

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE ESC PROGRAM

## Table of Contents

What is ESC? .....	2
Who runs the DMSEF? .....	2
How does the DMSEF raise money? .....	3
Where do the DMSEF funds go? .....	3
Why should I donate money to public schools? Isn't that why I pay property taxes? .....	3
Why should I donate money when I don't agree with the School Board's handling of our budget? .....	4
Why should I donate money when I pay for separate music/art lessons outside of school? .....	5
Why should I pay for ESC when I already donate to the PTA? .....	5
What are the benefits of a district-wide fundraising model? .....	5
How can I find out what my child does in ESC? .....	6
If we raise enough money, will we continue to have the same ESC teachers as this year? .....	6
What if I have more questions or need more information? .....	6

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*Your contributions to the Del Mar Schools Education Foundation support the ESC program, which offers focused instruction (outside of the homeroom class) by credentialed teachers in the areas of Science, Music, Art, Technology, and Physical Education. Please contribute today. Visit [www.delmarkids.org](http://www.delmarkids.org).*

## What is ESC?

The Extended Studies Curriculum (ESC) program provides focused instruction (outside of the homeroom class) by credentialed teachers in the areas of Science, Music, Art, Technology, and Physical Education for the eight elementary schools in the Del Mar Union School District (DMUSD). In addition, each school (via their Principal) has the ability to customize their ESC program to include other specialties, such as Spanish, Band, Choir, Drama, Problem Solvers, Math, etc.

ESC teachers work together with classroom teachers to enhance the core curriculum; thereby supporting our schools' mission to educate the "whole" child by providing students with opportunities for hands-on activities, problem-solving, teamwork, and exposure to the fine arts beyond what is possible in the general education classroom. In addition, our ESC teachers provide a multitude of opportunities that go beyond the core curriculum standards, through lunch clubs and special activities. Some of the lunch clubs available to our students include: Zoology, Garden, Green, and Engineering clubs (Science); Band, Strings, and Chorus clubs (Music); Digital Video clubs (Technology); Art clubs (Art); Math clubs, etc. Some of the special activities include musical performances, art shows, science fairs and competitions, problem solving competitions, photography shows, sport competitions, etc.

The ESC program was originally developed to enhance our district's school programs and was eventually expanded to cover contractual preparation time for classroom teachers in an Agreement between the DMUSD and the Del Mar California Teachers Association (DMCTA). The DMUSD agreed to cover the cost of a limited amount of "prep time," which provides classroom teachers an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue about student needs, analysis of student work, and planning of future lessons and units of study. During prep time, students would be taught by credentialed teachers who specialize in subjects like Art, Music, Science, etc. and thus the ESC program was created. The DMSEF was formed to expand the ESC program, which was widely viewed by parents as a valuable program.

## Who runs the DMSEF?

The DMSEF is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose sole purpose is to raise money for the ESC programs for the eight elementary schools in our district. The vision of the DMSEF is that every student attending elementary school in the DMUSD will have the opportunity to receive a premier education.

The DMSEF is governed by a Board of Directors made up of school representatives (parent volunteers from each of the eight elementary schools in the DMUSD), as well as members of the community. School representatives are nominated by members of the Board of Directors and to serve 1- or 2-year terms. The Board is responsible for all DMSEF business, including marketing and communications, finance and budgets, and administration, and the DMSEF's annual financial statements are audited each year by a certified public accounting firm. The Board meets at regularly scheduled, monthly meetings (second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM at Ashley Falls school). Meetings are open to all members of the community. For more information on the DMSEF board, please contact a board member or your school representative (<http://www.delmarkids.org/about-2/>).

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## How does the DMSEF raise money?

The DMSEF undertakes an annual campaign to raise sufficient funds for next year's ESC programs. The goal for this year's campaign is \$2 million. DMSEF raises this primarily through parent contributions. The DMSEF recommends a contribution of \$800 per child in order to reach our final goal of \$2 million. The \$800 amount is based on historical giving and current enrollment rates. Our goal is for 100% family participation AND \$800 per child. The \$800 per student contribution can be given as a one-time payment or spread out throughout the year, for as little as \$67 per month. However, we urge all families to give what they can – contributions at all levels are appreciated, and your contribution is tax deductible.

