

ESTA

# Panorama

September, 2006

*"It's only free  
speech when  
you use it."*

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## **The President's View**

*by Don McKell*

It's a little hard to believe that we've been back at work for almost a month, but it's true. I must say that compared to each of the last two years, the opening of this 2006/07 school year has been mighty smooth. It's almost like going to the dentist expecting something really bad, and having a much better experience than predicted.

To date, the District has recruited and hired over 150 new certificated employees for this year. Coupled with last year's retirements, resignations, and non-renewals this represents a turnover of around 12% in our ranks, or just about 1 out of every 8 teachers. Looking forward, it is likely that we will experience a similar turnover next year and perhaps the year after that. It ought to be a seller's market for people with credentials.

Change is all around us. Some for the better, some not. There are no more Emergency Permits being issued by the Credentialing Commission. There is no longer a position known as Long Term Substitute. Belated compliance with the dictates of NCLB is making it exceedingly difficult for an individual to teach in anything other than his or her major field of study. We are closer than ever to having an all-CLAD workforce. We inch closer to "Williams" compliance at every site.

The District seems to be making a tremendous effort to provide a variety of quality staff development programs. The District also seems to be making a great effort to comply with the class size provisions in the contract. A couple of sites experienced student enrollment numbers that were higher than expected; a few other sites are left wondering where their missing students have gone.

In the gross arithmetic of high school finance, each increase or decrease of 30 students translates into one teacher. If a school's master schedule is built around a projection for 2000 students, and 2090 students actually enroll, that school will probably need 3 new teachers. On the other hand, if 90 or 100 students that were expected at a school fail to appear, that site may have as many as three FTE too many teachers allocated.

The least expensive teacher costs the district around \$65k these days, when you consider not just salary but mandated district contributions and benefits. So if the district is off by three teachers, that error represents an excess cost to the bottom line of close to \$200k. If *every* school had the same 3-teacher overage, the costs would exceed \$2 million. We'd be in receivership in no time.

So it's important to get it right. The *good* news is that overall, as I write this, student enrollment is at 99.4% of what it was projected to be three months ago, and slowly rising. The *better* news is most sites nailed their master schedules to the point of needing to open or close very few new sections. The *best* news is that we have done away with the onerous "contract plus three" we had in our class sizes last year at the same time that we're seeing a 6.41% pay raise, and despite all that the district has a positive certification for its budget.

How did that happen? Who or what is responsible for such a stunning turnaround in the financial condition of this school district in the comparatively short space of two years?

The answer is: We are. We as in "ESTA" at the local level, and we as in "CTA" in Sacramento. Let me explain.

Remember the spring of 2005? The school board had been wrestling with wave after wave of bad financial news followed by worse financial news. There were cuts in counseling and threatened cuts in librarian services. There was an ill-advised and obscene layoff that was intended to whip ESTA into line on the eve of contract negotiations, but which instead mushroomed out of control, backfiring embarrassingly as 944 teachers (75% of us) got pink slips.

I don't fault the board for that any more. They were duped, and eventually did the right thing. ESTA's resolve grew, however, and we calmly went about our business. We defended ourselves against the obscene pink slip attack. We sued the District and the State Allocation Board to obtain a declaration that the surplus land sales proceeds from Quimby Road could rightfully be considered general fund money, or its equivalent. In one of the more controversial moves, when we got wind that the Board would be suspending the class size numbers in 05/06 because of "extraordinary circumstances", I agreed in the name of the Association not to pursue a grievance on the matter if the district

would agree to cap the increases at three and avoid certain classes altogether.

Meanwhile, we bargained. Not at Board meetings or in the newspaper, but at the negotiations table, as it should be. Ultimately we ratified language that will require the ESTA President's *concurrence* before contract class sizes can ever be set aside again. We preserved our fully-paid fringe benefits. And we agreed to take 2% less than full COLA for last year, this year, and next year. And all the talk about \$15m budget deficits disappeared in a puff of smoke.

