

AUSD Teacher Association to Protest Further Budget Cuts

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Increases in class sizes, unpaid furlough days, reduced salaries and cuts to health benefits: all part of the current discussion within the Alhambra Unified School District (AUSD). As the California budget crisis continues to deepen, conversation concerning massive changes to the 2011-2012 school year is emerging.

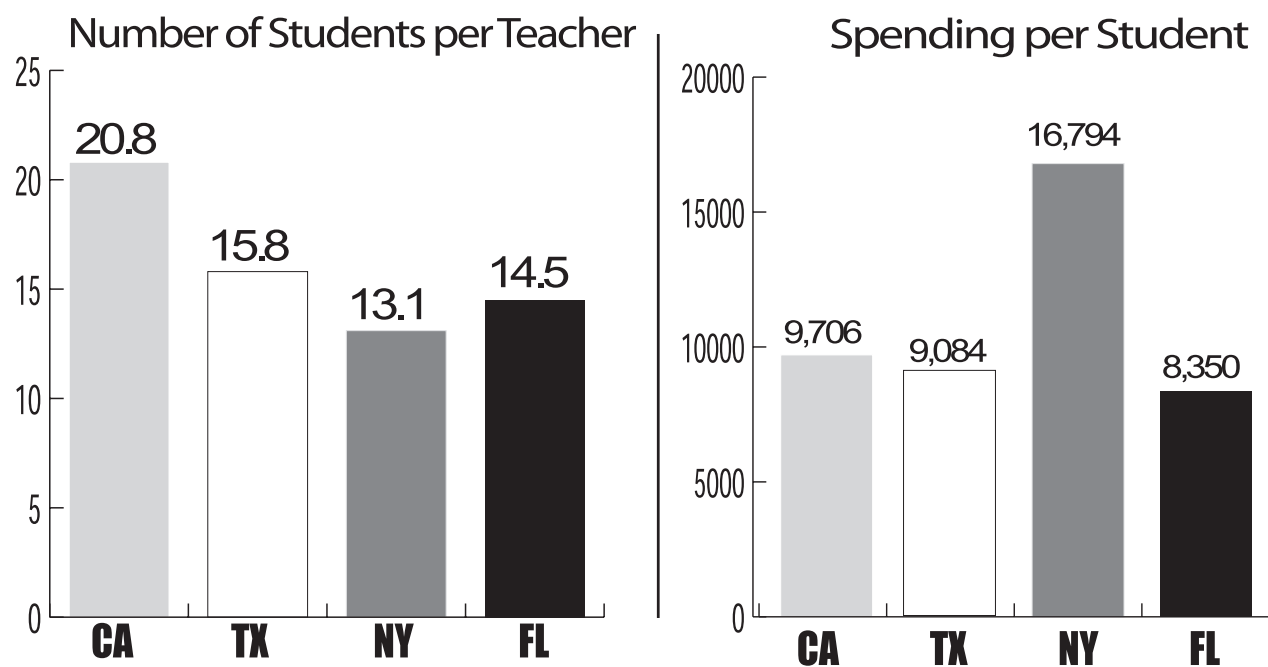
Currently, the Alhambra Teachers Association (ATA) is taking action to prevent the worst possible cuts from occurring.

"The cuts will be extremely severe because it is not just going to affect one academic school year," English teacher Nancy Padilla said. "As bad as cuts have been over the last few years, the federal government had given stimulus or other type of funding that at least helped reduce layoffs and maintain teacher staffing."

To spread awareness about the concerns, ATA will sponsor a Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, May 3, from 6-7:30 p.m. at San Gabriel High School's auditorium.

Teachers from districts around Los Angeles have prepared to gather at

TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO AND SPENDING IN FOUR MOST-POPULATED STATES 2007 - 2008



source of information: ed-data

Pershing Square on May 13 in Downtown Los Angeles in order to protest the downsizing of the state education budget. Headed by ATA's parent organization (the California Teachers Association), this rally is expected to draw thousands of educators to march for adequate funding for public edu-

cation and promote awareness about the state's budget shortfall.

"Currently there are over 18,000 teachers in California who have received notices that they will be [laid] off," ATA president Rosalyn Collier said. "This will seriously affect any school district's ability to provide

education. Classes will be cut, class sizes will soar and the children will suffer."

AUSD has scheduled to hold salary negotiations in May. There, teachers and administrators will discuss the possibility of furlough days and the likelihood of reductions in benefits.

With the cuts being made to the budget at the state level, there is a small feasibility of help coming from California's Department of Education.

"What we don't have this year is any kind of a 'rescue' from the state, and the district's reserves are as low as they are allowed to go," Alhambra High School ATA Director and English teacher Kathleen Tarr said.

This may translate to additional increases in classroom sizes, an issue that is already a problem on campus.

"I began teaching Drama with a class size of 17 to 20 students," Tarr said. "[AHS Drama teacher] Ms. Coalson now has 50. When I moved over into English, our class sizes were 27. Now they are 36."

Because these cuts will greatly affect education in California, the public needs to encourage legislators to grant the tax extension proposed by Brown in order to save public schools. This is necessary to prevent cuts that will affect the district for many years to come.

"Our country needs to get its priorities straight," Tarr said. "We seem to be able to bail out corporations but we can't offer our most valuable asset, our children, a top-quality public education without fighting tooth and nail for it year after year after year."

Senior Helps Develop Distillation Device

ALAN TAM
News Editor

The Jisan Research Group is an organization that seeks to help promote student participation in research and development. Over the course of several months, they have made an important contribution in combating water scarcity.

Utilizing what has been dubbed an "entro-chemical process," a team has developed a device that can purify water without the use of filters, fuel or pumps. One member of the research team is AHS senior Calvin Chau.