The DMSEF also raises funds through corporate sponsors. Many companies match employee contributions to the DMSEF. To find out if your company matches your contribution, contact your Human Resource department. We also have a list of companies that match employee contributions on the DMSEF website; visit <http://www.delmarkids.org/companies-that-provide-corporate-matches-to-the-dmsef/>. For a list of our current corporate sponsors, visit <http://www.delmarkids.org/business-partners/>.

Finally, each school holds various fundraising events throughout the year for the DMSEF.

## Where do the DMSEF funds go?

All contributions given to the DMSEF are restricted monies and can only be used by the DMUSD to fund ESC teacher salaries. Only 9.5% of contributions will be used for operating expenses, far lower than the 12 to 13% national average expenses for non-profit organizations. The DMSEF board is committed to keeping expenses low. That means 90.5% of contributions go directly into funding the ESC programs for the DMSUD.

The funds raised by the DMSEF are combined and given to the DMUSD for disbursement to the school sites for the ESC program. The total number of ESC teachers that can be funded is calculated and divided between the eight schools based on enrollment. With sufficient funds, the ESC programs can be funded at all eight schools; however, limited funds means fewer positions can be funded, and school Principals must then make painful decisions about which programs need to be cut at their schools.

## Why should I donate money to public schools? Isn't that why I pay property taxes?

Many of us moved to this district because of the quality of our schools, which is in part due to programs like ESC that provide our children with educational opportunities not available in other districts, without the private school cost. While it is true that property taxes are the primary revenue source for school districts like the DMUSD, these revenues are insufficient to provide the various enrichment programs that make our elementary schools among the best in the state and the nation. Since the passage of Proposition 13 approximately 30 years ago, California property taxes have been capped at 1%, while other state's property taxes are 3% or more. This has created an education revenue gap in California.

In addition, due to budget constraints in 2002-2003, lawmakers eliminated the \$120 per pupil the state gave Basic Aid districts<sup>1</sup>, like the DMSUD, saying that the state had met its constitutional obligation to

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these districts with other state funding for categorical programs<sup>2</sup>. This action further reduced our education revenue.

With California's fiscal crisis, the state government is considering several alternatives, which would greatly impact our budget. In June 2009, pressure began mounting at the state level to further reduce the unrestricted budgets for districts that are funded under the Basic Aid formula. In the spirit of fairness and to protect Basic Aid funding, a coalition of Basic Aid districts proactively submitted a "Fair Share" proposal, in which they agreed to the same reduction as the Revenue Limit districts and contribute their "fair share" through categorical cuts. DMSUD's fair share was a budget cut of approximately \$1 million, \$1.5 million, \$2.4 million, and \$2.5 million over the last 4 years. (At this time, it appears the Fair Share will continue until the 2014-2015 fiscal year.) Although categorical funds have been typically earmarked for specific programs (eg, class size reduction, instructional materials, special education, school improvement, etc.), due to the budget crisis, the state gave school districts the flexibility to use categorical funds for unrestricted costs, so cuts to these funds also affect our revenue for teacher salaries.

Fundraising through the DMSEF allows for ESC teacher funding, which can help bridge the revenue gap and mitigate budget challenges, thus ensuring the breadth of programs required to provide the quality education we all want for our children. Without continued parental and community support, the ESC program would be significantly reduced, resulting in fewer ESC teachers and/or less ESC classroom time at your school site.

<sup>1</sup>Basic Aid districts are districts where the local property tax exceeds their revenue limit and are allowed keep these excess taxes. Basic Aid districts do not receive State aid for general funds, unlike Revenue Limit districts

<sup>2</sup>School funding is divided into general funds (funds that may be used at the discretion of each school district's board) and categorical funds (federal and state funds that are earmarked for certain purposes and can only be used for specific student categories). General funds make up approximately two-third of California's K-12 education budget and categorical funds make up the rest.

## Why should I donate money when I don't agree with the School Board's handling of our budget?

While not everyone supports the DMSUD Board of Trustees' allocation of school funds, contributing to the DMSEF goes directly to funding the ESC program and is completely separate from the district's allocation of other funds. Every student, including your child, at all eight schools receive ESC instruction (K-6 grade); no child is excluded from these programs. However, without the funding to pay for ESC teacher salaries, these programs will be eliminated.

