



# San Mateo County Office of Education

Anne E. Campbell, County Superintendent of Schools

## **Daina Lujan Takes Helm of Safe Routes to Schools Program for San Mateo County**

In mid-December Dain Lujan came on board at the San Mateo County Office of Education as Coordinator of the Safe Routes to Schools Program and she has hit the ground running. She's been working with Peter Burchyns to get up to speed and transition the program to her leadership.

Before becoming Coordinator of the Safe Routes to Schools Program, Lujan taught first grade for six and a half years in the Pacifica School District. While there she served on a number of school and district committees including the Green Team Committee, working on green initiatives such as composting and organizing school car pools to reduce traffic and pollution, and on the district's Safe Routes to Schools committee. For several summers she ran the teen camp program for the South San Francisco Recreation Department, and piloted a program for 13 and 14-year-olds to serve as "buddies" to preschoolers. It became so popular that parents would line up overnight to get their preteens into the program.

[Safe Routes to Schools](#) is a national program, funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The goal of the program is to enable community leaders, schools and parents across the United States to encourage more children to walk and bicycle safely to school. In the process, programs are working to reduce traffic congestion and increase safety around school sites as well as improve health and the environment.

Federal money for this program is distributed to the states and in California the money is distributed through grants from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Last spring, San Mateo County became the recipient of a \$1,429,000 grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and a \$571,000 grant from the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG) of San Mateo County, making a grand total of \$2 million toward implementation of the program. The San Mateo County Office of Education is responsible for the overall coordination of the program and makes grants to local schools, districts and school/city partnerships to set up Safe Routes to Schools programs.

So far, in San Mateo County, six school districts—Ravenswood City Elementary, Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary, Pacifica, Redwood City Elementary, Millbrae Elementary and San Carlos Elementary—have signed on to participate. "We originally thought that 20-25 schools would sign up in the first year and we were delighted that school districts as a whole signed up. We have surpassed our goal and are now at more than 25 schools," notes Lujan.

In addition to the six elementary school districts that have signed on, Sacred Heart School (a private school) has also joined the program. Several other school districts, including San Mateo-Foster City and Menlo Park City Elementary have also expressed an interest. "For the next school year we plan to open up the program to all school districts once again and we look forward to involving more schools and districts," said Lujan.

All the districts that have signed on submitted proposals for Safe Routes to School activities. About half plan to do walk/bike audits of their school community to see how many students are currently walking or biking to school. Redwood City is the farthest along with its activities, having already implemented bike or walk to school days at district schools, in partnership with the city initiative, Redwood City 2020.

The Safe Routes to Schools Program is funded for two years and Lujan is already looking into ways to keep the program going beyond this initial funding through additional grants and partnerships.

Lujan is excited about her new post and all the possibilities for Safe Routes to Schools. "I love it here!" she says. "It's very different coming from the classroom where I had 24 students shouting my name." When she's not at the County Office, Lujan enjoys gardening and crocheting, and she's also an avid fan of the San Jose Sharks hockey team. Once a month she also volunteers serving dinner at the City Team homeless shelter in San Francisco, where she's been a regular volunteer for many years.