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Volume 27 - Issue 5

SSDA Elects Four New Executive Committee Members

The members of the Small School Districts' Association's Executive Committee appointed four new Executive Committee Members (effective July 1, 2010).

SSDA Executive Committee Members serve four-year terms, which are renewable by vote of the Committee.

SSDA was formed in 1983 to provide focused advocacy for the unique issues faced by the over 600 small school districts in California. SSDA began with four member districts and has since grown to a membership of more than 325 districts. The new Executive Committee Members are as follows:



*Helio Brasil, Superintendent/
Principal, Merced River
School District*

Helio Brasil has served as the Superintendent/Principal in the Merced River School District in Winton, California since 2000. Earlier in his career, he also served as the Principal at Ustach Middle School in Modesto. He has been a supporter of SSDA for many years, and he is currently a member of nine professional organizations. He is living proof that, if you want to get something done, ask a busy person. Dr. Brasil will be a great addition to the Executive Committee of SSDA.



*Fred Adam, Superintendent,
Placer Hills Union School
District*

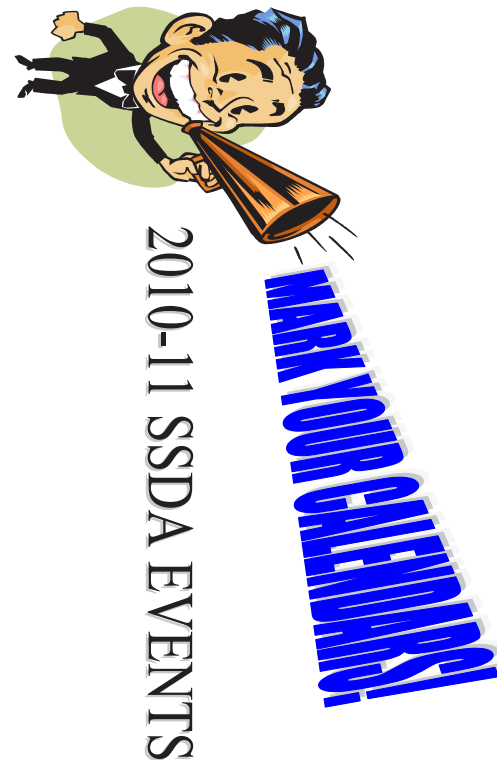
Fred Adam has served as the Superintendent of the Placer Hills Union School District since 2006. Over the past decade, Fred has served as Superintendent in three separate districts, and, in 2006, he was named Administrator of the Year in Sonoma County. Fred has always been an active member of SSDA and has often recruited other districts to join by sharing his personal experiences. As described by his colleagues, Fred always "finds a way" to get it done.



*Linda Irving, Superintendent/
Principal, San Antonio School
District*

Linda Irving has served as the Superintendent/Principal of the San Antonio School District in Lockwood, California since 2006. Throughout her career, Linda has shown a tremendous amount of commitment to small school districts.

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| Central California/Coastal Regional
Friday, July 9, 2010
The Cliffs Resort
Shell Beach, CA | Mid-State Regional (Sacramento)
Friday, October 22, 2010 – <i>Bridged Video</i>
Sacramento County Office of Education
Sacramento, CA |
| Southern California Regional
Friday, October 8, 2010
Radisson Inn
San Diego, CA | Northern California Regional (Redding)
Monday, October 25, 2010
Shasta County Office of Education
Redding, CA |
| Northern California Regional (Mendocino)
Friday, October 15, 2010 – <i>Fideo Conference</i>
Mendocino County Office of Education
Ukiah, CA | Wine Country Regional Meeting
Friday, November 5, 2010
Doubletree Hotel
Rohnert Park, CA |

New Superintendents' Symposium
July 19 - 20, 2010
The Citizen Hotel
Sacramento, CA

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Survey Results on Californians and Schools

Submitted by: David Walrath - SSDA Legislative Advocate



PPIC

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) released their most recent poll on Californians and education. The survey was conducted April 6 to April 20, 2010, and the results were reported as part of a press conference on April 28. The simple numbers show that only 8% of voters approve of how the Legislature is dealing with K-12 education, 15% approve of the Governor on K-12 education, while 59% believe the federal government should be doing some unspecified "more" to improve public K-12 education. These numbers show that the voters believe there is a difference between what they want and what the state and federal governments are doing.

The survey clearly indicates strong voter support for public education and a disconnect between the citizens and state government. While the Legislature and Governor are continuing to discuss means to reduce state funding for K-12 education, the citizens continue to oppose further cuts and believe public education is a high priority.

