



# La Cañada Unified

June 2007

Volume 02 - Issue 06

## Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



Even though the pace of events is much less hectic, things continue to happen during the summer months in the La Cañada Unified School District. From summer school to professional seminars, both students and staff will be busy with special activities.

La Canada High's summer school program runs from June 25 to July 31. Offered to students in grades 9 – 12, the schedule of classes includes English, algebra, geometry, world history, American history and government/economics. These courses are for students who need to make up credit as well as for those who want to complete a graduation course requirement during the summer and free up their next year's schedule for more electives. Summer school classes are taught by our own faculty members and follow the same state academic standards as our year-long classes. Students complete 4 hours and 40 minutes of class time each day.

Students in grades 1 – 8 have the opportunity to attend enrichment classes as part of a summer program sponsored by the Assistance League of Flintridge. For many years, the Assistance League has been providing this wonderful opportunity for the students of La Cañada Flintridge. Classes for grades 1 – 6 will be held at La Cañada Elementary School and classes for grades 7 – 8 will be held at La Cañada High School, primarily in the 700 Building. There are three periods of classes; periods in grades 1 – 6 are 65 minutes each, and in grades 7 – 8 they are 80 minutes each.

ALF Summer School classes are for enrichment only and not part of the district's regular course of study. The topic selections are as extensive as they are exciting. Elementary students can choose classes in art, band, cartooning, computers, cooking, architecture, Harry Potter books, poetry, math, printmaking, strategy games, Spanish and many other topics. Our middle school students can pursue interests in computers, engineering, construction design, ceramics, drawing, jazz band, improvisational performance, painting, textile design, Spanish, creative writing, math, frisbee golf and a variety of recreational sports.

La Cañada High School students also participate in camps and competitions related to athletics and extracurricular activities. Band camp at Cal Poly Pomona is a tradition for our marching band members during the final week of August. Our girls' basketball, girls' volleyball and boys' water polo teams will be participating in tournaments in places like San Diego, Hawaii, Lake Arrowhead and Hungary. Summer leagues in other sports also occupy student time in July and August.

(continued on last page)



LC Newsl ine



## School Board Plans for the Future

The La Cañada Unified School Board has recently identified its three top-priority strategic goals.

These are goals that require considerable time and effort from District staff to research and identify options with implementation steps, appropriate benchmarks and accountability.

The Board's first strategic goal, which has the highest priority, is to continue to research, plan, and implement comprehensive incremental class size reduction in grades 4-12.

As background, initial fact-finding revealed that peer high schools had considerably smaller classes than LCHS, even after our reinstatement of the State-subsidized ninth-grade class size reduction program effective September 2006.

The Board responded by making class size reduction an immediate priority and budgeted an additional 2.6 full-time teachers to reduce class size starting in September 2007 as follows:

- Algebra II/ Trigonometry reduced to 25 students per classroom
- All science classes (9-12) reduced to 30 students per classroom
- Core 7th grade classes reduced to 32 students per classroom

This is the first time in recent memory that the District has reduced class size without the benefit of a State subsidy. The budget continues to be closely monitored to determine if additional grades or subjects can be similarly addressed in the near term.

Over the next six to nine months, District staff will provide the following information for Board consideration related to this strategic goal:

- results of more extensive fact finding to include private school data, peer districts' funding sources, and classroom availability
- a proposed multi-year plan to reduce class size with prioritized, phased-in reductions at specific grade levels and/or subject areas
- related costs, funding options, and timelines for alternative scenarios to implement the class size reduction proposal.

The Board's second strategic goal is to identify the key attributes of the District's educational experience – the District "brand" – and effectively communicate this message to targeted constituents with consistency.



