

School News

Belmont-Redwood Shores School District

Volume 2, Issue 2

School Board

- Eric Shrader, President
- Karen Clancy, Vice President
- Cathy Wright, Clerk
- Jeni Benelli
- William Davidovitch

Next Board Meeting:

Thursday, Jan. 5, 2006,
at the District Office,
2960 Hallmark Drive,
Belmont

School Calendar

Dec. 19-30, 2005

Winter Break

Jan. 2, 2006

Staff Development Day

Jan. 3, 2006

Students Return to School

Jan. 16, 2006

Martin Luther King Holiday

Superintendent's Letter

Welcome to another issue of *School News*. As usual, we're delighted to share with you the good news about our public schools, and this month we have *great* news.

To begin with, Measure C—the \$25 million bond to build a new elementary school in Redwood Shores—passed by 68 percent. Most Redwood Shores kindergartners and several of the Shores' 1st through 5th graders currently attend elementary school in Belmont. Our goal, of course, is to provide small, quality-based schools for our students in their own neighborhoods.



Superintendent John McIntosh

Many thanks to the residents of Redwood Shores for their enthusiastic support of Measure C. We hope to have a new school in three years and all the children who live in Redwood Shores may attend school in their own neighborhood.

Our next goal is to find a site for the new school. From the available sites, we will choose one that will best serve the Redwood Shores community *and* come in at budget. Once a site has been found, we will establish a construction time line, and the School Board will begin accepting architecture and construction proposals. As usual, community input will be encouraged. While the design of the new school will be similar to Sandpiper, we will look to the community for input during the planning phases of the new school.

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New Writing Program Provides a Road Map to Success

Some students are good with numbers; others are good with words. It's usually one or the other, right? The District's new writing program proves that *all* students can learn how to write clearly and creatively—if they have a good writing road map.

This fall, students in the kindergarten through 8th grade were pro-

vided such a road map. It's called the "Six Traits of a Successful Writer." The Six Traits—Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions—give students a distinct path to follow when writing their book reports, essays, and other assignments in which they have to express on paper their ideas or their knowledge of a

subject.

How are the students doing with this new program?

"My 2nd graders are learning about ideas, voice, and word choice," says Nicole McKee, who teaches at Central Elementary. "The lessons are teaching my students to

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School News

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*“...We want to pay our teachers fairly and equitably for the outstanding work they do for our children.”—
Superintendent John McIntosh*

(Shown above: 1st Grade Teacher Andrea Roberts)



We have scheduled a community meeting to provide you with information and answer your questions about the new school. The meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2006, at 7:30 p.m., in the Sandpiper Community Center. Four board members will attend this meeting, as well as district administrators and staff.

Secondly, we extend a warm welcome to our two new School Board members, Bill Davidovich and Jeni Benelli. Mr. Davidovich, who has children at Fox and at Ralston, was appointed to replace Trustee M.J. Crousore, who resigned this fall for family reasons. Ms. Benelli, who taught in the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District and has two children attending Central School, was elected to the Board to replace Trustee Sharon Thompson, whose term on the Board recently ended.

Ms. Thompson did not seek reelection and is stepping down from the Board. I would like to acknowledge and thank Ms. Thompson for her six years of dedicated service to the students and community of our outstanding school district.

Our School Board, which also includes trustees Karen

Clancy, Cathy Wright and Eric Shrader, is comprised of extremely talented, intelligent, and committed individuals who work tirelessly to support and to strengthen our public schools. We're grateful for their work.

Also in the personnel category, we would like to thank Jeff Keuscher, who recently retired after serving as our district's Chief Business Official for 10 years. Many of you will remember how Mr. Keuscher was able to take complicated and detailed financial information and present it to the school community in a clear and simple presentation. We appreciate his service to our district, and we hope he enjoys his retirement. Joe DiGeronimo is under contract as our interim CBO while the Board interviews candidates for the position.

Negotiations with teachers for the 2005-06 school year are under way, and I would like to update you on our progress. The 2006-07 school year calendar is being discussed. Teacher feedback will be received and specific calendar options created on Jan. 23, 2006. The District made a salary/compensation proposal for 2005-06, which includes an increase of \$155,000 in health

benefit contributions and a \$110,000 increase in pay by reducing the teacher work-year from 186 days to 184 days, but maintaining their current salary. The \$265,000 offer is equal to a 2.71 percent salary increase.

It is probably the most difficult time in recent history to be a public school educator in California. What we want to do is pay our teachers fairly and equitably for the outstanding work they do for our children. Among the 23 districts in San Mateo County, we are second in the amount of benefits paid, and among the top six in certificated salary schedules. Each year, our teachers receive salary schedule increases, negotiated salary and compensation increases, and additional stipends based on semester units earned. Of course, if we had more dollars in our budget, we would pay our teachers even more. We are constrained only by the amount of revenue we receive and what it costs to provide quality programs for our students.

In closing, thank you for using our new Customer Service Center on the District web site. (See story on back page.) We wish you a happy holiday season.—John McIntosh

Writing, continued from Page 1

show, not tell, what they are trying to express, which helps them add rich details to their writing.”

