Getting to Know Common Core

Fresno Unified teachers are excited and inspired after completing the first cycle of three Common Core trainings facilitated by the district. Additional training cycles have already begun with full completion slated for April. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are being taught at all grade levels. Students are beginning to experience a new way of learning that prepares them for the real world. But what exactly is Common Core? What does it look like when you enter a classroom, and how can parents help?

What are Common Core Standards?

They are a revised set of educational standards that include rigorous content and skills, are research-based, and are aligned with college and work expectations. They provide opportunities for students to think critically and apply what they learn to complete real-world tasks.

See COMMON CORE, Pg. 11

Athletics are a Big Hit with Students

Elementary school students from throughout the district compete in a volleyball tournament Oct. 26 at Sunnyside High School. The district encourages students to take part in sports and other extracurricular activities to better engage them in school as part of its continued focus on the district’s Goal 2: All students will engage in arts, activities and athletics.
Board Approves Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Fresno Unified Board of Education has adopted a formal policy on the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion for all students, staff and stakeholders in the district, believed to be the first of its kind among California school districts.

The board unanimously approved Board Police 0411 on Oct. 23 to promote:

► The importance of having a diverse student body and workforce that is prepared to succeed in a diverse, global economy, and the board’s commitment to seek out diversity of thought.
► Fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all and removal of barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in district programs.
► Inclusion that provides supportive energy and commitment so that students and adults do their best work.

The board policy was brought forward by the district’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council, established in 2010 by Superintendent Michael Hanson.

In elaborating on the policy at the board meeting in October, Hanson noted that the policy recognizes Fresno is “beautifully and vibrantly diverse” but also struggles with more severe problems than any city in the country, including poverty, numbers of children in foster care and numbers of students learning English.

Despite these problems, Hanson said: “It is our job to treat every one of those kids like they are our own child. It doesn’t happen without bold statements from the Board of Education.”

The diversity, equity and inclusion policy will be cited throughout applicable district policies and administrative regulations to ensure that the new policy moves from the philosophical to a natural way of looking at who the district is and how it educates students.

Vision Statement for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

Fresno Unified School District values diversity, equity and inclusion, expects educational excellence for all, requires individual responsibility and participation by all and considers collaborative relationships with all stakeholders as essential.

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SUPERINTENDENT’S Message

(See Pg. 15 for Superintendent’s Message in Spanish and Hmong)

Michael Hanson
Fresno Unified Superintendent

It’s hard to believe we’re moving into the winter months already, and the holiday season is upon us. It feels like just yesterday we were opening school doors and welcoming our students back from summer vacation.

This time of the year is widely known as the ‘season of giving,’ and as 2013 comes to an end, I’d like to take a moment to reflect on a year of remarkable things that have happened (and are still happening) within Fresno Unified School District – all as a result of giving in some way or another. Giving comes in many different forms – through being an open ear or lending a helping hand to someone in need, by offering your time and energy to a cause you believe in or through financial support for initiatives that help a group achieve their mission. I applaud you for doing so.

Mother Teresa once said, “It’s not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving.” She was right. Every form of giving has manifested itself abundantly here at Fresno Unified – starting with the Board of Education, and extending from our teaching and administrative staff, principals, parents and community leaders, all the way to our greatest stakeholders – our students.

Over the past few years, thanks to the generous support of our board, and voters for their overwhelming support of Measure Q, we have been able to break ground on a number of exciting building improvement projects across the district. We’ve removed portables and added new classrooms at Aynesworth Elementary School and we recently finished and dedicated two beautiful new buildings that complement the historic Royce Hall at Fresno High School. To date, we have removed more than 130 portable classrooms from our school sites.

I’m also proud to report that the brand new Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School – being built from the ground up – is moving toward completion. This new school represents a major milestone for southwest Fresno – and more specifically, our entire city. The neighborhood hasn’t had a middle school for its young residents for more than 34 years. Students from 7th through 8th grade have to ride a bus – sometimes for over an hour – just to get to school. We wanted to fix that and with your support, it’s happening. The beautiful, state-of-the-art middle school will be a place where students will be more prepared than ever to not only enter, but succeed in high school. These are just a few examples of what happens when the community steps up

See SUPT’S MESSAGE, Pg. 9

Message From The Mayor

Ashley Swearengen
Fresno Mayor

Learn2Earn and Our Community

Learn2Earn has partnerships with many organizations in and around Fresno in an effort to help the people of our community reach their education and training goals. Fresno Adult School has partnered with Learn2Earn to assist in providing needed GED training and career oriented workshops to help students plan their career with an education advisor.

