It’s been a busy summer. At Fresno Unified, it’s also been a very productive summer as we prepare for a fresh start in this school district. Well before summer kicked off, Fresno Unified was already preparing for the next school year. We have some great things in store and we’ve been working hard over the summer to ensure that the 2012-2013 school year is one of our most successful yet. Before the previous school year ended, we received reports from our own Graduation Task Force and the Washington, D.C. based Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) regarding how we go about educating students. At the center of both was the need for more personalization of instruction and more intervention for at-risk youth. We’ve taken the recommendations from both reports and we’re working to ensure that not only do we address the concerns noted by students, parents, teachers and community members, but that we do so in the most effective manner.

“It’s been a busy summer,” stated Fresno Unified Superintendent Michael Hanson. “This past school year, we did a lot of listening to what the community has to say about the work that we’re doing at Fresno Unified. We’re still synthesizing all of that information, but we are really excited about working to implement some of the recommendations that we’ve received. Our graduation rate is up and fewer of our students are dropping out. Now, we just have to build upon that progress and I’m very confident that we have the right team to make that happen.”

This year, on the first day of school, all Fresno Unified schools will take part in a special campaign geared at making a connection for students between their current grade level and the importance of graduating from high school. Declaring a first grader a member of the “Class of 2024” is a tremendous way of sending a message that Fresno Unified is committed to helping students earn their diploma. A special assembly will be held on the first day and it should be a lot of fun for everyone involved. It will also help to get students, teachers and all staff motivated and excited about the year ahead.

“Over the summer, principals, vice principals, instructional coaches and teachers on special assignment received training with several key learning objectives: examining school culture, leadership and instruction and developing key content knowledge and processing skills. The training will help school leaders develop an intentional culture, provide direction and better guide instruction. Training participants also investigated the development, alignment and integration of systems that ensure college readiness for all students. During the course of the official school year, building leaders will participate in additional professional development and enrichment as they find new and more creative ways of reaching an ever-changing student population.

At the central office, Fresno Unified took additional steps in the re-organization process that was announced in May. Several key executive cabinet positions are now filled, including Babatunde Ilori at chief of staff, Michael Neece in the chief academic officer post and Jamilah Fraser in the chief information officer role. The three positions will help to ensure greater cohesiveness in the district’s academic program and information sharing both internally and externally. There has even been a physical restructuring at the central office as dozens of staff members packed up their things and relocated to other areas of the building just a few weeks ago in order to ensure that individuals...
Did you know the City of Fresno Water Division offers FREE classroom presentations for all ages and grade levels? From conservation tips to guided tours, the Water Division has the perfect presentation for your class!

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dave.williams@fresno.gov
SUPERINTENDENT’S Message

Two of the main concerns in both reports was that expectations for our students is low and that for the most part, many of them don’t even feel welcomed or connected in buildings that they have to spend six to seven hours in, five days a week, during 180 days of a school year. This has proven to be a recipe for low academic achievement, it’s unacceptable and we have to do better. Imagine the peril and hopelessness you would experience in an environment in which you didn’t feel welcomed for that many hours, that many days and that many weeks in a year. Now, just imagine how awful it must be for a child. This year, we have to do better and we need parental support and input.

Parents are one of the greatest factors in making sure that a school building is being run effectively and that it is an environment conducive to learning for all students. When your kids come home from school, ask them how their day was. Ask them what they learned. Ask them about their relationships with their teachers and their friends. Ask them if they like their school! Absolutely, children go through various stages and points in their growth and development that will make asking some of those questions about as pleasant as having wisdom teeth pulled. But, if you don’t know how your child feels about an environment that they are in for so many hours every day, you can’t hold our feet to the fire to make it right – to make it an environment that we can all be proud of!

Connections and relationship building are vital to the work that we are doing to prepare future generations for the challenges of adulthood. Every interaction that a child has with anyone in a school building – from teachers to custodians to coaches to principals to office staff – should be a positive one and we are working hard to make sure that going forward, that’s every child’s experience. No, I don’t intend to imply that our schools are going to be islands of perfection. But, I do intend to state that we are going to give it our best effort.

Over the past several months, we’ve been working to find more creative ways to make you, the parents of our students, also feel more connected and empowered. Fresno Unified’s Parent University has been around for a little while now, but this year and in every year going forward, we want parents to fully utilize that resource. Some of you are already skilled and capable when it comes to advocating on behalf of your children, but some of you may feel as though you’re fumbling around in the dark trying to figure out who to call, when to call and how to call. Parent University can help you learn how to effectively navigate the system and there are a wealth of other resources, including parenting classes and educational enrichment courses and seminars – all at no cost. It is a resource too valuable to ignore and I urge you to contact Fresno Unified’s Parent University office to find out how you can get involved.

As the summer vacation draws to close, I encourage you to start having conversations about school with your children now. It’s never too early and it will help make it easier and more comfortable once the school year begins. Make it a daily ritual. Ask them if they are excited about the year ahead and what kind of challenges they are anticipating. While it may not seem like a big deal now, developing an open dialogue that shows that you are truly interested in their thoughts and opinions will make it easier for them to come to you when there’s a problem that needs to be addressed in the future. We are working to create strong connections with our students in order to better ensure their academic success. But, our efforts will be more fruitful if they feel an even stronger connection with the people in their homes.

