



school bulletin

ISSUED BI-WEEKLY SEPTEMBER THROUGH JUNE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

November 14, 2003

Enrollment Levels Off After 24 Years

For the first time in 24 years--after decades of steady enrollment increases--enrollment in the Long Beach Unified School District has leveled off. This fall, the total enrollment of California's third largest school district now stands at 97,454, down 96 students--one tenth of a percent--from the same time last year.

Enrollment decreased slightly in kindergarten through fifth grade and in seventh and ninth grades. Enrollment increased in sixth grade and tenth through twelfth grades.

It is too soon to tell if this is a temporary pause or the beginning of a trend. Elementary school enrollment usually increases from September through June. It did last year. If that happens again this school year, the total district enrollment could still climb and surpass last year's record enrollment of 97,550 students. Only time will tell.

With a leveling off of total enrollment, it appears that the former elementary school bulge in enrollment has now moved up into the middle and high schools. Overall, elementary enrollment here was down 1,243 students; middle school, up 659 students; high school, up 392 students; and charter schools and other programs, up 96 students.

The Long Beach Unified School District hopes to reduce overcrowding and be able to accommodate all students in the years immediately ahead. If enrollment remains at the present level, existing school bonds from Measure A, approved by local voters in 1999, should allow for enough schools and classrooms to be built to reduce overcrowding and busing. The bonds will also be used during this decade to upgrade many existing older schools that need modernization.

The current leveling off of enrollment is not unique to Long Beach. In fact, many other school districts in California have reported significant unexpected enrollment declines. The current state budget crisis and businesses leaving California may have contributed to the school enrollment change.

The largest Long Beach school enrollment decrease this fall occurred in kindergarten, with 340 fewer five year olds enrolling than last year. Birthrates in local hospitals are usually a reliable predictor of what kindergarten enrollments will look like five years later when those children enter school. However, changes in employment, higher housing costs and migration in or out of the state can change that picture.

Final Free Flu Shots

A district-wide Employee Flu Vaccine Clinic, offering free flu shots to district employees on a walk-in basis, will be held Wednesday, November 19 at the School for Adults, 3701 E. Willow from 3 to 5 p.m. in the auditorium.

National Educator Award Surprises Teacher

Astonished Millikan High School teacher Nader Twal received a \$25,000 surprise award from the Milken Family Foundation recently during an all-school assembly. The announcement drew a roar of approval from thousands of students. Dubbed the "Oscars of Teaching" by *Teacher Magazine*, the Milken National Educator Awards recognize America's best teachers.

Twal will be honored January 16 in Santa Monica with three other Milken award recipients from California.

The English and philosophy teacher earned the national honor as a highly talented, inspirational educator whose classroom practices are among the best in the U.S. Twal may spend the cash prize as he pleases. He appeared stunned by the honor and all the attention.

"I woke up this morning and was just trying to fix my lesson so I could allow my kids to come to this assembly. Then I come here and walk out with a down payment on a house," Twal said to a cheering audience of students and colleagues. "This feels very surreal right now."

He thanked his students and fellow educators at Millikan, where he has taught for six years. Twal, a 29-year-old Jordanian American raised in Saudi Arabia, overcame kidney failure about two years ago. He continued to teach despite his life-threatening illness. He attributed his success to the strong support of Millikan's staff and his ecstatic students, who applauded, cried and hugged one another when his selection for the top award was announced.

"I consider the people at this school as more than friends. I consider them to be family," Twal said. "I feel that I represent all the people here -- the people who push, who aren't satisfied with the mediocre -- the people who are not willing to let anyone fall through the cracks."

AN ASTONISHED WINNER--Nader Twal received the Milken Foundation National Educator Award recently in a surprise presentation at a school assembly. He was greeted by Millikan co-principals Karen Brinkman and Jeff Cornejo and Lois Cohn, a past recipient of the award whose children are Millikan graduates. State Superintendent Jack O'Connell attended the upbeat celebration.

Milken Family Foundation Chairman Lowell Milken announced the prize.

"I happen to believe that teachers and principals have the most important job in the country," Milken said.

"Greatness in education should be recognized. The good work this school is doing would not have come to our attention if it were not for the many, many outstanding educators at Millikan. I wish we could present this award to every one of them. I'm confident that if this school's API (Academic Performance Index) keeps increasing like it has, we'll be back to present another award very soon."

Milken said his foundation scoured the nation to find Twal, who is "truly an individual of integrity and compassion."

Twal said he teaches character. He expects and gets respect and rigor from struggling students, average students and high achievers. He developed literacy materials that were adopted throughout the school district. He requires seniors to create PowerPoint presentations in his Bible as Literature class, and holds mock trials of Old Testament prophets and kings.

His students regularly show impressive growth on quarterly assessments and significant improvement in reading scores compared to national norms -- an average of three grade levels of growth. He also helped design and implement the school's popular PEACE Academy, which helps college-bound students become competitive in a diverse world and global economy.

Joining in the prize celebration were State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell and NFL legend Rosey Grier, who is a Milken Family Foundation trustee.

O'Connell visited the Long Beach Unified School District less than a week earlier to celebrate its winning of the \$500,000 Broad Prize

(Continued on back page)



Spectacular Bands

The 19th annual LBUSD High School Band Spectacular will fill the night with music Tuesday, November 18, at the Millikan High School Stadium. This exciting and colorful event will showcase the marching bands from Cabrillo, Jordan, Lakewood, Millikan, Poly and Wilson, and the LBCC Viking Show Band.

Each band will present its 2003 field show featuring dance teams, drill teams and tall flags. The evening culminates with a special performance of the combined bands, conducted by LBCC bands director Brian Hamilton.

