



# school bulletin

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October 3, 2008

## Bonner, Chino, Eckert Named Top Teachers

Three outstanding Long Beach Unified School District teachers have been selected as 2009 Teachers of the Year.

Patricia "Tish" Bonner teaches third grade GATE classes at Madison Elementary School. Joyce Mariko Chino teaches adapted physical education from kindergarten through Grade 8 at Stanford Middle School and Whittier and Henry elementary schools. Chris Eckert teaches fourth grade at Tincher Preparatory School.

The three were honored recently at a luncheon hosted by the Los Angeles County Office of Education for top teachers throughout the county.

Bonner sees teaching as more than just the imparting of knowledge.

"It is an art," she said. "It is the teacher who paints a collaboration among child, parent, district and state standards, and yet still manages to make learning a joy."

Though she characterizes the composition of her classes as "like a mini-United Nations," Bonner uses her classroom to create powerful shared experiences.

"A wonderful benefit of the Baldrige training in LBUSD has been the use of self-assessment and record keeping," she said "As my students track their progress in reading and math or spelling, they become very aware of the information, taking great delight in watching and tracking their own success. In no time at all they are setting their own goals based on their own records."

She believes that being prepared to expect the unexpected is an important part of being a good teacher.

"A lesson may take a bird walk if a teachable moment occurs," she said. "That interesting roofing crew pulling our attention across the street taught us about roof angles and endpoints and brought to vocabulary lessons the words 'eaves,' 'tar pitch,' 'shingles' and 'area.' Teachers are nothing if not creative.

"A less-than-ideal day may mean an unexpected interruption such as a fire drill or a different learning outcome than the one planned. Every teacher has had challenges, and they may mean creative solutions."

Bonner can think back to the time when she chose the teaching profession and has no regrets.

"Remembering my first step into my classroom as a student teacher, I can still feel those butterflies in my stomach," she said. "Would I remember what I learned in those methods classes? Would the students listen and learn? Could I make school as happy a place for them as it was for me? I took a breath and stepped in — and into the most wonderful career I

could have chosen."

Chino focuses on understanding the unique challenges and needs of the students in each of her adapted physical education classes and promotes many kinds of progress.

"We celebrate small achievements and individual progress not typically measured in a general PE curriculum," Chino said. "Sometimes success is demonstrated by having actively engaged students who are having fun during the physical activity."

Creating positive connections among students of different levels of capability is central to her teaching.

"Fostering a culture of inclusion has been my greatest contribution in my teaching career thus far," she said. "Everything that I do is geared towards inspiring students to live physically active lifestyles and to understand and appreciate the unique differences of those around them."

She has supported many ways for the general student population to interact positively with students in her classes.

"Peer coaches benefit as much as or more than the special education students," she said. "One of the peer coaches wrote, 'APE (Adapted Physical Education) is so great because you have peer coaches assist them, and they look at us as models. It makes me feel good helping them feel good about themselves.' During each unit rotation there are only six students chosen to be peer coaches. Often, there are more volunteers than slots to fill. Becoming a peer coach is considered a privilege and a reward."

She believes that letting students shine for their accomplishments is critical.

"Being an exemplary teacher does not mean you are the movie star of the class, but rather the director and effective leader who works behind the scenes and does whatever is necessary for your students' success," she said. "In my class, the students are always the star performers, and I do my best every day to direct, guide and facilitate their learning, using whatever means necessary so that they experience success."

Eckert sees student engagement as critical to his work as a teacher.

"I learned early in my career that if students

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Chino



Bonner

## Teachers Push to End Social Promotion

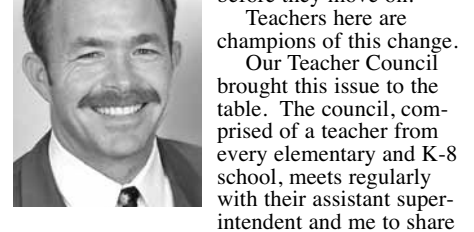
By Christopher J. Steinhauser  
Superintendent

Social promotion — the automatic advancement of students to the next grade regardless of their achievements — has plagued schools and teachers for years. How would you like to be a fifth grade teacher and have a student enter your class who reads at the first grade level? Social promotion dooms both students and teachers to fail.

Ending this practice is easier said than done.

Instead of an autocratic, top-down, orders-from-headquarters approach to raising standards for all students, something unique and revolutionary is now happening in the Long Beach Unified School District.

In an unprecedented breakthrough for a California urban school district, teachers here are pushing for students to attain specific higher grade-level standards before they move on.



Teachers here are champions of this change. Our Teacher Council brought this issue to the table. The council, comprised of a teacher from every elementary and K-8 school, meets regularly with their assistant superintendent and me to share

their ideas and concerns. They believe our promotion policy needs to address all grades and push all students toward higher standards. They also wanted multiple effective ways to help at-risk students succeed.

They have high expectations for their students and themselves. They have become vocal advocates of higher expectations for all students. They support the necessary interventions to make higher academic achievement happen.

Contrast that stance with the resistance in some other urban districts, the desire to lower standards, to excuse mediocre performance or to do away with testing altogether.

That's not the Long Beach Way. We see teachers as the solution, not the problem. We're listening to teachers and implementing improvements they propose.

In 1996, the Long Beach Unified School District first moved to combat social

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## Coffee With Chris

The Long Beach Unified Family Committee will meet Thursday, Oct. 9 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Administration Building.

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

# Broad Finalists Narrow Achievement Gap 80%

The 2008 Broad Prize for Urban Education will be announced Tuesday, Oct. 14 at a luncheon at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Five finalists — including Long Beach Unified School District — will be honored as America's best urban schools. The top national winner will be named at that event.

