



NIXON NEWS

Nixon PTA Newsletter—Vol. 2005-2006 Issue No. 9—January 27, 2006
The L.M. Nixon Elementary School, 1711 Stanford Ave., Stanford, CA 94305 (650) 856-1622 <http://www.nixon.pausd.org>

CALENDAR

Mon. Jan. 30
TB Testing, District Office
5:00-8:00 p.m.

Thurs. Feb. 2
TB Testing Read, District
Office, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

Thurs. Feb. 2
Kindergarten Registration
Deadline

Fri. Feb. 3
PTA Executive Board
Meeting, 8:15 a.m.

Tues. Feb. 7
PTA Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

Tues. Feb. 7
Children's Theater Auditions:
Cinderella, Nixon Theater
2:20-5:30 p.m.

Wed. Feb. 8
Children's Theater Auditions
Nixon Theater, 1:30 p.m.

NEXT PUBLICATION

DATE: February 10

DEADLINE:

Friday, February 3 at 5:00 p.m.

Principal: Barbara Welch

PTA President: Tracy Stevens

Editor: Sharon Dally

Layout: Liz Fendorf

A Word about Public School Support and Funding

I write this not only as the PTA President but also as a Nixon/PAUSD parent. The Palo Alto School District is one of the best in the country; test scores, graduation rates, and college admittance records all support this claim. People take jobs in this area and scramble to find (overpriced) housing just so their children can attend PAUSD schools.

This didn't just happen overnight. There was a specific effort on the part of parents and the community at large to make this a hallmark public school district. This required recruitment of the best teachers, administrators with foresight and stamina, businesses that would become partners, and parents who would be willing to roll up their sleeves and challenge the status quo with all the resources available to them.

We have every right to be proud of what this district stands for and what it provides to every child that attends one of our schools.

We cannot become complacent or assume that the efforts of others will keep this district performing at its highest level.

PAUSD requires both supplemental funding and volunteer efforts to keep this district not only at its current expectations but to continue to improve. There is an ongoing need to develop and enhance our curriculum and our facilities.

Every family that has a child in one of the PAUSD schools should be prepared to vol-

unteer a minimum of 20 hours per year (2.2 hours per month) towards one of the school functions. This could be in the classroom, classroom prep at home, committee functions, field trips, PTA representation, after school programs—the options are endless and can accommodate almost anyone's schedule. Even new families or those who are not permanent residents have something to offer and should become active in their child's school experience.

As for funding, let's not kid ourselves. This is not for free. To provide the quality of services and teaching expertise that is available in this district requires a further contribution in the form of dollars. Several years ago a decision was made to create a district-wide fundraising effort that would provide supplemental funds to all schools with equitable distribution. This ensures a desirability and benefit to the entire school district, not only in our education but also in the overall quality of life, the value of the housing market, and career opportunities. This district-wide fundraising effort is called PiE, Partners in Education, and there is a slice available to every school, and each of us benefits from the whole pie.

In addition to the central fundraising, each school has a PTA or PTSA that can collect and disperse funds that can go towards benefiting that school directly. Every school has its own personality and some very site-specific needs that are determined by the school administrator and the parents of that school.

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Se puede encontrar una edición de *Nixon News* en español en la oficina general de la escuela. Favor de avisar a Sandra Nadim si usted desea añadir su nombre a la lista de distribución.

A Word about Public School Support and Funding *continued from Page 1*

Both of these funding sources are important and necessary. It is not asked or expected that any family give more than is possible based on their family demands. But I am absolutely serious that every \$5, \$50, or \$500 makes a difference. Become part of the effort; a contribution at whatever level you can comfortably afford will make a difference.

If the Nominating Committee from Nixon asks if there is a volunteer position that might be right for you, take the time to explore the options that are available. When the registration material arrives in the mail for the next school year, do not leave the volunteer section blank. When you get the request for PiE donations, do not put it on your "to do" pile but write a check for whatever amount is appropriate for your family. To be clear, these are not one-time requests. Your level of participation may change from year to year. School-specific financial needs may vary year to year, and the funding for supplemental staff may change, but the request for donations to PiE will come every year. You expect your child's education to be consistent and improving; your support should be the same.

PiE Donations

The request for PiE donations for the 2006-07 school year will end March 31st, 2006. Funds are raised the year before they are distributed. All funds raised go into a central fund and are distributed to each school based on student enrollment numbers.

