



# La Cañada Unified

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Volume 4 - Issue 1



LC Newslines

## Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



At a recent meeting of Los Angeles County school district superintendents, I was asked to support a resolution addressing the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, the resolution specifically calls for the redirection of federal funding to low-performing schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students.

The language of the resolution “urges the United States Congress to fundamentally reframe ESEA to more carefully target the relatively small federal investment in K-12 education to schools serving larger concentrations of low-income and minority children.” While I believe it is vitally important to support disadvantaged at-risk students, I also believe that all schools and all students should receive an equal allotment of federal dollars. So, even though I agree with other elements of the resolution (e.g., a focused continuum of services to replace the current 93 disconnected programs of ESEA and a school accountability system based on multiple measures), I was unable to support the full document as currently proposed.

The resolution’s provision for disparate funding recalls the 2006 California Senate Bill 1133, which “settled” the dispute over the nearly \$3 billion that Governor Schwarzenegger appropriated from Proposition 98 funding. As you may remember, SB 1113 (the Torlakson Bill) ensured that \$300 million in 2007-08 and \$450 million each year thereafter for six years would be repaid to schools to make up for the excess dollars taken from the 2003-05 revenue limit bases beyond what was warranted by better than projected state revenues at that time. The problem for La Cañada Unified, however, was that all of this money went to only about 500 to 600 public schools ranked in the lowest two deciles of the state’s Academic Performance Index (API). La Cañada Unified schools, ranked in the top decile, received nothing.

High-performing schools frequently come out on the short end of funding legislation. A teacher recruitment and student support block grant at about \$25 per pupil was also approved two years ago for schools ranked in the bottom three deciles of the API. The last time that high performing districts like LCUSD were financially rewarded for their academic achievements was through the short-lived Governor’s Performance Award (GPA) program instituted by former Governor Gray Davis.

La Cañada Unified, along with all California public schools, has also come out on the short end of the recent budget “compromise” signed by the Governor on September 23. Rather than addressing the fundamental causes of California’s structural deficit and its uncertain and inadequate annual funding of education, the “get out of town” budget relies on borrowing, deferrals and accounting stratagems to maintain a flat spending level from 2007-08 to 2008-09. The borrowing



(continued on last page)



## Bond Projects

In March of 2004, the citizens of La Canada voted to support the educational system of their town by passing a \$25,000,000 bond to be used for badly needed facilities renovation at all of the campuses.

One of the legal requirements of the proposition was the listing of all of the projects that the district would like to complete with the approved funds. While this wish list was fairly extensive, most people did not believe many of those projects would ever actually be completed due to the projected increase in costs over the life of the bond funds. In addition, some projects were added to the list just in case one or more of the higher priorities could not be completed for unforeseen reasons.

More than half of the projects listed were at the high school due to the fact that the majority of the funds from previous bonds had been used at the elementary schools. The majority of the facilities at the high school were 40 plus years old and definitely in need of renovation and modernization.

We have actually benefited from the recent construction environment in that the costs for most of the projects completed so far have been at or below the original projections in spite of several years having lapsed. These projects have included:

- Removing the temporary walls of the inside pods at LCE and replacing them with solid soundproof walls
- Installing better security locks on doors and improving outdoor security lighting at all of the campuses
- Replacing cracked concrete pathway at PCR

At LCHS:

- Upgrading the fire alarm system
- Renovating and modernizing classrooms, science labs, band rooms and choral room (formerly the old library)
- Renovating the Social Science, Science and Math Resource Center (SSMRC) and the Language Arts Resource Center (LARC) for additional classrooms and offices
- Renovating eight bathrooms
- Upgrading the heating, ventilation and cooling systems
- Painting building exteriors
- Renovating student courtyard
- Installing a new elevator in the B building required by building code



Helpful Links from  
the LCUSD website:

Governing Board  
Meeting Schedule

[http://www.lcusd.net/  
SchoolBoard/index.htm](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](http://www.lcusd.net/District/councils.htm)

LCUSD Bond  
Oversite Committee

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

## *Electronic Lunch Payments*

Parents have been able to pre-pay for their children's lunches through a variety of means. Several years ago, the district deployed the web based Lunchbox pre-payment system to allow parents to check on their children's lunch account balances and add funds to those accounts using PayPal from the convenience of their own computer.

