

# nsd today

December 2008

## Newhall School District

25375 Orchard Village Road, Suite 200, Santa Clarita, California 91355

Telephone: 661-291-4000—Fax: 661-291-4001— [www.newhallschooldistrict.net](http://www.newhallschooldistrict.net)

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### Newhall School District Governing Board Members

Robert N. Jensen, Jr., President  
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 Michael Shapiro, Member  
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 Steve Tannehill, Member  
 Marc Winger,  
 Superintendent

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The Governing Board meets on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at the District Office. You are invited to attend.

### Superintendent's Message

#### California's Budget Crisis and **nsd**

Operational funding for California schools is directly dependent on the State Budget. When the State has big problems like we have been reading and hearing about in the news, school districts have big problems too. The California Legislature is currently considering how to slash state expenditures. Costs for K-12 education take about half of the State Budget, so we believe the revenue reductions for school districts will be severe in order to balance income and expenditures in Sacramento.

The information I am reacting to in this article is from the Governor's proposal for education reductions, and any solution has a long, political road to travel. The Governor has proposed a \$2.5 billion cut to K-12 education – mid year, this year. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released its own view of the crisis and the Governor's proposals. The LAO is recommending a significantly smaller mid-year reduction, but it is still in the \$1 billion range at the State level. The effect of a cut of either size in 2009-10 and beyond will be very significant.

The level of mid-year cuts being proposed by the Governor, should they come to pass, represents about \$2.1 million in **nsd**. This would lead to an ongoing cut in 2009-10 and the years beyond. Last spring we cut about \$2 million out of our budget, affecting among other areas office and library staffing, yard duty supervision, conference attendance and the purchase of materials. Any further cuts would have to be deep into major program expenditures. At this time we believe that the 2008-09 Reserve for Economic Uncertainty that we build into our current year budget is sufficient to shoulder the proposed mid-year revenue reductions. This is only possible because of the actions we took last spring to reduce expenditures and to build the reserve in anticipation of what is now playing out. However, once the 2008-09 reserve (one time money that is like one's savings account) is used for this purpose we still face the need to reduce ongoing program expenditures for the 2009-10 school year and beyond.

We await the Legislature's solution so that we know how to proceed. It is important to note that we have not made any decisions about any programmatic cuts in 2009-10 because we do not know the direction and flexibility we will be given when the solution is finalized in Sacramento. If the cuts are made in certain funding streams that are restricted for specific uses it may relieve a lot of stress on the District's Unrestricted General Fund, but it will challenge our individual school sites to adjust program. If we are ultimately given flexibility in special program funding, allowing the funds to be used on the unrestricted side of the budget, we have some hard work to do at both the district and site level.

A \$2+ million revenue cut to **nsd** will require major changes in some aspect of our program – it could mean personnel layoffs, it could mean it could mean changes in class size, or it could mean reduction or elimination of pro-

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**One Hundred Fifteen “Stakeholders” Attend  
“State of the District and Comprehensive Plan Meeting”**

Parents, teachers, administrators, Board members, support personnel and interested community members attended Newhall School District’s annual “State of the District and Comprehensive Plan Meeting” on October 20, 2008. Participants were presented with statistical data about students, teachers, the budget of the district, and student achievement as evidence of the “state of the district.” They discussed the information, each bringing a unique view to the meaning of what was presented. Discussions centered on challenges presented by the changing nature of the district’s student body, special student populations, the nature of teaching and instruction, and student achievement.

After the initial session, four “break out” sessions were offered and participants moved through their choice of two of the shorter sessions, led by assistant superintendents Mike Clear, Nancy Copley, and Beverly Knutson, and members of the Governing Board of the District. In these sessions attendees heard about the new instructional initiatives in the district; special education programs; the state and district budget; the role of the Governing Board in setting direction for the district; and a new approach to collaboration among teachers to insure that all students reach proficiency.

The State of the District and Comprehensive Plan meeting is an annual event. The Comprehensive Plan, including a wealth of demographic and achievement statistics is available on the district’s website at [www.newhallschooldistrict.net](http://www.newhallschooldistrict.net)



**Important Dates**

**2008**

December 16, 17 & 18 – winter concerts at Wiley Canyon  
December 22—winter break begins

**2009**

January 12—winter break ends (except McGrath School)  
January 19—MLK Holiday  
January 20—winter break ends - McGrath School  
January 23—Principal for a Day  
February 13—Lincoln’s Birthday  
February 16—Presidents’ Birthday  
February 21— Annual Run for Fitness  
March 18- Kindergarten Round Up

**Run for Fitness**

*WHEN:* Saturday, February 21, 2009  
*WHERE:* Pico Canyon Elementary School and Jake Kuredjian Park  
*REGISTRATION:* Entry forms will be sent home with your child. Please enclose the entry fee with your registration.  
*FEE:* \$10 per child (fee non-refundable)  
**Make checks payable to:**  
*Newhall School District Run for Fitness*