I hope that each of you enjoys what’s left of summer and I look forward to interacting with you throughout the school year. We have some great things in store, including the expansion of Fresno Unified’s International Baccalaureate (IB) into the middle grades and the grand opening of the Vang Pao Elementary School. We’ve had seven straight years of academic gains and our graduation rate is on the rise as well. We are on the right track, but we need to continually focus on the learning experience for all. I know that with your support and input we’ll get there, building even stronger connections and a culture of success for every one of our young people.
2,151 Students College Bound

Edison High School graduates (from left) Taylor Castro, Amber Dominguez and Tanveer Bhauria share a moment at commencement. More than 2,100 FUSD graduates will head off to college this fall representing 128 different colleges and universities.

Fresno Unified students will head off to 128 different colleges and universities this fall including Ivy League universities, nine University of California campuses as well as Fresno State and Fresno City College.

For the first time in recent memory, the district generated a comprehensive list of where all graduating seniors planned to attend college – with exciting results. According to records from the high school counseling offices, 2,151 graduates from the class of 2012 will go to college in the fall. Not surprisingly, Fresno State was the top choice, with 729 enrolled for the fall. Other popular four-year choices were:

Fresno Pacific University, 43
UC Merced, 32
UC Davis, 31
UC Santa Cruz, 29
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, 20

Hundreds of students also committed to junior colleges, including 826 headed to Fresno City College and 73 to the Willow International Center.

“In looking at this long list of colleges and universities where our students are headed, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of these young people,” said Superintendent Michael Hanson. “To get to this point took years of hard work for our students, as well as the support of their families and the dedicated teachers and staff of Fresno Unified.”

The district continues to increase the number of students moving on to colleges and universities through the FUSD counseling team’s sharp, intentional work placing students in the courses they will need for admission to college. Counselors have developed new tools to evaluate transcripts in real time and strategies to ensure students are aware of postsecondary eligibility requirements.

The district begins reaching out to students and their families in middle school to inform them of classes required for college and involves students in a variety of college-awareness activities, field trips and outreach programs.

The work includes an unprecedented partnership with UC Merced, resulting in a full-time UC counselor from UC Merced’s Center for Educational Partnerships working with every Fresno Unified high school to increase overall college-going rates. The district and UC Merced’s Center for Education Partnerships earlier this year received a $1.5 million grant from The California Endowment to improve social/emotional and academic support for students.

The funds will be used to develop a three-tiered system that matches the type and intensity of services required for struggling students. This work will be expanded to the Oakland and Long Beach school districts as well, which are partner districts with Fresno Unified in the California Office to Reform Education (CORE).

Staff in the three districts will be trained in using databases, tools and protocols to help identify and support students whose social emotional problems are holding them back from excelling academically.

As of graduation week in the middle of June, Fresno Unified had 3,296 graduating seniors, a total that could change based on summer school, results of the California High School Exit Exam and other factors. Based on the 3,296 total, 62.5 percent of seniors were headed to college, with numerous other graduates planning to attend technical schools, work or enter the military.

Counselors work in conjunction with the Fresno State outreach staff to ensure that eligible students are identified and complete all phases of the application process.

The results have been impressive, with Fresno Unified admissions to Fresno State rising 62 percent from 2009 through 2012.

The close collaboration with UC Merced is in addition to partnerships with Fresno State, Fresno Pacific and Fresno City College. Through these partnerships, families learn about the importance of early academic and financial planning for college and receive help with the application process.

The partnership with Fresno State includes a formal memorandum of understanding with the university to encourage college-going and career awareness in grades seven through 12.

The results have been impressive, with Fresno Unified admissions to Fresno State rising 62 percent from 2009 through 2012.

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Graduation Task Force

Jefferson Vang, a recent graduate of Edison High School, knows from his own involvement with gangs and drugs that a variety of pressures and issues can lead young people to drop out of school.

The issues that Vang faced and a variety of others were examined by the FUSD Graduation Task Force over the spring, culminating in a set of recommendations to the FUSD Board of Education on June 6. In the 2012-13 school year, new strategies will be introduced based on the work of the task force.

The district received encouraging news earlier in the summer with the release of the California Department of Education’s latest data on graduation and dropout rates using the new California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Fresno Unified’s graduation rate in 2010-11 increased to 70.8 percent, a 2.1 bump from 2009-10. Likewise, the number of students dropping out decreased to 905 in 2010-11, compared to 1,011 in 2009-10.

“Change truly is a process that takes patience and perseverance,” said Superintendent Michael Hanson. “The increase in our graduation rate and the decrease in the drop-out numbers didn’t occur by happenstance. We still have a great deal of work ahead of us, but these numbers prove that we are heading in the right direction. We are going to take things to another level this fall as we implement the recommendations from the Graduation Task Force and Council of the Great City Schools reports.”

The task force, made up of students, teachers, parents, community leaders and other stakeholders, heard from national experts, reviewed local data, hosted 33 community listening sessions, heard from more than 1,000 stakeholders and met as a group for seven two-hour meetings. The task force’s report includes 16 requirements to keep all students in school and 103 recommendations to ensure the district meets requirements.

Jefferson was a student member of the task force. He joined a gang in sixth grade and was a father by the time he was in eighth grade. He then started turning his life around and recently graduated. His inspirational story and his perspective on the drop-out issues are highlighted in a video on the FUSD Graduation Task Force website at www.fresnounified.org.

Hanson noted in a message to Fresno Unified staff about the task force recommendations that students like Jefferson “are the reason we should pursue this collective work.”

Task force recommendations include:

Teachers, Administrators and School Staff

Every adult who works with students must treat students with care, respect and high expectations for their academic success.

Every teacher must teach until every student learns, and every teacher must give credit for demonstrated knowledge and performance.

Teachers and school staff must work with families to ensure that every student is in school, in class, and engaged in learning every day.

District

The district’s behavior response system must restore healthy interactions, help participants learn from their mistakes, and connect students and adults with the supports they need to keep all students in school on target to graduate.

