



La Cañada Unified

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Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



The superintendent of schools in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, recently petitioned Washington for about \$100 million from the federal government's financial bailout fund of \$700 billion. Preferring to call the money an "investment," Superintendent Todd Hoadley argued that it is only fair for schools to also receive monetary relief since budget cuts handed them by federal and state governments are negatively impacting students all across the nation.

Without question, reduced funding is the biggest problem facing public schools in California. While our state officials shamefully drag their feet, the budget deficit grows daily. The Legislative Analyst Office recently announced that if no corrective action is taken, California could face annual operating shortfalls of \$22 billion. For 2008-09, the Governor has proposed taking back the .68% Revenue Limit Cost of Living Adjustment for schools and slashing our base per pupil funding by about \$300 a student. The total midyear loss potential for La Cañada is over a million dollars.

The legislators argue that it takes careful deliberation to reach consensus on the proper balance of spending cuts and revenue enhancements (i.e., taxes) to solve the problem. As the talk continues, the Governor's budget clock shows the deficit growing by \$1.7 million an hour. School districts suffer in "planning limbo," uncertain of whether and to what degree we'll need to adjust operating budgets.

Leaving revenue questions aside for a moment, however, there are some immediate and long overdue measures that Sacramento can take to help districts like LCUSD.

A good first step would be to stop forcing districts to adopt new textbooks on the current strict seven year adoption cycle. As now occurs, each subject area in every K-12 grade level must adopt a new textbook series every seventh year. For grades K-8, the State Board of Education provides a list of acceptable books from which the choices can be made. Just as teachers have received training in the various publisher support materials, have developed their own supplementary resources and have become completely comfortable with the series, they are forced (in the fifth year of adoption) to begin examining and piloting new textbooks.

I can certainly see the logic and necessity of adopting new science books every seven years since the body of scientific knowledge expands, changes and advances constantly. For social science, addenda could be purchased regularly to cover new global events or archaeological discoveries that have occurred since the previous adoption. Math, language arts and foreign language could continue for longer than the mandated seven years.



(continued on last page)

LC Newsl ine

The Newsboard

By Susan Boyd Board Member



Every couple of years the discussion comes up as to whether or not La Canada High School should have a public service requirement for graduation. This discussion is usually started by a parent or group of parents who become aware of the service requirement at the private schools in our area. Most recently, an article in a local paper highlighted the many projects involved and the amount of time the students at these local private schools commit to fulfilling this requirement.

Since the La Canada High School was not included in this article, this article serves several purposes. The first is to provide either side of the discussion with some facts. The second is to dispel the impression of many in the community that the majority of our students need this requirement to teach them the importance of volunteering for those less fortunate in their community. And lastly, it is to spotlight the magnitude and diversity of the volunteer hours being spent by our public school students helping a myriad of people.

A recent analysis of the current senior class indicated that approximately 75% of the La Canada High School senior students have documented community service projects. An estimated 70% of these projects are done during the summer months, weekends or during the holiday season. The other 30% are year-round but may be heaviest during a specific quarter. The actual time spent on each project varies according to student availability. As we all know, 78% of our students are involved in sports of one kind or another. A vast majority of the students are also involved in one or more other activities including but not limited to art, drama, theater, dance, band, choir, ASB, scouting, and/or after school special interest clubs.

In spite of these other commitments, our students are or have been working with such organizations as Habitat for Humanity, building homes in Mexico, Amnesty International, fundraising and helping the homeless, YWCA, helping battered women and working on shelters for the homeless, the American Red Cross, Special Olympics, Alliance for International Women's Rights, New Horizons as tutors for young children, St. Bedes Church as peer counselors, Skidettes making lunches for the homeless, PILOTS, helping the homeless in Hollywood, Tijuana Building Houses Project, Children's Hospital, fundraising for the new building and helping at the hospital itself, Share and Care, helping the homeless, Assistance League of Flintridge, National Charity League and the Salvation Army.

This isn't a complete list but does hopefully give our readers an idea as to the depth and breadth with which our students are helping not only our community but the world around them.

