

# School News

Belmont-Redwood Shores School District

Volume 1, Issue 2

## School Board

- Eric Shrader, President
- Karen Clancy, Vice President
- Cathy Wright, Clerk
- M.J. Crousore
- Sharon Thompson

Next Board meeting: Thursday, March 3, 7 p.m., at the District Office, 2960 Hallmark Drive.

## School Calendar

**Mar. 14, 2005**

3rd Trimester Begins at Ralston

**Mar. 15-22, 2005**

Parent-Teacher Conferences

**Mar. 28-31, 2005**

Spring Break

**Apr. 1, 2005**

Cesar Chavez Day Holiday

## Superintendent's Letter

I have several important items to share with the school community in this issue of *School News*. To begin with, our budget picture is looking brighter. We originally forecasted a budget shortfall of \$600,000 to \$700,000 for the 2005-2006 school year, after Measure G passed in November 2004. A part of that projection was due to a proposed increase in our State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) contributions. The Governor's budget this year proposes to transfer the state's contribution to the school districts. For Belmont-Redwood Shores, this would add a \$237,000 cost to an already tight budget.

The good news is that we are fairly certain that this proposal will



**Superintendent John McIntosh**

be defeated on the floor of the Legislature. The other piece of good news is that we have gained approximately \$350,000 in one-time money for the general fund due to two significant actions: We refinanced our COP (Certificate of Participation), which is money we have borrowed through bonds for initial construction of Sandpi-

per; and we refinanced our General Obligation bond (GO), which is bond money we used to modernize our schools and to complete Phase 2 of Sandpiper.

The savings on the bond refinances, combined with projected STRS savings, help narrow the budget deficit. However, there is still more work to do on next year's budget. Even with the Measure G Parcel Tax funds and a \$300,000 School-Force contribution, we still need to maintain a tighter staffing allotment at our school sites and watch our revenue and expenditure flow carefully to get to a balanced budget.

Many of you have contacted me

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## Electronic Arts Learning Center Opens for Business

The Electronic Arts Community Learning Center (CLC) opened on January 15 and is doing a brisk business. Housed in a completely renovated building at the back of Nesbit Elementary School, the CLC is outfitted with blonde wood tables and chairs and poster-sized photos of kids using the lab's new equipment. The room is sleek and uncluttered, but it actually is packed with some of the most powerful educational technology

available. The equipment includes five networked PCs, printers, scanners, networking hardware, an interactive whiteboard, a data projector, digital video cameras, digital cameras, and (the heart of the lab) three mobile carts that each hold 15 wireless laptop computers, as well as two large duffel bags that each hold 7 wireless laptops.

The CLC—funded largely by Electronic Arts, as well as with donations from Oracle and the Peninsula Com-

munity Foundation—was created to enhance the teaching and learning experience in the District. Last summer, 90 percent of the Nesbit staff and at least one teacher from each school in the District came to the CLC to learn how to use the available technology. These teachers also attend staff development trainings once a month to help them share what they've learned with the other teachers at

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# School News

## Letter, continued from Page 1

*“In order to achieve success in addressing important issues, the solutions we choose and implement must incorporate the involvement of parents, staff, and others who live in our community.”—*

*Superintendent John McIntosh*

with questions regarding the School Board’s recent resolution to the enrollment issue at Sandpiper Elementary. In this letter, I’ll outline the Board’s plan; on the insert in this newsletter, I’ll answer specific questions that you might have about the plan.

The enrollment plan includes the following items:

- A Prop. 39 School Facilities Improvement District Bond Measure will be placed on the ballot for Redwood Shores/Belmont Shores to construct a new school that will accommodate the 900 elementary students that will be residing in Redwood Shores by 2009.
- For the 2005-2006 school year, all Redwood Shores/Belmont Shores kindergartners will attend Nesbit Elementary, while those in grades 1 through 5 will attend Sandpiper.
- For the 2006-2007 school year, all Redwood Shores/Belmont Shores kindergartners and 1<sup>st</sup> graders will attend Nesbit, while those in grades 2 through 5 will attend Sandpiper.
- For the 2007-2008 school year, the process will continue.
- When a site is located and the bond has passed, the Board will draw the attendance area boundaries to fit the new school.
- If a site is not located or the

bond does not pass, the boundaries will be redrawn in advance of the 2009-2010 enrollment period.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Board for its hard work on this issue. Each board member put an incredible amount of time and energy into the process, while keeping sight of three primary objectives: to create an enrollment plan that would reflect the District Mission and Core Principles, work toward the best interests of all students in the District, and use district resources effectively and efficiently. It was not an easy job.