Redesign district policies to ensure that students are given every opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and academic performance, and to earn credits to stay in school on target to graduate.

Ensure that district transfer protocols keep every student in school learning at grade level every day.

Families and the Community

Create a sense of urgency and high expectations throughout the community for all students to stay in school on target to graduate.

All stakeholders – community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, and government agencies – should work collaboratively with the district to keep all students in school on target to graduate.

Parents and families must have high expectations for their children, hold them accountable to perform and behave appropriately, and stay in school on target to graduate.

FUSD Graduation Rate Increases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2009 - 2010</th>
<th>2010- 2011</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullard</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoover</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLane</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Overall</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent University 101

Ever felt bewildered by the variety of state and district tests your student takes throughout the year? Maybe you’ve felt confusion about the requirements for admission to college, or how you can better support your student to do well in school.

Fresno Unified’s Parent University offers free classes to help parents better understand public education, how Fresno Unified operates and what it offers, and how to be involved, supportive parents. Classes are starting this fall with a full listing at www.fresnounified.org under “Parents” or call (559) 457-6006 to register.

This fall, the district will pilot classes focused on English learners, special education, making the transition to middle school and choosing a college.

The English learner program will serve parents with children in third grade, targeting that grade because it is seen as a pivotal year for students as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn. These courses will provide parents with information on how to assist their children in making the transition to English fluency.

The special education program will serve families that are new to special education and/or the district. It will include a series of modules focused on understanding the services and resources available and information on their parental rights under Individual Disabilities Education Act.

The middle school baseline program will serve parents with students who will be or have begun to make the transition from elementary to middle school. This series will provide parents with the necessary information to understand the important academic and social emotional transition points, while providing strategies to support their children.

The college going program will serve parents who are beginning to explore the higher education options for their student by providing them support in choosing a college, searching for scholarships and financial aid and surviving the first year of post-secondary education.

As Parent University heads into its third year, it continues to expand and diversify. More than 5,700 parents participated in parent learning courses provided by Parent University and partner organizations last year, with a goal of 10,000 this year. Courses are offered in English and other languages as necessary.

For more information about course offerings provided by Parent University and its partner organizations please contact them at 457-6006.
Measure Q Update

Measure Q is changing the face of Fresno Unified. Following a year of planning and construction, several projects will be ready or near completion for students and staff with the start of the 2012-13 school year, including an eight-classroom building and three-classroom kindergarten building at Rowell Elementary School and new softball and baseball fields at Hoover High School.

Voters passed Measure Q with a resounding 76 percent approval in November 2010, making it possible for the district to pursue priority projects outlined by the Facilities Master Plan, a watershed document approved by the FUSD Board of Education in 2009 to guide the district’s facilities needs over the next 15 years.

“Thanks to our community’s support and investment in Fresno Unified, we are able to provide the quality facilities that our students and staff deserve,” said Karin Temple, assistant superintendent for operational services.

Other key projects underway include:

- Buildings to house classrooms, the library, career center and administration at Fresno High School. The buildings’ classical architecture will compliment historic Royce Hall and allow for the removal of 22 portables as well as the existing buildings at the front of the school to make way for green space.

- A classroom building at Hoover High School that will also house science labs and teacher collaboration space.

- Modernization of Hamilton K-8 School.

- Classroom buildings at Roosevelt and Edison high schools.

- Remodel of Roosevelt’s girls locker room.

- Classroom building at Winchell Elementary School to replace portables; preparation for classroom construction at Aynesworth, Easterby and Centennial elementary schools.

- Planning for new buildings at Bullard High School along Palm Avenue to house classrooms, library, career center and administration.

- Planning for a new classroom building for McLane High School.

The new buildings are part of $100 million in Measure Q projects underway throughout the district, providing a boost to the local economy and reinvestment in Fresno neighborhoods. Completed projects include classroom buildings at Mayfair and Wilson elementary schools.

The district also continues to complete work funded through Measure K, approved by voters in 2001.

This month, Vang Pao Elementary School will open in southeast Fresno, and construction is underway at Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School in southwest Fresno. Other Measure K projects include modernization of Bullard High’s Performing Arts Center and North Gym, and modernization of Addams, Bethune, Columbia and King elementary schools.

Fresno Unified Declared in Compliance With Title I Regulations

In early July, the California Department of Education (CDE) officially announced that Fresno Unified’s use of Federal Title I funds were appropriate and in compliance with the established regulations. On Friday, April 20, 2012, CDE concluded an extensive, routine Federal Program Monitoring site visit and informed Fresno Unified that a report of findings would be provided at a later date. CDE reviewed 180 compliance areas district-wide and reported only nine findings.

Every two years, each Local Educational Agency (LEA) in the state is required to provide CDE with a variety of information regarding the implementation of categorical programs. CDE then coordinates on-site reviews based on a four-year cycle. During fiscal year 2011-2012, Fresno Unified and 59 other LEAs in the state were subject to review. The CDE team commended the work of Fresno Unified staff, particularly school site staff, for the district’s categorical program implementation and for student achievement results.

Decisions about school site funds, including Title I and QEIA, are made by parents and teachers who serve on Fresno Unified’s school site councils. Federal funding is integral to the operation of many of FUSD’s most important programs and services and the district takes adherence to the compliance requirements very seriously. For more information about the proper, authorized use of Title I funds visit the United States Department of Education’s website at www.ed.gov.

