



school bulletin

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LBUSD Most Improved Big District in State

A new report from the nationally renowned Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institute shows the Long Beach Unified School District has improved the most compared to other large, urban districts statewide. The study further shows the district's improvement ranking fourth nationwide.

The report offers positive news about student achievement in many of the nation's largest urban school districts. While a number of recent reports have given encouraging accounts of improvement in big-city classrooms, the report states, this new analysis goes further by comparing large urban schools to state averages. The state averages include rural and suburban counterparts.

"Our approach stems from a concern for equity," said Tom Loveless, senior fellow at the Brown Center on Education Policy. "While it is always encouraging to see schools improving on state tests, if more affluent schools are improving even faster, that would raise disquieting questions about whether urban children

are receiving an inferior education."

Results were based on fourth grade reading and eighth grade math scores from state achievement tests in 2000 and 2007.

In 2000, Long Beach students performed significantly below the California state average. But by 2007, Long Beach performed well above the average for all students in the state. The study uses standard deviations to measure progress. In Long Beach's case, the significant change in standard deviations was approximately equal to students improving from the 19th percentile to the 70th percentile in just seven years.

The full study is available at www.brookings.edu/topics/education.aspx.

Established in 1992, the Brown Center on Education Policy conducts research and provides policy recommendations on topics in American education. The Brown Center is part of The Brookings Institution, a private non-profit organization devoted to independent research and innovative policy solutions.

VIPS to Celebrate 40th Anniversary

What started with 12 volunteers in 1969 has grown to approximately 8,600 Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), who will celebrate 40 years of service this month.

Schools are being encouraged to recognize the efforts of their VIPS during the week of March 27 to April 3. The VIPS Office is sending a list of suggested activities.



Former Board of Education member Arlene Solomon was the PTA Area Advisor during that first year in 1969 when she approached two elementary school principals about the idea of recruiting volunteers to help in the classroom. She opened her home to the first group of volunteers.

Forty years later, thousands of volunteers now provide direct assistance to students throughout the district.

"A lot of it happened by word of mouth," Solomon said. "It started during the turmoil of the '60s and people said, 'I want to get involved.' It was just something that caught on."

Today's VIPS assist small groups of students or individual children. Some keep classroom records or perform other essential clerical tasks, freeing teachers to focus attention where it can be of most benefit to students.

"We deeply appreciate the tireless work of our volunteers," said Christopher J. Steinhauer, superintendent of schools. "They are a big reason why our student achievement continues to improve. We've built a national reputation for excellence, and we couldn't have done it without our VIPS."

Before setting foot in the classroom, volunteers are trained in how to interact with
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State Budget Deal Still Means Cuts Here

Despite a recently approved state budget and an anticipated infusion of about \$56 million from the federal government, the Long Beach Unified School District still faces tens of millions of dollars in potential cuts over the next 18 months.

One bright spot in the state budget is that it allows for increased funding flexibility that will allow the school district to make local decisions regarding how to best meet the needs of students with funds that are usually very restricted in their use.

"We got about 70 percent of what we want-

ed on flexibility," said Christopher J. Steinhauer, superintendent of schools. The school district will continue to work with Sacramento to obtain further funding flexibility that would provide greater local control over how state funding is allocated, Steinhauer said.

The state also will receive "stabilization" funding as part of the federal stimulus package, but it remains unclear how much of that funding will go to local schools.

Reducing expenditures is necessary because revenues have been reduced drastically in the state budget, and district operating costs are increasing. For instance, district health care costs tend to increase each year, and LBUSD must pay for step and column increases for employees. These built-in cost increases add to the budget challenge when state funding is dramatically decreased. The end result is that the district is still facing \$35 million to \$45 million in cuts over the next 18 months.

School district staff continue to analyze the state situation carefully with the aim of providing the best education possible for all students while avoiding laying off employees.

State Schools Chief Reacts to Budget

Following are portions of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell's statement in reaction to the recent passage of the state budget deal:

"I'm pleased to see the Legislature finally put its differences aside and took action to end this protracted stalemate. While this budget is not ideal to any extent, the uncertainty and instability for schools created by the lack of an agreement is over.



O'Connell

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Coffee With Chris

The Long Beach Unified Family Committee will meet Monday, March 9 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Lakewood High School library.

The informal meetings encourage open dialogue between employees and Superintendent Chris Steinhauer.

Record Number of Business Partners

The Association of Long Beach Educational Managers honored 134 new business partners recently for their contributions to local schools. These additional business partners bring the new total to an all-time high of 1,220.

ALBEM welcomed each of the new education partners with plaques during the annual Partnership Recognition Breakfast.

Earning the most new partnerships this year was Marshall Middle School, with 10.

• O'Connell Calls for State Budget Reform

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"This budget will reduce the current year Proposition 98 funding level by \$7.4 billion, which includes about \$2 billion in reductions to program and revenue limit funding, as well as \$4.6 billion in deferrals and the redesignation of funds. While the state budget agreement resolves the massive state shortfall, we must recognize that part of the solution essentially transfers our state cash flow problem to local schools and districts, and these cuts will impact our students.