The eleven-person group led by Dr. Sanza Kazadi consists of high school students from San Diego, Rowland Heights and Crescenta Valley. They began research in December; within four months, five working prototypes have been produced.

The potential benefits of the device can help alleviate water shortages and improve the standard of living in arid regions and countries where clean water is not available.

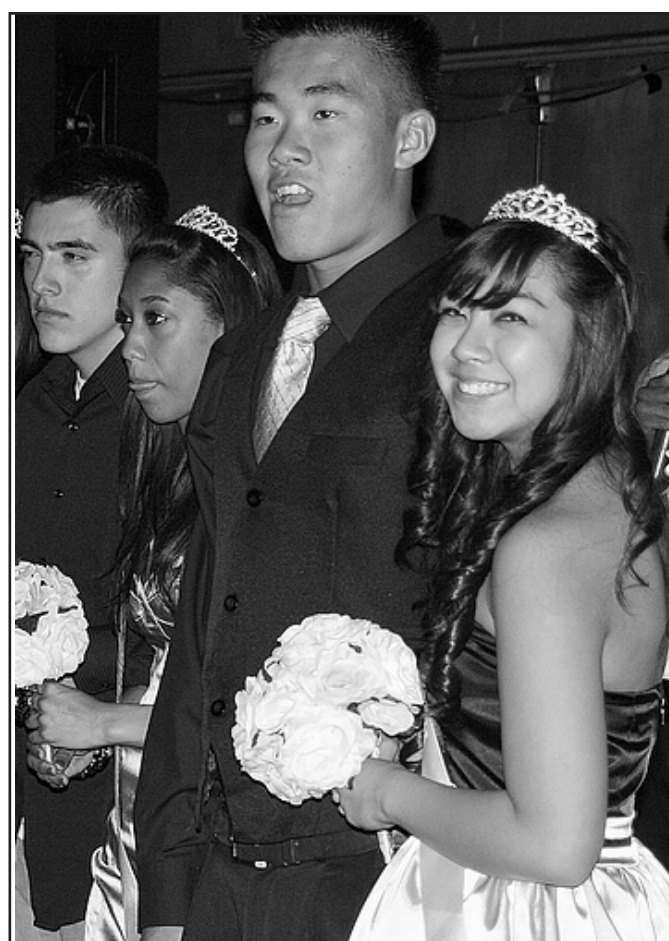
The device has the potential to make drinkable water an easily renewable resource, helping to prevent the exhaustion of underground aquifers and freshwater sources.

"It is going to help save lives," freshman Sean Cho said. "Clean water is hard to come by in other countries."

According to Chau, the research is still in preliminary stages and it may take years before a commercial product can be released.

Regardless, members of the research team feel that this process will be a step towards environmental sustainability.

"This process is capable of improving the lives of people everywhere," Chau said.



MOOR photo by KATHRYN CHU
FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING The Spring Court was announced at the first Spring Fling. The dance was held at the big gym on April 15.

AHS Swings into Spring Fling Dance

ELLEN LI
Staff Writer

When spring comes around the corner, things that might come to mind might be flowers, the sunshine and bunnies. For AHS students, however, something new was featured this season.

This year, Girls' League hosted their first annual Spring Fling on April 15 in the Large Gym. Because Winterball was cancelled due to low ticket sales, Spring Fling was introduced in order to replace it.

"Girls' League thought it would be a fun idea to mix things up a bit," member senior Lily Zhong said. "In addition, we thought it would be a good way to help students relieve some stress right before CST testing and AP exams."

This year, the theme was "You've Got a Friend in Me," and the colors were lavender, rose pink and baby blue.

Traditionally, Winterball includes a court in which one boy and one girl from freshmen, sophomore and junior classes, and two boys and two girls from the senior class are elected as princes and princesses. One boy and one girl from the senior class are elected as king and queen.

However, due to the cancellation of this dance, the Winterball court became the new Spring Court. Mauricio Perez and Chloe Lee were crowned King and Queen at the dance.

While it is unclear whether this dance will become a tradition, it was still a fun and refreshing experience for those who went.

"I would have liked to see more people attend, but I do not think attendance affected the people who were there," Zhong also said. "Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves."

Quality of Online Schooling Debated

Compared to spending eight hours in classrooms, the idea of staying at home, surfing the web and still earning credits for class seems very appealing.

Due to budget cuts, a growing number of middle schools and high schools have resorted to providing online courses to make up for failed classes.

According to the Sloan Consortium, an organization dedicated to integrating online and mainstream education, in the

'07-'08 school year, an estimated one million students took at least one online course, a 47 percent increase from two years before.

Online classes have shown "some improvement" for college students, but the actual educational value is disputed.

Opponents of online learning argue that students can easily use Google or Wikipedia to find answers to questions.

"It sounds fun to stay at home instead of going to school," said senior Genesis Reyes. "But I doubt you would actually learn anything."

Teens' Use of Marijuana Spreading

Weed, grass, Mary Jane. All are nicknames for marijuana: an illegal substance greatly increasing in use throughout the United States.

According to a study conducted in Connecticut and published in the Journal of Addiction Medicine, about 40 percent of Connecticut high students have tried marijuana at least once.

While this trend may not be consistent throughout the rest of the nation, the research also

showed that teenagers who participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, volunteer or academic clubs, had a significantly lower chance of trying the drug.

Among the most likely users were juniors and seniors, as well as those students with grades at or below the B to C range.

The study also showed that engaging in risky behaviors such as fighting, gambling, drinking and using steroids was linked to higher risk of marijuana use.

Shannon Li, News Editor

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