



photo courtesy Mollie Matull

**GREEN SCHOOLYARDS - Sherman Elementary students Devon Faraci, Diego Roesch, and Dakarai Moore dig into their school garden. See page 2.**

**Where are they going?  
Graduates head for college. See page 2**

## Mission High Athletes Spend Summers at College

by Heidi Anderson

It's a long trip from a Mission school soccer field to Harvard University, but some students now have a way to make the journey.

The Athletic School Advance Program, run by Mission High athletic director Scott Kennedy, started five years ago when Kennedy organized a trip for 11 athletes to attend soccer camp at Sonoma State University.

"Years ago, when I saw a lot of kids who needed to get off the street in the summer, I complained like everybody else," Kennedy says. "I decided I was tired of complaining."

This summer, Kennedy and several community volunteers will send over 150 Mission High student athletes to summer camps on college campuses all over the country, including Stanford, UC Berkeley, Cornell, Columbia and Harvard.

Kennedy financed the first camp trip with his personal credit card. This year he's working with a budget of grants and donations exceeding \$150,000.

Students qualify for ASAP by being on a Mission High athletic team and by maintaining a 2.5 grade-point average. Volunteer Judy Grossman leads a group of adult volunteers who help students keep their grades up and get organized for the trips. To boost excitement about college, volunteers take students for college visits during the school year.

"Our objective is to let them see that they really can go to college," Grossman says.

Mission senior Jenny Cervantes, who plays soccer for Mission High, has been to summer camps via ASAP two years in a row and says she's very glad she got to go.

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## The High Cost of Low Enrollment

by Nancy Waymack  
and Gentle Blythe

Like many urban school districts across the nation and over half the districts in California, SFUSD is losing enrollment. In the last five years, the District has lost almost 4,000 students. As a result, SFUSD now receives about \$20 million less discretionary State revenue per year.

The loss of enrollment, skyrocketing health care costs and other factors have caused great strain on the District's finances, especially considering that California spends \$1,000 less per student than the national average.

The more students that attend school, the more money the state provides to pay for teach-

ers, administrators, supplies and materials. The State of California gives school districts funds largely based on the number of students attending school each day. In turn, SFUSD funds individual schools based on the number of students enrolled and the characteristics of those students.

At its peak enrollment in the 1960s, the District had almost 90,000 students; now it has about 56,000 students. However, SFUSD still operates almost the same number of facilities.

Recently the SFUSD along with the San Francisco Education Fund, the Parent Advisory Council, and Parents for Public Schools held over 80 small group conversations with over 900 community members, primarily parents, about issues

around student enrollment and schools in general.

Among several other questions, participants were asked: "What do you think about the fact that the school district has buildings and facilities for almost twice as many students as are enrolled?" Most parents saw it as an opportunity to spread out and have smaller schools and classes, and very few parents recognized the costs associated with operating under-enrolled schools. Almost no one seemed to understand that schools are funded based on the number of students in attendance each day. For example, one parent asked, "Why are they closing schools? Can't they use these

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## Leadership: Walk that Talk

by Natasha Hoehn  
Contributing Writer

On a recent clear Noe Valley morning between 9:02 and 9:05 a.m., Carmelo Sgarlato shook hands and laughed with three parents to wrap up a meeting, calmly responded to a teacher's concern coming in on his walkie-talkie, called for a plumber to address an issue in the first floor bathroom, welcomed a visitor into his office, signed some paperwork, and ushered the last handful of dallying boys out of the restroom and into class — all in less than three minutes.

If you're Sgarlato, you don't ease into retirement resting on your laurels. Instead, you head right back to a school site to, as he puts it, "walk that talk."

Following 10 years as a chemistry teacher and science department head, Sgarlato moved to the district office as a curriculum supervisor for all K-12 science, math, and technology programs. That wasn't enough. He wanted to do more. So in 2005 Sgarlato became a principal.

"I decided that all those ideas about change and achievement I had read and talked about and deeply believed in, I needed to go do as a principal," he says.