Does this mean that we shouldn't have a community service requirement at La Canada High School? Not necessarily. We still have about 25% of our students that would probably benefit from learning that they too can make a difference and how wonderful it can feel and how gratifying it can be to see the reactions of the people you have helped.



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)

What it does mean is that if we were to implement such a requirement, a very large majority of our students wouldn't be affected at all. They are already completing that requirement on their own. It also means that as a community we should be proud of the character being developed in so many of our young people and that we should continue to support these young people as much as we can. That support and the environment it creates for families in general and our students in particular are two reasons why our community and our schools are treasures to be appreciated and protected.



LCUSD Website Getting Updated

After nearly ten years of the same look and feel, the District website is getting a makeover which will be unveiled in mid January. The new website features a modern look that is optimized for today's larger computer screens and has a revamped navigation system which will make it easier for users to find information while allowing the district greater flexibility in adding more content and features in the future. The elementary school websites will be folded in as subsections of the district website, while the high school will have its own website borrowing heavily from the look and feel of the district website. It will take several more weeks for the high school website to be fully converted over to the new format, so in the interim, there will be links to the "old" district and high school websites.

One feature of note will be a greatly improved calendaring system which will allow users to customize the types of events they wish to view and print out from the on-line district master calendar. Each school site or sub-section in the website will also be able to have its own independent calendar.

Once all of the data have been migrated from the old website to the new website, some new features will be implemented including a self registered log-in system so that users can receive customized email notification of new content whenever it is posted or access to protected information or files.

The screenshot shows the La Cañada Unified School District website. At the top left is the district logo with the text "LA CAÑADA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT" and "ESTABLISHED 1885". The main header features the district name "La Cañada Unified School District" in a stylized font. A yellow navigation bar contains links for Home, About Us, District Administration, Board of Education, La Cañada Elementary, Palm Crest Elementary, Paradise Canyon Elementary, News and Resources, La Cañada High, and Teacher Resources. A dropdown menu is open under "District Administration", listing: District Office & Enrollment, Business Services, Educational Services, Facilities & Operations, Food Services, GATE Program, Human Resources, Special Education, and Technology Services. A red callout box points to the yellow navigation bar with the text "Yellow Channel Bar has drop down Sub-Sections". On the left side, a "Site Shortcuts" sidebar lists: District School Year Calendar, District Newsletter, Employment Opportunities, Enrolling in LCUSD, School Lunch Payments, and Williams Act Reporting. A second red callout box points to this sidebar with the text "Sidebar with Shortcuts to frequently accessed resources". The main content area includes a "Welcome" message and an "Upcoming Events" section listing events for "Today" and "Tomorrow".

A New STEP for LCHS

La Canada High School's pilot Student/Teacher Enrichment Program (STEP) started on November 12th when students returned to a new schedule that included STEP sessions prior to their first period and later during block days. With over a year of planning and research by the STEP committee, the innovative program is designed to add academic enrichment and support to the students' school day, while also allowing them to explore a wide variety of academic and elective subjects as well as extra curricular activities. With regular classes starting later in the morning for three days a week, teachers are reporting that their first period students are more alert and energetic. STEP offers students 35–45 minute sessions ranging from AP American History Lab to yoga. Academic intervention, remediation, and support are also being offered in English, math, science, social science, and foreign languages.

The various STEP sessions were created and offered by teachers and described in the STEP catalog students received prior to the online registration. There are currently 126 step sessions with 97 different titles. Participation is initially limited to one STEP in 7/8 with an extended SSR/Homeroom for the rest of the week. At the 9-12 level, 83% of students are taking at least one or more STEPs; 75% are taking two or more. Some are taking as many as four STEPs including clubs and academic support. Fifty teachers and administrators are participating by running one or more sessions, and 29 teachers are receiving weekly collaboration time scheduled within the school day to share and develop ideas with colleagues for the ongoing improvement of curriculum and instruction. The extended SSR has new protocols to allow students to study and complete assignments in a quiet and controlled environment.