In recent months, there have been increasing reports of problems with the Paypal-Lunchbox electronic payment system, so this fall, under the recommendation of the Lunchbox vendor, the district has transitioned away from PayPal to a new company called eFunds to process the collection of electronic payments. Parents accessing the Lunchbox system (directly from a link on the district website's homepage) will now be directed to set up an eFunds account after they log in to the Lunchbox system and request to submit funds into their children's lunch accounts.

eFund allows payment through direct debit from a linked checking account (for a nominal fee of \$1 per transaction), or via a linked credit card (\$1 plus 1.99% per transaction). With an eFund account, parents can keep a shortcut in their web browser to eFund's website and directly check their child(ren)'s Lunchbox account balance(s) and add funds without having to enter through the district's website as was required before. For more detailed information such as what foods were ordered each day, or establishing daily spending limits, parents would need to log in to Lunchbox from the District's website.

For more information and for downloadable training documents, go to the district's Food Services web page at:

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

-Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology

While the cost of moving the district offices and building the multipurpose rooms at PCR and PCY have turned out to be significantly more than originally projected, the savings on the majority of the projects listed above have helped make it possible for us to complete the majority of the items listed in the bond.

We are in the process of building the multipurpose rooms at PCR and PCY and renovating the tennis courts at LCHS. With financial help from the city, we are also adding a sixth court so we will be able to host playoffs and eliminate the need to travel to other schools during these competitions.

We will begin renovating the last of the classrooms and the textbook room at the high school during the summer. In addition, specifications are being developed for the renovations of the North and South gyms.

The difference these projects have and will make on the environment in which all La Canada students are being taught is incredibly significant, especially at the high school and the citizens of our city should be proud of supporting the educational and personal development of all of our children.



## LCUSD Welcomes New Certificated Staff for 2008-09

La Canada Unified School District is pleased to welcome all of the newly hired certificated staff! The school year is off to a great start and we are very pleased to have these talented educators who are committed to student achievement and professional excellence as recent additions to our exceptional administrative and teaching staff. To help you get to know them a little better, brief biographies of each of our new certificated employees are printed below according to school site.

### La Cañada Elementary School

**Elissa De Angelo** isn't necessarily new to LCUSD. When we lost our previous LCE principal to a mid-year, transcontinental move, Elissa stepped in as the interim principal. And from a large group of strong candidates for the open position, we found we had the best person all along. She comes to us with 13 years of teaching experience in various grades at the elementary level and 6 years of administrative experience in the Rosemead School District. While there, she performed the duties of BTSA support provider for new teachers, teacher association president and chief negotiator. Elissa earned her bachelor's degree in business administration at Temple University in Pennsylvania and her master's degree in educational leadership at Cal State LA.

**Lindy Lowe** is a new second grade teacher. Spend a couple of minutes talking with her, and you'll come under the spell of her delightful Southern accent. Lindy holds a BFA degree from the University of Mississippi and master's degree in education from the University of Phoenix. She has spent three years working with preschoolers before coming to us.

**Mary Ellen Walker** is returning to us after a year of service as public relations manager at Descanso Gardens. Mary Ellen served as a Spanish teacher at PCR in 2006-07. This year she will work at all three elementary sites to provide Spanish instruction to our elementary students. Mary Ellen's background includes degrees and graduate studies at UCLA and Murray State University in Kentucky. She also has 20 years of experience with The Los Angeles Times in the roles of manager, feature writer, website manager and assistant editor. This last position focused her energies on developing and editing material for the "Kids Reading Room" pages of The Los Angeles Times.

