



April 7, 2006

State Reviewers Give LBUSD High Marks

Citing the "silent efficiency" of district staff and teachers, the leader of a review team from Sacramento recently praised the Long Beach Unified School District for its outstanding work.

The school district received high marks from the California Department of Education's recently concluded review.

A team of 20 experts from Sacramento spent five days reviewing categorically funded programs to verify that the district is implementing those programs in compliance with state and federal guidelines.

"When it comes to success, people are always looking for the 'Little District that Could,'" said Jesus Contreras, regional team leader of Categorical Program Monitoring for the California Department of Education. "But after our week in Long Beach, we can tell them we know of a big district that could.

"The Long Beach way is showing," he said. As an example, Contreras noted that in the area of English Language programs, LBUSD is the only large district in the first 100 reviews in the state to achieve compliance on all items. Only one other, smaller district matched that achievement.

"Support here is very quiet and very efficient in a very focused and targeted manner,"

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Hughes, Jordan Earn Counseling Honors

Hughes Middle School and Jordan High School added to their list of awards for counseling services recently when they accepted statewide "Best in the West" and SPARC Academy Awards.

Jordan had recently been named a SPARC Academy Award winner but last week learned that it qualified to receive the even more prestigious Best in the West Award. Top scoring schools may earn a SPARC Academy Award the first two years. Highest scorers three years in a row compete to earn the Best in the West Award. Hughes accepted the Academy Award for the second year in a row.

The awards are presented each year to California schools that best define and implement the state school counseling reform curriculum. The latest honors bring to 13 the total number of schools earning statewide awards this year for their counseling efforts. Other statewide winners include California Academy of Mathematics and Science, Lakewood High School, Prisk Academy, Wilson High School, Avalon High School, Cabrillo High School, Renaissance High School and Millikan High School. Poly High School, Reid Continuation High School and Educational Partnership High School earned Certificates of Commendation.

SERVING AGAIN— Stephens Student Council Co-President Simone Sims presents a plaque with a crystal jackrabbit, the school's mascot, to teacher Bill Mimiaga. Cheering students and staff recognized Mimiaga for earning the California Troops to Teachers 2006 Teacher of the Year Award. Mimiaga was the sole winner of the top middle school award statewide. He retired as a major after 31 years in the U.S. Marine Corps.



Marine's Second Career: Teacher of the Year

A gregarious former Marine welcomes students every morning at 7:15 at the front gate of Stephens Middle School. He's done it for the past six years. He offers high fives, pats on the back, kind words, a quick quip or a wise tip for almost everyone. Bill Mimiaga also happens to be one of the most effective teachers and positive role models on the planet.

Mimiaga was surprised recently by students and staff honoring him as California Troops to Teachers 2006 Teacher of the Year. Only one teacher statewide is selected for each of four levels — elementary, middle, high school and career/technical education. Mimiaga is the middle school winner and will accept the award April 29 in San Diego.

From boot camp to private to gunnery sergeant to warrant officer to major, Mimiaga earned his stripes for 31 years as an active-duty Marine. During service from Vietnam

through the Gulf War, he taught 17-year-old recruits from inner cities and small farming towns about self-discipline and working for a cause greater than themselves.

Troops to Teachers is a U.S. Department of Education and Department of Defense program that helps eligible military personnel begin a new career as teachers in public schools where their skills, knowledge and experience are most needed. Mimiaga was nominated by his principal, Diane Brown. The teacher reacted with modesty during the surprise event at Stephens.

"You know, I'm a man of few words," Mimiaga said. "There are so many deserving teachers who should be up here. I've had the best vice principal and principal who support us. My mother is absent. She passed away in September. I wish she were here to see this."

In the military service, some of Mimiaga's

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17 Schools Named Title I Academic Achievers

The state recently named 17 schools in the Long Beach Unified School District as 2005-06 Title I Academic Achievement Award winners. The winners were among 310 throughout California announced by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

Winners must demonstrate the achievement level of twice the schoolwide Academic Performance Index (API) growth target and twice the API growth target for the socio-economically disadvantaged subgroup for two consecutive years.

Winning schools must also have met national Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for two years in a row. At least 40 percent of students must meet the poverty index.

"We believe that all students can learn.

These awards confirm that belief," said Chris Steinhauer, Superintendent of Schools for the Long Beach Unified School District. "We couldn't be prouder of our students and schools for winning these state and national honors."

Local winners are Alvarado, Carver, Edison, Emerson, Gompers, Harte, Hill, Hoover, Hudson, Hughes, Kettering, Mann, Robinson, Roosevelt, Signal Hill, Stanford and Tucker schools.

Of the nearly 5,900 Title I schools in California, only 338 schools were eligible to compete for the awards this year.

Representatives of the winning schools will be honored at a banquet during the State Title I Conference scheduled for May 1-2 at the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa Hotel in Costa Mesa.

• State Reviewers

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Contreras said. "Ultimately, that affects classroom performance positively."

Robert Lee, a consultant with the Department of Education, has been participating in reviews of LBUSD for the past 20 years and has seen steady, continuous improvement.

"I like coming back to Long Beach," Lee said. "You show districts how to move on to the next level. Every four years I see you moving to a higher level."

He has seen this steady trend through two different superintendents.

"I was looking for that experience I see elsewhere with a new superintendent, of two steps forward, one step back, but it didn't happen here," Lee said. "Here, when you changed superintendents, I didn't even notice a hiccup."

