When Wolters Elementary students were challenged to read two million words in three weeks, Principal Debra Hawkins didn’t believe in a “million years” students would accomplish it. But take 586 highly motivated kindergarten through sixth grade students with the prospect of their principal dressing up as a chicken if they reached their goal, and the rest is history.

Wolter’s teachers Meme Biek and Mardy Cowan headed-up the reading effort with the resounding message that reading is just as adventurous as a movie or video games. Students stepped up to the test by almost doubling their goal after reading 3,516,266 words.

Words were counted from any book of the student’s choice as long as it was at the reader’s instructional level or above. To ensure that the book was at the reader’s level, a test was given after completion of the book. If the student did not pass, then the book was not counted, according to Hawkins.

“This was a fun way to motivate students to read at their level,” said Hawkins. “If kids are reading at their level, they are developing fluency and comprehension—that is our goal,” she added.

Hawkins explained since competing with today’s world of videos and computers, finding ways to engage students and keep them interested has become increasingly difficult. “We found that by keeping students engaged and interested and at the same time having fun, students made progress,” said Hawkins. “That was our motive behind the contest,” she said.

During the course of the contest, words were tallied and posted on a thermometer in the school. Hawkins said the students really kept track of their progress and anticipated morning announcements for the contest’s status. At contest end, Hawkins thrilled students when she came to work dressed in a chicken suit. “Everyone please see Wolters, Page 8
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Superintendent’s Message

Last August, when I first met with principals and other district leaders, I warned them that our work to transform the district would be difficult and sometimes uncomfortable: but our children deserve nothing less than that total commitment. While we are in the midst of growing pains, I am confident that we will emerge with a district that challenges every child to achieve academically, and prepares every child for a successful future. As we transform Fresno Unified, these growing pains will be felt by people throughout the district.

Our performance, as measured by local, state, and federal accountability systems demands that we transform the district. We are in the process of implementing changes that will create more stability and increase focus on the classroom.

The Board of Education also agreed to retain the Superintendent’s Message

• provide aggressive acceleration and intervention programs for all students
• improve the coordination and delivery of programs for English Learners
• improve choices for students who have not found success in regular classrooms or who disrupt learning for their peers
• provide comprehensive support staff and services for our schools

You may not see all the benefits of the hard work being done this year in our organization’s evolution, but when the next school year begins, as students and teachers settle into the business of teaching and learning, I believe the changes will be evident.

Governor Schwarzenegger visits FUSD

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger toured Duncan Polytechnical High School to see how a focus on careers and vocations with hands-on, real-life experiences prepares students not only for jobs but also for college.

The March 21 visit included a press conference where Schwarzenegger touted his own time in vocational training in Austria. He took sales and business courses. The governor is pushing for more such education and has included $50 million in his proposed state budget plus additional funding for vocational facilities in a state infrastructure bond he hopes to put on the ballot.

For Duncan students the visit offered an up-close view of the former movie man “Terminator” and a chance to show off their school. The magnet high school focuses on health, agriculture, industrial technology and business careers. Although 91% of students come from low-income homes and many come from families where English is not the primary language, the school has one of Fresno Unified’s highest graduation rates and nearly all its students are admitted to college. It was named one of nine Breakthrough High Schools nationally last year.

Greg Jauregui, 17, came to Duncan for its automotive services program and because it’s a smaller school with a reputation of caring and high expectations. He has earned entrance next year to the exclusive Universal Technical Institute’s automotive program in Arizona. Jauregui said he was able to apply explain how to fix a tricky spark plug problem to the governor — once the teen got over his nervousness.

But Senior Na Lee Chang was speechless when the governor stopped in her nursing class and stuck out his hand for her to file his nails. She did. “I’m a fan. I was really in shock,” she said.

Chang was able to tell Schwarzenegger that she’s on her way next year to Fresno City’s 'Future Nurses program next year. Duncan helped Chang settle on a life path after she had a chance to volunteer at the local Veterans hospital through a Regional Occupational Program class. ”Duncan introduces you to a field and makes you feel comfortable with the environment,” said 17-year-old Chang. ”I know my sister and others who didn’t go here, struggled for two years in college trying to figure out what they wanted to do.”
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Edison Wins 10th Academic Decathlon

For the tenth straight year in a row, Edison High School’s nine member Academic Decathlon team took home top honors, with one team member winning first place for the second time.