That's our significant contribution to the financial health of the East Side.

Meanwhile, some 40 private individuals had sued the governor, alleging he had violated the law when he failed to make good on his pledge to restore some billions of dollars to K-14 public education, as is required under Prop 98. In essence, he welshed on repaying a loan, and then denied ever borrowing the money. Some people call that "lying".

Arnold correctly saw himself inevitably losing that lawsuit, at the least opportune time: in the midst of his reelection campaign. And so as the legislature was working towards passing a state budget for this year, Arnold did what he had to do. All he could control was the timing, not the outcome. He caved in, admitting the plaintiffs were right. The plaintiffs, by the way, were the Officers of CTA and other Education Coalition member organizations that had totally kicked A.S. in the special election of 2005.

The Governor agreed to repay five billion dollars to public schools. The deal he struck with the plaintiffs was to repay it over a period of seven years at around \$700m per year. The exact details are still being worked out through a series of trailer bills.

In addition, because he had been unable to suspend Prop 98 in his nasty little special election last November, Arnold had this humbling little problem of having to honor its terms and preside over the full funding of the statutory COLA, the total elimination of the state budget deficit, and another \$400m in Equalization Aid. Ironically, he's calling himself the "Education Governor" again in his reelection spots. Weird, huh?

That's how we ended up with a 6.41% raise this year.

## What's New With the NEA?

Welcome back, folks! This is my annual "What's up at the NEA RA" letter, not that this was a particularly exciting year -- no visits from Hilary or Edwards and luckily no hurricanes. The most critical news was the demising "No Child Left Behind Act", (oh, goody!) and whether or not to support it's renewal. It dies a deserved death this year if it is not renewed by the powers that be in the federal g. NEA is now debating whether to support a conditional renewal or support it's death. The act for those of you who weren't aware has resulted in all of the credentialing hoops through which new teachers have have to jump. Did you know that they take a test to prove they know their content? Most of the English teachers I know--including myself --would probably not pass and personally I consider myself to be fairly well educated thanks to several different institutions, as I am quite sure most of you are also. Praxis (the company most states use) is not only a pain in the you know what and an insult to most college institutions, but also rather arbitrary -- those taking it never find out where their areas of strength and weakness are. All they receive is a pass or a fail. They can repeatedly take it (an expensive option) but they have no way of knowing what to study! Administrators also have a few hoops to jump through, but that isn't such a bad idea judging by the administrators for whom I have worked (to date, 37 of them, only 3 or 4 of them sincerely competent in their decision making processes, much less able to separate their egos from their actions, although I've been accused of that myself).

We know best the portion of the act that created the CAHSEE fiasco and STAR8/9/10/11/whatever number we're on mishmash. Good old API scores, which have every administrator in the country chewing their fingernails and have virtually nothing to do with the quality of education students receive, are quickly destroying public education in this country which was probably the original intention if you ask me, since, of course, none of this has been funded. Which brings me back to the gist of NEA's conditional support. If adequate funding is provided ... of course, the man with the power to fund is also the man who cut federal funding of the preschool programs that were working to create

an equitable education in the first place. Ironic in light of his wife's former job, but....

The most provocative piece of this to me was a proposal for a task force to explore the possibility of forming a US Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing every child an education. Don assured me its come up before, but I'd never noticed. Certainly a possibility. It is an interesting idea, and frankly I don't believe public education will ever work in this country until everyone participates in it. And please don't tell me that the wealthy in this country go to public schools or that funding for up-mid class schools is the same as for lower. If you question that, just look at the difference between "basic aid" districts and ours. My nephew went to Atherton -- they had flip-top computers built into the desks in the classrooms. Neat, huh?

Two other pieces of the NEA New Business were a campaign to "compel Congress to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act" and a nationally funded comprehensive healthcare insurance plan for teachers. These have also come up before and personally I'm all for them.

