



CALENDAR

March

7th - International Women's Day In-school celebration

11th - PTA Meeting Dinner provided in the cafetorium (donations welcome) 6 - 6:15 p.m.; 6:15-8:15 p.m. meeting in the library. Childcare provided.

14th - Fuerza Latina and African American Unity Joint Meeting 5:45, Library

24th - School Governance Council 5:30 p.m., library

28th - Cesar Chavez School Day of Service & Learning

31st-April 4th - No School Spring Recess

April

8th - G.A.T.E. Final Meeting of the Year Topic: Resources for Parents and Students. 6-7:30 p.m., Washington Library.

21st-27th - Turn Off TV Week (and other screens, too!)

26th - Washington Playground Clean-up 9 a.m.

28th - School Governance Council 5:30 p.m., library

School Community Rallies In Face of State Budget Crisis

By Washington PTA Chair Andrew O'Shea

Word is out about the looming budget crisis in California and how it will impact schools in the immediate future. In the face of a \$14 billion budget shortfall projected for an 18th-month period covering the 2007-08 and 2008-09 fiscal years, Governor Schwarzenegger is proposing a 10 percent reduction for all General Fund departments, including money for education, which is guaranteed by Proposition 98. The Governor is not only willing to suspend Proposition 98 for the 2008-09 fiscal year, but is also ready to reduce the K-14 (K-community colleges) budget by \$4.4 billion.

In a response to the Governor's proposals, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), a non-partisan office that annually reviews California's budget for the State Legislature, came out against the across-the-board cuts, stating that some programs are more essential than others, namely K-14 education.

The LAO proposed a new budget; however their proposal still includes extensive cuts to education, amounting to \$2.2 billion in 2008-09.

In response to both budget proposals, State Superintendent of Schools, Jack O'Connell, had this to say: "While the LAO proposes a smaller reduction to Proposition 98 in the upcoming budget year than the Governor, any suspension of Proposition 98 would result in

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Take Action!

- Write a letter to Governor Schwarzenegger, State Capitol Building, Sacramento CA 95814
- Send an e-letter to your State Assemblymember through EdVoice - www.EdVoice.com
- Attend the March 11 PTA meeting!



Organizers of the Black History Month Celebration. Back row, left to right: Ramona Coates, Brandy Turner, Kendra Butler and AAUG co-president Shaahiida Ali-Smith. Front row, left to right: Theresa Butler, AAUG co-president Tamara Madison, and Magi Kiurciev. See p. 4 for all the details.

Next PTA Meeting

The PTA meeting on March 11 will feature the movie "Making Whiteness Visible" with Dr. William Walker moderating. Dr. Walker has been working with Latino and Afro-American groups in Berkeley schools for several years. Note that the meeting will begin at 6:15 p.m. after a quick pizza dinner.

Clothing Donations Needed

If you have clothes you no longer need that fit kids in grades K-3, please drop them off in the school office. School Secretary Paula Shoemaker says that kids often need dry clothes, such as after falling in a puddle on the playground. Pants and socks especially needed.

PTA Coffee Hour Every Wednesday

If you have a few minutes to an hour on Wednesday mornings at 8:15, please join parents in casual conversation at the PTA's coffee hour, directly across from the office.

Sign Up for WTalk!

Get the latest news and announcements from Washington School by email -- sign up for Washington Talk! Send a blank email to: wTalk-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Keep up to date on all Washington events on our website: <http://www.washington.berkeleypta.org>.

State Budget Cuts ...

Continued from page 1 ...

direct harm to programs critical to closing the achievement gap and preparing all students to succeed in a demanding future."

What that means to Berkeley is approximately \$3.2 million in cuts over the next year, mainly affecting after-school programs, teacher assistants, counselors, literacy coaches, and class size. According to Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Sheila Jordan, 16 out of 18 districts in Alameda County will submit qualified or negative budgets.

This prompted several key district administrators to go to Sacramento to meet with Assemblymember Loni Hancock and representatives from two key groups leading the charge to support funding in schools: the California School Boards Association and the Association of California School Administrators. The contingent from Berkeley included Jordan, Berkeley's new school superintendent Bill Huyett, Karen Hemphill, Berkeley School Board Member, three elementary school principals and seven PTA representatives.