I would also like to thank the participants in the enrollment study sessions. They took on the difficult task of identifying fair and workable solutions to the overcrowding issue at Sandpiper and coming to a consensus on the options. Their work was an important part of the Board’s overall effort.

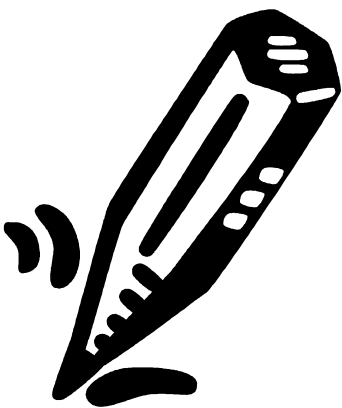
Over the past year, the Board and the entire school community have faced some very difficult issues from budget shortfalls to burgeoning enrollment at Sandpiper. In order to achieve success in addressing these issues, the solutions we choose and implement must incorporate the involvement of parents, staff, and others who live in our community.

I encourage you to attend and to participate in the upcoming 2005-2006 budget development meetings. On February 17, school staff and parents from each school participated in a board study ses-

sion on the budget and made recommendations to the Board. The budget development process will be addressed at regularly scheduled board meetings with a final adoption of the 2005-2006 budget anticipated at the June 16 board meeting.

In addition to these and regularly scheduled board meetings, the District will be holding three community forums. These forums were designed as a way for the school community to interact with the Board on issues that are important to them. The first forum—which included the Sandpiper and Nesbit communities, as well as district staff, and board members Cathy Wright and M.J. Crousore—was held February 16. The second forum—with those from Central, Cipriani, and Fox, district staff, and board members Eric Shrader and Karen Clancy—will meet Wednesday, March 2, at 7 p.m. in the Cipriani Multi-Use Room. The open forum at Ralston will be held Wednesday, March 9, at 7 p.m. Please plan to attend these meetings and to share your ideas and concerns with us.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for the staff, parents, and community members who worked so hard to pass Measure G. With their help, and with the ongoing input and participation of our school community, we can continue to provide the programs and services that are essential to providing our children a high-quality education.—John McIntosh



## Board Notes

Hello. As your new board president, I would personally like to invite you to an upcoming school board meeting. You will see representative democracy in action and can gain insights for yourself into how your board is thinking on the issues. Sometimes, as has been the case recently during our discussion regarding proposed solutions for the district enrollment issue, we have a full house, with many people engaged in the process. Much of the time, though, we have very few folks in attendance.

At each board meeting, we are making decisions that will affect all of our students and the community at large. I encourage you to keep an eye on our agenda for items that interest you and to attend a meeting or two to get a feel for how we do business. The

process will then be more familiar to you if an item arises that you feel passionate about.

Many people, during my three years on the Board have said things like: "I didn't know you have been discussing this issue," or "Why wasn't I asked for my input?" and "When did you make that decision?" We are your board, we discuss almost everything in public, and you are invited at each meeting to provide us input on district business. In 343 BC, Aristotle said, "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost."

These words are as true today as they were then. Your board needs you to share in the governance of

your district, by providing your input on the issues facing us all, by listening to our deliberations and thought processes, and by helping us communicate with the greater community.

We believe that the parents in our district want the very best education for their children, and we as a board want to provide the support for our professional staff and our wonderful teachers to make that happen.

Our role in this is not really to run the district—that is our staff's responsibility—but rather to make sure that the District is well run. In order to do that effectively, we need input from everyone involved. Again I personally invite you to come and participate in that process.—Eric Shrader



**School Board President Eric Shrader**

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their schools.

Jeanine Woodell, the director of the CDC, shares some ways teachers are using this new equipment at Nesbit:

"A 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher had her students present their autobiographies, complete with digital photos, using PowerPoint presentations," she says. "The kids loved it.

"A 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher used the interactive whiteboard to teach a unit on money. Using the whiteboard's special pen, students gathered nickels, dimes, and quarters from the screen to make stacks of

coins that each represented one dollar."

In addition, the center is open to students before and after school. Mrs. Woodell and volunteer high school students from the San Carlos Charter School staff the center in the morning to offer homework support to Nesbit students. Nesbit parents help staff the after-school homework center. "In the morning there are usually 15 kids in here," says Mrs. Woodell. "After school, there are 20 to 25 students."

