Palos Verdes middle schools to review and discuss "best practices" in their respective math programs. Some of the guiding questions for discussion were:

- What are the current issues or trends with regard to the middle school math curriculum at your site?
- What instruments or assessments are used or recommended for use by your site to measure a student's readiness for acceleration through the math curriculum?
- What are your school's course offerings and how are they designed to meet the needs of your advanced, proficient, struggling, or special needs students?
- How does your school articulate with the high schools your students attend?

The discussion was extremely informative and lively. The teams shared information on course offerings, textbook selections, learning materials, and assessments used by each site. The needs, resources and offerings among all three of the districts were varied, but common concerns and challenges surfaced during the two hour discussion. The LCHS 7/8 Team will continue to meet to distill from the information current practices in 7/8 that represent "best practices" and to refine and create other curricular policies, procedures and protocols to better serve the needs of our students.



March 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<u>1.4(4)</u> PCR-Science Exploration Week LCE Community Read-In PCR-Science Fair, 6-8:00 pm Fine Arts Month 3/1-3/31	<u>2.4(4)</u> CPC Dir. Mtg.: VHHS 7:00 am BTSA Support Provider Mtg. - DO 3:30 pm PCR-Science Exploration Week PCR-Round Table Pizza Night	<u>3.5(5)</u> PCR-Science Exploration Week LCE Parent Tour, 10:00 am 9-12 Comedy Sportz: Aud. 7:30 pm PTA Council Meeting - Citibank, 9:15 am PCR Parent Tour, 9:00 am	4
5	<u>6.5(5)</u> Multi Cultural Week: LCHS ***GATE Advisory Mtg. - DO 12:35 pm*** Gr. 3 GATE Testing All Sites 3/6-3/10/05 PCY-Spring Support Drive, 3/6- 3/17/06 20 Day Notices Due - Grs. 7-12 Parents Check Grades On-line	<u>7.6(6)</u> 7/8 PTA Mtg. - LCHS-IRC 9:15 am PTA/PTSA Founders Day Celebration: LCHS Aud. 6:30 pm STAR CST Writing, Grs. 4-7 All Sites Multi Cultural Week: LCHS Instructional Council Mtg. -IRC 3:00 pm Elementary Staff Mtg.	<u>8.16(6)</u> K-6 Tech Leaders Mtg. (See Description for Specific Dates) 3:30-5 pm Multi Cultural Week: LCHS Booster Mtg. - LCHS IRC 6:30 am Childcare RT - DO 8:30 am STAR CST Writing Make-Ups, Grs. 4-7 All Sites PCR-PTA Mtg. - 8:20 am	<u>9.7(7)</u> LCE-See's Candy Sales Begins 3/9-3/23 Scoliosis Recheck Joint Use Committee Meeting - City Hall LCFED Mtg. - LCE 7:15 pm Multi Cultural Week: LCHS 8-12 Pep Squad Parent Info Night: LCHS No. Gym 6-7:00 pm 7-12 Tech Leaders Meeting: LCHS IRC 3-4:30 pm	<u>10.4(4)</u> PCY Parent Tour 9:00 am Multi Cultural Week: LCHS 9-12 Spring Sports Assembly 7/8 Assembly	<u>11.1(1)</u> 9-12 Backwards Dance - 8:30-11:30 pm
<u>12.1(1)</u> LCJBSA Opening & Picture Day: LCHS 1:00 am-4:00 pm	<u>13.2(2)</u> 7-12 Choral Concert: LCHS Aud. 7:00 pm LCE-Art Museum in Cafe 3/13- 3/17	<u>14.3(3)</u> 7/8 Instrumental: LCHS Aud. 7:30 pm PCY-PTA Mtg. - Library 7:00 pm 7-12 School Site Council: LCHS Rm. 305 3:00 pm	<u>15.2(2)</u> LCHS Incoming 9th Gr. Parent Orientation: Aud. 7:00 pm LCE PTA Mtg. - Cafe 9:15 am	<u>16.6(6)</u> CPC Parenting Forum 2: CC- YMCA, 7:00-9:00 pm IPG Mtg. - 8:30-11:00 am Curriculum Council Mtg. - 12:30-3:30 pm LCHS Sr. Panoramia Picture: SSR LCE-Round Table Pizza Night District Wide DELAC Mtg. - DO Conf. Rm. 7:00-8:30 pm	<u>17.4(4)</u> PCR Spirit Rally/Eat Lunch w/Grparent or Sp. Visitor w/Spirit Rally & Lunch w/special visitor St. Patrick's Day 9-12 PTSA Mtg. -LCHS Cafe Lounge @ 9:15 am	<u>18.2(2)</u> 7-12 Servathon: LCHS 8:00 am - 12:00 pm Y-Camp Sign Up Day, 9 am - 1:00 pm
19	<u>20.2(2)</u> LCHS Chamber Singers @ LA Masters Choral Festival PCR 5th Gr. Valley Forge/Blue Sky Meadow Field Trip 3/20- 3/24	<u>21.5(5)</u> ****Governing Board Mtg. - Rd. Building 4490 Cornishon Ave. @ 7:00 pm**** Elem. Site Council Mtg. (SSC): Library 3:15 pm CAHSEE Make-Ups, Grs. 10, 11 & 12: LCHS 9-12 Instrumental Music 7:30 pm Instructional Council Mtg. -IRC 3:00 pm	<u>22.3(3)</u> PCY Pizza Night - Grs. 4th & Sp. Ed. 7-12 OPEN HOUSE - 7:00-9:00 pm CAHSEE Make-Ups, Grs. 10, 11 & 12: LCHS	<u>23.2(2)</u> LCE-See's Candy Orders Due Incoming 7th Gr. Parent Mtg. - LCHS Aud. - 7-9:00 pm	<u>24.2(2)</u> LCHS Band Festival: LCHS Aud. All Day PCY-Spirit Rally 10:15 am	<u>25.1(1)</u> La Canada Flintridge Foundation Gala Event- Biltmore Hotel, 6:00 pm
26	<u>27.2(2)</u> PCR Multicultural Week 3/27- 3/31 PCY Valley Forge Trip 3/27- 3/31	<u>28.2(2)</u> 8th Gr. Drama Production: LCHS Aud. 7-9:00 pm LCHS Staff Mtg.	<u>29.3(3)</u> 8th Gr. Drama Production: LCHS Aud. 7-9:00 pm Fine Arts Specialist Mtg. - DO 3:30 pm DAC Mtg. - DO 1:00 pm	<u>30.1(1)</u> Health Service Staff Mtg. 2- 4:00 pm	<u>31.2(2)</u> ****7/8 Basketball Bowl**** END OF 3RD QUARTER	