2012-2013 Dates to Know

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 14</td>
<td>Extended registration hours to 7 p.m. at every school site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 20</td>
<td>First day of school</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>Veteran’s Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19-23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 24 to January 11</td>
<td>Winter Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 21</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Lincoln’s Birthday</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Presidents’ Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 25 – April 1</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>Memorial Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>Last day of school</td>
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</table>

www.FresnoUnified.org
Jorge Aguilar, associate superintendent for equity and access, REA and accountability, was the keynote speaker at a career day at Firebaugh High School on May 14. The event was hosted by the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP), which is instrumental in improving the flow of information about college and financial aid and raising the achievement levels of low-income students, many of whom are the first to attend college from their families.

A young red-tailed hawk was reunited with its parents on June 14, thanks to the help of FUSD employees working with an animal rescue agency. Fiscal services technician Gloria Jenkins had discovered the bird days earlier after it fell out of its nest on top of the Education Center.

The reunification effort involved Maintenance Department employees, working with the Critter Creek Wildlife Station, hoisting the young bird in a basket close to the nest.

Employees honored for March of Dimes fundraising

The Fresno Unified School District’s March of Dimes effort, led by Public Information Officer Susan Bedi, was recognized at the FUSD Board of Education meeting June 20. District employees raised $52,000, far surpassing the $40,000 challenge from Fresno State President John Welty. The district was honored as the second-highest contributor to March of Dimes from among new participant organizations in the Fresno area.

March of Dimes representative Nicole Lyon presents Achievement Award to Susan Bedi and Michael Hanson.

A  Teacher You Should Know

Abril Garcia

School: McLane High School
Teaches: Biology GATE (9th and 10th), biology (10th), anatomy and physiology (11th/12th)
Years as a teacher: 10
Favorite teacher tip: Do for your students as you would do for your own child; show the interest, compassion, and fairness that you would want for your child. Prepare your lessons in advance and push students to achieve more than they think they can because most times they will surprise themselves!

I know I am successful with a student when: I hear them talking in the hallways about some of the content they learned in my class or I hear them debating over concepts; I often have to settle the debate.

My favorite lesson to teach is: Anything related to the human body.

I like to learn about: Nutrition and working out - so basically anything to do with the human body.

First job: Making pizzas at Little Caesars and tutoring AVID students at Roosevelt High School at the same time.

Most people don’t know that I: Have wanted to be a teacher since I was in 7th grade.

In my down time I like to: Watch sports on TV and in person, play recreational basketball and spend time with family.

If I couldn’t be a teacher I would: Help serve the community as part of our police force.

Dream vacation: Any place that has a great relaxing view of the ocean.
Fresno Unified Praised for Focus on Effective Teaching

Around this country too many states and districts are forgetting one of the most important players in the education arena: teachers! But that’s not the story here in Fresno Unified.

A new national report released this summer by Educational Trust praises Fresno Unified, along with four other large urban districts, for creating environments in high-poverty schools where teachers can thrive and stay. The report, “Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning,” praised the district’s Skillful Leader Project and touted the district’s innovative approach to winning the confidence of teachers by encouraging them to work openly and collaboratively.

“We have been strategically and purposefully building a pipeline for creating leaders within our district for several years now through a myriad of methods, including the Skillful Leader Project,” said Superintendent Michael Hanson. “We’ve also been able to establish a more collaborative culture within our district. Key to that has been our teachers’ willingness to absorb and respond to feedback and, more importantly, their commitment to improving their craft for the sake of our students and our entire community. To have these efforts highlighted in this national report is further affirmation that we are on the correct path to making profound changes in our schools that help teachers to teach and children to learn, even in difficult circumstances.”

The report notes that Fresno Unified is among the districts that “view building and sustaining strong teaching and learning conditions as a key strategy for attracting, developing and retaining strong teachers in high-need schools.” The report also states: “While each district’s approach is different, some consistent themes emerge: a focus on strong leadership, a campus-wide commitment to improving instruction by analyzing student data and reflecting on practice, and a collaborative environment that values and rewards individual contribution.”

Abril Garcia is a science teacher at McLane High School who recently completed Fresno Unified’s leadership cohort. She appreciates the district’s efforts to encourage new leadership from within the district, teachers who are “motivated and involved.” These are the kind of leaders, she said, who can best support teachers who are striving to improve their skills: “When teachers feel empowered, that translates over into the classroom and that impacts students’ lives for the good.”

Want more information on this national report?
Visit: www.edtrust.org

Gaston Middle School

Anticipation is building in the southwest Fresno community as construction proceeds on the long-anticipated Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School — the neighborhood’s first traditional middle school since Irwin Junior High School closed in 1978.

The school is underway on 22 acres at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Church Avenue, which includes the former site of Carver Academy. The school was named in April for Rutherford “Bud” Gaston Sr., the district’s first African-American principal and a longtime educator and civic leader. Gaston passed away in May at age 91.

“There’s just so much excitement in this community for the new middle school,” said Principal Steve Gonzalez. “With the start of construction, it just makes it that much more real, and we can’t wait to welcome those first students.

“The Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School will be on the cutting edge both in regards to instructional strategies as well as facilities, and it’s going to provide educational opportunities for the students of this community that they have not had in the past.”

The campus was originally slated to open in August of 2013 but a number of considerations compelled the Fresno Unified School District to push back the completion date to the spring of 2014.

With dozens of homes, a church and a commercial business located on the site of the school, the district proceeded with care to ensure the sensitive and appropriate relocation of families, property owners and the church community. The delay was necessary to effectively implement housing solutions that support the needs of the whole community and contribute to its sustainability and resilience.

With the successful relocation of those affected by the selection of the school site, Carver was demolished and construction launched on the new middle school during the summer. Before demolition was complete, the district partnered with the Fresno Fire Department to allow fire fighters access to Carver as a training site for practicing roof-ventilating skills and other techniques critical to saving lives in the event of a fire.