Almost nine in ten voters (88%) are very or somewhat concerned that the state budget deficit could result in significant K-12 funding cuts. Slightly more than seven in ten voters (72%) believe K-12 public school state funding is not enough. While they are very concerned about teacher quality (77%) and academic achievement (87%), the voters also give high grades for their local neighborhood schools (67%) and gave either an A or B grade.

The lack of trust with the state government is reflected by the fact that only 44% would support higher state taxes to support K-12 public schools; a bare majority would support local parcel taxes (52%) or construction bonds (54%) for public K-12 schools. Unfortunately, parcel taxes require at least a 2/3 voter approval and local school construction bonds generally require at least a 55% approval.

[Note: The school construction bond polling reflects a significant support reduction from the current economic climate.]

Although the polling shows strong citizen support for K-12 public education, the state has been shell shocked by a deep recession and very slow beginnings of economic recovery. To paraphrase one State Senator: "We can not spend money we do not have." The poll clearly shows that the citizens understand this. The disagreement is that the citizens believe schools should be a priority for funding and budget protection. The state, however, appears to have looked at schools as a priority for cuts, not protection in 2009.

SSDA Elects Four New Executive Committee Members

....continued from cover

Linda's experience has been as a successful Superintendent/Principal of two high performing small elementary school districts, and she has also served as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in Mono County. Linda has shown great interest in SSDA where she is a regular Conference attendee and Workshop Presenter.



Mike Michelin, Superintendent, Cascade School District

Mike Michelin is the newly appointed Superintendent of the Cascade School District in Anderson California. Prior to coming to Cascade, Mike served as the Superintendent of four small school districts in Siskiyou County. Mike previously served as a member of the Executive Committee of SSDA and felt compelled to step down for a while when he took on four school districts. Now that he is down to one district, he is eager to serve on the Executive Committee once again. Welcome back Mike!



State Budget and Federal Education Bailout

Submitted by: David Walrath - SSDA Legislative Advocate



GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER'S BUDGET
May Revision



The real 2010-11 State Budget process began with the May Revision and will have taken its next step by May 28, 2010 when budget subcommittees and full committees make their recommendations. It will continue through the form of a conference committee to work out Senate and Assembly differences starting early in June. Although the Senate and Assembly leadership want an open budget process through the normal committee hearings, expect the Big 5 to again make the major decisions.

The May Revision is the Governor's proposal which can be characterized as "cut programs and spend;" the Senate Democrats have responded with "tax increases, program cuts and spend proposal;" and the Assembly Democrats unveiled their "tax increases, borrowing and spend" proposal. The legislative Republicans have made no proposal other than to say they want to balance the budget with no new taxes.

None of the major players have the votes for their proposals. The Assembly Democrat's proposal is creative but is subject to significant legal uncertainty. The Senate Democrat proposal is more balanced, but balanced is not always a virtue during a polarized budget negotiation. The Governor probably has fewer votes at his disposal because he is termed-out and really only has the power of no, rather than the power of being able to make things happen.

While the State Budget process looks as if it will last until at least mid-July at the earliest, schools will be looking elsewhere for fiscal relief. President Obama, the House Democrats and the Senate Democrats all want to provide an additional \$23 billion to schools to save education jobs. They have placed their proposals in various bills, but the most likely successful action will be if the Democrats can place the \$23 billion

into the supplemental appropriation for: 1) the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; and 2) natural disaster relief. That bill will be difficult for many members of Congress to oppose. SSDA hopes for federal action within the next month that will successfully provide these funds.

SSDA is cautiously optimistic that the funds will be approved and signed by the President by the middle of July. If that is the case that does not mean the funds will immediately available on the first of August. The funds could be delayed as the federal government works through it's bureaucracy to allocate the resources to the states, and further delayed as the state tries to allocate the funds to schools.

California can expect approximately \$2.6 billion from the \$23 billion. Some of that \$2.6 billion will need to be allocated to post-secondary education. SSDA anticipates between \$1.8 and \$2.0 billion would be available for K-12.

The worry is if the State Budget is still at an impasse when the federal funds are approved, will the State Legislature and Governor have an overwhelming temptation to attempt to offset the funds dollar-for-dollar in order to create state budgetary relief? SSDA believes the state maintenance of effort requirement will limit the state's ability to offset on K-12 and Community Colleges, but the State may be able to make offsets on University of California and California State University funding.

SSDA hopes that our anticipation of positive federal action will materialize. We have no hope for really positive action from Sacramento other than there will not be deeper K-12 cuts than those proposed in the May Revision.