### Palm Crest Elementary School

**Kristen Angelica** is our new Speech & Language Pathologist at Palm Crest Elementary. She worked at Children's Hospital Los Angeles for 9.5 years before coming to us. Kristen holds a BA and MA in Communication Disorders & Sciences from the University of Oregon and the University of the Pacific. She is a member of the American Speech and Hearing Association. And she also shares a remarkable resemblance to another well-loved person at PCR—Kerry Russell, school secretary and Kristen's mother.

**Rebecca McLarty** is one of two new kindergarten teachers at PCR. She has nine years of previous elementary teaching experience, seven of which were with Beverly Hills Unified School District. Rebecca is originally from the East Coast and completed her studies in elementary education at the University of Maryland at College Park. When Rebecca is not teaching, you'll find her enjoying the great outdoors or playing with her 16-month old daughter.

**Holly Price** is another name you may also know. Holly has served as a one-one-one paraprofessional for children in our special education program. Most recently she served as substitute teacher at our elementary schools. This year she takes on the role of kindergarten teacher at PCR. Her background is in sociology with a BA degree from UC Santa Barbara, but Holly says that her paraprofessional experience with LCUSD spurred her to enter and complete the teacher credentialing program at CSUN. And yes, it is no coincidence that there are two Prices at PCR—Holly is the daughter of Sue Price, PCR health clerk extraordinaire.

**Laura Richey** took on the position of PE teacher at Palm Crest Elementary and Foothills Schools. Laura has two years of teaching experience at a private school. She gained her BA in liberal studies through Cal State Chico and finished the PE credentialing program at Cal State Long Beach. She is currently pursuing the Adapted PE credential through Cal State Long Beach. Laura is a member of the California Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. She has also been a coach for 9 years and an athletic director for 2 years.

**Rachel Ware Zoi** has filled the position of counselor at PCR. Rachel previously served as school counselor with Temple City Unified School District and Newhall School District where she worked with children grades kindergarten through eight. Her undergraduate studies were completed at Scripps College in English, and her graduate studies at Cal State LA led to a master's degree in counseling. Rachel is a member of the California Association of School Counselors. In addition, she is co-owner, along with her husband, of a music school in South Pasadena.

## Paradise Canyon Elementary School

**Kimberly Hardash** came to LCUSD in 2007-08 as a substitute at the elementary schools and proved her worth. She is now a fourth grade teacher at Paradise Canyon Elementary. Kimberly earned her bachelor's degree at UC Riverside and studied abroad at the University of Cambridge in England. She has also taught English language development classes to junior high students. "Hardash" does have a familiar ring to it. Kimberly's brother Greg is now in his fourth year as an elementary teacher with LCUSD.

**Mary Malhotra** is a familiar face in the community. She has had children enrolled in LCUSD schools for the past 18 years. After 11 years of service at JPL and 12 years as CFO for a small tech company, Mary has focused her energies on education. Mary completed her student teaching at PCY and has served as a substitute at all three elementary schools. She is now a fourth grade teacher at PCY. Mary holds a BS in math and applied science from UCLA and is a member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

**Kathryn Selsor** is another name that should sound familiar. Kathy was a teacher at PCY from 1989-2002. During that period of time and after, she has been active as a parent supporter at PCY and LCHS. Kathy is returning to a full-time position as a fourth grade teacher. On top of her years with LCUSD she has also taught with Walnut Valley Unified School District. She gained a BA degree in English from UCLA. Her outside activities include teaching at her church and participating in student support organizations.

**Jennifer Strople** has filled the position of kindergarten teacher at PCY. Jennifer has one year of experience in teaching through the Eastside Union School District in Lancaster. Jennifer completed her undergraduate degree at Cal State Fullerton and her credentialing program at UC Irvine. Jennifer also has experience as a cross country coach.

## La Cañada High School

**Cindy Blandford** is our new English teacher at the 7/8 school. Her previous six years of teaching include piloting the junior high AVID program in Whittier and piloting a cross-age tutorial program in Pasadena. She earned her BA in English and MA in Education at Biola University. Her interests span the entire globe—she has participated in humanitarian efforts in Taiwan, Rwanda and Albania. At home, she volunteers her time at First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood.