"The budget agreement also provides additional flexibility to transfer funding between about 40 programs which may assist school districts in continuing to provide the educational services their students need. I hope that district leaders will use this flexibility effectively to manage local educational needs while maintaining a focus on raising student achievement

Guide to Community Resources Available

A newly updated fifth edition of the LBUSD Guide to Community Resources is now available for download at www.lbschools.net. Go to "Community Resources Guide" in the A-Z index. Adobe Acrobat reader is required to open the PDF file.

Staff may want to save the guide to their computer desktop for easy reference. Funds from the district's Title IV (Safe and Drug Free Schools) entitlement were used to update the guide.

For more information contact Debra Mahoney, school social worker, at dmahoney@lbschools.net.

Special Education Transition Fair

"High School and Beyond," a special education transition fair, is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, March 20 in the Millikan High School Library.

More than 25 agencies will provide information on employment training opportunities increased independence, support from Harbor Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation, and disabled students programs and services at local community colleges.

For more information, contact Joe Gawel at 951-7733 or jgawel@lbschools.net.

Rogers Jogathon Raises \$16,000

A PTA-sponsored jogathon at Rogers Middle School recently raised about \$16,000.

The entire teaching staff ran laps on the P.E. field to the delight of 900 students and parents. The staff charged onto the field to the tune "Gonna Fly Now" from the movie "Rocky."

Students sponsored their favorite teachers. The teacher with the most donations was Kevin Hamilton, who proudly displayed his Golden Shoe Award as he ran his victory lap around the track.

and closing the achievement gap.

"I am glad that the budget agreement did not include the very successful class size reduction program in the list of categoricals subject to flexibility. Keeping class sizes low benefits students in the critical early grades when they are learning to read and establish a foundation in understanding mathematics.

"My staff will continue its review of the language in the proposed ballot measure affecting the Proposition 98 maintenance factor, which is intended to provide the \$9 billion in repayments owed to public education.

"The painful budget process at our state and local school district level calls out for reform of California's dysfunctional budgeting. It is time for a sincere and frank conversation about reform. Central to this conversation is the idea of throwing out the two-thirds vote requirement to pass a budget and simply using a majority vote. Nearly every state in the nation and Congress, as well as counties and cities use majority votes to pass their budgets. California should follow suit."

School Nurse of the Year Nominations

The Long Beach School Nurses Association is seeking nominations for School Nurse of the Year for 2008-09. Each year the association recognizes one special nurse for outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of LBUSD students.

To nominate a school nurse for this honor, request a nomination form from Jayne Petrich, R.N. at ext. 4500, or jpetrich@lbschools.net. Submit nominations by Friday, April 10.

Summer School Jobs

The classified application for summer school employment is now available on the Personnel Commission web site.

The application and information sheet can be completed online but must be printed out and signed. All applications and information sheets must be attached together and sent directly to Personnel Commission, Summer Applicant Desk, 999 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90813.

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 20, by 4:30 p.m. For information, call ext. 7380.

SCHOOL BULLETIN

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• Volunteers

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students to maximize motivation and help contribute to a positive classroom environment.

During these lean times for public education, their work is especially important and contributes to student success. VIPS contribute thousands of hours of volunteer time each week, which equates to tens of millions of dollars in donated time, based upon national volunteer service rates. More than a hundred LBUSD employees started out as volunteers here.

For more information about VIPS and how to volunteer, visit www.lbschools.net and click on VIPS in the A-Z index.

1,100 Students Attend L.B. Virtual Trade Fair

The Long Beach Regional Occupational Program (ROP), a part of the Long Beach Unified School District, hosted its fourth annual Virtual Enterprise Trade Fair recently at the Long Beach Convention Center. More than 1,100 students and 67 virtual businesses from throughout California competed.

Virtual Enterprise is a school-based, simulated business program designed to help high school students prepare for the working world. Each LBUSD high school now offers Virtual Enterprise classes.

Students create and run their own virtual businesses. The class counts toward the University of California and California State University A-G entrance requirements. During the school semester, virtual businesses trade their services and products and compete in trade fair competitions at virtual trade fairs throughout the state and the world.

At the trade fairs, all guests and judges spend virtual dollars to buy services and products.

The judges, a select group of Long Beach business partners and educational leaders, also score the virtual businesses in competitions based on a series of professional criteria in such categories as Most Creative, Most Professional, Best Salesmanship, Best Job Interview/Resume, Best Mission/Vision Statement, Best Marketing Plan, Best Company Catalog, Best Company Newsletter, Best Video Commercial and Best Webpage.

Cabrillo Donates to Wounded Vets Group

Students at Cabrillo High School recently donated more than \$1,100 of their own money to the Wounded Warrior Project in memory of Cabrillo graduate Ernesto R. Guerra, an army private who was killed in action in Baghdad in July 2005.

Donation buckets were placed in various classrooms for two weeks. Small Learning Community Coordinator Dan Schlessinger organized the school project.

The national Wounded Warrior Project helps men and women who were severely injured in Afghanistan and Iraq. All donations are used to help provide comfort items, counseling and rehabilitation to aid in the transition from a hospital bed to an independent and productive life.