

# The Nugget

News from the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools Office

March 2010

Holly Hermansen, Superintendent

## News & Notes ...

### School district consolidation takes much consideration and time

By **Holly Hermansen**

*Nevada County Superintendent of Schools*

On Feb. 18, 2010, the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools office hosted a workshop on School District Organization presented by the School Fiscal Services Division of the California Department of Education. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an opportunity to educate school board members, administrators, the County Committee on School District Organization and interested members of the public on matters related to the organization of school districts.

Often in Nevada County, and especially during difficult budget times, the question is asked as to why we have 10 school districts in a county our size. Many wonder if this is the most efficient and effective model for education in our county. We should all become more educated about the laws and issues involved in order to understand and to make decisions, or to support and promote change.

In California, school district organization issues are governed by Education Code. Consolidation is a form of school district organization that includes combining two or more elementary districts or combining one or more elementary districts with a high school district to form a unified school district. The process to consolidate school districts is complicated and lengthy. If either 25 percent of the voters in all districts affected, or the majority of the members of each school district governing board approve a petition, the County Committee on School District Organization begins the process of holding public hearings to make a determination on approving the petition. If there is not agreement from all parties or there is an appeal, the petition must go to the state board to consider.

Currently, the state board of education is taking three to four years to complete the process when a petition is sent to them. If all parties are in agreement and there is no appeal, the County Superintendent of Schools calls an election. For these reasons, it is critical that there is education and buy-in

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**The Nevada County Indian Education staff (l-r): Sonia Delgadillo, Melissa Marcum and Aimee Dorion.**



### Indian Ed welcomes new staff

There is a new face — three faces, actually — to Nevada County Indian Education with the recent hiring of a new program coordinator, Melissa Marcum, and tutors Sonia Delgadillo and Aimee Dorion. Since January (following the departure of former IE coordinator John Negrete) the three have been introducing themselves to schools and working to improve educational support services to students of American Indian and Alaskan native ancestry. Three part-time Indian Education positions are sharing the work previously done by one person.

There are approximately 331 verified Native American students in Nevada County, of which about 29 receive tutoring services, according to Marcum. These students are in all grades K-12.

“We now have a waiting list and we’re trying to see the students that need it most,” Marcum said.

Federal funding provides support to students who have been verified as American Indians or Alaskan natives. Eligibility for services is based on completion of a federal 506 form, also known as a Title VII Student Eligibility Certification form). Since Indian Education funding is based on the number of 506 forms on record, Marcum is working to make sure schools have valid 506 forms (some are old and invalid), that these forms are distributed to parents, especially at the beginning of the school year, and that newsletters and other communications to parents includes info about Indian Ed services.

Marcum said, at a time when schools are struggling financially, “Indian Ed can be a resource.”

With culturally sensitive tutoring, monthly Native Family Night events, and networking with local tribal groups, Indian Ed also helps connect students and their

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from all the involved parties in order to make the timelines reasonable. Partly because of the complicated nature of the process, there have only been six school district consolidations in California in the last five years.

There are many factors to take into account when considering consolidation. First of all, the consolidation should result in reduced costs and/or increased revenue to the “new” school district. Even though it seems obvious to many that this would occur, and sometimes it does, it is not always the case for a variety of complicated funding reasons. It is important that a comprehensive study be undertaken in order to be assured that the consolidation will result in fiscal improvement.

Another factor to take into account is the educational benefit to the students. Families with students attending schools in Nevada County value the education their children receive, and many move here from suburban or urban areas for the schools, believing that small intimate schools and districts will provide better educational opportunities. There are many that strongly believe that local control provides a more effective educational environment, but it is still important to consider the educational opportunities that might be available for students in a larger environment as a component of any decision or discussion.

Our task is to balance fiscal efficiency with a high quality educational environment that continues to attract families to our area. One of the things that school districts in Nevada County have done and continue to do is find ways to share services and resources. Examples include shared transportation services, shared food services, staff shared across districts and two districts that share a superintendent, district office and business manager. Nevada County school districts continue to explore ways to share resources and services during the current budget planning process.

The Nevada County Superintendent of Schools office will continue to facilitate the education process by providing opportunities for school board members and the public

## Nevada County Reads events continue

The Nevada County Superintendent of Schools Office and Nevada County Library have chosen the novel “Snow Falling on Cedars” by David Guterson as the 2010 book selection for the 6th annual Nevada County Reads.

A class set of “Snow Falling on Cedars” is available for loan to high school classes from the NCSoS on a first-come basis. Contact Nikki Johnson at 478-6400 ext. 201.

In conjunction with this Asian-American story, Nevada County Reads also encourages middle schoolers to read the award-winning memoir “Farewell To Manzanar” by Jeanne W. and James Houston. “Manzanar” recounts one family’s hardships amid other Japanese-Americans imprisoned during World War II at the infamous internment camp in California’s Owens Valley.