Communicating Budget News in Difficult Times

Submitted by: John Almond - SSDA Executive Director



Budget cuts and staff reductions translate into reduced services, which in turn adversely impact the quality of education for students. When districts are forced to cut staff, successful programs are cut along with them. Other critical services that create successful learning environments suffer during a budget crisis, especially when the budget crisis is of the magnitude that we face today. Ultimately, students are the ones that have been most victimized by California's unresolved school finance issues.

Research shows that management is often reluctant to communicate bad news. If open and honest communication is not a part of a district's culture, then communicating bad news will result in more bad news. Without a well established framework that supports a dialogue of full disclosure, there's very little that can be done at the last minute to make the communication of bad news anything other than a disastrous disappointment.

Highly effective leaders, however, recognize the importance of communicating on a regular basis and use the opportunity to establish credibility with their colleagues and employees. In good times and bad, the best leaders can inform, motivate and move forward using tactics such as these:

- Have a disciplined process. Make certain that there is a communication infrastructure in place to support the sharing of information across the district.
- Be consistent. Consistency in message delivery and the messages themselves are important elements of a good communications process. Communication tools that are used regularly can reduce downtime caused by the fear factor of an upcoming announcement.
- Be honest and don't sugar-coat the message. When you have good news to deliver, you usually can't wait to share it. All too often, however, when the news isn't so favorable, we suddenly feel the need to sugar-coat the message. Not only is sugar-coating unfair to everyone in the organization, it can

also be a time bomb for your credibility. If you create a fantasy scenario because you believe that your staff can't handle the truth, you're setting yourself up and the people who depend on you for disappointment.

- Make certain that your administrators and supervisors are informed members of the leadership team. Share the information with your administrators and supervisors in advance, so that they can be prepared to intelligently respond to employee concerns and questions.
- Take the opportunity to measure. If you use a staff meeting to deliver unfavorable news, take the opportunity to truly assess their reactions. Don't assume that all responses will be bad just because the news was bad. It's a great time to check the pulse of employees. The feedback that you get from employees can often be used for subsequent communications and planning.
- Share feedback. Give staff members honest and candid feedback. Let them know that their views count, and that their voices are being heard. When staff members know that their questions are being addressed, the rumor mill is cut down tremendously. Reliable feedback will also establish you as an administrator as a credible source of information.

In essence, nobody likes being the bearer of bad news. However, there can be opportunity for improvement even in the delivery of bad news. Don't make an unfortunate situation worse by failing to communicate effectively.



Hats Off to the Superintendent/Principal

Submitted by: John Almond - SSDA Executive Director



There is no doubt that one of the most difficult administrative positions in public education today is that of the Superintendent/Principal.

Administrators in these small school districts face particularly challenging jobs. Where job descriptions exist, they are frequently impossible to fulfill and, at the same time, sufficiently ambiguous to allow for a variety of actions by those who control their positions. Small school administrators confront the customary tasks of running a school including: staffing, scheduling, conducting faculty meetings, developing a budget, and leading curriculum development. One of the primary differences between a Superintendent/Principal and a Superintendent is that the latter can delegate some tasks, whereas the former is often responsible for not only seeing that tasks are accomplished, but for actually performing most of the tasks.

Superintendent/Principal positions are certainly financially beneficial for small schools, but there can also be negative consequences on the educational system. Unfortunately, small school Superintendent/Principals are not super-human. Due to time constraints, they are often forced to prioritize their responsibilities. With having to manage the daily crises and routines including discipline, communications with parents and board members, and general facility concerns, it is easy to see how some aspects could get neglected.

The Superintendent/Principal position also places a large amount of wear and tear on these individuals and, consequently, contributes to a high degree of stress and job turnover. Few administrators take this type of position with the goal of staying there for the remainder of their careers. These dual positions are usually seen as stepping stones to a higher single administrative position, thus contributing to a high rate of turnover in the small school superintendency.

An additional problem faced by the Superintendent/Principal is the lack of insulation within the organiza-

tion to protect him/her from every problem, issue, or concern that happens on a daily basis in a school district. In schools with full-time Principals, many time consuming tasks are addressed before they reach the superintendent's desk, thereby allowing the Superintendent more time to work on other issues.

In small school districts where one Administrator has the dual role of Superintendent/Principal, completing all of the tasks in all operational areas becomes very burdensome due to the multiplicity of roles and limited personnel available for assistance. The small school Administrator has to carry out a variety of functions not required by large district Superintendents. Simply stated, support personnel, curriculum specialists, and the administrative staff required by the ever-expanding state and federal programs are usually not affordable.

In spite of all obstacles, however, there are many outstanding Superintendent/Principals throughout the State, and they are to be commended for the critical role that they play in public education.