When it opens its doors to students, the campus is expected to serve as a community and academic hub for the neighborhood, as well as create a strong K-12 feeder system for Edison High School area. Gonzalez and staff have led activities during the past year with students from the feeder elementary schools to build a strong and cohesive Gaston community.

Gaston Middle School will expand and improve academic options for students in the area by offering Edison’s career pathways, an early opportunity for A-G courses necessary for admission to University of California and California State University campuses, and a full offering of extra-curricular activities and sports.

Gonzalez said the school “will be the centerpiece for our community.”

“Our first and primary responsibility is to the educational and social/emotional needs of our students, but we also want to be involved in various ways so that we can also provide whatever services we are able to for our families and the community at large,” Gonzalez said.

www.FresnoUnified.org
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API REPORT

The California Department of Education (CDE) releases the 2011 Academic Performance Index (API) data.

Recently released Academic Performance Index (API) rankings show increases in both state and similar-school rankings for several Fresno Unified schools, while other data indicates the district’s continued need for improvement.

The API measures the academic performance and growth of schools based on a variety of criteria. The recently released rankings reflect student test performance in the 2010-11 school year; Fresno Unified is eagerly awaiting the release of results from this year’s STAR testing, administered in the spring of 2012.

The schools that showed marked improvement are Webster Elementary, Easterby Elementary, Ericson Elementary, Muir Elementary, Balderas Elementary, Sunset Elementary, Leavenworth, Olmos Elementary, Fremont Elementary, Hoover High and Roosevelt High. Webster Elementary is one of Fresno Unified’s three turnaround schools; it made marked improvement in 2010-2011.

As Fresno Unified continues to work to implement the recommendations in both the Council of the Great City Schools and Graduation Task Force reports, the district is optimistic that additional schools will begin to show improvement similar to that of Webster and other schools that are excelling academically.

Three Fresno Unified schools once again achieved the highest possible state and similar school rankings described as 10-10 schools because they are in the top 10 percent of schools state-wide and in the top 10 percent of their similar schools grouping. Those schools are:

Manchester Gate Elementary, Comutech Middle School and Design Science High School. Thirteen Fresno Unified schools moved up in their similar ranking only and 11 schools ranked in the bottom 10 percent in both the state-wide and similar school rank.

The 2012-2013 school year will be one of tremendous possibilities as Fresno Unified welcomes new Chief Academic Officer Michael Neece, who brings a wealth of experience in utilizing systems to turnaround schools that are academically deficient. The district is striving to make instruction more personalized to students, to build greater relationships with the parents of students and to make students take more ownership and feel more empowered about the necessity for a high-quality education.

Over 2,100 Fresno Unified graduates, or over 65 percent of the total 2012 graduating class, are planning to attend a college or university this fall and this is something that the entire Fresno community should celebrate. The future is bright for students and the district has a very dedicated staff that is anxious to help them reach their goals.

Lockdown Drills

Did you know that as part of every school safety plan, all schools practice lockdown drills twice a year? A school lockdown confines students, teachers, and staff to classrooms or offices due to a perceived or real threat. Schools are most often placed on lockdown due to police activity in the community, and it is most often done as a precaution. During a true lockdown, the school will hang a banner on the fence stating it is on lockdown and provide a phone number to call for information.

Every classroom, library, administration and multipurpose rooms has an Emergency Planning/Crisis Response guide to provide information on lockdowns as well as other emergencies such evacuations, fires, or medical crises.

Because the safety of students and staff is the district’s highest priority, campuses routinely prepare for lockdown situations. One of the practice drills will take place during recess, when most students and staff are outside. Staff escort students to the closest classroom, library, office or cafeteria. Throughout the school year, it is common for schools across the nation to repeat lockdown drills as a way of preparing campuses to be as safe as possible.

For more safety tips, check out the new Family Emergency Guide online at www.fresnounified.org or contact Parent University for a copy at 457-6006. The guide was developed in partnership with the Fresno County Department of Health and City of Fresno Office of Emergency Services. Funding was made possible through a Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) grant.

AEDs

Over the past five years, Fresno Unified has been working toward purchasing and installing Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) at every school site in the district. Thanks to a generous donation by Fresno Community Hospital’s Cardiac Response Unit, the last 20 were installed at elementary schools this summer. Since the beginning of the five-year plan, more than 1,500 employees from throughout the district have been trained in CPR, first aid and the use of AEDs.

The AED training is critical to saving lives. Young people die from cardiac arrest on school and college campuses every year. In fact, according to the Mid America Heart Institute, 5,000 to 7,000 children and adolescents die from sudden cardiac arrest in the United States annually. Most of them could have been saved with prompt defibrillation.

“It’s reassuring to our school board that we’ve successfully implemented an AED program in our district. We all feel better knowing that we are prepared to deal with potentially devastating human tragedies on our campuses,” said Superintendent Michael Hanson.

Driver Alert – School Begins August 20

On Aug. 20, doors will open to more than 72,000 students. To ensure students arrive safely to school, please be reminded to drive 20 mph in school zones. Parents need to remind their students of safety measures to and from school. Here are a few tips:

- Do not talk to strangers
- Always walk directly to and from school using the same path every day
- Always walk or ride your bike with a group of friends
- Run directly to school or home if approached by a stranger
- Immediately notify a school staff member or parent regarding any stranger
- Contact or illegal activity
- Always inform a parent if you are not going directly home after school
- Always follow traffic rules when crossing streets and railway crossings
- Do not walk on or near train tracks

To prevent a lost or missing child, have children check in with an adult family member daily. If your child is lost or missing:

- Contact relatives
- Contact child’s close friends
- Contact school
- Contact Fresno Police or Fresno County Sheriff
- Check parks, playgrounds in neighborhood

Family Safety

INTERESTED IN PLACING AN AD?

