

SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS' ASSOCIATION

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*Strengthening Districts.
Enlightening Youth.*

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California Drop Outs Reach 10 Year Low

California's high school graduation rate fell to a 10-year low last year. Unfortunately, the "drop out crisis" affects a staggeringly large number of students particularly in large urban high schools. Small school districts tend to fare better, but also need to keep a watchful eye on their graduation rates.

Statewide, the California graduation rate fell from 71% in 2005 to 67% in 2006 according to a California Department of Education report released May 12, 2007. That 4 percentage point fall works out to an additional 21,000 students who failed to graduate. Or, have we (educators and administrators) failed to prepare them? The answer is unclear. There are as many responses as there are schools. Everyone considers their situation unique. But, how unique is it?

This significant decline comes as the state required a test of basic skills, the California High School Exit Exam, for graduation the first time. The debate is clear. Ann Bancroft, spokeswoman for state schools Superintendent

Jack O'Connell who authored the exit exam law in 1999 said: "It (the declining rate) indicates that before the exit exam requirement, students were graduating without having the skills measured by the exam." On the other hand, Attorney John Affeldt of the law firm Public Advocates, claims: "There are thousands of students who have not been adequately prepared for this exam. The state has not yet earned the right to impose this exit exam penalty on them."

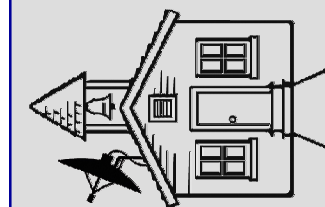
The crisis may be worse than current data shows because both graduation rates and dropout rates in California are notoriously unreliable because the state lacks a student tracking system that allows it to accurately determine whether a student has left school altogether or has gone to another school. Additionally, school districts and the state use different methods of calculation.

The bottom line is that too many youth are not prepared to compete in today's economy.

(Continued on page 3)



SSDA'S SMALL WORLD



SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS' ASSOCIATION

AVOIDING THE SUPERSIZED GENERATION

BY DR. MELISSA BROWN

Small school districts have a secret "healthy kids" weapon. It's called quality care by name. Most small school district superintendents, teachers, and staff know every child by name. They also know their student's eating habits and something about the child's family history. Such knowledge counts and is part of the best practice formula when it comes to winning the battle of the supersized generation and its unwanted impacts.



Childhood obesity is more than a challenge—it is a very visible epidemic caused by years of insufficient attention, poor habits, and ineffective school and home practices. What's worse—it's largely curable. So, why does it persist?

Forty years after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Child Nutrition Act, many of our youth are malnourished, unfed, go to school hungry, "pig out" on supersized, unhealthy foods, or fail to exercise regularly. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the number of overweight children ages 6-11 has *doubled* in the past 20 years; for adolescents 12-19 years old, the overweight figure has *tripled*. An estimated 17% of U. S. children are overweight, and policymakers believe schools can help students trim down and shape up. After all, we did it in times past and can certainly do it now.

Today's overweight epidemic occurs predominately within the nation's poorest rural and urban areas. The CDC research shows overweight numbers are highest among Caucasians from low-income families, Mexican American boys, African-American girls, and American Indian

(Continued on page 2)

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

MAY / JUNE 2007

In this issue:

- Avoiding the Supersized Generation **1**
- The Real Game California* Offers SSDA Students Career Choices **1**
- 5 Steps for Building a Healthy School Environment **3**
- California Dropouts Reach 10 Year Low **6**

Special Points of Interest:

- * Curb Your Fuel Costs...the SSDA Help Desk tells you how. **5**
- * Check out our New Members! **2**
- * Don't miss the Pismo Beach Regional...see the Calendar of Events. **5**
- * May Revision is out...Legislative Watch has more info. **5**

The Real Game California Offers SSDA Students Career Choices

The Real Game California was one of the featured resources of our March 2007 SSDA Conference in Sacramento. Phil Jarvis focused on it in his keynote, and in a follow-up concurrent session with Charley Cartwright, Executive Director of the California Career Resource

Network (CalCRN) (www.californiacareers.info). The keynote presentation and follow-up workshops were such hits that we asked for and received a discount for all members. SSDA members now have a great opportunity to receive a 15% discount through June 2007 on the

purchase of *The Real Game California Series (TRGS)*!

By using curriculum, students participate together in role simulations of being employed adults learning the skills to managing their lives

(Continued on page 4)

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Small World is published bimonthly, except for the summer and holiday school district breaks, by the Small School Districts' Association, 455 Capitol Mall, Suite 315, Sacramento, California, 95814. Periodical postage paid at Sacramento, California, 95814. Subscription price: \$40 value to members; offered to non-members on a qualifying basis.

Small World keeps SSDA members informed of association events and activities, issues pertinent to small school district instructional services and operations, and efforts on their behalf in the legislative arena. Advertising or the mention of products, services or programs in *Small World* does not imply endorsement by SSDA. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SSDA, 455 Capitol Mall, Suite 315, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Editorial Offices: SSDA, 455 Capitol Mall, Suite 315, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 444-9335.

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We want to hear from you...

Call to celebrate Small School District events and best practices, toll-free (866) 443-7732.



Small school districts and their staff are on the move and contributing greatly to California's educational climate.

Steve Lund, Superintendent of Fort Bragg Unified School District, was recently appointed to the CSBA's statewide Superintendents Advisory. **Chris McGriff**, Superintendent of Happy Valley Elementary School District will serve as the SSDA's representative to the CSBA's statewide Small School District Council.

