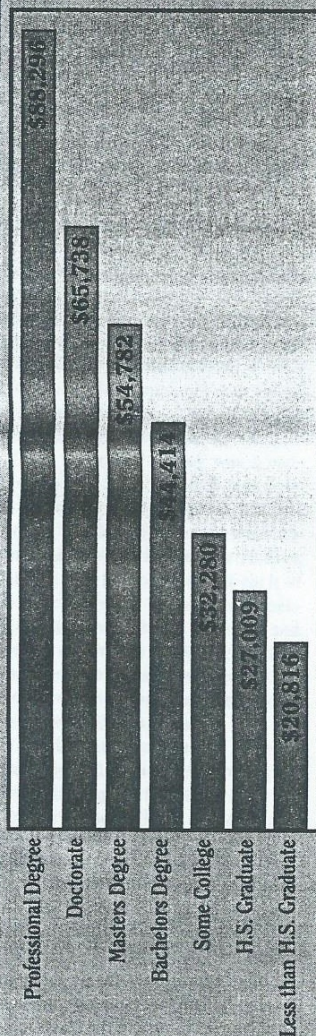


PARTNERS

BUSINESS AND EDUCATION TOGETHER

California average annual earnings by level of educational attainment



Definition of measure:
Average annual income of California civilians, 18 years and older, who worked full-time year-round in 1989 according to the 1990 U.S. Census.

Looking for a way to help schools?

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Mayor Joe Serna and Councilman Darrell Steinberg toured William Land Elementary School last fall.

Giving kids a real good START

Volunteers from business, community are key to programs success

By SIGRID BATHEN

Darrell Steinberg remembers that when he was growing up in San Bruno, his life revolved around the Millbrae Unified School District. For Steinberg, the school day didn't end in early afternoon, as it often does for students today.

Now a Sacramento City councilman, the 36-year-old Steinberg found himself troubled by the limited use of Sacramento school buildings after hours. So last year he helped initiate a model effort, now being put in place in 20 local schools, to offer after-school tutoring and enrichment programs for elementary-age students.

As a founder of the fledgling Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow program, Steinberg sees a huge problem that a small-but-determined paid staff is working to alleviate for some of Sacramento's most impoverished youngsters. But volunteers are urgently needed, and organizers are especially urging business leaders to get involved.

The program is a key element of Sacramento Mayor Joe Serna's efforts to improve the city's schools and a central recommendation of the Mayor's Commission on Education and the Future, co-chaired by developer Phil Angelides and retired Elk Grove Unified School District

Superintendent Robert Trigg. Among many strong recommendations, the commission urged that the START program be "aggressively" pursued, and that the city "continue to build on its efforts to keep schools open" past standard academic hours.

Steinberg, a state administrative law judge who earned his law degree at the University of California at Davis Law School, believes the key to improving the schools — and the dismal academic performance of many students — is to return to the concept of the school as a community center. "I grew up pre-Proposition 13 in the Bay Area in a community where school was really so central to my life," he recalls. "Not only the school day, but after hours. I was a sports-oriented guy, so it depended on the season, but I did basketball, football, tennis. And drama. And I wrote. For me, it was a very positive experience. Besides family, it was the center of my life."

"Since I got into office, I've been struck by the fact that we do not utilize schools as a community in the way that we should. Today, by and large, schools virtually close down at 2:15 or 2:30. So many kids are latchkey kids, and they're going home watching crap on television — or doing other things. We have school buildings in the middle

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"So many kids are latchkey kids, and they're going home watching crap on television — or doing other things"

Darrell Steinberg
City Councilman

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COVER STORY

START: Partnerships between schools, community

Continued from Page 1

of our own neighborhoods that are underutilized."

Citing a direct correlation between time spent on academics in school and preparation for later life, Steinberg bemoans a "lack of coordination" among youth-related programs. He points to START as an unusual collaboration among the city, school districts — including the beleaguered Sacramento City Unified School District — and the private sector.

Patterned after a successful program in Los Angeles called Better Educated Students Tomorrow, START relies on both public and private-sector funds. The biggest chunk this year came from \$500,000 in excess funds from the Sacramento Cable Commission, which will not be available next year.

Money, role models needed

"This is not a 'city' program," says Steinberg. "It's a collaboration between the school districts, the city and the private sector. Budgets are incredibly tight everywhere, and I view this as a triangular partnership. Sac City stepped forward with \$200,000, in the midst of a lot of turmoil. Other districts came up with in-kind contributions. And I'm devoting myself, whatever time it takes, to raise money through the private sector."