Twenty-four schools recently went head-to-head in the county-wide competition held at Fresno State. According to Gary Mrkaich, Social Science teacher and the team’s coach for the past five years, the decathlon is a 10-event competition complete with speech, essay and interview sections and a multiple choice test.

Subjects range from art, music, language and literature to science, economics and math. A “Super Quiz” with this year’s theme, “European Renaissance,” completed the mix. The two-part speech category tested participants’ nerves and abilities presenting both a prepared four-minute speech and an impromptu speech to last two minutes with one minute to prepare.

“It was a real team effort,” said Mrkaich. “The team’s time and dedication paid off and we get to hold onto the trophy for another year,” he said.

Teams are comprised of three students each in three categories: Honors (3.75-4.0 G.P.A.); Scholastics (3.0-3.74 G.P.A.); Varsity (2.99 & below G.P.A.). Honors member Elspeth Hansen won First Place Dean’s Medalist for the second year running. Teammate and Honors member David Sun improved his 3rd place standing last year with 2nd Place, Dean’s Medalist this year. Also, Nadje Najar took 3rd place in the Honors section.

Other team member standings include: Alex Vera, 3rd Place, Scholastics; Lizzie Davis, 4th Place, Scholastics; Andy Lai, 6th Place, Scholastics; James Forelo, 1st Place, Varsity; Samantha Nelson, 2nd Place, Varsity; Youa Yang, 4th Place, Varsity.

The team recently competed in the state competition held in Los Angeles and took home fourth place overall. Elspeth Hansen was awarded the top scoring student in the state. Also, Bullard’s team received 16th in the state competition.

Important 2006 Graduation Information

Graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2006 are fast approaching! All graduation dates and times for each high school in the district can be accessed through the district website at www.fresno.k12.ca.us. Here are a few reminders for those planning to attend graduation this year:

• There are no limits of family and friends attending graduation.
• Parking at the Save Mart Center is $4.
• Please be aware that noise makers, bullhorns, confetti and signs are not allowed. We realize that graduation is a time of celebration but these items cause a distraction to others receiving recognition and their friends and family supporting them.
• Seniors who have met academic credit requirements will be allowed to participate in graduation exercises regardless of CAHSEE status.

Fresno
2 p.m.
Tuesday, May 30

Bullard
5 p.m.

Edison
8 p.m.

Fresno Adult GED
1:00 p.m.

Fresno Adult High School
3:30 p.m.

Hoover
2 p.m.

Sunnyside
5 p.m.

Roosevelt
8 p.m.

Tuesday, May 30

J. E. Young
11 a.m.

McLane
7:30 p.m.

Fresno Adult GED
11 a.m.

Fresno Adult High School
6:00 p.m.

Duncan
6 p.m.

Cambridge
6 p.m.

DeWolf
7 p.m.

Wednesday, May 31

Save Mart Center
Save Mart Center
Save Mart Center
Save Mart Center
McLane Stadium
Saroyan Theatre
Saroyan Theatre
Saroyan Theatre
Roosevelt Auditorium
Tower Theatre (tentative)

Picture Perfect CELEBRATIONS

DRESS THEM IN THEIR EASTER BEST

Gottschalks
Wrestling to the top

McLane High School Senior Alfonso Sanchez grappled his way to the top spots in his sport this year. Coached by Dr. Bruce Lippman, Sanchez captured both the Valley and Master’s Wrestling Championships titles in the 140 pound division. Sanchez also snagged third place in the California State Wrestling Championship, compiling an impressive overall record of 48 wins and one loss.

Sanchez will be attending CSU-Fresno next fall, receiving a scholarship and will major in Business/Real Estate. His goals include returning to McLane to serve as an assistant coach.

Fresno High School students see how to ‘Break Down Walls’

How does a motivational speaker inspire and intrigue an entire student body of high school students by simply playing the piano and drums? It’s easy when it’s done with feet.

Alvin Law, motivational and keynote speaker, kicked-off a week-long program, “Breaking Down the Walls” when he amazed on-lookers with his presentation recently held at Fresno High School. Students listened as he expressed that society must break the status quo of judging people on the basis of appearance.

