

Outlook

A tri-annual publication of the Diablo Managers Association. DMA is a charter of ACSA.

DMA administrators Jim Morrison and Nigel Dabby

As part of a continuing series, *Outlook* is profiling Mt. Diablo Unified administrators and classified personnel who are members of DMA. This issue features discussions with *Jim Morrison and Nigel Dabby*. The questions we asked were: What is your primary job responsibility? What is your biggest challenge? And what is something people might not guess is true about you?

Jim Morrison, Director of Technology Support

Jim was a middle school math teacher in Glendale, California, and a middle school student counselor both in Glendale and Colorado. He joined Mt. Diablo in 1993 at Riverview Middle School, but after just two weeks, was assigned to Diablo View Middle (then a brand-new school) as student services coordinator and later as vice principal. His technology work at Diablo View helped him land a job in 1999 as customer service supervisor in TIS (Technology and Information Services) at the district office, which evolved into his current role as director of technology support. In 2006–07, Jim led a district-wide team to explore and recommend a new student information system for the district.



Jim Morrison

In my role overseeing technology support for the district, I currently spend most of my time managing the implementation of our new student information system. I am fortunate to work with a new supervisor of customer services, **Harold Waters**, who manages the day-to-day specifics with our technicians.

I gained a lot of great IT and administrative experience at Diablo View, and much of what I learned has applied directly to my current job. For example, in 1993 we were already entering grades and attendance with networked computers. Now, 15 years later, I'm glad I can share some of that knowledge with the rest of the district as we implement the new [Aeries Student Information System](http://www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/sis/aeries.html) (www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/sis/aeries.html), which we started using in August. Also, we will provide the new [Encore Special Education System](http://www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/sis/encore.html) (www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/sis/encore.html.) in a pilot program next fall.

These new systems provide a way to keep track of all data related to students, including demographics, grades, attendance, transcripts, testing data, IEP info, etc. Our goal is to make it possible to use that data to assist teachers, site administrators and parents to more fully meet student needs.

We're rolling out the student information system over three years, with the final piece expected during the 2009–10 school year. Secondary offices have used the system for about six months now. We've begun to train elementary office staff, who will be using Aeries full-time starting this fall. Training and pilot programs have begun for online grading and attendance for teachers at secondary schools. Bringing teachers into the system is particularly rewarding because they could not perform these tasks at all with our older systems.

The major challenge in our work is to continue to implement the new system in a way that meets the needs of all participants. The biggest obstacle is that the system is new to everyone, so every day involves some kind of change for many people. There are new things to learn and new ways to do things. We in TIS are on a learning curve, too. I've been particularly grateful for the enthusiasm and flexibility shown by so many people as we move forward. It hasn't been easy, but it's been worth it.

People might be surprised to learn that I've jumped out of airplanes in the past (with a parachute). And for my last birthday, I did indoor sky diving. Also, most IT managers don't have master's degrees in counseling. That doesn't help much with computers, but it certainly can with people.

Nigel Dabby, Vice Principal, Delta View Elementary

Nigel joined Mt. Diablo 19 years ago, and has taught fourth grade at Rio Vista and fourth and fifth grade at Hidden Valley.



Nigel Dabby

He has served as a district mentor in science and technology and spent six years as a Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA)/PAR coach, working with K–12 teachers in all subject areas including special education. This was his first year as a vice principal. Unfortunately, due to district budget cuts that included nine elementary vice principals, Nigel's job for next year has been eliminated.

Far and away the biggest priority at our school, and one of my major responsibilities, is student safety—making sure the kids feel safe at school, both emotionally and physically, and ensuring that the whole environment is safe, with no

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Member profiles *(cont. from page 1)*

dangerous practices. We have also just revised our emergency plan, which is part of our overall safety plan.

Other tasks include enforcing student discipline, working with parents and maximizing student learning, which involves ensuring that good teaching practices are in place. Our principal, **Susan Petersen**, who is supremely well organized and very clear about where she wants the school to go, provides leadership in these areas and I follow her lead.