April 2006

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2		<u>3 (2)</u> CEC Child Care Open @ Elem. Sites w/Pre-regist. 4/3-4/7 **SPRING BREAK-NO SCHOOL**	<u>4 (1)</u> **SPRING BREAK-NO SCHOOL**	<u>5 (1)</u> **SPRING BREAK-NO SCHOOL**	<u>6 (2)</u> CPC Dir. Mtg.:VHHS 7:00 am **SPRING BREAK-NO SCHOOL**	<u>7 (1)</u> **SPRING BREAK-NO SCHOOL**	<u>8 (1)</u> ACT Testing
9	<u>10</u>	<u>11 (2)</u> 7/8 PTA Mtg. - LCHS-IRC 9:15 am 7-12 School Site Council:LCHS Rm. 305 3:00 pm	<u>12 (5)</u> K-6 Tech Leaders Mtg:(See Description for Specific Dates) 3:30-5 pm Booster Mtg. - LCHS IRC 6:30 am ***Drama Event: LCHS Aud. 5:00 pm*** LCE-See's Candy Pick-up:Cafe 1:30-6:00 pm PCR-PTA Mtg. - 8:20 am	<u>13 (4)</u> LCFED Mtg:LCE 7:15 pm 7-12 Tech Leaders Meeting:LCHS IRC 3-4:30 pm PCR-Round Table Pizza Night 7-12 Report Cards Distributed	<u>14 (2)</u> PCR Parent Tour 9:00 am ***Drama Event: LCHS Aud. 5:00 pm*** ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Drama Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Drama Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm	<u>15 (2)</u> Solo Ensemble Instrumental 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Drama Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm ***Event: LCHS Aud. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm	
16	<u>17 (1)</u> ***GATE Advisory Mtg. - DO 12:35 pm***	<u>18 (3)</u> ****Govn. Board Mtg. - Rd. Building 4490 Cornishon Ave. @ 7:00 pm*** Instructional Council Mtg.-IRC 3:00 pm Elementary Staff Mtgs.	<u>19 (2)</u> PCY-Round Table Pizza Night, , Grs. K & 6 ***9-12 Comedy Sportz: Aud. 7:30 pm***	<u>20 (2)</u> 7-12 Institute/Internship Showcase & LCF Chamber Mixer Time TBD LCE-Round Table Pizza Night	<u>21 (4)</u> PCR - Volunteer Lunch PCY Volunteer Brunch 9:30 am PCY Spirit Rally/Lunch w/Child Day 10:15 am 21st Century Institute Showcases: 3:15-5:00 pm	<u>22 (1)</u> Pep Squad Tryouts- N. Gym 9 am - 5:00 pm	

Elementary Field Trips

La Cañada Unified continues to provide elementary schools with inspiring field trips that expand students' learning and stimulate critical thinking skills. In addition to the many daily excursions that students enjoy, such as trips to Descanso Gardens, JPL, and the California missions, elementary students engage in a variety of exhilarating overnight trips.

