



# A Report from our *President*

March 7, 2008



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## Dianne GarciaStevens

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Montebello Teachers Association/California Teachers Association/National Education Association • 918 W Whittier Blvd Montebello 90640 • (323) 722-5005 • montebelloteachers.org

I've been speaking at Board of Education meetings regularly since last July. I've attended them off and on for more than 20 years. Last night's meeting was different than any one I had experience prior. The Board passed Resolution 21 which eliminated 47 certificated positions (3 non-administrative) due to the loss of State revenues. This was the third round of painful District budget balancing.

The members of the Montebello Teachers Association are the educational program. Last night I chose to focus on some of our incredible, inspirational stories.

Good evening Madam President Mrs. Calderon, Vice President Ms. Guzman, Board Members Mr. Vela, Mr. Chau and Mr. Chacon. Good evening Superintendent Mr. Velasquez, Cabinet Members, and Community. My name is Dianne GarciaStevens President of the Montebello Teachers Association. I would like to begin by sharing a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Can anybody remember when the times were not hard and money not scarce?" As an education community we are facing the largest proposed budget cuts ever in the history of the state of California. Every one of us has heard through the media and our own resources that the upcoming fiscal years could be devastating to our number one priority, the students we serve and care for.

It is my hope that MUSD, along with the employee organizations, can collectively work together through these difficult times. What is on the horizon for us will not be clear until the legislative assembly delivers a final budget. Even then, things may change because nothing seems to stay the same very long during these trying times. The only constant is change and change happens to all of us. What we must do is choose our response carefully.

As a district, we should choose to look forward, to focus on possibilities. We are not responsible for the shortcomings of the state budget. Our charge is to ensure that MUSD is fiscally solvent. We did our job. Democratic legislative leaders on Tuesday drew their line in the sand by stating they are ready to fight the proposed cuts to education. Our Education Coalition is working closely with CTA to send the message to Sacramento that students didn't cause this budget crisis and shouldn't have to pay for it. United, we should focus on recharging our emotional batteries. Having different feelings about the same situation is understandable. We can choose not to dwell on the negative. To turn the negative into the positive. "The silver lining".

Our school sites have begun taking the necessary steps to overcome their challenges. As evident through the past school site presentations, our sites are monitoring their progress and making ap-

propriate choices. They have chosen to look forward towards that silver lining. At our last Rep Council meeting I shared with our council reps a new addition to our web page. It's called "Advancing MUSD's Educational Objective". I have asked our members to tell me their stories in this time of budget crisis, declining enrollment, and overwhelming demands because we know our students continue to learn.

Did you know that at LMI teachers collected \$1,884 dollars among themselves to help defray the cost of the annual 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Washington D.C. trip for 5 students. That averages out to \$40 per teacher. Without this monetary help from the LMI teachers, these students would miss one of the educational highlights of their young lives. In addition to this, the staff has organized fundraisers at the local Shakey's for the Avid Program and the Leadership Camp for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The experiences these trips offer are priceless. The memories they take with them are precious. At BGI one of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders was recently honored for her artistic ability. She placed 1<sup>st</sup> in her grade level for middle schools. Also the dance team at BGI participated in a competition this past weekend in Chino and came home with several 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place trophies. At MHS the sophomore AP World History class has read 6,627,510 words from novels so far this year; and this was only the first semester! As for that "Silver Lining" our sites have shown faith and determination in attaining their goals. They have chosen to look forward to an envisioned future full of possibilities.

Each of us is a leader. Leadership is not about being elected or appointed to an office. An office does not teach someone how to be a leader. Leadership is an attitude that comes from within an individual. Vince Lombardi said "Leaders aren't born they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work." That's the price we'll have to pay to achieve our goal, or any goal. It's our time to step up and lead this district through these difficult times. As I have stated previously, I invite you to join our MUSD community to be united as one voice...One voice.