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>

## *Student Recognitions*

Congratulations to the following LCUSD students for their achievements:

**Tucker Heaton - Student representative to the Governing Board for 2006-07**

### PARADISE CANYON

#### Los Angeles Times Plan-It Earth

|                 |                  |   |
|-----------------|------------------|---|
| <b>Art:</b>     | <b>2nd place</b> | <b>Aubri Thompson</b>                       |
|                 | <b>3rd place</b> | <b>Kara Lankey</b>                          |
| <b>Writing:</b> | <b>1st place</b> | <b>Rebecca Villapando<br/>(Grand Prize)</b> |
|                 | <b>2nd place</b> | <b>Maddy Fisher</b>                         |
|                 | <b>3rd place</b> | <b>Anjali Jain</b>                          |

### LCCHS

#### Color Guard

- **First Place - Winter Guard International Championship in Orange County Apr. 28-29**

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Carly Anderson</b>     | <b>Rebeccay Grosch</b>  |
| <b>Mackinzi Anderson</b>  | <b>Sara Keys</b>        |
| <b>Elizabeth Connelly</b> | <b>Abbidie Merchant</b> |
| <b>Erica Fredhom</b>      | <b>Sylvia Stoker</b>    |
| <b>Lynn Friedman</b>      |                         |

#### Boys Varsity Swim and Diving

- **CIF Southern Section Division II Boys Swimming Champions**

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Dustin Bell</b>        | <b>Julian Lawrence</b> |
| <b>Devon Borisoff</b>     | <b>Jerrold Lee</b>     |
| <b>Alex Campbell</b>      | <b>Wes Lewis</b>       |
| <b>Peter Chi</b>          | <b>Brandon Liu</b>     |
| <b>John Geyer</b>         | <b>Chris Myers</b>     |
| <b>Christian Lawrence</b> | <b>Mark Nakanisshi</b> |

It is the Board's view that La Cañada's educational experience is richer, more robust, and more compelling than the usual "elite public school district" soundbite.

Staff has proposed a timeline, which includes stakeholder surveys and workshops to identify and reach consensus of key components of the District's "marketing message".

Targeted constituents would include families with pre-school children, private school families, realtors, the community-at-large, and college admissions officers.

An environment of declining enrollment makes this goal especially timely and relevant.

The Board's third strategic goal is focused on our secondary educational program. The first phase will include a thorough review of our current delivery of services at the high school.

In providing recommendations, staff will consider research-based education advancements and the best practices of the nation's leading public and private secondary schools.

Additional factors to be considered include the effects on education of continuing globalization trends, accelerating technological innovations, and rapidly evolving career options.

This goal is in its earliest stages of development. More information regarding this goal will be forthcoming.

Collectively, these three strategic goals are indicative of the Board's desire and intent to continue to enhance the educational service for our students.



## LCHS Receives Six Year WASC Accreditation

Aside from the wonderful experience of supporting our students as they grow through another year of their development, we as a school community have worked hard to meet some large goals. One of the themes that permeated this year was the WASC self study. This major process, that heavily depended on the active participation of parents and students in addition to the staff, brought many more members of the school community into “the know” in terms of how and why things occur on our campus. The insights and experiences brought to the focus groups by all participants helped shape the document we presented to our visiting committee in March and was cited and referenced extensively in its report to the main office of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in Burlingame, which reviews both our self study as well as the visiting committee report in making the final determination of “term of accreditation”. We recently received this long awaited letter and are proud of all the people that worked to bring us to this point—a meaningful term of full 6 year accreditation! This is a major accomplishment of all involved and will serve to support our next six years of focusing on our students, their needs, their development and the shaping of our school to meet those goals. The action plans of our self-study focus on those priorities that were jointly identified by our constituents. Most of the structural changes on campus needed to achieve these action plans were actually created and well established during the self study process and are now a part of how we do business. Parents and families keep looking for the invitations to come and be part of the campus community, as we will continue to expand the depth and breadth of involvement for all in making LCHS an even better place for our students to develop.