With the three primary goals of providing enrichment, remediation and collaboration, STEP is off to a promising start. The focus now is to determine how it is achieving in these three areas and how to measure its effectiveness in terms of overall school achievement. A committee of teachers and administrators will meet regularly for the remainder of this school year to identify and implement the measurement criteria for evaluating the pilot. While there has been significant insight gained from the STEP pilot already and some important lessons learned from its initial implementation, there is still much to do. Second and third quarter STEP registration has yet to be completed, and in the first week back after the holiday break, students will need to choose which STEPs they want to take for the remainder of the year.

For additional information or to see the catalog, visit the LCHS STEP webpage at www.lcusd.net/lchs/2009/step

- Kevin Buchanan, LCHS Assistant Principal



Expanding Opportunities at 7/8

Research has shown that students who feel connected to their school are more likely to feel confident in their abilities, earn good grades, be persistent in completing difficult tasks, and be better personally adjusted to school. With the goals to connect more students to school and to increase student engagement, La Cañada High School 7/8 has added three extra-curricular programs. The 210 Athletic League, the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program and the Builder's Club are in full swing, with more than 200 students participating.

Thanks to the support of PTA, Boosters, ASB and parent donations, our students have the chance to show off their athletic ability and represent our school by participating in the 210 Athletic League. More than 100 students tried out for the La Cañada 7/8 girls and boys basketball teams. The four teams (7th grade boys, 7th grade girls, 8th grade boys, and 8th grade girls) will play a nine game season, with home games played in the high school south gym. In addition to basketball, students are looking forward to participating in soccer, volleyball and flag football, which are also offered by the 210 Athletic League.

In addition to athletics, LCHS 7/8 is expanding the GATE opportunities for junior high students. La Cañada has an active GATE program at the elementary schools and offers Advanced Placement courses for high school students, however, opportunities for GATE students at 7/8 were limited. With approximately 100 students at 7/8 identified as GATE, the vision was to provide experiences in

addition to the differentiation students receive in the classroom. Seventy-five students attended the initial informational GATE luncheon, where students were introduced to their GATE peers, worked together to solve brain teasers and received information about upcoming GATE events. The students are very enthusiastic about participating in the program.

Three GATE activities are currently in place. One is the GATE STEP offering. Each quarter, GATE students are able to select Mrs. Gregg's GATE class as their STEP offering. In her class, Mrs. Gregg works with students on real-world problem solving activities, leadership skills, decision-making, and logic skills. Another activity is the GATE Gathering. On the last Friday of every month, students are invited to a GATE Gathering luncheon on Oak Grove field. They participate in team building activities, play games, socialize, and indulge in desserts that are generously donated by parents. A third event is the After-School Speaker Series. The Speaker Series will kick off on December 10th, with Mr. Jeff Stroud. Mr. Stroud will discuss Entrepreneurship: How to create a successful business from the ground up.

Lastly, LCHS 7/8 has worked in conjunction with the local Kiwanis to form a Builder's Club. The club is a student-led community service organization. 7/8 Builder's Club is the Jr. High counterpart to the High School Key Club. Thirty-six club members meet weekly to discuss ideas and plan activities to benefit their school and community. Students in Builder's Club have numerous opportunities to develop their leadership skills, work as a part of a team and complete projects that provide support to local organizations.

The addition of these extra curricular activities has sparked enthusiasm in our students. With support from parents, staff and community members, LCHS 7/8 will continue to increase opportunities for students and connect more students to our school.

- Jackie Luzak, LCHS 7/8 Principal



Cool Tools at Elementary Schools

In the past few years, negative effects of bullying in schools have become a topic of both local and national focus. As a result many schools have begun revisiting their anti-bullying policies and maximizing efforts to address and eliminate this problem in schools. LCUSD elementary schools join many other schools across the country in revisiting our schools' Cool Tools program and implementing a more strategic and intentional school wide policy and program to address bullying. We have identified two areas of focus based on current research: increasing our consistency and effectiveness in staff response to bullying behaviors and providing a more comprehensive guidance curriculum to better equip students to recognize, refuse and report bullying. We were able to draw on the strengths of our existing program and are utilizing the *Steps to Respect** program to expand staff training and guidance lessons in the classrooms.

