

Outlook

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

DMA profiles: Denise Larkins, Coleen Martin and Lisa Sullivan

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 *Denise Larkins*, *Coleen Martin* and *Lisa Sullivan*. The questions we asked were: What are your primary job responsibilities? What are the biggest challenges? And, if you could create a metaphor for your job, what would it be?

Denise Larkins, Employer/Employee Relations Specialist, Personnel Services

Before joining Mt. Diablo 13 years ago, Denise worked at Vanir/3DI, a construction management firm that at that time was doing Measure C work with the district. Her first job as a Mt. Diablo employee was Office Manager at Glenbrook Middle School, followed by a move 4-1/2 years later to the Dent Center to become a senior personnel specialist. She has been in her current job for 2-1/2 years.

My job, and certainly my job title, is a big mouthful. My primary responsibility is to support *Gail Isserman*, Assistant Superintendent, Personnel Services, in whatever tasks she needs to get done at the time. This can involve contract management and contract negotiations; attention to union issues; the processing of new administrators, Psychology interns and Social Work interns; in addition to addressing a range of business and personnel issues. With well over 4,000 employees and the Personnel Department itself to run, we attend to a broad range of issues around people and jobs on a daily basis. On occasion, I also provide support to Superintendent *Gary McHenry*, which includes participating in union leadership meetings, taking minutes and preparing reports.

I also feel that a major facet of my job is to support the other people in my office, whenever I can. Recently, we experienced a vacancy of my prior position in our office, and I filled in on that desk. That work included calling new and prospective teachers, providing them with orientations to the district, and helping people complete paperwork. Now that we have a replacement, I provide ongoing training.

We have so many requirements now with our teachers—No Child Left Behind is huge, along with credentialing issues, Crosscultural

Language & Academic Development (CLAD), visas for foreign teachers, fingerprinting, badges, etc. In addition to new hires, we fingerprint school volunteers and substitute teachers. There is a huge part of the hiring process that people don't see; all of these procedures take time, and they must get done.

The biggest challenge is that every single situation, when you're dealing with Personnel, is different. There's nothing cookie-cutter about it. You can't look at one situation and say, "We can handle this the way we handled that." This makes the work both a challenge and a reward. You are constantly doing new things, and always reinventing how you do something. You have to look at an issue and say, "Here is where we are, and here is where we need to be. What are the steps we need to take to get there?"

What I like best about my job is dealing with the people. I really like sitting down with the new employees. I hope I get across to them that this is a great district, and a very rewarding place to work. We strive to be accessible and hope our employees know they can call or e-mail us anytime.

I see my job and the district as a racetrack. We are running at breakneck speed. There are only so many hours in a day, and that deadline is looming to get the job done. We have people's livelihoods, their working lives, in our hands. When we cross the finish line, it feels really good.

I am a product of Mt. Diablo schools. I went to Holbrook, Glenbrook and Mt. Diablo High School. My kids have done the same. This is my home.

Coleen Martin, Student Services Coordinator, Pine Hollow Middle School

Coleen's first job in education was teaching a Special Day Class (SDC) at Pittsburg High School. She joined Mt. Diablo as an SDC teacher at Ygnacio Valley High School. After a summer as principal of the Ygnacio Valley summer school program, she was a vice principal at Concord High for three years. She left the district for a year to work as a vice principal at Alhambra High School in Martinez, where she also directed the program for Native American education. Coleen returned this school year to Mt. Diablo and Pine Hollow.

In my new job at Pine Hollow, my major responsibilities include the master schedule, all standardized testing, special

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Denise Larkins

DMA member profiles *(continued from page 1)*

education and 504s, our English as a Second Language program and discipline. The challenges are those that all educators face, which are that every day we strive to serve our school community and educate our students. We do this the best that we can, and we try to put a smile on everyone's face. I don't think my challenges are any more unique than anyone else's.