At Nixon, these funds are used to support classroom aides and our teaching specialists and support staff. Specifically this means Barbara Klausner (Math), Sue Chakos (Reading), Barbara Vana (Computer), and Janice Mulhol-

Principal's Corner *by Barbara Welch*

Dear Nixon Families,

I will be in Detroit with my daughter and son-in-law welcoming my first grandson, Grant, into the world when the deadline for this article is due. Rather than leave the "Principal's Corner" blank for this issue, I am choosing to rerun one that appeared two years ago. At the time, many parents commented that it prompted them to do some reflection. I hope you find it thought provoking.

Will Our Children Be Resilient?

Nixon has a long-standing culture of commitment to educating the whole child (including intellectual, physical, emotional, ethical, and social development). Resilience is a lifeskill receiving a high priority from the staff. Although

land (Librarian). Is it possible that you are not aware how much time your student spends with one of these teachers? They support both those students who may need some extra assistance and those students who can benefit from something more challenging than they get in the classroom. What would it be like to have a computer lab and no computer instruction? Or a library with no librarian?

Last year Nixon families contributed \$83,532.98 into the PiE fund. We received \$110,149.00 for our current school year. We had a contribution rate of 46%. Simply put, we did not fund our portion of the pie.

Currently Nixon stands at 20.59% of our goal for this year. This puts us near the bottom, in 11th place out of 12 elementary schools. I need to ask, what is wrong? What is it that we can do to provide you more information? Based on school demographics, Nixon should be able to fund its portion of the pie. If the overall campaign falls short, everyone's dollars go down.

If this were not extremely important, I would never have come to you with such a lengthy statement about school support and funding. With only 63 days left in the campaign, I would like to encourage you to do what you can and support our school.



Tracy Stevens
PTA President

the roots for children's resiliency come from home and family, we can all nurture it.

Resilience has many definitions or descriptions: capacity to withstand difficulties; capacity to accept feedback; "picking yourself up" and being willing to try again and again; perseverance in the face of challenges and setbacks; capacity to cope with stress; realizing it's okay to make a mistake and that mistakes are opportunities. We need to teach students that failure is their teacher, not their enemy. They must find ways to embrace it. Teach them by example how to learn from failure without succumbing to disappoint-

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Principal's Corner *continued from Page 2*

ment, frustration, or humiliation. Flexibility is a key ingredient in resiliency: flexibility "allows us to adapt to changes, problems, and unexpected situations without undue emotional strain and unpleasantness for ourselves and those around us." Flexibility indicates our willingness to alter specific plans, ideas, and expectations. One of the gifts of our temporary move to the Garland site in 2003-04 was that it forced all of us to be flexible and try different activities in a new environment.

The quality of resiliency is one which worries us when we look at our well cared for and, yes, well-loved students. Often, the nurturing of resiliency is cast aside in our desire for our students to be successful or to be happy. When we are too protective due to our loving intentions, we send our children the message that they cannot weather the "storms" of life, and we make it impossible for them to learn how to navigate these storms. Schools are a safe environment for children to test their resilience without adults "saving" them.

We squelch the development of resilience in children when we, at home and school:

- demand perfection (and therefore create perennial disappointment because performance can't measure up to the expectations of others or of ourselves).
- model anxiety over small inconveniences and uncertainties.
- catastrophize over changes or *possible* problems.
- solve problems for our children.
- cushion every bump in the road for our children.

On the other hand, we foster the development of resilience

PTA President's Message by Tracy Stevens

Welcome to the second half of the 2005-06 school year! There are a number of PAUSD updates, many of which you may find interesting and most certainly will impact your child's educational experience.

The District is presently reviewing or evaluating five different priorities: a Facilities Evaluation, Program Priorities to include a Curriculum Review, Attendance Area Evaluation, and the State of the District (including Goal Setting).

At the recent School Board meeting a timetable was set to achieve each of these tasks.

At the forefront is the Program Priorities, with an online survey from February 1—16. There will also be Community Meetings (see attached flyer). I encourage you to com-

plete the survey and attend one of the Community Meetings should you have an interest in your child's education and want to get a better understanding of where PAUSD is heading, or want to express your concerns and priorities. More information regarding the on-line survey will be available as February 1st gets closer.