Fourth grade students have the opportunity to participate in the Pilgrim Overnight Trip at Dana Point in Orange County. In preparation for this trip students read "Two Years before the Mast" by Henry Dana, Jr., where they learn about the adventures and sacrifices of sailor life during the 19th century. Although the ship is docked during the trip, students simulate daily life as a sailor – they help cook their own meals, learn sailing techniques, and stand guard against pirates! After the trip students make learning connections through oral and written projects that are aligned with the California social studies standards.

Fifth grade students have the opportunity to travel to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. This trip helps students understand a seminal period in world history – the American Revolution. Students study the Declaration of Independence, discuss democracy with Thomas Jefferson, and ponder the challenges of leadership with George Washington. These are stirring experiences for students, teachers and the principals, as they examine and reflect on the critical events that gave birth to a free nation.

At the 6th grade, all students have the opportunity to travel to the Pali Mountain outdoor science camp in Lake Arrowhead. This trip provides a preview of the year to come in 6th grade science. The students experiment with freshwater biology, use a compass to navigate direction, build structures strong enough to withstand high intensity earthquakes, and build self-confidence and peer bonding with the ropes course.

Staff and students have a wonderful time during these trips and they make academic and social connections that last a lifetime. Our elementary schools look forward to having your children participate in the future.

Superintendent

(continued from page 1)

more complex. A current “snapshot” of K-6 visual art at this point in the year, for example, reveals primary students working on overlapping, shading and color manipulation to create a sense of depth in pastel and watercolor landscapes. Fourth through sixth grade students are working on perspective and still-life.

Enriching this elementary curriculum is the Assistance League of Flintridge program, which provides before school instrumental music classes at each site and a central after school drama class. Also supporting elementary art is a PTA art docent program, in which parent volunteers come into the classroom and share information about specific artists and art movements.

The elementary arts program provides solid background and preparation for the extensive offerings available at grades 7-12. La Cañada High School offers courses in beginning art; advanced art; art portfolio; beginning and advanced ceramics; photography; media arts; dance; beginning, intermediate and advanced drama; stagecraft; band; orchestra; jazz band; men’s chorus; women’s ensemble; concert choir; and chamber singers.

There is a school literary magazine and newspaper, and yearbook classes in both the middle and high school give students additional opportunities to practice creative writing talents. Eleven different staff members teach art-related classes, and the school continually looks at new elective possibilities in the arts. As programs like vocal and instrumental music have expanded, the district has provided additional staffing units to support the growth.

Arts curriculum in grades 7-12 is sequential and carefully aligned with state frameworks. Our teachers are practicing artists, musicians and actors and have been well trained in their fields. Art faculty members also frequently attend specialty workshops and conferences, where they are trained in instructional strategies and in the evaluation of student work.

Student participation in the arts is extensive. Almost three quarters of our 7-12 students are enrolled in an arts-related class. Approximately 385 7-12 students participate in instrumental



La Cañada Unified School District

Cabinet

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Dr. William Loose

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music; 400 in choral music; 360 in visual art and 260 in drama. Approximately 200 students take media arts classes and another 60 students are enrolled in dance.

Student achievement is equally impressive. This year alone six LCHS students were named to the all-state honor band. Both the band and orchestra regularly receive top ratings in competitions as do our various choral groups. Vocal and instrumental groups are invited to play in very select venues, and students in our media arts program have received awards at student film festivals and have continued their studies at cinema schools around the country.

The district continues to search for additional ways to expand arts opportunities for students. Next year, for example, we are planning a special high school speakers program where students will have the opportunity to hear directly from community members who work in film, television, music production, art galleries, etc. The goal is for students to learn about real world applications and opportunities directly from practicing professionals.

If you would like to volunteer one morning next year to share your own experiences in the world of “art work,” please contact my office at 818-952-8387. Please remember also that another excellent way to support the arts (as well as technology, class size reduction and other aspects of the educational program) is to attend the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation annual spring gala on March 25, 2006, at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel.

LC Newsline Editor:
Enoch Kwok



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