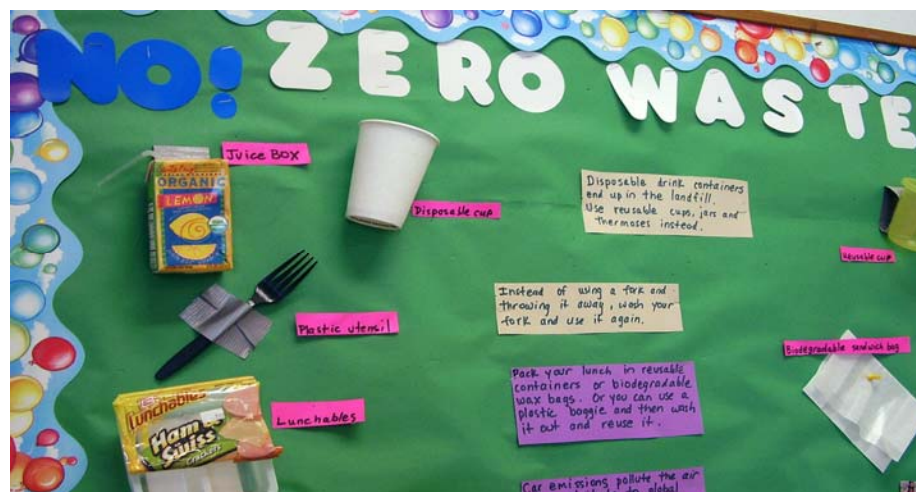
Assemblymember Hancock, one of the staunchest supporters of public education in the State Assembly, was unequivocal about her message. In her meeting, she stressed two key points: that the governor can't "cut his way out of this mess," and that to address the upcoming shortfalls, the governor, the State Legislature, and the public all need to start talking about revenue generation.

The main impediment to this solution, however, is that it requires a two-thirds majority to pass a budget, a situation which invariably empowers the one-third minority. Since every Republican legislator has signed prominent anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist's pledge of "No New Taxes," passing a budget with any new forms of revenue would be close to impossible. According to Hancock, it is essentially a "tyranny of the minority."

Revenue generation is a move also supported by the Education Coalition, which includes the California School Boards Association and Association of California School Administrators. Their collective message stressed many of the same points, namely that Proposition 98 is the bare minimum needed to maintain adequate funding, that no cuts are acceptable, and that revenue generation is part of the solution.

Clearly, there are forces at work in Sacramento: pro-education legislators are staking out positions and lobbyist groups are articulating a uniform message in support of education. The next step is for local communities, schools and districts to take the next step and organize. Since the budget is not expected to be approved until September, there is a lot of work to be initiated and sustained between now and then.

Attending PTA meetings and subscribing to WTalk are good ways of staying apprised of and engaged in this work (see sidebar).



Check out the Washington Green Committee's hallway display showing how to reduce waste from home-packed lunches. For more info, contact Linda Currie at 510-851-2552.

Washington News Shorts

Bike Safety Training Offered

Bicycling on the roads takes a lot more than balance, a helmet and a good attitude. Join Safe Routes to Schools-Alameda County for three hours of drills, games and a neighborhood ride. Learn to MAKE GOOD CHOICES AND HAVE FUN! Learn drills and techniques to teach and assess your bike handling skills. This training is for parents and kids between 2nd and 5th grades and is ideal for kids who can bike over one mile.

TIME: Saturday, March 22nd 9:30-12:30

LOCATION: Washington School Blacktop

BRING: Your bike, your helmet, adequate clothing for relaxed bike ride (2 miles) There are bikes to borrow if needed.

RSVP: Space limited to 30 people: Parents and kids over 9 years of age are encouraged to attend together. Snacks provided.

CONTACT: Melanie at (510)740-3150 x332 or melanie@transcoalition.org.

The class is sponsored by the Safe Routes to Schools - Alameda County Partnership and the East Bay Bicycle Coalition. It is taught by certified League of American Cyclist Instructors.

Illustrator Visits Washington

Illustrator Sarah Klise shared her work with Washington students at a special lunchtime visit on February 5th (see photo). Klise, and her sister, author Kate Klise, have won awards for their children's picture books (*Shall I Knit You a Hat?* and others). The sisters have also written and illustrated the bestselling "Regarding" series of graphic middle-grade mysteries (such as *Regarding the Fountain*), as well as other quirky graphic novels.