David Miller, Superintendent of the Hilmar Unified School District, retired. **Armando F. Flores**, Superintendent of the Bellevue Union School District, became the recipient of the SSDA Charlie Binderup Award for excellence in school district management, March, 2007. **Tom Changnon**, former small school district Superintendent of Keyes Union Elementary School District, won his election as Stanislaus County Office of Education Superintendent. **Debra Pearson**, Superintendent of Wheatland School District, was designated by the California Department of Education to serve on the CDE School Facilities and Planning Division Project. Congratulations to all!

Please share any information about your district in this section by calling SSDA, toll-free, (866) 443-7732 or (916) 444-9335. You can also send an email to Shannon Asher, shannon@ssda.org.

NEW & RENEWED MEMBERS



Strategic Partners

- Golden State Labor Compliance
- 4 Administrators
- Kelling, Northcross & Nobriga
- School Innovations & Advocacy
- Foundation for Educational Services
- Ripple Effects
- NOW Media Group

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- Axiom Advisors & Consultants, Inc.
- SchoolDude.com
- Education Support Services, LLC
- National Carport Industries
- Rand McNally
- iNetwork Technology Solutions

District Members

- Twin Ridges Elementary School District

(Supersized, continued from page 1)

youth. The CDC claims the average daily consumption of soft drinks among young girls doubled from 1978 to 1998, while it nearly tripled among boys during the same period. The CDC advocates a "whole child" approach and is promoting a Healthy Youth! Initiative (www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/) encouraging all segments of the population to join with schools in combating the epidemic.

Small School District Association member Chris McGriff, Superintendent of Happy Valley, has joined the whole child healthy development movement by involving his youth directly. He has developed a contract with a local vendor who prepares nutritious lunches daily and delivers them to the school with menu input from the students. The youth take turns serving the meals, and advertise the menus to their peers. The result: more nutritious foods, less waste, reduced costs, and a complementary nutrition education program that encourages students to become more responsible for their own health. "Our kids take great pride in meal planning and learn some community service techniques, too. Then, they help educate their parents about the

SSDA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2007

- * **May 13:** Mother's Day
- * **May 21:** Executive Committee Meeting
- * **May 28:** Memorial Day

June 2007

- * **June 17:** Father's Day
- * **June 6:** Summer Begins

Regional Conferences

- * **July 20:** Pismo Beach Regional Shore Cliff Lodge, Pismo Beach
- * **July 31-Aug. 1:** New Superintendents' Symposium Embassy Suites, Sacramento
- * **October 4:** San Diego Regional SD County Office of Education
- * **October 16:** Redding Regional Red Lion Hotel, Redding
- * **October 22:** Humboldt Regional Humboldt County Office of Education, Eureka

Graduation Rates in California:

How Does Your District Compare?

Urban School District	2006 Graduation Rate
1. San Francisco Unified	73%
2. Oakland Unified	46%
3. West Contra Costa Unified	57%
4. San Jose Unified	76%
5. Tamalpais Union High	92%
6. Los Angeles Unified	41%
7. Sacramento City Unified	55%

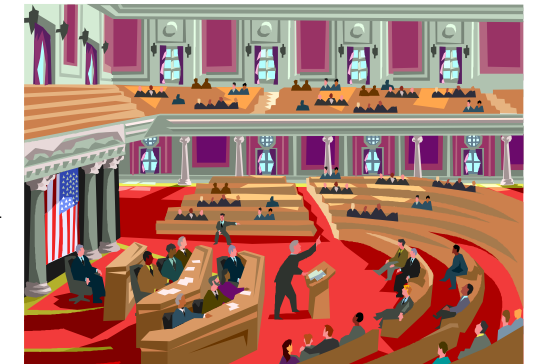
Source: CDE, May, 2007

Call SSDA and share your district's graduation rate with others, toll free (866) 443-7732.

LEGISLATIVE WATCH

May Revision Outcomes

- More money for K-14 schools. The Governors May Revision offers new programs such as:
 - * \$38.1 million to fund the Supplemental Instruction Program deficiencies.
 - * \$20 million for English Learner supplemental instructional materials.
 - * \$8.5 million to county office of education to assist school districts for students to pass CAHSEE.
 - * School nutrition per meal increase of 4.7 cents
 - * The good news is that there are no mid-year cuts or deferrals and there is a higher 2007-2008 COLA and there is new money for Proposition 98.
- Statutory COLA increases:
 - * The federal government has released the data used for calculating the 2007-08 Cost-of-Living Adjustment for schools. The COLA is now 4.53% compared to the budget as introduced 4.04%



- For more information on any of these stories go to www.ssda.org or contact Dave Walrath, SSDA Legislative Advocate at dwalrath@m-w-h.com



SSDA Help Desk

Question: How can I reduce my district's fuel costs?

Answer: With gasoline over \$3 per gallon and natural gas prices still on the rise, small school districts will be one of the first industries to feel the effect of increased fuel cost. There are several ways to cut costs. First, keep busses and vehicles in good shape. Make sure regularly scheduled maintenance on engines such as changing filters and fluids occurs to obtain best fuel efficiency. Tires should be at the correct inflation pressure for the load they carry. Over-inflation increases slippage and wastes fuel. Secondly, take advantage of the new SSDA/Comdata MasterCard Public Sector Purchase Card Program. Comdata supplies solutions to 5 of the top 10 fleets in the United States, such as; FedEx, Coke, and Pepsi. The Comdata fuel/purchase card is the most widely accepted card in the transportation industry and will provide your district with the opportunity to negotiate bulk, discount fuel purchases with local stations in your area. It will be provided to SSDA members at zero interest and no annual fee upon request. For more information and an application, call Dr. Melissa Brown, SSDA, toll-free, (866) 443-7732.