- help our children set reasonable personal goals.
- respond to a child's failure at something by turning it into a learning experience.
- act as a resource, not a rescuer, when a child encounters difficulties.

Most of all, parents and teachers must model for our children the capacity to:

- take things in stride.
- maintain a sense of humor when things go wrong.
- accept changes in what had been expected.
- sort out the truly important problems from the minor twists and turns of daily life.

Building a child's capacity to withstand the ups and downs of life is one of the most important gifts we can give our children. This does not mean life should be presented to children as a test or a proving ground. The important thing is how we help children view, deal with, and respond to the inevitable difficulties of living. My own children, as adults, have shared with me that they wish I had listened more and "fixed" less as they were growing up. Too bad there are no "do overs" for us parents.

Barbara

The Attendance Area Evaluation has now been scheduled to begin a bit later in the year. There will be a preliminary meeting scheduled in April or May. The main work on this project will take place in the fall of 2006 through early spring of 2007.

A Facilities Review for all schools in the district has been completed and will be revised and prioritized over the next

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PTA President's Message *continued from Page 3*

several months. I have taken a look at this report, and it is overwhelming in its size and detail. This report is available for you to look at if you want to get a better sense of the challenge ahead.

On February 28, district superintendent Dr. Mary Frances Callan will be giving her annual *State of the District report*.

Reminder - PTA Meeting February 7th, 11:30 a.m.

Don't miss this one. Dana Tom and Barb Mitchell, two of our newly elected school board members will be the fea-

tured guests. Listen to what they have to say, and don't hesitate to speak up and share what is at the top of your concerns. They will review each of the five district priorities as mentioned above and more....

Tracy

Tryouts for Cinderella

If your child loves to perform on stage, here's their chance. The Palo Alto Children's Theatre (PACT) Outreach Program will be coming to Nixon on February 7 and 8 for tryouts for *Cinderella*. This is an abbreviated version of the Disney animated musical classic. The next PACT play at Nixon won't be for three more years, so don't miss your chance. The play is open to all 3rd through 5th graders, and every child who tries out and can commit to the rehearsal schedule will get a part. PACT provides costumes, sets, and the director. Tryouts will be held after school in the Nixon theater. Children may try out either or both days.

The schedule has not been finalized yet, but rehearsals are tentatively scheduled to begin Tuesday, February 14. They most likely will be held Tuesday through Friday in the Nixon theater from 2:30 to about 5:30 p.m. (Wednesdays at 1:30). There is a possibility of some Saturday rehearsals as well. There will be no rehearsals on school holidays (February 17-26). The schedule for Tech/Dress rehearsals includes Saturday, March 25 and Monday through Wednesday, March 27-29 and cannot be missed, no exceptions. Show dates are Thursday, March 30 through Saturday, April 1.

All parents of cast members will need to volunteer in some manner, either by chaperoning rehearsals or performances, selling tickets, organizing the cast party, or other. Questions? Contact Sharon Dally.

“I Can Do That!”

When the bell rings at the end of the school day, the fun begins (and the learning continues) for students enrolled in Nixon’s outstanding after school enrichment program. This program has grown substantially since it started seven years ago with a single after school French class. Now, over 200 students are enrolled in classes as diverse as Spanish, Chinese, Chess, Art, Music, Science, and Basketball. Many parents are under the mistaken impression that this program is run by Nixon or PAUSD personnel. In fact, this is entirely a PTA program, offered as a service to our parents.

Lisa Schmidt has served as Enrichment Program Coordinator for the last three years. She has volunteered in a number of capacities during her years at Nixon, including a two-year stint as PTA co-president. Lisa is the mother of 5th grader J. and Terman 8th grader E. and successfully combines volunteering with her role as the VP of Marketing at a software startup company. Her energy, diplomacy, and dedication will be greatly missed when she leaves Nixon in June.

Prior to the start of each semester, the Enrichment Program Coordinator contacts the individual class providers and reviews their proposed class schedules for conflicts. She makes sure that the contracts are signed properly and coordinates room assignments and facility rental fees with the school principal. She also makes sure that class availability and registration information is publicized through the Back-

to-School Packet, Friday Folders, and *Nixon News*.

