

## OPINION

FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2010

THE STAR B9

FC

# PRINCIPAL CORDES

## Bring Cordes back

I was in the Oxnard School District from 1970 until 1992. During that time, I worked as a teacher, counselor, director of the bilingual education program and 12 years as principal.

I have known Debra Cordes since my early years as a principal. I have always known Mrs. Cordes to be a very enthusiastic and industrious individual, who was always involved in every facet of her job. I have always considered her to be a very strong educator. She is an effective communicator, and her bilingual skills allow her to communicate with the majority of people with whom she has dealings.

Mrs. Cordes has always been an asset to the OSD educational team, and I was shocked when I heard that she was being relegated to the classroom.

In 1988, when Measure A was on the ballot, she spent hours of her free time walking the streets of the Colonia district urging the citizens to vote. The measure passed mainly because 95 percent of the Colonia residents voted in favor of the measure, resulting in a \$40 million bond that enabled the district to add four new schools.

During the eight years Mrs. Cordes has spent as principal, the Academic Performance Index scores for her school have steadily increased from a low of 607 in 2003-04 to a high of 727 in 2008-09. This trend is not characteristic of inefficient leadership. The fact is, her record shows that she is a very capable administrator.

I feel that the Oxnard School District is doing a disservice to the children they serve, and I strongly urge that she be retained as principal.

— Juanita L. Sanchez-Valdez,  
Oxnard

## Principal reassigned

Parent representatives from Harrington School, along with community leaders, continue to ask the trustees of the Oxnard School District to explain the reason for the demotion of Debra Cordes, who has served eight years as principal of Harrington School. This

reassignment is especially disturbing considering that a school's success is measured by its academic performance, and based on Harrington School's Academic Performance Index and the federal Adequate Yearly Progress scores, students have improved every year since Mrs. Cordes has been principal.

Furthermore, she has always had good performance evaluations and is thought of in high regard in her community. I can honestly say that Principal Cordes, with the collaboration of the Harrington staff, has continuously improved student learning.

Cordes is a single mother. Her husband, who was also a teacher, died 10 years ago, leaving her to raise their three children. Two of the three are following their parents' footsteps and have also entered the teaching profession. The third is currently a college freshman.

Cordes is a product of local schools and has raised her own children in the Oxnard community. It is heartbreaking for community people who have worked very, very hard to contribute to the well-being of this community to see one of their own treated unfairly by the Oxnard School District leadership.

This issue is not about budget cuts — Harrington School will have to have a principal — but, after eight years, the Board of Trustees decided that it should no longer be Debra Cordes, although she has never had a negative evaluation in her 33 years as teacher and principal in the district.

Our community efforts to participate and work with the Oxnard School District to develop a healthy leaning environment is hindered by the unfair way we see them treat loyal employees such as Cordes. It is a disservice to the children of Harrington School.

The question remains: Why is this being done? She, the children and parents of Harrington School deserve an answer, as does our Oxnard community, which is dedicated to improving education.

— Lupe Angulano,  
Oxnard



Association of Mexican-American Educators  
Oxnard Chapter  
P.O. Box 566, Oxnard, CA 93032-566

April 13, 2010

Mr. Joe R. Howry, Editor  
Ventura County Star  
P.O. Box 6006  
Camarillo, CA 93011

Dear Mr. Howry,

The Association of Mexican American Educators, Incorporated, Oxnard Chapter, seeks clarification from the Oxnard School District on the alleged reassignment of Debra Cordes from the principalship at Harrington Elementary School to an undefined classroom assignment.

At this time, it is still unclear as to how this recommendation was arrived. First, were areas of concern identified, documented and discussed with Ms. Cordes by her immediate supervisor? Second, was Ms. Cordes given an opportunity to reply to the alleged areas of concern? Third, did the immediate supervisor provide Ms. Cordes with the training necessary to deal with the identified areas of concern? And fourth, was Ms. Cordes given the opportunity to remediate the perceived areas of concern by the immediate supervisor?

This lack of transparency and clarity makes it appear that this process was capricious and arbitrary. This rush to judgment is unfair to the Oxnard School District, students, staff, its community and especially to Ms. Cordes. This apparent premature reassignment at a time of instability is at best questionable. By making the process transparent, it will alleviate many of the perceptions of bias and unfairness.

AMAE's Executive Board:

Graciela Soliz, Christie Hudson Rachel Valdivia Ornelas

Lydia Fernandez-Palmer

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Page 2

If there are any questions regarding the contents of this letter of support for Ms. Debra Cordes, please forward them to:

Lydia Fernandez-Palmer



Ms. Fernandez-Palmer is also an educator for the Oxnard School District.