

IUSD Today

News and Notes from around the Irvine Unified School District

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2007

LOOKING AHEAD:

- **Feb. 6:** The IUSD Board of Education meets at 7 p.m.
- **Feb. 12:** Lincoln's birthday observed
- **Feb. 19:** Washington's birthday observed
- **Feb. 20:** The IUSD Board of Education meets at 7 p.m.

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Irvine district to review its facility needs 4

Irvine caps 2006 with new board president

Michael Parham didn't wait until adulthood to make his mark on public education.

As an eighth-grader living in Albany – a town near Berkeley – in the early 1980s, Parham saw his P.E. class and several elective courses fall victim to Proposition 13, which siphoned away local tax revenue.

Naturally, he responded the way any kid would – he became a student liaison to the city, serving on a committee that helped secure the passage of a parcel tax.

Problem solved.

"I saw my P.E. classes get cut, along with Spanish and music," he said. "I didn't want that to happen, and the result was it didn't happen. We made it work, locally."

Now vice president of RSM EquiCo, an investment banking firm, Parham was recently named president of the Irvine Unified School District's Board of Education. Just like his days as an ambitious middle-schooler, he'll strive to make things work, locally.

Fortunately, Irvine isn't in danger of losing



New IUSD board President Michael Parham took the gavel at the Dec. 5 meeting.

P.E. or Spanish. But the 37-year-old predicts there will be an emphasis on facilities planning as the district looks to accommodate a swelling population.

IUSD, he said, has done a "fantastic job historically" on the curriculum side. Now it's time to find funding sources to modernize

Please see PARHAM on Page 3

IUSD Today: What's happening in my school district?

There's a lot going on in the Irvine Unified School District these days.

There's a lot going on in public education, for that matter.

Federal and state accountability tests, construction and modernization, classroom-based programs, school board meetings, after-school programs, the state exit exam – how can anyone keep up

with it all?

Well, *IUSD Today* is a start.

Every month or so, this publication will provide news and notes about the Irvine Unified School District, including policy updates and features about the students, staff and volunteers who make a difference.

This first issue features an article on Michael Parham,

our newest board president, as well as a tribute to the late Chuck Keith and a word from Superintendent Gwen Gross. In future editions, we'll try to keep you abreast of district news and important dates to mark on the calendar.

We hope you enjoy reading *IUSD Today*, and we look forward to your suggestions for future stories.

Chuck Keith: 1948 - 2006

'A Wonderful Life'

University High School bids farewell to a legendary administrator

"He was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word, a kind and affable leader with a great sense of humor who brought smiles to everyone around him."

- Gwen Gross, superintendent

"What an influence he still has on all of us."

- John Pehrson, University High principal

He was the affable jokester who could always pry a smile, even on a melancholy day.

He was the mentor and father figure, weaving wisdom into everyday conversations with students and staff.

He was the friend who somehow managed to make everyone around him feel special.

Last month, University High School and the entire Irvine Unified family said goodbye to Chuck Keith, a longtime assistant principal known for his robust sense of humor and his unyielding devotion to kids.

A professional educator for 32 years, including the last 21-plus in Irvine, Keith died Dec. 11 at Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in Laguna Hills, just one day shy of his 58th birthday.

A night earlier, he had gone into respiratory arrest at his Lake Forest home, where he was celebrating his birthday with family. He later fell into a coma after being taken to the hospital.

"Our entire district mourns the loss of this wonderful, caring man," Gwen Gross, superintendent of the Irvine Unified School District, said. "Chuck was a wealth of institutional knowledge for Irvine, but his influence extended far beyond that. He was a gen-



Photo courtesy of University High School

Chuck Keith, the longtime assistant principal at University High School, died on Dec. 11.

tleman in the truest sense of the word, a kind and affable leader with a great sense of humor who brought smiles to everyone around him."

Mr. Keith joined IUSD in July 1985 as an assistant principal at Woodbridge High School. Four years later, he transferred to University High, where he was most recently in charge of students with last names that start with the letters "O" through "Z."

Prior to his arrival in Irvine, Keith worked for the neighboring Saddleback Valley Unified School District.

During a packed memorial at University High on Dec. 14, students and staff remembered a one-of-a-kind man who was likened to Jimmy Stewart's selfless protagonist in the cinema classic, "It's a Wonderful

Life."

"Chuck Keith will be remembered as our George Bailey," University Principal John Pehrson said. "He always put others in front of himself, always encouraging, always joking and always caring. It has been a true blessing and humbling to see the entire community respond in such a 'Chuck' way. What an influence he still has on all of us."

Keith is survived by his wife, Dominique, who is a teacher at Trabuco Hills High School in the Saddleback Valley district; his son, Eric, a teacher at Northwood High; his daughter, Chantal Barney, who teaches at Stone Creek Elementary School; and three grandchildren.

Services were held Dec. 15 at Saddleback Church.



Photo courtesy of Hali Kessler

Seniors Rosa Hong, left, and Kirsten Runstrom pay tribute to Mr. Keith at University High.

IUSD gets an assist from the City of Irvine

Not every public school system can boast a collaborative relationship with its local municipality.

But the Irvine Unified School District certainly can.

Historically, the City of Irvine has assisted IUSD by offering everything from school resource officers and crossing guards to surveys that help identify safe walking routes and the popular D.A.R.E. drug-prevention program.