Other finalist districts include Aldine Independent School District, Texas; Broward County Public Schools, Florida; Brownsville Independent School District, Texas; and Miami Dade County Public Schools, Florida.

Tom Brokaw, special correspondent for NBC and moderator of the second presidential debate, will be the keynote speaker.

The five finalist districts have far surpassed all of the 100 large urban school districts that are eligible to compete for the Broad Prize. While the 100 districts succeeded in narrowing 58 percent of the achievement gaps between white and hispanic students, the five finalists narrowed 80 percent of the achievement gaps between these groups of students. They far surpassed their peers statewide in reducing ethnic and income achievement gaps.

## • Top Teachers

(Continued from first page)

like what they're doing, they learn more, work harder and retain more knowledge from the assignment, he said. "This drive to develop creative lessons has helped my students and me to make some incredible projects. Projects included building a complete skeleton, then attaching working circulatory, digestive, respiratory and nervous systems; performing a rat wedding so students could refine cooperative team skills and reinforce Internet research; and, most recently, infusing multimedia technologies to enhance instruction and increase student achievement."

His own childhood experiences helped to shape his teaching style.

"I was fortunate to have several teachers who inspired me as a child," he said. "These teachers helped me break out of my shell. They instilled the love of learning and made the classroom fun. They made me feel special, appreciated and created a place where I wanted to go every day. It has been my aspiration to continue this legacy in my own classroom."

After establishing firm classroom management and a cooperative learning ethic among his students, he seeks to excite and engage students in their learning.

"It has been my experience that students who are excited and who are having fun will actively engage in their learning, complete more rigorous tasks and achieve more than with traditional teacher-centered modalities of instruction," he said.

Yet, he makes the distinction that there is more to his method than creating enjoyable lessons.

"Teaching my students to have fun at school is not the primary focus of my teaching," he said. "Learning is.

"Through the infusion of creative projects, I teach students to enjoy school and enjoy learning. I teach them school is a place where they can explore and expand their knowledge through cooperation and teamwork. I teach them that knowledge is never-ending and by being excited to learn they will become lifelong learners."

All five finalists have shown significant progress in helping all students — no matter their background — to prepare for and attend college. The study by the Broad Foundation looked closely at gap closures that occurred only when both hispanic and white student groups increased their achievement. The five finalists had even a greater margin of success — 80 percent for the five finalists versus 50 percent for the 100 large urban districts in the U.S. The gap closure in the finalist districts was not attributable to white student achievement declining.

## Fitness Magazine Features Wilson

The September issue of Fitness Magazine notes that fitness innovations are underway at Wilson Classical High School, where instructor Ruth Mohr-Silofau applied for a grant to teach physical education based on a health-club model of cardio, strength training and running.

One of Mohr-Silofau's students lost 60 pounds after taking part in her classes.

The article, "A body is a terrible thing to waste," features a photo of spin classes at Wilson, which are also offered at other high schools in the district.

Earlier this year, Mohr-Silofau won the state High School Teacher of the Year Award from the California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

## The Job Board

Applications are now being accepted at the Personnel Commission, 999 Atlantic Ave., for senior purchasing assistant and supervisor of autism services.

### In Memoriam

**Roland Berry**

former carpenter supervisor  
Sept. 13, 2008

**Lawrence Scott**

former principal  
Sept. 22, 2008

### SCHOOL BULLETIN

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## • Interventions

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promotion as the only major school district in California to do so. The demise of this practice began with the district's pioneering third grade initiative, then expanded to grades 1, 3 and 5. The state followed our example and adopted grade-level standards statewide.

Teachers here recently proposed and the school board unanimously approved applying in more grades new tougher standards for students to be promoted. Their goal is to have no student fall behind more than one grade level.

We are becoming far more systematic about intervening and following through with students at risk of failure. If necessary, we retain students until they improve their achievement. We know that being held back a year is less likely if a student is required to attend summer school. Despite recent budget cuts, we still have enough state funds to serve our highest-needs students in summer school. We also set aside school site funds for the most at-risk students.

More interventions now help struggling students get over the bar to earn promotion to the next grade:

- Math Achievement Professional Development
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)
- Preppy Kindergarten
- After-School Tutoring
- Literacy Classrooms
- Lindamood-Bell Reading Clinics

Other award-winning efforts like CBET, Community Based English Tutoring, also help. CBET provides language lessons both to our students and their parents. It engages parents in their children's education, requiring them to tutor at their child's school.

I know of no other large school district in the state that has so many courageous teachers urging their school administrators and school boards to set higher standards. I know of no other district that acts on teacher recommendations with such can-do commitment.

By listening to teachers who understand that we must expect more to achieve more, we are doing exactly what all school systems should be doing: eliminating social promotion and making higher achievement happen. Public schools throughout the U.S. need to engage teachers in reforms like this that help teachers reduce the achievement gap.

When the end of social promotion is soon fully implemented, a fifth grade teacher will enroll far fewer students achieving even a year below grade level. Our new teacher-driven grade level standards and specific interventions give teachers help and hope. That's in the best interests of every student we serve.

## Hi-Hill, Uniform Help

During these lean times, generous donations from school employees are helping hundreds of students to spend a week at Camp Hi-Hill or receive new school uniforms.

Sign-ups for these tax-deductible payroll deductions are now available through payroll clerks at all schools and offices. For a \$60 contribution (\$6 quadriweekly), a donor can outfit a child with a new uniform. For \$160 (\$16 quadriweekly), a donor can send a local fifth grader to Camp Hi-Hill in the San Gabriel mountains for an unforgettable week of outdoor education.