- Dr. Damon Dragos, LCHS Principal



## Palm Crest Celebrates its 50th Anniversary

Thanks to the wealth of La Canada history on tap at the Lanterman House, resourceful Palm Crest parent Graham Stumpf made a discovery late in the 2005-2006 school year: Palm Crest opened its doors on October 9, 1956, making the current school year the 50th Anniversary of its opening! Palm Crest’s PTA immediately formed a 50th Anniversary Committee, co-chaired by Graham Stumpf and Kelly Wine, and a year-long schedule of festivities was held to celebrate this important milestone.

The celebration began with a Back-to-School BBQ and Birthday Celebration that served as a grand birthday party for the school. Live Fifties music was played by the band Chameleon, and food was served by the era’s authentic Tommy Burgers. Banners, balloons, and birthday cake festooned the Palm Crest playground as students, their families, current and former staff, and special guests sang “Happy Birthday” to the school. Many alumni, including Candace Dougherty from the first graduating class, former teachers and principals, including Don Hingst, and one of the school’s original builders, Bob Samuelson, shared stories about Palm Crest and enjoyed a display of newspaper articles and photos spanning the school’s fifty years.

A special logo was designed by several PCR parents for Palm Crest’s 50th Anniversary celebration, incorporating the date and the school’s panther mascot. In the winter, Palm Crest students and families were invited to attend a “Fifties Movie Night” in the school cafeteria, for a screening of the original 1959 version of “The Shaggy Dog.” In mid-May, the school held a “Fifties Day Costume Contest” and invited all students to come to school dressed in vintage fifties style. Each class selected a boy and girl winner, and these 50+ kids marched before a panel of judges during a Spirit Rally on the playground, with one boy and one girl selected as top winners.

How do you wrap up a year-long 50th Anniversary Celebration? With a Time Capsule, of course! At the last Spirit Rally of the year in June, each class is going to contribute items to a collection that will be sealed for the

next 25 years. In the school year 2031 – 2032 the time capsule will be opened so PCR students of the future can have a look at what life was like for the students of today. The goal is to open the special collection every 25 years, adding new items each cycle, and continuing a wonderful legacy that began in 1956.

- Anais Wenn, PCR Principal



## Summer ELD Testing

Just as summer begins for most students, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) testing window opens. The CELDT is a state-mandated examination administered annually to English language learners. It is the most important component to determine when a student can be considered fluent in English and exit the English Language Development Program. New enrollees who speak a language other than English in their home must also take the CELDT to determine their fluency in English. The test is required by the state and there are no opt out provisions. There are four components of this test: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students will also receive an overall score. It takes approximately two and one-half hours to complete. The assessment window is from July 1 to October 31, 2007.

For the convenience of students, testing sessions have been set up for July and August. In this way, students can take the test outside the regular school day. Students will receive a letter indicating they need to be tested. If students do not come to one of the summer testing sessions, they will miss class in the fall to complete the CELDT. The testing dates are as follows (grade level as of September 2007):

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Grade 2     | Monday, July 16th at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada Elementary School<br>OR Monday, August 27th at 8:30 a.m., La Cañada Elementary School  |
| Grades 3-5  | Tuesday, July 17th at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada Elementary School<br>OR Friday, August 24th at 8:30 a.m., La Cañada Elementary School |
| Grades 6-8  | Wednesday, July 18th at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada High School<br>OR August 27th at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada High School                   |
| Grades 9-12 | Thursday, July 19 at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada High School<br>OR Friday, August 24th at 1:00 p.m., La Cañada High School              |

Students are to come to only one testing session. They may come in July or August based on their family's plans and their availability. No reservations are required. Kindergarten and first graders only take the listening and speaking portions. The CELDT will be administered to them after school starts to maximize their comfort level due to their young age.

Preliminary scores are sent home to parents and communicated with staff when school starts. The official results arrive in the district approximately two months after testing.

