

Burns Takes the Helm at JM

By Lee Borrowman

The Moraga School District announced late last month that Los Perales Elementary School Principal Bruce Burns will succeed Catherine Mikes as principal of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. Mikes resigned the post earlier this summer for medical reasons. Superintendent Rick Shafer has also recommended to the Governing Board that it approve at its next meeting the appointment of Bill Walters, who has served as Assistant Principal and Principal of JM in the past, as the interim principal of Los Perales.

In announcing Burns' move to JM, Superintendent Rick Shafer stated, "The combination of his experience working within the Moraga School District, his outstanding management and administrative skills and his knowledge of our unique and wonderful community make Bruce ideally suited for this important leadership role." On the pending interim appointment of Walters to LP, Shafer says, "We are extremely lucky to have him."

Although Shafer had originally planned to recruit a new principal for JM from outside the district, after careful consideration he recommended to the Board that an internal candidate be sought and encouraged Moraga's three elementary school principals to consider the position. He explained, "We needed someone who was already familiar with the way the district works and who could successfully implement the positive changes initiated by Catherine Mikes. Bruce is a proven leader with prior middle school experience. Why would I turn down an internal candidate with tremendous skills and go looking for someone else? The Board and I were delighted that Bruce was willing to accept this challenge."

JM PTA President Erin Bydalek, who had children at Los Perales since it first reopened in 1996 and now at JM, is pleased that Burns will be leading the team. "I worked closely with Bruce on LP's site council, and more recently, I served with him on two district Coordinating Council committees. I found him to be engaged, thoughtful, and very committed to what is best for students. His experience as a principal and knowledge of the district will make him a great addition to JM," said Bydalek.

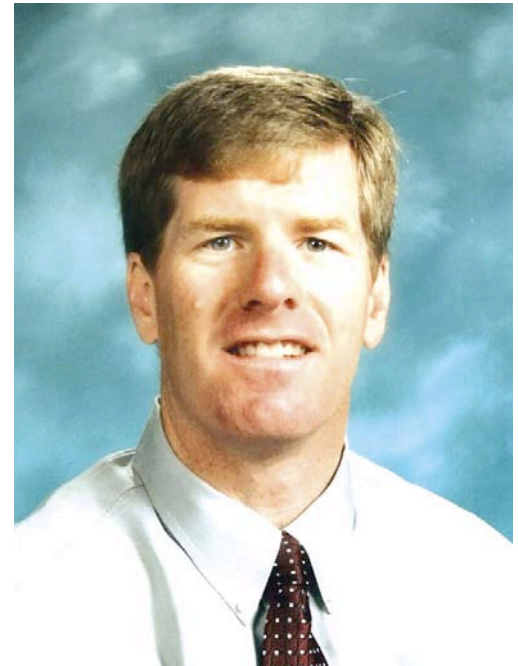
Burns is excited about the change: "I had not considered the JM job specifically; however, I was ready for new challenges and had been looking for some new opportunities." The decision to make the move to JM was not easy, he continued, "I've been at LP since August 15, 1996 and every day have worked with staff and parents to provide the best for LP kids. I truly enjoyed my work. As each day approaches toward my transition I find myself excited about working at JM, yet full of sadness as I leave wonderful students, staff and parents. I have been blessed to work with so many fabulous educators, students and parents and I am grateful to them for their support to establish LP

and maintain a quality educational program for all students."

His immediate goals for JM, Burns explains, "Are to plan for the opening (of the school year), implement the programs and activities that the JM staff began last year, and most importantly, take the time to listen to students, staff and parents to fully appreciate the school culture."

Burns is also preparing LP for the interim administrator, and is confident that the school will not suffer from the loss of its long-time principal. "Los Perales has a solid foundation, excellent operations in place and quite possibly the most talented and veteran staff ever. The PTA is incredibly well organized, productive and their impact at LP grows every year. Overall, LP is running very smoothly resulting in a high level of comfort for me in leaving to try something new."

The District timeline calls for a permanent principal to be in place at LP by January, 2008.



Bruce Burns



Bruce "Grease" Burns gets into the Halloween spirit

Photo by Judy Rowland



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