Coleen Martin

How I am unique, perhaps, is that I spent a year away from the district. After I had been with Mt. Diablo for five years, I was looking for some different experiences. I really enjoyed what I learned at Martinez Unified, but I am ecstatic about returning to Mt. Diablo. Another challenge, perhaps, is adjusting to a new school. My experience is primarily at the high school level, and I'm in middle school now. While it's a challenge and it's different for me, middle school is something I can really put my arms around. We have a fabulous team here. I work with an outstanding staff, and the parents and the students are incredible. We have a thoughtful, new principal in *Karen Gordon*, and *Mike Mattos*, our vice principal, was student services coordinator for nine years before assuming his new job. Serving the students and working with families is their primary focus.

Can we please everyone all the time? Absolutely not, but I believe what is most important is that we listen to people's concerns and explain *why* when we can't please them. For example, we need to explain to a parent the reason why their child cannot go into a particular class at this point in time. If I'm working with a student on discipline issues, it's important that I explain to him or her why that particular incident could not occur, what safety issues are involved. As long as we spend the time to explain the other—the administrative—side of the situation, it gives people more of an understanding. Although I learned a great deal and had a wonderful experience in Martinez, I felt a draw to come back home. Mt. Diablo feels like home to me. I live in this community, so I'm a part of it. I have had such great experiences here, both as a teacher and as an administrator, working with staff members as well as parents and students. It's just such a positive experience for me, and I feel I've been blessed to be in this position.

Lisa Sullivan, Vice Principal, Ygnacio Valley High School

Lisa grew up in Walnut Creek and joined the Mt. Diablo staff as a substitute secretary in 1985. The following year, she was hired as attendance secretary at Concord High School, where she worked for 10 years. In 1998, she accepted a teaching position at Clayton Valley High School, where she taught mathematics until accepting her new job as an administrator at Ygnacio Valley this year.

As vice principal, my major responsibilities are to administer special education, to head our school's climate and safety committee, and to coordinate all student testing, including the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), health, etc. I also serve students whose last names start with L through Q.

We have four vice principals at Ygnacio Valley; we used funds from our Program Improvement school grant to fund the fourth VP position. With about 1,500 students, we are the third largest high school in the district after Clayton Valley and College Park. We have a very diverse student community: 49 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and more than 400 students are English language learners.

Learning a new school is always a challenge—learning about the school climate, the rules, the entire school community. You need to listen a lot, and to have as many conversations as possible with people who have been at the school for at least three or four years. You need to have an interest in learning the history of the school community, and why things are the way they are. I'm enjoying learning my new responsibilities, a new school, and a whole new group of people.

Coming back to an office feels a little like coming home again. I worked for 10 years as an attendance secretary at Concord High. That early experience was where I learned that I loved working with high school students. The teachers at Concord High encouraged me to continue my education, so I went to school at night and became a teacher.



Lisa Sullivan

It was very hard to leave Concord High, and the extended family that I had come to love as much as my own family, but I needed to fulfill my dream of teaching. I had a wonderful experience teaching math at Clayton Valley, and came to love the students and staff there as well.

I enjoyed every minute of teaching math, and of seeing my students excel at a subject that is not for everyone. However, I had made the decision to become an administrator before I ever walked into my classroom. I always knew that I would go back to the office at a high school. It was not that I was tired of teaching, or that my love of teaching had faded. I simply knew that at some point, I would become a vice principal. When I had the opportunity to go back to college and get my administrative credential and master's two years ago, I realized the time had come.

It is wonderful to be back. I had missed the opportunity to interact with other adults and with students throughout the day. For me, this is the best of both worlds. ■

A message from DMA President Bob Dodson

Looking forward to serving our members in 2006-07

Welcome, new and returning DMA members, to the 2006-07 school year. This year promises to be filled with excitement and joy as we continue to support one another, grow professionally, and work together to make MDUSD the best school district possible.

Our Fall Social at Tony Roma's on September 27 was a wonderful event. It was great seeing friends and familiar colleagues, and meeting new DMA members. Special thanks go to *Linda Hutcherson* and *Nadine Rosenzweig* for coordinating this occasion.



Our Winter Celebration will be held on Wednesday, December 6, at the Contra Costa Country Club. This is a very special event, where managers are encouraged to invite their office staffs and administrative teams to enjoy good food and company during the holiday season. More information is coming soon, and we look forward to seeing all DMA members at this event.

