



La Cañada Unified

February 2008

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LC
News
line

Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



District's Annual Program Goals

Traditionally, one of the most interesting and illuminating Governing Board meetings of the year is the one where La Cañada Unified School District administrators provide a progress report on the district's annual program goals. The most recent update occurred on February 5, 2008, and the list of achievements is remarkable. Specific accomplishments were detailed in the following six areas.

Curriculum and Instruction

A variety of new courses has been implemented at the high school, including Sports Medicine, Digital Design, Speech and Debate, Advanced Placement Psychology and Advanced Placement Physics B. All of our Advanced Placement courses were approved by the recent College Board audit, and more students than ever before completed AP tests last spring. New social science textbooks were adopted in the elementary grades and new science textbooks were adopted at the middle school.

As part of our efforts to continually monitor and support all students in their mastery of state curriculum standards, elementary grade levels and 7-12 departments have met on a quarterly basis to review test results and to coordinate strategies for supporting students. In some cases, specific performance and instructional targets have been established within the departments.

Educational programs also have been enhanced through new equipment and additional resources. Each elementary school is implementing the use of an interactive whiteboard program that allows teachers to manually manipulate digital text as part of a class lecture or demonstration. Additionally, the LCHS science department has received grants from British Petroleum for electronic weather stations and data probes and has partnered with JPL and CalTech for classroom resources, lecturers and research materials.

On top of all this, district standardized test scores continue to be outstanding, with La Cañada Unified School District placing third in the state for API rankings and with LCHS listed by US News and World Report among the top 100 highest achieving schools in the nation.

Student Support

Each school in the district has developed and is implementing an Every Student Succeeds plan which coordinates the various monitoring strategies and support programs employed to help all students meet grade and/or course level expectations. A key component of the ESS plans is special "interventions" which provide extra instructional assistance. Examples include an after school class at LCHS for students still needing to pass the state graduation exam; a guided study program



(continued on page 4)

The Newsboard

By Susan Boyd, Board President



Exciting Programs and Achievements in LCUSD Schools

With all of the doom and gloom we have been hearing regarding the governor's proposed budget cuts and how that is going to affect education, I thought I would take the opportunity to highlight some of the positive and exciting programs and achievements happening in our schools.

Did you know that two of our La Canada High School science teachers applied to JPL and were awarded a grant to support students working on robotics? Along with the funding they received, these students are now working with advisors from JPL and Cal Tech and believe they are going to win the robotics competition in which they will be competing. This is a great example of our staff and students taking advantage of the resources in our own backyard and providing program enrichment at no additional cost to our school district.

This year the high school added three new ROP classes, sports medicine, digital design and graphic design, all of which our students had expressed a significant interest in and all of which were funded through ROP; once again, an expansion in our curriculum at no cost to our district. At the request of both parents and students, speech and debate and AP psychology classes were also added.

Student support has been, and continues to be, a very high priority district wide. At the kindergarten through 6th grade levels, math, reading and language intervention and guided study programs have been implemented and/or expanded at all three elementary schools. PCR, LCE and PCY have had 92, 90 and 94 students respectively participate in these programs. The 7/8 has had 12 students participate in guided studies and 15 students in after school math intervention which uses computerized math diagnostic tools.

All of our schools have completed and begun implementing their individualized Every Student Succeeds plans which will focus attention on the specific academic needs and support of each and every student. One of the goals of this program is to make sure that every student, even those that are particularly quiet, shy and sitting in the back of the class will get the attention and support they need to be successful. No more "falling through the cracks."

The modernization of all of our facilities continues due to the bonds passed by our community four years ago. The classrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the B building at the high school (that would be the building that houses the auditorium) was completed last summer and we will begin on the A building (where the administrative offices are located) this summer. Playgrounds, roofs, steps and locks have been upgraded, as needed, at the elementary schools.

These are only a few of the well over 100 significant improvements to have been achieved over the last twelve months and that were reported at the last school board meeting. So while we know we will have some financial challenges ahead, it is important to realize and appreciate the incredibly productive and supportive programs and staff we have within our school district and to recognize their efforts and the positive impact all of these have upon our students.



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>



Fiber Optic Network Upgrade

The District will be having new fiber optic data lines installed within the next few weeks to connect each school with the district office. This major upgrade to the networking infrastructure should eliminate much of the data network congestion that plagues the school's current data lines and position the district to be able to move forward in rolling out additional technology services in the future.