Building Futures is an award-winning publication recognized by the National School Public Relations Association and the California School Public Relations Association

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For more information about placing an ad contact Susan Bedi (559) 457-3733 or email her Susan.Bedi@fresnounified.org
So much happens in any given school week and Fresno Unified wants to make sure that parents and staff know about it with tools that are free and easy to use on the go. The district’s social media accounts are a great way to find out about school closings, special events and the latest developments and to get answers to questions, seven days a week. All of the major news outlets and most government agencies use social media to share information. It’s an effective way of reaching a large audience in a short amount of time and school districts across the country are finding the tools just as useful.

Fresno Unified has a Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr presence and the district invites the community to Follow, Like and Subscribe to each of them and connect with FUSD!

www.facebook.com/fresnounifiedpage

www.twitter.com/fresnounified

www.YouTube.com/FresnoUnified

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The district has some big changes ahead this coming school year and doesn’t want anyone to miss a thing. The district will continue to bring timely updates and information via letters home, website updates and other traditional means. But, during an age in which most people access some form of social media regularly, the district would be remiss if it didn’t ensure that it made those options available as well.

Have a great school year and FUSD looks forward to connecting with you - its community.

A Kick Start for Early Learners

Exciting things are ahead for the district’s youngest learners this school year! Transitional kindergarten, a program that gives children who are not old enough to start kindergarten early enrichment, will be expanded to over 30 Fresno Unified schools. During the 2011-2012 school year, the program was only offered at two district schools which served as pilots – Balderas and Thomas elementary schools.

A change to the California state education code allowed for the creation of the transitional kindergarten program and the benefits for young students are tremendous. Prior to the change, students were admitted to kindergarten if they were going to become five years of age on or before Dec. 2. State Education Code 48000 changes the admission requirement to Nov. 1 for the 2012-2013 school year. The requirement will change to a month earlier in each of the following two years – Oct. 1 for the 2013-2014 school year and Sept. 1 for the 2014-2015 school year. For those students who will not reach the minimum age requirement for kindergarten, transitional kindergarten is an available, worthwhile option.

Students who take part in the transitional kindergarten program learn oral language development, pre-literacy skills, early math skills, large and small motor skills, development and enhancement of appropriate social and emotional skills that promote success in school and self-regulation skills. This level of preparation before the official start of their kindergarten education provides a solid foundation for launching academic careers. Research has shown that ensuring that students are proficient readers by third grade is essential to their success in school and beyond. Many students start kindergarten having had only minimal exposure to reading and math concepts, causing them to have a steep up-hill climb to success. The transitional kindergarten program helps to eliminate that gap.

“The first group of students who participated in the program saw remarkable growth over the course of the school year, and we have every reason to believe the benefits of this early support will carry over to their kindergarten year and well into the rest of their schooling. This is a great program that we sincerely hope every parent will take advantage of because the results can only be positive when you give early learners this much support before they even start their formal kindergarten year,” stated Maria Maldonado, assistant superintendent of English Learner Services-School Support Services for Fresno Unified.

Parents are not required to enroll students in transitional kindergarten, but districts state-wide are required to make the program available. Registration for kindergarten and transitional kindergarten began April 11, 2012, but there is still time to register your child for the coming school year. Just visit your neighborhood elementary school to find out if the transitional kindergarten program is offered or call 457-3343. Our goal is to have every transitional kindergarten student in a classroom on Aug. 20, when the new school-year begins.

More information about the transitional kindergarten program can be found on the California Department of Education’s website.
The first day of school is just around the corner and parents everywhere are busy buying school supplies, picking out first-day of school outfits and checking over classroom schedules and teacher assignments.

But before children enter the classroom, it’s a good idea to do a quick assessment of their health.

Ensuring children are in tip-top shape can improve their chances of having a successful school year. Children who miss school frequently because of illness often fall behind and have a hard time catching up to the rest of the class.

One of the best ways to protect your child from common childhood diseases and other contagious illnesses throughout the school year is to make sure he or she is properly immunized. Most school-age children receive several vaccinations at ages 4 or 5, just before entering kindergarten. Typically, the next set of vaccinations occurs when they are 11 or 12 years old.

A new state law requires all students entering 7th grade show proof that they’ve received the tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) booster shot before entering school. A Tdap vaccination protects against whooping cough, a highly-contagious bacterial disease that can cause children to make a whooping sound as they gasp for breath.

Health officials are predicting that the nation is on track to have the worst year for whooping cough in more than five decades. We have already begun to see documented cases of whooping cough this year in Fresno. Now is the time to make sure your child is protected. Nearly 18,000 cases have been reported nationwide and the Centers for Disease Control estimates that at this pace the number of whooping cough cases will surpass every year since 1959.

Flu also is highly contagious and leads to chronic absences throughout the school year. A flu vaccine can provide some of the best protection for children and help minimize outbreaks at school sites. Most flu vaccines are available starting in mid to late October.

Other recommended immunizations protect your child from chicken pox, Hepatitis A and B, measles, mumps and Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Remember to check with your child’s pediatrician to make sure your child is up to date with vaccinations before the first day of school.

Routine physicals are also a good preventive step to take before children return to school – especially for those students who plan to play a sport. Children need to be properly assessed for any medical conditions.

Asthma is a common chronic condition that many Valley students deal with daily. It’s important for asthmatics to monitor this condition closely, especially when engaging in vigorous activities that can make breathing difficult.

