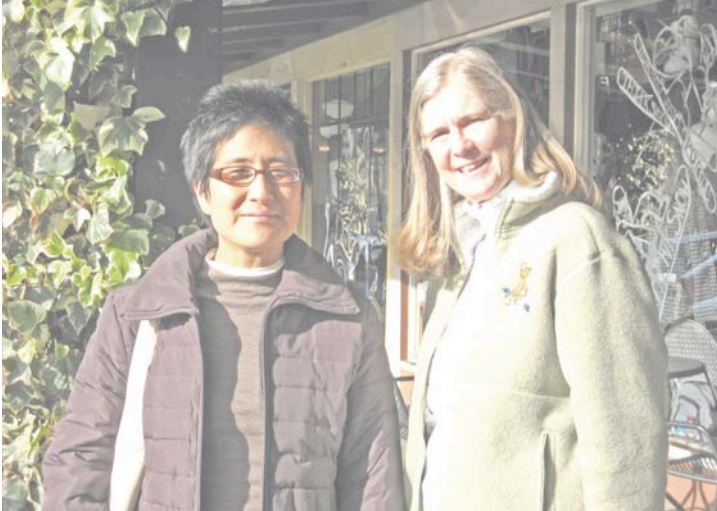


PTA Fieldtrip

Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs Goes To Sacramento; Beyond The Budgetary Crisis, Our Schools Need Fundamental Reform

By Sophie Braccini



(left to right) Diane Oshima and Cindy Millard, co-chairs of the Legislative Advocacy Team of the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs
Photo Sophie Braccini

“On the 2005 National Assessment of Education Progress, California ranked 7th lowest in eighth grade math among the 50 states, 3rd lowest in reading, and 2nd lowest in science... The low achievement of California’s students will almost certainly hurt their economic outcomes later in life.” These severe statements are part of the “Getting Down to Facts” study (“GDF”), a comprehensive research study ordered by a bi-partisan group in Sacramento. The investigation was conducted by researchers at Stanford University, with a mission to examine California’s school governance and finance systems. On February 27th, the Las Trampas Creek Council of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) will go to Sacramento to meet with policy makers and ask them what actions they intend to take after reviewing the report.

Now in its twenty-eighth year, this “Advocacy Day” will include PTAs and Parents Clubs from Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and Walnut Creek school districts, joining forces with San Ramon Valley, Alameda and Livermore. The day trip brings up to 200 parents, educators, district staff and board members to the place where decisions are made.

“It is important that a large group of voters from our area remind our elected officials that they are watched,” explains Cindy Millard, co-chair with Diane Oshima, of the Legislative Advocacy Team that is part of the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs, “We expect them to take action.”

The grim budget that was proposed by the Governor and its cut for education will be at the center stage as well. “With the looming budget crisis and the huge potential cuts to Lamorinda school district budgets next year, we will address the need to protect Proposition 98 funding, as well as addressing school reform,” says Oshima.

Jim Negri, Superintendent of the Acalanes High School District, believes that this trip is a very effective way to engage in a dialogue with policy makers. “The Governor is telling us that there won’t be any revenue enhancement to balance the State deficit and that we’ll have to deal with the cuts,” says Negri, “but the impact will be on the students. So we won’t lose track of the long term issues, but we have to communicate on the crisis we’re facing.”

The Las Trampas Group is presenting the Governor with a letter that highlights the priority actions as it has identified them: equalization funding, giving districts more local control, increasing the predictability of funding and fully funding special education. “Equalization is the key to more just and better funding,” explains Oshima, “the funding of our schools is based on a per student allowance. The amount of money that districts receive per student varies immensely, from \$450 to more than \$1000.” The system was established in the 70’s when our district was rural. Since then, demographics have changed considerably all over California but the system has not. Reforming it, will take years,” states Oshima, “but all too often elected officials do not want to dig into such a complex issues and would rather sponsor short term measures.”

“Going to Sacramento is about Citizenship,” insists Millard, in unison with the GDF study that concludes: “The failure to act now abrogates our public responsibility. Ultimately we fail our children, our families and the future of our State.”

All concerned members of the community are encouraged to participate; the dead line to register for the trip is February 15th. Go to <http://www.lastrampaspta.org/08AdvocacyDay.pdf>

To learn more about the GDF study go to:
<http://irepp.stanford.edu/documents/GDF/summary-paper-final.pdf>