Charter Business is expected to finish the installation of the fiber optics lines by the end of April and students and teachers should see an immediate improvement in internet access speeds and reliability. Parents and teachers accessing the Pinnacle gradebook program should also notice much quicker response times.

The upgrade to fiber optics data lines also paves the way for the district to upgrade the core of the phone systems at the school sites to a modern Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system which should save the district money compared to the existing analog telephone lines. Farther on down the line, the district will take advantage of the new fiber optic data lines to upgrade the distributed student information system (Aeries) to a centralized version which will improve the accuracy and accessibility of student data districtwide.

The district is constantly evaluating new technologies and selecting those technologies that can improve the service to our community and staff while minimizing or even lowering the cost of access for those services.

- Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology

LCHS Part of High Performing Schools Consortium

Did you know that as part of the ongoing process of seeking out best practices, LCHS continues to be involved in a consortium of high performing similar schools? These schools including LCHS, Beverly Hills HS, San Marino HS, Mira Costa HS, Oak Park HS, Calabasas HS, Agoura HS, Whitney HS, South Pasadena HS, Arcadia HS, and Peninsula HS. All have some similar characteristics and face some of the same challenges of supporting a high performing student body and active community. Monthly meetings of administrators who keep an ongoing dialog on issues and solutions culminate in an annual professional practices day-- held this year at Beverly Hills HS-- that brings together representatives from the key academic departments and guidance teams to share instructional practices, action research and successful strategies to support students among the job-a-likes. This powerful resource has been in place for many years and continues to be a rich source of best practices that benefit all of the students at the various schools. LCHS has and continues to be an active participant in the give and take of these communications and is regularly able to leverage findings from other schools to immediately benefit our students. Such consortium groupings were modeled over a decade ago through the California Department of Education in its 100 Schools Network plan, which ended along with the supporting funding in 2002. This group of high performing schools and their leadership have seen the enormous benefit of this kind of resource.

- Damon Dragos, LCHS Principal



Superintendent

(continued from page 1)

in grades K-8; before and after school classes in reading and math for grades 1-6; and new computerized instructional programs for students learning English as a second language.

Across grades 7-12, additional teacher staffing was earmarked to reduce class sizes. LCHS counselors also actively contributed to student support, developing learning contracts for students in grades 9-12, restructuring 9th grade individual student/parent counseling meetings, presenting Developmental Asset lessons in homeroom and expanding college admission officer visits to the LCHS campus.

To more effectively apprise students and their parents of academic progress, 100% of LCHS teachers are now using an online grade posting program, and special progress reports have been developed for all K-12 English Language Development students.

Staff Development

District staff members including teachers, administrators and classified employees have participated in a wide range of professional training opportunities. Technology mentors at each school have trained teachers in the use of hardware and software aimed at both curriculum enhancement and grade/data management. Similarly, each school's front office staff received technology-based training in the student information system, health procedures and the online processing of substitute teacher requests.

Motivated by the goal of delivering improved program in a cost-effective way, our Special Education staff attended an intensive battery of advanced workshops. Among the issues addressed were assessment techniques for pre-schoolers, sensory integration disorders, strategies for working with autistic students, crisis prevention, differentiated instruction, occupational therapy, legal guidelines and assistive technology. To more clearly delineate the learning objectives and measurability of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), all Special Ed teachers and support staff also attended training in new software which provides content and format for those plans.

Elsewhere, through other district training sessions, our Regional Occupational Program (ROP) teachers expanded instructional strategies, our new K-2 teachers worked with the Open Court reading program, various 7-12 social science teachers studied best instructional practices and 7-8 small school teams learned how to organize a network of interventions for academically at-risk students.

Facilities and Technology

The big news here is the modernization of the second and third floor classrooms in Building B at LCHS. The high school campus also benefitted from modernized football field restrooms, a new sports medicine classroom, new cement work in the quad and a new high capacity data storage server. Among the K-6 facility improvements were asphalt/pavement replacements on Palm Crest and Paradise Canyon playgrounds, re-roofing at PCR and LCE and the installation of emergency electronic locks at all three elementary schools.

Equally impressive were the technology upgrades occurring throughout the district. New file servers were installed at every school, new copier machines were secured for the high



For More Info



school and site licenses were purchased for a special software program that allows teachers to select and download clips from the Discovery Channel video library for inclusion in lectures. Student contact with Cal Grant financial aid officers was more easily accessed through the electronic upload of grade point data.