Before I leave you, I wanted to mention something that came up for me while I was sitting there surrounded by 14,000 people all arguing with each other. In Jewish tradition the holy men are called "rabbi" or "reb". The word literally means "one who helps others learn," or "teacher". The modern Rabbi may be more priest-like, but traditionally anyone to whom others look for knowledge is a rabbi, and that implies all of us, which I think makes us all pretty special. Ellen Frankel says "we are the Sages of our people, the inheritors of the priests and prophets who vanished when the Temple was destroyed by Rome. ... we are the Rabbis of our time, scholars and teachers who continue to search." She goes on into a lot of mumbo jumbo but you get the gist. We have a critical job and we do it pretty well. Have a peaceful, happy year, people -- janet goldhamer

*--Janet Goldhamer*

PS. A one liner I overheard slightly misquoted from Elaine Boosler: "When women are depressed, they either eat or go shopping. Presidents (originally "men") invade another country."

# ALL IS NOT LOST

Elementary teachers have all the fun when it comes to gifts. On holidays and the last day of school, parents make sure their child comes to class bearing a gift for teacher. My brother who teaches third grade, receives more mugs and ties and candy than he can use, and he's even gotten Dodgers tickets for his whole family. High school kids, on the other hand, race for the door to start their summers, clutching their yearbooks and even forgetting to say goodbye. It's not that they don't care; they are engulfed by hormones leading them around by the nose, or they are so self-absorbed by their adolescent miasma that they don't notice the needs of the adults in their lives. I remember; I was like them once.

Actually, I have received a fair share of cards, mugs, earrings, cookies, plants, and other goodies from students. One freshman presented me with the infamous "squeaky taco," a dog toy that had made its appearance in class skits and presentations all year. Another year a group of students pitched in to buy me a yearbook they all signed. (I felt so included in their world!) But two unique gifts really stand out.

Kevin was a timid boy, more boy than young man, in fact. He had confided in me about the death of his father and about a childhood accident that left him deaf in one ear. We also shared a love for bulgogi, Korean barbecue. He rarely smiled, always lowering his head so my dominant image of him is a head of glossy black hair. At the end of the year, Kevin handed me a cellophane cone about 18 inches long stuffed with hundreds of dime-sized origami animals—frogs and cranes, hearts, and other unidentified spiky creatures in orange, green, blue, purple, yellow, and various tie dye combinations. "I don't know if you want this," he muttered as he handed it to me. When he left, he dropped a poem on my desk that read in part, "In the past few years you're my teacher/ Now you are my friend future."

Kevin became a much taller senior who barely acknowledged me when we passed on campus. It's not cool to like your teachers. But I know that sweet boy is still in there, and that his gift was an acknowledgement of sorts.

But the coup d'grace, the icing on the cake, the zenith, the crowning glory, the mother of all gifts was given to me at the close of my first year of teaching.

This class had been my Trial by Fire. It was a

remedial class; all the students were either special ed, English language learners, or on parole. Some were all three. The roster fluctuated from eleven to thirty-five as they frequently migrated or got into trouble. I broke up three fights they got into, one of them between 250 pound Norman and the never-present Julio who thought "broad" was an acceptable synonym for "woman." To try to reach these kids, I changed strategies so often it made my head spin. My first year had not lived up to my expectations of success and greatness, for myself or for them.

Then on the last day of class, Michelle and Jenny came forth as emissaries bearing a box. As if on cue, everyone was quickly out of their seats and gathered around us. After unwrapping the gift and pulling it from its box, I beheld the tackiest, kitchiest Thing I had ever seen. A clear plastic dome held three fake red roses. When a switch was flipped, the gold base rotated, the flower petals opened and closed, opened and closed, and tiny white lights lit the flowers' centers. By flipping another switch, it played "Everything Is Beautiful."

I was speechless. Michelle breathlessly explained how the class collected donations. Everyone wanted to chip in. They had bought it at the Woolworth's downtown, taking the bus such a long way. They almost picked out the one with blue roses, they said.

