Building Futures

A Publication of the Fresno Unified School District

2006 winner of California School Public Relations Association Community Newsletter Award of Excellence

Volume 3, Edition 1

Fresno Unified School District - Serving the Community since 1889

October 2006

Ground Broken for Williams Elementary

Fresno Unified celebrated the start of construction of Deborah A. Williams Elementary School with song, dance, and speeches in tribute to Ms. Williams, a dedicated and passionate educator who believed every child could succeed given the right support.

While bulldozers moved earth and workers poured cement during the September 12th groundbreaking ceremony, Board President Luisa Medina described how schools shape and mold communities and how educators lay the solid foundation on which children build their futures. The new school at the northwest corner of Fruit and Dakota will make a profound difference to the families that live in the neighborhood, Medina said.

The school is being constructed with funds from Measure K, $199 million in bonds approved by voters in 2000 to update existing facilities and build new schools. When Williams opens in 2007, it will relieve crowding at nearby elementary schools and help the district move all schools off year-round schedules.

The crowd at the groundbreaking included much of the congregation from The Home Baptist Church that once stood on the site, as well as members of the Williams’ family and her former students.

Medina fondly recalled being a student in Fowler with Ms. Williams. She described her school friend, who died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1999 at age 46, as quiet, studious and active in a number of social service clubs on campus.

Throughout her 24 years as a teacher, counselor, vice principal and then principal at Jane Addams Elementary School, Ms. Williams positively influenced thousands of students and their families. Superintendent Michael E. Hanson described her impact: “She challenged students living in poverty to reach their fullest potential by giving responsibility charts.

This month, Fresno Unified continues critical work to chart the future of the district. With the aim of accelerating learning for every student and achieving operational excellence, district leaders are initiating a process to develop a District Improvement Action Plan to guide FUSD for the next three to five years.

Superintendent Michael E. Hanson sought the deep engagement of all stakeholders in the process. "I believe that the greatest gift we can give our youth, many of whom live in poverty, is opportunity," he said. "The best way to provide them with opportunities is by working together to provide every student an excellent education."

Excellence can be measured in the classroom by how well district operations support classroom learning. The District Improvement Action Planning process began in August when a team of experts spent three days with district leaders taking a snapshot assessment of Fresno Unified’s operations, processes and business practices. More than 30 district leaders visited 12 schools to look at: 1) How the district supports teaching and learning in the classroom; 2) How well the district communicates; and 3) How central departments respond to the needs of schools. The team also conducted focus discussions with more than 100 people. On October 16, students, parents, teachers, administrators, union leaders, trustees, elected officials and representatives from businesses, faith communities, social service agencies and higher education institutions worked together to refine the district’s mission, vision and core values.

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Superintendent Michael E. Hanson studies a computer lesson at Fresno High School alongside teacher Kathy Maloney with students Derek Swint (r) and Josfinio Platon (l) during a visit to assess how the District supports teaching and learning in the classroom.
Julie Severns
Administrator of Leadership Development

Many district improvement efforts have been implemented this school year to increase student achievement at Fresno Unified schools. A key leverage in our district’s transformation is effective leadership. The district will be developing new leaders and introducing a set of expectations for our current leadership. Defining leadership standards sets clear expectations for leaders and provides a framework for the delivery of support.

The FUSD Leadership Standards were developed to simplify the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs) into manageable day-to-day behaviors. The California standards detail over 40 elements. The Fresno Unified School District Leadership Standards are:
1. Supervising and evaluating staff
2. Using evidence to improve instruction
3. Decision making/managing change
4. Appropriately allocating resources
5. Effectively communicating
6. Support to school sites for central office leaders

At the start of the school year, principals and department leaders were brought together to discuss the six leadership standards. At these meetings, they created lists of evidence that would accompany each standard. They answered the question, “What would that standard look like” and “sound like?” Based on their input, the following descriptions were created.

Supervision and evaluation of staff is a critical part of effective leadership. Evaluation is a formal process monitored by Human Resources, whereas supervision is a daily practice of providing feedback. Supervision looks like a principal walking through classrooms asking reflective questions and providing necessary support to teachers to help them improve their work.

Supervision and evaluation can only happen when a leader has access to and uses evidence to improve practices. Evidence is data, but it is not just student achievement or test score data, it’s also operational data, human resource data, fiscal data and process information. Effective leaders work with their teams to analyze that data and plan their next actions. A cycle of continuous improvement (plan-do-study-act) lets leaders know whether their programs are working just as it lets teachers know whether their instructional strategies are working.

Effective leaders access data at critical points throughout the year to make decisions and manage change. At a school, a leader will often have to address the issue of appropriately allocating resources. Effective leaders recognize that all fiscal and human resources should be aligned to stated goals and needs.

Decision-making and resource allocation requires that leaders effectively communicate with all stakeholders to build understanding and support. Meaningful communication answers questions such as: why this is important? who is affected by this decision? and how was input used to reach the decision?

