

# More on Presentation at CEFPI

By C.A.S.H. Staff

***In the last issue of the CASH Register we gave you an overview of the C.A.S.H. workshop on Challenges and Opportunities of Building Schools in California at the CEFPI Conference. Following are more detailed excerpts from Pamela Johnson's presentation on the roles of state and federal agencies in the building process:***

When California public school districts acquire land for new schools, construct new schools or modernize existing schools, we receive assistance and oversight from as many as 30 entities. CASH, representing its school district members, its architects and all the other consultants that assist in providing adequate school facilities, have choices when dealing with all of these players. While we must comply with laws and regulations, we have chosen to be proactive, politically, and to approach the agencies as partners in delivering safe and educationally sound facilities for all of our students.

Because of the focus of the organization on school facilities issues, our mission remains clear going into our 27<sup>th</sup> year. Bolstered with a reputation for resolving issues in the best interest of all of California's public school students – not just a particular segment or special interest – we have been able to respond to legislative and regulatory processes defensively to lessen the blows and to influence those processes offensively to enhance the educational environment and redirect scarce resources to the classroom. In dealing with state agencies on behalf of our CASH membership, we educate, we collaborate; and if necessary, we litigate

to ensure adequate school facilities for all students.

Accessing state money to pay for part of school projects launches districts into a convoluted process that requires skill, perseverance, commitment, good timing, and at times, a sense of humor to navigate. Part of the complexity of building schools in California is not just the breadth of agency oversight but the interface among the agencies. The agencies that are most often involved in providing school facilities are the big six.

The first of the big six is the Division of the State Architect (DSA) which is always involved in school projects, irrespective of the funding source. The primary role of DSA is to review plans and specifications to ensure compliance with California's building codes, with an emphasis on structural and seismic safety. Before a district can apply for state funding, DSA must have approved the project. Once the project begins, DSA continues its review through continuous on-site inspection by a DSA - approved inspector, approval of any change order on the project, and approval of specific submittals. DSA's final review consists of collecting all the verifications of testing lab results, certification from the inspector of record, and certification from the architect that the project has been constructed in compliance with the approved plans and specifications.

The 10-member State Allocation Board (SAB), comprised of state agency representatives and legislators, allocates state resources for new construction and

modernization of public schools, and administers several other facilities related programs. With this composition of state agencies and legislative members, and with the responsibility of allocating billions of dollars, members are subjected to significant political pressure.

The Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) acts as staff to the SAB and decides who is eligible for funds, authorizes fund releases after the SAB approves the projects and audits the expenditures. OPSC staff has discretion in policy recommendation and interpretation that impact school districts in this very competitive environment.

The California Department of Education (CDE) is the agency that ensures a school project meets the educational needs of the school community. CDE's site approval includes looking at environmental hazards and proximity to airports, freeways


and power transmission lines, always with an eye on the safety of children and the educational adequacy of the proposed facility. School districts must have CDE's approval of school sites and plans, which includes resolution of all the environmental issues, as well as DSA's approval, before applying for state funding. CDE's actions reflect advocacy for the school community and that includes not only students, staff and parents, but school administrators as well. With a seat on the SAB, CDE publicly displays its advocacy for school

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## A Successful Labor Compliance Program

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the best option, the school district should look for an LCP administrator with experience in working with the Department of Industrial Relations ("DIR"), and with an understanding of the School Facilities Program. Hiring a third-party LCP consultant should not be a financial burden to the overall project cost. By effectively managing an LCP program, school districts should be able to administer these new responsibilities at costs consistent with the grants provided by the State Allocation Board. 

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children and school districts at every meeting while working tirelessly for schools behind the scenes.

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is a subdivision of California's Environmental Protection Agency. While a toxic free environment is the ideal, beyond the ideal, we face public policy issues. What are acceptable pollution levels? Where are they acceptable? Whom are they acceptable to affect? Whose responsibility is it to take care of pollution once the first three questions are answered; that means, who pays? In California we have recent legislation that has imposed major environmental regulations on all school districts when building new schools or expanding existing schools, which often means it is school districts that pay. In California, before a district can apply to the CDE for site approval for new schools or significant additions to existing schools and apply for state funding, the site involved must receive clearance from the DTSC.

The role of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) in the school construction process is to enforce labor laws relating to contractors and employers through a labor compliance pro-

# Albert Mensah – Keynote Speaker for the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual C.A.S.H. Conference


Tuesday, March 1, 2004 • 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Albert Mensah's own life has provided him the deep insight and wealth of experience he shares with his listeners. A child of one of the world's most impoverished nations, Ghana, West Africa, Albert Mensah, grew up within a village of 200 residents without electricity, plumbing or shoes, Mensah was inspired to immigrate to the United States after seeing his first movie. The movie was made in America and full of American privileges, including cars for every driver and shoes for every foot. He saw an opportunity to live a better life if he moved to the United States. Albert found his way to this country through his scholastic ability and a vision he held since childhood – to someday come to America.



Albert Mensah

Distinguishing himself in sales and market penetration upon graduation from Western Maryland College, Albert went on to become a successful business owner. Recognizing that his life story could provide inspiration for others to achieve their goals and face challenges, he began to focus on his current path as a widely sought after and internationally recognized speaker, author and humanitarian.

Today, Albert lives in Dallas with his family and visits Ghana annually, where he supports an orphanage and clothes residents in his home village. He speaks of his journey from Ghana, his first years in the United States and how he has arrived where he is today. You will love his humor and enthusiasm for life. 

gram. While enforcement of labor laws has always been DIR's responsibility, because of recent legislation, the burden of providing a labor compliance program on school projects has shifted from DIR to school districts.

Over the past quarter century, C.A.S.H. has been instrumental in

developing effective partnerships with state agencies by bringing them into our world by giving them information and providing opportunities for them to interact with school districts at monthly meetings, workshops, and our spring, fall, and annual conferences. 