



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN PON

The sixth grade band class at Washington Manor Middle School played in front of the school last Thursday to draw attention to potential cuts to the music program.

Schools Protest, Play Music To Make a Point about Budget

By Amy Sylvestri
San Leandro Times

Parents, teachers, and students all over the state protested last Thursday, urging state legislators to not cut funding to California's public schools.

Over the past few weeks, the San Leandro and San Lorenzo school districts have made some tough cuts. In late February, San Leandro announced \$2.7 million worth of cuts. On March 2, the San Lorenzo board authorized over \$7 million in cuts,

which may result in the elimination of 109 full time equivalent positions.

During the school board meetings, the mood was contentious, with public speakers alternately angrily berated the board for cutting staff and begging for positions to be saved. But on Thursday, many teachers and parents joined administrators and organized "Stand Up for Schools" rallies.

In San Lorenzo, a series of "disaster drills" were
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Protest: Drivers honk for band

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held to emphasize what teachers called a state of emergency in the public school system.

San Lorenzo High students in Mike Jones' government, history, and economics classes made posters and stood along I-238.

"We got quite a few honks of support," said Jones, who added that the day was positive, because teachers, students, and district administrators were all working together to benefit schools.

In addition to the freeway protest, Jones and his class also called Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's office on their speaker phone. They didn't get a chance to speak with the governor himself, but Jones said his secretary was pretty amused by the class' enthusiasm.

"We did a call-and-response sort of cheer," said Jones. "I told him to reprise his role in "Kin-

ergarten Cop" and look at the budget from that point of view."

During their regular class periods, students in art and music classes performed outside many schools.

At Washington Manor Middle School, kids in the beginning band program came out on the front lawn and played music, showing off what they have learned so far this school year.

"The day before we practiced in class and talked about why we were doing it," said sixth-grader Jeremy Pon, who has learned tenor sax this year. They performed six songs including "Hot Cross Buns" and "Jingle Bells."

Jeremy's mom, Susan Pon, said that cuts to the music and art programs would devastate her son and the rest of San Lorenzo's
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Protest: Quiet protest

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students.

"He studied piano privately in elementary school, but he just wasn't as enthusiastic about it as he is now," said Pon. "Music classes are a social thing, too. The kids bond and talk about music at lunch."

A more somber protest was also held at the juvenile justice center, with teachers picketing outside the jail, bearing signs that read "Build schools, not jails."

Annie Green teaches one of the 15 classes that are held at juvenile hall, serving some of the county's most at-risk students. She says that cuts may disenfranchise students, who might then turn to crime.

Alameda County Superintendent of School Sheila Jordan also spoke at the rally.

"The majority of the people in the legislature want to do what's right for schools," said Jordan. "We've got to let them hear our voices."
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