Together, these first five standards provide clear, easy to manage behaviors. At the district level however, there is one more standard of leadership which guides our work. Departments are expected to provide differentiated, efficient and high quality support to school sites.

These six standards are meant to guide both the practice of effective leadership and the delivery of support to schools. Throughout the year, professional development will be focused on these standards. By reflecting on our strengths and opportunities for improvement in relation to these leadership standards, our students will achieve, our leaders will grow and our district will thrive.
Superintendent’s Message

When I took this job a little over a year ago, I had a vision for Fresno Unified School District. I didn’t see the fourth largest school district in the state that ranked among the lowest performing districts in the country. I saw a potential for greatness. Today, I believe more than ever – that together we can build a district that leads the nation in student achievement and I vow to be relentless in the drive to achieve that vision.

Some say it is an impossible task. About 82% of our students live in poverty. Nearly a third don’t speak English. We have 76 different languages spoken on our campuses. How can we expect greatness? I say we owe our students of poverty a wealth of expectations and innovation. Our children can achieve, should achieve, and must achieve. And they deserve nothing less than our best. They are the future of our community.

But if we are going to do what others call impossible, we must work together. No one has the answers by themselves. The only shot we have is to learn from each other and from the best practices of high-performing districts. That is how we will achieve break-through results for Fresno Unified and its 75,000 students. That is how we have made important changes and gains in student achievement over the last year.

As a team we rolled up our sleeves and began rebuilding, reorganizing and realigning the system over the past 12 months so that all staff and all resources are focused, laser-like, on improved teaching and learning at the school site. Like all change, it hasn’t been an easy or always comfortable process. But we have taken steps proven to dramatically increase student achievement.

To address a serious underinvestment in teacher support systems, we are now investing more thoroughly in teacher recruitment, development, coaching and leadership by:

- Dedicating more than 50% of our unrestricted general funds to teacher compensation.
- Increasing the starting compensation for FUSD teachers to more than those in Central and Clovis school districts.
- Accelerating the process of reaching the highest salary schedule for teachers where in it takes fewer years for an FUSD teacher to reach the highest salary schedule than a teacher in Clovis or Central.
- Realigning categorical funds to provide more resources to address high priority needs at the school sites such as:
  - 71 teachers to provide intensive intervention for underperforming K-8 students in reading and writing.
  - 62 teachers focused on helping targeted high school students to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).
  - 20 additional elementary teachers to reduce class sizes.
  - 42 teachers to reduce class sizes (20-1) for regular 4th grade English and math classes.
  - 16 middle school teachers to provide classroom alternatives to suspensions and orientation for students returning from expulsion.
  - 16 additional high school counselors.
  - 9 social workers for select middle schools.

Additional vice principals to ensure that every school will have an administrative team of at least two people

- Instituting leadership changes to ensure that the highest quality professionals are guiding the district’s realignment.
- Appointed 27 new principals whose leadership skills match the needs of their schools.
- Established a Chief Academic Officer to guide district-wide alignment of curriculum and lead implementation of data-driven instructional practices.
- Established a Chief Technology Officer to direct the organization of a large and complex department that has an impact on every student and adult in our district.

Our underinvestment in technology is felt most keenly in the classrooms, where teachers cannot access critical student data to identify student needs, email one another to collaborate over instructional strategies, or track student progress to assess and revise strategies. Over the past fifteen months, despite the heroic efforts of our technology staff, we have not been able to fix the systemic problems. Instead, staff has worked long hours to compile the information manually. The hire of Kurt Madden, who began Oct. 1, signals an important step in the school district’s transformation. Madden, former Chief Executive Officer for the non-profit One by One Leadership, where he helped launch ReadFresno, secured a $1 million federal grant to mentor the children of prisoners, and mobilized 1,000 volunteers to aid nonprofits throughout the city, has a demonstrated passion for community transformation. Prior to his non-profit work, Madden was corporate Vice President of Fiserv, a national banking software company.

The next three months are critical to the transformation of this district.

Now that we have the right people in the right jobs, we must create action plans for each department to ensure our work is strategically coordinated, data-driven and aligned to reach our goals. Everyone has a stake and a role in this work.

This fall, our district is taking significant action to deeply engage and learn from all stakeholders in order to establish the operational excellence system-wide necessary to raise student achievement.

- In September, a team of 50 administrators, led by national experts, fanned out across our district to gather information about district systems and business practices. During the process of this “baseline assessment,” they conducted classroom “walk-throughs” and interviews with principals, teachers, classified employees, students and parents at 12 elementary, middle and high schools to assess which district systems and practices are working and which are not.
- On October 16th, over 140 teachers, parents, students, administrators, classified staff and community members including representatives from union, higher education, civic groups, local government, faith organizations, businesses and social services reviewed this assessment and other data and began the process of designing action plans to meet the needs identified by the data. This District Improvement Action Planning process charts the district’s future by designing a detailed plan to guide day-to-day work to achieve district goals. Work continued October 17th and 18th as staff defined objectives, benchmarks and timelines for their work. This planning process will help us hone our budget priorities in order to direct monies where they are needed most.