“There is no such word as ‘can’t,’” Law explained to students. And what better example than Law, who has lived his entire life without arms. Affected by Thalidomide, a medication used in the 1960’s to treat morning sickness of expectant mothers, Law was born without arms. His biological parents were overwhelmed by a baby with such a condition and put him up for adoption.

Young Alvin was adopted by Jack and Hilda Law, a couple in their late 50’s whose own children were grown. With the love and encouragement of his adopted parents, Law learned to use his feet for tasks accomplished by hands and arms for most. Besides playing the piano and drums, he also plays the trombone and can throw a football. He attended regular school throughout his life, graduating from both high school and college with a degree in broadcasting.

After Law’s moving presentation, students began four days of training workshops designed to promote respect and acceptance amongst themselves. Encounters with nearly 600 students over the course of four days dealt with relationships and interpersonal communications.

“The focus of ‘Breaking Down the Walls’ was understanding to celebrate, not just tolerate diversity,” said Robin Snowden, Algebra teacher at Fresno High School. Snowden explained that there are currently 25 different languages spoken on Fresno High’s campus.

The activity that created the most controversy among students was a game called “Cross the Line.” Many students opened up emotionally about personal issues and also learned that they are not alone in their thoughts and feelings.

“When we do this activity next year, the impact will be exponentially greater,” Snowden said.

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Spring 2006
Southeast Asian Educational Conference helps families connect with schools

The Fourth Annual Southeast Asian Education Conference will draw speakers this year from as far away as Laos, Honolulu and Minnesota, to give families insight on how to deal with generational difficulties, ways to better connect with educational institutions and to help their students go successfully on to college.

The conference, set for 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., April 29, at Roosevelt High School in Fresno, is a collaborative effort among community groups, social service agencies, Fresno, Clovis and Central unified school districts and the Southeast Asian Education Council. Conference organizers hope to promote educational success through family, school and community partnerships.

Special guests this year include:
• Hmong Gen. Van Pao
• Rev. Timothy Vang, senior pastor of Maplewood Church in Minnesota and leader of regional literacy efforts
• Chhany Sak-Humphry, a Khmer language professor at University of Hawaii
• Nam Loc Nguyen, director of immigration and refugee services for Catholic Charities in Los Angeles, who will speak on generational disconnect
• Dr. Khamptha Thepavong, of University of California San Francisco’s medical center in Fresno
• Paul Lo, trustee of Merced City School District
• Inta Chanthavongsouk, president of The Lao Conference of Churches in Whittier

Workshop topics include gang prevention, developing positive self-esteem, how to apply for college financial aid, family math activities and creating positive learning environments at home.

While workshops throughout the day are geared mostly to families’ needs, there are also cross-cultural training sessions for education professionals. And students can find exhibits and booths with information on career pathways, financial aid and colleges. There will also be hands-on science activities for children.

Registration for the workshop is from 9-10 a.m. with opening speeches beginning at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be provided. For more information contact Hongthong Niravanh at 457-3957 or Blong Xiong at 225-8395.
Safe schools are job #1

Fresno Unified Schools are dedicated to providing the safest and most comfortable school experience for its 79,000 students district-wide. But the safe school planning process would not be successful without the continued commitment and support of parents, students and staff alike.

According to Pete Summers, Executive Director of Prevention and Intervention for the district, each school within the district submits a Comprehensive Safe School Plan to the Office of Emergency Planning/Crisis Response for board approval by March 1 of every year.

Every school within the district has a Safe School Leadership team which consists of the school's principal and key campus staff. A Threat Assessment /Student Wellness Team, First Aid Responders and a Student Release Team round out the plan. The school site council, consisting of school staff and parents, has the responsibility to approve the final plan and is involved in the plan development.

"It is important that parents get involved in their children's safe school process through school site councils," said Summers. "If we feel safe, we tend to do better," he said.

Safety plan components include strategies for improving school safety/climate, fire and lockdown drill schedules and confidential school phone tree plans. Procedures, established by the district, instruct that fire drills be conducted once per month at the elementary and middle school levels and two times per year for high schools. Lockdown drills are also done twice per year.

Summers encourages parents of students to talk to their school principal or child's teacher on how to become involved with the safe school planning process. For additional information: pjsumme@fresno.k12.ca.us.