Sgarlato's drive to dramatically improve student achievement in his school is evident at James Lick Middle School, which serves more than 500 students in grades six through eight. Seated in his office chair, papers piled high, door open, wearing his stylish leather jacket, Sgarlato gazes out into his schoolyard — his dark eyes conveying that understated mix of wisdom, charisma and urgency necessary to lead a school.

He describes his vision of having every student in every classroom experience a standards-based, rigorous, relevant curriculum along with full enrichment opportunities. As he speaks, the halls buzz around him with the energy of a school on the rise, momentum reflected in its test score trends — the school's Academic Performance Index shot up 63 points last year and rose from a similar schools state ranking of 1 to 6 (10 is the highest).

Articulating a vision for success is not all a school leader needs to do. "I've also noticed that I have to be extremely situationally aware, resilient and flexible," he laughs, as yet another call comes through on the walkie-talkie. "I think I learned that skill riding the subways of New



photo courtesy Seth Affoumado

**James Lick Middle School  
Principal Carmelo Sgarlato**

York City as a kid: I know what to focus on when, what to leave to do later, and how to keep my eyes on what matters most."

He doesn't do it alone. "I have a great staff, a great leadership team," he acknowledges. "I meet regularly with my assistant principal, Bitu Nazarian, and instructional reform facilitator, Carrie Melton, to strategize on ways to improve student learning and our processes. I'm also in classrooms as much as I can be, giving informal feedback and watching teaching and learning in action. My teachers and department heads also have common planning time so they can support each other, and we use regular six-week benchmark assessments to track our students' progress."

continued on page 2

## Where are They Going ?



**Michael Sung**  
**Washington High**  
"I had an internship at Laguna Honda Hospital and it was pretty stressful at times but I stuck with it. I found what I like to do and dedicated myself to it; I'm going to UC Berkeley to study Molecular Biology."



**Maureen Nwaokoro**  
**Thurgood Marshall High**  
"I learned to keep at it, even though my classes were a lot of work. I've been accepted to UC Davis. I'm thinking about getting into the medical field."



**Alexandra Mogannam**  
**Lincoln High**  
"This has been the best four years of my life. I was recruited by Skyline College to play on their soccer team, and get to intern with the Men's Olympic Wrestling trainer there, which is my dream job."



**Cathy Liang**  
**International Studies Academy**  
"I took a lot of AP classes – US History, English, Statistics, Biology – that I hope prepared me for UC Berkeley. I'm really happy I got a full scholarship."



**Alfredo Sabillon**  
**Balboa High**  
"At Balboa I was on School Site Council, the Student Nutrition Committee and the Mock Trial Team. I'm going to Stanford."



**Charly Uc**  
**Mission High**  
"When my big brother was shot in the head and died, it was really hard, and I thought I should drop out of school and help support my mother. But I had to make a kind of self-determination. My teachers encouraged me. I have a full scholarship at UC Santa Clara."



**Kelly Ware**  
**John O'Connell High**  
"I took an animal care class at the Randall Museum and said 'this is what I want to do'. I worked while I went to high school, and I'll be doing the work-study program at UC Davis. The biggest thing I worry about right now is making sure I can cover all my bills at school."



**Jennifer Woo**  
**Galileo High**  
"I think my Advanced Placement classes prepared me the most for college, because I learned to study on my own. I'm nervous because I hear it's really competitive at UC Berkeley, but I felt the same way before my AP Biology class and it was okay."



**Seph Kramer**  
**School of the Arts**  
"I think I'll be surrounded by a lot of ambitious people at Harvard. I'm hoping the Creative Writing Program and great History teacher here trained me to stay focused and creative under pressure."



**Kai Fan Tsang**  
**Wallenberg High**  
"I'll be going to UC Santa Cruz to study either Law or Engineering. I am excited. I guess I am growing up."



**Tisa Vo**  
**Lowell High**  
"In my sophomore year at Lowell I kind of went against the grain and didn't worry about college strategies. I just followed what I liked. Harvard is everything I ever wanted in a college; I was really surprised to get in" □

## Walk that Talk

from page 1

Research backs up Sgarlato's approach to school leadership. Studies show that principals' behaviors and leadership strategies can have a profound impact on the success of their school communities.

