

MDUSD MONDAY MEMO

A Weekly Update of District Activities and Education-related Issues
from the Superintendent's Office, Mt. Diablo Unified School District

Week of March 23, 2009

Board looks to future, considers what to restore when revenue improves

For the last several years, but especially recently, the subject of budget cuts has received a lot of attention. As has been reported in previous issues of the *Monday Memo*, the growing state budget crisis has forced the District leadership to cut the MDUSD budget by approximately \$45 million, beginning in 2003 and extending through the next school year, 2009-2010. While all of the cuts have impacted employees and programs over the years, the most recent ones--\$8 million worth in next year's budget, approved at the March 3, 2009 Board of Education meeting (and listed in the *Monday Memo* for the Week of March 2)--hit closest to the classroom. They will result in larger class sizes and fewer library services at all grade levels and include school vice principals and custodians, psychologists and classroom assistants, 4th grade instrumental music and high school athletics.

At tomorrow night's meeting, Tuesday, March 24, the Board of Education will take a break from budget cutting and look to the future, when through a parcel tax or other funding source, the District will have revenue to add back some of the programs. At a planning meeting on March 14 the Board gave its initial consideration to adding back programs and positions. It created two categories, Tier 1 (school-based programs) and Tier 2 (other), and tentatively listed some preferences under each. Tomorrow night it will consider that earlier work along with recommendations from staff with the intent of adopting priorities for each Tier.

Tier 1 items, taken from the cuts approved on March 3, 2009, are listed here in no particular order of priority:

- Elementary school vice principals
- Middle school vice principals
- High school vice principals
- Secondary school librarians
- PM Custodians
- Elementary Instructional Media Assistants
- 4th grade instrumental music
- High school athletics
- Groundskeepers
- Resource Specialists
- Special Education Assistants
- Psychologists
- Site Technicians
- Campus Supervisors

CDE has web site to address achievement gap

The California Department of Education (CDE) has unveiled a new web site designed as a general education approach to closing the achievement gap. Called "Response to Instruction and Intervention" (RTI²) the site is located at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/index.asp>. It provides no- or low-cost instructional strategies for students who struggle to achieve due to cultural, economic, language, or physical/mental disability issues.

According to the CDE, "Response to Instruction and Intervention encompasses high-quality instruction, early intervention, and prevention and behavioral strategies. By using culturally relevant, research-based instruction, continuous assessments of student learning, and increased parental involvement, RTI² aims to catch students before their educational problems grow and they need more intensive instruction."

In addition to instructional strategies, the site contains information on the philosophy and core components of Response to Instruction and Intervention and lists many available resources.

Student and Staff Successes

United Way supports Foster Youth Program

The District's Foster Youth Services program has received a \$60,000 grant from the United Way of the Bay Area to support foster youth preparing to transition out of the foster care system. James Wogan, MDUSD administrator of school-linked services, said the grant award is great news. The funding will be used to provide intensive services and support for foster youth in 11th and 12th grade, helping them achieve educational success, graduate from high school, connect with employment and higher education opportunities, and prevent homelessness in the future. James offered a heartfelt "thank you" to "the United Way of the Bay Area for their assistance and support!"

College Park musicians to perform at Carnegie Hall

They clearly passed the audition. Last week the College Park High School Symphony Orchestra received an invitation to participate in the 5th Annual New York International Music Festival, which will be held at Carnegie Hall in Spring 2011. In a letter to CPHS Music Director O.L. (Johnny) Johnson, the festival's artistic director, Dr. Lawrence Sutherland, congratulated the ensemble musicians who performed the audition recording. Of the many groups from around the world that apply for the annual festival, only six high school or youth ensembles are accepted to participate. The festival organizers told Director Johnson, "We are very pleased to have a program of your quality involved in the Festival and we look forward to working with you towards the event! Congratulations, Johnny, to you and your outstanding program."

Local PTAs contribute to state PTA award

The national PTA has honored the California PTA with its "Outstanding Advocacy Award" for its "Flunk the Budget" campaign last year. The state organization was credited for the "thousands of PTA leaders and members [who] visited legislators, wrote letters, participated in phone banks, and attended state and local rallies as part of the grassroots effort to protect funding for education and other crucial children's programs." Locally, the Mt. Diablo Council PTA has 26 PTA schools that were involved in the campaign in one capacity or another, so they deserve a share of this recognition.

Wren Avenue PTA helps students help nursery

More than 350 Wren Avenue Elementary students experienced the joy of giving at a Valentine's Assembly in February. Encouraged by the school PTA and its president, Michele Blake, they had collected goods for the Bay Area Crisis Nursery and, at the assembly, gave them to Sister Ann Weltz, founder and executive director of the nursery. Sister Weltz said she was "touched and impressed with the children's caring, sharing and generosity, and their attentiveness and excellent behavior in the assembly."

In others' words . . . on generosity

"The spirit in which a thing is given determines that in which the debt is acknowledged; it's the intention, not the face-value of the gift, that's weighed."-- Lucius Annaeus Seneca

"Give, give, give. What is the point of having experience, knowledge, or talent if I don't give it away?"--Isabel Allende

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Winston Churchill

"You always get back much more than you give." Jimmy Carter

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