Any questions regarding this assessment can be directed to Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment, Research and Consolidated Programs, at [ldarthur@lcsd.net](mailto:ldarthur@lcsd.net) or (818) 952-8391.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment, Research, and Consolidated Programs



## The 2007-08 LCUSD Budget

June is a very busy budget month for all California public school districts. Like all other districts, the LCUSD Governing Board must adopt a budget by June 30 before the new fiscal year begins (July 1 – June 30) while beginning the process to close out the current year. In many years, the school district must adopt a budget before the State legislature and Governor have passed and approved the State budget which includes the funding for education. Once the Governor has signed the State budget, the district must then revise and update our budget within 45 days to reflect any subsequent changes that may be based on the final version of the State budget.

In LCUSD, we do two readings of the budget at public Board meetings. The first presentation of the 2007-2008 budget was held on June 5. The second final reading and approval of the budget will be at the June 26 Board meeting. All members of the public are invited to this meeting at which a Public Hearing on the budget will be held before adoption by the Board.

All budgets are based on assumptions. The reason for this is that the budget is a fiscal forecast of many items related both to revenues and expenditures of an entire year into the future. On the revenue side of the equation, our primary source of funding is referred to as a revenue limit appropriation. The State provides the district with a sum of money for each day a student is in attendance as the basic foundation of the school district budget.

To help cover increasing costs due to inflation, the State also provides an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The COLA is provided to help the district cover increasing costs that include such things as utilities, insurance, and salary adjustments to help employees keep up with inflation. One of the difficult parts of making this assumption based on revenue is that the calculation for the COLA fluctuates during the course of the year. During the 2006-2007 budget cycle year, the estimates for the 2007-2008 COLA increase changed at least four times. The preliminary estimate for the 2007-2008 COLA made about one year ago was an increase of 4.34%. In the late fall, this projection was modified to 3.9%. In the early spring of 2007, the estimate was 4.04%, and the final expected revision was announced in mid-May of 4.53%. At first blush, one might think that those revisions would not have a material effect on the revenue projection, or since it is for the following year, would not be important at this time. However, both of those thoughts would be arrived at using faulty logic because the district is required to always provide a multi-year budget projection that covers the current and upcoming two years; and when multiplying the apparent “small” fluctuations in the COLA by millions of dollars, can result in significant variations in the expected amount of new revenue.

Regarding the assumptions for expenditures, when building a projected budget now (June 2007) for the entire next school year (ending 2008), it is assumed that all the programs will spend all of the funds that have been allotted to them (instructional, School Improvement, Maintenance, Salaries, Special Education, etc.). However, the reality is that with expenditures in excess of \$33 million



dollars, not every program expends every dollar allotted to it. The extent of the money not spent by the programs is not truly known until the district is nearing the end of the current year budget cycle and begins closing down expenditures and purchase orders and recapturing the unspent funds back into the budget. In the current year, the recapture expected at this time is approximately \$700,000 which initially looks like a large amount of money. However, compared to the \$33 million dollars of expenditures, represents a variance of 2.12%.

Another extremely important budget assumption and variable is the declining enrollment situation. Since we are funded on the students who attend school, when the number of students declines, the funding also declines. The State tries to help declining enrollment school districts that will be losing funds by allowing them to use the previous year's attendance figures rather than the current year's budget figures, using whichever calculation is more favorable to the district.

Yet again, another volatile feature comes into play at this juncture. Because of the decline, the expected budget increase is a set amount and will not change. But what happens if we do enroll more students and need to add staff back? How do you cover the increase in cost when you have no additional revenue to cover that increase?

The answer to that question is that a prudent district has an adequate reserve to cover the staffing increase cost. Fortunately, LCUSD is in this process. In the early spring, -6 teaching positions were removed from the staff due to the declining enrollment via a reduction-in-force layoff procedure. As of the writing of this article, that number has decreased from -6 to -3.33 because the District has added back teaching positions. Fortunately, this has also meant that all of the teachers involved in the layoff procedure have now been rehired through either additional positions added back, or through other staff attrition.

