

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 April 20, 2009

Will Federal Stimulus Funds Help Mt. Diablo Unified?

Within days of learning late last week that California will receive \$4.9 billion in federal State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF) over this year and next, Mt. Diablo USD staff had completed an application for a share of those funds. The application will be presented to the MDUSD Board of Education at its April 28 meeting for review and approval before being submitted to the grant agency .

The SFSF is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the federal stimulus package sponsored by President Obama, and is specifically earmarked for public education. Of the \$4.9 billion that California is to receive, \$3.1 billion is available as a first installment, which will be distributed among public school districts, county offices of education, direct-funded charter schools, and state colleges and universities that apply and meet the criteria.

The SFSF requires applicants to show progress on four reforms previously authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the America Competes Act of 2007:

- Making progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities;
- Establishing pre-K-to college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement;
- Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need;
- Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

So what does this mean for Mt. Diablo Unified? Can we rescind any layoff notices? Restore any student programs?

Frankly, at this point, it's too early to say how this funding will impact the District. The federal stimulus package is welcome news. After years of deep cuts in state revenues, almost any additional funding will help. However, many details are still not known.

One thing that is known: SFSF is one-time money and much of it is restricted to specific expenses. One-time money may not help the District avoid laying off teachers and other employees whose salaries are on-going expenses. Using one-time money to pay for on-going costs may put the District in a deeper hole next year.

While the SFSF is welcome, other on-going revenue sources are still essential. Plenty of uncertainty continues to surround the state budget. Even if the statewide propositions pass on May 19--and there's no assurance they will--more cuts in the state budget are possible next year. More will be known when the Governor presents his revised budget proposal in late May or early June.

Passage of Measure D, the parcel tax initiative on the May 19 ballot, would provide Mt. Diablo with 7 million dollars a year in on-going revenue that it could count on for several years. District staff, parents, students, and community members are putting a lot of energy into the campaign. A reliable source of local funding along with increases in state and federal revenues would collectively produce an optimistic picture about restoring positions and programs in the District. Until there is some assurance that the District will receive those monies, the picture will be hazy.

District Teachers of the Year Announced

If someone had told **Jacques Casamajor** and **Linn Kissinger** five years ago that they would be Mt. Diablo USD's nominees for Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year in 2009, they may have laughed in disbelief. At that time each was just stepping into a teaching career after years of following other interests. Each clearly found a calling, as their nominations attest.

Jacques spent five years in the corporate world after earning his B.A. in Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Oregon. Wanting work that felt more meaningful to him, he earned his teaching credential and, in his first assignment, found his niche--at Valley View Middle School, where he has taught 7th grade resource collaborative core English and Social Studies classes since Fall 2004 and been chair of the Social Studies Department since 2007. In 2006 and 2008 the school PTA has recognized him with its "Very Special Person" award for contributing to the lives of students.

Linn discovered her love of teaching while volunteering in her son's kindergarten classroom. His first grade teacher encouraged her to get a credential. After another two years as an active parent volunteer, she returned to college and earned a B.A. in liberal studies, a teaching credential, and an M.A. in curriculum over the course of four years at CSU, Hayward (now East Bay). She came to MDUSD in 2003 as a substitute teacher and taught 2nd grade at Delta View for two years before transferring to El Monte and a 4th grade classroom in 2006. She presently teaches a combination 4/5 class and chairs the Curriculum Committee. She developed the school's Student Council and a 5th Grade Girls' Lunchtime Club while also serving as a mentor for new teachers at the school.

Employee Recognition, Thanks Especially Welcome This Year

With hundreds of teachers, administrators, and support staff in the District--and thousands throughout the state--recently receiving notices of possible layoff, it's important to express appreciation for each employee's work, efforts, and commitment to students. Annual employee recognition dates are as follows:

- California Day of the Teacher: Wednesday, May 13

- Classified Employees Week: May 18-22
- District Retirement Reception:
Retirees will be honored at a reception on Wednesday, May 13, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Pleasant Hill Community Center.

Meeting Reminders

Details of the meetings listed below were provided in the April 6 Monday Memo.

Tuesday, April 21: Panel to discuss Foster Care Opportunities

An expert panel of service providers, community organizations, volunteers will discuss "Foster Care Opportunities" at a public meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Mt Diablo High School, 2450 Grant Street, Concord.

Wednesday, April 29: "Cyber Safety," or How to Keep Kids Safe Online

A workshop for parents, teachers and service providers to hear about ways to protect children from dangers they may encounter on the Internet will take place from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at Heald College, 5130 Commercial Circle, Concord. Registration fee is \$10; initial deadline has passed. To inquire about late registration, contact Juliana Granzotto at 925-335-1092 or Jgran@cao.cccounty.us.

Friday, May 8: National Board Certification information for teachers

Teachers interesting in learning how to earn National Board Certification are invited to a meeting from 3:45 to 5 p.m. in Room 16 at Olympic High, 2730 Salvio Street, Concord.

In others' words . . . *on dealing with hard times*

"Adversity not only draws people together but brings forth that beautiful inward friendship, just as the cold winter forms ice figures on the window panes which the warmth of the sun effaces." ~ Soren Kierkegaard

"All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me . . . You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you." ~ Walt Disney

"You never know how a horse will pull until you hook him to a heavy load." ~ Bear Bryant

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