

A message from the superintendent

By Gail Malay

Superintendent, Lake Havasu Unified School District #1

I would like to begin by saying I have great respect for the community of Lake Havasu City. I have lived here since 1977 and have witnessed many times our community doing really great things. As a member our community for this long, life has brought me ups and downs. During one of my down times, my mother said to me: *"The community will not let you fail."* She was absolutely right. The reason I am sharing this is because anything I say in this column is out of respect, not criticism.



Superintendent Malay

Lake Havasu Unified School District has done several things to tighten our belts. Last year when one of our administrators retired, we did not replace him. We re-distributed the workload among the existing administrators. If any of you know our administrators personally, you will know that they are a hard working team that contributes many hours to instructional improvement and the management of the school district.

No one in the school district got a raise last year. Administrators and classified staff have been on a salary freeze for two years. Even in a challenging economy, it is still difficult to find highly effective math, science and special education teachers. We have to keep our salaries competitive or students will not have effective teachers. We almost had to open this year

with two science positions unfilled at the high school. Math and science are critical to our students and our nation's future. Over the past two years we have cut thirty-seven teaching positions. We have lost students but our class sizes are getting larger. It is hard to give individual attention in large classes. Sometimes students can get by without the skills they need in large classes. This is no fault of the teacher; it is just having too many students. I had an opportunity to work in private business for three years. During that time we would discuss how many people a manager could effectively manage and it was significantly less than our teachers have in their classes.

The District has worked very hard on energy conservation. We had both Unisource and APS do energy audits. We have replaced lighting and asked staff to take home energy demanding devices as well as not work on Sundays. We are currently looking into the possibility of solar energy for the high school.

Roger Burger, our athletic director, has worked to cut down on transportation costs for athletics; one example is, this spring the regional track meet will be in Lake Havasu.

I hope this demonstrates your school district and Governing Board have tightened their belts during this difficult economy.

We have focused on improving our curriculum and the instruction we deliver.

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We have been a good school district; however, we know that we must be committed to continuous improvement.

I have always been future oriented. Our children need a more rigorous curriculum in order to be successful in a global economy. A rigorous curriculum needs to start in Kindergarten and continue until graduation. We are finding around twenty-four percent of our students need support to meet these expectations.

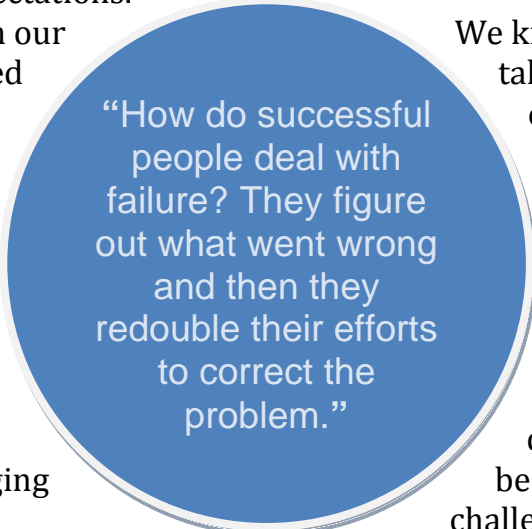
We have worked hard with our funding to put in the needed supports. We also want to challenge our top end students. Our schools quickly found out you cannot earn an excelling label unless your top students are showing growth. Out of nine schools, six are excelling. We take the job of challenging each of our students very seriously.

How do successful people deal with failure? They figure out what went wrong and then they redouble their efforts to correct the problem. The school district is in the process of doing this.

The State still has not settled on a budget for this school year. We have had to set aside \$771,000 of our soft capital money in anticipation the State will ask for this money back. Soft capital is the money used for books and technology licenses. This generation has to be technically

literate in order to be employable. The business community understands their future workforce is in our schools today; how well we prepare them will affect the business community for years to come.

In the coming days, the school district and Governing Board will have to make some extremely tough decisions. We hope our community will support these difficult decisions.



“How do successful people deal with failure? They figure out what went wrong and then they redouble their efforts to correct the problem.”

We know we have a lot of talented early retirees in our community. If you have some time and would like to volunteer at your local school that would be greatly appreciated.

It is easy to have opinions and discuss what the school district should or should not be doing during these challenging times; I just ask you, educate yourself by visiting one of our schools and see what is going on. Talk with the dedicated educators, most of whom have devoted their lives to educating children, before you express your opinion.

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