All three schools have presented fun yet educational assemblies to bring students' attention to the problem of bullying and to promote their involvement in recognizing, refusing and reporting these behaviors. School counselors have attended training sessions in order to be able to effectively train staff and students and implement school policies on bullying. A series of guidance lessons are being delivered in classrooms throughout the year.

We know that the best way to combat bullying is to pay attention, get involved and never look away. We can build and promote a positive school climate by intervening, creating opportunities for students to get involved in helpful and constructive activities, nurturing empathy, and teaching friendship skills.

*Source: Coloroso, B. (2003). *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*, HarperCollins.

- Anais Wenn, PCR Principal



The Great Southern California Shake Out

On November 13th all schools in the district participated in the Great Southern California Shake Out. Students performed the “Drop, Cover, and Hold on” procedures before evacuating the buildings. Sites performed search and rescue and reacted to several scenarios that tested the site disaster plans’ effectiveness. The principals used the Connect–Ed communication system to make parents aware of the drill. The principals used cell phones to send the message in an effort to further explore the capabilities of the system.

Prior to the event, the district met with representatives from the private schools in La Canada at a meeting hosted by JPL. This meeting was very insightful and informative. We are exploring ways that we can partner with JPL in the event of an emergency and take advantage of their resources. We have set a follow up meeting to de-brief the drill and to look at next steps.

It should be noted that the district participates in a number of disaster preparedness drills each year. Monthly drills are held at the elementary schools which include evacuation, drop and cover, and shelter in place. The high school performs the same drills on a semi-annual basis. Each April, in coordination with Disaster Preparedness Month, the district holds a district wide drill much the same as the November 13th drill. As we prepare at school, we urge you to prepare at home. 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, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Facilities & Operations



District Professional Development Day

At the district-wide professional development day on October 29th, internationally known speaker, learning skills consultant, and author, Jon Pearson, presented a half-day workshop to La Canada Unified School District’s teachers, grades K – 12. Mr. Pearson is the author of [The Inventive Mind](#), and his in-services focus upon ways to access multiple intelligences and personalize learning. Using a lively combination of words and drawings, Mr. Pearson makes the case for including drawing in every class and discipline. His instructional strategies emphasize the many ways that drawing can be used to increase imagination, understanding, and authentic literacy across the curriculum.

Describing how to “draw” out the best in your brain, Mr. Pearson states: “Drawing can be a language for capturing thoughts, feelings, and the substance of things. We write words. But most of us collect, store, and retrieve our thoughts in pictures. Drawing can make all learning more lasting and meaningful by making it more creative and personal.”

The workshop was well-received by LCUSD’s certificated staff. One teacher from Paradise Canyon, who implemented the instructional strategies a few days later when teaching a short story, commented that her students were actively engaged by the pictograph note taking process. They did not ask her to slow down, repeat, or to start over. Their information was accurate, detailed, and they enjoyed the learning process. For all of the educators involved, the in-service offered a practical methodology to tap into the “inventive minds” of all students.

- Wendy Sinnette, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources



ROP Career and Technical Education at LCHS

CSI Forensic Science is the latest ROP course at La Cañada High School to earn the University of California's a-g college prep certification as a science elective. The Regional Occupation Program (ROP) offers students courses in Career and Technical Education (CTE) that lead to occupations in the field and/or further study in a variety of college majors. LCHS ROP has grown significantly in recent years both in the variety of courses and number of classes available, and currently serves 490 students in 16 classes covering 10 subjects. This year, beginning and advanced courses are being offered in Media Arts, Digital Photography, and Culinary Arts. Additional offerings include Sports Medicine, Graphic and Web Design, Retail Marketing, and CSI Forensic Science. Media Arts, Digital Photography and Graphic Design are UC certified in the "f" Visual and Performing Arts(VPA) category, while Sports Medicine and CSI Forensic Science are certified in the science elective "g" category. ROP students are regularly awarded medals of achievement by the Los Angeles County Office of Education in recognition of their accomplishments in the different CTE fields.