Coming into a school new, I had to learn about the school's culture, the students and parents, how the office works and how the district works relative to our site. I felt like a total novice—it was very humbling! While I had seen enough principals and VPs to feel I had a sense of the job, it is very different when you're sitting on this side of the desk. After about three months, I finally felt I had a reasonable handle on how things should work.

One of our big challenges has been school climate, as Delta View experienced a number of suspensions and office referrals in the past. Our Climate Committee has worked very hard in this area, and over the summer we developed a program that charts a series of consequences for certain behaviors, clarifies how to make a referral, and specifies where students should be in terms of these goals. Part of my job is to implement this plan. So far this year, student referrals have dropped by 30 to 50 percent, and suspensions are also down dramatically—and not because we are being more lenient. We will continue to make adjustments to the plan as needed.

We are also shifting our focus to academic challenges, as our school didn't meet its annual yearly progress score on which schools are judged. Our challenge in this area is to ensure that we have a rigorous academic program. My personal challenge is always to see the big picture.

In addition, I need to evaluate 10 teachers and of course work with all the teachers, many of whom are in their first or second year. I have been working to help them become more familiar with good teaching practices and practical ways to handle the diversity of our student population. Our new teachers bring a lot of energy, new ideas and creativity to the school, and we want to make sure that energy is harnessed appropriately.

One of the neat things about this site is that teachers work extremely well together and we really have a positive school culture. Teachers are generally open to new ideas and are willing to change if what they're doing isn't working. For example, early in the fall, three third grade teachers went to a math training and learned about this great, entirely oral, math program that has produced remarkable results elsewhere. When they presented the concept to all staff, we unanimously agreed to implement the program.

What would surprise people about me? When I arrived from England, my first job in the U.S. was babysitting. I put my baby daughter on the back of my bicycle and rode up to a house, where I took care of her and another child whose parent was a teacher. Soon other parents started asking me to take care of their kids. ■

The DMA Executive Board wants you!

The DMA Nominating Committee is looking for candidates to form a slate for the 2008-09 DMA Executive Board.

Positions include President Elect (a three-year term, including President Elect, President and Past President), two Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. If you are interested in running for any of these positions, please contact **Karen Sakata** by **April 25** at ext. 85790.

Board Representatives are elected by constituent groups. If you are interested in serving as a representative, please let your current rep know, or contact Karen. ■

Nominate your colleagues for DMA awards!

DMA members who have made outstanding contributions to the Mt. Diablo education community, plus student scholarship recipients, will be honored at the End-of-Year Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, June 18. The annual event will be held at the Contra Costa Country Club, 801 Golf Club Road in Pleasant Hill.

Please watch your mailbox for more information about nominating a colleague for this signature DMA award—and plan to attend this wonderful year-end event!

Management Employee Recognition Awards and 2007 winners included:

Outstanding Contribution to Education (Melinda Hall) — A

person who has made a dramatic difference in the education, health, safety and/or well being of students, staff, families or community members.

Have a Heart (Nadine Rosenzweig) — A person who has touched the lives of students, staff, families or community members in a creative or unique way.

Most Involved (Bob Dodson) — A DMA member who has been extraordinarily active on behalf of our organization and its health and sustainability.

Lifetime (Bob Johnson) — A person who has served the district for a minimum of 15 years and who has demonstrated any of the qualities or characteristics listed in the other categories.

Rising Star (Liz Kim) — A person who has served in a position for two years or less, no matter how many years in the district, and who has had a positive impact in their position.

For more information, please contact **Bob Dodson** (Awards chair), **Linda Hutcherson** or **Denise Larkins** (Luncheon co-chairs).

See you at the luncheon! ■



Next DMA newsletter will be e-mailed!

DMA is going green! The next issue of the *Outlook* newsletter will be e-mailed to your desktop. As a result of our member readership survey, which received very positive comments (yet from a small number of members), we will begin e-mailing you news. Copies of the newsletter will continue to be posted at the DMA website at <http://diablomanagers.org>. ■

Why Mt. Diablo is exemplary: diversity, programs and people!

(DMA President Karen Sakata made this speech to the MDUSD School Board on February 12, 2008.)

Good Evening! I am Karen Sakata, the president of Diablo Management Association representing classified and certificated managers and confidential employees.