Financial Management

Having just received the most favorable audit report possible, the district has allocated and managed its financial resources in a highly effective manner. We renegotiated our construction management contract at a reduced rate, increased our lease space and revenue, generated increased funding from the Regional Occupational Program and maintained reserves for economic uncertainties.

Additional cost savings came through reduction in Workers Compensation claims, favorably negotiated health insurance rates and reduced reliance on outside Special Education services.

As always, we continued to enjoy strong relations with the city government and community sports groups and financially collaborated on facility upgrades including Oak Grove field lights, Lanterman auditorium parking lot resurfacing, LCHS gym floor resurfacing and the Oak Grove field dressing room/restrooms project.

Communications and Decision Making

Underlying many of these achievements is increased communication with and involvement of our stakeholders in decision making. Parents and community members have contributed through construction design review committees, the Special Ed District Advisory Council; Site Councils and booster groups; the kindergarten study group; PTA/PTSA committees and the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation. The Governing Board has developed a multiyear strategic plan, conducted numerous workshops on issues like class size and assessment and completed a first full year of interest-based bargaining with the teachers' association.

An array of strategies has been employed to keep staff and community up to date on current information. In addition to the online district newsletter, we have posted Governing Board minutes and Site Council minutes on the website and have used the ConnectEd phone message system to immediately communicate breaking news to all families in the district. Rapid technology also now allows high school students to complete course selection online and allows parents to complete enrollment online.

For special language needs, we provide translation services in Individual Education Plan meetings and parent conferences, and we translate all district English Language Development mailings.

Conclusion

Even with the devastating education budget reductions proposed by the Governor, La Cañada Unified School District continues to effectively manage its resources and strengthen learning opportunities for our students. This success can be attributed to the skills and dedication of staff members, parent support groups and Governing Board members. If you would like to view the full presentation by staff on goals progress, please go to www.lcusd.net and click on School Board. Scroll down to Meetings Schedule and Resources.



LCHS Fall Athletics and Athletes

Each year, a great number of LCHS students participate in rigorous academic classes, volunteer in the community, are engaged in the arts, have jobs, participate in family and other community activities, and nearly a third of them are also athletes. Our fall sports include Girls Tennis, Girls Volleyball, Football, Boys Water Polo, as well as Boys and Girls Cross Country. Girls tennis had a strong season and played successfully all the way into November and the Semifinals matches. Girls volleyball also had a great season with some exciting games, culminating in playoffs that reached the quarter finals level. Football faced a series of player injuries that helped to derail the team's efforts but still saw some strong individual accomplishments that were recognized in the league and local papers. The Cross Country and Water Polo teams took students the greatest distances, with runners competing at the State level and the water polo team earning an outstanding three-peat win of the CIF Championship. All of these teams of athletes earned large numbers named to all league teams, individual recognition and praise in the local press, and each were acknowledged for its academic honors as Scholar Athlete Teams by CIF. In addition to the CIF sports, one athlete who is on the Winter Girls Basketball team is also an Olympic level luge champion. Sophomore Kate Hansen has been competing over the past couple of years in the exclusive sport of luge, earning victories and training at Olympic facilities in the US and Europe, all while maintaining her studies at LCHS. Flights to Colorado, Germany and Canada intersperse her regular life as a Spartan student athlete. Kate's accomplishments have been covered in the Los Angeles Times, and she continues to race as her season progresses. To Kate, and all of the other LCHS student athletes, job well done in balancing the priorities of school, family, and extra-curricular activities with that of an athlete and team member.

- Damon Dragos, LCHS Principal



The Guided Studies Program

In May of 2007 and again in February of 2008, teams from Palm Crest Elementary, La Canada Elementary, and La Canada High School 7/8 attended a Pyramid of Interventions workshop presented by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. The workshop's facilitator, Gayle Karhanek, the author of *Whatever It Takes*, specializes in helping educators develop systematized preventions and interventions to academically support all students in a professional learning community. During the workshop sessions, Karhanek shared ideas on specific types of intervention programs, as well as the accountability features that must accompany them, to ensure success. The teams from all three schools found the ideas instrumental to building and refining their own Every Student Succeeds (ESS) Plans.