Since the cable money was a one-time windfall, Steinberg said fund-raising is a high priority. Funds will last through Thanksgiving to pay a small administrative staff, headed by Andrea Fletcher, and five paid staff at each of the 20 school sites. In addition to seeking private contributions, Steinberg and Fletcher emphasize a pressing need for volunteers, particularly businesspeople who can serve as role models and work one-on-one with students.

"The business community plays an absolutely vital role in several respects," says Steinberg. "It is not too early for grammar school children to understand what is out there in terms of career possibilities. We need members of the business community to be out there as mentors, advising kids about what the possibilities are as they grow and become adults. We need businesses to step to the plate and actually sponsor (a school)."

A mix of education, recreation

The cost of the program at each site is approximately \$45,000 per school year, Steinberg said. Emphasizing literacy and help with homework, START programs also offer electives such as sports, science, math, art, drama and music. Snacks are provided, but the program is not intended as a substitute for child care. Participation is strictly voluntary, but since the program started in January, interest among students and



Lilly Jones doesn't seem to mind staying after school

parents interest is high, and waiting lists are already forming.

Ultimately, the program aims to help 4,000 students at the 20 sites, and organizers would like to see it expand to junior and senior high schools. The ultimate objectives: improving academic performance, test scores and social skills, reducing vandalism and acquainting families with community services.

Growing with the program

"The real goal here is to expand," says Steinberg. "Every school in this community should be open after hours. I really believe that you have in this community a lot of efforts to serve youth by businesses, recreation, law enforcement. What you don't have is some mechanism to force collaboration. This model provides the potential to provide collaboration because it's site-based, so that any entity, private or public, whose mission is to serve youth, will have a place to do their work."

START also emphasizes parental participation — making the school a core of activity beyond the family. To that end, family-related services such as parenting classes and other adult education classes are part of the program, which is offered in many schools where many kids come from poor, single-parent families.

Another key component of START is evaluation of results, which started immediately with the beginning of the program in January.

Fletcher has a doctorate in political science and a background in nonprofit educational programs, most recently the nonprofit, statewide Sacramento-based Learning and Self-Esteem Network. She says participation by the busi-

ness community is critical to the success of START.

"We can use all the role models we can get," she said. "If there are people who can volunteer some of their time, even for a particular segment of the program, we really need the business community involved in that perspective. We also need to integrate more special events into the program."

More male volunteers are especially needed. Men currently comprise only about 30 percent of the program. "It's much harder to get men than women to participate," says Fletcher. "We could really use more male role models."

Family participation crucial

The BEST program in Los Angeles has been successful, she said, in part because organizers have made family involvement a major focus.

"The way that they really brought families into the sites is sort of by the back door," she said, "by offering tickets for special events, primarily to attract families."

Driven more by the demands of day-to-day survival than educational quality, many of the parents of children in the schools targeted by START have not been active in their children's schools. And, says Fletcher, it is "absolutely essential" that parents are involved.

"It's tough," she said. "Parents haven't really felt confident enough to become involved in the school environment, and there is a reluctance to get involved."

But, at orientations for the START program, parents have been showing up — as participants in their children's education, and as volunteers.

"Response has been very positive,"

says Fletcher. "Initially, we have 100 children per site, and we will have 200 by May. We now have waiting lists of 40 to 60. And as we get more volunteers, we can add more children." Parent orientation meetings have drawn as many as 80 parents, rarely fewer than 25, "which indicates pretty strong support," she says.

Teachers designing the literacy component of the program are encouraged to be creative and innovative, says Fletcher, to "stimulate enthusiasm for learning."

Many students speak English as a second language, and bilingual instructors or aides are involved throughout. Although the program is open to all students in kindergarten through sixth grade, Fletcher said first-graders through third-graders are targeted, "to strengthen skills early-on."

Students spend nine hours per week in the program, generally spread over three or four days after school. Since there are "significant waiting lists" at each site, three no-shows and they're out. There have been few of those. ☛

For more information:

Martha Lake, resource coordinator for START volunteers, 277-6122.

Dr. Andrea Fletcher, START program manager, 277-6115.

Monica Blanco, START resource coordinator for site-based activities, special events, 277-6188.

START is located in the city's Office of Human Services, 6005 Folsom Blvd., Sacramento CA 95819.