As I looked up from the gift at them gathered around, I saw that their eyes sparkled. Serious Hoang was smiling. Huge Norman had a goofy grin. Tami ducked her head as she smiled, as usual. Michelle and Jenny and Migda fairly beamed. This was the coolest gift they had ever given.

I thought I had failed to connect with these students, failed to teach them every skill and lesson as prescribed, failed to create a cohesive, nurturing classroom. Yet this gift told me otherwise. As a first year teacher, I was a long way from being the pro I wanted to be, yet I had made a difference for these students. Perhaps they had noticed my struggles and my earnestness, and I was too wrapped up on surviving to see it. Perhaps I had helped them acquire a valuable skill that their test scores hadn't shown. Perhaps I had taught them something after all.

I know they taught me.

**Kathleen Gonzalez**  
*Santa Teresa*

# Á L A B O A R D

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 the ESUHSD Board of Trustees met to discuss a bunch of stuff. Here is the Reader's Digest version!

A mom was very upset that East Side kids were not in the Mercury supplement about outstanding seniors from June 2006. This was during the public address section so the board could not respond, but their antennae were twitching and they did hear...

The eagerly anticipated results of the ridiculous expenditure that three board members decided on to hire an outside firm to investigate the behavior of another board member was delayed. The problem is that one board member says he felt "bullied" by another member during the final CAHSEE vote. All activity during the meeting is on tape and the finger-shaking behavior afterward was witnessed by many people and the perpetrator has admitted the behavior.

I am at a loss to understand why the credit card scandal (FCMAT report – also at district expense, but never acted on) was swept under the board's rug, but finger shaking and threatening to talk to her attorney is being investigated at district (*read*: money away from your classroom) expense. She accused the male members of the board of engaging in violations of the Brown Act. Maybe they didn't, but the night that three of them voted to spend this money, they all used similar phrases to suggest the same investigative firm. It sounded, to my untrained ear, choreographed. (The missing board member that night sent a letter asking that the discussion be tabled until she could be there. Three members decided to proceed. **Manuel Herrera** attempted to dissuade them--unsuccessfully. You may hear the conclusion to this story on September 28<sup>th</sup> at the Board meeting at 6pm at the district office.

**Jerry Kurr** announced \$1 million plus added to the bottom line in the Unaudited Actuals from 05/06 school year. This is good! He said the extra funds are from energy savings! Pat yourself on the back if you turned off the lights and unplugged over vacations – or installed a pool cover on campus!!!

**Mr. Moore** gave a stellar Measure G Oversight Committee report with understandable numbers. Member **Martinez-Roach** asked for a chart and a dandy Pie chart appeared that made sense. More work than was considered possible to complete may be done due to a state participation that refunds 60 cents on the construction dollar for some new construction.

**(Personal note: WE MUST PRESSURE THE DISTRICT TO USE SOLAR POWER ON NEW CONSTRUCTION – AND TO USE NATIVE PLANTINGS ONLY.** Both are responsible in this new century, good role modeling for our students and community, BEEEEEG cost/money savers, and morally AND ecologically the right thing to do. They also support Ah-nold's program aimed at either one or five million solar roofs on public, government, commercial and residential buildings. And they save money, allowing **Jerry Kurr** to make more happy budget reports! You can help by contacting the board, district admin, and your campus construction person, **Misters Garofalo or Rono**. Hey, kids can call, e-mail or write letters, too!)

Great sorrow and outrage was expressed over the arson fire at Foothill. I hope they catch the creeps and turn them over to a group of outraged librarians and computer techs!!! Quick, everyone turn your back when that happens and we will have plausible deniability! Kick 'em once for me!!! There is a reward for capture and arrest.

**Manuel** announced that **Craig Mann** will assume the District 6 County Board of Education seat (for which he was unopposed) at the end of November. I expect the board will announce a process for selecting his replacement very soon. Maybe on September 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at the district office??? (**Personal note:** I know a great female candidate who is an ESUHSD grad, a mom, an active school site council and PTO parent, a union activist, and in a job where she deals with special needs kids who is interested in the job... more on her later...)