As this article has shown, building a multi-year, multi-million dollar public school budget can be a difficult forecasting issue due to many variables, three of which that have been highlighted in this article. The "shifting sands" of projected COLA revenues, the unexpended funds from the many programs, and trying to budget and deal with the constraints of a declining enrollment district make this in many ways a difficult projection to get perfect.

-William V. Loose, Deputy Superintendent



## Vandalism at the School Sites

Our schools in La Canada have open campuses and are fantastic community resources for use as playgrounds and by sports teams. On any given day, many families use the school fields and playgrounds and appreciate the wide open spaces. The down side of having the schools open to the public is that they are also open to vandals and pranksters. Over the course of the past couple school years, the list of damage to school sites is extensive:

- grass torn up by cars racing in circles on the fields
- potted plants overturned that the teachers leave outside their classroom doors
- bulletin board displays ripped down
- breakage of hooks for hanging students' backpacks
- damage to the Disaster Prep storage bins
- damage to the roof and equipment on the roof from people up there skateboarding
- trash strewn all over (often broken bottles)
- breakage to the outdoor water fountains and faucets
- graffiti at multiple sites

The elementary playgrounds have become a hangout for local teenagers at night because they are not visible from the street. They set off firecrackers, drink alcohol (judging by the bottles and cans with which they litter the place), and make lots of noise. The local neighbors have tried to phone the police, but by the time the police arrive, the perpetrators somehow vanish.

Skateboarders and other kids are inexplicably drawn to the roofs of the school buildings. This is both unsafe for the kids and does damage to the equipment up there. On many weekends, kids have been spotted up there and are sometimes quite belligerent when asked to get down.

All this damage is bad for the schools, bad for the students, bad for the neighborhood, and bad for the District. The school personnel have to spend time and effort cleaning up the mess and damage, and making reports to the police. The students are bewildered about why anyone would want to hurt the schools in which they take so much pride. The neighbors are distressed by the noise. The District has to spend money to make repairs or replace property at a time when the budget is already very tight. This is heartbreaking to those of us who work so hard to make this a great place to go to school.

Who are the people doing this and why? How can we stop them from doing this?

Should lots of District money be spent to hire a fulltime security guard? The District can't afford that kind of expense. Should vigilantes stake out the school to try to catch the vandals? That would be time consuming and possibly dangerous and who has time to volunteer for that anyway? Should we build a tall fence around the school? If they can get onto the roof then a tall fence would be easy to get over.

If you have any ideas about how to fix this problem, please email me at [mleininger@lcsd.net](mailto:mleininger@lcsd.net) or phone me at 818-952-8320.

- Mike Leininger, Assistant Superintendent



## STAR Test Changes

On May 1st, the 2nd through 6th grade students at the elementary schools were administered this year's California Standards Test also known as the STAR test. All three sites feel very positive that the students were appropriately prepared for the test and that they did their best work.

This year the state made changes to the format of the test for grades 2 and 3. In the past, most of the second grade test was read to the students by the teacher. This year, the students themselves were asked to read more parts of the test than they have in previous years.

In grade 3 a more drastic change to the format was made. The students were administered different versions of the test simultaneously. In past years, even though students had different versions within the same classroom, the starting and ending points were the same. This allowed the classroom teacher to read only one set of directions. This year, because versions had different starting and ending points, the test directions had to be read separately. To accommodate this change, the teachers grouped the students by test version within the classroom. There was some concern that hearing the two sets of directions may have been problematic for some students.

The state did provide early notice regarding the changes. For both grade levels, the classroom teachers report that students appeared to handle the changes well. However, the full impact on student results will not be known until August. In August, results of the test are sent to the school districts by the state.

