



### **Enrollment Outlook Improves**

Like most schools districts in California and San Diego County, enrollment in the San Diego Unified School District declined again this fall, but not as much as expected.

“Our total enrollment is good news for our schools, with hundreds more students arriving above our prediction,” said William Kowba, chief financial officer. “The declining enrollment of the past six years is slowing. The increase in our preschool enrollment this fall indicates that future enrollment growth could be on the way.”

The district’s total enrollment last year was 134,521. At the end of the first month of school this fall, it now stands at 133,830, down 691 students or about one-half of one percent.

Aside from areas of growing housing and population like San Marcos and Carlsbad in the North County area, most school districts in the area continue to experience lower enrollment. A majority of school districts statewide have also reported fewer students each year for several years.

The ratio between district schools’ enrollment and charter schools’ enrollment remains about the same as last year—with approximately 90 percent in district schools and 10 percent in charters. The district now has 36 charter schools, up three from a year ago. Six existing charter schools added one or more grades this fall.

With enrollment stabilizing, the next task is to keep attendance up for the entire school year.

“Now that our students are enrolled, our job is to encourage every student to attend school every day,” said Kowba. “There is a direct relationship between higher daily attendance and higher student achievement. The best way parents can improve their children’s achievement is to make sure they’re in school every day.”

To help with attendance efforts, the district’s Every Day Counts attendance awareness campaign is gearing up for the new school year. Local businesses are partnering with the district to help raise awareness and recognize schools and students for improving student attendance.

### **Getting to Know You: Arun Ramanathan, Executive Director of Government Relations**

Arun Ramanathan has spent a lifetime moving. By the age of five, he had lived on three different continents. By the time he left elementary school, he had lived in three different states. Once he reached middle school, his family settled in Memphis, Tennessee at a time when there were few Indians living in the South. After graduating from Dartmouth College, he moved to Washington D.C. to work in the public policy arena. His stay in the nation's capitol spurred his interest in public service and led him to join Volunteer in Service to American (VISTA) in rural Appalachia. His role was to support and provide services to a community of de-institutionalized mentally ill and mentally retarded; adults, many of whom had been in institutions for 30-40 years. He worked to provide them with services, teach them life skills and promote their integration into their communities.

During his stint with VISTA, he got a first-hand glimpse into prejudice and discrimination faced by people with disabilities and the power of government programs to address injustices. It also spurred his interest in working with people with disabilities and led him to a career in education working as a paraprofessional, counselor and a teacher of children with severe disabilities in New England and San Francisco. His practical experiences in education spurred his interest in education policy and research. This led him to still another move, into the education policy doctoral program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. His research focuses on the future of the federal oversight and enforcement role in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). He has published articles on special education, charter schools, and state takeovers of school districts. For the last three years, he has directed the research for the organization overseeing the court monitored special education reform process in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Ramanathan is married to Indelisa Carrillo, a teacher and reading specialist. They have two young daughters, a 2 1/2 –year-old and a 2-month-old. Recently, he sat down with Staff Bulletin to talk about his new role in California's second largest school district:

**What has been your first impression of the district so far?**

The people here are smart and motivated. They have been very welcoming and generous with their time. It's been interesting getting to know and understand issues here in San Diego. While in LA and even in Boston, I followed the situation in San Diego and was surprised by the level of acrimony in the newspaper articles. What I see here now is that the relationships are much calmer and more positive.

**What are you most looking forward to this year?**

I am looking forward to getting to know more about the San Diego community and the district. My goals are to build our relationships with our local elected officials and their staffs and raise the district's profile in San Diego, Sacramento and Washington D.C. Our elected officials have a tremendous impact on our schools, and I am looking forward to collaborating with them to support our district and achieve the superintendent's five goals.