The Community Learning Center was made possible with a gener-

ous grant from Electronic Arts. In addition, Oracle, Corp., is funding the director position at the CLC; and The Peninsula Community Foundation has provided a planning grant and may provide ongoing funding.

In March, the CLC Leadership team will meet to plan the implementation of Phase II. The goals of Phase II include providing community access to the center, making it a resource for parents, hiring a bilingual afternoon coordinator, and recruiting volunteers for one-on-one tutoring. —Jill Aldrich



**A Nesbit student works on one of the new laptops in the Community Learning Center.**

## School News

Non-Profit Organization

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### Suggestion Box

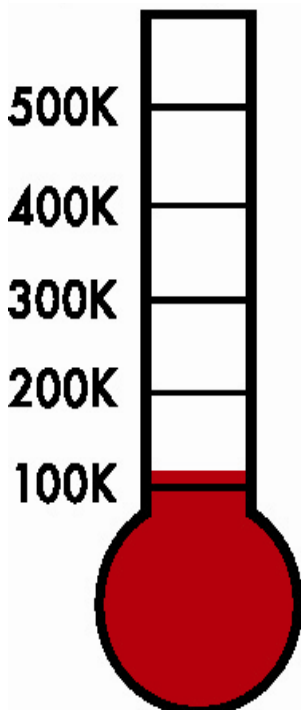
*School News* is a publication of the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District. We are interested in hearing what you would like to see in this newsletter. Is there an issue you would like us to address? Do you have a question about a District policy or a decision?

Please email us at [schoolnews@belmont.k12.ca.us](mailto:schoolnews@belmont.k12.ca.us). We'd be happy to hear from you.

### School-Force Update

#### 2004-2005 Goal

**\$600,000**



#### School-Force Annual Giving Campaign Bumps Total to

**\$115,000:** Donations to our Annual Giving Campaign and proceeds from Save the Music total \$115,000 this school year.

#### Local Businesses Get In-

**volved:** We have had some recent donations from local businesses and foundations that are partnering with us to support our kids and schools. We've also had great input into our long term plan from several local businesspeople who participated in a business round-table. Thank you to Dave Warden, Belmont's Mayor, Janet Pepe Davis of Carlmont Associates, Emily Lim of RE/MAX, and Wendy Haller and Patty Vilcsek of Wells Fargo.

**Reading Power!:** The Reading Power read-a-thon will be held **March 4-18th**. During these two weeks, our elementary school students will raise money by soliciting and collecting pledges based on the number of books/chapters that they read. Get those books ready!

#### How will School-Force dollars be allocated next year?:

Next year's budget deficit is projected to be more than \$300,000, even with the passage of Measure G. School-Force has already raised \$115,000, which will help offset possible cuts. Our goal is to raise \$600,000, which will allow us not just to maintain, but also to improve the quality of education in our schools.

#### Preferred Realtors/Lenders:

We encourage you to support our Preferred Realtors/Lenders, who last year donated more than \$9000 to School-Force.

**Chuck Green**, American Family Funding, 631-1800

**Adele Della Santina**, Cashin & Co., 343-3700

**Helen Cross**, Coldwell Banker, 596-5425

**Adrienne Krause**, Carlmont Associates, 590-4543

**Haifa Houry**, RE/MAX, 598-8718

**Emily Lim**, RE/MAX, 637-1100

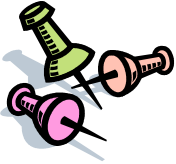
**Janet Pepe Davis**, Carlmont Associates, 508-7885

**Dawn-Marie Tragoutsis**, Cashin & Co., 403-6216

**Stella Martinez**, Prudential California Realty, 342-9252 ext. 361

**Tom Stone**, Coldwell Banker (650) 596-5451

## Sandpiper Enrollment Resolution: Questions & Answers



### *What is the Sandpiper over-enrollment situation now?*

- Sandpiper has 522 students now attending, with 50 students enrolled in other District schools.
- The school's maximum capacity is 530 students
- An additional 400 students are expected to reside in Redwood Shores by the year 2009-2010. This figure is based on birthrate information and 1997-2004 over-enrollment trends.

