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Lafayette School District Wants Help Planning for the Future

By Cathy Tyson

"Shift happens," is the creative colloquialism that describes what's going on with the Lafayette School District. Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill along with the Governing Board and District Administrators were at Stanley Intermediate School recently to kick off the official Strategic Planning Process to guide the District for the next five years.

The process is meant "To provide direction to what the district should start doing, stop doing and keep doing" summarized Brill. Clearly staff shares a collaborative view of their vision toward student success

Input from all stakeholder groups is critical in molding the strategic plan, with end goal of creating a roadmap for the District. This is the time for teachers, parents and the community to offer their opinions about what is working and what needs some adjustments.

District administrators are offering a number of ways for residents to get involved. The team will be taking the show on the road visiting Burton Valley, Happy Valley, Lafayette Elementary and Springhill through the month of February with teacher meetings in the late afternoon and parent community meetings in the evening. Everyone is encouraged to attend a meeting, but for those that can't make it, participation is welcomed in the online Strategic Planning Survey 2012 - four simple anonymous questions. For those that just want to read all about it, the District has also posted a comprehensive, very organized and user-friendly strategic planning portal link, front and center on the Lafayette School District homepage www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

Feeling out of the academic loop? There's much more going on than reading, writing and 'rithmetic at Lafayette's five elementary schools and one intermediate school. Five priority areas are the focus of the strategic plan. The first, arguably the most important area, is student achievement - specifically higher level critical thinking. "Students are learning a different way to think about thinking," said Rachel Zinn, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, adding, "math instruction is being transformed." Audience members were bowled over by the PowerPoint presentation that explained just a snippet of how this process works.

The balance of the priority areas include: Finance - maintaining a sustainable budget, Healthy kids - healthy adults, Globalization - which includes non-English language instruction, and Technology. Part of the Character Counts program, that falls under the Healthy Kids umbrella teaches ways for students to do the right thing, just because it's the right thing to do. "We look at it as more pro-respect versus anti-bullying," said Zinn.

Through the direction of the Superintendent and staff, the point of the Strategic planning process is to support and guide the District's mission: We embrace a rigorous, comprehensive curriculum to provide a quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. We commit to meet the needs of all students, to foster continuous learning and to promote respect.

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