

# THS BEAR TRACKS



May 7, 2011 Volume I

## “THE MUSIC MAN”

MAY 11 & 12 AT THE RAVEN THEATER/HEALDSBURG

Buy your tickets today and bring your Friends!



## Service Project Presentation

Don't miss the presentations of the class service projects for this year. Our students will present their posters and achievements on

**June 7th**

in the Campus Center.

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NEWS

## THS Alumni Association - Our Mission

The mission of the Alumni Association is to establish and maintain long-term relations with and among alumni, parents, and friends through reliable, consistent, and sensitive communications. The committee endeavors to report to its constituents the state of the School, highlighting the exceptional work being done and the areas where improvements could create extraordinary possibilities.

## THS Alumni Association - Founded

All THS Graduates and Families of Graduates, please watch for your special newsletter and the interesting stories that our graduates will share with you!



## Schools Struggle Even as Businesses Thrive

By [CARI TUNA](#) WSJ

At the office, times are good for Mark Sheridan, vice president of business development for software company Actiance Inc. of Belmont, which is hiring aggressively as its revenue bounces back from the recession.

But at home in Cupertino, Mr. Sheridan is worried about his son's education. Two weeks ago, he learned that the first grader's teacher is among dozens of Cupertino Union School District instructors who have received layoff notices.

"It doesn't feel like the situation is getting any better," said the 38-year-old Mr. Sheridan, who donated money last year to help the district avert class-size increases and layoffs.

Mr. Sheridan's concern is part of an increasingly stark contrast in Silicon Valley. While many technology companies are thriving or enjoying a comeback, expanding their job ranks and posting big financial gains, cities and school districts are grappling with budget deficits and cutting services and staff.

The dichotomy is a reversal from the onset of the recession, when companies in the region scaled back quickly even as government employment held relatively steady.

In the Santa Clara-San Jose-Sunnyvale area, private-sector employment fell 9% to 748,000 workers between February 2008 and February 2010, while government employment fell just 2% to 96,400 workers, according to the California Employment Development Department. By contrast, between February 2010 and February 2011, job losses accelerated in the public sector, which shed 5% more workers, while private-sector employment grew 3%.

Local governments' lagging recovery has implications for Silicon Valley companies, said Valerie Frederickson, chief executive of a Menlo Park recruiting and human-resources firm that bears her name.

"People used to move to Cupertino specifically because the schools were so good," she said. Now, "every recruiter at Apple who's negotiating for a candidate to move from somewhere else...has got to be cringing." A spokesman for [Apple Inc.](#)—which reported a 78% quarterly profit surge in January—declined to comment. Ms. Frederickson doesn't do recruiting work on Apple's behalf.

Last month, [Oracle Corp.](#) of Redwood City posted a similar 78% jump in quarterly profit and boosted its dividend payout to shareholders as the business-technology company hires technical and sales employees.

In contrast, the Redwood City School District might have to furlough teachers for up to 10 days—including five instructional days—and dock their pay an additional 7.5% in the coming fiscal year, said Superintendent Jan Christensen.

"Government is still in the cutting mode," said Mayor Jeff Ira of Redwood City, which has slashed about 75 positions over the past two years as it scaled back parks maintenance, street maintenance and fire-department staffing.

In addition to being major local taxpayers, some Silicon Valley companies said they support local school districts and nonprofits. Last week, [Google Inc.](#) announced a \$1 million grant to the Mountain View Whisman School District to help improve math education. Google also said it awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Mountain View Educational Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the school district, last year.

Apple, meantime, said it encourages employees to volunteer at nearby schools, and it donates \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually to a foundation that backs Cupertino public schools, the foundation said.

foundation that backs the school district for the coming fiscal year, up from \$20,000 for the current fiscal year, those groups said. Oracle also has pledged \$70,000 to the San Mateo County Office of Education to

For its part, Oracle donates \$50,000 to the Redwood City School District and recently gave \$25,000 to a foundation that backs the school district for the coming fiscal year, up from \$20,000 for the current fiscal year, those groups said. Oracle also has pledged \$70,000 to the San Mateo County Office of Education to fund a DNA project for high school students in the coming fiscal year, up from \$3,500 in the current fiscal year, which was lower than Oracle's typical annual gift, the county said.

Ms. Christensen said that while she appreciates the \$50,000 Oracle gives directly to the school district, it projects a shortfall of as much as \$9.6 million for the coming fiscal year. "We're facing another round of catastrophic cuts," she said.

Jo-Ann Sockolov, president of the Redwood City Education Foundation, the group that provides funds to public-school programs, said some Silicon Valley companies could do more to help local schools, though she praised Oracle for its support.