Sarah Klise draws and paints in her studio in Berkeley, and teaches drawing to children and adults in San Francisco's Chinatown. She delighted the children by drawing some of her characters, and sharing some of her techniques, such as shading.

And here's what Ms. Klise had to say to Washington Librarian Suzy Mead: "The kids were excited and KNEW the books and had such great questions. Oh man! Let me tell you, this does not happen at all schools. A school that has an effective librarian always has a really positive school visit experience. So, I thank you."

Summer Camps and Programs Fair

Get information on summer camps and programs at the 26th Annual Summer Camps and Programs Fair, sponsored by The American Association of University Women, Oakland-Piedmont Branch. From robotics to Shakespeare to water-ski camp, meet reps from over 100 day and sleep-away programs. There are camps and programs for kids from pre-school to high school, including special needs. This free event (with door prizes!) will be held on **Sunday, March 9**, from 1-4:30 pm, at the Scottish Rite Center in Oakland, 1547 Lakeside Drive, across from Lake Merritt. For more information, visit www.aauw-op.com.

Three Education Lectures

Alfie Kohn, author of 11 books on education and parenting, and well-known critic of education's focus on grades and test scores, will be giving three lectures in the Bay Area in March: "The Homework Myth" on March 18 at 3:30 p.m. at the Bentley School in Lafayette, "Achievement vs. Learning," on March 18 at 7 p.m. at the First Congregational Church of Berkeley; and "Unconditional Parenting: Beyond Bribes and Threats," on March 19th at 9 a.m. at the Delmar Burke School in San Francisco. Admission is free. For more information, contact Washington parent Erica Etelson at 841-3204 or ericadavid@earthlink.net.



Illustrator Sarah Klise at Washington School. Photo by Jeremy Armes.

PTA Officers

Please contact any one of the officers if you have ideas, questions or concerns.

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rock.lisa@sbcglobal.net

Thien Phan- Treasurer.
Phone: 229-0317, email:
tphan1969@sbcglobal.net

Acorn Coordinator - Nancy Rader, phone: 845-5077, email: nrader@igc.org. Ideas, information and articles for *The Acorn* are welcome!

We're on the Web! <http://washington.berkeleyppta.org>

Washington Elementary

2300 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: 644-6310
Fax: 644-7718

Rita Kimball, Principal.
Email: rita_kimball@berkeley.k12.ca.us

Paula Shoemaker, Secretary.
Email: paula_shoemaker@berkeley.k12.ca.us

Berkeley Unified School District

2134 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: 644-6348

Next BUSD Meetings: 3/12 and 3/26 at 7:30 p.m.

More Washington News Shorts

Black History Month Celebrated

The Black History Month Celebration, sponsored by Washington's African American Unity Group, was held Friday, February 29th. The lively evening featured a number of performances: Ms. Wash's K class performed Maya Angelou's poem "Life doesn't frighten me." Ms. Talbott's 1st-graders sang Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World"; Ms. Clark-Ridell's 5th-grade class performed African dances (pictured below); Ms. Bail's 4th-grade class dramatically recited poetry by Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes; the after-school chorus sang popular tunes by African American artists (pictured); and Mr. Gibe's after-school African drumming class electrified the crowd with their beat (pictured).

Afterwards, the crowd enjoyed a huge spread of soul food provided by Washington families, and watched a slide presentation of black poets and singers.

Many thanks to the AAUG for organizing the event, and to everyone who contributed:

students, teachers, staff, Principal Kimball and the PTA.

Attention Kindergarten Parents!

Volunteers are needed to host the Welcome Picnic for incoming Kindergarten families, which will occur in May or June. This event is a fun afternoon on the playground, traditionally hosted by current K parents for the incoming K families. Contact Joal Arvanigian at 843-3085, email: arvanigian@yahoo.com.

Planning for the Spring Fair Begins

Mark your calendars for Washington's annual Spring Fair -- Saturday, May 31, from 11-2. The event will feature game booths, performances, a book exchange, crafts and more. If you have time or special talents you can contribute to this important event, please contact Eve Graham Mohr at 510-644-9388.