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School Finance Adequacy Litigation

Submitted by: David Walrath - SSDA Legislative Advocate



SSDA congratulates and commends the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California School Boards Association (CSBA), and the California State PTA (PTA) on their litigation to require adequate resources for all school districts. The litigation will ensure that the school districts are able to provide instruction to meet the state academic standards. During the last decade it has become obvious that even in the best school funding times, the State has not and will not provide the amount of resources needed by school districts to provide a comprehensive instructional program.

What Does the Litigation Mean?

All public policy litigation should be considered as part of a legislative and ballot strategy. Litigation is a means by which a public policy issue can be brought before the citizens through the courts. The court action becomes the impetus either for legislative action or ballot box action if the Legislature does not appropriately respond to the court direction. The Legislature and the efforts to have legislative relief, frequently take a long time. Sometimes resolution is delayed until the final court action and multiple appeals. The Serrano v Priest decision took close to a decade before all the legal and legislative action was complete. In other instances, such as the Williams lawsuit, legislative relief was provided prior to the court issuing an opinion.

The normal course of events would be three-to-five years of litigation, with direction to the Legislature to resolve the issue, and then an additional two-to-three years for that resolution. However, because the Serrano suit and the Williams suit have already been litigated, the new litigation could be on a faster track than the normal three-to-five years. SSDA hopes that will be the case. Even if it is not the case, SSDA supports the action to litigate because it does raise the issue and pro-

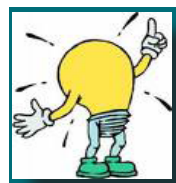
vides a means by which relief can be granted. Without such litigation, it is doubtful that the State will allocate the resources or have the ability to acquire the resources needed to provide school funding adequacy.

Proposition 98

Proposition 98 was enacted in 1998, to stop the fiscal bleeding in school funding and to provide stability in public school funding. It was hoped that it would allow for increased funding when economic times improved. The practical effect is that Proposition 98 has been both a floor (stop the bleeding) and the ceiling (no more than the minimum guarantee) that is politically used to limit the amount of state and local funding provided for schools. Proposition 98 does not automatically increase when new state requirements, such as new academic standards, are placed on schools. Instead, those new requirements must be funded within the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee. Therefore, just funding the minimum guarantee is inadequate to meet the higher level of service required by the state academic standards.

The Proposition 98 minimum guarantee was amended by Proposition 111 to create a guarantee that fluctuates based upon the state's economy and revenues from the proceeds of taxes. Because of tax policy changes over the last two decades, the state's revenue has become tremendously volatile. Consequently, the intent of stability of funding from Proposition 98 was blocked and changed by the enactment of Proposition 111.

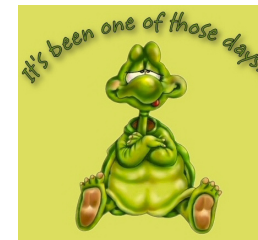
The litigation will return to the Proposition 98 intent to create school funding stability and a floor that assures funding adequacy. For these reasons, SSDA supports and appreciates the action taken by ACSA, CSBA and PTA and looks forward to assisting them and their leadership in ensuring all students receive the support needed to have access to a comprehensive high quality education.



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS.. We would love to hear your feedback on any of the articles listed in this issue. Please send us an e-mail at shelly@ssda.org. If you have any suggestions for future articles or have any topics you would like to see, let us know.

Are You Maintaining Balance in Your Life

Submitted by: John Almond - SSDA Executive Director



As public school administrators, we often feel as though there is not enough of us to go around. In today's hectic world, we are trying to fill multiple roles and are often pulled in a variety of directions. The end result can be that one's life becomes totally out of balance.

Your ability to maintain balance in your life will be determined by your leadership style and your ability to live your priorities. The balance between work and your personal life is not equal or constant. It certainly does not mean scheduling an equal number of hours for work and play. I would offer, however, that it does mean that there needs to be a balance between achievement and enjoyment. In order to achieve balance in your life, I ask you to ponder the following:

- Know who you are - recognize your limitations. We simply cannot be all things to all people.
- Know what you value. We all normally say the right things, but, oftentimes, actions speak louder than words.

The logical question at this point is: How do you know if you are living your priorities? To answer this question, I would say that other people would describe you as:

- Energetic and Enthusiastic
- Focused
- Optimistic
- Creative and Innovative
- Productive and
- Motivated

If these characteristics describe you, then you are most likely living a balanced life. On the other hand, if you are typically fatigued, resentful, overwhelmed, or depressed, you definitely need to spend some time re-thinking your priorities and what you value. Maintaining balance in your life requires a conscious effort.

How many times have you heard expressions like: I simply don't have time, or I'm swamped. As public school administrators, we all know that we are going to have tough days, but the trick is to not let everyday be *one of those days*.

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