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Continuity at the Head of Camino Pablo Elementary

By *Sophie Braccini*



(from left to right), Neil Jennings, Mary Thomas, Deborah Roden and Diane Haley Photo Sophie Braccini

"I am beyond happy," says Deborah Roden, future Principal at Camino Pablo Elementary (C.P.). "I feel like I'm in Heaven." The woman who will fill Neil Jennings's shoes come August, believes that the school and the community are a perfect fit for her, her values and her experience.

Roden is bringing to C.P. a rich and diverse experience all based in California education.

She taught K-7 grades for more than 10 years, then changed the focus of her career to administration. She became a resource teacher in a magnet school, then got her master's degree and served as vice-principal and principal in different greater Bay Area schools. She presently works for the Lodi School District as coordinator of professional development.

Her diverse experience taught her that focus, consistency and continuity make for better results. She observed and practiced this method teaching teachers and implementing methodologies and curriculum across a whole district. "We were very impressed by Deborah Roden's caliber," said Moraga School Superintendent Rick Shafer. "She will be a great addition to our team and we're looking forward to working with her."

The distressed situation of Lodi's school district motivated Roden to look for another job. "I looked for another opportunity that would allow me to fulfill my absolute passion, working with children," she said. Roden chose Moraga for many reasons: The community resembles the small town where she was raised near Santa Cruz; and its values seem to offer the kind of environment she likes best, where families share the same values of respect, security, manners, and of course have high expectation for learning.

She feels ready for the challenges of the position. "Where I am now I balance the objectives and requirements of 50 schools, 2,000 teachers, and 125 staff," she said. "As a principal, I will do the same with different constituencies, parents, students, and district." She feels she understand the demands of the Moraga parents. As a mother, she has the same high level of expectation for her own children. "The main focus is to give children a well rounded education, with a strong core of learning," she adds.

When she starts next fall she is not planning to revolutionize the place. "I'll gently make the transition, I will watch, I will listen and I will learn," she says. "Of course I have my own personality and experiences, but I will wait before changing anything."

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