- Over last summer and the next two years, our Board of Education is participating in a process to strengthen and enhance its governance role. Conducted by the nationally acclaimed Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS), this training process is designed to help school boards clarify core values and commitments, outline and solidify roles and responsibilities and develop policies to improve constituent services and management oversight. Our district was one of only four school districts in the United States to be chosen and funded for two years of intensive education and training through the CRSS “Reform Governance in Action” program.

The training includes graduate-level, multi-day seminars for board members and district administrators as well as training sessions with other urban district board leaders.

Clearly the old way of doing things was not working. The new way is beginning to get results. Recently released state scores prove we are on the right track. While we applaud important gains made in student achievement, and schools that are doing the hard work to exit program improvement, we have a long road ahead of us. Seven out of every ten FUSD students are not proficient in English and Math, and the achievement gap between our white and minority students is unacceptable. We cannot and will not let up until the gap is gone and all students are excelling. Together, we can transform Fresno Unified and ensure the future vitality of our community.

Have a great semester!

Michael E. Hanson, Superintendent

Michael E. Hanson
Superintendent of Schools
Kids First Festival 2006

Fresno Unified proudly celebrates the many successes in our schools at the 2006 Kids First Festival on Sunday, October 22, with student entertainment, fun and information about Fresno Unified. This family event begins at 11 a.m. and features dancers, singers, bands and delicious foods representing our community’s great diversity. The Fresno Blood Mobile will be giving harvest t-shirts to donors. The City of Fresno Science Mobile will offer children a chance to do science projects they can take home with them. Flu ($25) and pneumonia ($40) shots will be offered through Maxim Health. At 1:30 p.m. the world’s shortest parade begins with marching bands, folkloric dancers, fire trucks, Hummers and FUSD’s Sesquicentennial float. Back by popular demand will be the famous Fresno Unified Harley Davidson riders. Don’t miss this great opportunity to support our schools. For more information contact the Communications Office at 457-3733.

Bullard Athletes to Build 1,200-foot Subway Sandwich

When Bullard High’s baseball, track and cross-country athletes were challenged to raise nearly $70,000, baseball coach Chad Thorhill said the teams had to think big. How big? How about a massive submarine sandwich, 1,200-feet long?

It all started when parent Martin Viramontes, a Subway franchise owner whose son and daughter compete in Bullard baseball and cross country respectively, came up with the idea to build the world’s largest party sub sandwich. Bullard’s teams hope the massive effort will also net enormous proceeds and outdistance other past fund-raisers.

The sandwich, which will be constructed by over 300 volunteers on Saturday, October 21, will stretch from home plate at Bullard’s baseball field to the end of the track on Browning Avenue, between Fruit and Palm. “We have never done a fundraiser of this magnitude,” said Thorhill, second year coach at Bullard. “The support we have been receiving from Mr. Viramontes and the community has made this overwhelming task manageable,” he said.

To build this enormous sub sandwich Subway will supply 270 lbs of ham, 150 lbs of onions, 180 lbs of cheese, 100 lbs of olives, 540 lbs of roast beef, 612 lbs of turkey, 300 lbs of tomatoes, 300 lbs of lettuce, 300 lbs of pickles, 150 lbs of bell peppers, 300 lbs of banana wax peppers and 3200 pieces of bread. Now that’s a heavy duty sandwich!

Slices of the sandwich will be pre-sold before the event with all the proceeds going directly to the baseball, track and cross country teams. According to Thorhill, any surplus sandwich will be donated to local homeless shelters. Local celebrities as well as community and city dignitaries are anticipated to participate in the community event. For more information or ticket sales contact Coach Chad Thorhill at 451-4320 ext. 2503.

The mouse can be a ferocious hunter.

The internet is a jungle, a tangle of data and advertising, and you need all the help you can get finding reliable information. How do you train your mouse to be a ferocious hunter? When it comes to trustworthy pediatric health information, just point it to the official Children’s Hospital Central California website, www.childrenscentralcal.org.

Thanks to a partnership with the Kohl’s Cares for Kids program, Children’s now offers an online health encyclopedia covering almost as many illnesses and conditions as we treat. We also offer good health advice for your kids, and safety tips that could keep your family from ever needing our services.
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In an effort to improve communication with the Fresno Unified community we’re asking for your input. Let us know how we’re doing and what you’d like to learn more about. To thank you for participating, those returning the survey below will be eligible for a drawing for a prize.

What features do you look for and like most in Building Futures?
- Superintendent’s Message
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- News on FUSD policies, changes, regulations
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How would you improve Building Futures?

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What information or news would you like to read more about?

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Let us know who you are. Please check boxes below.
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If you’d like to be entered for a prize drawing, provide a phone number, e-mail address or mailing address where we may contact you. Please complete and return via US Mail to:

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William School Construction Begins

Continued from Page 1

them the tools for success, standing by with unwavering support and having the highest expectations.

