



La Cañada Unified

April 2008

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LC Newsliner

Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



State Budget

The major news out of Sacramento these days concerns finances, and nothing in the Governor's Budget Proposal offers particularly good news for education.

As early as November 2007, the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) predicted that weak revenues would deplete the state reserves and trigger a deficit. The Governor's Budget for 2008-09 acknowledges the lowered income stream and projects at least a \$14 billion deficit by June of 2009. Consequently, for education in 2008-09, the Governor is proposing not to fund the statutory Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), which is estimated to be 4.94%, and to further cut revenue limits by an additional 2.4%.

Along with this overall reduction, the Governor is also proposing cuts to Special Education and to categorical programs like School Improvement and Instructional Materials. The probable statewide Special Ed reductions alone add up to about \$189 million.

So what is the impact of all this on the La Cañada Unified School District budget for next year? Most significantly, our revenue limit loss will be about \$1.7 million, and this shortfall will come directly out of our General Fund, which is used for salaries, supplies, equipment and other operating expenses. Another \$115,000 will be cut from our Special Education budget and over \$70,000 cut from our K-3 and 9th grade Class Size Reduction allotment. An across-the-board hit of 6.5% will be applied to School Improvement, Instructional Materials, 10th grade counseling, English Language Learner and other restricted categorical programs.

Even though some of the Governor's proposed reductions may be modified by legislative committees over the summer, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (which approves the budgets of all districts within LA County) is requiring that the Governor's provisions be built into all budgets submitted to that office for formal approval. In addition, since all official school district budgets must cover three years of operation, LACOE is mandating that the cuts be reflected in projections for 2009-10 and 2010-11 as well. So, for example, an additional \$1.68 million and \$1.64 million will be slashed from our General Fund in years two and three.

On top of the Governor's reductions is the fact that our enrollment is dropping and, since California school districts are

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Partnerships Between LCUSD and City of La Canada



One of the really great partnerships we have here in La Canada is that of the Joint Use Agreements between the City of La Canada and the La Canada Unified School District. Not until having actually sat on the Joint Use Committee last year did I realize what a broad reaching mutually beneficial relationship this is. It is also a perfect example of what can be accomplished when two or more organizations pool their resources.

In this case, the City helps the District maintain and man the facilities during the times of the day that the schools are not using them so that members of the community other than our students can use them. Two great examples of this are the IRC (that's the library to us old timers) and the athletic facilities, both of which can be used by all ages for a myriad of reasons.

Some of these projects that have or will be completed in 2007-08 are the parking lot at Lanterman Auditorium, the bathrooms at the high school football field, the skate park at FIS, the bathroom/storage room/locker room at the Oakgrove softball field and placing crossing guards at the school sites for safety.

Planned for 2008-09 are re-skinning the junior varsity baseball and Oakgrove softball fields, renovating the existing tennis courts at the high school so they can be put back into service and possibly adding a sixth so the tennis team can host playoffs and tournaments at home and the community will once again have lighted tennis courts available for night time use.

Currently scheduled for 2009-10 is resurfacing the FIS tennis courts and in the midst of all of these, the City and the School District are both studying the parking and traffic problems currently being experienced at several of the school sites due primarily to changes in the laws affecting the time a new driver must drive by themselves before being able to car pool with fellow students.

Even in good financial times, these projects would be beyond the scope of the School District's budget resources, but with the help of the City as well as many of the local user groups such as AYSO, Sports Coalition, Gladiator Football, LCJBSA, and the Boosters, these facilities are made available and maintained for the use and enjoyment of everyone. That's definitely a win-win situation.



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>

SARCs Available on-line

The latest 2007-08 School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) which show data from the 2006-07 school year are now available for download from the district website at:

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

School Accountability Report Cards (SARC) are required by law to be published annually and contains information about the condition and performance of each California public school. More information about SARC requirements is available at the California Department of Education (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sa/>.

DataQuest, an online data tool at <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>, contains additional information about each school and comparisons of the school to the district, the county, and the state.