The show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets are available in advance from high school band members or at the gate the evening of the performance. Suggested donation is \$3. All proceeds benefit the high school band programs.

West Nile Virus Here

The California Department of Health Services recently confirmed that a crow found dead in Bluff Park tested positive for the West Nile virus. Anyone who finds a dead bird should call 570-4132.

The virus, a form of encephalitis, often causes only mild fevers and aches but can be fatal. This year, it has caused 153 deaths in the U.S. Young children and the elderly are at the greatest risk.

Mosquitos spread West Nile virus. Health officials suggest removing any stagnant water around the house, changing bird baths, fountains and pet water dishes often, cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools, disposing of or drilling holes in containers where water collects, and cleaning roof gutters.

Window screens on houses should be secure and without holes. Mosquito-infested areas should be avoided and long-sleeved shirts and pants worn when going outdoors, or use insect repellent with DEET, 10-30 percent for children, when mosquitos are present.

Names in the News

Elijah Bowdre and **Rebekah Reynolds**, both seniors at Poly, were winners of the inaugural Carol E. Norfolk Memorial Youth Award of the Long Beach Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Each received a \$500 savings bond. Four other LBUSD seniors received honorable mentions in the essay contest: **Amaris Lane** and **Verjeigh Shorter**, Cabrillo; **Frederick Miller**, Poly; and **Patricia Quines**, Wilson.

Job Opportunities

Applications are now being accepted at the Personnel Commission, 999 Atlantic Ave., third floor, for heavy truck driver, intermediate office assistant and intermediate office assistant-schools.

In Memoriam

Rudy Carmona
former custodian
November 4, 2003

King-Edison Among 14 Best in U.S.

King-Edison Elementary School was honored as one of the 14 highest performing Edison Schools in the U.S. The school won the double Four-Star Achievement Award from the New York-based company.

Vice principal Shivaun Stanton credited the success to "highly dedicated and focused teachers . . . strong support from our district and the support of our parents."

King-Edison made significant academic achievement gains and is no longer at risk of being taken over by the state.

The school also received an award for excellent financial management.

Islanders To Confer

The Second Annual Pacific Islander Education Conference will be held November 14-15 at The Point at The CSULB Pyramid.

The conference is for educators, students, parents and community organizations that serve Pacific Islander students. Activities include sessions for K-12 teachers, administrators, counselors and classified staff; financial aid, scholarship and career planning sessions for students and parents.

A mentoring and educational resource fair allows participants to meet Pacific Islander professionals from business, medicine, architecture, communications, entertainment, law, technology, law enforcement and other fields.

For information, contact Eugene Mafi, ext. 6300.

Out of Harm's Way

The following letter appeared in the Long Beach *Press-Telegram*:

"The devastating wildfires touched the lives of 150 Poly High students attending a three-day camp at Poly North when an evacuation was ordered.

"The Poly North team, under the leadership of principal Shawn Ashley and coordinator Rob Shock, did a tremendous job organizing the evacuation, including arranging transportation, directing students, informing guardians, and organizing the campus for pickups at 2 a.m. on Sunday. The evacuation and implementation was perfection. As a parent, I salute the professionalism and dedication of these leaders."
--Maureen Hawkins

SCHOOL BULLETIN

Official publication of the Long Beach Unified School District issued bi-weekly during the school year from the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, 1515 Hughes Way, Long Beach, California 90810.
(562) 997-8000. www.lbusd.k12.ca.us

CHRISTOPHER J. STEINHAUSER

Superintendent of Schools

BOARD OF EDUCATION

BOBBIE SMITH, President
MARY STANTON, Vice President
JAMES CHOURA, Member
SUJA LOWENTHAL, Member
JON MEYER, Member
ANTONIO ARELLANO, Student Member

• \$25,000 Prize

(Continued from front page)

for Urban Education, recognizing America's top urban school system for closing achievement gaps among various ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Long Beach is the most diverse large city in the nation, according to the U.S. Census.

"What a special week, and what a special day for your school," O'Connell told the Millikan audience. "Talk about a school district on the rise – a district that's going in the right direction. Last week you were recognized as the best urban school district in the country, and now this. It's fun for me to race up and down the state and take credit for your hard work."

Grier, a minister and motivational speaker, had the audience chanting, "We can change the world!"

"When I look at your faces, I have great hope," Grier said. "We all have an important role to play. It doesn't matter what color you are. All that matters is that you give your best. And the best is in you. You have the ability to change the world for the better."

Twal's students said he already has changed their world for the better.

"This was so great. It was awesome," Cecelia Pinel, a senior in Twal's philosophy class, said after the assembly. "He doesn't just give us the work. He explains it. He really throws himself into the work and shares his life experiences with us so that we really understand the material."

Classmate Raul Valladares said he predicted that the assembly was called to honor Twal.

"I told Mr. Twal to get his speech ready, but he didn't believe me," Valladares said. "I just found it amazing that he came to class when he had kidney failure. He gained about 50 pounds that one week because of the fluid build-up in his body, but he sat in his chair and delivered our lesson. He's beyond dedicated to his students. I'm so glad that his dedication is getting the proper recognition."

The national Milken awards go to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education. By honoring outstanding educators, the program strives to attract talented people to the high calling of teaching.

The awards are announced each fall at surprise notifications, held in all-school assemblies.

From its original presentation of awards to a dozen California educators, the program has grown to national stature with 47 participating states. Nearly 2,000 outstanding kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, and other specialists have been recognized with unrestricted individual Milken Educator Awards of \$25,000.

One of the early recipients of the Milken National Educator Award was Wayne Piercy, Lakewood city councilmember and former principal of Poly High School.

The criteria for selection include:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by outstanding instructional practices in the classroom, school and profession;
- Outstanding accomplishment and strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit www.mff.org.