This year, the city has done even more.

For 2006-07, Irvine has contributed nearly \$800,000 worth of grants through its Educational Partnership Fund.

Some of that money was secured by the nonprofit Irvine Public Schools Foun-

ation to pay for school nurses, health clerks and a health education program.

The rest will be used by the district to fund middle school counselors, high school counselors and elementary counseling assistants, as well as strategies designed to reinforce positive school behavior and staffing for the Family Resource Center, which offers mental health assessments, referrals and treatment.

Because there are no added administrative costs associated with these programs, the money directly benefits kids, according to Diana Schmelzer, IUSD's director of Secondary Education.

"It's really to provide those direct services for students," Schmelzer said.

Program funded by City	Amount
Middle School Certificated Counselors	\$178,572
High School Certificated Counselors	\$178,572
Elementary Counseling Assistants	\$128,571
Effective Behavior Support	\$35,714
Family Resource Center	\$53,571
Health Education	\$61,533
School Nurses	\$82,018
Health Clerks	\$65,610

The City of Irvine has contributed nearly \$800,000 to IUSD this year through its Educational Partnership Fund program. The chart above shows where that money goes.

PARHAM: Facilities planning to be emphasized

[Continued from Page 1]

older schools, build new ones and perhaps even construct a stadium.

"Obtaining the requisite financing for that without having to go to the community for extra funding, that's what I intend to focus on for the next 12 months," Parham said.

He won't go it alone.

Though he'll have the title of board president for one year, Parham insists he's just one player on a five-member team that has had a successful run in recent years. The other trustees are Gavin Huntley-Fenner, Sue Kuwa-

bara, Carolyn McInerney and Sharon Wallin.

Each member brings something different to the dais. For Parham, it's a broad background in corporate and financial markets.

But more than anything, he said, he's a representative of his community, as are his colleagues.

"We really are their representatives," Parham said. "We are all parents of children educated in Irvine, and I believe this board is dedicated to the same issues and concerns

that most parents have, which is the way it should be."

Parham and his wife, Nicole, have two children – Megan, 12, and Glenn, 8.

Like so many local moms and dads, the couple was drawn to the area by the reputation of IUSD schools. They haven't been disappointed.

"I wanted my children to go to public schools like I did," he said. "I think you learn more from being in that environment than just what they teach you in class."

"We are all parents of children educated in Irvine, and I believe this board is dedicated to the same issues and concerns that most parents have..."



...providing the highest quality educational experience we can envision.

Board of Education

Michael Parham
President

Carolyn McInerney
Clerk

Gavin Huntley-Fenner
Sue Kuwabara
Sharon Wallin
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Terry Walker
Assistant Supt., Human Resources

District Office

5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, California 92604-4652
Phone: (949) 936-5000
Fax: (949) 936-5259
www.iusd.org

Got a story?

Have an idea for an *IUSD Today* story or a submission? Contact Public Information Officer Ian Hanigan at ihanigan@iusd.org or call (949) 936-5002.

Be sure to check out the Irvine Public Schools Foundation at www.ipsf.net

Superintendent's Notes:

It's time to take "pause" to review facility needs

By Gwen Gross

At the dawn of what is poised to be an exciting new year for the Irvine Unified School District, I wish to take a moment to pass along a brief update about our facilities and the scheduled transition to a 6-8 grade configuration in our middle schools.

As many of you already know, the IUSD community has spent the last several years working diligently and collaboratively to craft a model 6-8 program for our middle schools, which currently serve seventh- and eighth-graders. This is a worthwhile and ambitious project with a long list of complex components to consider, including curriculum, staffing, credentialing, special programs and, of course, facilities. Under the original timetable, implementation was scheduled to begin at two campuses in 2008.

Since arriving in Irvine this past fall, I have studied the extensive work compiled so far, as well as some of the newer trends and statistics. I have also been analyzing the district's long-term goals with the Board of Education, keeping the 6-8 shift at the forefront of each deliberation. Looking at all these elements and the broader district picture over time, one imperative has come sharply into focus: We must



*"We must move forward only with a full accounting of our facilities needs."
- Gwen Gross, superintendent*

move forward only with a full accounting of our facility needs.

With this guiding principle in mind, our business and facilities departments have been directed to update the district's facilities master plan, a comprehensive document that will spell out all of our building and modernization needs, as well as anticipated sources of funding for upcoming construction pro-

jects. Underscoring the importance of this exhaustive report, I believe it is necessary to hit the "pause" button on the 6-8 transition until the full scope of data is available to the Board in February or March.

The Irvine Unified School District has forged a reputation for using thoughtful and meticulous research to pave the way to great successes in the classroom. Because no less than world-class educational programs and first-rate facilities will suffice, we must be sure we consider every detail in advance and maintain a proper financial accounting. That said, we are committed to the merits of the 6-8 model, which will likely be rolled out when our new middle school in Woodbury opens in the fall of 2009.

As in years past, 2007 will no doubt present a host of new challenges as well as opportunities for IUSD to soar to even greater heights. More information about the 6-8 grade configuration and other exciting programs will be presented as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime, I thank you for your continued support of Irvine Unified and its enduring mission to provide the highest quality educational experience we can envision.