

Tiger Pause
May/June 2006 edition
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We must be on the cusp of some great convergence of sorts. The cosmos must be up to something big. There is hardly a person I know who isn't experiencing some sort of life-altering transition of late. Whether it is helping elderly parents condense their lives for different living arrangements or experiencing all of the changes that come with high school graduation, welcoming new babies, or making the leap from middle school to high school, these milestones have a great impact for all involved in those experiences.

As we gear up and move into our final months of school, sixty of our senior students are traveling with five teachers for a week of backpacking and self-discovery in beautiful Yosemite. The trip will profoundly alter some people's perceptions of the world around them. Just weeks afterward, our senior class will mark the departure from things known and predictable to life's more unpredictable future. We impress upon our students that the rites of passage -- Baccalaureate, senior awards night, and graduation -- are major events that are meaningful not only to them but to all who surround them, and we thank the community for their support of our students during this major period of transition.

As we send our senior students off with our warm wishes, fond thoughts, and request that they keep in touch, we will be readying our school for our incoming freshman class. Eighth graders now, they will be developing quickly into independent thinking, mature young adults. Believe me! Those students, along with our returning students, will experience SPHS at a time when it is undergoing its own transition. Due to financial constraints, we will need, more than ever, to work together to make decisions about resource allocation. When students signed up for classes early this spring, they chose many alternative courses, as we will be continuing to assess our ability to offer the full curriculum we have provided over the years. I ask all of our families to check the mailbox and email for updates as we develop a clearer picture of the effects of our budget shortfall.

Last year, we had our accreditation review and visit. Our school was given the highest term of accreditation and was lauded with much praise for our achievements. In October, we heralded our thirty-point gain in the Academic Performance Index. Now, as we try to better that gain, we are also continuing to review our achievement of the goals laid out in our school's action plan. To that end, we have been having roundtable discussions that include parents and school staff listening and questioning representatives from each academic department. This is helping us keep track of our progress and also make decisions consistent with our school's mission and action plan.

Our District, too, is in transition. With conflicted feelings, we will say goodbye to Dr. Moffett, Interim Superintendent, who has provided incredible leadership and enriched each of us by sharing his experiences and working to bring us back into focus as a family of schools. Also leaving will be Wes Stewart, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business Services. Together, these two veterans of school management and leadership have provided the stability and guidance needed to move us through tough times. The mixed feelings generated by their departure are from losing two valued friends and guides, but knowing that permanent appointments will help us with our forward momentum. While a selection has not yet been made for their replacements, we look forward with positive thoughts about our new Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.

No matter what the changes are that we, our friends, or our neighbors are experiencing – turning fifty, getting married, selling a house, moving – let's remember that the changes *will* happen ... regardless. What we can control is how we deal with them. There may be many balls in the air, and some may fall on our heads. Even so, at South Pasadena High School, we are dedicated to educating each and every child who comes to us, and we will continue to persevere through times of transition and to do our best by and for our students.

Thank you for another rich, challenging, and fulfilling year with the families of South Pasadena High School. There's no place like this! You can continue to reach me (technology willing... it's been a tough spring for computers) at janderson@fc.spusd.net. Our final Community Coffee of this school year will be at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 4, beginning in the main office. We invite you all to join us on June 1, at 6:30 p.m., for our annual Open House and Exhibition of Student Work.