

## SCHOOL MATTERS

# School warmups abound in Palo Alto

If you have a child in the Palo Alto Unified School District, but you don't have a "back-to-school night" event on your calendar, you might be too late.

Escondido Elementary School's event on Thursday was a great success, with about 90 percent of parents in attendance.

"We want parents to be on the inside of what we teach and how we teach it," Principal Gary Prehn said.



**PREEVA  
TRAMIEL**

Escondido was the only Palo Alto school that hosted a back-to-school night event last week, and El Carmelo Elementary School held an event for parents of kindergartners on Monday.

The rest of the back-to-school nights are coming up fast. An event for parents of first-through fifth-grade students at El Carmelo is scheduled to take place tonight, as are events for parents of students at Juana Briones, Nixon and Palo Verde elementary schools.

On Wednesday, Addison Elementary School parents, along with JLS and Terman middle school parents, will have a chance to see the inside of their children's classrooms. Duveneck Elementary and Gunn High will also hold events Wednesday. Gunn administrators are reminding parents to bring a flashlight to help them get around, because the campus is big and poorly lit.

Additional events are slated for next week. Fairmeadow and Hoover elementary schools, along with Jordan Middle School, will host back-to-school nights on Sept. 9. Parents of Walter Hays Elementary School kindergartens will have their event on Sept. 10 — the same day as Palo Alto High School's. Palo Alto High asks that parents bring their flashlights.

On Sept. 15, this year's round of back-to-school nights concludes with an event for parents of first- through fifth-grade students at Walter Hays, along with events at Barron Park and Ohlone elementary schools.

## Race to Top grants on state's slate

States must partner with school districts to compete for Race to the Top funds, which provide competitive grants to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform. The governor has called a special legislative session to address the issue. This part of the stimulus package is designed to get states to make systemic changes.

Triona Gogarty, the head of the Palo Alto Educators Association, is willing to discuss change, particularly in one of the requirements for the stimulus grant proposals — the linking of test results to specific teachers, which is forbidden by the California education code.

"I believe the answer is larger than 'the unions won't let us,'" Gogarty said. "I will be happy to discuss this with (Superintendent) Kevin (Skelly) and (Assistant Superintendent) Scott (Bowers). Most likely the proper setting is within contract negotiations."