**Wendy Stegeman**  
*Andrew Hill*

If you were to go strictly by the movies, you could be forgiven for thinking that Americans have no idea what they want out of education. What kind of teachers do our children need? Well, there's Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*, who tells his students flatly, "Your boss won't care about your problems, and neither do I." This is a far cry from Robin Williams's empathetic *carpe diem* shtick in *The Dead Poets Society*. Still somehow, both teachers were celebrated despite their tremendous difference in styles and philosophy.

Perhaps, the cynical leftist in me is saying, there is something sinister in the expectations for different races and classes of students. The Holden Caulfield prep school types in *Dead Poets* evidently need a muse, someone to liberate their dormant souls before they go on to become captains of industry; Latino kids in East L. A. apparently need a drill sergeant, someone to whip them into shape and keep them out of jail--a sort of pre-emptive liberation. I suppose it could be worse. You could be one of the black kids in *Lean on Me* (a movie I haven't seen), where your principal patrols the hallways of your school with a baseball bat. This seems more like prison prep.

But I have neither the space nor the intellect to tackle the sociology of teacher movies. In fact, I barely have patience for the movies themselves. I always get the feeling that Hollywood is using them to tell me how to do my job. "See, Marty Brandt? That's how Michelle Pfeiffer does it in *Dangerous Minds*! You'd do well to show a little more skin yourself, bub!"

Of course I should get over myself. But the question of what kind of teacher you're going to be is one which all of us face, especially in the formative years of our careers. America may not know what kind of teachers it wants, but we teachers must certainly develop a philosophy which will allow us to do the greatest good for our students, the least harm, and the growing confidence and self-respect needed to promote the greatest degree of professional longevity.

Now I'm sounding like a mission statement. But

I find myself very conscious of the 150 new teachers to our district. Certainly they're not all rookies, but still I feel the need to make them feel welcome, and to reassure them that there is support and collegiality out there on their campuses and within our union. And that whatever challenges they face, they needn't face them entirely alone.

I find myself wanting to tell them that there is another side of the schools which they will encounter. It's never portrayed in the movies, for the same reason that there's rarely anything happy on the news: it's just not compelling theater. It is reality, though. It's the side of a great career in which you will be surrounded by colleagues that you respect and love. It's the side of a system that is not irrevocably broken but instead supported heroically by the mighty effort of lots and lots of really great people.

How many untold millions of dollars might filmmakers have missed had our society adopted this view, instead of--from *The Blackboard Jungle* on--the deeply entrenched notion that our schools are nothing more than a harbinger of societal collapse?

One hundred fifty new teachers in the East Side, even after the catastrophic reign of Zendejas? There is hope! All is not lost. In fact, I've become so optimistic in these post-Zendejas days that I've decided to devote a page of each issue of *Panorama* to document our reasons for hope. It's a revolving authorship column titled "All Is Not Lost," and it offers a forum for ESTA members to pass on their own reminiscences of classroom victories and the oft-overlooked delights of this privilege masquerading as a profession. The Great Kathleen Gonzalez of Santa Teresa has supplied the inaugural column.

We've got the movies and the media to tell us what's wrong; we owe it to ourselves to document what's right. Send submissions (Word attachments, please) of up to 500 words to the usual place: brandtm@esuhsd.org.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

**Martin Brandt**  
*Independence*

# ESTA Classifieds

**MindsInSight Online Classroom Tools** - MindsInSite is a hosted Moodle solution for teachers and trainers of any kind. Allowing us to host your remote learning solution allows you to spend your time developing content rather than managing software and hardware. Cut your time spent on paperwork in half. 10% discount for all ESUHSD teachers. Take a look at our services at: <http://www.mindsinsight.com> and/or contact Bruce Selzler @ 347-4936

**VACATION RENTAL:** Cozumel houses available by the week. One and a half blocks from ocean. Easy walking distance to shopping & ferry to mainland. Three rental units: 3 bedroom, 2 bath \$950; 2 bedroom, 1 bath \$650; & 2 bedroom, 2 bath \$680. All 3 units combined for \$2,052. Ten percent discount for teachers. Summer rates are lower. All have kitchen, A/C, DSL internet, cable, safes, and phone and access to pool, rinse tank for scuba, courtyard, and sundeck on roof. Contact Mike at 251-1584 or [cloughmf@msn.com](mailto:cloughmf@msn.com).