For additional information about a particular school, parents and community members can contact the school principal or the district office.

Detection Canines

In efforts to continue to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all members of the La Canada High School 7-12 community, LCHS will pilot a fourth quarter program to help minimize the presence of prohibited items on its campus. LCHS has contracted with a private company, Interquest Detection Canines, to provide random unannounced visits to the campus via the use of non-aggressive specially trained Golden and Labrador Retriever canines. Interquest is the service provider to a large number of schools and districts in the local area. The campus will be checked periodically to reduce and hopefully eliminate unwanted contraband. All visits by the detection canines and their handlers will be supervised by an LCHS administrator. In the event that prohibited items are detected, appropriate action in accordance with school policy and Education Code will be taken by school administration. The primary purpose for the presence of the detection canines is deterrence, as well as the desire to send a proactive message to students that their school environment is safe and genuinely committed to their health and well-being.

La Canada High School's decision to pilot the program during the fourth quarter and Summer School 2008 was designed as a means to test the program for its fit and effectiveness with the LCHS 7-12 school culture. A parent information meeting was held on the evening of April 16th to present the program to parents and to answer their questions. On Friday, April 18th, each grade level attended an assembly presented by Interquest and the administration, informing students about the details of the program and the scope of services contracted with the company. The detection canines will randomly visit the campus from April 21st through August 1st. During this time the school administration welcomes feedback from students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the program and its impact. Based upon the informed experience of the LCHS 7-12 community, the administration will recommend whether a contract with Interquest will be signed for the 2008 - 2009 school year.

- Wendy Sinnette, LCHS 7-8 Principal



Interquest Detection Canines



PCY Earns Distinguished School Award

The state of California facilitates the Distinguished Schools awards program. Every other year the state invites elementary schools or high schools to apply for the award. The criteria are based on either very high test scores or strong growth in test scores. All three of La Canada's elementary schools were invited to participate in the fall of 2007. Paradise Canyon decided to apply and has received the award. Paradise Canyon was also named Distinguished in the years 1989, 1998 and 2004.

The process of applying for this award first involves the writing of a detailed description of all aspects of the school's educational programs, learning environment, parent and community involvement and student support system. It is recommended that the description be written by one author but that many people contribute ideas and examples. I had the honor and task of writing PCY's description, which had to be submitted by December 3, 2007. Our School Site Council, PTA and staff groups first gave input on each of the topics. They also read drafts of the various sections, which were revised many times before we were pleased with our result. The application we submitted had about 10 pages of test score data and general school information and 20 pages of the description of our programs.

In the winter of 2008, we received a call to say that our application was accepted and that we needed to have a validation visit. A team of 4 school administrators came to PCY in March and validated our application by visiting all classrooms, interviewing parents, teachers and students, and reviewing evidence of all details that were mentioned in our application.

This entire experience has been very significant to all the PCY stakeholders. We were required to look at all the elements of success we are fortunate enough to have. We had the opportunity to weigh the importance of all those elements in providing for success for all our students. A critical point in our school description was that we are not resting on laurels of high test scores for most of our students. All the LCUSD schools are implementing our Every Student Succeeds plans, which have systematic steps to provide for academic, social and emotional success for all students. The leadership Jim Stratton has provided in the development of these plans has inspired PCY to put forth a strong effort to make sure all our students reach their full potential.

The other main reason PCY has earned this state award is that we have a great team effort by all our stakeholders. There is a culture of working together to provide for student success. Thank you to the staff, students, parents and community for working so hard to make La Canada schools so vital and notable. The visiting team commented positively on all our enrichment programs, provided by the Educational Foundation, the PTA and the Assistance League, as being an integral part of making our educational program so meaningful to our students.

It was very gratifying to this old principal to receive a phone call from State Superintendent Jack O'Connell recently, personally congratulating her on the success of Paradise Canyon Elementary School. It is a privilege for me to serve as principal of such a fine school and to work in a district and community that value its children as the future of our country.