Wolters students reach milestone

Continued from page 1

one had a great time with it," said Hawkins. "We want to provide students with a balanced curriculum, but we discovered that a lot of academic mileage is gained through celebrations like the "Million Words" contest," she said. "Wolters is the district's only retrofit "Smart School," meaning an older school which had dated classroom computer equipment installed. Each "Smart School" teacher is equipped with a "Smart Board," projector, speakers and a laptop computer which utilizes power point presentations through the "Smart Board". Hawkins said that these tools help pace teaching so kids don’t have time to "zone out".

Students and faculty had so much fun and success with their "Million Words" contest that a new learning experience took form. "Read Across America Day" was celebrated at Wolters with a western theme and a book drive for gently used books donated to the Ronald McDonald House. Guest readers celebrating literature also filled a key role in the day's activities.

"Happy teachers, happy kids, a happy school and a solid curriculum equals learning," said Hawkins. "That is our motivating force behind all we do," she ended.

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Sunnyside senior to spend year in Brazil

Sunnyside High School senior Martina Ming will help bridge the gap to foreign cultural understanding around the world when she serves the East Fresno Rotary Club as their newest ambassador and scholarship recipient exchange student to Brazil next year.

Ming will represent Rotary International District 5230 Youth Exchange as one of 18 high school students chosen within the four county district including Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Monterey Counties. She is one of more than 10,000 youth who will take part in the program nation-wide traveling to different countries throughout the world.

"Rotary's Youth Exchange Program provides young people like Martina the opportunity to meet people from other lands and to experience their culture," said Anthony Yavasile, District 5230 Youth Exchange Officer.

Ming not only was nominated and selected for the program after an extensive interview process, but was awarded a scholarship from the East Fresno Rotary Club to pay for many of the personal expenses incurred by a student in the program. Ming’s scholarship will amount to around $3000. Normally students are responsible for their own round-trip ticket to their selected country, medical insurance and passport/visa expenses, while Rotary clubs usually take care of administrative costs and fees of the program.

According to Marion Montgomery, International Services Chair, East Fresno Rotary Club, the scholarship allows students otherwise excluded from the program due to expense, to be afforded the “life changing opportunity” of taking part in the exchange.

Ming will live with at least two different host families during her year-exchange. Montgomery pointed out that the focus of the exchange is "a cultural experience" and that the student will come back to the United States fluent in the exchange country’s native language—in this case Spanish.

"Students are chosen who will represent our club, city and country well," said Montgomery. "They must be prepared, possess the right attitude and understand the expectations of the program," she said.

Ming, the daughter of Cambodian immigrants, knows first-hand about the trials and tribulations of adapting to different cultural backgrounds. Steve Linney, her counselor from the East Fresno Rotary Club, was delighted when she expressed interest in the program because of her background.

Linney said that Ming has been active in Interact Club, sponsored by the Rotary Club. She has also volunteered in numerous Rotary fundraising projects throughout the year. At school she is a member of the color guard and is in the Doctor’s Academy.

“Martina is an all-around outstanding student,” said Linney. “You have to have a lot of inner strength to participate in this program and Martina has that," he said.

Although Ming graduates from Sunnyside High this spring, she will still be required to attend high school classes every day in Brazil. Her focus will be to become fluent in Spanish so that she will be able to fulfill her obligation of giving an hour-long speech in Spanish about Fresno and her experiences before leaving her host country.

Ronan Ribeiro, Rotary District 4510, São Paulo, Brazil, said that Ming will experience "the true Brazilian life with a familiar home and the greatest of kindness." Upon Ming’s return, she will give a talk at the East Fresno Rotary Club about her Brazilian travel experience.

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Parent concerns heard in five different languages at multicultural event

Fresno Unified hosted the “Multicultural Parent Conference” last month at Roosevelt High School for more than 1,500. The focus was on parents and how they play an integral part in student achievement.

“The conference gave the opportunity for two-way communication between parents and schools,” said Paul A. Garcia, Director of Services for English Language Learners and one of the conference coordinators. “The district was able to hear the parents and the needs they have,” he said.

A variety of parent workshops were presented in three different languages including English, Hmong and Spanish. Two other languages, Lao and Khmer, had interpreters within the English workshop. Workshops addressed information on topics such as graduation requirements and the high school exit exam, special education, English Language Services and college entrance requirements and enrollment information.

