

# Budget Notebook



*Chronicling California's developing budget and its impact on IUSD*

## The Governor releases his latest budget plan, and the City of Irvine makes a generous offer

BY SUPERINTENDENT GWEN E. GROSS, Ph.D.

**I**s this a good budget or a bad budget for schools? Sometimes it's a matter of perspective. If Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had initially proposed a spending plan that offered almost no cost-of-living increase for education and a 6.5 percent cut to categorical programs, it would be roundly denounced as harmful to our schools.

However, given an even worse scenario outlined in January, these proposals seem a little more palatable. That's why the Governor's revised budget plan, released May 14, has been met with a sense of cautious relief by most educators.

I say "cautious" because we are still far from viewing an actual state budget, which probably won't be adopted until August or September. In addition, the Governor's plan relies on some rather shaky revenue assumptions, including a perplexing scheme to borrow against future Lottery earnings.

But the "May Revise," as it's known, is at least an upgrade from the Draconian plan that was rolled out in January, and that means IUSD may not have to consider additional cuts before 2008-09.

In Irvine, the Governor's latest plan equates to an increase of \$2 per student over the 2007-08 allocation, and it calls for approximately \$3.7 million more than was offered to us in January, when IUSD projected a \$12.5 million shortfall. But again, this can't be considered "real money" until the state officially adopts a budget. Moreover, remember that our district made its cuts anticipating that the fiscal outlook for education would improve slightly, which it has – for the time being.

Meanwhile, as Sacramento continues to mull its priori-

ties, our own City has once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to education.

The Irvine City Council voted unanimously in May to contribute up to \$900,000 in matching funds to help IUSD maintain smaller class-sizes.

That means for every dollar raised to keep student-to-teacher ratios down, the City will generously contribute a dollar of its own, potentially generating as much as \$1.8 million to be distributed among our schools.

The Irvine Public Schools Foundation has quickly taken advantage of the City's magnanimous offer, committing \$500,000 to leverage more than half of that funding. And other groups, including the Irvine Unified PTA Council, the Irvine Korean Parents Association and Bethel Korean Church, have also contributed generously. But we need much more in

order to maximize the City's donation, and I encourage all of you to take a moment to visit IPSF's website at [www.ipsf.net](http://www.ipsf.net) to learn how you can ensure Irvine's schools retain their world-class status.

Once again, the City of Irvine has shown itself to be an extraordinary partner to our schools, as has IPSF and our incredible PTA volunteers. Despite the state fiscal challenges that have fallen on our doorstep, we must remember how fortunate we are to live in a city with leaders who not only understand the value of education, but are willing to roll up their sleeves and take action in a time of crisis. This, above all, is what enables us to carry out our mission of providing the highest quality educational experience we can envision.

For more information on IUSD's budget, check out the district's Budget Watch page at [www.iusd.org/budget\\_watch](http://www.iusd.org/budget_watch).



**Superintendent Gwen Gross addresses a group of students at the PTA-organized "Blue About the Budget" rally outside the District Office on May 15.**