

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union

High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, May 28 at 7:30 pm
Wednesday, June 18 at 7:30 pm

Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Tuesday, June 17 at 7:00 pm

Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, June 17 at 7:00 pm

Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, June 2 at 6:00 pm

School/Community Events

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Trip to Costa Rica.

Sixth-grade JM students interested in going on the 2009 Costa Rica trip must sign up by June 1st to guarantee the 2008 prices. Students can get a packet in their Science class if they still need one. Contact Ms. Lockett with any questions at klockett@moraga.k12.ca.us or 377-4249.

The Pirates of Penzance will be performed on June 4th & 5th at 1pm and 7pm in Lafayette School's multi-purpose room (950 Moraga Road). Tickets are \$5.00/adult and \$2.00/child.

Snoopy!!! Wagner Ranch Elementary School students will perform this Charles M. Schulz's musical comedy on June 6th at 4 pm and 7 pm and again on June 7th at 3 pm and 7 pm in the school multi-purpose room located at 350 Camino Pablo in Orinda. For ticket information go to <http://www.orindaschools.org/wagnerranch/site/default.asp>

Enthusiastic Summer Reading Teen Volunteers Wanted. The Lafayette Library is looking for enthusiastic and energetic teens to help with the Summer Reading Program, *Catch the Reading Bug*. Teens must be entering 7th grade or above in the Fall and available to work one or two 2-hour shifts per week from June 9 through August 18. Interested volunteers should visit the Library and complete an application. For more information please contact Rebekah Brainich at 925-283-3872.

May Revise Softens the Blow to School Budgets—Just a Bit

By Andrea A. Firth



Teresa Gerringer

Photo Andrea A. Firth

The usual crowd of school administrators, teacher and classified employee representatives, school board members, and concerned parents gathered in the blistering heat on May 15th to listen to statements by several members of the Contra Costa County school system and their reaction to the Governor's May Revise to the state budget.

"The work that has been done in the community letting the legislature know of our dissatisfaction needs to continue," stated Joseph Ovick, Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools. "The Governor's May Revise is moving in the right direction but it has a long way to go," he added.

Teresa Gerringer, a member of the Lafayette School District Governing Board, concurred. "While the May Revise is an improvement over the January budget, we can not become complacent," she stated. "We need to continue to write letters, send emails, make phone calls, and stand together to protect education funding," she implored.

In a subsequent communication to stakeholders of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) about the impact of the May Revise on public school fund-

ing, Superintendent Jim Negri acknowledged that the Governor's decision to fully fund Proposition 98 is an improvement over the state's January budget. However, Negri noted that California public schools would receive \$4.2 billion less in state funds next year with no cost-of living-adjustment for employees and in the face of increased operating costs. Funding for categorical programs, such as class size reduction and counseling services, would be cut by 10%, although AUHSD would be able to absorb some of these cuts through parent club and foundation donations.

Negri found the Governor's plan to borrow against future lottery earnings troubling due to the proposed cap to the lottery revenues contributed to schools and due to the potential risk to education funding should lottery revenues be insufficient to repay the proposed loan. Negri also noted that the impact of the need for voter approval in November for the lottery proposal to be viable on the passage of the state budget this summer was unclear.

What seems to be clear is that more will transpire over the next several weeks as budget deliberations continue.

The First Interview

By Jean Follmer



Fall 2008 Kindergarteners Caroline Sween (Lafayette), Mac Follmer (Springhill) and Peter Husch (Lafayette)

Photo Jean Follmer

Interviews start early around here! No longer reserved for the private schools, some of our Lamorinda public schools have begun offering an optional Early Kindergarten Interview to their incoming students. Jeannie Pitney, a Springhill Reading Specialist, said "The purpose of the interview is to gather a very beginning sense of how we can group our new kindergarteners into balanced classes."

The Early Kindergarten Interview process was established last year at Springhill and "the feedback about the interview process from the kindergarten teaching team this year has been very positive." The interview lasts approximately 10-15 minutes and allows the kindergarten team to get a snapshot of each child in a classroom setting. The children "have the opportunity to draw a picture and write his/her name." There are also "a few activities that relate to early literacy and math." The interview "is not a readiness screening." Readiness and development questions should be addressed with your child's preschool teacher and/or pediatrician.

Lafayette Elementary began offering the interview this year and parent Lisa Sween said her daughter Caroline "was really eager to go through the process and seemed happy when she came out of the room." Lafayette parent Karin Husch said her son Peter "told me the

teachers asked him to draw a picture of himself and write his name. Then I believe they asked him some questions about the alphabet and numbers." Incoming Springhill kindergartener Mac Follmer reflected on his interview saying "I like it that they do ABC's and stuff and I know that stuff. Miss Leona's been getting us ready for kindergarten." Miss Leona is Caroline, Peter and Mac's pre-K teacher at Joyful Beginnings Preschool in Lafayette.

Balanced classes benefit the teachers and students in many ways and kindergarten is the only grade in which this isn't easily accomplished. After kindergarten, balanced classrooms can be more easily achieved simply because the teachers and administrators already have some information about the students. They've seen them perform academically, they know their respective personalities and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Having a balance of academic aptitude, personalities, gender and number of students helps the teachers know what to expect in the classroom and saves them some time in the beginning of the year. Jeannie Pitney said, "We had great participation for the 2008 Early Kindergarten Interviews. The parent support validated our efforts in building a foundation for balanced classes."



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Sue Rusk To Lead Burton Valley Elementary

By Andrea A. Firth

Sue Rusk is looking forward to "going back home" when she takes on her new role as Principal of Burton Valley Elementary School in Lafayette the summer. Raised in the Burton Valley neighborhood where she attended St. Perpetua School, Rusk worked as a third grade teacher at Burton Valley Elementary for seven years and as Assistant Principal at the site for another nine years. Now after four years as the Assistant Principal at Stanley Middle School, Rusk will return to lead the elementary school of over 700 students.

"I'm really looking forward to reconnecting with everyone there," says Rusk.

Rusk's appointment as Burton Valley's Principal was greeted with a round of applause from the room full of supporters who gathered at the recent Lafayette School District Governing Board meeting in anticipation of the announcement. "We feel like we selected the

best candidate," stated School Board President Stephenie Teichman. "She was just the right fit."

When asked about managing a school in the turmoil of today's school budget crisis, Rusk notes that good communication is essential. "Our parent community is great, and these partnerships are crucial," she explains. "We have to partner with the community, and let people know why the decisions are being made," she adds.

A self-described multi-tasker, Rusk plans to bring her organiza-



Sue Rusk at her desk

Photo Andrea A. Firth

tional and listening skills to her new position. She smiles broadly when asked about returning to her old school and the elementary-age setting. "I love working with kids. Elementary school is such an exciting time for kids. They are learning to read. Everything is fresh and new."

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