

viewpoint

CUSD offers new programs for upcoming school year

BY PAUL CORDEIRO

Carpinteria Unified School District Superintendent

Life continues to get a lot tougher for American families, no less so for families in our community. Housing, food and fuel costs make it difficult to make ends meet. Wages aren't keeping up. Our children are among those who must deal with the consequences. Their parents, working longer hours to pay the bills, are challenged not only to provide adequate supervision, but also the guidance and nurturing children need to be happy, secure, social and competent in school. Overwhelming pressures on the family can come back to the classroom in the form of poor behavior, anxiety, disengagement and slow academic progress. These problems don't get "parked" at the classroom door.

We are tasked as a school district and as a community to assist families wherever we can, in order to offer children the supervision and nurturing they need. For several years now, we have had state-supported, after-school programs at Aliso, Canalino and Carpinteria Middle schools. We continue to make these vital programs the best they can be for children. We've also had a state-supported preschool at Aliso for many years. This is a great place for children to become "school ready" and for their parents to learn how best to support their child's education.

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However, we need to add more—so we have. Starting this fall, we will open a full-day preschool/childcare program at Canalino School. Opening at 7 a.m. and closing at 5:30 p.m., the school will provide working parents the support they need at a very reasonable price. There is no income requirement. The school will be funded by the fees it collects. For registration or more information, call 884-8056 or email mrobertson@co.santa-barbara.ca.us.

The reopening of Main School as the Carpinteria Family Services Collaborative is working its way through the city's approval process. With the Hutton Foundation as the master lessor, the collaborative will offer a range of family services (counseling, wellness, Carpinteria Education Foundation) in addition to the relocated Head Start Preschool.

We expect to partner with two other private foundations to provide a professional staff that will not only coordinate services and do intake, but also coordinate parent education programs throughout the district and manage a UCSB-conducted research study that will track children's progress over a range of variables (wellness, school attendance, academic progress) through third grade.

A special emphasis will be on providing family support for expecting parents and parents of infants and toddlers. The earlier we can assist, the better positioned children will be to succeed in school. Our overall approach with the collaborative is to provide a welcoming, supportive introduction to the school district that will engage parents and caregivers at the earliest possible time.

It is important that all of us in Carpinteria understand the economic pressures being brought to bear on families. The

more involved we get as a community in supporting families (e.g., through local nonprofits), the better our community will be in the long run.

School starts Monday, August 25.