

## 4/17/09 *Notes from Nirvair*

Spring is here and we are enjoying the beautiful outdoor environment at Khalsa Montessori school. Have you noticed the colorful pollinator garden in bloom outside the administration building? You might not have noticed the outdoor projects behind the middle school building where the students have been working to beautify their environment. Middle school teacher, Tina Bartsch recruited her husband, Jim, to help build a new wall and sitting bench. Jim also rebuilt the tortoise habitat wall. We will soon be welcoming a new tortoise from the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum.

Spring is also planning time for the coming school year. Planning takes on a different dimension this year for our charter school because the legislature is still making final decisions on school funding for next year. If you would like to contact our legislators, their information is below. We will be inviting our legislators to visit our schools during Charter School Week, May 4-8. It will be important for them to hear from parents who value charter schools and want education to be a priority in the state budget.

|                | District 26 (River School)                                                                                | District 28 (Camden School)                                                                  |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Representative | Nancy Young Wright<br><a href="mailto:nyoungwright@azleg.gov">nyoungwright@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-3398 | Steve Farley<br><a href="mailto:sfarley@azleg.gov">sfarley@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-3022    |
| Representative | Vic Williams<br><a href="mailto:vwilliams@azleg.gov">vwilliams@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-5839             | David Bradley<br><a href="mailto:dbradley@azleg.gov">dbradley@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-3300 |
| Senator        | Al Melvin<br><a href="mailto:amelvin@azleg.gov">amelvin@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-5911                    | Paula Aboud<br><a href="mailto:paboud@azleg.gov">paboud@azleg.gov</a><br>(602)926-5262       |

Many Arizonans, including some elected officials, are still uninformed or misinformed about charter schools and there are agencies opposed to charter schools that are deliberately spreading misinformation. School funding is one area of confusion. Did you know that Arizona continually ranks around 49th out of 50 states in per-child school funding for district schools and that charter schools are underfunded compared to district schools by about \$1,872 per child according to the Superintendent's 2007-2008 report? If you think your tax dollars should support your children equally whether they attend a charter school or district school, please let your legislators know. Students thrive at Khalsa Montessori School. With over 200 students enrolled in the charter school, we can only imagine what we would be able to do with equitable funding.

Districts have been advised to seek budget overrides and property tax increases during the economic crisis. These options are not available to charter schools. The legislature is planning to reduce regular school funding in the coming year and we are planning for substantial cuts. There will also be a significant decrease in Proposition 301 funds which support teacher salaries. Proposition 301 is funded from sales tax revenues which are very low.

*And the Good News Is.....* Enrollment is our sole source of funding and we are happy to report that our re-enrollment and new enrollment numbers look great. We are not planning on cutting staff or programs. We are looking at areas where we can cut expenses and possibilities for additional sources of funding. Creativity and discipline will be required. We are excited about your enthusiastic support for our programs and we are optimistic about the year ahead. We will be sending three staff members to Montessori teacher training programs during the summer and we are collaborating on ideas for curriculum and projects for next year. We envision a wonderful year at Khalsa Montessori School and look forward to sharing it with you.