She also reached out to families to show them how to help their children in school. She believed that children living in nearby motel row, homeless at times, could and would succeed. And they did,” Hanson said at a time when it wasn’t fashionable, Williams was adamant that all children could learn given the right learning environment.

In her writings she described education as the “right of every individual.” She said, “All children deserve the best educational program possible. Where children live should not be a factor...All children can learn, but the method of learning must meet their needs.”

Four former Addams students spoke about the joy Ms. Williams brought to their school. They remembered her singing “We Are Family” during recess, urging students to sing and clap along. Ms. Williams brother-in-law, Archie Cooper, joked that Deborah learned her school management skills while growing up in a big family. While other speakers remembered her as the epitome of a committed educator, Cooper remembered her love and dedication to her siblings and extended family.

Fresno High School’s JROTC Color Guard began the ceremony after a welcome by new Assistant Superintendent Dr. Sue Smits. Addams Elementary student Ephraim Bosse led the pledge of allegiance and Fresno High junior Taylor Abels sang the national anthem. Bullard TALENT Showcase Singers’ rendition of “Journey to the Past” tugged at the audience’s emotions and the Leavenworth Elementary Folkloric Dancers made guests smile with their foot stomping and swirling skirts.
Central Kitchen Groundbreaking

After nearly a decade of saving and planning by the Food Services Department, Fresno Unified broke ground this summer on a new Central Kitchen and Nutrition Center that will not only provide better meals, but also help students do better in school.

The new Central Kitchen and Nutrition Center will enhance the quality and nutrition of the 72,000 meals prepared daily for Fresno Unified students. The new state-of-the-art facility will allow staff to bake breads, cook and create the food that best suits students’ needs and tastes. With this new facility, FUSD will not only provide better meals, but also help students do better in school.

Superintendent Michael E. Hanson complimented the District’s Food Services Department during the August groundbreaking ceremony, calling their efforts “nothing short of miraculous” in putting together quality meals in the current antiquated facilities. The department received kudos from a U.S. Department of Agriculture representative that reviewed services in May.

“I imagine what they’ll be able to do with a new facility,” Hanson said.

Currently, frozen food is brought in daily to what is essentially a repackaging facility. The food is assembled on four production lines and sent out to schools to be heated in warming ovens.

The new kitchen is part of Fresno Unified’s district-wide effort to help students be healthier. Last spring, the Board of Education adopted a District Wellness Policy — the first of its kind in the state.

Superintendent Hanson reminded those gathered at the Aug. 4 groundbreaking how important school meals are to the community. Nearly 82% of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. “There is great reliance on our school meals,” Hanson said. “They are essential to the daily life of our children.”

Food Services Director Paul Idsvoog (c) along with Past Director of Food Services Billie Richardson (l) and Food Services Operation Manager Mary Navarro (r) turn the first shovel of dirt at the Central Kitchen groundbreaking.

Holland and Thomas Named California Distinguished Schools for 2006

Holland and Thomas Elementary Schools were selected as 2006 California Distinguished School recipients for their hard work in raising student achievement.

Receiving a congratulatory call from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell, both schools join the ranks of 20 Distinguished Schools in the Fresno Unified School District named over the past 21 years.

The schools were evaluated by a state review team and chosen based on their state Academic Performance Index (API) and how they meet federal “No Child Left Behind” academic goals. According to Holland Principal Jonel Mueller, the school’s achievement journey began six years ago. Holland was at the bottom of state rankings; its API score was 483 out of a possible 1,000 and the school was designated as underperforming. Focusing on standards as the centerpiece, using effective curriculum, identifying best practices and staying committed to kids were all part of a plan between staff and community that led Holland to its current success.

Holland’s success is proof that students can make amazing improvements despite daunting circumstances. Currently, Holland has the greatest API increase of any K-12 school in the district. The school’s API ranking has soared to a 6 out of a possible 10 in the state and a 9 compared to schools with similar student demographics.

Thomas Elementary Principal Bob Nelson said his school was also identified by the state in 1998 as underperforming. Since that time, Thomas’ API has improved gradually every year from 577 in 1998 to 675 in 2002 and 737 in 2005.

“Our teachers have continually worked to refine their instruction through research-based teaching techniques, which have proven to work with kids throughout the years,” said Nelson.

Nelson said that in Language Arts, the students are taught explicit vocabulary in order to help those who don’t have a wealth of outside life experiences to bridge the gap. Techniques such as interactive writing and editing help Thomas students become more proficient writers.

In Math, we identify by grade level, key understandings that every single student has to master,” said Nelson. “We then teach those concepts over and over until our kids can do them.”

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All services performed by students under the direct supervision of an instructor.
Community Provides Backdrops for FUSD Students

“Meet the Teacher Night” at Mayfair Elementary School sported a new twist this year when 50 lucky students were awarded backpacks filled with school supplies during raffles held in each classroom.