How does the SFUSD ensure that Sgarlato and others like him have enough support to continually improve their schools? And once Sgarlato and the 75 administrators who will be eligible for retirement in the next five years eventually retire, how does the SFUSD ensure that there is a corps of dynamic leaders to fill those shoes? The new SFUSD Leadership Initiative is striving to address these questions.

In partnership with the San Francisco School Alliance, UC Berkeley and Partners in School Innovation, the SFUSD Leadership Initiative is transforming the way the District recruits, prepares and supports its school leaders. The goal is to provide every leader with exceptional preparation, coaching, and ongoing support, so that every school, in every neighborhood, can flourish.

Through the Leadership Initiative, Sgarlato, his assistant principal and his instructional reform facilitator, along with leadership teams at every other school in all of the SFUSD, have access to a continuum of coaching and professional development, from seminars for aspiring administrators, to one-on-one coaching.

Sgarlato is optimistic about the future. "This school is on its way up," he says. "We want to build a culture and way of being here that respects diversity and ensures equitable and high-levels of teaching and learning for every single person in the building. I still have a lot to do, and I'm not going to rest until it's done." □

## School Gardens are Blooming

by Susan Cattoche  
Contributing Writer

A green revolution is reshaping San Francisco schoolyards. All over the district, flowers, trees and vegetable beds are gradually replacing the asphalt that has covered playgrounds for generations.

Sherman Elementary is one of the schools where children are experiencing the sea change.

With a shared plan created by staff, parents, students and even neighbors, the old blacktop has been removed from the school's largest play area.

The area has been contoured with curving paths to create spaces for planting and composting. Additional areas have been scooped out for group instruction, art projects, and quiet contemplation.

Parent Kent David has been involved from the very early stages. He says a by-product of the work has surprised him.

"We've had a tremendous number of families coming to work on the yard on weekends, many who typically can't show up at other events during the week," he says, "We're actually building a stronger community while we build the yard!"

In the coming year, shade, fruit and ornamental trees will be planted to make a canopy of green. Climbing vines will be added to buffer noise from nearby Franklin Street, and a waterfall and pond will be installed.

On a sunny spring afternoon, teacher Kathleen Dominguez brings her kindergarten class to an important part of all Green Schoolyard projects, the garden. Her students are looking forward to the first taste of the bright red strawberries they've been growing. They'll also

sample Swiss chard, chocolate mint, oregano, sage, the bright red tops of Bull's Blood beets, and the pods of Indian Gold sweet peas.

Garden coordinator Linda Myers leads the class, "Who can find a ripe strawberry?" A dozen hands shoot up. "And how will you know that it's ripe?" Myers continues. "It will be red all over!" they shout.

The nature of the work done in a garden encourages cooperation and a shared sense of ownership.

"I once watched a whole bunch of my kids build this tiny tepee to shelter one plant, all those little hands, and they were so cooperative," Myers says. "No arguments, nothing broken."

At the end of the school day, a sturdy fourth-grader bounds toward his afternoon bus. He stops to examine his favorite plant, a chocolate mint. Zackery announces to his friend, "It has a strong scent, and you can eat it. I took a piece home and put it in a glass of water—and it grew roots!"

Funded by voter-approved Proposition A bonds, the District and the non-profit San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance are working with school communities to develop, design and implement green schoolyard master-plans at 45 schools over the next 5 years.

"We have an opportunity to change the way children interface with their environment, by providing natural elements and a context with which to appreciate the natural world," says the San Francisco Unified School District director of educational gardens, Arden Bucklin-Sporer.

For more information on Green Schoolyards at SFUSD, visit [www.sfgreenschools.org](http://www.sfgreenschools.org). □

## Reading, Writing, and Listening

by Heidi Anderson

It's hard when you're thirteen years old, in sixth grade and you're having a tough day, then somebody does something that makes you mad. Just ask Roberto Perez, who goes to Aptos Middle School in the Ingleside District.

"Sometimes I get into fights for what seems like no reason," says Perez.

Perez isn't alone in his occasional conflicts, but it's not just teachers who can help, it's his fellow students. From Kindergarten to 12th grade, SFUSD students receive training in conflict mediation. They learn how to identify their feelings, talk about them and take turns listening to each other.