ACSA's 2006 Annual Conference will be held November 2-4 at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel in San Diego. The conference offers many informative workshops, focusing on developing leadership skills and powerful schools, and keeping the winning spirit. The cost of the conference is \$340; however, teams of 10 or more from Mt. Diablo can attend the conference at a discount rate of \$250. For more information about the conference, go to www.acsa.org/events/. In addition, DMA has a Professional Scholarship program, with money budgeted to reimburse its members for professional development for up to \$500 every three years. Contact *Linda Hutcherson* or go to our Web site at www.diablomanagers.org for a professional development reimbursement application.

If you are still considering becoming a member of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) (www.acsa.org), please e-mail Rose Lock at lockr@mdusd.k12.ca.us. (See the article alongside for more information.)

Your DMA leadership is committed to serving and supporting you, the managers and administrators of Mt. Diablo. In addition to holding monthly Board meetings to plan activities and discuss pertinent issues relative to our organization, we meet monthly with Superintendent McHenry to acquire information, gain understanding, share your concerns and provide input regarding decisions affecting DMA and the district. We also meet monthly with the superintendent and all labor leaders in an effort to constructively and collaboratively problem solve, communicate, plan and provide input regarding decisions affecting our *unified* school district.

I look forward to serving you as DMA president. Please don't hesitate to contact me, or any DMA Board member, if you have any questions or concerns. Have a great school year! ■

ACSA membership offers support for DMA members as education leaders

DMA is now an official charter of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). ACSA is the leading proponent in California for school leaders and for our profession. All certificated administrators, classified managers and confidential employees are eligible for membership.

ACSA offers numerous benefits to members, including professional development, a weekly newspaper with educational articles and information, insurance, job opportunities, mini-grants, legal assistance and more.

The mission of ACSA is to support California's educational leaders, to ensure all students have the essential skills and knowledge needed to excel, and to champion public education.

ACSA is divided into 19 regions statewide. Our DMA charter operates in Region 6, covering Contra Costa and Alameda counties. Region 6 is currently offering the following membership benefits:

- Three \$1,000 scholarships to children of ACSA members who are graduating high school seniors and plan to pursue a career in education
- Three \$1,000 mini-grants for innovative projects
- \$1,000 to the Region 6 student nominee for the State ACSA's Every Student Succeeding Award

For more information, or for forms and deadlines, you can access the ACSA Region 6 Web site at www.acsaregion6.org/events_awards.html. Also, the state ACSA Web site at www.acsa.org has a wealth of information and resources.

For questions regarding ACSA membership or programs, please contact *Rose Lock* at Walnut Acres, ext. 4346, or e-mail her at lockr@mdusd.k12.ca.us. ■

DMA expanding awards to align with ACSA

As an ACSA Charter, DMA is expanding its program to align with the State ACSA awards program. *Liz Kim* and *Diana DeMott* are chairing the Awards Committee. They will be seeking nominations for the various categories later this fall. Selections will be completed by December in order for winners who are ACSA members to move on for consideration at the Region 6 level and possibly at the state level.

DMA will also continue to recognize members in the established categories. All winners will be honored at our End-of-Year Luncheon. If you are interested in serving on the Awards Committee, please contact Liz at kime@mdusd.k12.ca.us or Diana at demott@mdusd.k12.ca.us.

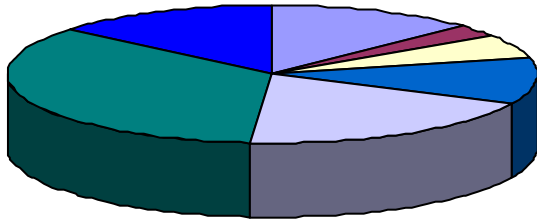
Members honored at the June 2006 End-of-Year Awards Luncheon were *Evie Groch* (Outstanding Contribution to Education), *Pat Krummen* (Lifetime), *Barbara Oaks* (Have A Heart), *Ernesto Ramirez* (Rising Star), and *Cherisse Baatin* (Most Involved.) ■

DMA 2006-07 financial report

Beginning balance (as of July 1, 2006)	\$18,595
Projected cash balance (as of June 30, 2007)	\$9,245