- Donna Robinson, PCY Principal



LCHS FIRST Robotics Team

One of LCHS' newest and most dynamic groups is the FIRST Robotics team that has come out of the La Canada High School Engineering Club. This group has roots that began over three years ago with outreach by JPL engineer and LCUSD parent Kevin Watson. His involvement with other local schools brought him to LCHS in the fall of 2005 to offer to help. It took a while to make the connections, but this past fall, science teacher Jenny Witman was contacted and the birth of the team began. Bringing in help from recent Cornell alum Matt Haberland and fellow LCHS science teacher Steve Zimmerman, the group began to collect momentum. Once the framework had been set, the teachers began recruiting students on campus. Lunch meetings with guest speakers led to after school sessions where coding for the programming and small robots to learn the building process prepped the group for the upcoming season.



Behind the scenes, much work had been done to prepare space and collect resources. A donation from Lockheed Martin provided some project specific computers which became a mini lab in one of the science teacher's offices while a portion of the school's wood shop was borrowed for assembly of the main robot.

Hours of enthusiastic hard work brought the group, now named FIRST OVERDRIVE: Team 2429, to its first event, held at the LA Sports Arena. The group which had started with 15 students had now grown to a full team including 27 students ranging the entire campus and bringing a wide variety of talents, expertise and interests. This event about a month ago brought the team the Rookie All Star Award and qualified them for the nationals in Georgia in late April. The nature of the event is to have the robot accomplish several tasks including knocking a ball off of a rail, herding it around a track and coordinating with two other teams against three opponent teams. Beyond the game, the greater goals are to develop creativity, problem solving, team work, and communication skills both within the team and with the many other participating teams.

The group is moving forward, and invites you to view their progress at their web site,

www.calzim.com/first.

-Dr. Damon Dragos, LCHS Principal



Star Testing in May

Students in grades 2-11 are required to participate in state-mandated Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) assessments in May. These assessments, which are the cornerstone of state and federal accountability, will take place a little later in the school year than in the past. The testing window will be from May 12 – 23. The STAR testing program consists of the California Standards Tests (CSTs), the California Achievement Tests, Sixth Edition (CAT/6), the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA) and the Standards-based Test in Spanish (STS). The state added a new test this year called the California Modified Assessment (CMA). Although not officially part of the STAR Program, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) exam will also be given at the same time.

The different kinds of required STAR assessments and the number of different subject areas to be tested are almost overwhelming. All students in grades 2-11 take CST English/language arts and all students in grades 2-9 take a CST math standards test. A CST science test will be administered to students in grades 5, 8 and 10. The CST history-social science assessment is given to students in grades 8, 10 and 11. High school students will also take an end-of-course CST in math, science and social science in grades 9-11 in addition to the other required assessments, if enrolled in those classes. The CAT/6, which has reading/language arts, math, and spelling components, will only be administered to students in grades 3 and 7. The STS is administered to Spanish-speaking English learners in grades 2-7 enrolled the U.S. for one year or less. Eleventh graders may also complete the EAP multiple-choice questions in English and mathematics.

Students with disabilities, who are unable to take the CSTs and CAT/6 even with accommodations, will be given either the CMA or the CAPA. The CMA is only available to students in grades 3-5 at this time and will be expanded to more grade levels in the future. Students in grades 2-11 may take the CAPA. These assessments were designed for students with individualized education plans (IEPs) who need an alternate assessment.

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

As always, it is important that all our students do their best on these tests. History tells us that "test fatigue" is prevalent in the 11th grade and especially those students should be reminded of the importance of doing well. The Academic Performance Index (API) uses these tests as its rating criteria. Currently, LCUSD is only one API point away from being the second top unified school district in the state. These scores are also used as part of determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the federal accountability system. In addition, college admissions officers consider the results as a strong indicator of school quality. It is important to note that at least 95% of all students must take these tests to meet the state and federal accountability guidelines.