"Second Step" is the program taught in all middle schools; students participate in group

discussions, role-playing, and coaching to teach empathy skills, anger management, and problem solving. The research proven middle school program, "Second Step" is taught twice a month to all students in homeroom at Aptos Middle School.

Principal Ericka Lovrin says it's part of a school-wide system. "We use three things in tandem at Aptos – a discipline program, Second Step, and Peer Resources."

Katie LeRoy, Aptos' Peer Resources teacher, adds, "Conflict is natural, but students are responsible people and they can resolve it." LeRoy has been teaching conflict mediation at SFUSD schools for four years.

"Second Step" lessons, taught in homeroom class, are used

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# Viewpoints

## Board of Education President Mark Sanchez



Sanchez

San Francisco has long been recognized as a global city. The San Francisco Board of Education made a commitment this past year to expand opportunities for students to learn a second language. A task force has been formed which will advise SFUSD on how to prepare every child to graduate from SFUSD fluent in English and at least one other language.

SFUSD is committed to welcoming and respecting the families of all children. To this end, the Board directed the District to review and plan for District-wide family diversity curriculum.

As well, the Board unanimously voted on a policy to create intentionally small schools to help bridge the education opportunity gap, especially for African American, Latino and other historically under-served students. Following a trend in urban districts across the nation, the Small Schools by Design policy is based on extensive research which shows that many under-served students fare better when taught in more personalized, smaller environments.

As the current school year comes to a close, we are in the midst of many serious undertakings which will affect the future of our District: the selection of a permanent superintendent; reaching agreements with our teachers' union; approving a long range plan for student enrollment; and pursuing increased resources to stabilize our educator workforce.

The Board worked with broad-based

community organizations and civic leaders to identify critical criteria for the superintendent search. We are now interviewing a number of promising candidates and expect to have selection completed by early June.

In our labor negotiations, the Board is committed to supporting our teachers. Last year we agreed on an 8.5% raise. I am confident that we will soon have good news to report regarding a labor agreement.

The long range plan for Student Enrollment, Recruitment and Retention has been a thorough undertaking and a draft is soon to be shared with the public. After careful review, we look forward to using this plan as one important guide for several years.

As always, we greatly appreciate San Francisco's support for public schools. □

## Interim Superintendent Gwen Chan



Chan

As a former student, teacher, parent, principal and central office administrator at SFUSD, I am fortunate to have a unique perspective that spans the past 56 years. During the past 15 months as superintendent, I have focused on

strengthening the relationships that we at SFUSD have with each other and the community at large.

This past year, we worked with several community organizations to hold small intimate community conversations with over 900 people. In all of our conversations, we heard that quality schools must have good teachers and administrators; a

safe and nurturing school climate; well-rounded learning opportunities for all students; and strong parent and community partnerships. I agree. It takes resources, vision, expertise, hard work, flexibility, and, above all, good relationships, to make our schools work for our children.

Good relationships require commitment. The citizens of San Francisco have shown their commitment to our schools. This past November, the voters of San Francisco approved a 450 million dollar school bond measure. This and other voter approved initiatives invest in much needed facilities improvements as well as sports, counseling, libraries, and arts programs. This April the Mayor and District formalized our commitment to work together by signing the "Partnership for Achievement" agreement, signifying an unprecedented level of cooperation between the City and the

District in six strategic areas.

Good relationships require shared values. The District has begun a Leadership Initiative to transform the way we recruit, prepare, support and retain school leaders. We are working with several community partners who believe, as we do, that having strong school leaders is essential to the success of our students.

Good relationships require communication. This newspaper is one of many efforts to communicate with you. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to John Wilcox at the Examiner for sponsoring the printing and distribution of this paper. Because of the Examiner, we have one more way to keep you informed.

Together we are creating amazing opportunities for our children that none of us could achieve alone. □

## SF Examiner Publisher John Wilcox



Wilcox

Few things have more impact on a city's economic health than the quality of public education. And few things have more impact on a city's self image than how it perceives the quality of its schools. That's why it's so

important to get the whole San Francisco education story before its citizens.