2006-07 Projected expenditures \$36,350

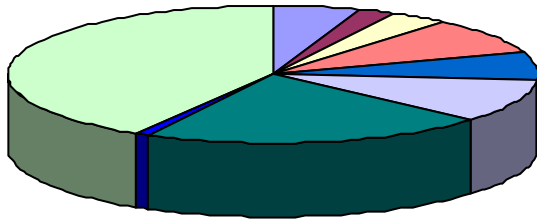
Admin costs & services \$4,650	Awards \$1,000	Leadership Institute \$2,000	Newsletter \$4,000
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Scholarships \$7,000	Socials & events \$12,700	Staff development \$5,000
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2005-06 Spending wrap-up \$23,917*

Admin costs & services \$3,003	Awards \$1,347	Leadership Institute \$2,000	Newsletter \$3,809
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Scholarships \$6,000	Gifts \$48	Socials & events \$12,240	Staff developmnt \$470
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*Note: A \$5,000 loan made last year to the Parent Action Coalition for Education (PACE) was repaid at the beginning of last fiscal year and is not included in this report.

Welcome, new DMA members!

Vittoria Abbate-Maghsoudi—Vice Principal, Adult Education, Loma Vista
 Nichole Alberti—Student Services Coordinator, College Park
 Elizabeth Block—Vice Principal, Sun Terrace
 Jessica Bonduris—Vice Principal, Ygnacio Valley High
 Brent Brinkerhoff—Vice Principal, Sequoia Middle
 John Broussard—Student Services Coordinator, Mt. Diablo High
 William Cassin—Supervisor, Occupational Therapist, Wing D
 Pat Cleaver—Curriculum Specialist, Wing C, Dent Center
 Veronica Garcia—Vice Principal, Cambridge
 Karen Gordon—Principal, Pine Hollow
 Wayne Harris—Transportation Service Coordinator, Maintenance
 Ramon Honea—Vice Principal, Rio Vista
 Coleen Martin—Student Services Coordinator, Pine Hollow
 Jeffrey Middleton—Social Work Specialist, Foster Youth Service
 Gina Miller—Program Specialist/Special Education
 Kara Oettinger—Program Specialist/Special Education
 Mary Ann Pritchett—Senior Personnel Specialist, Personnel
 Marie Schirmer—Principal, Cambridge
 Connie Stutz—Vice Principal, Shore Acres
 Lisa Sullivan—Vice Principal, Ygnacio Valley High

Welcome, new ACSA members: *Marie Schirmer, Dorothy Epps and Carmelita Goldsby!*

Comments, news & notes ...

Management evaluation ... Up to now, no administrative rule had been developed to accompany the district policy (BP 4315) on management evaluation. For the past two years, DMA met and conferred with Assistant Superintendent *Gail Isserman* to develop AR 4315, which provides guidelines for management evaluation. These include frequency, use of the MDUSD Management Evaluation Form, standards, and a timeline for the evaluation. All managers should have received a copy of the new AR from Personnel. If you haven't, please contact Gail Isserman's office.

Save these dates! ... *DMA Holiday Social*: Wednesday, December 6, 4 to 6 p.m., at Contra Costa Country Club. ... *ACSA Region 6 Leadership Summit*: April 20–21, in Napa. Watch for details! ■

DMA Executive Board and Representatives

President Bob Dodson, Pleasant Hill Elementary, 4328
President-Elect Karen Sakata, Ayers Elementary, 4300
Past President Rose Lock, Walnut Acres Elementary, 4346
Vice Presidents Linda Hutcherson, Mt. Diablo Elementary, 4320;
 Nadine Rosenzweig, Valley View Middle, 5000
Secretary Denise Larkins, Personnel, 4136
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Central Services Jeanne Rau, Transportation, 3710
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Elementary Vice Principals Donna Marshall, Bel Air, 4334
High School Martha Riley, Northgate, 3500
Middle School Hellena Postrk, Sequoia Middle, 4374
Special Education Melinda Hall, 4045
Retirees Meridith Noble, 510-530-2410; Judy Schoen, 925-935-7255

Your representative's role is to represent you on the DMA Board and to provide feedback to you as a DMA member 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 Hellena Postrk at ext. 4374, postrkh@mdusd.k12.ca.us. Thank you!