Some programs and courses offered include: Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, Citizenship, various career technical training, and GED preparation. The Fresno community is lucky to have such a great resource available. California is experiencing the closure of adult schools throughout the state due to a lack of funding that comes from each unified school district. The commitment of the Fresno Unified School District to continue to serve the adult population here in Fresno is commendable.

Fresno Adult School specifically helps Learn2Earn participants in a number of ways as well. They provide workshops for our participants to assist them in their career planning and in understanding the steps that are needed to achieve their goals. They assist our participants with transfer and enrollment to Fresno City College if students are interested in pursuing a degree following their GED. Representatives from Fresno City College come to the campus to meet with prospective students to alleviate the confusion of the enrollment process and to provide counseling and advisement for classes and education planning.

Finally, they work closely Learn2Earn to arrange internships for GED students and graduates introducing internship candidates to community organizations, staffing agencies, and other schools which are willing to train our participants.

So, a big THANK YOU to Fresno Adult School and Fresno Unified School District for helping to make meaningful change in our community! Please comment below if you have an interest in visiting Fresno Adult School or Learn2Earn to see what they can do for you. Hundreds of people have already taken the steps to get started. Now is the time! Getting your GED or training is possible, so start here, start now!

There are so many opportunities to work toward your GED, neighborhood study clubs with tutors, childcare and other needed solutions, GED preparation classes at multiple

See MAYOR’S MESSAGE, Pg. 4
Board Sustainability Committee’s Message

Changing Our Community Through Reform Governance

This column is the first in a series written by the Fresno Unified Board Sustainability Committee to educate the community about the role of reform governance in supporting the work of the district in preparing career-ready graduates.

Admittedly, the word governance does not evoke much excitement, but its impact on the success of an organization is critical. The Fresno Unified Board of Education is responsible for governing the district by creating strong policy to guide and shape improvements throughout the district.

More importantly, the board has been engaged in reform governance since 2005 when it began working with the Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS). The board engaged in training based on the Reform Governance framework developed by Donald McAdams—a belief that student achievement can be improved if the school board is committed to effective governance and change. This was an important trigger point in the board’s work to reform the district.

In fact, the board adopted Core Beliefs and Commitments, as well as a Theory of Action that set in motion a set of reform policies that has contributed to continuous improvement throughout the district. Perhaps most importantly, the board’s reform governance has led to clarity of purpose from the boardroom to the classroom where everyone in the organization understands their role and how they are connected to the mission of the district to prepare career-ready graduates.

The success of Fresno Unified has a direct and hefty impact on the transformation of our community. Preparing career-ready graduates contributes to the social, economic, and cultural vitality of our city. It is exactly this point that prompted the Choosing Our Future document written by a group of community leaders in 2004 when the district was at the verge of state take-over. Community leaders recognized that the success of Fresno Unified was vital for the future of the city and they proclaimed the belief that the district could “once again take our place among the highest performing school districts in the state.”

This belief by the community—coupled with a board committed to reform-minded leadership—continues to propel Fresno Unified down the path of change that is tightly knit by reform governance. Understanding the critical role that Fresno Unified plays in transforming our community, the board has developed reform policies to guide continuous improvement. These reform policies include: Theory of Action, Accountability, Professional Learning, and Data Dashboard.

Future columns will describe more fully these important reform policies. Now—more than ever—reform governance is taking center stage to lead Fresno Unified toward its rightful place among the highest performing school districts.

In fact, the district’s role in reform governance put the district in the position to receive a waiver from the federal government to more fully align federal, state, and local standards. The waiver allows more flexibility with an opportunity to fundamentally re-shape and re-define how districts define success and incorporates many of the elements already included in the board’s reform policies. The board’s reform-minded leadership put Fresno Unified in the position to garner more flexibility and local control to meet the needs of our community.

To comment, email Vincent.Harris@fresnounified.org.