The book selection for K-5 students is “Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes” by Eleanor Coerr. The 1977 non-fiction book tells the story of a girl, Sadako Sasaki, who lived in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing and developed leukemia from the radiation. While in a nursing home, she folded paper cranes in hope to make 1,000, which might grant her the wish to live.

Nevada County Reads events continue with ...

- March 9: **Book Club event**, 7-9 p.m. at the Madelyn Helling Library. Discussion of “Snow Falling on Cedars.” Book clubs also share their history, book selection process and rituals. Free.

- March 18-April 10: Community Asian Theatre of the Sierra presents a stage adaptation of the best-selling novel “**Snow Falling on Cedars**” at the historic Nevada Theatre. Various show times. School student matinees are March 26 (sold out), April 1 and April 2, 10 a.m. More info: [www.catsweb.org](http://www.catsweb.org)

- March 26: **Friends of the Library Fund-raiser** performance of “Snow Falling on Cedars,” 8 p.m. Nevada Theatre. A talk-back and audience Q&A session with the cast will be moderated by Paul Harrar. \$20-advance; \$25-door (\$15-\$20 for students). Info: 265-1407 or <friends@ncfol.org>

- April 24: **Japanese cooking class** taught by Wendy van Wagner, 5-7 p.m., at In The Kitchen, 648 Zion St., Nevada City. Learn to make miso soup, vegetable tempura with dipping sauce, veggie sushi rolls, marinated kale and hijiki salad. \$45. Enroll: <wendyvanwagner@gmail.com> or 478-0669.

to learn more about the issues surrounding school district consolidation and unification.

## NUHS senior hosts middle school poetry contest

Nevada Union High School senior Katrina Beedy has organized a poetry contest for middle school students. Cash prizes of \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third place will be awarded and these poems will be published in the Union newspaper. The submission deadline is March 31, 2010.

All entries must be the original work of the author. Poems are to be neatly handwritten or typed (single or double line spacing). The subject of the poem should be a person or place that is special to the poet. Poems must be 20 lines or fewer. One poem may be

submitted per student.

For more information contact Katrina at 530-559-7486 or email her at <katrina3366@hotmail.com>.

## Local Earth Day activities are being organized

A loose-knit coalition of local environmental and educational groups are working to coordinate and publicize Earth Day 2010. The 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day is April 22.

Anyone in the educational community is welcome to participate in planning or submit school Earth Day observance activities to a community Earth Day calendar that is being compiled. The next planning meeting is from 4:30-6 p.m. March 8 in the community room at Briarpatch Co-op. For more info, call Stephanie at 272-5333 x 127.

# Training Events

Classes • Workshops • Seminars • Meetings

## Real world algebra workshop March 18

Warren Schnack and Clay Dagler from Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento will present an algebra workshop in March at the NCSoS. The workshop will take place either March 18 from 3:45-6:30 p.m. The cost is \$15, which includes a light dinner.

The teachers will present sample algebra lessons that focus on real world applications of algebra concepts. These lessons have been used and proven with challenging inner-city students. It can engage students and provide "relevance" for algebra.

The flyer soon will be on the NCSoS website: [www.nevco.org](http://www.nevco.org). Registration can be made through Judy Nielsen: <judy@nevco.k12.ca.us> or by calling her at 478-6400 ext. 203.

## EMSA First Aid/CPR training April 17 for child care providers and preschool staff

The NCSoS will offer Emergency Medical Services Authority certified first aid and CPR training on April 17. This training is designed especially for child care providers

and preschool employees who are required by law to have this EMSA training certification. Class time is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and costs \$65. Preregister by contacting Nikki Johnson by e-mail: <njohnson@nevco.k12.ca.us>

Reservations will not be confirmed until payment is received. Mail it to Nikki Johnson c/o NCSoS, 112 Nevada City Highway, Nevada City, 95959.

## Ongoing First Aid/CPR training continues

First aid and CPR training continues at the NCSoS through 2010. This program, designed and approved by the American Heart Association, is recommended for coaches, physical education teachers, classroom teachers, administrators, instructional aides and secretaries.

Thursday classes in 2010 are March 25, April 29, May 27, June 17, July 8, Aug. 28, Sept. 9, Nov. 11 and Dec. 2. Saturday classes in 2010 are March 13, April 24, May 15, June 26, July 17, Aug. 19, Sept. 18, Oct. 30, Nov. 20 and Dec. 18.

Thursday classes are 3 to 7 p.m.; Saturday classes are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The cost is \$30. Reimbursement receipts are available. Pre-register by e-mailing Nikki Johnson at <njohnson@nevco.k12.ca.us>

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families with native culture.

"Academics are No. 1, but we bring culture in and can give these students a sense of identity," Marcum explained.