For more info on the
STAR testing program

[http://www.cde.
ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/)

SARCs can be
downloaded at:

[http://www.lcusd.net/
Schools/index.htm](http://www.lcusd.net/Schools/index.htm)



HELP CHILDREN BEAT TEST STRESS

The STAR tests will be given between May 12th and 23rd. The overwhelming majority of testing will take place the first week at the elementary schools. To avoid an overlap with Advanced Placement exams at the high school, STAR testing will begin on May 15th. Here are some tips to provide the best testing environment for children.

- Reschedule any regular dentist or doctor appointments to a time other than testing dates.
- Make sure children are in attendance during the testing window to take each test when regularly scheduled.
- Ensure children get plenty of sleep before each test day.
- Provide a healthy breakfast and possibly a snack for children on test days.
- Allow extra time in the morning on test days to get to school so children won't feel rushed.
- Build children's self-esteem every day by praising them for having a good attitude about tests.
- Emphasize that children should do their best and assure them you will care about them no matter what.
- Explain that it is OK to feel stressed sometimes and encourage them to express their concerns or worries.
- Teach quick ways to reduce stress, such as taking deep breaths, stretching, doing shoulder rolls or picturing a relaxing scene.
- Set a good example by managing adult stress during testing and staying positive about school and test taking.

- Lindi Dreibelbis Arthur, Director of Assessment & Evaluation



Disaster Preparedness

April is Disaster Preparedness month. As a district we will be conducting a district-wide drill to test our disaster preparedness plans. However, Disaster Preparedness also begins at home. During an emergency, the more you have planned ahead of time, the calmer and more assured you and your family will be.

The following six steps will help you through the process:

Talk	Talk with your family about disasters than can happen where you live.
Plan	Plan where to meet after a disaster. Choose two places.
Learn	Learn how and when to turn off utilities.
Check Supplies	Review your disaster supplies and replace water and food every six months.
Tell	Tell everyone in the household where emergency contact information is kept.
Practice	Conduct fire drills and practice evacuating your home twice a year.

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services – water, gas, electricity or telephones- were cut off? Local officials and relief works will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

For complete details and additional information go to the following web sites:
www.redcross.org/services/disaster or www.redcross.org/prepare/makeaplan-p.html

- Dr. Michael Leininger, Assistant Superintendent



Schools Upgraded with Fiber Optics Data Links

Over spring break, the district technology department completed the installation of fiber optics data links between each school and the district office. These data lines will allow each school to better make use of the district's broadband internet connection and help alleviate much of the sluggishness that students and staff previously experienced when accessing the internet. Parents and teachers should also see increased responsiveness when visiting district web pages and viewing electronic gradebooks and other on-line resources. Internet access speeds for students and teachers have been increased thirty fold, while internal network speeds to district file servers has been increased over three hundred fold for the high school.

The new fiber optic data links complete the three phase upgrade of the district network infrastructure which was begun two and a half years ago and encompassed 1) upgrade of the district's broadband internet connection to fiber optic technology, 2) upgrade of each school's networking switches to modern components, 3) upgrading the data links between the district office and each school with fiber optics data lines. Additionally, each of the school's file servers have been replaced during that time span. The district now has a modern network infrastructure which will enable it to better serve the needs of its students, parents, and staff while also positioning the district to roll out some new products and services over the next few years.

Over the next few months, the district will build on its upgraded network infrastructure by 1) installing a Voice Over Internet Protocol phone system at each school's office, 2) redesigning the district and school web sites to offer better access to information and resources, 3) replacing the current distributed student information system with a central data warehouse (made by the same company) to be located at the district office to facilitate better data accuracy and more timely access to up-to-date student data at each school site.