All LCHS ROP classes are taught using the latest industry standard technology and students receive instruction in career essentials such as resume writing, interviewing, as well as legal issues in the workplace including sexual harassment and labor law. To teach an ROP course, the instructors must have at least 5 years work experience in the field and have earned an ROP vocational education credential. These instructors bring a wealth of expertise and experience to the classroom and teach the most current knowledge and skills being applied in real work situations.

The California Department of Education is placing increased emphasis on Career and Technical Education in public high schools, and at LCHS we have a program tailored to meet the post-secondary college and career goals and needs of our specific student population. Each year, incoming tenth grade students take a career interest survey that indicates to the LCHS ROP administration which career pathways our students are interested in pursuing. Subsequent planning is conducted to design and implement new courses based upon the students' career interests.

Future plans include a career and college fair focusing on the career pathways we currently offer. Additional courses in the health, legal, and business occupations pathways are also being explored. For more information, contact Assistant Principal, Kevin Buchanan, ROP Technician, Mary Ohms, or ROP Counselor, Johanne Auger.

-Kevin Buchanan, LCHS Assistant Principal



Foothill SELPA selected for Special Education Self-Review

Every four years the California Department of Education mandates a special education self-review for each SELPA. The Foothill SELPA was selected this year! La Canada Unified School District is a member of the Foothill Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA). The Foothill SELPA is made-up of three districts; La Canada, Glendale, and Burbank. A SELPA is the service area covered by the local plan for providing special education services to individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the Special Education Self-Review is to ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring of the special education programs and services. One component of the Self-Review is the parent input process which began last school year when all the parents of children with special needs were asked to complete the Special Education Parent Survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from parents and guardians about the special education services and programs provided for their children. Our office mailed out 430 parent surveys and we were delighted when 109 surveys were returned! Next we held the Parent Input Meeting where parents from all three districts met at Wilson Middle School in Glendale to discuss their experiences, provide information and ask questions. The information from the meeting and the surveys will be analyzed to help us identify parent issues and concerns regarding our special education program. I look forward to reporting our overall findings when the self-review is completed in the spring.

- Tamara Jackson, Director of Special Education



Fall Sports Report

The fall season is now over, but there are many successes to report!

The last time the LCHS Girl's Varsity Volleyball team won the coveted CIF Championship title, Jimmy Carter had just been elected President of the United States, gas prices were fifty cents a gallon, and the median household income in the US was \$12,686. Fast forward thirty two years, and the Lady Spartans are reveling in the taste of victory after a long drought. On Friday, November 21st, the team beat La Reina High School in a 3-2 stunner to earn the crown of CIF Champions. The team led by Head Coach, Brock Turner enjoyed a 23-8 season record. Coach Brock Turner said, "We had an amazing season, and these athletes worked hard. They deserve to be called champions." The members of the 2008 CIF Championship Volleyball team include Eirene Kim, Catherine Horner, Cami Martin, Madison Anderson, Hayley Woodford, Connie Suh, Courtney McCutchan, Molly Teodo, Mary Jo Scott, Julia Burrows, Meredith Horner, Tara Rallis, Maren Slater, Grace O' Hara, Emily Selsor, Peyton Collins, and Claire Hilsen. The athletes' talents have also been recognized by college recruiters. Cami Martin will attend Truman State University in Missouri, and Madison Anderson will attend Stetson University in Florida this fall on full-ride scholarships. "These two athletes are examples of the importance of the female athletic program here at La Canada High School, and we need to continue to promote our female athletes and celebrate their success", said Tamar Hill, Athletic Director and Girl's Varsity Basketball coach. The team also won the Rio Hondo League title for the sixth year in a row and made it to the Semi-Finals in the Southern California Regional State Tournament. Junior Courtney McCutchan was named Most Valuable Player in the Rio Hondo League while Cami Martin, Tara Rallis, Hayley Woodford were named Rio Hondo League First Team. Madison Anderson and Eirene Kim were named to the Rio Hondo Second Team.

