

Staff Bulletin

For the employees of San Diego City Schools



Vol. 77

February 13, 2003

No. 3

Proposition MM Update: Management of Cost Growth Challenges

Since initial planning for Prop MM in 1998, land and construction costs in San Diego have dramatically increased beyond original projections. Land costs have nearly doubled from \$2 million to \$4 million per acre. Construction costs (labor and materials) have increased 20 percent. This poses a serious threat to new schools to be built under Prop MM.

The Prop MM new schools program was originally budgeted at \$508 million. Proactive analysis by staff revealed a *potential* cost growth of \$42 million to \$189 million due to rising costs of land and construction.

The Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC), an 11-member task force, developed a package of \$201 million of cost management recommendations. On February 4, 2003, the Board of Education unanimously approved the implementation of the following recommendations *as necessary* to ensure that all Prop MM obligations are fulfilled as promised in the ballot:

Resource Enhancement Actions:

- ◆ Include interest earned on Prop MM bond funds.
- ◆ Include additional State School Facilities Program funds (Prop 47).
- ◆ Include proceeds from the exchange or

lease of the vacated Mead Elementary School site.

Cost Reduction Actions:

- ◆ Use combination of modular (factory-built) and steel frame and masonry (site-built) construction for new/expanded schools.
- ◆ Increase the cost-effectiveness of district design standards.
- ◆ Build "twin" schools at the existing Sherman and Kennedy Elementary School sites, build the new Mason/Hage Area Elementary School on existing district property, and replace/expand Mead Elementary School at the existing Chollas Elementary School site.
- ◆ Reduce operating costs through programmatic economies and efficiencies.

Scope Reduction Actions:

- ◆ Reduce project scope for Scripps Ranch Middle School
- ◆ Reduce size of some new school sites to six and a half acres, consistent with Board action to date.
- ◆ Reduce size of joint use fields in new schools by about half an acre.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do these cost pressures impact

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Getting to Know You:

Donis Armenta,

Director, Classified Personnel



Tell us about your background with San Diego City Schools.

I like to think I was born to be here. My mother worked here in Human Resources, and when she was pregnant with me, her co-workers threw a baby shower. When I came to Human Resources fourteen years ago, some the co-workers who threw the baby shower were still working here! **So you must have had a lot of "I remember you when" comments.**

Oh yes, heard that a lot. My mom named me after an HR supervisor on top of that, and they all knew her. Plus, they could have told stories on me at any time from when I was a student here.

Which schools did you attend?

Bay Park, Marston and Clairemont. In fact, my claim to fame in high school was graduating at the time "Fast Times at Ridgmont High" was out. I knew Cameron Crowe, but I wasn't in his movie. Thank goodness.

How did you get into Human Resources?

I began my career at the IMC as a Clerk Typist I, known as a Junior Clerk at the time. Then I worked as a Clerk Typist II in what was then "data systems" for five years. Worked in the attendance office at Mission Bay for three years. Came to Human Resources after that, starting out in unemployment/workers' comp/employee benefits, then moving to Labor Relations for 8 years. I've been with San Diego City Schools for 23 years.

As Director of Classified Personnel, what do your responsibilities include?

I have overall responsibility for any human resources function related to classified employees including recruitment, classification, processing of new employees, assigning subs, evaluations, discipline and

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Layoff Assistance for Employees

The Human Resource Services Division has been hard at work planning events to offer assistance to classified employees affected by layoffs or reductions in hours. "It is the goal of Human Resources to provide as much information as possible, including connections to agencies outside of the district that may be able to provide job opportunities," to those employees, according to Classified Personnel Director Donis Armenta.

"These are extremely emotional times for those who may be affected by layoff,"

noted Armenta, and every effort is being made to provide timely and accurate information to those employees.

Affected workers, managers and supervisors have been invited to attend one of two meetings on February 11 (from 2:00-5:00 p.m.) or February 13 (from 8:00-1:00 p.m.) being held in the auditorium of the Eugene Brucker Education Center. In addition to being able to learn about the contract language surrounding layoffs and reductions in hours, staff will be

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Donis Armenta

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layoffs.

What is the hard part?

Being the bearer of bad news. Layoffs especially, since it's such a painful process. People sometimes think I'm the one actually identifying the layoffs, when what I'm really responsible for is the implementation. That means making sure affected employees have as much information as possible within the appropriate timelines.

I think employees all struggle to understand the process. They wonder why they were chosen, when it really is no fault of their own. We can only tell them the Ed Code language states that layoff is done by seniority - the years of service - not by the actual people in the positions.

Bumping is also very hard to understand. It's very unsettling to know that even if you've been here for many years, it's possible that someone's been here longer and they have rights to your job. The Ed Code very specifically outlines the formula we must follow in notifying employees involved in bumping. We provide all these employees with information about the process, their recall rights, and the timeline involved.