**Jeff Brookey** has stepped into the leadership of the choral program at the high school. Jeff has 15 years of experience leading choral groups at high schools in Porterville and El Monte and at the college level at Porterville College, USC and Chapman University. Jeff holds a bachelor's degree in music from Chapman University, a master's degree in music performance and conducting from Cal State Fullerton, and is pursuing doctoral level studies at USC. He is a member of the American Choral Directors Association, the California Music Educators Association and the Southern California Vocal Association.

**Dana Daniels** fills the position of chemistry teacher. Dana has many years of experience as a science teacher and as an administrator. She has served in a number of area schools as teacher, coach, dean of attendance, dean of students and assistant principal. Dana has a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a master's degree in educational administration from Azusa Pacific University. Her hobbies include graphic design, jazz, weight training and gardening.

**Elizabeth Devine** is lending her expertise to the Regional Occupational Program at the high school. She is teaching a course on Forensic Science for which she is well-qualified. Her company, Yellow Tape Productions, provides technical advice to television shows on the creation of crime scenes and the tools and techniques employed in forensic science. Two of these shows are the popular CSI: Crime Scene Investigation and CSI: Miami. She has also served as an expert witness in court cases when she was employed by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

**Shoghig Garabet** has taken the position of Speech and Language Pathologist at the high school. Shoghig received both a bachelor's degree in liberal studies and a master's degree in communication disorders from CSUN. She is a member of the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association. She has also invested her time in Troop 923 of the Boy Scouts of America. Shoghig is fully bilingual in English and Armenian.

**Julie Hong** is new to the social studies department at LCHS. She holds a bachelor's degree in history and Spanish from UC Davis and a master's degree in history from San Francisco State University. Julie completed her student teaching in Larkspur and South San Francisco before joining the La Cañada team.

**Joseph Lee** is returning to the high school's art department. From 2001 to 2004 Joe taught at LCHS. During his absence he pursued a master's degree in ceramics at Hongik University in Seoul, Korea. In addition to this degree he earned a BS in business administration from USC and an MA in education from Point Loma Nazarene University. Joe has exhibited his art in shows in California and Korea.

**Jamie Lewsadder** is another familiar face in La Cañada. After graduating from La Cañada High School, Jamie pursued studies in English at CSUN and a graduate program in education at USC. She has returned to us now as a high school English teacher. When not in the classroom or preparing lessons, Jamie can be found participating in various 5k races to support cancer research. You will also see her as a volunteer and artist at the Pasadena Chalk Festival.

**Jacqueline Luzak** stepped into the position of LCHS 7/8 principal on August 1st. Jackie was working for Hemet Unifies School District as principal of Santa Fe Middle School. Prior to that she was assistant principal of Diamond Valley Middle School in the same district. In her 18 years of previous teaching experience, most of that time has been in a mathematics classroom, grades 6-8. Jackie is a member of the California League of Middle Schools and the Association of School Administrators. She also holds bachelor's and graduate degrees in education from the State University of New York, Fredonia, Cal State LA and the University of La Verne.

**Joseph Mearig** is returning to us as a high school math teacher. He taught the first semester of 2007-08 at LCHS to cover the maternity leave of another math teacher. Now as a full-time teacher he is currently teaching the subjects of geometry and advanced topics in math. Joey holds a BA in math from Azusa Pacific University and completed the credentialing program through CSUN.

**Susan Moore** is a new teacher with the English department. Coming from a background of advertising and television production, Susan returned to CSUN to pursue a teaching credential. She has a BA in communications from Marywood University in Pennsylvania and an MBA from Claremont Graduate University. Susan recently finished her student teaching with Glendale Unified School District. Mary also has experience leading community college classes and Girl Scout troops.

**Joanne Park** is serving as a math teacher at the LCSH 7/8 school. She has a diverse educational background with a BS in business administration from USC and a JD in law from Golden Gate University. Joanne has spent 10 years teaching algebra and computers at all grade levels. In her last position with Whittier City School District, she served as math department chair for 6 years. In 2006 Joanne was one of the top 10 finalists for the Region 11 California League of Middle Schools Teacher of the Year.

