



San Mateo-Foster City School District

November 22, 2009

Dear SMETA Members,

Over the years, I've had the pleasure of writing about the outstanding achievements at our schools. The success of our schools is the result of many factors, primarily our outstanding teachers and staff, dedicated parents and the strong support we receive from the community. Unfortunately, I now write to you about some significant challenges we face.

As you may know, historically, the revenue that pays for general education has come from a combination of local property taxes and the State. As you have no doubt heard, the State has cut education funding by unprecedented amounts and these funding reductions are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. These drastic state funding reductions have forced San Mateo-Foster City schools to cut more than \$18 million from its budget to date, with more cuts on the horizon. In fact, State revenues have been reduced so significantly that it appears that this year, we will be solely funded by our local property taxes, and receive no State revenues.

Additionally, funding from our local school parcel tax is set to expire in June 2010. The parcel tax, which was approved by over 70% of local voters seven years ago, currently provides nearly \$3 million in stable local funding each year that cannot be taken away by the State. If the parcel tax is not renewed, we will have to cut an additional \$3 million on top of the \$18 million in state funding cuts.

Our elementary and middle schools cannot absorb such deep cuts without a severe reduction in the quality of education.

At their meeting on November 19, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to place a measure on the ballot next year that would renew the existing parcel tax for another seven years and increase the rate by \$96 (\$8 per month). These funds will be used to offset damaging state budget cuts and preserve the quality of education in our schools by:

- ✓ Attracting and retaining qualified teachers and staff
- ✓ Maintaining school libraries
- ✓ Providing middle school art and music programs
- ✓ Supporting small class sizes
- ✓ Supporting programs which enhance student achievement

Board of Trustees:

Jack E. Coyne, Jr.
Mark D. Hudak
Lory Lorimer Lawson
Cathy Rincon
Colleen Sullivan

Superintendent:

Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.

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Senior citizens would continue to be eligible for an exemption to ensure the cost is not a burden to those living on a fixed income. Independent oversight of parcel tax funds will continue to ensure they are spent as promised. By law, all money from a parcel tax must stay here in our school district and cannot be taken away by the State.

This measure will be decided by a special mail-in ballot election in February 2010. There will be no polling places for this election. All registered voters will receive a ballot in the mail the week of January 25, 2010 and ballots will be due by February 23, 2010.

This year will involve many challenges and will also provide many wonderful opportunities. Please check our website at <http://www.smfc.k12.ca.us> for updates. If you have any questions or want to share your input, please feel free to email me at pclark@smfc.k12.ca.us or call me at 650-312-7348.

I wish you, your family, and loved ones a happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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