The conference, a collaborative effort of the English Language Services, Community and Family Engagement Network (CFEN, previously called Parent Engagement Center), District English Learners Advisory Committee (DELAC) and the Office of State and Federal Programs. This year’s featured keynote speaker was Superintendent Michael E. Hanson.

Conference participants were entertained by student members of various cultural organizations. Lunch was served, offering a diverse array of food representing many different cultures. Roosevelt High staff provided day care for over 500 children of participants.

“We hope to build a greater capacity in communication so that kind of knowledge will lift student achievement levels,” said Garcia. “We have to involve our community. We realize we can’t do this alone,” he said.

McCardle launches ‘ScholarShare’

Students at McCardle Elementary began preparing for the future by taking part in the kick-off of California’s new college savings program, “ScholarShare.”

California State Treasurer, Phil Angelides, spoke to a packed house about the 529 College Savings Program during a recent assembly for parents and students grades four through six. The new program offers savings accounts promoting early saving for higher education. Saved funds can be used at any college, university, trade or technical school, including overseas.

“We were the only school in the district where the state treasurer spoke on behalf of the new program,” said Kathy Dennen, Principal at McCardle.

Chaired by the state treasurer, “ScholarShare” has been designed to assist both children and families start saving for college. Accounts can be opened for as little as $25. and can be handled on-line. “ScholarShare” earnings and qualified withdrawals are tax-free when used for qualified education expenses.

“The assembly spoke to the importance of a college education and at the same time motivated parents and children to establish this need as a long-term goal,” said Dennen.

Assembly guests also heard from Fresno State Football and Fresno Falcon players on the importance of receiving a college education. Cynthia Sterling, Fresno City Councilwoman was also in attendance. Fourth and fifth grade students received T-shirts supporting the “ScholarShare” program.

To obtain additional information on the “ScholarShare College Savings Trust” go to www.scholarshare.com.

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Wednesday, April 12
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Thursday, April 13
Paddle Boats and Steam Engines
Friday, April 14
Illusions, Eye Puzzles, and Mind Games

SUMMER CAMP
Week of June 19
The Science and Art of Photography
Week of June 26
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Week of July 10
Sound Exploration
Week of July 17
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Week of July 24
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Week of July 31
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“Without your help, she never could have passed her high school courses, or even hoped to get into college.”

Parents, 16 years old
Our teacher told us the fateful news today,
Our soldier friend had passed away.
She fought her fears to fight in Iraq,
She knew that she might not ever come back.
She fought for freedom for you and me,
To be the soldier she knew she had to be.
We sent her books and treats to lift her soul,
She leaves us cherished memories and a dark hole.
Some of us wept, some of us cried,
Some of us just felt funny inside,
She left us without ever saying goodbye.
We have great sorrow and pain,
You are our hero and you did not die in vain.

Hamilton students Audrey Benelli, Royshon Snowden, Charlotte Kinsfather, Sydnie Vinuela, Dominque Gardea and Victoria Villa wrote this poem on the day they found out about Sgt. Regina Real's death. It was the first day back to school after winter break, which was also the day of their soldier pen pal's funeral.

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For information about making your home and car smoke-free or to request information about quitting smoking, call the Fresno County Tobacco Prevention Program at (559) 445-3276.

Paid for by Proposition 99, the California Tax Initiative, Grant #04-10.
School bus driver receives military’s Purple Heart

Fresno Unified School District requires children to have a physical examination before starting Kindergarten in the fall. Physicals need to be done after March 1, 2006, and all immunizations must be current. Call Fresno Unified Student Health Center for an appointment now if you cannot get in to see your health care provider or if you do not have a health care provider or health insurance.

FUSD Student Health Center:
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Parents Of Fall 2006 Kindergarteen Students . . .

IT’S TIME FOR KINDERGARTEN PHYSICALS!

Just taking my own advice.

DR. WAYNE ARIO TO

I hate running. But I love ice hockey.
I’ve got a regular game with the guys a few times a week, so I need to stay in shape. That’s why I run. I don’t really have the time. It’s not fun. But when I get the puck on a breakaway and it’s just me against the goalie, it all pays off. Hey, if I can do it, maybe you can, too.