**Sharon Sherman** has taken on a split assignment with LCUSD. Part of her time will be serving as a home instructor through the Special Education Department. The other part of her assignment will be teaching an Adaptive PE class at the high school. Sharon has worked in special education before as a long-term sub and classroom teacher at the elementary level. She also has elementary teaching experience at a local private school. She completed her bachelor degree and credentialing program through Sonoma State University and is pursuing studies in special education through San Francisco State University. Her outside interests include activities in her church, with Girl Scouts and as garden docent at Huntington Botanical Gardens.

#### District-wide Employees

**Lesley Mayne** is another employee who is returning to a position with La Cañada Unified. From 2001 to 2006 Lesley worked as a Speech & Language Pathologist at LCHS and Foothills School. She is returning to a part-time position based out of the district office. Lesley has also worked in the private sector and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in special education through Claremont Graduate University. Her other passion is running—Lesley has qualified three times for the Olympic trials in the 800 meter and 1,500 meter races.

**Danielle Chandler** is filling the position of District Nurse. She gained her BS in nursing from Northern Arizona University and has worked in the field of pediatrics in both hospital and clinic settings. For pleasure she loves to hike, travel and spend time with her family.



For More Info



## LCHS “Steps” into 2nd Quarter

Beginning in November as a pilot program, LCHS will be offering a specialized set of seminars known as STEP (Student Teacher Enrichment Program). The concept grew from a number of sources. Beginning in the fall of 2005-06, the campus began the process of a self-study—looking at how we approach the instructional and curricular objectives, and more importantly, how we approach the students who are the intended recipients of a masterly level of understanding of the curriculum. Through the course of the 18 month self study, and as an outcome outlined in the self-study written findings, there were identified needs for students that included academic intervention in a meaningful and targeted manner, true electives that were outside of the scrutiny of GPA and college bound transcripts, and venues for students to connect with each other and staff in pursuit of the acquisition of the 40 Developmental Assets as identified by the Search Institute.

Through time spent with the entire staff during the Fall 2007 Professional Development Day, these specific needs and specific approaches to fill those needs were addressed which led to an ongoing process of developing offerings. The notion of a one-size-fits all approach was quickly set aside, with the variety of needs clearly being the task to meet. Working to fill the needs as identified through LCHS’ ESS (Every Student Succeeds) Plan, a series of adjustments to the bell schedule were explored, and seminars designed to address the many identified needs were developed. Working with the Board of Education on the matters of the instructional day, and of the substance of the seminars, a proposal was accepted that would support this initiative beginning during the 2nd quarter (November 12th) and running as a pilot program for the balance of the 2008-09 school year.

In this model, students would retain three days of their current five of the current SSR/Homeroom period, and be provided the options to add two days of the new STEP seminar. Offerings include academic interests, clubs, sports activities, co-curricular activities, tutorials sessions, art, philosophy, and academic intervention. In addition to these focused offerings, the SSR/Homeroom has been retooled to be more of a setting that promotes academic study. The new sessions are 35 (45 Block) minutes versus the traditional 15 (23 block) minutes under the 2007-08 schedule. Students will register for these seminars electronically as they do for regular registration, with the window for “pondering” about two weeks. In the middle of that open registration time, students (and parents) can read through either the printed materials, or the on-line descriptions of seminars, and students will be able to participate in a small seminar fair on campus to speak with staff about what one might expect from a particular seminar.

The pilot begins with the two seminar offerings a week for students with the intent being that as more seminars are developed, additional days can be made available to students at the semester and again for 4th quarter. The staff involved are excited to be able to offer this different tool for our students and look forward to the upcoming debut of this innovation for our campus.

- Dr. Damon Dragos, LCHS Principal



## Summer Construction Update

This past summer there were three major projects worked on in the district. We completed the Oak Grove restroom project and had a ribbon cutting ceremony the second week of school. The project included boys’ and girls’ restrooms and a changing room. The project was funded by the district, City of La Canada and three user groups: LA Futbol, LCJSBA, and AYSO. This project is an example of the working relationship between the district and City enhancing our joint use facilities.