“It’s fun to watch the Six Traits come alive for the kids,” she says. “I’m looking forward to seeing them grow this year!”

Andrea Roberts, also at Central, says she and her students are excited about learning and applying the Six Traits program. “After only three weeks, I have seen a significant improvement in my students’ writing,” she says. “Writing that was lacking both detail and focus is now more purposeful and rich.”

Ms. Roberts explains that the Six Traits help her to “break down the writing process into understandable concepts” and that the lessons appeal to multiple learning styles. “Even the most timid writ-

ers find it easier to express themselves,” she adds.

“Teachers are working hard to implement this program with their students,” says Assistant Superintendent Jeannie Bosley. “They report that the program provides an extremely organized approach for teaching the many elements of good writing.”

This summer teachers and administrators attended a two-day training on the Six Traits program. Teachers recently met to develop a shared understanding of the rubric (a set of specific goals) that will be used to evaluate student writing. They will meet again in December to share their instructional plans and materials for teaching the Six Traits.

Students in grades K-5 were recently assessed on their narrative

writing skills; in January, students in grades 6 will be administered a writing assessment and will receive feedback on their work based on the Six Traits rubric.

The District will be holding Six Traits parent education events this spring. “We would love to see a good turnout for the parent meetings,” says Ms. Bosley. “We want to help parents better understand the Six Traits program and how it’s improving their children’s writing skills.”

Parents will learn that the Six Traits program, when followed carefully, can lead to a great marine animal report or to a clear and well-thought-out explanation of the fall of the Roman Empire. And that’s a road worth taking.—
Jill Aldrich



Nicole McKee teaches the Six Traits to Anna-bella Lynch (above) and Brent Jang (below).



School-Force Update

Phone-a-Thon: Our annual Phone-a-Thon will be on Sunday, Jan. 29, 2006, from 11 a.m.-7:30 p.m. at the District Office. This is the major fundraiser for the foundation. Last year it brought in \$318,000. To help make calls, contact your School-Force liaison.

Preferred Realtor News: We welcome our newest Preferred Realtor, **Pooneh Fouladi**, with Coldwell Banker. Sincere thanks to **Emily Lim**, with RE/MAX Dolphin, and **Janet Pepe Davis**, with Carlmont Associates, for renewing their commitment to the program. Preferred Realtors do-

nate a minimum of \$1,000 per year to School-Force. If you’re buying or selling a home, call these professionals first. Their contact information is on our web site at www.school-force.org

School-Force Board Opportunity: We’re looking for a volunteer with a financial background to serve on the Board. This person will work with our current Treasurer to administer the financial reporting and filing required of a 501 (c)(3) organization. Please contact Colleen Devlin at 592-5903 or coldev@pacbell.net to learn more.

5K Family Fun Run: 140 runners and walkers participated in this year’s Belmont Heights 5K Family Fun Run in October, helping to raise about \$2,500 for School-Force. Sincere thanks to organizers Joan Dentler, Ashley Banks, and Margaret Goldsmith, and to BHCIA for voting to donate the funds to School-Force!

Year-End Tax Planning? We are asking you to consider a donation of \$333 per family for the 2005-06 school year. Why not make that donation now? Send donations to PO Box 5196, Belmont, CA 94002. Thank you!

Deepest thanks to the co-chairs, organizers, and more than 200 volunteers of this year’s Save the Music Festival, which raised more than \$65,000.

Co-Chairs: Greg Carbullido & Alan Sarver.

To see a list of all volunteers, please visit the School-Force web site. Want to help next year? Contact Alan Sarver at asarver@earthlink.net or 592-6129.

Belmont-Redwood Shores
School District

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*“Do you have an idea for
how we can do something
better? We want to hear
from you!”*

How Are We Doing?

One of our primary goals in this school district is to improve our communication with you. We want you to know what’s happening at our elementary schools, at Ralston Middle School, and up at the District Office. Likewise, we want to hear from you.

One thing we’d like to hear from you is what you think about *School News*. We’d like to know if it’s meeting your information needs.

Do you have an idea for how we can do something better? We want to hear from you!

Please take a minute to go to our new Customer Service Center on our web site and give us your opinion. Our web site address is www.belmont.k12.ca.us.

Here are some things we’d like to know:

- What do you think about our content?
- Which parts of the newsletter do you regularly read?
- Which parts do you not read?
- What other topics would you like us to cover?
- We are publishing four newsletters a year. Is that too few, too many, or the right number?
- Would you read the newsletter if it were available online only?
- In what other ways can we improve our communication with you?

We value your opinion and appreciate your input.

Why is it so important to us that we hear from you? The main reason is to ensure that

the children in our district receive the best possible education. We rely on many sources to help us determine how we’re doing: STAR test results, API scores, etc. But the most important measure of our success is how *you* (the parents, the teachers, the administrators, and the school community) evaluate our efforts. You’re in the classroom, helping with the homework, attending school functions and board meetings. You’re the closest to the action.

We know you’re busy. If you have a free minute, give us your opinion. We’d love to hear from you.

Many thanks. See you in the new school year.