Easterby Students Say No to Bullying

Students at Easterby Elementary School check out their classmates’ work focused on ways to prevent bullying. Following two weeks of bullying prevention activities, students participated in a “gallery walk” on Oct. 25 to share what they had learned.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Continued from page 1

drive launched in August, the district has raised more than $70,000 for the fund this year. In the spring, deserving seniors at all of the district’s high schools will be selected by a committee to receive scholarships. Last year, $52,000 in scholarships were awarded to 24 students.

Following a challenge from the superintendent, the Sunnydale region pledged the most of the high school regions to the scholarship fund while the Bullard High School staff pledged the most among single staffs. In addition, students at Terronez Middle School collected $600 for the scholarship fund.

Students played key roles at the State of Education event, with Men’s AllIniance students greeting guests, Vang Pao Elementary School students leading locations to make it easy for you to get started.

We are proud to announce that we have more than 200 graduates to date, and many of them thought that they would not be able to be successful with their education. Many others are concerned about the changes in the testing process that begin Jan. 1, 2014, and we want you to know that those who have tested the new process are getting great results with scores and ease of testing. Learn2Earn can help with your concerns and can provide resources for you to practice and understand the testing process. We expect hundreds more to receive their GED in 2014, we hope that you will be one of them!

There is no better time to join Learn2Earn and get started on your education today. Employers continue to have higher expectations of applicants, and a GED or high school diploma is a necessary item to have for meeting minimum job requirements. Whether you are looking for basic education, or you want to pursue career technical training, a degree, or a Masters, we want to help you achieve your goals.

Contact us today at www.learn2earnfresno.org or stop by our office located on the second floor of Manchester Center, suite 225.
Students Show Growth in College Readiness

Fresno Unified students continue to make academic gains in a number of areas, including an increase in high school A-G course completion, recently released data shows.

At the end of the 2012-13 school year, 42.3% of high school seniors completed A-G courses with a C or better compared to only 35% the year prior. Roosevelt, Edison, Sunnyside and Hoover high schools all saw gains over last year, but the most significant increase was at McLane High School with a 12.5% increase. The most recent data shows 50% of current Fresno Unified high school students are on track to meet this goal for future years.

To be considered for admission to most four year colleges and universities, a student must complete 15 year-long high school A-G courses with 11 of them prior to their senior year. All courses must be passed with grades of C or better. Last school year, of 3,597 Fresno Unified high school graduates, 3,418 completed college applications.

The increase in our A-G completion rate is a great sign that we’re continuing to move in the right direction,” stated Superintendent Michael Hanson. “As we take additional steps to give our students the support they need to be academically successful, I believe we’ll see even more of our seniors applying to college.

“I’ve heard some amazing stories over the past few years, from students who had never given college a thought, who now know that it’s absolutely a goal they want to reach. It’s because of our great teaching staff, a growing number of involved parents and a caring community.”

To further promote the value of A-G completion, Fresno Unified recently joined the national Get Schooled campaign. Through an interactive website, the program promotes student success through high school and into college via activities and competitions using pop culture icons.

District Celebrates Tehapipe Community Garden

Students, faculty and staff at Tehapipe Middle School celebrated the first planting of their community garden with a special event on Dec. 3. The dedication of this unique garden was also attended by the family that inspired it, Francine and Murray Farber, along with district leaders.

The community garden is a key component of the “Steve’s Scholars” scholarship program at Tehapipe Middle School, started in 2012 by the Farber family. In memory of their son Steven, the Farbers established a $1 million endowment with the Fresno Unified Scholarship Fund.

The donor selected the Fresno Unified Scholarship Fund out of a desire to make a difference in the Fresno community, knowing that the future of the city rests with the success of its young people.

Over the past five years, nearly $100,000 in scholarships have been awarded to district students through the Fresno Unified Scholarship Fund. Last May, 24 graduates representing all of the district’s high schools were awarded $52,000 in scholarships.

On Oct. 28, the district raised more than $51,000 for the scholarship fund at the State of Education luncheon. In addition, employees pledged more than $19,000 to the scholarship fund during a pledge drive during the first two months of the school year. To donate to the Fresno Unified Scholarship fund, go to www.fresnounified.org or call 457-3733.
Vang Pao Teacher Provides Love, Knowledge

Ly Thao is an exemplary preschool teacher at Vang Pao Elementary School, and a model for other teachers as the district expands its pre-kindergarten program and places a high priority on providing more students with the opportunity to attend a high-quality preschool.