**What should we know about your philosophy and what is important for good schools to do?**

I think Dr. Cohn has it right. Sometimes we are taught in educational theory to focus on student achievement and only student achievement. But if you don't deal with the other issues that affect a student, you'll never get to the heart of improving student achievement. Student discipline and safe schools are areas that get very little research attention but are absolutely vital. We need to look at the process of improving performance as an interlocking series of elements, including improving school climate and setting high behavioral expectations along with improving curriculum and instruction. Public policy often tries to control the behavior of teachers, administrators and schools through regulatory mandates, thinking that rules alone will translate into sustained improvement for students. I think that's wrong. The role of education should be to foster the circumstances where teachers, schools and districts have the freedom to innovate and to distribute resources based on local needs and circumstances. One size does not fit all.

**Who most influenced you and why?**

Oh, I don't think there is just one person. I've had a lot of wonderful influences and mentors. My wife has been a major influence on my life. She's been teaching now for ten years and she really knows how to focus her fellow teachers on the hard questions. The other thing about having a wife who teaches, when you're away from teaching, you forget how draining and challenging the experience is and how much teachers give of themselves. Policymakers look at school results and sometimes look for scapegoats. Well, I think blaming and mandating is a poor foundation for school improvement. The last people they should be scape-goating are the people on the front lines of education. I think we need to take a closer look at the policies and the practices that impact educators and consider what is effective in improving student performance and what isn't.

**What unique background and strengths do you have that will have the greatest impact upon our students and schools?**

I've lived in many places, had the opportunity to meet many different and interesting people and learn from them. It spins your head around sometimes but you quickly learn to adapt to circumstances. I also feel after spending those years working with adults and children with disabilities that, and I know this is cliché, I learned to be patient and to value victories no matter how small. Our challenge in government relations is to reduce our regulatory burden and bring more resources into our schools. To do this, we need to pursue a long-term strategy that alters the political perception of school districts and education interest groups as being solely focused on the needs of adults. We have a remarkable district. There are many good things going on here for children and parents, amazing innovations. We need to tell our story of school improvement using concrete examples of how the resources we receive from the state and federal government benefit children. We then need to build a conversation for additional resources as a way to sustain those benefits and promote even more innovation. My goal is to galvanize the resources that we have here in the district to do just that.

**You have little ones at home. How do they inspire what you do?**

The two-year-old by ordering me around. The two-month-old by spitting up on me.

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**Getting to Know You: Dorothy Harper, Associate Superintendent, Parent, Community and Student Engagement**

Former science teacher Dorothy Harper always has an encouraging word and goes out of her way to help parents. She has been an exemplary educator and an insightful people person for more than three decades, helping hundreds of thousands of students and families benefit from better education. She joined San Diego Unified School District as associate superintendent of parent, community and student engagement in July.

She got her start as a brand new high school science teacher in the Memphis Public Schools, then spent 30+ years in the Long Beach Unified School District on an ambitious career path that led her from teacher to counselor; vice principal to principal; director of special projects to area superintendent; assistant superintendent to deputy superintendent until she retired in 2004. Her retirement was short-lived. In 2005, she was named vice president of development for Newton Learning Supplemental Education Services, a company that helps students who are behind in achievement.

During her career, her accomplishments include opening the eighth grade transition school that ended social promotion in Long Beach. Highlights include welcoming General Colin Powell at the dedication ceremony for the district's Colin L. Powell Academy for Success and greeting President Bill Clinton when he endorsed the district's Robinson Academy in 1996.

Recently, she sat down with *Staff Bulletin* to talk about her new role at San Diego Unified School District.

**What have been your impressions of San Diego Unified School District so far?**

The people here are very warm and welcoming. I already feel right at home. It is fun coming to a new district and San Diego is such a beautiful city. I have a lot to learn about the community and the district but am excited about the prospect of making a contribution to education here. I have had the opportunity to visit several schools, including a visit to a Family Friday event. It was great to see the teachers working in their classrooms and watching parents reading to students. I was able to observe first-hand the good work that's already been done in building parent involvement. I am looking forward to building and strengthening these relationships in the coming school year.

**As the school year begins, what are you most looking forward to?**

As I mentioned, the district already has many ways for parents and the community to be involved with our students and our schools. I am looking forward to working with the individuals in the district who have been providing these services. The new organizational structure with area and assistant superintendents will help to further deepen and expand our involvements as we work together to build on a strong foundation. Our task is to help parents and the community take advantage of the opportunities that already exist at schools by making sure they are informed. Parents, the community and schools working together for kids, that's the real deal.

