

Dealing with the School Budget

350 Guest Commentary

By Superintendent Christine Lim

San Leandro Unified School District, like other districts throughout the state, is experiencing deep pain as we struggle with the painful education cuts due to the state fiscal crisis.

Not only is it painful, it is time consuming, and often confusing to grapple with the constantly changing budget information coming from our state capitol. One of our Board Trustees compared it to trying to paint a moving car. Although this is difficult, I am happy to report that we were able to do this while preserving the art, music and physical education elementary specialists program for the upcoming 2009-10 school year.

Our District and the community have a strong commitment to the arts, understanding how the arts contribute to the development of the whole child. Most districts without a parcel tax or have another local source of funding, have not been able to offer music and art specialists for many years. Given the distressing economic forecast, we may have to look at this program again in the future, but for now, our students are receiving a stellar arts enrichment program.

In March, our students performed in their Band and String Concerts to the delight of families, staff and community members. We are so fortunate that we are able to provide instrumental music to our students, and I want to give a great big "shout out" to former Board Trustee Rick Richards and the Keep Music Rockin' Foundation, which has raised nearly \$60,000 to support our music program and purchase instruments. Music is truly the universal language, and our students continue to develop fluency and bring joy to our community through their talent, dedication and passion.

Our San Leandro High School Advanced Placement Art students also showcase their work at the San Leandro History Museum and Art Gal-

lery every March, which is National Art Education month. This is a deep interest of mine, as I serve on the Alameda County Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership and am on the committee currently developing a strategic plan for the County which will integrate arts across curriculum, deepen understanding on how essential the arts are to student success, and help shape public policy to ensure access for all students to a quality arts education.

In San Leandro, we are in partnership with the Alameda County Office of Education, and Lois Hetland, Ph.D., Harvard School of Education on an exciting arts initiative: the Arts Integration for Equitable Outcomes Teacher Action Research Initiative (TARI) that is providing professional development to our arts specialists and our fourth grade teachers and is serving as a model for other districts in the county. This project is integrating the arts across curriculum and providing teachers and art specialists professional development on culturally relevant teaching strategies and the "Eight Studio Habits of Mind" that deepen critical thinking skills of our budding young artists.

In the Bay Area, we are rich in opportunities to enjoy the visual and performing arts. Join me in taking advantage of these cultural riches, including opportunities to see our San Leandro students perform or exhibit their work. The artists in our community, young and old, play a vital role in shaping our future, documenting our past and present, and enriching our lives beyond measure.



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