Deanna Mathies, a manager in the Elementary Division, said Thao exhibits the characteristics integral to effective teaching with young learners. “She has the belief that every child who walks through the doors of her classroom is capable of succeeding,” Mathies said. “She is dedicated to making sure every child leaves her classroom with the necessary social-emotional and academic skills to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.”

Years with Fresno Unified? 13 years

Why did you become a preschool teacher? I love working with children, love hearing them say that they love coming to school, and I always wanted to be a role model for the children.

What is the most challenging part of the job? The most challenging part of the job is not having enough time.

It makes me laugh when the kids: It makes me laugh when I can’t remember the words to the song and I look at the students and they teach me the words.

I get emotional when: When my students come to me and say they love me and that they can’t wait to come to school. Because I know I am making a difference in their lives.

At the end of the year, what are the most important things you hope your preschoolers learned? I hope that at the end of the year my preschoolers are competent in striving for their best when they have learned the social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

If you couldn’t be a preschool teacher, what career would you choose? If I couldn’t be a preschool teacher, I would probably choose something related to working with children.

What could an adult learn by attending preschool for a day? The adult can learn that the children are constantly learning as they are in and out of the classroom. There will be lots of smiling faces, social skills and language skills developing through the classroom.

Name one thing most people don’t know about you: I look shy but as you get to know me, I can be lots fun and an easygoing person.

On your down time, what do you like to do? I like to work in my backyard.

What is your dream vacation? I would like to spend some time on a tropical island.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

News Features Edison Teacher

Edison High School teacher Catherine Haynes was selected in November as an Educator of the Week by NBC24. Haynes was highlighted for her dedication as a teacher for three decades, and it was noted that she has not missed a day of work in more than 25 years.

Roosevelt Teacher Selected for Alumni Award

Linda Jean Voth, a teacher in the IRS Business Academy at Roosevelt High School, has been selected as a 2014 Kremen Noted Alumni Award recipient for California State University, Fresno. A letter to Voth says the award is to “recognize those who have made great contributions to the field of education in our Valley - an opportunity to highlight some of the most deserving individuals - a select few who have impacted the quality of education in a significant way. We believe that you deserve such recognition.” Voth will be honored at a Noted Alumni Awards Dinner March 20.

Cooper Academy Teacher Wins Fresno Marathon

Cooper Academy Spanish teacher Jesus Campos won the Two Cities Marathon & Half on Nov. 3, completing the 26.2-mile race through Fresno and Clovis in 2 hours, 29 minutes, 20 seconds. This was Campos’ fourth straight men’s overall victory in the Two Cities Marathon.

Preschool Slots Open

Fresno Unified continues to enroll students in preschool, with afternoon openings at the following schools: Addams, Anthony, Birney, Burroughs, Calwa, Centennial, Columbia, Duncan-LEEP, Homan, Jefferson, Kirk, Mayfair, Muir, Olmos, Pyle, Sunset, Turner, Vinland, Webster, and Wolters. Contact 457-3803 or 457-3684 for registration information.
District Focuses on High School Projects

Plans are moving forward at Bullard High School for new classroom and administration buildings and a redesigned entrance using Measure Q funds, while the Board of Education has also set aside $8 million in general fund money for projects at the district’s seven largest high schools.

The Bullard project, unveiled at a community meeting Oct. 21, also includes an expanded library and career center and improved quad space. The district expects to break ground this summer. The project is among $130 million in Measure Q projects completed or underway following voters’ overwhelming approval of the $280 million Measure Q in November 2010.

“The entire Bullard community is excited about the work that is about to begin on campus,” said Principal Brian Beck. “Not only will this mean much-needed new classrooms for our students and staff, but we will be supporting academics and career exploration through a larger library and career center.

“The project will also create a new look for our campus, and send a message to our community and city that great things are happening at Bullard High School.”

Even while Measure Q projects are moving forward in every corner of the district, the Board of Education approved a one-time allocation of $8 million from the general fund for the high school projects on Nov. 6, with a focus on projects with significant short- and long-term impact on campuses and community.