Our public schools do have problems.. Some of these are nearly universal in urban systems, some are more uniquely ours. We have falling enrollment, schools that don't meet minimum standards of achievement and buildings in need of repair. You proba-

bly know that. But did you know that our San Francisco Unified School District is ranked number one among urban school systems in California, that our teachers have more years of experience than the national average and that sports, libraries and art education is either available in all SFUSD schools, or soon will be?

By definition news is recent events that are unusual or notable. Too often it is negative. Perception is skewed when we only read about shortcomings. While those certainly are news; there is good news about San Francisco's public schools that you should know about.

At The Examiner we see our job as more than relating the bad and the ugly. We should also include some of the good. That's what we're doing by printing and distributing this newsletter from the San

Francisco Unified School District. It's not an advertisement for the District, but rather an opportunity for a fresh view, a balance, you might say, to the stories that highlight the problems. We can't move forward without recognizing and repairing our shortcomings. And we can't move forward without recognizing and repeating our successes.

I hope you will find this newspaper enlightening and see that while we sometimes struggle we also often succeed. And after all, that's what education is about, isn't it, succeeding into the next generation. □

## Fall '07 Calendar

### August

27 - First Day of School

### September

3 - Labor Day / NO SCHOOL

### October

8 - Indigenous Peoples' Day  
NO SCHOOL

### November

12 - Veterans' Day / NO SCHOOL  
22-23 Thanksgiving Recess  
NO SCHOOL

### December-January

17-Jan 1 - Winter Recess  
NO SCHOOL

## Listening from page 2

school-wide and bolstered in Peer Resources, an elective class for students.

"A really important exercise we do is all about empathy," says LeRoy. "The kids get deeper into understanding how they might misinterpret a person's actions by looking at pictures of people's faces and guessing what they're feeling."

Student leaders are recruited, interviewed, and trained by Le Roy to become Conflict Managers.

Student Conflict Managers clue teachers into things happening that might erupt into a fight and help talk feuding classmates into mediation.

Conflict Manager Leilah Barnes, 8th grade, is an old pro. When students are brought to her, she says she knows the first thing she needs to do.

"You have to make them both feel important," she says, "I learned that if they think you're taking sides, it won't work."

Conflict Manager Karimah Pierce, also 8th grade, didn't want to be a Manager at first.

"I can be a trouble-maker, but now it's fun when I can solve the same problems I used to make."

Pierce adds that looking at conflicts from a Manager's point of view has been helpful. "It's changed me."

LeRoy says she's proud of the work her students do. Every mediation includes a contract students have to sign stating what they will do to avoid the conflict in the future. If the disruption was intense enough, parents have to sign it as well. Recently, a spoken apology requirement was added. Conflict Managers see to it that the student takes responsibility for his or her actions, and that the apology is sincere.

"That's really where the healing starts," says LeRoy.

Perez concurs. "I had to say I was sorry for what I did, and especially had to look him in the eye," he recalls. "The next day I felt happy." □



"Peacock Rendezvous" by Carolyn Gage

**ARTS FOR EVERY SCHOOL, EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY**  
This chalk pastel by Carolyn Gage, eighth grade student at Horace Mann Middle School, was one of 3,500 student artworks displayed at the de Young Museum as part of this year's Young at Art Festival. Under the direction of the Arts Education Master Plan and funds from Proposition H, every SFUSD student will soon be participating in daily visual and performing arts instruction. □

## Work in Progress

by Gentle Blythe

In November 2006, 74 percent of voters approved Proposition A to modernize and repair 64 San Francisco schools. Together with the voter-approved 2003 bond, 94 schools across The City will benefit. These bond funds will support a range of school facility improvements, including bathroom repairs, fire and life safety upgrades and school gardens. Once bond work is complete, bond schools will be accessible to all students regardless of physical ability. Additionally, elementary schools in the program will have a green schoolyard where students can learn and play in a natural outdoor environment.

Bond construction work takes place year round with much of the work concentrated in the summer when schools have a lower occupancy.

"The district is committed to doing everything it can to proceed with the work as quickly and efficiently as possible without hindering the ability of schools to teach and learn," says David Goldin, SFUSD chief facilities officer.