We are constructing a new multipurpose room building at Palm Crest Elementary School. The new 5000 square foot building is replacing the existing undersized building. The new building will feature a stage for school productions and warming kitchen for daily cafeteria use. The main interior space will be able to accommodate half the school for lunch, instead of a third as the previous facility allotted. A conference room and adult restroom will be added amenities for the staff. The school name will be prominently identified by a sign on the front facade. You can visit the project photo website at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lmatlcsud> for regular updates.

We are also constructing a new multipurpose room building at Paradise Canyon Elementary School. It will be located on the front basketball court in the lower playground. The 5000 square foot building will provide a space for assemblies, large meetings, school plays, and physical education activities. The building will also house restrooms that can be accessed from the play fields. You can visit the project photo website at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lmatlcsud> for regular updates.

- Mike Leininger, Assistant Superintendent of Facilities and Operations



# La Cañada Schools Soar Above State and Federal Targets

La Cañada Unified School District continues to perform at high levels as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API) scores released recently. LCUSD's overall district-wide 2008 Growth API is 917, showing growth of three points from 2007 to 2008. The statewide performance target is 800. Since the inception of the API nine years ago, LCUSD students have exceeded the statewide performance target for academic achievement and LCUSD has been above the 900 for the last five of those years. The API is the cornerstone of the statewide accountability system for California public schools.

All LCUSD schools showed 2008 performance growth except La Cañada Elementary School although LCE still maintains the highest score in the district at 956. The most growth this year is again at Paradise Canyon Elementary School. Its API score is now 950, up six points since last year. Palm Crest Elementary is up by five points at 940 and La Cañada High School, now at 899, grew by four points.

Each district also receives an overall API score. There is only one point that separates the second, third and fourth highest achieving districts in the state. San Marino Unified School District takes top honors at 944. In second place is Piedmont City Unified at 919, followed by Palo Alto Unified in third position at 918. LCUSD's API, at 917, ranks fourth highest in the state. STAR test score performance is the most significant contributor to the API score.

The California API summarizes a school's or district's academic performance and progress on statewide assessments and is based on a growth model. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 mandates that schools also receive Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results. Not only do LCUSD students far exceed the state API targets, La Cañada Unified and each school independently have also exceeded the federal AYP targets. Of the 79 ways to fail to meet AYP, LCUSD schools and the overall district pass in every measure. The requirements of AYP include percentage of students tested, percent proficient by significant subgroup in English-language arts and mathematics, API rate and graduation rate. These AYP targets increase every year until 2013-2014 when all schools are expected to have 100 percent of their students performing at or above the proficient level on statewide tests.

La Cañada Unified School District students have scored consistently among the highest schools in California. These state and federal accountability measures are a tangible result to show that the contributions of students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community make La Cañada schools great.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment and Evaluation



## LCUSD STAR Scores Among Top in the State

La Cañada Unified School District students perform among the top students in the state as demonstrated by the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program scores released by the state recently. In English/language arts (ELA), LCUSD shows the highest performance in the state at second and fifth grades for the second year in a row. In mathematics, LCUSD fifth and sixth graders take the top honors statewide.

The most important part of the STAR Program is the California Standards Tests (CSTs) because these assessments tell how well students are performing as measured against the state content standards. The highest performance this year in LCUSD is seen at fourth and seventh grades where 90% or more students met or exceeded the state standards of achievement in both English/language arts and mathematics. Fourth graders have the highest percentage of students in the district at 92% in ELA and 93% in math meeting or exceeding the state targets. In mathematics, 90% or more students in grades 2-7 reached the state target or higher.

Since the tests' inception in 2000, last year's seventh graders demonstrated the most growth in both ELA and math. Eighteen percent more students are now meeting the state targets in both subject areas bringing the total percentage of successful students up to

92% in ELA and 90% in math. In mathematics alone, 20% more students in grades 8 and 9 are meeting or exceeding the state target bringing their total percentage up to 88% and 89% respectively.