Lisa states that most of the work occurs during the 4-6 weeks prior to the start of each semester. During this period she spends about 10 hours a week on enrichment tasks. Once the semester is underway, the workload drops off to maybe 10 hours per month. There are no special skills needed, and no meetings to attend. Over 90% of the job can be done via e-mail, so it can easily be managed by a working parent.

The enrichment program is aptly named—it enriches our children’s lives. If we don’t have a volunteer, there will be no after school classes next year, and our children will be poorer for it. If you value the enrichment program and want to see it continue, now is the time to speak up and say, “I can do that!” Please step up to the plate; volunteer to serve as Enrichment Program Coordinator next year by contacting Tracy Stevens. **Nixon PTA needs YOU!**

PTA Positions Previously Profiled in *Nixon News* and Still Unfilled

Nominating Committee (October 21) – still need 2 alternates
Nixon News Editor (November 4)
Parliamentarian (November 18)
Treasurer (December 9)
President (January 13)

Previous profiles can be found in the *Nixon News* archive at www.nixon.pausd.org/news.htm.

Don't Miss Out on Just For Fun Events! *A Nixon PTA Sponsored Program*

I am sending out a big Thank You to all the Nixon families who participated in the World of Cookies and the Twisters Rock Climbing and Gym Event, both held in December. The good news is we still have many **Just For Fun** events that you can participate in. A complete calendar is attached to this newsletter. February brings us two events.

First on the list is the Chocolate Fest hosted by the 2nd grade Teaching Team. This is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1st in the Nixon Library from 1:45 p.m. until 3:45 p.m. Participants will make their own sundaes then join the team in watching *Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory*. The cost is \$15.00 per child payable to Nixon PTA, placed in the **Just For Fun** envelope in the main office.

Our second event is brought to you by our generous 5th grade Nixon Families. They will be hosting the Laser Quest Extravaganza on Sunday, February 12th from 2:40 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. The cost is \$20.00 per child and he/she must be older than 7 years old to participate. Each participant will be able to play two games then enjoy desserts and drinks that follow. Tracy Stevens is the contact person for this event.

For most events, space is limited and filled on a first come basis. A spot will be reserved upon receipt of payment. Any questions, please contact me. See you soon at these wonderful events!

Denise Provost
Just For Fun Chair

Nixon Receives Gift of High-Tech Emergency Instructional Device

Fifth-grade teacher Donna Rumwell and her husband, Myles H. Kitchen, recently donated a new, high-tech emergency instructional device, known as SafetyMate, to Nixon. SafetyMate was developed in cooperation with the American Red Cross and provides interactive audible emergency information for many common emergencies, allowing virtually anyone to provide the proper care in an emergency prior to the arrival of trained professionals. SafetyMate can provide this information in either English or Spanish. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with this device during your next visit to the school as it can provide life-saving information. For more information on SafetyMate visit www.safetymate.com.

Kindergarten Registration

Don't miss the February 2 deadline for registering your child to enter kindergarten in Fall 2006. Registration information is available at the PAUSD website (www.pausd.org) or by calling the Central Attendance office at (650) 329-3707. Registering before the February 2 deadline is critical, so please pass the word along to any friends or neighbors with incoming kindergartners.

TB Testing Reminder!

Dear Volunteers,

It is time to renew your tuberculosis test. If you have been here at Nixon for four years, have just moved into the area, or just want to hang out at Nixon school, please make a note of this.

Free TB testing will be conducted at the PAUSD Office located on Churchill Avenue. You must return for a read of the test or you will invalidate the test.

TB test administered: Monday, January 30, 2006
TB test read date: Thursday, February 2, 2006
Time: 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

If you are not sure if you need to do this test, please refer to the Master TB list located by Becky Brewer's desk in the

Dolphin Tales

"A dolphin named Daan watched a diver whose job it was to clean algae off the inside of a glass viewing port. Daan took to scrubbing the window with a seagull's feather, at the same time making a noise like the diver's air-demand valve and emitting a stream of bubbles like the exhaust air from the diver's equipment. When he couldn't get a feather, he would scrub the window with a rock, a piece of paper, a dead fish, or an unfortunate sea slug. He monopolized the job, threatening and shoving divers who tried to come near. He got the window pretty clean." From *Becoming a Tiger* by Susan McCarthy.

school office. This list shows all those who have had a test before and the expiration date.

