



[Sign up for the PW Mailing List!](#)



- [Home](#)
- [Opinion](#)
  - [Editorials](#)
  - [Consider This](#)
  - [Cigar Smoke](#)
  - [Guest Opinions](#)
  - [Letters](#)
  - [Democracy 101](#)
- [News](#)
  - [Web Exclusives](#)
  - [Feature Stories](#)
  - [School Zone](#)
  - [Planet Watch](#)
  - [The Count](#)
- [Life](#)
  - [The Law](#)
  - [Dining Reviews](#)
  - [Restaurant News](#)
  - [Well Being](#)
  - [Wheels](#)
  - [Home](#)
  - [Outdoors](#)
  - [Fashion](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Arts](#)
  - [Books](#)
  - [Book Reviews](#)
  - [Books](#)
  - [Music](#)
  - [Arts Features](#)
  - [Music Features](#)
  - [Music Notes](#)
  - [Theater Reviews](#)
  - [CD Reviews](#)
- [Calendar](#)
  - [Today's Events](#)
  - [This Week's Events](#)

- [Submit Your Event](#)
- [Prime Picks](#)
- [Film](#)
  - [Film Reviews](#)
  - [Film Showtimes](#)
- [PW Guides](#)
  - [Summer Guide 2013](#)
  - [Wedding Guide 2013](#)
  - [Education Guide 2013](#)
  - [Dining Guide 2012](#)
- [Best of Pasadena](#)
- [Arroyo](#)

## Paying for success

### Pasadena city and school officials need to work together on a ‘youth master plan’

By [Karen Aydelott](#) , [Peter Dreier](#) 12/06/2007

[Like it? Tweet it! SHARE IT!](#)

A grassroots movement is growing in Pasadena, Altadena and Sierra Madre to support our public schools. There’s a new school superintendent, Edwin Diaz, a new interim Pasadena city manager come January in Pasadena Police Chief Bernard Melekian, a new spirit of cooperation between the Board of Education and other local officials, and, most important, a growing sense of both possibility and urgency among parents, teachers and community residents that strengthening our public schools is vital to having a vibrant community.

This was clearly evident on Nov. 4, when more than 220 people — almost twice the number that organizers expected — packed the Pasadena Senior Center for a forum called Civic Investment in Our Public Schools. That same spirit of collaboration was clearly present at a joint meeting of the Pasadena City Council and the school board on Nov. 13. Once again, there was a big turnout among parents, teachers and community residents. But there was also a growing understanding by the council and the board that it is time to put the “us and them” attitude behind and begin talking (and acting) as “we” — the entire community.

As Diaz noted at both events, PUSD lacks the resources to provide every student with a first-class education. This is due in large measure to the fact that California, which once ranked near the top in per-student spending on public schools, now ranks 42nd in the country. But, as Diaz also pointed out, with the wealth of talent, resources and institutions in our three communities, there’s no reason why PUSD can’t be one of the best school districts in the state. We just need the political will to make it happen.

The Nov. 4 forum built on the momentum already underway to create a strong political constituency for public schools among parents, teachers, residents, religious institutions, employers, colleges, cultural institutions and nonprofit groups within our three communities.

There is no more important investment to make than one that helps assure that all children have access to a quality education, which means they have the support and resources they need to succeed. It is the basis on which our democracy was founded and it is the responsibility of our entire community.

At the forum, three speakers — Burbank City Manager Mary Alvord, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education member Ralph Mechur and San Francisco Unified School District Board member

and education adviser to the mayor Hydra Mendoza — described how they built effective and ongoing partnerships with their public schools that have become win-win situations for the cities and the schools.

Burbank has made significant financial investments in major capital projects with the school district, including school remodeling, a new athletic stadium and installation of a synthetic surface for the field. The city also provides major utility subsidies to the school district and installed solar heating panels for the high school pools. At the behest of the Mayor's Youth Task Force, the city funds counseling services for at-risk youth.

San Francisco provides \$40 million annually for a variety of programs that are based at school sites or target school children. Half of those funds are reserved for libraries, sports and art and music programs. The city also funds 11 wellness centers at high schools.

Santa Monica, whose school district is half the size of PUSD, allocates more than \$13 million a year to its school district, half of it in unrestricted funds. That would be comparable to Pasadena contributing more than \$25 million to PUSD, more than three times what it now provides.

In Santa Monica, the city and school district share city and school facilities — parks, playgrounds and athletic fields — as community resources. The city helped the school district remodel the high school's historic auditorium.

In those three cities and dozens of other communities across California, cities save money by purchasing equipment and supplies jointly with the school district, run after-school programs, support school libraries and provide transportation for students to and from school. They also work collaboratively on such issues as public safety and gangs, job training and internships, health-care services, art, music and science programs and affordable housing for teachers and key city employees.

A key element in successful city-school collaborations is having an ongoing commission on schools and youth that includes representatives of the schools, the city, the business community, local foundations, nonprofit and community organizations and other institutions, as well as young people themselves. This provides a venue to put together a "youth master plan" so that the entire community has a clear roadmap for moving forward, with short-term and long-term initiatives, and clear benchmarks to evaluate whether they are making progress.

Fortunately, there are many positive signs in the Pasadena district to give our business, civic and political leaders confidence. For example, in 2001, 14 PUSD schools had API scores below 600. Only three schools had API scores higher than 700. This year, 20 of our schools have API scores over 700, five have API scores over 800, and none have API scores below 600.

Our schools have incredible teachers and programs. Recent graduates of PUSD high schools have been accepted at some of the nation's top colleges and universities.

But there are still too many PUSD students performing below grade level, too many dropping out before graduation and too little money to provide every student with smaller classes, lab equipment, computers, language instruction and other basics.

Should California increase funding for public schools? Of course it should. But can we wait until that happens? No. We have to act now at the local level to make a difference for every PUSD student.

PUSD can be a great district. With Caltech, JPL and several major science-based businesses located here, PUSD should have a world-class science and math program. With Huntington Library, Pasadena Playhouse, Art College Center of Design and the Norton Simon Museum, PUSD should have a world-class performing and visual arts program.

Businesses and nonprofit institutions should be working with PUSD and Pasadena City College to provide our students with internships and job training opportunities. We have many talented people in our community — artists and musicians, scientists, businesspeople, actors, architects, librarians and many other professions — who should be recruited to mentor our children, provide internships, and volunteer in our schools.

As the African saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Our cities cannot thrive if our schools aren't working for every child. We expect our civic and political leaders to join the movement to make PUSD the best school district in California.

[DIGG](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [REDDIT](#)

[Like it? Tweet it!](#)

[Other Stories by Karen Aydelott](#)

[Other Stories by Peter Dreier](#)

### Related Articles

- [News](#)

### Post A Comment

Requires free [registration](#).

Username:

Password:  ([Forgotten your password?!](#))

Comment:

### Search

- [Stories](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Places](#)
- [Businesses](#)

Keywords

Category

Authors

Date from  to

Keywords

Category

Neighborhood

City

Date from  to

Keywords

Category

Neighborhood

City

Keywords

Category

Neighborhood

City

**Tools**

[Print](#)

[Email](#)

[Subscribe](#)



**MORE  
READERS**

[About](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact](#) | [Careers](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Pick Up PW!](#)  
[Arroyo Monthly](#) | [Ventura County Reporter](#) | [San Diego  
CityBEAT](#) | [Inland Empire Weekly](#)  
Copyright Southland Publishing 2013. All Rights Reserved.  
[Login](#) | [Register](#)