Thanks to listeners of Valley Christian Radio and Office Depot, surprised students at each grade level, kindergarten through sixth-grade, became the proud new owners of the donated backpacks during the August 30 event.

According to Principal Al Sanchez, the event was a night for firsts, as not only was this the first donated backpack giveaway, but also for the first time in 20 years the school began following a traditional school schedule, moving from year-round status. This meant that a capacity crowd of parents of the 834 students of Mayfair attended the event.

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Sanchez said Mayfair staff and students are very thankful and proud to receive the donated backpacks from Valley Christian Radio and Office Depot. “Our mantra here is a child’s job is to learn, a teacher’s to teach and a parent’s job is to help,” Sanchez said.

Students throughout the district received backpacks thanks to the generosity of business partners like Valley Christian Radio and Office Depot.

Fresno High Teacher Chosen for Oklahoma City Memorial Fellowship

When Fresno High School social science teacher Joe Barron was selected as one of 12 educators from across the country to participate in a five-day fellowship program at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum last June, he looked forward to gaining new ideas and strategies for the classroom. Barron’s experience turned out to be that and more.

The most enriching part of the program was participating in panels with people who were there April 19, 1995, during the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, including survivors, clergy and first responders to the scene,” said Barron. “It was a very emotional roller-coaster ride listening to these people speak of their experiences.”

A selection committee chose the 12 teachers by focusing on the applicant’s potential for making good use of what they learned in their classrooms, ability to collaborate with colleagues and innovations in creating lesson plans. This was the second year the memorial center awarded fellowships.

Barron said that the teachers who participated in the fellowship examined the impact of violence on society, ways to make the world a safer place and how to incorporate this knowledge into classroom lessons through workshops and tours. Discussions focused on urban terrorism, urban violence, moving on from great tragedy and rebuilding society in the face of horrific events.

“One of the hardest parts of teaching history is how to connect the kids today to things that happened years before,” said Barron. “This program showed us ways to help students to think globally,” he said.

On the last day of the program, 35 teachers from the state of Oklahoma joined the 12 fellowship participants for the memorial center’s sixth annual Education Summit. Barron said this part of the program utilized role-playing, where teachers stepped into events to show how to make a “real” experience for students in the classroom.

Barron plans to use the many materials, books, posters and lesson plans from the program in his classes this year.

“I hope to make presentations this spring on the effects violence has on a community and how it comes to grip with something so horrible,” said Barron.
Scott Lamm - Cooper Middle School

Personal: Single

Hobbies: Work is my life, but in my spare time I enjoy being with my family, reading, working in my yard, traveling and trying to make the most of every day.

Background: I am excited to be serving in my 24th year in Fresno Unified. As a product of Fresno Unified schools, I have the great pleasure of remembering how powerful these memories are for what school meant to me and for defining who I am today. These experiences are my reminders of how exciting school can be when we strive to engage students academically and socially.

Cooper Middle School: My mission is to help students find their place in the world through positive school opportunities. Previously, I served as Principal at Del Mar Elementary for five years. I am really excited that the staff has worked hard in earning their first year out of program improvement status. It has been a lot of hard work, but with such a dedicated group of staff, targeted instruction and support from literacy coaches, I knew that this was going to happen.

My goal at Cooper Middle School is to help provide direction and focus to the hard work that has already been going on in the past years. I believe that Cooper is filled with students that have a lot of potential, a desire to be successful and the drive to make a difference in their lives.

Reynoldo Villalobos - Del Mar Elementary School

Personal: Married with a 3 ½ year old daughter.

Hobbies: I enjoy traveling, fishing, golfing and gardening during my spare time. But with a new baby, these activities have gone towards the sidelines for now.

Background: I grew up on the coast in the small town of Santa Maria. My father is a generation Mexican and my mother is from the island of Puerto Rico. My parents instilled in us a love for what school meant to me and for defining who I am today. These experiences are my reminders of how exciting school can be when we strive to engage students academically and socially.

Del Mar Elementary School: I am excited to be working at Del Mar Elementary. The Del Mar community is friendly and very diverse in ethnicity. The parents want what was is best for their children and are willing to support the school in providing the best education for their children. My short term goal is to improve parent involvement through SSC, ELAC and school-wide activities. My goal is for Del Mar to meet AYP goals for the second consecutive year and become a Non-Program Improvement school.
**FUSD Introduces New Principals**

**Lynn Rocha Salazar** - Ayer Elementary School

**Personal**: Married with 2 children

**Hobbies**: I have a wonderful family that has been incredibly supportive. Our two children attend Baird Middle School and Ayer Elementary. The best way to end the day is sharing with each other.

**Background**: My 17 years in the district include working at Fremont, Susan B. Anthony and Lincoln. I’ve taught first through sixth grade. I've worked as a Resource Teacher and as a Program Manager. I worked as a Vice-Principal on Special Assignment and had the opportunity to see many of the wonderful things going on in our district. Transitioning into this new position is an awesome experience and one that I appreciate.

