

The News from Fremont PAC

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY FOR JOHN C. FREMONT ELEMENTARY

December 1, 2009 Issue #1

Hello, Fremont Parents,

Welcome to PAC's first email newsletter. In this issue, you will find:

1. **The State of the Schools**
2. **Questions & Answers about PAC**
3. **PAC fundraising events**
4. **Minutes from our last PAC Meeting, held November 18**

There are important developments happening in our district that will affect all children in Glendale Unified. So, if you only have time to read just one article, please read *The State of the Schools*. It contains some very important information: the dire state of our school's budget. Dr. Escalante will be at our December 9th meeting in the Fremont auditorium to discuss this topic. Please plan to attend!

Sincerely,

Brenna Bash
PAC President
Mom to Bayla and Edan (Fremont 3rd graders)

The State of the Schools in the Glendale Unified School District

By Brenna Bash

I feel lucky to have my kids in Glendale Unified School District. When I hear what is going on in neighboring school districts, I am impressed with the way our school district has planned ahead and created financial reserves so that our children and teachers aren't suffering during these trying times with the California state budget problems.

Glendale Unified had not laid off any teachers, while other school districts were forced to. However, as I discovered at a district meeting recently, Glendale Unified has had to make cuts in other areas. Since 2002, Glendale Unified has had to cut 115 Facilities/Operations jobs in the district. So far, they have managed to not make cuts directly in our classrooms, but there have been significant reductions in other areas. The Curriculum and Instruction Department, for example, has been cut from a department of 18 people down to 4 people. And at the last superintendent's meeting I attended, I learned that the cuts are now creeping into the schools. The high schools have lost four counselors. Obviously, the budget cuts are putting a strain on our district.

If things stay "status quo", the future at Glendale Unified looks bleak. Because of the district's acumen in

setting aside reserves and a little relief from the federal government, our budget will be okay for the next 2 years. But by 2011, Glendale Unified will be in the red by \$4.61 million. By 2012, our school district will be in debt for \$22.68 million. The district's budget has been cut back to the amount they were getting in 2005. But the expenses have increased by \$28.8 million.

Somehow, Glendale Unified has managed to keep improving the schools, despite the drop in funds. The district's Academic Performance Index is 830, up 13 points from 2008. Fremont Elementary API score was, at 875, up 65 points from 2002! 23 of Glendale's 31 schools are designated as California Distinguished Schools, and 9 have been awarded the National Blue Ribbon.

I grew up in California going to public schools, when California schools were number one in the nation. Back then, California spent \$400 MORE per student than the national average. By 2010, California will spend an estimated \$1,700 LESS per student than the national average.

I write this letter to appeal to all the parents out there who want things to change. It is obvious that the budget cuts in California will definitely mean cuts directly in our classrooms if things continue as-is. I know there is hope, because I see what the parents at our own elementary school can do when we put our minds to it. There are great thinkers and activists out there who want to see a change in the way our state government does things. Our PTAs and parent foundations are important and can help alleviate some of the financial burdens put on our schools. But these HUGE budget problems are going to require a more collective effort from ALL parents in our state. "Glendale Unified has truly perfected the art of making bricks without straw," says Mary Boger, President, Board of Education. But Dr. Escalante points out that soon "we will be expected to make bricks without mud", and how is that possible? Together, as parents and people that care about children, we can work towards a change. Our kids and the future are worth it.

Parents, SAVE THE DATE and PLAN TO ATTEND:
A special PAC meeting with
Dr. Michael Escalante
Superintendent of Schools, Glendale Unified School District
Topic: The State of Our Schools
December 9. 7:00 p.m. Fremont auditorium.

Questions & Answers about Fremont PAC

What is Fremont PAC?

It's a nonprofit organization established in 1995 by Fremont parents and community members to raise money for Fremont. PAC's mission is to provide resources that will enhance the learning environment and education of the students at Fremont. PAC works with the teachers and administrators to identify and fund school needs.

Here's a partial list of items that PAC funds:

- + **Computer Lab** Our biggest annual expense! (Computers, hardware, software, upgrades, maintenance, instructor salary)
- + **Instructional materials** (technology, library books, supplemental class materials, etc.)

- + **Grants to Teachers** (4th grade Gold Rush Day, field trips, workbooks, etc.)
- + **Storage bin** for P.E. equipment
- + **Library book shelves**
- + **Play structures**
- + **Contribution to Laura Thornbury Literacy Garden**
- + **Copier for workroom**

How does PAC differ from the PTA?

PAC is a parent run foundation that works with PTA to help lessen the ever widening gaps in our school's budgets. All money raised by PAC stays at Fremont Elementary. PTA is strictly governed by national guidelines while PAC has more flexibility with how it spends its funds. Participation in both PAC and PTA is vital to our school community and programs.

How can you help Fremont PAC?

PAC can always use more actively participating parents to help organize and run events. Come join our meetings, held once a month, usually the SECOND Wednesday of the month, 7pm in the Teachers' Lounge.