- Enoch Kwok, Director of Technology



District Master Calendar

May 2008

Week	Sat	Fri	Thu	Wed	Tue	Mon	Sun
3 (2)	PCR Spring Festival SAT Testing: 8 am. LCHS	2 (2) LCHS-7/8 Home Tour ***LCHS Pops Concert: 7:30 pm. Lanterman**	1 (7) PTA -CA PTA Convention: 5/1-5/4/08 LCHS Pops Concert: 7:30 pm. Lanterman** Spring Festival Preview: Elem. Spr. Writing Assessments: May & June Math Assessments: May-June ***LCHS Pops Rehearsal: 6-9 pm. Lanterman** PCY-Reading Night: 7 pm. Cafe				
4	10 (1) Subject A Exam: 8 am. LCHS	9 (7) LCE-Staff Appreciation Wk PCR-Teacher Appreciation Lunch District Wide-Teacher Appreciation Wk. PTA Council Mtg.: 9:30 am. DO LCHS-AP Exams: LCHS Band Tour of Elementary Schs. PCR-Spirit Rally: 9:45 am	8 (5) LCE-Staff Appreciation Wk ALF-Instru. Rehearsal: 3-7 pm. Lanterman PCY-Staff Appr. Lunch: LCHS-AP Exams: District Wide-Teacher Appreciation Wk. DO LCHS-AP Exams: LCHS Band Tour of Elementary Schs. PCR-Spirit Rally: 9:45 am	7 (6) LCHS 9-12-Staff Appreciation Lunch District Wide-Teacher Appreciation Wk. LCHS-AP Exams: LCE-Staff Appreciation Wk. PCY-Gr. 4 Pilgrim Trip PCR PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am Cafe	6 (8) PCY-Gr. 4 Pilgrim Trip LCHS-7/8 Staff Appreciation Lunch LCE-Staff Appreciation Wk. District Wide-Teacher Appreciation Wk. LCHS-AP Exams: PCY-PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am. Cafe LCE-Staff Mta.: 3 pm ***Governing Brd. Mtg.: DO Brd. Rm. 7 p.m.**	5 (3) LCE-Staff Appreciation Wk LCHS-AP Exams: District Wide-Teacher Appreciation Wk.	
11 (1) LCHS 9-12 Drama Dress Rehearsal: The Odd Couple. 10-5 pm., Aud.	17 (2) PCY-Fun Run: 7:30 am PCY-Medieval Faire: 9-4 pm	16 (4) LCHS-PTSA Mtg.: 9:15 am LCHS-AP Exams ***LCHS STAR Testing** **LCHS STAR Testing Grs. 2-11**	15 (6) ***LCHS 9-12 Band Pops Concert: 7:30 pm. Aud.*** LCE-Pizza Night: 5-10 pm ***LCHS STAR Testing** **LCHS STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS-AP Exams Fine Arts Specialist Mtg.: 3:30 pm. Closed Session Rm.	14 (3) **STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS-AP Exams ALF-Instru. Concert: 6-9 pm. Lanterman ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS-7/8 PTA Mtg.: 9:15 am IRC Mezz. LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-7 pm., Aud.	13 (7) LCHS-AP Exams LCHS 9-12: ASB Elections Mtg.: Lunch ALF-Instru. Concert: 6-9 pm. Lanterman ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** PCR-Incoming Kindergarten Orientations: 9 am LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-7 pm., Aud.	12 (6) GATE Advisory Mtg.: 12:30 pm. Brd. Rm. LCHS-AP Exams ALF-Instru. Rehearsal: 3-7 pm. Lanterman ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** PCR-Incoming Kindergarten Orientations: 9 am LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-7 pm., Aud.	
18 (1) LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-2 pm & 7 pm. Aud.	24 (1) LCHS 9-12: PROM. Location TBD	23 (4) ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS Sr. Activity Day LCHS-7/8: Gr. 8 Career Day PCR-Parent Tour: 9 am	22 (4) ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS 9-12: 3 on 3 Bsktball Tournament: 3 pm. S. Gym Childcare Roundtable Mtg.: 8:30 am. Gov. Brd. Rm. LCHS-7/8 Student of the Month Reception: 3 pm. Aud.	21 (5) LCE-PTA Mtg.: **STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** 20 Day Progress Rpt Due IPG Mtg.: 8:30 am. Closed Session Rm. Curr. Council Mtg.: 12:30 pm. Gov. Brd. Rm.	20 (7) LCE-Volunteer Appreciation Coffee ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS Math Diagnostic Test: All Day PCR Site Council Mtg.: 3 pm. Lib. LCE-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 am LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-7 pm., Aud.	19 (3) PCY-Gr. 4 Pilgrim Trip ***STAR Testing Grs. 2-11** LCHS 9-12 Drama: The Odd Couple-7 pm., Aud.	
25	31 (1) ***LCHS 9-12 Drama: Man of La Mancha. 2 & 7:30 pm. Aud	30 (3) LCE-Spirit Rally: 10:15 am ***LCHS 9-12 Drama: Man of La Mancha: 7:30 pm. Aud.*** PCY-Spirit Rally: 10:15 am	29 (2) ***LCHS 9-12 Drama: Man of La Mancha: 7:30 pm. Aud.*** **Elementary Sch. OPEN HOUSE: 6:30-8 pm. **	28 (2) ***LCHS 9-12 Drama: Man of La Mancha-7:30 pm. Aud.*** LCHS 9-12: ASB Elections: SSR	27 (5) PCR-Staff Mtg.: 3:15 pm LCE-Site Council Mtg.: 3:15 pm. Lib. PCY-Site Council Mtg.: 3:15 pm. Lib. ***LCHS 9-12 Drama: Man of La Mancha-7:30 pm. Aud.*** PCR-Play: 9:30 am. Cafe	26 (2) HOLIDAY-Memorial Day GEC-Closed for Holiday	