I have worked in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District for 30 years in the positions of teacher, speech pathologist, early childhood specialist, special education program specialist and elementary principal.

Why does someone dedicate 30 years of service to one district? The answer is simple—Mt. Diablo Unified School District is exemplary!

Why is it exemplary? **Three things: diversity, programs and people.**

Our district serves a large student population that is geographically and educationally diverse. This diversity reflects society. **Diversity** continually forces educators to create **programs** to meet all student needs through the arms of general, special education, alternative and adult education.

People are the heart of any organization:

- ▶ to the teachers and support staff who work with students daily
- ▶ to the classified staff who help run the infrastructure
- ▶ to Maintenance, who hold the infrastructure together
- ▶ to administrators at the building and district level who help foster the learning environment
- ▶ to our parents who send us their most precious commodity, their children.

DMA members work in Mt. Diablo because of the diversity, programs and people. We strive to make a difference every day in the lives of children and families. We work to see that Mt. Diablo is distinguished, innovative and responsive to students and the community.

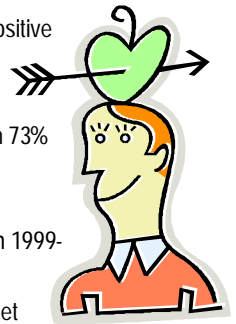
There are many factors that make the district exemplary.

These are just a few of the current highlights in Mt. Diablo:

- ✓ Systematic training and professional development—this includes Reading First, Kevin Feldman engagement and vocabulary strategies, Suzanne Duto Systematic Instruction for ELD, Edusoft for student data management at school sites.
- ✓ Collaborative Model, Learning Centers and Intervention Models for special education and general education “at risk” students.
- ✓ Feeder pattern communication and collaboration involving elementary, middle and high schools in the geographic area.
- ✓ The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Induction Program to support new teachers.
- ✓ 17 California Distinguished Schools, 2 Blue Ribbon Schools and 5 schools who will receive Distinguished School validation visits this year
- ✓ The New Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) criteria and identification tools, which will lead to a more diverse GATE population.
- ✓ Measure C improvements which include classrooms, painting, parking lots, roofs, electrical and heating upgrades, flooring, telephone systems, etc.
- ✓ Supports for school climate and behavior including BEST (Building

Effective Schools Together), and the district Positive Behavior Support Team.

- ✓ Class size reduction for grades 1–3 and 9.
- ✓ A 7 % Increase in High School Graduates from 73% in 1999-2000, to 80% in 2006-07.
- ✓ An 8% increases in High School graduates completing the A-G requirements; from 33 % in 1999-2000, to 41% in 2006-07.
- ✓ Positive budget certification of the district budget from the Contra Costa County Office of Education.



Again, what creates this level of expertise in a district? There are quality programs because of **diversity, programs and people.**

I am not naïve . . . Having been in the district for 30 years, I know we are facing tremendous challenges.

What are some of the challenges?

- ▶ **Providing competitive total compensation**—salary and benefits—for **all** district employees; teachers, assistants, confidentials, clerical, maintenance, support staff and administrators.
- ▶ **Reduced funding due to declining enrollment.**—This has significantly reduced funds coming into the district.
- ▶ **Greater accountability**—we are mandated to examine the assessment data for **all** students so we can continue to develop programs that match student needs. And . . .
- ▶ **The State Budget Crises**—estimated as a 14.5 billion dollar deficit affecting every agency, every district and every single school in California. It will decrease Mt. Diablo funding for this year at a cost of 1 million; and next year at a cost of 14 million.

The district faces tremendous challenges. This is not the time for a climate of blame and finger pointing. This is the time to lay aside differences and to increase communication, to increase collaboration and to establish a cooperative working environment.

More than ever, this is a time we must come together. It is not about one person, one school or one superintendent. It is about a public school system dedicated to the education of the (country's) future—its children. We in the Diablo Management Association support the hard work and dedication of our leader, of our superintendent, Gary McHenry!