- Ivette Ellis, LCE Principal

## Lemonade Stands and Backyard Slippers

Thank you to all the parents of LCUSD students for your strong support of the students' educational programs. All year long, you have been helping students with reports, projects, and tests. I think every parent actually breathes a sigh of relief when another school year is past. No more getting children up early enough to be ready for school. No more helping to find just the right type of poster board for the science project. No more helping your child study for the "big test." No more reminding your high school senior to fill out those college applications. No more rushing to drive your student to a play rehearsal or team practice. Hooray! School is out!

We work so hard during the school year. I want to make a plea for fun in the summer. Back in the fifties, summer was long, hot and enjoyable. I can remember playing Monopoly and card games all day. I can remember a tent that was made with blankets on my mother's old wire clothesline. We slept in that tent for a week, until my mother had to wash clothes and hang them out to dry. There were games of hide and seek played as the sun went down. We read books and rode our bikes to the library to get more books. I can remember loading up our red wagon with redeemable bottles and using the money for candy at the corner store. I know we don't have wire clotheslines anymore but you can put up your REI tents!

Although it is good to take your children on vacations, to send them to camp or summer school, please leave time for just relaxing too. Be sure your children have time to imagine things, to sit and talk and to lie on the grass and read. We have the whole school year to schedule play dates, games and lessons. And, save some time to have fun with the children yourselves. I suggest a walk at Descanso, a hot fudge sundae at Twohies or a visit to the library and Penguin's. Treat yourselves and your children to summer fun.

- Donna Robinson, PCY Principal

# Superintendent

(continued from page 1)

Just as our students are involved in summer learning and training, so too do many of our staff members participate in professional development during the summer. In addition to university classes to complete credentials or expand subject area expertise, teachers attend a variety of special training sessions. There are workshops for Advanced Placement teachers sponsored by the College Board and there are art and science workshops sponsored by local museums and universities. One of the most popular summer sessions for our teachers is the seminar on Korean History and Culture and the Korean American Experience, which is conducted at the Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles and which each year attracts several of our K-12 educators.

Along with summer classes, our high school will be humming with the sounds of construction this summer. Renovation and remodeling of the B-Building will continue throughout July and August and we hope to have the newly modernized classrooms ready for students in September. Similarly, we will be reroofing at La Cañada Elementary and Palm Crest Elementary and repaving at Lanterman Auditorium parking lot, which is across the street from the district office.

The district office itself will be open throughout the summer, with the exception of six Fridays from July 13 to August 17. During the summer, district office staff will be working on budgeting, staffing, technology upgrading, curriculum planning, state reporting, textbook purchase and receipt, test result processing and various other operational tasks. We will continue to update our website (lcsd.net) throughout the summer and invite staff and parents to check in periodically.

Best wishes to everyone for a relaxing and rejuvenating summer.



## La Cañada Unified School District

### Cabinet

**Superintendent:**  
James Stratton

**Deputy Superint.**  
Dr. William Loose

**Asst. Superint.**  
Mike Leininger

### Governing Board

**President**  
Scott Tracy

**Vice President**  
Virginia Dalbeck

**Clerk**  
Susan Boyd

**Member**  
Cindy Wilcox

**Member**  
Joel Peterson



# Tech LITEs for 07-08

The 2007-08 Tech LITEs (Leaders Integrating Technology in Education) have been chosen. These teachers will receive specialized training throughout the year and function as an on site technology coach/mentor/advocate for the staff at each school.

The 2007-08 Tech LITEs are:

LCE: Marie Evelyn

PCR: Debra Bedell-Au

PCY: Amy Sweetnam

7-8: Paul Kim

9-12: Tom Traeger

The TechLITEs will be trained in the use of laptops in various instructional settings, digital video editing and image processing, enhancing multimedia projects, and other emerging instructional technologies. They will be available on site to help teachers at each school learn how to use technology effectively in the classroom and hold regular "office hours" for drop in or appointment based consultations.

- Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology



**LC Newline Editor:**  
Enoch Kwok



La Cañada Unified  
School District  
4490 Cornishon Ave.  
La Cañada, CA 91011  
818.952.8300