What are "recall rights"?

If you lose hours or you are bumped into a lower position because of lack of seniority, you have recall rights. That means you are automatically made an offer of recall back into your classification when the next position opens up. This process can happen very quickly or can take a few years. Depending on the circumstance, an employee may have either 39 or 63 months of recall rights.

So the effects of bumping can linger for some time?

Years. It really depends on the position though. Some of them have fast turnover. Other positions involve so few employees, recalls can take years. We are in the midst of this process right now, too, so people are talking about it.

Can you explain the timeline?

Last week, the Board took action on the elimination or reduction of positions. Certified letters to all employees affected by the board action were sent out the next day, and employees received them over the course of the next three days. This included employees whose positions were cut or reduced, plus the employees they would be bumping and who might bump others down the line. Once employees notify us whether they intend to exercise their bumping rights or choose to be laid off, we develop a final list of affected positions and sites. All

employees will be notified on February 28 of their new locations. They'll then report to those new sites March 17th.

Some offices where the staff lacks seniority may end up with completely new staff. School sites could be affected as well, since some central office positions affected by layoff or reduction in hours involve people who used to work at school sites, and they'll bump back to school site positions. The next few years may be a wild ride because the layoff process may need to be repeated several times.

Our employee union groups are invited to participate with us throughout the process and we work collaboratively to ensure the process is done according to Ed Code and collective bargaining agreements.

It's a tough reality.

Very much so. We do our best to support affected employees by providing as much information as possible and advising all employees of their rights. We understand how it feels because even though HR has to implement this process, we're also affected. We're losing people too. You can provide all the information available, but you can't fix how it feels.

Scenes from Schools

Students from **P.J. Jeffery's fifth grade class at Hickman Elementary** recently took part in a special overnight program aboard the **Star of India**. Students experienced what it was like being a poor emigrant in 1874. They performed shipboard duties, stood "watch", cooked, helped hoist the sails and sang sea chanteys. The "voyage" was part of a social studies unit.



Layoff Assistance for Employees

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provided with information about bumping, reemployment with the district, benefits, Employees Assistance Service for Education (EASE), unemployment, credit union services, and more. "During the difficult times of reductions in force, the district and union leadership can agree on the importance of support for the affected employees," explained Deputy Administrative Officer Deberie Gomez, which is why bargaining unit leadership will attend both meetings and be available to answer questions.

The district is encouraging staff who are affected by layoffs or reductions in hours to take advantages of the services offered by outside agencies such as the San Diego Workforce Partnership and Employment Development Department (EDD). Both the Workforce Partnership and EDD have career centers throughout San Diego that offer free services, including job search workshops, resume

writing/interviewing workshops, computer classes, career counseling, and a job posting board with thousands of job opportunities, to laid-off of affected employees. Visit www.sandiegowork.com or www.caljobs.ca.gov for more information on the resources available through the San Diego Workforce Partnership and Employment Development Department.

Affected employees will also receive information about TLC Staffing, a local staffing company. TLC Staffing places temporary workers in clerical, secretarial, administrative, accounting, human resources, information technology, and technical positions throughout San Diego County. Interested parties should go online to www.tlcstaffing.com or call (858) 569-8026 for more information.

The Human Resources Division has established a Classified Employee Layoff Information Hotline. Callers may direct their questions to (619) 725-8101, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Rebuilding Lincoln High School

The largest project in the Proposition MM bond program, the construction of the new Lincoln High School, will begin in earnest in a matter of months. The existing school will be demolished this fall following a unanimous vote by the Board of Education on January 14, 2003, to close the campus at the end of this school year. The new high school will be rebuilt and expanded on a 24-acre site comprised of the existing campus area as well as an additional six acres to be acquired. The district's relocation team is currently working with residents in that area on appraisals, relocation options and other issues.

"The district expects that all property should be acquired by early 2004, and that construction will begin May 2004," said Lance Lareau, senior project manager for the district's Facilities Management division.

The new site as recommended by the Lincoln community, extending a portion of the existing Lincoln southern campus boundary across Franklin Avenue to Ocean View Boulevard, between 48th and Gloria streets, was approved by the Board of Education at its September 10, 2002, meeting.

A key issue behind the construction of a new campus is the need to create a world-class school at Lincoln that will result in improved student achievement and will strengthen the surrounding community. Improving the achievement levels of all students in the Lincoln feeder schools is critical as well, and, according to district liaisons, will remain an ongoing focus of the planning effort.

"This has been, every step of the way, a



community-led project with an unprecedented amount of community involvement. There were 80 community meetings, design task force sessions and workshops over 18 months. This wouldn't be happening without the community's participation," noted Lareau.