In selecting the projects, the district considered facility needs, previous and current campus investment, supporting Goal No. 2 that “all students will engage in arts, activities, and athletics” and fostering positive climates on campuses.

The projects are:
- Bullard: Audio/visual system in gym for large assemblies and additional quad tables
- Edison: New pool
- Fresno: Maintenance and improvements on Royce Hall
- Hoover: Exterior paint
- McLane: Improvements to Cedar Avenue frontage and parking lot
- Roosevelt: Exterior paint; site/classrooms improvements
- Sunnyside: Exterior paint; stadium improvements

It’s Breakfast of Champions at Fresno High

Fresno High School students, from left, Christian Hosoda, Averell Rogers and Samantha Rosas celebrate winning the Got Milk? contest on Nov. 7. Fresno High increased its breakfast participation by 5.7% over the same period last year.
Fresno High Dedicates New Buildings

The Fresno High School community celebrated the addition of a new administration building and library media center, gathering on Oct. 22 to officially dedicate the new buildings.

Three days later, in front of Fresno High, the city of Fresno honored Fresno High alum and Hall of Fame pitcher Tom Seaver with the honorary renaming of Echo Avenue between McKinley and Weldon avenues “Tom Seaver Lane.”

Seaver was a World Series champion and three-time Cy Young Award winner. After graduating from Fresno High in 1962, Seaver pitched for USC and the New York Mets, helping the Mets win the 1969 World Series.

Both the dedication and street renaming highlighted the community’s pride in Fresno High School and its prominent place in Fresno’s history.

At the dedication of the buildings, Superintendent Michael Hanson called the new administration building and library media center “breath-taking,” and said: “It’s a great day for this city because it’s a great day for Fresno High.”

The festive celebration also included remarks from Board Member Carol Mills, Assembly Member Henry T. Perea and Fresno City Council President Blong Xiong, and tours of the new buildings.

The buildings, which opened for students and staff at the start of school in August, give the campus a significant new profile and complement the architecture of historic Royce Hall. The buildings were constructed with funds from Measure Q, the $280 million local school bond voters passed overwhelmingly in November 2010.

They replace low-profile buildings completed in 1971, known as the “bunkers.” The 1971 buildings had replaced Palmer and LaConte halls, torn down for safety reasons.

“For years, the Fresno High community has been hoping to tear down the ugly bunkers and return Fresno High to its classical beauty,” said Mills. “Every high school should have its own unique architectural style and these new buildings certainly match the style of Royce Hall. I am especially pleased with the new Senate chamber, which is absolutely beautiful and like nothing else in this district. The students, staff, and Fresno High neighborhood are thrilled with the new buildings.”

The new administration building houses administrative offices, front office, attendance, parent center, Fresno High School Senate chambers and 10 classrooms on the second story. The library media center also houses the counseling and career center, Harris Reading Room and 10 classrooms on the second story. The district was able to remove 20 portables with the completion of the buildings.

Senior Phillip Villanueva said the new buildings “bring about a new history and a new tradition…that the students can write themselves.”

New Gaston Middle School on Target for August 2014 Opening

The newest middle school to join the Fresno Unified family is making a splash and continues to be on target for the opening of the 2014-15 school year.

Views from the front parking lot of the Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School provide a glimpse of the state-of-the-art building that will wrap around a grassy quad and house an academic wing of 36 classrooms. Athletic fields are complete and work on the outdoor basketball, volleyball and tennis courts is underway.

The state of the art gym, located in a separate building in the back, including locker rooms, snack bar and three practice courts is underway. This campus will serve as the center of community activity once completed and for the first time in 34 years the southwest community will have a middle school in their own back yards.

Superintendent Hanson spoke of the significance of Gaston Middle School during his State of Education address in late October. “This school will be a long-overdue asset in our community, rectifying a decades-old wrong in our city.”

Other construction highlights include three career and technology classrooms; a lecture hall that seats 100, food court and kitchen, teacher lounge with outdoor patio, security cameras throughout the campus and a health and wellness center that will be the first of its kind in Fresno Unified.