**What strengths do you have that will have the greatest impact upon our students and schools?**

I like people. I have a passion for building positive relationships and recognize the importance of making a connection with people. I've learned that it's about connecting with people where they are. I have had a lot of success bringing people together to make things happen for kids. It's important to get to know people through listening and demonstrating mutual respect each other. We should always take time to find out about what works in a community. That's when listening is so important. I hope to build on what we already have and to champion what still needs to be done.

**Who most influenced you and how did they do that?**

With such a long career, there have been many people who have been very influential in my development and success as an educator. Since the saying goes that every journey starts with the first step, I have to give a lot of credit to my first principal. His name was Harry Cash and he was the principal at Alexander Hamilton High School in Memphis where I got my first teaching job. On my first day, he brought me into his office and basically told me one thing: "I never want to see any of your students in my office." At the time and as a new teacher, his words were not particularly comforting or reassuring. Only later would I realize their power and significance. Harry taught me that effective teaching is not just about knowing the subject matter. It is far more complex. Teachers must be skilled at managing their classrooms, recognizing the unique qualities of each student and respecting everyone. They must be good communicators and build relationships with parents. This knowledge helped me in my role as a teacher and administrator. That was Harry's invaluable lesson for me. Oh yes, and I have never sent a student to the principal's office.

**What unique background and strengths do you have that will have the greatest impact upon our students and schools?**

I have worked in public education for more than 30 years as a teacher, counselor, principal, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent. I have learned that parents are really the key. Early in my career I discovered that, far more effective than sending kids to the office, is telling them, 'I'm going to your home to talk to your parents' and I would go. That sends a strong message to parents and ultimately to the community, that you really care about kids. That's what it's all about.

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**Becoming America's Best**

**Dewey Elementary Receives National Distinction**

*2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon School*

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced the 2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools on September 22. Among the honorees is San Diego Unified School District's Dewey Elementary School, one of only two schools in San Diego County to earn this national recognition. Dewey joins Jerabek Elementary, Scripps Ranch High and Mira Mesa High as the SDUSD schools to receive this prestigious award.

In a statement released on September 22, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell congratulated the 31 public schools and four private schools in California identified as 2006 No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—Blue Ribbon Schools.

"I nominated these schools last year for this national distinction because their students made significant gains in academic achievement," said O'Connell. "Everyone involved in these students' lives deserves credit for helping them make these gains that we hope will ultimately help students develop the mastery of skills necessary to be successful adults."

NCLB—Blue Ribbon Schools is a national recognition program of the U.S. Department of Education. The 23-year-old program encourages states to nominate public kindergarten through grade twelve schools that are either academically superior or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. Private schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education.

Dewey Principal Vera Valdivia is grateful that her school's hard work is being recognized. She is quick to credit her teachers for the school's success.

"The teachers are the ones working 12 hour days and weekends," she said. "It's their hard work and dedication, along with very supportive parents, that produced the results that earned us this honor. I am proud to work with such outstanding educators and parents."

Next month, Valdivia and a teacher from Dewey will travel to Washington, D.C. to accept the award at a ceremony being held on November 9 – 10.

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### Dates to Remember

#### Monday, October 9

All employees are invited to join Superintendent Cohn and the area superintendents at **Cookies with Carl** from 4 to 6 p.m. at Adams Elementary. If you have something you would like to share with or ask the superintendent or the area superintendents, please plan to attend.

#### Tuesday, October 10

All employees are invited to attend the **Back to School Reception** from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on the front lawn of the Education Center. Join the Board of Education, Superintendent Cohn and your fellow employees in celebrating the start of a new school year.