The new Lincoln High School, slated to have a fall 2006 opening, will allow for a full 9-12 grade configuration at Lincoln, Morse and San Diego high schools and alleviate overcrowding. The new school, the largest school construction project to be funded by Proposition MM at an estimated \$89.9 million, will serve 2,700 students.

Community groups involved in this project include the Lincoln Gompers Redevelopment Committee, Lincoln Transition Workgroup, Lincoln Design Task Force and Lincoln Education Specifications Committee. These same groups also worked with Martinez & Cutri Corporation on the tentative schematic design plans, shown on page one. Owner Joseph Martinez is, coincidentally, a Lincoln alum.

For ongoing information about the project, please visit the Proposition MM web page, www.sandi.net/propmm.

Management of Cost Growth Challenges

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modernization and construction at existing schools? No. Prop MM has two program components: construction of 13 new and three rebuilt schools, and modernization of 165 existing schools. The modernization program is on time and on budget. Staff forecasts that it is manageable within budgeted amounts due to successful management controls.

Is Prop MM affected by the state or district budget crisis? No. The state is not able to access the funds, and the district is not able to use Prop MM funds for anything but the work that was promised to voters.

News You Can Use

The **Instructional Media Center (IMC)** will be adjusting its hours of operation in response to the budget situation and in an effort to maintain its focus on classroom instruction. The new hours for the IMC and the Teachers' Media Center (TMC) hours are now 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Elementary curriculum library materials and multimedia resources may be ordered any time online using the IMC web page, www2.sandi.net/IMC. The IMC and TMC will continue to be open the first Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. These changes will not affect other services/programs at the IMC. For additional information, visit the IMC page on the district web site, or call the IMC Infoline at (858) 496-8122.

Student Salutes

Two student groups from **Taft Junior High** have been recognized by **Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) San Diego** with a special certificate of appreciation for their community involvement. The Two groups, **Students Who Care (SWC)** and **Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE)** organized a huge blanket drive during the holiday season to benefit the homeless.

Keiller Middle School students were recently featured on the **Math Vision** television program on ITV. Students **Richie Agpaoa, Titus Baxter, Luyen Doan, Alvin Heard, Myleisa Smith** and **Leonard Reasol**, along with their advisor, **Georgia Moore**, helped broadcast the program from aboard the **USS Tarawa**, while docked at the 32nd St. Naval Station. Commanding Officer Lt. David Minnick assisted them. It was the second year Keiller has been honored by Math Vision.

The **Sandburg Elementary Safety Patrol** has received the special award of "**Best Safety Patrol – Northeastern Division**" from the **San Diego Police Department**.

Early Retirement Plan

San Diego City Schools, in collaboration with all of the district's employee groups, is offering eligible employees a Supplemental Early Retirement Plan (SERP). The plan is being offered to reward long-time employees for their dedication to San Diego's students and to minimize the number of employees who could be laid off as a result of the budget situation.

Participation in the plan is completely voluntary. Retirement is a fiscal, personal and life-changing decision. Employees are encouraged to seek guidance and advice from their families, tax consultant, attorney, accountant or other advisors. The district and employee groups will not provide tax, accounting or legal advice.

SERP Eligibility

Certificated Employees (STRS) (e.g., administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, etc.)

- ◆ Age 55 with five years of service; or
 - ◆ Age 50 with 30 years of service
- Classified Employees (PERS) (e.g., instructional assistants, clerks, custodians, etc.)

- ◆ Age 50 with five years of service
- The plan to offer SERP to employees was

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Hall of Fame

The **Community Service Association (CSA)** has a new Board of Directors. **Patricia Vacio**, development coordinator at O'Farrell Charter School, has been elected to represent classified employees. **Lorraine Goodwin**, King Elementary School, has been re-elected to serve a second three-year term as the representative for teachers. Their terms of office are effective from January 2003 to December 2005. Additionally, the C S A board is announcing recipients of its annual



VOICES FOR CHILDREN

holiday campaign. A gift of \$1,500 was provided to **Voices for Children**, a local agency assisting abused children in foster care. Agency executive director Sharon Lawrence said the generous gift would ensure hours of fun for the children. Other holiday donations designated by CSA included \$500 to **Salvation Army** and \$500 to **St. Vincent de Paul** for local assistance to families.

The **Hartford group** of homeowners and auto insurance services recently donated \$4,000 to **McKinley Elementary School** in support of the school's literacy efforts. Hartford has been involved with McKinley as a partner since November 1996.



Longtime district volunteer and **OASIS tutor Joan Slote** likes to keep the wheels turning. Literally. Joan is an avid bicyclist and calculates that as she turned 74 recently, she marked a personal "mile"-stone. Joan pedaled 6,351 miles in 2002 – second only to the 6,454 she pedaled 10 years ago at age 64! She is a gold medalist in the Senior Olympics for bicycling and was fined \$8,000 for riding her bike in Cuba back in 2000 (a debt she's still paying off). Joan's been a regular at **Florence Elementary**, tutoring for an hour a week since 2000. The **Community Relations Department**, which oversees the **OASIS** program, estimates she's tutored more than 120 hours. For more on the **OASIS** program, visit the Community Relations web page at www.sandi.net/partners.