Superintendent

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funded according to the number of students enrolled, this decline will spell further reductions in available dollars. If 2008-09 enrollment decreases by the worst case scenario figure of 150, we will lose another \$875,000 from our revenue limit income.

However, unlike many school districts in our area and throughout the state that have also been rocked by the Governor's Budget Proposal, we will not need to issue a string of teacher layoff notices. Staffing reductions that otherwise would have been necessitated by the budget cuts and the enrollment declines will be balanced by not replacing resignations, retirements and some temporary positions.

At this current point in time, things are relatively quiet on the Sacramento budget front. Following the Governor's January budget proposal and the Legislative Analyst's review in February, not much will be occurring until the release of the May Revision budget on or about May 14. Then, from the May Revision until the legislature reaches a two-thirds majority agreement on a final budget sometime in the summer, things happen fast. Subcommittees convene at all hours of the day and night with policy decisions, trailer bill proposals and revenue revisions happening in rapid succession.

Rumors regarding how big the ultimate deficit will be and how Draconian the final cuts will be are spreading throughout the education community. Some observers think conditions will remain the same as in January while others believe things will get much worse. Almost all of the experts agree, however, that even though we have faced continuous budget shortfalls in California since 2001, this one will



La Cañada Unified School District

Cabinet

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James Stratton

Asst. Superint.
Mike Leininger

Governing Board

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Susan Boyd

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Joel Peterson

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Jeanne Broberg

Member
Cindy Wilcox

Member
Scott Tracy



be the toughest to bridge. The major reason for that consensus pessimism is that all of the easy fixes (e.g., borrowing unspent reserves, deferring maintenance, eliminating non-essential programs) have already been applied.

As a result, many parents and staff members are asking what they can do to support La Cañada Unified School District in the middle of all this turmoil from Sacramento. Letters, phone calls or emails to our state representatives would certainly be helpful. Our request of state Senators and Assemblymembers is not just that they scale back the cuts to education but also that they grant local districts the flexibility to combine all of our various categorical and special funds into one overall allotment that we can spend according to local needs rather than in strict alignment to state formulas and restrictions. And, as always, contributing more to the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation is an important way to help the district maintain academic excellence in the face of decreased financial support from the state. The district's appreciation of the wonderful work done by the Foundation cannot be overstated, especially in these difficult and challenging times.



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