



Supporting Community Education Spring 2016

Dear Friends of Nicasio School,

Benefiting from its unique rural setting, strong sense of community and distinguished history, Nicasio School aims to educate children to value learning, act with integrity, live a healthful life, and participate as responsible citizens both locally and globally. Nicasio School is fortunate to have exceptional teachers and staff and a positively supportive community. Nicasio School Foundation hopes to continue working with supporters of Nicasio School for continued success.

Rising Costs in Public Education

State funding for public schools in California has been on the decline for years. The state is now ranked forty-seventh in the nation for K-12 per pupil funding. Today's state funding *barely covers* instruction of the mandated core curriculum (math, reading, writing, history, science and physical education).



Rising costs in public education over the past 10 years have exhausted Nicasio School District's general funds collected through federal, state, and local revenue sources. In order to maintain an excellent program at Nicasio School, which includes providing fair and competitive salaries to retain high quality teachers and staff, the district relies heavily on the community parcel tax supported first in 2008 and again in 2015 by our Nicasio residents.

Business Services

Nicasio School District has had to absorb a substantial increase in essential administrative costs this past decade. Prior to 2007/08, Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) provided all business services free of charge. Services included all financial aspects related to mandated reporting, budget, payroll, accounts receivable, and accounts payable. The district now contracts with outside sources to provide these vital business services and what began as \$35,000 per year in 2007/08 has increased today to \$75,000 annually.

Special Education

Approximately 20% of Nicasio School District's students receive special education services. The types and costs of these services vary widely based on each student's individual needs. As a small, rural school district, we are not always able to provide services on our own campus to students with significant learning needs. In these cases, we contract with other schools (public and private) to provide an appropriate program, in which case our district is responsible for covering all costs associated with tuition, special services, and student transportation. The budget for special education is an ever moving target. For example, due to increased and unforeseen needs in 2015/16, the school has approved the mid-year hire of an additional employee not originally included in the approved budget.

English Language Learners and Translation Services

Over the past decade, the enrollment of English Language Learners (ELL), students who are learning English as their second language, has increased from approximately 10% to 25% of

the student body. The state mandates schools with an ELL population representing at least 15% to translate all student reports and other forms of communication into the home language of those children's parents. As a result, the school has added over recent years a part-time employee to provide translation services, a new program that provides ELL students with additional instructional support, and a second part-time employee to support this new program.

Bridging the Gaps in Public School Funding

With the community parcel tax, Nicasio School District is successful in bridging the financial gap to ensure a quality instructional program, outstanding teachers, and essential business services. However, to offer our children with a more complete and well-rounded educational experience that includes enrichment classes such as art, performing arts, Spanish and a specialist for physical education, the school relies on Nicasio School Foundation (NSF) to provide a significant annual contribution. NSF is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit, volunteer group dedicated to raising funds for enrichment at Nicasio School. These "enrichment classes" only exist at Nicasio School due to the generous financial donations we receive from parents, alumni, community members and other friends-of-the-school. NSF also provides student scholarships for overnight field trips to places like Yosemite National Park, Sierra Outdoor School, and Sacramento.

Local Support Makes the Difference

The average annual cost of providing these valuable enrichment programs is \$48,700. Last year, NSF received \$71,800 through direct donations, grants and fundraising events to support Nicasio School. We were able to meet the school's grant request for the 2015-16 school year and, with your help, we hope to keep all these wonderful programs in place for our children for 2016-17. In addition to community outreach programs and events, NSF is actively investigating grants and the establishment of an endowment to continue our mission for generations to come.

Thank You for Your Support!

With your support, we can ensure that every child in our community benefits from a complete education. Please return the enclosed form or make a secure donation online at www.nicasioSF.org. If you would like to support Nicasio School on a monthly basis or make a legacy bequest, or if you would like to inquire about making a stock donation, please contact the NSF at (415) 237-3218. With all NSF members being volunteers, 100% of your tax-deductible donation directly supports the students of Nicasio School.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to all of you who actively support quality public school education with your charitable donations. As long as California struggles to resolve its budget shortfalls, quality education is at risk. Your support is the only opportunity we have to continue our mission of providing a well-rounded education for the children of Nicasio School.

Sincerely,

Mark Burton
President, Nicasio School Foundation

NSF Fundraising Goals for 2016/17

Fundraising goals for the 2016/17 school year include the projected costs for all recurring programs: enrichment classes, classroom materials and supplies, student council, and year-end fieldtrips. Nicasio School Foundation (NSF) also targets raising some additional funds to cover any unanticipated expenses. For example, in previous years, NSF has funded the purchase of science kits, umbrellas for shade in the lunch area, and a new kiln for the art program.