One intervention program from Karhanek that all three schools have implemented is the Guided Studies Program. The program at each school runs a little differently, but at LCHS 7/8 it has fit perfectly within the framework of the small schools. In Guided Studies, a teacher works with students who have been identified as needing targeted support with organizational skills, such as writing down assignments, tracking homework, agenda checking – even back pack cleanup. A teacher from each small school volunteered to run a Guided Studies class during SSR/homeroom. The class size of the SSR was capped at twelve, in order to provide focused support. The 7/8 counselors used testing results, grade reports, and other data to identify students for the Guided Studies program. The Guided Studies teacher, the counselor, and the parents monitor student progress. When a student's grades and habits reflect that he or she has internalized the study and organizational skills the class has been practicing, the student is exited from the Guided Studies SSR and another student who needs the intervention is enrolled.

Based upon students' successes, teachers' experiences and insights, and the results of this first-year pilot, the Guided Studies program will be refined and hopefully expanded as an intervention in 2008 – 2009. It is one offering among many in our schools' ESS Plans, designed to ensure the success of every LCUSD student.

- Wendy Sinnette, LCHS 7-8 Principal



March 2008

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | | | 11 (1) LCF Ed. Foundation Gala. 6 p.m., Ritz-Carlton |
| 2 | 3 (2) PCY-Gr. 6 Wrightwood Trip PCY-Spring Support Drive | 4 (8) PCR-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm ***STAR Writing Grades 4 & 7 Today*** PCY-Spring Support Drive LCHS 7/8-PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am. IRC Mezz. PCY-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm LCE-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm PCY-Gr. 6 Wrightwood Trip LCHS-7/8 PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am. IRC Mezz. | 5 (6) PCY-Gr. 6 Wrightwood Trip ***STAR Writing Make-up Test. Grades 4 & 7*** LCHS 9-12: Pep Squad Info Mtg.: 7 pm. N. Gym LCHS 7/8 Fine Arts Concert: PCY-Scoliosis Screening: 5th Gr. Girls PCY-Spring Support Drive | 6 (7) PCY-Notecard Fundraiser Packer Distribution PCY-Gr. 6 Wrightwood Trip GPC Mtg.: 8:15 am. DO PCR Pizza Night: Gr. 6 LCHS 9-12: Club Council Mtg.: SSR. Aud. LCE-Scoliosis Screening: 5th Gr. Girls PCY-Spring Support Drive | 7 (5) PCY-Gr. 6 Wrightwood Trip PTA Council Mtg.: 9:30 am. DO PCR-Scoliosis Screening: 5th Gr. Girls LCE Spirit Rally w/G-parent or Sp. Guest: 10:15 am PCY-Spring Support Drive | 8 |
| 9 | 10 (2) 20 Day Progress Rpt Due PCY-Spring Support Drive | 11 (5) LCHS CA Math League: 8:49 am PCY-Spring Support Drive ***LCHS-CAHSEE Make-up Testings Grs. 10-12*** PTA-Founder's Day Reception: 6:30 pm. LCHS Cafe ***Governing Brd. Mtg.: DO Brd. Rm. 7 p.m.*** | 12 (5) ***LCHS-CAHSEE Make-up Testings Grs. 10-12*** PCY-Spring Support Drive PCR-Drama Rehearsal: 8-3 pm. Lanterman PCR PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am LCHS-Incoming 9th Gr. Parent Mtg.: 7 pm. Aud. | 13 (4) PCY-Spring Support Drive LCHS 9-12: Club Day/ Lunch Scoliosis Recheck: All Grades PCR-Drama Prod.: 6-9 pm. Lanterman | 14 (2) PCY-Spring Support Drive PCR-Parent Tour: 9 am | 15 (1) LCHS 7-12: Serv. A-Thon: 8 am-12 pm |
| 16 | 17 (2) GATE Advisory Mtg.: 12:30 pm. Brd. Rm. LCHS-7/8 Multicultural Event | 18 (5) PCY-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm LCHS AMC: 7:50 am PCR-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm LCE-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm ### LCHS-OPEN HOUSE: 7 pm ### | 19 (5) PCY-Pizza Night: Gr. 1 & 5 LCHS-7/8 Multicultural Event LCE-PTA Mtg. ***LCHS 9-12 Instrumental Music Fine Arts Concert: 7 pm. Aud.*** Childcare Roundtable Mtg.: 8:30 am. Gov. Brd. Mtg. | 20 (3) ***LCHS 9-12 Choral Fine Arts Concert: 7:30 pm. Lanterman*** ***LCHS Band/Orch. Festival: All Day - Aud.*** LCE-Pizza Night: 5-10 pm | 21 (7) Good Friday LCHS-7/8 Multicultural Assembly: Aud. LCHS 9-12: Spring Sports Assembly PCY-Notecard Fundraiser Artwork Due LCHS-PTSA Mtg.: 9:15 am PCY-Parent Tour: 9 am LCE Parent Tour: 9 am | 22 (1) LCHS 9-12: Backwards Dance: 8:30-11:30 pm. N. Gym |
| 23 | 24 (2) PCR-Valley Forge Trip LCHS 9-12 Drama Production: 7 pm., Aud. | 25 (8) LCE Site Council: 3 pm. Lib. PCR-Valley Forge Trip LCHS Blood Drive PCY-Staff Spring Brkfst PCY-Site Council Mtg.: 3:15 pm. Lib. PCY-PTA Open Mtg.: 7 pm. Lib. PCR-Site Council Mtg.: 3 pm. Lib. LCHS 9-12 Drama Production: 7 pm., Aud. | 26 (2) LCHS 9-12: House of Reps PCR-Valley Forge Trip | 27 (5) Health Services Staff Mtg.: 2-4 pm. PCR PCR-Valley Forge Trip LCHS Sr. Panoramic Picture: SSR Curr. Council Mtg.: 8:30 am. Gov. Brd. Rm. IPG Mtg.: 12:30 pm. Closed Session Rm. | 28 (3) PCR-Valley Forge Trip PCY-Spirit Rally: 10:15 am PCR-Spirit Rally | 29 |
| 30 (1) LCHS 9-12 Drama Production: 2 pm., Aud. | 31 (3) LCHS-7/8 Registration Visits to Elem. Sch. PCY-Gr. 5 Valley Forge/Other Trips LCHS 9-12 Drama Production: 7 pm., Aud. | | | | | |