Indian Education operated out of a county office of education is unusual, she said. The program usually is managed by a tribal agency or a single school. But by having a county-wide approach, Marcum said there is an opportunity to "pool all of our resources."

Marcum is a part-time Indian Ed coordinator. She also works as a case manager for the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools' Foster Youth Services/Independent Living Program. She previously was a tutor for the Placer Union High School District Indian Education program in Auburn. She has Choctaw and Cherokee Indian ancestry.

Sonia Delgadillo teaches English as a second language at Sierra College in Rocklin. The daughter of Mexican immigrants, she said she identifies with the struggles of minority students. Aimee Dorion, a credentialed teacher, has worked for about 10 years in the Reno area helping students in various educational settings. Of Blackfoot ancestry, Dorion was part of a drumming circle and participated in sweat lodges.

Nevada County Indian Education has a Parent Council and welcomes input from parents and educators on services. For more information, contact Marcum at 478-6400 ext. 248.

## Developmental Asset of the Month

### Asset #6

**Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.**

This is an external asset. Parents should get to know teachers to act as partners in educating the child. Teachers are recommended to read *Engage Every Parent: Encouraging Families to Sign On, Show Up, and Make a Difference* by Nancy Tellett-Royce and Susan Wootten.

A reminder from Got 40? (formerly MADE 4 Youth), the local nonprofit organization inspired by the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets. For more info about the 40 Developmental Assets, see [www.search-institute.org/](http://www.search-institute.org/)

*Practice random and intentional acts of asset building every day!*

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### New Imaginarium workshops can come to your school

As promised, during restructuring, the Imaginarium has hit the road and wants to come to your classroom. Imaginarium staff is available to make site visits lasting approximately two hours. Start times are 9 a.m. or noon, though these times are flexible to accommodate school schedules. The cost is \$2 per student.

Available on-site "field trips" include:

- Celebrate the International Year of Astronomy (Grades 3-8): plan an evening "Sky Show" star viewing party.
- Magnetism Workshop (4-5)
- Electricity Workshop (4-5)
- How Airplanes Fly (4-5)

On-site programs are being enthusiastically received by both teachers and students.

The Imaginarium is working with Chico State University to teach hands-on workshops for grades K-3 and new workshops for 4-6. If you would like to be part of the pilot program in April and May, please contact the Imaginarium.

To schedule a visit to your school or participate in upcoming new programs, contact the Imaginarium at 478-6400 ext. 231 e-mail <imagarium@nevco.k12.ca.us>. Also, for more news and info check out the Imaginarium's new web site: [www.imagariumnnc.org](http://www.imagariumnnc.org). There is a kids page with puzzles and links, and an educators page with curriculum for educators.

### Sierra College, NCSoS partners in new toddler program

March 8 marks the opening day for the new Sierra College Child Development Center Toddler Program, a partnership between the community college, the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools Office and Placer Action Council.

Free to qualified parents, the program will serve up to 16 children age 18 to 36 months with a student to staff ratio of four to one. Morgan Best has been hired as the new site supervisor. Best is a former kindergarten teacher with Sierra Montessori Academy, and a former teacher and site supervisor with the Grass Valley School District preschool at Sierra College.

Two grants are providing new funds to help start the program. Two other grants are funding staff training and start-up costs. The NCSoS and Sierra College are collaborating with Grass Valley School District to gain expertise in operating the toddler program, said Stan Miller, Associate Superintendent at the NCSoS.

"We want to thank Carol Viola of Grass Valley School District and Marianne Kreshka of the Sierra College Child Development Center for their support and countless hours of help getting this started," Miller said.

The NCSoS-SCCDC partnership represents a new foray into early childhood education for the NCSoS. Miller said there is increasing interest by public schools in preparing preschoolers for kindergarten. Last year, the California Department of Education published new "foundations" of learning and development for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

"The more we can provide age and developmentally appropriate support for kids before they start school, the more likely kids will have greater success in school," Miller said.

The toddler program joins a GVSD-operated preschool at the SCCDC. The programs provide daycare for Sierra College students and a practicum experience for Sierra College students seeking careers in early childhood education.

For enrollment info, contact Carol Viola at 273-9528.

### New Toddler & Me groups starting at TKM Center

Two new Toddler & Me playgroups are forming to meet April 12 to June 21 at the McAteer Family Resource Center in Nevada City. The groups will be facilitated by an experienced preschool teacher. The program is sponsored by First 5 Nevada County.

The 12-24 Month Toddler Group will meet from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Mondays. The 24-36 Month Toddler Group will meet from 11 a.m.-noon Mondays. (Dates and times are subject to change.)

The first session is free. A nominal fee will be charged thereafter, with a sliding scale and scholarships available, if needed. Reservations to join this program may be made by calling 265-0611 ext. 223.

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