For more information about PAC, visit our website: <http://fremontpac.org/>

PAC Fundraising Events

Here's a partial list of on-going and seasonal programs:

- + **Family Fiesta and Silent Auction:** held every June. Fun carnival games and big silent auction of valuable merchandise and services. This is a major fundraiser for PAC. You can help Fremont by volunteering for the Fiesta.
- + **Fremont PAC Annual Campaign:** One of PAC's biggest fundraisers held during October and November. Parents are asked to donate money to support PAC's programs. Donors of \$250 or more will have their family or company name added to the Giving Tree. Donors of \$500-1000 will receive special recognition.
- + **See's Candy Holiday Sales:** See's Candy sales take place before Christmas and in the spring. A percentage of the sales is donated to PAC. Certain items yield a 50% return to PAC.
- + **eScrip:** A year-round merchant give-back program. Includes many retailers that you undoubtedly shop at, including Vons/Pavillions, Macy's, and many more. Earn money for Fremont just by grocery shopping! But you have to be registered.....which is easy to do at: <http://www.fremontpac.org/escrip.htm>
- + **Scrip Holiday Gift Cards:** Another merchant give-back program centered around Gift Cards. Over 50 popular retailers participate, like Bed, Bath & Beyond; Amazon.com; Chevron; LL Bean; Crate and Barrel; Pottery Barn; restaurants, and many more. Make your holiday shopping easier! Order for cards due December 1. Download the order form at: <http://fremontpac.org/escripcards.htm>
- + **Holiday Shopping at The Americana:** Another give-back program, this by The Americana merchants. Shop and dine at any merchant at the Americana or the Grove. Take your receipts to the Concierge Services desk

and tell them you're supporting Fremont Elementary. Program runs between Nov. 19–Dec. 24.

- + **Dine–Out Nites and More!** Monthly partnerships with local eateries and restaurants, as well as other merchants. This year has included New Moon; Barnes & Noble; and Los Rapidos & Cold Stone Creamery. PAC gets a percentage back from your purchases.
- + **An Occasion for Adults:** December 4, 6:30pm, at Leo's All–Star Sports Bar. An adult evening of fundraising. Dinner, live auction and opportunity drawing for big ticket items, including 52" TV; Ipod Touch, \$200 MAC gift certificate. Tickets available by contacting Lisa Ruf at dlruf@pacbell.net or Paige Heaphy at peheaphy@mindspring.com. Tickets for event : \$25. Opportunity drawing tickets : \$10/each. Space limited.
- + **Coins for Computers:** In the spring, we collect your spare change. Hey! It adds up!
- + **Sponsor–A–Book:** This is how we stock our school's library. Anyone can select from a batch of library–bound book by contributing the cost of the book (\$10–\$25). Sponsors are commemorated with a permanent nameplate affixed on the inside front cover, along with a customized phrase of their wording. On–going. Available books in the library.
- + **Movie Night:** Family fun in the auditorium! In January.

Minutes from Nov. 18 PAC meeting

President's Welcome

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM. Mrs. Laing was introduced to everyone

Principal's Welcome

Christin Walley stood in for Dr. Livingston this evening. Mrs. Walley was introduced to all PAC members.

Treasurer's Report

Vivian reported the bank account balance was \$46,588.03 as of October 31, 2009. Expenses for October included some teacher grants, a printer for the computer lab, and reimbursements for the Kindergarten BBQ. Dine Out Night & More has brought in \$1386.98. Barnes and Noble was a great success. Our anticipated amount for the year will almost be surpassed by December! Great work, Ron Scott and Fremont Families!

NEW BUSINESS

1. Computer Lab Needs – Brenna explained the history and progression of the computer lab here at Fremont. It was noted that keeping a computer lab up–to–date and properly maintained requires ongoing capital investment. Our new computer lab teacher showed all PAC members some important needs involving maintenance and general improvement. The following specific problems were addressed along with recommended solutions:

a. Desks – the current desks being used are not effective. Cables hang in places where kids can easily trip on them or accidentally unplug them. The desks are old and are not designed for computer use. Students are currently cramped into small places. Mrs. Laing has chosen desks/tables that are much more appropriate for computer labs and student use. These desks would give some room to the students and tuck cords neatly into the desk itself. Mrs. Laing is requesting that 20 desks be purchased to resolve these issues.

b. Projector – The projector is only able to work when set up directly in front of the door, which is not safe. Setting up a mounted projector in the ceiling would solve this problem.

c. Smart Board – Mrs. Walley suggested a Smart Board be used instead of a projector screen. Members discussed the Smart Board and its benefits.

d. Headphones – There are many broken headphones, and most of those that do work are very uncomfortable for the students after a very short time of use. Mrs. Laing requests that new headphones be purchased.

e. Kid Pix software – Mrs. Laing requested that this program be purchased. A program overview was shown to all PAC members. This program would be beneficial to the students and would meet several State Standards.

Members discussed the various minor changes that would have to be made in the computer lab layout. Brenna announced that these issues would be sent out to the PAC Board for a final vote.

2. Annual Campaign Update – Brenna announced that \$28,329.00 has been raised from the Annual Campaign so far. This total reflects 113% of our goal with 28% of the Fremont families participating. The Annual Campaign will come to an end at the end of the week, but contributions are always welcome. Elizabeth commented that more people were involved this year and the increased involvement resulted in the increase in total donations.