**CGT Travel**, Contact Marian Dotson, at 831-338-1959 [cgtravelpals@yahoo.com](mailto:cgtravelpals@yahoo.com) CGC Travel cst 2027232-40

**Wedding/Event DJ.** \$120.00 per hour. We are a husband/wife team that will work very hard to make your special day perfect. Contact Anthony Kudsi (IHS) at (408) 858-4555 for more info or to make an appointment.

**Materials** for Spanish For Spanish Speakers classes : Books, posters, etc. Sistilio Testa (WCO, OG, ret.) 295-6327.

**For Sale: Wurlitzer Organ.** Full pedals, 2 keyboards, beautiful walnut finish. Sounds great. \$250.00 or best offer. Contact Nick Shehadi (408) 265-0351.

**Joe Sousa, handy service:** Remodeling, repair, plumbing, electrical, flooring and tile, drywall. Free estimates. Excellent references. License number 316835. Tel. (408) 234-7428. (Marie Anderson, AH).

**LOS GATOS LATTICE:** fences, decks, gates, pergolas, arbors, patio covers, retaining walls, automated gates, outdoor projects. Also, general construction/remodelling as well: crown molding, baseboards, doors, windows, drywall, finish work, etc. Call DAVE FREDERICKS @ 347-3966 or contact at [big57wave@yahoo.com](mailto:big57wave@yahoo.com). References from colleagues at all ESUHSD schools.

**FOR SALE:** Oak Teacher's Desk-- 54" x 33"-- six drawers, with chair \$300.00 Call 74287 or 378-9593 Marta Kinder (**AH Maui** 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom condos available July 3-17. 1 bedroom \$750 a week and 2 bedroom \$950 a week. Call Gary Miller at Yerba Buena or cell number 408-892-1873.

**Intero Real Estate Services** Selling or buying a house is very personal....but you can get three great realtors by calling Sam Alvarado (772-7661), Sheryl Ruth (348-5449) or Ron Smith. They are Intero people (a great firm) and through their WREATHS Program are donating \$1000 to your school program, department or team for ANY name that results in a sale. It is a no-brainer and seamless!

## PANORAMA MARTIN BRANDT, IHS EDITOR

*Panorama* is a monthly publication of the East Side Teachers' Association, 888 S. Capitol Ave. San Jose, CA.

*Panorama* is a forum for ESTA members, and welcomes all member contributions. Submissions must include author's name, position, and school site. Those with fewer than 250 words will be printed in the "Letters" section. All submissions may be edited for length or clarity.

Letters, articles, columns, queries, or classified ads (for ESTA members only) should be emailed as Microsoft Word Attachments to [brandtm@esuhsd.org](mailto:brandtm@esuhsd.org). Deadline for October submissions is Friday, October 13, 2006.

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in *Panorama* are those of individual members and may not represent the official views of the East Side Teachers Association. *Panorama* will not print ad hominem attacks, personal insults, or racially provocative imagery.

HHH 1910-1993

# The Backside

*Lying to your face since 1776*

## Astrologists demand equal time for Pluto in schools

TAOS, NM (BS) Incensed by the seeming arrogance of astronomers, and citing the possibility of irreparable cosmic harm to Scorpios, the American Academy of Astrological Education today announced its opposition to the decision by scientists earlier this month which downgraded Pluto from the status of full-fledged planet in our solar system.

The AAAE also declared its intention to pursue legal action which would require that teachers present the alternative theory that Pluto is indeed a planet.