The bond program is subject to careful financial supervision from a Citizens' General Obligation Bond Oversight Committee appointed by the Board of Education. As one of their responsibilities, the bond oversight committee is

required to conduct an annual financial audit of the bond program. According to Goldin, all of the annual audits performed on the 2003 bond program have had positive findings and have determined that the work is being performed per the requirements of the bond as approved by the voters.

The 2006 bond work is still in the planning and development stage. Several 2003 bond projects are complete while others are in the construction process.

### Completed Sites:

Bryant Elementary  
Bret Harte Elementary  
Rosa Parks Elementary  
Dr. Charles Drew Elementary  
Commodore Sloat Elementary  
Clarendon Elementary  
Sherman Elementary  
Alvarado Elementary  
S.F. Community Elementary  
Gloria Davis Middle  
E.R. Taylor Elementary  
West Portal Elementary  
Leonard Flynn Elementary

### Current Sites:

Horace Mann Middle  
Malcolm X Elementary  
A.P. Giannini Middle  
Hillcrest Elementary  
Claire Lilienthal Elementary  
Everett Middle  
Harvey Milk Elementary  
James Denman Middle  
Mission High  
George Washington High  
Galileo High  
Lowell High  
Thurgood Marshall High  
Balboa High  
Marina Middle  
Abraham Lincoln High □

## Mission High Athletes attend College Camps

from page 1

Cervantes remembers that when she was a freshman at Mission High, she didn't feel college was something she could do. Her parents had not gone to college, and she hadn't given it much thought.

But after her first summer camp experience, Cervantes not only has attended more soccer camps, but did a stint at a UC San Francisco medicine-related camp as well.

Cervantes will be attending Chico State in the fall and hopes to play on the soccer team there.

"I encourage kids to do this, because you really have to see what's out there before you make up your mind about college," she says.

The camps are not all soccer and basketball. Students often are enrolled in academic camps during their stay, mixing sports with college prep courses in math and science.

"What's amazing is how mature the kids are when they get back," Kennedy says. "We've discovered that the summers at college are challenging them in a safe way."

Mission High Principal Kevin Truitt agrees.

"Without exaggeration, I can say ASAP is the most inspiring program I have been involved

with in my 22 years in education." He says that the week-long experiences all across the country give students a real feeling of hope.

"These are talented young people, and all they need are experiences to help them believe they can succeed."

With a summer or two spent on college campuses, many ASAP students become eager to attend college and ASAP's volunteers assist them with applications. Students have gone on to attend a range of public and private universities, including Harvard. □



SFUSD photo

**Mission Sophomore Astrid Bonilla (left) and Junior Edgardo Gomez have attended college summer camps through ASAP.**

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## The High Cost of Low Enrollment

from page 1

buildings to reduce class size?"

When students are in schools that have low enrollment, the mandatory costs for the school – like the principal, school secretary, and custodian – are divided across a smaller number of students making the cost per child go up. In an elementary school with 500 students, the cost of the principal is \$250 per student, but when the enrollment of the school falls to 200 students, the per-student cost of the principal rises to \$624.

The high cost of spreading students across a large number of schools in the District has led to increasing pressure on the District's budget and resulted in the Board making the difficult decision to close several schools. Over the past three years, eight schools have closed, and two more have merged with existing schools.

Demographic projections show that the enrollment decline will continue for at least the next five years, especially at the middle and high school level. According to Myong

Leigh, SFUSD's senior chief of policy and operations, "As enrollments continue to decline, more school closures may be seriously considered to maintain financial solvency."

In spring 2006 the Board of Education urged the Superintendent to initiate a planning process focused on the enrollment, recruitment, and retention of students. The community engagement conversations that took place this fall are a part of that effort. SFUSD staff has spent time evaluating the demographic forecast for the

City, enrollment trends, and policies and programs that impact where students go to school. A community advisory committee is now looking at other districts' practices around long-term planning and school closure and preparing recommendations to the Board.

This June, Superintendent Chan will present recommendations based on the work of these groups to the Board to address this pressing issue. □

## San Francisco Unified School District School Times

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