If your student does not plan to play a sport during the school year, a back-to-school check-up is probably only necessary every couple of years. But if you feel like your child may be struggling with his or her vision or hearing, it may be wise to bring your child in for a check up. Vision and hearing impairments can make it difficult for a child to concentrate or absorb educational material.

A routine physical also can determine if there is any type of behavioral or developmental issue that may prevent a child from succeeding in school. Treating these types of issues early can lead to a more productive school year.

One of the most important things parents can do for their children as they prepare for school is to begin a more structured routine; ensuring they are getting plenty of rest and eating healthy meals throughout the day. Children often get used to summer break and not having a set routine, so it’s important for them to adjust to a more rigid schedule before school starts.

Encourage them to get at least eight hours of sleep a night. Prepare healthy meals for them to eat – especially breakfast, which can help them stay energized throughout the day. Keep them active, even if it means kicking a ball around the back yard or taking a dip in the pool.

Making sure your children are healthy will better prepare them for school and help them thrive all year long.

For more information on how to keep your kids healthy and active, visit www.kp.org/fresno.

By appointment only: Call 457-3294 for FUSD LOCATION
Parent/Legal guardian must accompany student
Bring current immunization record
No charge for physicals
Bring current Medi-Cal card if your child has Medi-Cal insurance

Sports Physicals: Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes for running

IMMUNIZATIONS for Kindergarten Entry and Tdap for 7th Grade

No appointment required
Free for Medi-Cal, uninsured, or income eligible (call 457-3294 for details)
Tdap vaccine free for all FUSD students
Parent must accompany student & bring current immunization record
Bring current Medi-Cal card if your child has Medi-Cal insurance

Mobile Health Unit Schedule

August 16, 2012
King / Carver
noon - 4 p.m.

August 18, 2012
Olmos Elementary
8 a.m. - noon

August 21, 2012
Adams Elementary
9 a.m. - noon

August 23, 2012
Mayfair Elementary
noon - 4 p.m.

Tdap Immunization ONLY
Edison, Hoover, Sunnyside high schools
Monday – Friday: 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Remember: If your child is ill or injured please contact your health care provider or call 911 for an emergency.

Mobile Health Unit Funding provided by Full Service Community Schools Grant Program

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC SCHEDULE
visit: www.FresnoUnified.org/dept/HealthServices
FUSD Instructional Media Center (IMC Bldg #1)
3132 E. Fairmont 93726 • (south of Shaw; east of First)
Aug. 14 • 2 – 7 p.m.
August 16, 20, 21, 22, 23 • 1 – 5 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Students throughout the district stay busy at school, even after the afternoon bell. Fresno Unified provides a variety of programs for students beyond the school day that allows students to complete homework, receive academic support, be physically active, enjoy a nutritious snack and stay busy, safe and on the right track.

“Our quality after-school programs help to provide a positive future for all of our children by allowing children to receive enriching opportunities throughout the school year,” said Glenn Starkweather, director of expanded learning.

Approximately 9,500 students are expected to engage in after-school programs in the coming year at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Students in the elementary program must apply as space is limited in order to maintain the 20-to-1 student/staff ratio required by the After School Education Safety (ASES) grant that funds the program. Parents interested in enrolling their children should check with the program site coordinator at each school site regarding availability.

Elementary students are expected to attend every day from the end of the school day until 6 p.m. under the grant guidelines.

Participation at the middle and high school levels is not limited. Middle school students are expected to attend a minimum of three days, or nine hours per week, while there is no minimum attendance requirement for the high school program.

FUSD also operates a fee-based after school program at the elementary schools that do not have an ASES program: Bullard TALENT, Eaton, Figarden, Forkner, Gibson, Malloch, Manchester GATE and Starr elementary schools. A before-school fee based program is also offered at Bullard TALENT, Eaton, Figarden, Forkner, Gibson, Malloch, Manchester GATE, Starr and Yokomi. Additional information can also be found at: www.fresnounified.org/dept/CPL/afterschool.com,

In addition to the ASES grant used to support the elementary and middle school programs, the district receives a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant to support the high school program. Currently, 58 elementary, 12 middle, and three high schools receive grant funding to support 73 FUSD school sites. The Fresno County Office of Education provides services for 40 of the elementary, middle and high school sites with the district providing services for 33 elementary, middle and high school sites. (A complete list of sites is available on the Expanded Learning Program’s website.)

After-school programs staff includes a site coordinator and instructional aides, with FUSD certificated teachers hired to provide tutorial help at the elementary and middle school levels and for credit recovery classes at the high school level. All staff members must meet the federal No Child Left Behind requirements and participate in professional learning focused on the skills necessary to provide appropriate support to students.

The goals of the program are to provide:

- Healthy snack.
- Academic support; time for homework.
- Activities that are an extension of classroom learning and based on state curriculum standards.
- An opportunity to experience enrichment activities that reinforce and complement the academic program.
- A physical education component.
Students at Forkner Elementary School in northwest Fresno collected pop-top tabs from beverages and canned foods to raise money for the Ronald McDonald House adjacent to Children’s Hospital Central California. They were one of 98 elementary schools throughout Central California to participate in the competition.

Principal Kay Davies stated that every teacher at Forkner signed up his or her class to participate. At the end of the competition, the pop tabs were taken to the Ronald McDonald House to be weighed. The class at each grade level (K-6) that saved the most would be honored with a trophy and letter acknowledging their school’s accomplishment from Senator Barbara Boxer.

This community service project was thanks to 4th grade student, Adia Waters, whose aunt and uncle stayed at the Ronald McDonald House at Philadelphia Children’s Hospital while awaiting the birth of their daughter, Meghan, who was diagnosed with spina bifida in utero.