Save the Date

A **Technology Expo** will be held Saturday, February 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lincoln High School. The Expo is being held in recognition of **Black History Month** and is part of the **National Black Family Technology Awareness Week**. For more information, please visit www.sdaadc.net. For additional information, please contact Maurice Wilson, (619) 602-2577.



Staff and students at **Memorial Academy Charter School** are hosting a blood drive on Tuesday, February 25, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., in honor of **Olivia Lopez**, an 8th grade student with leukemia. Informational materials will be

available from the American Red Cross during the drive. For additional information, please email Andres Acosta, co-advisor of Memorial's Builder's Club, at aacosta@mail.sandi.net.

San Diego City Schools' **Gifted and Talented Education Program (GATE)** presents this year's new series of speakers. Both lectures will be presented at Madison High School auditorium from 7 – 8:30 p.m. "Living With Intensity" will be presented by **Dr. Sharon Lind** on Thursday, February 27. "On Being Gifted: Treasuring Your Differences" will be presented by **Susan Winebrenner** on Thursday, May 1. For additional information, please call (858) 573-5991 and ask for Marcia.

A special program recognizing the accomplishments and legacy of **Dr. Martin Luther King Junior** will be broadcast on

Instructional Television (ITV) channel 16 on Thursday, February 27, at 7 p.m. "**Justice and the Citizen: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King**" will feature **Maya Angelou** and **Professor Alan M. Dershowitz**. For additional information, please call ITV at (858) 292-3729.

Retirement Plan

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approved by the Board of Education at its February 4 meeting. Eligible employees will begin receiving information from the Public Agency Retirement System (PARS) mid- to late-February.

A new web page dedicated to SERP information has been added to the district website at www.sandi.net/serp. Additions will be made often to ensure employees are well informed about the early retirement options.

Classified Ads

ADS RUN ON SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS - Send to Communications Office, Room 2145, Eugene Brucker Education Center. **Limit to 10 words (not including phone) or ad not accepted. Include work location and phone (for ID purposes only).**

For Sale: '88 Saab 9000 Turbo, stick shift, \$2,900, 619-540-7663; '98 Chevy S10, stick shift, \$6,500, 619-583-7923; **Baby Jogger II**, 12" wheels, suncover, fab, magenta, \$130, 858-273-4117; **GEDualwave II** microwave oven, oak finish, excellent cond. \$50/obo, 619-464-4050; **USD extension CLAD** for teachers course video tapes, \$80, 619-440-4671; **Designer sofa**, loveseat and recliner, soft hunter green velvet, \$650, 760-931-6513; **Couch**, Bassett, beige, w/sofabed, excel. cond., \$250, 619-589-1168; **Upright piano**, \$1,000, 858-272-4911 (leave name and number); **Entertainment center**, low, split height, versatile, double-faced oak, \$100/obo, 858-569-1770; **Piano**, early 1900's, beautiful antique wood, plays well, \$400, 858-550-0909; **4-17" 4 lug wheels**, \$150/obo, Foosball table, \$75, 858-569-6875; **Dining table**, 4 chairs, oak, 48" round, 24" leaf, \$400, 858-536-7766; **Pentax ZX-7 SLR**, 28-200mm AFzoom, AF330FTZ flash, more, \$425/obo, 619-222-5654; **Couch**, cream, needs cleaning, 2 yrs old, \$150/obo, **Tall book shelf**, 5 shelves, natural wood, new, \$50/obo, 619-795-6736; **Washing mach.**, Amana, excl. cond., \$100, reptile cage, \$10, 619-888-0044; **For Rent:** 2br/1ba house, North Park, no pets, \$1,200/mo., 619-283-3843; **Share** beautiful canyon condo, Clairemont/Bay Park, incl. Room and private ba., use of jacuzzi, pool, garage, w/d, \$650/mo., 619-459-8058; **Wanted:** Roommate, Mission Valley, 2b/2ba, \$725/mo., 619-291-5565; **Misc:** **Wanting** microscopes donated, for emotionally disturbed middle school students, 858-546-9327; **Expecting** twins, newborns, infants, toddlers clothes, and other baby items, 619-640-8991; Pay cash for collectibles and estate sale stuff, 619-772-6903.

The next Staff Bulletin will appear Feb. 29. Deadline for submissions is Feb. 22. Please note that deadlines are final and cannot be extended. Staff Bulletin is on the web site.

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Published for employees of San Diego City Schools twice monthly except during school holidays, and monthly in July.

Send news items and classified ads to:
Staff Bulletin

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