We are lucky to have such involved parents that are committed to providing their children with the best education, and none of us want our children's education to be jeopardized by politics. Unfortunately we do not have enough money to fully fund the ESC program next year, but together we can make it happen through contributions from parents and the community. Contributing to the DMSEF will ensure your child has access to classes taught by credentialed teachers specializing in Science, Music, Art, Technology, and Physical Education, as well as all the extracurricular clubs and activities these teachers organize.

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## Why should I donate money when I pay for separate music/art lessons outside of school?

The ESC program provides teachers that specialize in Science, Music, Art, Technology, and Physical Education year round at a fraction of the cost of private lessons. More importantly, the ESC teachers are both subject matter experts and trained educators and are accountable for covering the state-mandated standards for their subjects. The ESC teachers work closely with classroom teachers to integrate the subjects, and research shows that student learning is most powerful when such connections are made. In addition, many of the ESC teachers provide our children with extracurricular opportunities, such as lunch-time clubs (eg, Zoology, Garden, Green, Engineering, Band, Strings, Chorus, Digital Video, Art, Math, etc.) and organize special events (musical performances, art shows, science fairs and competitions, problem solving competitions, photography shows, sport competitions, etc.) Talk to your school staff about these opportunities, and ask your child about what interests them.

## Why should I pay for ESC when I already donate to the PTA?

The DMSEF and the PTA at each school are dedicated to improving the learning environment at our schools, but their focus and fundraising efforts differ. PTAs are volunteer child advocacy groups that fundraise for school programs at individual schools, while the DMSEF is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose sole purpose is to fundraise for ESC teaching positions for all eight elementary schools in our district.

Parent support (through contributions and volunteering) is critical to both organizations.

## What are the benefits of a district-wide fundraising model?

The DMSEF uses a district-wide model to fund the salaries for our ESC teachers because we believe in a quality education for all our community's children - equity builds community. The DMUSD Board of Trustees supports the DMSEF and this model.

Using a district-wide model has many benefits. It consolidates fundraising at the district level and a community-based fundraising effort. Monies raised by the DMSEF are given to the DMUSD for disbursement to the school sites. The district-wide initiative is intended to give DMUSD a more consistent revenue stream to cover ESC teacher salaries now and in the future. In addition, it allows us to build synergy among our fundraising efforts and targets larger corporate donors. District-wide funding provides more equity among the schools, which is key since most children in the district's eight schools pool into the same two middle schools and then into the same two high schools. District-wide fundraising allows for equitable disbursement while ensuring flexibility among the schools, so that individual sites can maintain programs that are unique to their site.

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## How can I find out what my child does in ESC?

Each school has a unique program and its own process for sharing what your child learns in ESC and their accomplishments. These methods include newsletters, shows, art displays in school offices, school website highlights, etc. We encourage you to talk to your school Principal and the ESC teachers to learn more about the specific programs in your child's school. Please also visit the ESC teacher profiles section on the DMSEF website (<http://www.delmarkids.org/>) and see your school's website for more information.

## If we raise enough money, will we continue to have the same ESC teachers as this year?

DMSEF funds supplement the DMUSD budget to secure ESC positions at all eight schools. ESC teachers are employees of the DMUSD; therefore, assignment of ESC teachers to a school is managed by the rules and regulations of the DMUSD and is outside the scope of DMSEF funding.

## What if I have more questions or need more information?

Call or email us! The DMSEF offices are located at Ashley Falls Elementary School, and you can call us at (858) 523-6007, or email us at [delmarkids@gmail.com](mailto:delmarkids@gmail.com). You can also contact your school's DMSEF representative or the current DMSEF president, Drew Isaacman (parent at Ashley Falls) at [aisaacman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aisaacman@sbcglobal.net).

## How do I make a contribution?

You can contribute to the DMSEF online or by mail. You can choose to make the suggested contribution of \$800 per child in one payment or spread them out throughout the year, for as little as \$67 per month.

For an online contribution, please visit [www.delmarkids.org](http://www.delmarkids.org). Checks can be mailed to the DMSEF office at the address below. Contribution envelopes are available at every school; please check with the front office.

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