**Ayer Elementary**: What an honor it is to have been selected as the new principal of Ayer Elementary School. Everyone has made me feel welcome. The Ayer staff has a reputation for being friendly and hard working. School pride is evident everywhere. While visiting classrooms, I see how teachers communicate high expectations and students strive diligently to meet them. While walking the campus you will notice nice displays of student work, well-mannered children, and teachers enthused about teaching and learning. My short-term goals include supporting teachers and students academic success and maintaining the momentum that’s been developed in the last several years. I look forward to meeting more of our families and community members. While providing a rigorous academic program and maintaining high expectations, I would like Ayer students to experience a broad array of activities. I look forward to building community partnerships to make that happen. We have an active PTA and SSC that provide a strong foundation for parent involvement. I look forward to working with classroom tutors and P.E. partners. This is just one of the many wonderful things that happen on our campus. I look forward to Ayer’s Annual Harvest Fest scheduled for Friday, November 3rd. Everyone is invited.

**Davinder Sidhu** - Wishon Elementary School

**Personal**: Married with 3 children

**Hobbies**: I have 3 wonderful boys in my life who keep me well balanced with work and my personal life. I spend every spare moment I have with my children. My family farms almonds and grapes in Kerman. The family business connects the children to their Punjabi way of life.

**Background**: I started my teaching career in Kerman Unified in 1993, and joined Fresno Unified in 1996 at Birney Elementary. I taught grades 3-6. Administrative duties have been at Lawless School, Yosemite Middle School, Columbia Elementary and Wilson Elementary. I was vice principal on special assignment reporting to Assistant Superintendent Eko Coronado. I graduated in 1992 from CSU Fresno, and got my Master’s in 2001 from Fresno Pacific University. I graduated from Alliant University, Fresno in 2006 with a Doctorate in education.

**Wishon Elementary**: I feel honored and privileged to serve as the principal of Wishon Elementary. Everyday, I wake up and feel challenged with the great opportunities that await the Wishon Staff. It is exciting to be part of such a dedicated and committed group of educators at Wishon. I look forward to working with the community collaboratively as we set out to transform into becoming a high-performing school. I am humbled and indebted with gratitude for all the opportunities I have been provided with to learn and grow as an educator. Many mentors have assisted me in developing my leadership skills and preparing me for the role of a principal. I truly believe our children need mentoring and guidance on various levels. It is a daily process as they develop emotionally, socially, and academically.

**My Punjabi, Indian heritage, being born and raised in England, and immigrating to America as an 18-year-old, optimist immigrant, are all life experiences that have really shaped my mind and approach to life and opportunities I have been provided with to learn and grow as an educator. Many mentors have assisted me in developing my leadership skills and preparing me for the role of a principal. I truly believe our children need mentoring and guidance on various levels. It is a daily process as they develop emotionally, socially, and academically.**

**Toby Wait** - Hoover High School

**Personal**: Married with 4 children

**Hobbies**: I am very committed to my family. On weekends and holidays we enjoy family times at our favorite getaway, Shaver Lake. I enjoy boating, playing with my kids in the sand and riding in the inner tubes. The waves, sand and pier fishing keep us all moving.

**Background**: I started my career in education following graduation from Baylor University, Waco, Texas. My first full time teaching position was in the Hanford High School District. In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I coached football and boys volleyball. While at Hanford, I started working toward my master’s degree at Fresno Pacific University. I continued my career in education as Vice Principal at Bullard High School. Following three years at Bullard, I was Assistant Principal at Fresno High School. Following Fresno High, I accepted a position working in the High School Division.

**Hoover High**: My short-term goal as a high school principal is to develop a deep understanding of a comprehensive high school. As the principal, the responsibility is great. To be successful in this position, I am committed to grow as a leader while also focusing on my staff and students as whole people. Teachers and support staff are key to creating a successful learning environment and their efforts show here at Hoover where there is a strong commitment to academics and athletics. Our community has high expectations and is extremely supportive.

**Go Pates!**
Targeted Improvements at Middle Schools Boost Achievement

Additional staff help students improve behavior and academics

New transitions classes, teachers and social workers at Fresno Unified's middle schools are already making dramatic differences in the learning environment this school year. Teachers and site leaders expect to see great gains in test scores by the end of the year.

Dr. Mabel Franks, the assistant superintendent of middle schools, described the targeted improvement actions as focusing on the needs of the “whole student, socially, emotionally and academically.” Franks said, “We’ve encircled them with support systems.”

“It’s finally freeing us to get out in the classroom to do the observations we need,” said Kathy Hannah-Chambas, principal of Yosemite Middle School.

Yosemite’s case manager and transitions class teacher teamed to work with high-risk students making sure they get intensive academic help, counseling on behavior and instruction on study skills. “This just brings more organization and calm to our campus,” Hannah-Chambas said of the class that offers an in-school alternative to suspension.

