

# *Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs Legislation Team*

## **Lafayette School District**

- Burton Valley
- Happy Valley
- Lafayette
- Springhill
- Stanley Middle

## **Moraga School District**

- Camino Pablo
- Los Perales
- Rheem
- Joaquin Moraga Intermediate

## **Orinda Union School District**

- Del Rey
- Glorietta
- Orinda Intermediate
- Sleepy Hollow
- Wagner Ranch

## **Canyon School District**

- Canyon

## **Walnut Creek School District**

- Buena Vista
- Indian Valley
- Murwood
- Parkmead
- Parkmead PALS
- Walnut Creek Intermediate
- Walnut Heights

## **Acalanes Union High School Dist.**

- Acalanes
- Campolindo
- Del Oro
- Las Lomas
- Miramonte

February 2009

*The Las Trampas Legislation Team represents 27 K-12 schools in six districts from Contra Costa County. We are frustrated and distressed over the budget stalemate. The debates lack definition of State priorities to justify budget proposals. In our communities, public education is a top priority, a value which is shared among all Californians, as reflected in poll after poll. The multi-billion dollar cuts to education funding will have crippling long-term effects on our kids, our competitive edge, our economic viability, and the social qualities that attract people and business to California.*

Why does California need to reinvest in education?

- Since the 1960's, California has fallen from providing among the highest level of education funding, to within the bottom 20% of the nation. Then, California had the top-rated schools in the nation; performance has since fallen precipitously as education investment declined.
- All our schools are in "low wealth" districts, and are at the bottom of per-pupil funding in the State, based on bizarre and unaccountable funding formulas.
- The burden of high quality education has swung too far to relying on local funding sources. State funding received by our districts cover only 70-80% of costs. The rest has been raised through education foundations, parcel taxes and parent contributions. The current budget cut proposals will intensify pressure on local sources.
- If that is the reality, then the State should give districts more local control. For example, we support a change to the threshold for approving school parcel taxes to 55%.
- But, even so, many communities do not have the local funding capabilities needed to support high quality education. The state's dysfunctional and overly political budget and funding process has created districts that "have" and "have not", contributing in large part to the achievement gap which is undermining our economic competitiveness and well-being.
- The antiquated funding formulas are based on academic and curriculum needs of the 1970's. There has been no recalibration to the new skills and knowledge needed to address the problems and challenges that face our world today --which didn't exist in 1970.
- Money is not the only need. We also need to institute education reforms. The Governor and Legislature have the information to tackle this in the *Getting Down to Facts Studies*, the most comprehensive research and analysis conducted by the greatest minds in education, completed in 2007. We can become more cost-effective in our education investments, but it will take hard work and dedicated effort over several years.
- California's success and economic power has been fueled by creativity and intellectual curiosity which has been supported and nurtured by our public schools and universities. With the same entrepreneurial spirit, we need to put back into those institutions to ensure