3. See's Candy Sales – Megan Roy reported that sales are a bit slow. The profit is around \$400.00. Usually it's at \$1500.00. The sale ends Monday, November 23.

4. An Occasion for Adults – 49 people have already RSVP'd. Jenny Stern has decorated the display case, flyers have been made; letters to Room Parents have been sent out advertising the event. There will be a table set up on Monday, Nov. 23 and Tuesday, Nov. 24 in the morning to sell tickets for the Opportunity Drawing. Lisa Ruf needs help in selling those tickets. 10 volunteers were requested for set up, checking people in, selling the Opportunity Drawing tickets, and clean-up on the night of the event. Several people signed up to help Lisa; all were encouraged to contact Lisa if interested in volunteering to help.

5. E-Scrip and Gift Cards – Tina Koch reported that we have raised \$1063.35 in Vons E-Scrip since July. Many more people continue to sign up. For the Scrip gift cards, the merchants sell gift cards and give a percentage to the school. Each person pays face value for the gift card, but the school will receive money from each card purchased. The sale runs through December 1. The order forms are in the office and on the PAC website, and MUST be completed and turned in by Dec. 1. Anyone can participate, so grandparents and friends of Fremont can purchase these gift cards and help earn money for the school. Almost any store will be found on the list of participating stores. It is a great opportunity to earn extra money for Fremont. When a card is ordered, Tina will receive the card. On the 14th – 16th of December, a table will be set up outside of school for pickup. A confirmation signature is required, so a Fremont parent must pick up the card(s) in person. A trusted individual may pick up a gift card; the person who purchased the card does not have to sign for it at Fremont.

6. Dine Out Nights and More – The New Moon and Barnes & Noble events were both huge successes and brought in a lot of money for Fremont. Ron Scott was commended for his hard work. The Americana is also offering a fundraising opportunity. If anyone makes a purchase at the Americana and brings the receipt to the concierge, 5% of the amount spent will be given to Fremont. Even movie tickets count! Brenna spoke on behalf of Ron Scott who wanted all to know that he is organizing a Christmas caroling event on December 18. It will be a community event on Honolulu and Ocean View, where Fremont families can come and sing Christ-

mas carols together. He also has all of Spring Break lined up with events! For Mother's Day, he is planning a Ladies' Night Out at Three Drunken Goats.

7. Teacher Gifts – Jenny Stern reported that we are letting the teachers pick what they would like to receive this year. They have a \$50 limit. The teachers will receive a paper ornament and will put it on the Christmas tree Jenny set up in the lounge. The teachers will indicate on the ornament what gift is desired.

8. Movie Night – Bruce Austin reported that the economic reality has affected the planning of this event. Licenses and other legalities and logistics make it difficult to make this a fundraiser. Classic films are films that are part of the public domain and do not require a license, so some of these films are being reviewed and considered. Bruce reported that he has been trying to reinvent the concept of this event. He suggested a Fremont Family's Funniest Home Video showing. Zac commented on how various shorts could work for this event. Zac will be pooling from our PAC members to start with submissions of their funniest home videos. Zac will collect all videos submitted. If anyone has the technology to create a DVD with that one part on it, that works best, but any and all submissions will be accepted. Every Fremont family is encouraged to submit their funny videos for all to enjoy at this event.

9. Green Team Report – Ray Maifeld reported that he attended the Green Team meeting. The main topic was going paperless. The Green Team has set a goal of making our school completely paperless by the next school year. Advertising is key, so the start of that process is to gather emails from all parents of the school. Tables will be set up by various organizations (including PAC) at the school where emails will be collected. E-bulletins, announcements on the website, and education are all part of the overall plan. Those without computers at home will be encouraged to use computers in the library. The Green Team has also suggested that a computer be purchased and set up in the office so that those without computers may be able to access the information from Fremont as well. Parents will be notified that in order to become involved and to be informed, they must sign up/register with their email address. Due to legal requirements, this process may take some time, but an avenue will be provided for those without computers. Plastic water bottles were also mentioned to be a problem because they cause a recycling issue. The Green Team is looking into getting Fremont metal bottles so that plastic bottles would not be used. The money would be donated to PAC. Grants would be requested to purchase these items. Various concerns were discussed regarding equal access. Several members discussed the possibility of having one board displayed at the school site with the news posted on a single hard copy for those without computers. For those who wish to be a part of the process, Brenna reminded all that the Green Team meetings are the first Thursday of every month in the Teachers' Lounge.

OPEN FLOOR

1. Teacher grants were discussed. Zac Matthews suggested that teachers be educated on the process and opportunities of the grant requests. PAC members discussed various methods of reaching out to the teachers to let them know how to make requests.

2. Subway and Burger King are offering percentages of sales to be donated to Fremont. A Chairperson is needed to organize this ongoing fundraising opportunity. Anyone interested should contact Brenna.

3. On Wednesday, December 9, Dr. Escalante will appear at our PAC meeting to answer questions and discuss issues with the parents and members of PAC.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35PM.