Wawona Middle School Principal Mike Darling boasts that the number of days students have been out on suspensions is just 20 this year, compared to 103.5 days last year at the same time and about 200 days the year before. He attributes this change to having a transitions class teacher and requiring high-risk students to meet daily with the case manager. Those students work on behavior modification, social skills and academic issues together and get a chance to check in daily with a teacher who really knows them.

Darling said, “These new programs are keeping more kids in school and helping them succeed.”

Fresno Unified budgeted more than $40 million for the 2006/07 school year to add extra teachers to help students struggling with reading, writing and math, teachers to help coach their colleagues to improve instruction and extra teachers, case managers and Categorical/Guidance Learning Coordinators to support students’ social/emotional development. Middle Schools were especially targeted with additional supports and staff because this was where budget cuts had been made in the past. These improvement actions are expected to accelerate learning throughout the year, significantly raise academic performance and quickly connect students to the learning environment.

This year, at most middle schools, support staff includes:

• An additional Categorical/Guidance Learning Coordinator to work with students on behavior modification, anti-bullying and peer mediation, career awareness, campus involvement, community involvement and leadership. They also focus on improving home-school communication.

• AVID (Advancing Via Individual Determination) program teacher to encourage a college-bound attitude for students, provide academic support while challenging students with increasing rigor, encourage critical thinking and writing, and increase career awareness among students.

• A case manager and social worker to look at the whole child, build partnerships between student, teacher and family, seek and provide outside social service help, and aid in the transition to and from middle school.

• A transition class teacher to assist students in developing coping, social and study skills, take personal responsibility, set goals, plan for improvement, and feel successful.

• An activities director focused on campus culture to encourage student involvement, inclusion and teamwork, create an exciting and positive campus environment, build school spirit and pride, develop peer role models, and encourage community service.

Hannah-Chambas said the key for Yosemite has been finding the right team. Her social worker has close collaboration with the case manager, a former special education teacher and with the transition class teacher, who has a multiple subject credential so he’s well-versed in teaching several key subjects where students are struggling. That team has been observing at-risk students in their classrooms and meeting with families to talk about all the extra support available to help students turn around this year.

Franks said she has been asking principals to carefully measure and track the differences being made by the extra staff to be sure “we do not let a single student slip through the system.” Staff feedback will help increase effectiveness of the targeted improvement actions and allow teachers and administrators to be more strategic in planning for their success.
Transfer Policy Changed To Create Opportunities for Fresno Unified Students
Meetings Scheduled to Help Families Painlesslly Make Important Decisions

Terri M. Pieretti
Prevention and Intervention Department

The Fresno Unified School District is proud to announce that the transfer process is changing, creating more opportunities for families to select the school that is just right for them and their children to succeed academically.

Fresno Unified is committed to providing students with as many options as possible because we recognize that when students are excited about school, they are much more likely to succeed in school. Ruth Fonseca, a student at Hoover High School participated in the transfer process last year and is thrilled to be attending the school of her choice. "I am so thankful to be at a great school like Hoover. I love everything about this school because it is a wonderful school with a lot of bright and polite students and teachers," said Fonseca.

Recently, the Board of Education adopted a new transfer policy that is designed to stabilize enrollment for students throughout the district. In the past, if a child moved out of a school attendance area in the middle of the school year, they would be forced to move on to the new school of residence. The district’s new policy now enables a child to at least finish the current school year at the school in which they were enrolled through the tenth day of that current school year.

The district is also making every effort to allow students to continue attending schools within the same feeder pattern through grade 12 as long as there is adequate space to meet this demand. The district’s new lottery system is now computerized and is proving to be a wonderful tool to expedite the enrollment of students to ensure a smooth start at the beginning of each school year.

The Department of Prevention and Intervention recognizes that families face many issues that sometimes make it difficult to get their children to the school in their own attendance area. Therefore, to support families as early as possible in the planning for each new school year, the district is accepting transfers as early as April through the end of June, for the upcoming school year, and processing all of the decisions no later than July of each year. In addition, Open Enrollment, Magnet placements and NCLB choice transfers will be completed even earlier for families who submit their requests by the new December 1 deadline which will now be in effect every year.

In order to help families understand the transfer process and the options available to select specialized programs such as schools with magnet themes, the Transfers office and the Magnet Schools office will host informational meetings at the following dates and locations:

- Oct. 10 6-7 p.m. ..........Sequoia Middle School
- Oct. 12 6:30-7:30 p.m. ...Baird Middle School
- Oct. 17 6:30-7:30 p.m. ....Hamilton K-8 School
- Oct. 25 6:30-7:30 p.m. ...Wawona Middle School
- Nov. 3 9:30-10:30 a.m. ......Yokomi Elementary
- Nov. 7 6:30-7:30 p.m. ....Bullard TALENT K-8

Open Enrollment and Magnet applications are now available online to make the application process easier and more convenient. If you don’t have access to a computer, we invite you to visit the Transfers office located at 1350 M Street and we’ll take you through the online process, step by step. Contact the Transfers office at (559) 457-3343 for more information on the transfers process and open enrollment/magnet applications to ensure timely submission of an application.