Adia provided each classroom with a large jar decorated with pictures of her cousin, Meghan, and Ronald McDonald. At the end of the competition in May Forkner students and staff had collected 200 pounds of pop-tops! Kacey Sanom’s second grade class and Joe Lang’s fifth and sixth combination class won for their grade level.

Since Clovis recycling matches what the Ronald McDonald House turns in, the 200 pounds, when cashed in enabled 26 families to spend a night with their daily fee waived. Who would have thought that pop tabs could generate so much money and help so many families with hospitalized children? The Forkner teachers and students are excited to collect even more pop tabs for the 2013 competition, and encourage everyone to start “pullin for Ronald’s kids!” For more information check out their website at www.Ronald-Mcdonaldhouse.com.

ARE YOU READY? (continued from page 1)

are grouped by departments, making the day-to-day work pace more efficient.

Even though the official school year is in hiatus, Fresno Unified has served tens of thousands of meals to young people during the district’s Expanded Learning Summer Program and free summer lunch programs. From June 19 to July 19, 222,698 meals were served to students attending summer classes and children in the community. Of that number, 7,741 meals were served to children who simply visited the sites that were serving the free meals, and Fresno Unified is happy to be able to provide the service. It is not need-based, but the hope is that those students who might not otherwise be provided with a meal at home will be able to receive one at a location that is relatively close to their home during the majority of the summer break. Studies have proven that young people who are nutritionally deficient do not do as well academically as those who eat balanced meals regularly.

Be sure to check the district’s website regularly before and during the school year in order to stay abreast of the latest news and updates. The work that we do to prepare our young people to go out into the world and become productive members of society is some of the most important working happening in this city. We look forward to continue serving the community and we hope to build even greater relationships with parents and other stakeholders. Have a great school year!
Pookie Gonzalez

Pookie Gonzalez excelled at not one but three sports during her four years at Bullard High School, and will play for Division I Northern Illinois University this fall on a full-ride volleyball scholarship.

She admits she is looking forward to “focusing on one sport,” but also says she wouldn’t change a thing about her whirlwind athletics career at Bullard. She starred in varsity volleyball, tennis and badminton all four years at Bullard – a feat even more remarkable given that girls volleyball and tennis are both fall sports.

“It was a lot of fun. I wouldn’t have done it any other way,” she said.

Her list of accomplishments includes:

- **Volleyball**
  First Team All League sophomore through senior years; Fresno Bee All-Star Team (valley wide) senior year.

- **Tennis**
  First Team All League and Fresno Bee All-Star four years; Valley titles in doubles in sophomore and senior years.

- **Badminton**
  Valley champion four years; Clovis North Tournament champion four years; holds Bullard record for assists with 2,049.

- **Royal Knight Award** as the best female athlete of the year at Bullard for 2012.

- **Fresno Bee Player of the Year** in badminton three years; Co-Player of the Year in tennis in junior year.

- **B’nai B’rith Student Athlete Award** candidate from Bullard.

- **3.3 GPA**

Bullard Athletic Director Doug Finks characterized Pookie “as one of the most accomplished athletes to ever come through Bullard High School.” He also said she was an exemplary student, teammate and role model.

“She’s just one of those kids in the Bullard community who all the kids look up to,” Finks said. “Little kids just gravitate to her.”

Pookie is the daughter of Fresno High School teacher Stacey Goedhard-Gonzalez and Francisco Gonzalez, the head tennis pro at Sierra Sport and Racquet Club. Her mom gave her the nickname “Pookie” as a baby and Pookie has grown up preferring it to her given name, Alexis.

Goedhard-Gonzalez was chauffeur throughout Pookie’s high school career, racing her sometimes across town – sometimes between towns – for tennis and volleyball matches. It helped that tennis matches generally began at 3 p.m. and volleyball at 7 p.m.

Pookie recalls perhaps three times in four years that her tennis and volleyball matches landed at the same location on game day.

“Those were good days,” she said. “I thanked God for those days.”

She says her volleyball coach, Kieran Roblee, just wanted her there before the first whistle, knowing Pookie was already warmed up from her tennis match. She almost didn’t make it one day last fall, even though her tennis and volleyball matches did happen to both be at Bullard.

As she was playing her doubles match in tennis, Pookie knew she was cutting it close. Then she heard the warm-up CD blaring from the gym for her volleyball match. She knew the order of the songs, and knew when the last one played before the match was scheduled to start. By design, the Bullard game announcer took an extra long time to announce the lineups and Pookie was able to dart in at the last minute through the gym side door – left open for her – to get the ball and serve the first serve for Bullard.

Pookie had never played badminton beyond the backyard, but she figured she could get the hang of it because it was “on a court and you play with a racquet.” With no experience and no knowledge of the rules, she made the varsity team, beating all but the No. 1 player as the ladder was established. She lost just two matches in four years and was a four-time Valley champion.

She loves volleyball the most, however, because of the strategy involved, working with teammates and the high-energy atmosphere of the gym on game days. To play on scholarship for a Division I team is a dream-come-true, Pookie said. She took an instant liking to Northern Illinois’ campus, coach and program on a recruiting visit last spring to the DeKalb, Illinois school.

Would she advise younger athletes to pursue multiple sports? Absolutely.

“Don’t think it’s that hard,” Pookie said. “If you really want to, you can find a way to make it work.”

She is grateful to Roblee and Bullard girls tennis Coach Darren Carter for allowing her to split her time between the two fall sports. Pookie decided to add a third sport, badminton in the spring, partly because she wanted to pursue the B’nai B’rith recognition, awarded to Fresno County athletes based on involvement in sports, academic achievement and community service.
AALRR is proud to support the Fresno Unified School District

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