If you cannot go for the free test, you can (at your own expense) get your TB test done by your doctor. **Please be sure to send in your test results to Becky Brewer.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Daisy Zook
Health Care Coordinator

Meet the Teacher *by Sylvia Sanders*

Stephanie Han—Kindergarten Teacher

Stephanie Han comes to Nixon from Fairmeadow, where she did both her student teaching and long-term substituting for a 3rd grade teacher on maternity leave. Teaching a new grade at a new school can be daunting, but the collegiality of the Nixon staff has ameliorated much of that stress. In addition, the other members of the kindergarten teaching team have provided lots of support in the form of both tangibles and guidance. As a result, Stephanie is enjoying her first year as a kinder teacher. The extra time she spends laundering the residue of paint and sneezes is well repaid by the affectionate nature of her students.

Stephanie grew up in Santa Clara and spent all of her free time ice-skating. She started skating at age 5 as a form of physical therapy and never stopped. Though she skated competitively, she did not have a competitive spirit. The tears of the other athletes and their sometimes belligerent parents saddened and baffled her. Now, as a skating coach, Stephanie tries to help her trainees maintain a healthy perspective.

Stephanie's childhood would have been perfect if only she could have switched bedrooms with her older sister. As luck would have it, Stephanie again lives with her sister in her childhood house – and this time she has the big room!

To her dismay, however, the room seems to have shrunk in the intervening years. Though they are opposites – Stephanie is neat, her sister isn't; her sister likes make-up and heels, Stephanie doesn't – they are terrific friends. Stephanie will be maid of honor at her sister's wedding in the fall.

When she isn't teaching, Stephanie enjoys reading. Her tastes are broad, though she prefers "girlie" books and avoids science fiction and horror. She recently read and enjoyed *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. Stephanie also enjoys sitting on the beach (and reading!), shopping (she loves shoes!), scrap booking, and watching movies. She has two rescued dogs - a Pomeranian named Foxy and Oreo, a Chihuahua.

Box Tops for Education

Just clip and save

Don't forget to save those Box Tops for Education labels. Ask your friends, family, and neighbors to join in too. ***Hurry, the rush is on! The next submission deadline is February 28th.*** Turn those Box Tops in to the front office ***now*** so they can be included!

Nixon Elementary receives 10 cents for every Box Top. If you have any questions, please contact Liz Fendorf.

Beyond Nixon

Equity Matters: Creating Educational Opportunities for All Students

Saturday, January 28, 2006, 1:00 p.m.
Dinkelspiel Auditorium (471 Lagunita Drive on the Stanford Campus)

Foundation for a College Education (FCE) and Stanford University School of Education are proud to present "Equity Matters: Creating Educational Opportunities for All Students," a Higher Education Forum featuring Dr. Cornel West and moderated by Professor Linda Darling-Hammond. While most agree that education can and should be the great equalizer, academic success and degree completion in this country continue to be tied to income and race. Through this forum, we will examine issues of educational equity and access with a focus on why some students succeed and others don't at the K-16 level. Tickets are available through the Stanford Ticket Office, Tresidder Union, (650) 725-2787; \$15 adults, \$10 students.

Health Expo: The Business of Healthy Families

Saturday, March 4, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Cubberley Community Center

This event is hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and will include topics such as Breast Health Awareness, LifeSkills, and Healthy Life Style Balance in a Fast-Paced World. It is free to the public. Sponsored by Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, Stanford Hospital and Clinics, and the City of Palo Alto, with participation from the Palo Alto Fire and Police departments, Parks and Recreation, and Family Resources.

About *Nixon News*

Nixon News is a PTA funded newsletter, designed to serve as a parent educational and information resource. It is published every other Friday (except when holidays interfere). Submissions should be sent via e-mail to the editor, Sharon Dally. Either type the text directly in the body of the e-mail or attach a Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format file. If your article is on paper and cannot be submitted electronically or if you have a photo or graphic, please contact the editor for instructions. Deadlines are announced on the front page of every issue. They are normally (but not always) the Friday before publication. Articles may be edited for spelling, grammar, clarity, and length. All submissions must include your name and contact information.

Information in this newsletter is provided as a community service. The mention of any business, service, or organization in this newsletter does not imply endorsement by the Nixon PTA or the PAUSD.