#### November 1 – 30

SDUSD annual Open Enrollment

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### Important Updates on Medical/Dental Plans

*Annual Open Enrollment Set for November*

Maintaining quality benefits is a goal shared by the district and its employees. Recent agreements between the district and its labor partners include significant changes to medical plans that employees must carefully consider in the month ahead. We are pleased to continue to offer district employees and their eligible dependents three medical plans that provide excellent coverage at no premium cost to our employees. The medical plans offered for 2007 are:

- Kaiser – co-pay for office visits increases from \$0 to \$5
- PacifiCare HMO – same co-pays as 2006. PLEASE NOTE: HMO with a Scripps Clinic primary care physician is not available in 2007. Scripps Mercy and Scripps Penn-Elm **are** still included in the plan.

- PacifiCare POS – There are five important changes:
  - The primary care physician may not be affiliated with Scripps Clinic
  - Scripps Clinic physician services will only be available on an out-of-network basis
  - The employee co-insurance rate for out-of-network services will increase to 30% in 2007.
  - The maximum out-of-pocket cost for out-of-network services will increase to \$4000 per individual; \$12,000 per family in 2007.
  - A one-time “savings share” of up to \$750 will be offered to employees with current POS coverage who elect either the HMO or Kaiser plans during the 2007 Open Enrollment

The difficult choice to move away from the use of Scripps Clinic was a strategic decision by our labor partners and the District to preserve and protect quality medical options while assuring that resources available for salary increases were not depleted by extraordinary benefit cost increases.

Other Open Enrollment News:

- Open Enrollment runs through the entire month of November 2006. Materials will be delivered to work sites by November 1. Changes made during Open Enrollment will take effect January 1, 2007.
- The Safeguard Dental Plan will be replaced in 2007 with the Delta PMI plan. Delta offers a significantly larger selection of dentists. Employees who have current SDCS Dental Plan coverage are encouraged to ask their dentist if they participate in the PMI plan. If the dentist is in the PMI network, the employee can receive expanded coverage with lower out-of-pocket costs through PMI.
- Flexible spending accounts (FSA) must be reelected annually. Employees who wish to have FSA deductions in 2007 must enroll during the month of November 2006.

In addition to the general plan information, letters will be sent to those employees who are currently with Scripps Clinic Primary Care Physicians. Please read the information carefully. If you have questions or need additional information about General Open Enrollment, call (619) 725-8130, option 6. Starting Monday, October 9, you can also call Betty at VEBA at (858) 880-9867 with specific questions about Scripps Clinic. For assistance in selecting a new Primary Care Physician, contact PacifiCare at (800) 624-8822 or visit the PacifiCare website at [www.pacificare.com](http://www.pacificare.com).

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**News You Can Use**

**District Adds Option for Employee Retirement Planning**

As retirement approaches, many people find that they wished they had saved more. San Diego Unified School District employees now have the opportunity to enroll in two retirement plans, a 403(b) plan and the new 457(b) plan, which can help boost retirement savings. Employees can choose to contribute to the 403(b), the 457(b) or both. Learn more about the new 457(b) plan by attending any of these informational meetings:

Date	Site	Time	Location
Monday, October 16	Mira Mesa High	3:15 PM	Theater
	Kearny High School	4:00 PM	Auditorium
	O'Farrell Charter School	3:30 PM	Auditorium
Tuesday, October 17	La Jolla High	3:15 PM	Theater
	Hoover High	4:00 PM	Theater
	SCPA	3:30 PM	Theater
Thursday, October 19	Scripps Ranch	3:15 PM	Library

	Crawford High	4:00 PM	Auditorium
	Correia Middle School	3:30 PM	Auditorium
Monday, October 23	University City High	3:15 PM	Theater
	Crawford High	4:00 PM	Theater
	San Diego High	3:30 PM	Theater
Tuesday, October 24	Marston Middle School	4:15 PM	Auditorium
	Mission Bay High	3:30 PM	Auditorium
	Serra High	3:15 PM	Theater
Thursday, October 26	Lewis Middle School	3:30 PM	Auditorium
	San Diego High	4:00 PM	Theater
	Eugene Brucker Ed. Center	3:30 PM	Auditorium
	Eugene Brucker Ed. Center	4:45 PM	Auditorium

The presentation will describe the differences between a 403(b) and a 457(b) plan. Interested employees will have the opportunity to enroll in the 457(b) plan at the meeting. For information, contact Mike Price at [mprice@sandi.net](mailto:mprice@sandi.net) or (619) 725-7560.