The most growth in one grade and/or subject area since last year is in eighth grade general math that improved by 10%. High school biology performance also grew by 9% since 2007. Algebra II showed the greatest decline. While more students are enrolled in the class, their scores dropped by 10% from last year with only 43% meeting or exceeding the state standard.

These tests assess what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level. When looking at student performance statewide, LCUSD is first, second or third place in 7 out of the 10 grade levels tested in ELA as compared with other high performing districts. In mathematics, LCUSD has one of the top three places in 8 out of 10 grade levels tested as compared with the same districts.

For further information and other test scores from the state, county and local districts or schools, go to <http://star.cde.ca.gov>.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment and Evaluation



## The Play is the Thing

LCUSD is grateful to the Educational Foundation for its financial support of our elementary drama program. Students in grades four through six participate in drama class for one third of the school year. We have a new drama specialist, Thom Vacca, who is currently working with PCY students. He came to us from Connecticut where he has had experience working with students and adults in various drama jobs and has acted in plays himself. Thom is excited about working with our LCUSD students and the students are already enjoying his classes.

The drama curriculum develops drama skills for the students over the three years they participate in it. During fourth grade, students learn how to project their voices and portray characters in improvisational and scripted roles. They build trust in their fellow “actors” by working with them in role-playing. In fifth grade, students learn to act in small skits. The skits have traditionally been correlated with the American Revolution, which is an important part of fifth grade social science curriculum. At the end of the trimester, the fourth and fifth grade students put on programs for their parents.

Sixth grade students put on a full play which is presented at Lanterman Auditorium. This year the play will be “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown”. This is a delightful production with warm feelings, humor and wonderful songs. PCY students are currently auditioning for the parts. Each class will take one or two songs to sing and the lead characters will have solos. Parents from Palm Crest are in charge of sets this year. Last year the LCE parents did a great job on sets and the sets were used for all three productions.

Thom Vacca will be at PCY until winter break and will go to Palmcrest in the winter and LCE in the spring. The “Charlie Brown” play will be performed at all sites. In drama, students learn that working hard as a team produces great results. They learn that every part, and every role in life, is important to the overall success of any project. Thank you to the LCF Educational Foundation for supporting this very fine program for our children.

- Donna Robinson, PCY Principal



# Superintendent

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component includes about \$10 billion from the securitization of the state lottery which would be repaid from future lottery proceeds.

A very slight .68% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will be added to the revenue limit but not to categorical programs. No COLA for 2009-10 is expected at all. Underperforming schools that are entering corrective action will receive anywhere from \$50,000 to \$150,000 per school based on the severity of their sanctions. Once again, however, because LCUSD ranks in the top decile, our schools will receive none of these special funds.

But even the flimsy budget solution signed in September already is starting to unravel. As this column is written, the state's actual revenue is coming in significantly below estimates made last spring. Senator Perata has stated that the 2009-10 budget may face between a \$15 to \$18 billion dollar shortfall. The Governor is meeting with the four legislative leaders and has indicated that he might call a special session of the legislature to address the crisis. Many observers feel that the Governor will propose midyear budget cuts and a suspension of Proposition 98 for 2009-10.

State politicians hold public schools to strict accountability mechanisms like the Academic Performance Index. La Cañada schools continue to exceed the targets demanded by the state. It is only fair then that we demand from Sacramento this same accountability and a commitment to truly fix our outdated and ineffective state budget process. We are not expected to fail, and neither should Sacramento be permitted to fail.



## La Cañada Unified School District

### Cabinet

**Superintendent:**  
James Stratton

**Asst. Superint.**  
Mike Leininger

**Asst. Superintend.**  
Wendy Sinnette

### Governing Board

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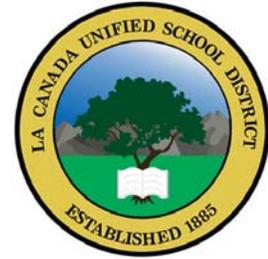
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