**Lottery Money Helps – But it’s Not the Solution**

We are often asked how much State lottery money we get, where it all goes, and why it doesn’t help in tough economic times when the State budget is bad. The California State Lottery releases annual reports to assure the public that the lottery works as promised and as voters approved it – 34% of all the money collected goes to help schools. That was the campaign promise, and that has been how the lottery has operated. It’s just that in any district, all the money from the lottery makes up only about 2% of the total district budget. A typical use of each dollar collected by the California Lottery looks like this:

- 52.2c goes to prizes awarded to winners
- 34.8c goes to public education
- 6.8c goes to retailer bonuses and commissions
- 3.4c goes to operating expenses
- 2.8c goes to game costs

This year **nsd** expects to receive about \$889,335 from the lottery, which is about 1.7% of the \$53 million general fund budget of the District. Of the total, \$111,590 is “restricted” and must be spent on instructional materials. The remaining amount is used for general fund purposes. More information on lottery funds and the rest of the Adopted Budget can be found at [www.newhallschooldistrict.net](http://www.newhallschooldistrict.net).

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**California’s Budget Crisis**

grams that are important to our students and families. We will be forced to make significant programmatic changes if large cuts, such as those being discussed, are required. How those cuts will occur depends on the direction given by the Legislature and the Governor.

As always, people in public education rise to every challenge and I expect, with everyone’s understanding, that we will all weather this crisis as we have in the past.

Marc Winger, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

## Arts Corner – The Arts are Alive in Newhall School District



### Music Program News

By Elizabeth Gilbert, Jana Gruss,  
Jami DeSiena, Peggi Stoffel and Tara Speiser,  
District Music Teachers

Intermediate orchestra students are preparing Winter Concert music that stretches their abilities through independent two and three part arrangements, extended note ranges and eighth note rhythms. Advanced orchestra students are preparing full band and orchestra arrangements of popular Russian folk melodies and holiday classics... you won't believe your ears when hear the level of musicianship of our **nsd** developing musicians.

Don't miss the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Concert held at Wiley Canyon, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

December 16<sup>th</sup>—Old Orchard, Valencia Valley and Oak Hills

December 17<sup>th</sup>—Stevenson Ranch, Newhall, McGrath and Peachland

December 18<sup>th</sup>—Meadows, Pico Canyon and Wiley Canyon

Please note that these concerts feature chorus intermediate and advanced orchestra students only. Beginning orchestra students will perform at the Beginner Showcase concerts held February 25<sup>th</sup> and February 26<sup>th</sup>.

**nsd** chorus members from all ten schools ring in the new year as the annual opening act of the Henry Mayo Newhall Tree Lighting ceremony.

Our K-2 General Classroom music classes have just finished a group of lessons on melody. We studied melodies that sound major, minor, and pentatonic. Our melody unit just concluded with a study on Native American Indian Music. The students really enjoyed recreating a celebration using drums, shakers, jingles and rasps.

Our 3rd grade recorder classes have finished learning 4 notes! Many of our students have earned their first karate recorder belt (blue) for playing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as a solo. There will be 4 benchmark songs this year. If a student is able to play a song successfully, a colored belt is tied to the end of their recorder. Our next challenge will be "This Land is Your Land."

Beginning string, woodwind, brass and percussion students have transitioned from learning about instrument assembly and care, understanding correct playing posture, practicing sound production drills, to now breaking the "secret code" of note reading. All beginning instrument classes are working towards their first year bronze medal in orchestra. Parents, ask to see your child's "Medal Check Off Sheet" to learn about our benchmark songs and to see how your child is progressing.

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## PRINCIPAL FOR A DAY

Here's a rare opportunity for parents who would like the full attention of their child's principal for a morning and a chance to see their school's operation from the administrator's viewpoint.

Reservations are currently available for parents, business executives and community leaders who would like to spend the morning with a superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal or assistant principal in the 17th Annual Principal for a Day sponsored by the SCV Education Foundation. This year's event is Friday, Jan. 23, but the earliest reservations will have their choice of school or administrator. Priority registration is available through Dec. 1.

Participants spend the morning shadowing an administrator from one of the five school districts in the valley, getting a first-hand perspective of the educational environment. The event concludes with a catered luncheon at the Santa Clarita Activities Center. The tax-deductible donation ranges from \$150 for an elementary, junior high, or middle school principal to \$400 for a superintendent, with \$200, \$300 and \$350 levels for administrators at other levels.

Sponsorships are also available, starting as low as \$500. Proceeds help fund scholarships, Student Enrichment grants, and other projects of the Education Foundation.

Registration information and a fax-back registration form can be downloaded from the Foundation's Web site at [www.scveducationfoundation.org](http://www.scveducationfoundation.org) or by calling Dan Aldrich, Principal for a Day chair, at (661) 255-0244, Ext. 16.

## Mathematics Textbook Adoption

The state of California has an adoption cycle on which school districts throughout the state replace basic textbook series. The State Board of Education has approved six math series for consideration by districts. During the 2008-2009 school year, the Newhall School District will adopt an approved math series and staff, students, and parents play a part in the process.