So let us:

- ✓ Find ways to increase the district revenues
- ✓ Join together to investigate and pass parcel taxes or bond measures
- ✓ Recruit students back to the district from private preschools, elementary and secondary schools
- ✓ Focus on increasing the average daily attendance
- ✓ Increase district/school/community communication showcasing our quality programs

Is it easy? NO! Can we do it? YES!! Now is the time for all of us in Mt. Diablo to join together to protect funding for California public education. Together we have strength; divided we are weak. Our children deserve our best efforts. We cannot disappoint them. ■

ACSA Corner: Things you should know!

ACSA members receive periodic e-mails from the Governmental Relations Office on budget development and other legislative activities. You can also visit www.ACSA.org for all ACSA news and Legislative Updates.

Whether you want to be more informed or speak to the impact of the Governor's proposed budget reduction to education, you can find up-to-date information as well as talking points on the ACSA homepage, "Protect Our Students, Protect Prop 98."

The Education Coalition made up of ACSA, CTA, CFT, CSEA, CASBO, CSBA, CSESSA (California Superintendents Association) and PTA has a website at www.Protectourstudents.org with the same information. You may want to refer parents to this website.

As administrators, we need to take a more active role in advocating for public school education at the state and local level. We all need to stay informed through ACSA and other sources. ACSA sponsored its annual Legislative Action Day in Sacramento March 9–10. DMA President **Karen Sakata** and I met with local legislators and shared our concerns and the position of the education community of "No reductions!"

The Region 6 Leadership Summit will be held in Napa on April 18–19. The Annual Awards Dinner will be held on Friday, April 18. DMA has eight nominees: **Dick Nicoll** (Central Office), **Joanne Durkee** (Adult Education), **Wayne Miller** and **Denise Larkins** (Confidential employees), **Martha Riley** (high school principal), **Nadine Rosenzweig** (middle school principal), **Patt Hoellwarth** (elementary principal) and **Christine Huajardo** (middle school vice principal). For more information, see www.ACSAregion6.org.

For those of you who are not ACSA members, it's not too late to sign up for membership for A Dollar a Day. Please contact me for an application. —*Rose Lock, Region 6 Delegate (Walnut Acres, ext. 4346)* ■

Welcome, new DMA members!

Constance Cirimeli—Vice Principal, Diablo View Middle School
Barb Corrick—Workers' Compensation Manager, Personnel Services

Christina Filios—Vice Principal, Northgate High School
Carmen Garces—Administrator, Coordinated School Support, Curriculum & Instruction

Alan Glass—Personnel Coordinator, Personnel Services

Nancy Klinkner—Vice Principal, Cambridge

Socorro Lomas—Student Services Coordinator, District Wide

Emily Lopez—Senior Personnel Specialist, Personnel Services

Jennifer Voris—Principal, Pleasant Hill Elementary

Congratulations to retiring members!

Gloria Gamblin—Chief Financial Officer

Martha Riley—Principal, Northgate High School

Mary Ann Pritchett—Senior Personnel Specialist, Personnel

DMA members: \$500 reimbursement available!

We hope we now have your attention! The fact is, it is absolutely true!

Every three years as a DMA member, you may apply to receive up to a \$500 maximum reimbursement of your registration fee for professional development courses or conferences. All you need to do is fill out an application and have proof of registration, evidence of attendance and a copy of your receipt of payment. The window to apply is May 16–31 (please don't send them in early!).

More information and reimbursement forms are available on the DMA website at <http://diablomanagers.org> under Programs and Projects. Check it out! ■

DMA Executive Board and Representatives

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Elementary Vice Principals Anne Eggleston, Mt. Diablo Elementary, 84590

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High School Martha Riley, Northgate, 3500

Special Education Melinda Hall, 4045

Retirees Sandy Brickell, 925-827-4002, Brickellsl@aol.com; Evie Groch, 510-235-9771, egroch@comcast.net

ACSA Region VI Consultant John Searles, 925-228-5700, searles3@comcast.net

The role of your DMA representative is to represent you on the DMA Board and to provide feedback to you about Board decisions and issues. If you have questions or feedback to offer, please contact your representative. To comment on items in this newsletter, contact Joe Marsich at ext. 4132, marsichj@mdusd.k12.ca.us. For more information about DMA, please visit <http://diablomanagers.org>.