The rigorous state review is conducted every four years. Schools visited were Avalon School, Franklin Middle School and Cabrillo High School.

Areas examined in this year's review include English Language Programs, Homeless Education, Improving Teacher Quality, Physical Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, Tobacco-Use Prevention Education, Uniform Complaint Procedures, Adult Education, Child Development, Title I, Career/Technical Education and other programs.

Credential Current?

Certificated employees are required to keep their credentials and permits current. Employees who allow credentials or permits to expire, or who do not provide the state with evidence of meeting renewal requirements, cannot remain in paid status in a California public school district.

Credentials can be renewed online at www.ctc.ca.gov. For questions about credentials, call ext. 8008.

The Job Board

• Franklin Classical Middle School is seeking a math coach and language arts coach. For information, contact David Taylor, principal, at ext. 5500.

• Applications are now being accepted at the Personnel Commission, 999 Atlantic Ave., for intermediate nutrition services worker, painter and senior nutrition services worker.

Employee of the Year

Nominations are being accepted through April 28 for the 2006 Classified Employee of the Year. Information and nomination forms are available at sites, the Personnel Commission office and at www.lbusd.k12.ca.us under Personnel Commission.

In Memoriam

Robert Latraverse
teacher, Prisk
March 20, 2006

• From Marine Corps to Teacher of the Year

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men did not make it back.

"I saw the sacrifice of all those with whom I served," he said. That's why he promised them on the battlefield that someday he would help their kids and the kids they never had.

GI benefits helped Mimiaga earn his bachelor's and master's degrees, and California Troops to Teachers counseled and placed him at Stephens.

He hit the ground running.

"He's the most incredible teacher," said principal Brown. "He has the most phenomenal rapport with students. He'll tell a kid, 'You look hungry. Did you eat breakfast?' If not, he gets him something to eat."

He notices if students look angry, hurt, tired or sick. He'll take them to the nurse or make sure they get help. He's also a master at teaching kids to get along with each other. He gives respect and he gets it.

Visitors marvel at Mimiaga's special-needs students, who are all on task, challenged and solving algebra problems. The students enter a door covered with University of Hawaii pennants, caps, tropical leis and three large artificial palm trees adorned with colorful lights. The teacher is a perennial winner of the school's door competition – each room featuring a different university.

On state tests, Mimiaga's students' latest 11.9-point gain in reading and 14-point gain in math are impressive, especially for special education. His students outperform many students in regular education classes.

"I hate the bigotry of low expectations," he said. "These kids can learn. Every kid can learn. They must learn to read and do math. Personal accountability and responsibility get you ahead in this world. Our job is to work with them and motivate them."

"We must compete with gangs that offer money and praise for illegal activities. It takes courage to resist that, to find a better way. My kids come from some very tough backgrounds, yet they discover there is so much more than just gang life."

Mimiaga takes his students to Veteran's Hospital. They visit quadriplegics and other wounded vets who have so much less than they do. For the first time, they begin to appreciate their youth, health and possibilities. His students and the Stephens Steel Drum Band entertain the veterans at the hospital and enjoy an annual barbecue with them. The vets love it.

Mimiaga's students also volunteer to clean up the campus and help out at school. They understand service to others. After working in a classroom of moderate to severely handi-

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capped students, one of Mimiaga's students purchased fish and an aquarium for the class.

"That kid felt like a million bucks," said Mimiaga.

"This school is their refuge. This is their home. Some of the kids get here at 6:15 in the morning and hang out here until 6:15 at night. Some have no fathers. I try to be that for them. I try to make them feel special."

Like the Marines, Mimiaga is the first to arrive and the last to leave.

"I owe the military a great thanks," said Mimiaga, who is a leader of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 75 in Orange County. In his spare time, he takes veterans to doctors' appointments in a 15-passenger van provided by his organization. In May, he will ride 10 days on his Harley from Ontario, California to Washington, D.C. to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a half million other vets on motorcycles.

Known as the Run For The Wall, this trip will be followed closely by his students at Stephens. Each day, he'll post photos and lessons from his laptop on a computer blog for the kids to access. They'll do the math on his gas mileage, and explore the history of the major cities and nearby sights he rides by, such as the Grand Canyon and the Smithsonian.

At the recent Stephens event, the Cabrillo High School ROTC, the Stephens Advanced Band, Stephens Steel Drum Band, cheerleading squad and cheering students thanked Mimiaga for all he's done for them. Even some of his veteran buddies arrived on their Harley motorcycles.

The surprise celebration was presented by students who are so grateful for one tough Marine who respects them, teaches them and every morning greets them at the gate.

Coffee With Chris

The next Long Beach Unified Family Committee meeting will be held 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday, April 24 in the Lakewood High School Library. The informal meetings encourage open dialogue between employees and Superintendent Chris Steinhauer. All interested employees are invited to attend.

Camp for Teachers

Science, technology and math teachers are invited to participate in an ASM Materials Camp this summer at California State University Long Beach to learn low-cost simple labs and experiments to engage students in applied science.

The free full-day, weeklong workshop will be offered July 10-14 and includes lunch each day. Reservations are required and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Continuing education units and semester credits are available through participation. To apply, download the application at the ASM Materials Education Foundation website, www.asminternational.org/foundation.

Retirement Event

Honoree	Date	Contact
Jeannie Reynolds	June 6	Ann Driskill 439-6873