"I would love to see more funding of elementary school districts," in particular, she said. "You have to start teaching children at the very youngest age how to develop skills to be successful employees in the 21st century."

"THS is a valuable institution for our Sonoma Businesses and their employees and we need to ensure that these businesses keep supporting THS and its mission to give the best high school preparatory in Sonoma County. Our children deserve the right to be able to compete with students from all over the world in this new economy." Bettina Kochinke, editor Bear Tracks Magazine.

NYT Today, April 14, 2011

## **Ready or Not**

By JACQUES STEINBERG



FOR those parents and school administrators who believe it is never too early for students to begin preparing for the PSAT and SAT, the College Board has begun offering a junior version of its marquee college-entrance exams — this one specifically for eighth graders.

Called ReadStep, a name that sounds more appropriate for the kindergarten set than middle-schoolers, the two-hour test has questions written in the same style as the PSAT and SAT and a similar marking system: scores range from 2 to 8, which aligns roughly with the 20 to 80 they will someday receive on the PSAT, and the 200 to 800 on the SAT.

About a quarter-million eighth graders have taken ReadStep since it was introduced last fall, according to the College Board. The overwhelming majority are in Texas, where the state education department has offered to cover the cost of the exam — \$8 per pupil — as part of a statewide college readiness program.

The introduction of the test follows a one-year delay that the College Board had imposed in acknowledgment of the stretched-taut finances of many school systems. It created ReadStep, the board says, in response to the clamoring of school districts for an indication of students' potential performance — not just on entrance exams, but also on college-prep coursework — far earlier than 10th or 11th grade, when most take the PSAT.

In that spirit, some schools have long given discontinued versions of the PSAT to eighth graders, and scored the exams themselves, though with no formal benchmark for what those scores might mean.

“ReadiStep is designed to be very similar to the PSAT and SAT,” says Glenn B. Milewski, executive director of Readiness and the PSAT, which is also the qualifying exam for National Merit scholarships. “It is essentially a learning tool. It’s intended to help schools and districts improve their curricula and instructional practices.”

And yet, in a culture that has become increasingly obsessed with the admissions process, especially to premier colleges, it seems fair to ask whether giving middle-schoolers a preview of the PSAT and SAT also gives them a preview of the agita that awaits them.

“Where does it stop?” wonders Louis J. Kruger, an associate professor in the school psychology program at Northeastern University in Boston. “If you can prepare them in eighth grade, can’t you prepare them even earlier than that? There’s already considerable stress and anxiety today in public school students in regard to being assessed, and the assessment as being a gateway to college.”

Other experts on testing worry that the College Board is preying on anxious parents who only want the best for their children. Will the exam be able to deliver on the seductive come-ons in its promotional materials — for example, that the results will provide “information on the skills that students possess and the skills they need to develop, and advice on how to further develop those skills”?

W. James Popham, professor emeritus in the graduate school of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, recently pored over detailed descriptions of the psychometrics underlying Readiness, which has three 40-minute sections to assess an array of skills in critical reading, writing and mathematics. He concluded that any results should be taken with a grain of salt because of insufficient items “to allow teachers, students or students’ parents to arrive at a reasonably accurate estimate of a student’s per-skill prowess.”

“It’s just deceptive as can be,” he adds. “It conveys the notion that your child has these strengths and weaknesses, when there’s no way to tell.”

Asked about Dr. Popham’s comments, Mr. Milewski seemed to take pains to lower expectations for what specifics parents might learn from the results. Students receive only three scores — one for each subtest — along with “suggestions” for how to “improve their learning” based on the broad band in which they scored — for example, low (2 to 2.9) or high (6 to 8).

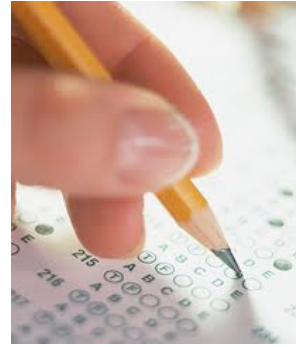
Those inclined to lump in Dr. Popham with FairTest — an organization that was sharply critical of Readiness during its development and which angrily laments the proliferation of standardized testing in American education — should bear in mind that Dr. Popham is actually an advocate for such exams. “It’s not the early testing that bothers me,” he says. “It’s the early, wrong kind of testing.”

Margo Gige, the director of advanced academics for the Pearland Independent School District, in a Houston suburb, has no such qualms. Last fall, Pearland administered Readiness to all but a handful of the community’s 1,300 eighth graders.

Ms. Gige ticks off the battery of state tests to which the district’s eighth graders are already subjected — including in math, reading, social studies and science. Then she asks, rhetorically: “Why do one more test? What’s the point?” She cites research that suggests that if students “don’t have a college mind-set by fourth grade, then it’s not as likely to happen.”