### **Ballard Parent Center Offers Free Trainings for Title I Schools**

The Harold J. Ballard Parent Center is offering several free trainings for staff and parents from Title I eligible schools:

- Training of Trainers is designed to teach attendees how to conduct parent trainings, organize parent activities, increase parent participation and set up a parent center.
- Parenting classes, in English and Spanish, are designed to help parents of students of Title I schools.
- Make it/Take-it Open Labs work with parents of pre-k through 5 grade students to help them build a solid foundation for their children's education.
- San Diego Parent University Visiting Program is a new component that provides a variety of free parent workshops and classes to be conducted at schools sites. Priority goes to Title 1 schools that do not have site personnel responsible for providing workshops to parents. The center provides the teacher and all materials.

For information about any of the programs, call (619) 293-4431 or visit the center's website at <http://www.sandi.net/depts/osss/ballard.html>.

### **24 Hour Fitness Offers Discount to SDUSD Employees**

District employees and their families are now eligible to join 24 Hour Fitness at a special discounted rate. As clubs members, employees can also participate in the Biggest Loser promotion. Discounts are available at all San Diego 24 Hour Fitness locations. For information, contact Christine Ranford at [cranford@24hourfit.com](mailto:cranford@24hourfit.com) or (800) 600-2007, ext. 2140.

### **SDUSD Logo Shirts Available**

The Finance, Social and Recreation Committee are selling polo shirts with the new San Diego Unified School District logo. Prices range from \$15 to \$25, including tax, depending on style, size and color. Payment in advance is required. Cash only. For information or to order a shirt, contact Kitty at (619) 725-7751, Renate at (619) 725-7611 or Aly at (619) 725-7221.

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## Hall of Fame

- Gompers High School Principal **Don Mitchell** has been accepted to participate in the first national College Board Leadership Institute for Principals. The institute accepted 60 principals nationally to examine and make recommendations to reform secondary education. The institute will focus on seven key areas: the acquisition of both knowledge and skills in culture; communication; conscious leadership; data-driven decision making; change; organizational development; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

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## Save the Date

### Save Money during Borders Educators Savings Week Oct. 12 - 17

It's time again for Borders Educator Savings Week. All SDUSD employees can receive a special 25 % discount\* on classroom and personal purchases at any Borders Store, including Borders Express and Waldenbooks, from Thursday, October 12 through Tuesday, October 17. A special reception with food, fun and prizes will be held Friday, October 13, from 4 to 8 p.m., at all Borders Store (not Borders Express) locations. Current and retired teachers as well as any district employees are eligible for the discount. Just bring proof of employment. To find a store near you, go to <http://www.bordersstores.com/locator/locator.jsp>.

\*Discount on DVD's is 20%.

### Kearny High School Celebrates 65 Years

A dinner dance commemorating Kearny High School's 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is planned for Saturday, October 21, at 6 p.m., at the Marriott Mission Valley. Tickets are \$55 per person. For information or to make a reservation, contact Dee Dee Klaus at (858) 549-6681.

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## Classified

### For Sale

Oak laminate flooring w/ installation kit. Approx. 250 sq. ft. \$300. Contact [vkrautheim@sandi.net](mailto:vkrautheim@sandi.net) or (619) 675-6524.

La Mesa house. 3 bd/2 ba. 2-car garage. Great neighborhood. Beautiful upgrades. Seller motivated. FSBO. \$519,500 obo. Call (619) 337-9020 or email to [rfischer@sandi.net](mailto:rfischer@sandi.net).

Condo in Palm Springs. 1 bd/1ba. Gated community. Great vacation home. \$165,000. Contact Mila at (619) 231-0981.

### For Rent

4 bd/2.5 ba House. 2003 sq. ft. \$2000/mo. Contact Wes at (619)246-9806.

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