"Make no mistake about this," said AAAE spokesman M.H. Brady. "Pluto is the celestial body which affects Scorpios most. To deny Pluto's status as a planet is to throw the world-view of Astrologically faithful Scorpios into disarray. And we are by no means to be considered solely with derision as 'lunatic fringe.'"

"Imagine a poor Scorpio child in a science class being forced to believe that the planet which most directly affects his fate, the planet which he has looked to for guidance in the pages of the "Lifestyle"

section of the morning paper all his life, is not really a planet. Such a child could actually be induced to abandon his belief in the intercession of distant celestial bodies in his day-to-day affairs."

Brady has already enlisted the help of Congress, which is drafting a bill requiring that Astrology be given time in science classrooms as an equally plausible alternative to the rigors of Astronomy.

"Let's be honest," said congressman Roger Houston (D-Taos). "Most people don't even know the difference between astrology and that other subject, anyway. What is it? Like, two letters apart? It's like they're trying screw with our heads in the first place."

"If you believe in science, fine. But that doesn't give you the excuse to use the classroom as a platform to ram your beliefs down the throats of innocent Scorpios."

Speaking from his grave in Florence, famed astronomer Galileo Galilei told *The Backside*, "Welcome to my world."

## District inks Testing Season deal with ESPN

Officials with the East Side Union High School District are ecstatic today after granting multi-year Testing Season television rights to sports juggernaut ESPN.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but some industry analysts estimated the value of the contract in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

"ESPN has long been a world leader in the televising of pseudo-sports," said district official O. Howie Cheatham. "And in this day of reality television, with the schools being judged on their test performance and ranked like college football teams, it seemed that the time was right to put standardized testing on TV."

Officials from the cable television network were effusive in their optimism. "Already, we're planning on televising all the pre-season action: rote learning, memorization, and test-taking strategy sessions," said one. "By the time the actual Testing Season begins, we expect national excitement to be at fever pitch."

Network programmers have already assigned testing shows a slot between their ubiquitous World Series of Poker and Strong Man competitions. Also planned are a series of corporate tie-ins, including a John Madden video game.

"The Madden video game was key for us," said Cheatham. "It ensured that the deal would go through, and most importantly, it kept this whole thing from landing in the lap of Joe Buck over at Fox. Everybody hates that guy."

Revenue from the contract is expected to help raise administrator salaries. "Once we get East Side administrators making real money," Cheatham added, "You'll see test scores shoot through the roof! We'll be nationally ranked. We'll have the best product on the field anywhere!"

"We live in a competitive world, sighed Cheatham. "And the earlier our students learn this, the better. It all makes so much dollars and sense."

## Governor announces new box-top initiative

In a bold and cunning election year strategem, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced his plan to repay billions owed to the schools using box-top vouchers from General Foods breakfast cereals.

"I call on the konsümers of such General Food favorites as Cheerios, Lucky Charms, Cöcoa Püffs, and Raisin Nüt Bran: eat that cereal every day. Eat two bowls if you have to, then send in those böx töps, cause I don't know how else we are going to get that money back to those damn schools."

The governor added, "Don't böther with Wheat Chex. Nobody eats that *sheisse* anyway."

Long time Sacramento insiders were impressed with the governor's proposal. "Once again, we have seen Governor Schwarzenegger stay ahead of his adversaries through such imaginative policymaking," said political analyst Mary Hart of *Entertainment Tonight*. "Plus, of course, he *is* a movie star."

Strategists for Democratic nominee Phil Angelides were hopeful that the bounce from the governor's announcement would be short-lived. "In the end," said one, "Californians know that Kelloggs still controls a far greater share of the cereal market than General Foods, so that the benefits of this proposal would be negligible."

Schwarzenegger dismissed these claims, however. "They might häve girlie man fakts," he said. "Büt I have star power, and thät's all that mätters to thöse hot chicks in the elektoräte. Sö eat üp your cereal like the good little konsümers that you are, and help me säve my administrätion fröm fürther embarraßment."