“I didn’t do well,” she told her mother.

But when the results came out and district officials held a meeting to explain them to parents, Ms. Jimenez realized that Kelly had actually scored quite high. And that success built confidence. “She knows her ultimate goal is college,” Ms. Jimenez says. “She wants to get good, passing scores and stay on track.”



## National Teacher Day

### Great Teachers Make Great Schools

On National Teacher Day, thousands of communities take time to honor their local educators and acknowledge the crucial role teachers play in making sure every student receives a quality education.

This year's National Teacher Day was celebrated at THS on May 3, 2011. The BBQ was rolled out again and everybody had a Hot Dog for lunch, followed by some ice cream treats and a special cake for the teachers. Each class honored their teachers with flowers and letters of appreciation and thanks.

### The Best Teachers

*Teachers open up young minds,  
showing them the wonders of the intellect  
and the miracle  
of being able to think for themselves.*

*A teacher exercises  
the mental muscles of students,  
stretching and strengthening,  
so they can make challenging decisions,*

*find their way in the world,  
and become independent.*

*The best teachers care enough  
to gently push and prod students  
to do their best  
and fulfill their potential.*

*Thank You!*



## Orderly Toddlers? Try Uniforms

Donna developed an eye for fashion when she was just a toddler in day care. "She would actually say, 'So-and-so has this skirt. Can I get it?'" says her mother, Christie Rickert of Locust Grove, Ga.

But since Ms. Rickert enrolled Donna, now 4, at ABC Montessori School in McDonough, Ga., where all the children wear uniforms, "we don't have those kinds of conversations anymore," she says. Putting on her white or navy polo shirt and navy or khaki shorts or skirts, just like all the other kids, "took the pressure off, of trying to belong."

A growing number of preschools and child-care centers are requiring children to wear uniforms. Many parents like the ease of dressing children in uniforms and say it usually costs less than other clothing. Day-care directors say uniforms lend an atmosphere of professionalism, giving a sense of order and security.

At ABC Montessori, where Ms. Rickert's daughter Donna is enrolled, Kimberly Morey, executive director, says having the children wear uniforms "eliminates distractions.

"Children come in comfortable and prepared to focus. They're not worried about what their neighbor is wearing or what their mom

didn't let them wear today," Ms. Morey says. Uniforms reinforce feeling part of a group for children, she says. Even in preschool, "if you put a blue shirt on a child, he or she knows 'I'm getting ready for school.' "

Long used in many private and parochial schools, uniforms started showing up in public schools in the late 1980s, and are now used in 13.9% of public schools, federal data show. They're also commonly found in schools in other countries, such as Japan and England.

Janice Palmer, early-care administrator of Little People Child Development Center in Bear, Del., says she began considering requiring uniforms last year after two 4-year-olds began competing for her to admire their dresses. As one child begged her to "look at my new pretty dress and my sparkly shoes," Ms. Palmer says, a classmate approached her and said, " 'Miss Janice, I have on a new dress today, too, and you didn't tell me I was beautiful.' All of a sudden they were comparing themselves with each other," Ms. Palmer says. "I don't want to hurt these children. I don't want them to think I acknowledge one child over another."

After discussing the issue with parents, she set a uniform policy last fall for all children 3 and over. "It has gone over so well that I have parents in the 2-year-old

program who have gone out and purchased uniforms" voluntarily, Ms. Palmer says.

*Uniform are a hot button issues with todays parents and school administrators.*

*At THS we believe:*

*Uniforms will stop other students by being judged on how they look / Uniforms will make it harder for cliques to form.*

*Uniforms will make it easier to identify those who are not from the school and therefore increase security/safety.*



## PTO Socials

What a fabulous time we had getting together as parents, trustees, teachers and administrators this school year. But all good things have to come to an end, at least for the summer break. But no worries, we will be hosting our first PTO Social in August at the house of Daryl and Lisa Groom, welcoming all our new families and teachers as well.

Thanks to all the generous hosts that have stepped up and hosted this year! To build a community for our young school we need these events to foster the THS spirit and make this school a special place for you and your children.

PTO Socials, please sign up now for hosting one event next year at your house! There are still a few dates available. Please contact Sue McCutchan for details.



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## THS FREE FRIDAY BBQ

The last BBQ for the school year will be May 20th after school from 3:00-5:00pm.

Get your Dog!



**The THS Flea market** was off to a great start. We raised over \$5000, funds that will count towards each class 7th and 8th grade trip to Washington DC. Our thanks to all volunteers!



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Please send inquiries in regards to Bear Tracks to [bettinga@thehealdsburgschool.org](mailto:bettinga@thehealdsburgschool.org). We'd love to hear from you!