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Dear Fresno Unified Families:

One of the most critical foundations for teaching and learning is a safe and orderly environment. As you may be aware, there have been a number of school shootings around the United States and Canada in the last few months, including a recent tragedy at an Amish school in Pennsylvania. Like you, I am very concerned about the safety of our children and our staff.

I want to assure you that our schools regularly review their Safe Schools Plan. Also, Principals hold frequent meetings with their Safe School Leadership Team; make sure staff are familiar with district and school site emergency procedures and protocols; conduct safety drills regularly; and make sure that all adults on campus know their roles and responsibilities during crises.

As a parent, you play a vital role in the safety of your children. The following are tips for fostering open communication with your children and preparing them for emergencies:

1. Ask them questions, and then LISTEN.
2. Tell them you want to hear about what happens at school and with their friends, and encourage them to share anything with you.
3. Create a support system. Make a list of people to whom your children can turn to for help.
4. Understand the sense of loyalty your children feel towards their friends, but set expectations and rules to make them safe.
5. Report to school administration if your child is being bullied.
6. Talk about emergencies they may encounter in school and stress the importance of listening to school staff during school emergencies.
7. Encourage your children to talk to a teacher or staff member if they have concerns about their safety.
8. Have a family emergency plan with emergency contact phone numbers.

You should also know that District leaders regularly communicate with the Fresno Police and Fresno County Sheriffs departments as well as Fresno County Probation. This collaboration ensures a continual flow of information necessary to increase safety for everyone. There is nothing more important than the safety of our students and staff. Know that our entire staff is committed to creating a safe and orderly learning environment for all of our schools.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Hanson
Superintendent

State Proposition 1D

On Election Day in November, voters across the State will have an opportunity to decide on an initiative that would have a significant impact on Fresno Unified School District. Proposition 1D, the Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2006, is a $10.4 billion bond issue to provide funding to repair older schools and relieve school overcrowding. A total of $7.3 billion is earmarked for a variety of K-12 school facilities projects statewide.

Prop 1D would provide a minimum of $15.9 million for projects to modernize FUSD schools. The district has ten modernization projects that are designed and ready to complete, but funding from the state is not currently available. If Prop 1D is approved, modernizations will be accomplished at the following schools: Ahwahnee and Yosemite Middle Schools; and Burroughs, Calwa, Easterby, Figarden, Heaton, Kirk, Lowell and Sunset Elementary Schools. If Prop 1D does not pass, another source of funding will have to be found locally for construction of these projects to go forward. Lincoln Elementary has already been modernized and the district would receive reimbursement for this project from Prop 1D.

Modernization projects include replacing roofs and making other structural improvements; updating security, electrical, plumbing and air conditioning systems; and enhancing handicapped accessibility.

FUSD has 23 other modernization projects planned for the future, and Prop 1D funding may be used for these projects as well. All together, the district could receive up to $60 million for modernization projects if Prop 1D is approved.

The initial design work on the school modernization projects was funded by the local Measure K bond measure approved by Fresno voters in 2001.
Yokomi Students Gain Insight Through Three Large Science Murals on Campus

When the 706 students of Yokomi Elementary School returned from summer vacation this year, they were awestruck by three extraordinary science murals decking the hallways.

Yokomi Principal Steve Gonzalez explained that the educational murals - which are 9½-feet tall and up to 32-feet long - depict scientific subject matter through photos imprinted on wallpaper. Topics such as the beginning of the universe, the age of mammals, the solar system (Pluto included!) and the age of machines through today's technology are a few of the picture panels enhancing the school's walls.

"Our teachers use the murals as another way to introduce science in a visually exciting manner," said Gonzalez. "It gives the students a new and better perspective instead of just looking at a photo in a textbook," he said.

Gonzalez said that the mural's help create the atmosphere of a science academy. Yokomi, in its second year, is the only science magnet school at the elementary level in Fresno County. "We hope that these eye catching and beautiful murals make Yokomi different and unique in comparison to a traditional school," said Gonzalez.

According to Gonzalez, students will again be amazed next fall with the addition of three new murals proposed to be hung on the second floor of the school. These new murals will concentrate on life, physical and earth sciences. Yokomi Elementary received national recognition with a visit from Morgan Brown, Assistant Deputy Secretary for the Office of Innovation and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education.
Fresno City College

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Creating Opportunities

• FCC students move on to universities that include: Amherst, Brigham Young University, Chapman, Fresno Pacific University, Harvard, Mills, National University, Pepperdine, Sarah Lawrence, Stanford, Tufts, USC and Yale
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Call the College Activities Office at (559) 265-5711 to schedule a campus tour.

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A Legacy Renewed
Construction to transform the Old Administration Building into a modern facility will begin in 2007.