

## **Superintendent Forum Recap**

Submitted by: Mary Newman

On Tuesday, Feb 13<sup>th</sup>, Frank Brunetti, Bill Levinson and Jim Negri, the Superintendents from Orinda, Lafayette and Acalanes, voiced to the Las Trampas Legislative Team and interested parents the core legislative related issues facing our local school districts - namely declining enrollment, equalization, parcel tax approval levels and Special Ed funding.

Declining enrollment: The Lafayette School District will continue to experience declining enrollment for the foreseeable future which will result in a significant reduction in funding from the state. The Lafayette School District enrollment declined over 100 students this year creating a loss to the district of over \$500,000. New strategies need to be explored at the state level (adjust the Average Daily Attendance/per pupil sending calculations) to compensate for this projected loss over the next several years.

Equalization: Equalization funding is a fairness issue. The main source of funds for our public schools comes from the state; however, California does not fund school districts equally. Many districts in California receive much higher per-pupil general funding (this funding is independent of special categorical funding for low income and/or low performing schools) than Lafayette which results in a loss of over \$200,000 per year. We need to ask our legislators to address this inequity and have the state budget fully fund the difference and give the districts the flexibility to manage schools at the local level.

Parcel Tax Approval Levels: Through the generous support of our community we have passed the last two parcel tax measures in Lafayette (Lafayette Unified 7 years ago and Acalanes 2 years ago). An incredible amount of energy goes into campaigns to pass vital pieces of local legislation which fund the necessary programs and additional teachers required to provide a high quality education for our children. Changing the threshold for parcel taxes from the 2/3 majority to 55% will give more local communities the ability to support their schools and improve the quality of instruction. Prop 59 reduced the majority threshold requirement for school facility bond measures resulting in significant improvements to our buildings. This fall Lafayette residences will vote to renew the (Lafayette Unified) parcel tax to provide the additional funding needed for our schools to continue to provide quality instruction.

Special Education: Unfunded special education mandates are creating a significant budget challenge for the district. The federal government has not stepped up to the special education funding requirements associated with what it takes to meet IDEA requirements. Our district provides quality resources without appropriate funding. Our elected officials need to address this shortfall.

The Las Trampas Leg Team will continue to advocate for quality, fully funded education, monitor the education bills coming out of Sacramento and report on the state budget ('07-'08) negotiations underway. For more legislative news, please sign up to receive the *Get SMART* e-newsletter by visiting [www.lastrampaspta.org](http://www.lastrampaspta.org) and clicking Leg Team and the newsletter link!