### *Why did the School Board decide to build a new school in Redwood Shores?*

- The Board wanted to provide Redwood Shores the opportunity to raise the funds needed to build a new school because it has the largest population of children in any one elementary school with only one neighborhood school.
- By the year 2009-2010, Redwood Shores will have 50% of the elementary school population but only 20% of the capacity (Sandpiper).
- The Board believes this option is in keeping with the District's mission statement and strategic plan, both of which include maintaining small community schools.
- Small community schools encourage parent/community involvement and provide an optimal learning environment.

### *What is the operating cost for a school?*

- It costs approximately \$350,000 for the facility (fixed overhead), the principal and school secretary, and the maintenance personnel and supplies.

### *Will Measure G money or School-Force money be used to operate the new school?*

- If a site for the new school is located, a Proposition 39 School Facilities Improvement Bond Measure will be placed on the ballot for Redwood Shores as early as November 2005. This bond money would be used to construct the new school.
- Measure G money can be used to provide the programs of a new school, just as it is available to be used for those purposes at other District schools.
- School-Force funds are used at the discretion of the School Board. These funds typically supplement the costs of providing full-time school library services, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade instrumental music, elementary science, and ongoing technology programs and support.

### *Why is the bond being put before only Redwood Shores/Belmont Shores voters?*

- Short answer: if Belmont voters were asked to vote on this, they probably would defeat it, for the simple reason that they don't gain anything from the measure. Also, it should be remembered that Belmont schools (built exclusively with Belmont taxes) housed Shores students for many years, which is one of the major benefits of being part of a district where we have resources to share with each other. And we shouldn't forget that the 1997 bond measure that financed the second phase of Sandpiper was passed in all Belmont precincts, but didn't pass in Redwood Shores.

### *How will the operating costs of six schools be covered if the new school is built?*

- The current budget projection will maintain programs in all District schools as they are today.
- Property tax revenues are expected to grow at a higher percentage than District expenses.
- It is projected that California budget reform will place public education as a higher priority.

- Expenses associated with the 400 additional students will have to be born anyway, regardless of what facility is used.
- There may not be a need for another parcel tax initiative in 10 years. However, if there is a need, a "renewal" is easier to pass than a "new" tax.

*Why didn't the School Board simply redraw the boundaries in Redwood Shores and have half the students attend Nesbit?*

- The existing students and their siblings do not fit at Sandpiper; 50 students currently attend other District schools.
- Redrawing the boundaries does not address the fact that Redwood Shores will have 900 elementary school students by the year 2009-2010. Sandpiper and Nesbit *combined* could not accommodate that number of students, as well as the students who currently reside in the Nesbit attendance boundaries.
- It is a priority of the District to provide small community schools. Redwood Shores needs two schools to accommodate the number of students projected for that community.

*Some of the other District schools have under-utilized capacity. How can the District justify building a new school when there is space at the existing schools?*

- The District is looking at the possibility of renting out space in the other schools for preschool purposes.
- Current budget projections strongly suggest that the District could afford the costs of operating a new school.
- The Board believes in maintaining small neighborhood schools.

*How will the population growth in Redwood Shores affect Ralston?*

- Ralston has a maximum capacity of 1100 students.
- Enrollment numbers indicate that there will not be a facility capacity issue. While Redwood Shores' student population is expected to grow, Belmont's student population is expected to remain static or increase slightly.
- A larger student population ensures that the middle school's electives program will have a wide variety of electives for students.

*Until a site is located and the new school built, all Redwood Shores kindergartners and (eventually) 1<sup>st</sup> graders will attend Nesbit. How will the large kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade population at Nesbit affect parent participation and the sense of community at the school?*

- The District will help Nesbit and Sandpiper build "transitional" ties to each school, and to build collaboration among parents to enhance instructional programs at both school sites.
- The primary goal for District is to provide the best programs and resources for *all* of its schools and children.

*What is the district doing about improving student achievement at Nesbit?*

- One criterion in hiring district administrators was to hire people that have implemented successful models built around similar issues and demographics that exist at Nesbit.
- The district is committed to working with the principal, teachers, and parents at Nesbit to address the student achievement issues and develop a plan.
- The principal is working with the Nesbit Leadership Team to develop a school improvement plan. Once the plan is adopted, the Board will commit the required resources.

*Considering all the negative public reaction, why did the Board even consider boundary changes at all?*

- As a State agency, the District is required to seek Department of Education approval for school sites and meet a host of other compliance issues or lose all its State funds. Boundary changes are the most common way for districts to shift population to match capacity, and the State will always demand that this option be examined before approving a new school site. Our Board can now tell the State that this alternative had been thoroughly examined.