A Math Adoption Committee was convened in September. This committee is comprised of twenty-six teachers representing each of the ten sites and each grade level. They reviewed the *Mathematics Framework* for California schools, three grade level standards for math, STAR score trends in math over the last three years, and established criteria to evaluate each of the six programs. During the first meetings, members of the committee eliminated four of the six programs, as their components did not meet the needs of our district, and subsequently selected two programs for piloting.

Between late October and the end of February, the twenty-six teachers will pilot the selected materials in their classrooms. Teachers and, to some degree, students will have input in the adoption process. In addition, the two series will be available for parents and community to preview and to provide written input to the Math Adoption Committee. The preview is from December 1<sup>st</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup> at the District Office in Room 104. If you are interested in previewing the math textbooks, please contact Musette Caing at 291-4178 to set up an appointment.

Through the use of an electronic evaluation form, analysis of rubrics from teachers at all ten school sites, written evaluations from parents and community members, and discussion a decision will be reached by the Math Adoption Committee. This recommendation will go to the Governing Board in March for final approval.

## Be Safe, Be a Good Neighbor

Parents can help us deal with some potentially dangerous situations on our playgrounds and in the parking lot areas at primary and upper grade dismissal times. We also try to be good neighbors to those homeowners around our schools. Teachers may be approaching you, asking your assistance with the following:

Children should be picked up at curbside only. Please do not signal a child to walk across the street to get to your car unless your child is being crossed by the crossing guard. Earlier this year, one of our students was hit by a car because of this practice.

Drive slowly in valet lines. Please be patient. We understand the lines get long at times. Please do not honk your horn in the valet lines.

If children are crossing a parking lot, they need to be escorted by you, the parent, or by school personnel. Since they are usually smaller than most cars it is difficult to see our students.

Please don't walk your very small children through our busy parking lots to drop off older siblings. It is hard to see them, it is busy, and sometimes they are on their tricycles or a distance from their parents – all potentially dangerous situations.

Dogs are not allowed on campus at any time – this includes the walkways inside of the parking lot areas and the playground. Skateboards, scooters, and rolling shoe skates are not allowed on campus at any time – this includes the playground.

Drivers should always be aware of the rules of traffic, especially avoiding double-parking, blocking driveways, red no parking curbs, making u-turns in crosswalks, and other safety violations. On occasion we ask the Sheriff's Department to patrol at high traffic times to enforce traffic laws.

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### Visual Arts Program News

By John Fossa, District Visual Arts Teacher

The Visual Arts program delivers direct instruction to all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and supports teachers of all other grades.

In the first trimester of the 2008-09 school year, the visual arts program has continued the model we established last year of challenging students to analyze the art elements in fine art masterpieces and apply the same skills and concepts in their own drawings and paintings.

Children in fourth grade have studied various ways that artists use color and light and dark values to create form, contrast, and mood in their work. For example, they studied the use of dark colors in Winslow Homer's rugged seascapes and created their own seascapes using a similar technique. In another lesson, fourth graders analyzed the use of color relationships in Paul Cezanne's fruit still lifes and created their own paintings using the same color concepts.

Fifth graders have participated in lessons centered around drawing skills. They have studied a variety of perspective techniques such as the use of vanishing point, and they have been introduced to drawing practice exercises such as contour drawing. Our program has challenged students to think critically about the masterpieces they have viewed, while giving them opportunities to create more sophisticated artwork themselves.

Congratulations to the approximately 100 Newhall School District students of all grade levels who participated in the Santa Clarita Street Art Festival in September. Students created chalk street murals and many paintings on canvas for the event.

Look for our **nsd** booth at the Arts and Literacy Festival coming up in December.

*Santa Clarita's Literacy  
and Arts Festival  
Saturday, December 6th at  
Hart Park, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Storytelling, Stage Productions,  
Food, Music and More*

### STAR Deputies Shine in **nsd**

Deputies from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) have been a presence on all of the campuses of Newhall School District for a number of years. Known as the STAR (Success Through Awareness and Resistance) deputies for the program they've been bringing to our students, they have delivered lessons to upper grade students in drug, alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and violence prevention. Deputies are trained in the use of the federally-approved Too Good For Drugs (TGFD) materials.

The City of Santa Clarita has funded the STAR Program for schools inside the city limits. But the three schools in **nsd** that are outside of the city limits have not gone without STAR Program services. The district has used funds received under federal Title IV, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, to contract with the LASD for identical services in these schools. This year, **nsd** will not have to use these funds to provide the STAR Program services to the westside schools. This year, the LASD will use available narco forfeiture funds, money that was confiscated during drug raids or generated as a result of the liquidation of assets of convicted drug dealers, to pay for the deputies' services.

Newhall School District is pleased to have this program available to our fifth and sixth grade students each year. Deputies also make visitations to classrooms at other grade levels, make appearances on the playground at recess and lunch, and occasionally do presentations for parents.