No stranger to League titles and CIF play, the Boy's Varsity Water Polo team enjoyed a successful season that actually began in Hungary this past summer when the boys took 3rd place in an International Tournament. Senior Spencer Borsoff was named the Most Valuable Player of the competition. Meanwhile back in the States, all three levels: (Varsity, JV, and Frosh/Soph) won the Rio Hondo League Championship title. First year Varsity Head Water Polo Coach German Lopez said, "We were successful this season, and I am proud of how we performed." Coach Lopez went on to comment that the Varsity team played some of the most competitive water polo teams in the nation. The future of the LCHS Water Program is looking good, if the Frosh/Soph's team's season is any indication. The team won first place in the highly competitive Mater Dei Tournament, and sophomores Justin Lee and Graham Roth were named Offensive player and Defensive player of the tournament respectively. The Frosh Soph's record was 21-4 for the season and the JV record was 21-6.

The 2008 Cross Country team also had a successful season under Andy Di Conti who returned to the program this year as Head Coach. All four teams won the Rio Hondo League title and Andrew Fisher and Kaitlin Fueling were crowned the Rio Hondo League Champions.

Our Girl's Tennis team also had a fantastic season. The Varsity team placed second in the Rio Hondo League, with Rachel Fox placing third in the CIF tournament singles tournament and sisters Missy and Alex Antanoplis finished third in the doubles category. The team made it to the quarterfinals of the CIF tournament and was ranked 8th in CIF.

Congratulations to all the coaches and players for an outstanding season and many exciting moments.

-Joanne Davidson, LCHS Assistant Principal



Superintendent

(continued from page 1)

In 2007-08, La Cañada Unified School District received about \$285,000 from the state Instructional Materials Fund and about \$70,000 from the restricted lottery fund. That combined money, however, could only be spent on textbooks. If we were given the flexibility to use those funds for whatever program needs are most pressing, we could make up a fraction of the shortfall of state funds caused by Sacramento.

Similarly, a loosening of restrictions on categorical funds would also help us to combat budget crises. Categorical funds are dollars that are apportioned by Sacramento and that must be spent on specific programs like School Improvement, 10th grade counseling, English Language Development, Early Intervention, School Safety, etc. Current law authorizes a school district to expend in any fiscal year up to 15% of the amount allocated for certain “block grant” programs for any other categorical program.

Unlimited flexibility would allow us to move bigger portions of money from programs that may have carryover or may have reduced need to programs like Special Education that always exceed their state funding and encroach on the General Fund. Being able to transfer more from under-spent funds would help us better utilize our total financial resources.

Flexibility in Class Size Reduction (CSR) regulations would also be extremely beneficial. For several years now LCUSD has participated in the CSR program for grades K-3 and for 9th grade math and English. In exchange for additional per pupil funding, we agree to keep classes in those areas to a maximum of 20 students. The state funds don't completely pay for the staffing costs but with additional contributions from the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation and the district General Fund, we are able to implement the smaller classes.

The problem, however, is that as soon as one additional student moves in and enrolls in a class already capped at 20, we must either pay a penalty or open up a new class that will now



La Cañada Unified School District

Cabinet

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have one student and that will cost us way more in staffing than we receive per student. The amount we receive for the K-3 CSR program, for example, is \$1,071 per pupil.

Permitting districts to enroll up to 21 or 22 when necessary and when a waiver request is submitted would mitigate the “one new student” dilemma and would not adversely affect the CSR program. This is not a step that needs endless deliberation or additional funds from Sacramento; it could be done right now.

Another major cost saver for us would be for the state to cut back on the overwhelming number of special reports we are forced to submit annually to the California Department of Education. In addition to School Accountability Report Cards and Single School Plans which are mandated for each school, we must submit extensive English Language Learner, Drug Free School, School Safety and other reports. The idea behind these reports is to hold schools accountable for student learning, but for high performing districts like ours, the paper work seems to be cumbersome and unnecessary. Scaling back the reports would allow us to consolidate staff and redirect their efforts.

None of the proposals made here would cost Sacramento additional money. None of the proposals would negatively impact student educational opportunities. Each of the proposals would, however, help us better manage the dollars we currently receive from Sacramento. There is no good reason for our legislators to not implement the ideas.

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Enoch Kwok



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