Construction Update

To date the District has completed the following projects using 2004 bond funds: LCE wall partitions, LCHS restrooms, LCHS Choral room and building "B" elevator, LCHS band and home economics rooms, LCHS building "B" 2nd and 3rd floors, LCHS Energy Management system, LCHS Cafeteria, and the District Offices at FIS.

The District has approximately \$4,900,000 remaining in the \$15,000,000 "Series A" bond monies for the completion of modernization at PCY, PCR and high school. Additionally there is \$10,000,000 of unsold bonds available for future projects plus an estimated \$608,461 in interest from the 2004 Bond as well as \$1,140,795 in state matching funds and \$273,042 in developer fees.

In June of 2008, the Governing Board approved the security locks projects at the three elementary schools and approved the high school security hardware project in September. At our last meeting, the Governing Board approved staff's request to go to bid for the PCR and PCY multipurpose rooms and the LCHS building "A" modernization project. Future projects at LCHS include the north gym and south gym modernizations, the tennis court repair, repairs to campus pavement, asphalt parking and paving and site concrete resurfacing. The scope of work for these projects will be further defined in the upcoming months.

- Michael Leininger, Assistant Superintendent



La Cañada Unified School District

Cabinet

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James Stratton

Asst. Superint.
Mike Leininger

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District Spelling Bee

The third annual La Canada District Spelling Bee was held on January 31, 2008, in the LCUSD Board room. Twelve students from the three elementary schools competed to be the district spelling champion for this year. In two prior years, Zhi Hi Low, from Paradise Canyon has won the LCUSD Spelling Bee as well as the LA County Spelling Bee.

Each school held its own school bee during the month of January and selected four top spellers from grades 4 – 6. Each 4 -6 grade class had held its own bee and sent two candidates to the school bee. The four top spellers from each school were able to study the words from the Scripp's Spelling Bee list, with words that have moderate usage. It took several rounds to reduce the district champions down to four students. The four students participated in several rounds until there were two left. The winner was Josie Kamida, a fifth grade student from PCY. The runner up was Samantha Ko, a sixth grade student also from PCY. Josie Kamida will compete in the Los Angeles County Spelling Bee on March 19, 2008. Best wishes to Josie and congratulations to all twelve candidates.

- Donna Robinson, PCY Principal



LC Newsline Editor:
Enoch Kwok



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