Two long-time educators, Steve Gonzalez and Felicia Quarles Treadwell, are working as co-principals for Gaston Middle School. Together they are ensuring that all academic aspects of the school match the state-of-the-art structure and will surpass expectations for students, staff and the well deserving community it will serve. Funding for Gaston Middle School was provided by Measure K and Measure Q.

Excitement continues to build with each new week of construction at Gaston. Future students had a chance on Nov. 7 to begin developing friendships while learning about careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Sixth grade students from Gaston feeder elementary schools Addams, Carver, Columbia, Lincoln, Sunset and Kirk gathered at Edison, their future high school, and explored pathways through hands-on learning stations. The day ended in celebration, with a Gaston rally.
High School Students Are Challenged to “Get Schooled”

For many of Fresno Unified’s high school seniors, this time of the year is not only about enjoying the holiday season, but students are just as much consumed with the process of getting into college. They are in the midst of submitting college and university applications, writing essays, visiting colleges and taking college entrance exams. Still, there are many students who need an extra ounce of motivation to put them into the college-going mindset.

To assist in keeping students motivated and informed during the college application process, Fresno Unified has partnered with Get Schooled, a national non-profit founded on the belief that students themselves have the power to improve their own futures if given the right information and motivation. Get Schooled leverages the key influences in teens’ lives, like celebrities, powerful peers, and pop culture, along with various other forms of new media (mobile/SMS, social, web) to meet the students where they are and to directly engage them on their path through high school and into college.

All of Fresno’s high schools are participating in the Get Schooled Campus Challenge, where schools will compete against each other (as well as against other schools across the nation) for the chance to win prizes. The challenge is based on how often students interact with Get Schooled’s college readiness tools on its website, apply for financial aid, and ultimately apply for colleges, universities, trade schools and other post-secondary education options.

The national winner of the Get Schooled College Challenge – or the school that accumulates the highest score – will win a special visit from a “celebrity principal for a day” at their school. Past celebrity principals have been Ne-Yo, Kendrick Lamar, Diggy Simmons and the OMG Girlz.

Locally, Fresno Unified decided to add a bit more sizzle to the competition. The high school that finishes with the highest amount of points will win a party at their school with a local DJ.

Get Schooled is a friendly competition attempting to motivate an entire school to improve educational outcomes and create a strong culture of college and career readiness. Schools hope to see a major increase in the amount of students applying for and being accepted into post-secondary education programs and schools.

and shows their support and concern for our kids’ futures. On behalf of our board, staff and students, I thank you.

With the support of more than 450 individual members of the collective Fresno community who attended the 2013 State of Education luncheon, we were able to raise more than $51,000 for the Fresno Unified Scholarship Fund. That’s $16,000 more than last year. Every penny will directly and positively impact the life of a high school senior in need at the end of this school year.

Not only are teachers and staff giving their dollars to help expand the scholarship fund, but they have committed their time and energy to making sure our students are staying in school and remaining on track to graduate. In 2012, our graduation rate was at 74.6%; up 1.2% from 2011. For the first time in several years, the graduation rate of our African-American students has increased by 10 points. More than 3,500 students graduated in 2013, and we project this to raise our overall graduation rate to over 76%. A few years ago, our graduation rate stood at 66%, so many thanks to all of our teachers, staff, parents and community members for helping us continue to prepare our youth. We have much more to do and are at it every day.

It’s no surprise that our students are generally doing better across the district. We’ve redesigned our middle schools so that students have more time with an effective teacher, while also gaining access to electives like music, art, journalism, language and other extracurricular activities. The middle school redesign goes hand in hand with our Goal 2 initiative, developed in partnership with the Fresno Community Arts Team.

The objective of Goal 2 is to provide access to expansive arts, athletics and other extracurricular experiences for all students. It’s already having a tremendously positive effect on our school climate and culture. Our heavy investment in character and culture-building activities has resulted in a huge upsing in the number of students enrolled in these electives.

I am quite humbled and proud to have the opportunity to share so many positive stories with you, and to be able to detail all of the amazing acts of kindness and giving that are happening here in Fresno. I’m sure I could fill up an entire edition of Building Futures with the personal stories, alone.

I hope that your holiday season is full of cheer, love, memorable experiences, and most of all, giving. Research shows that giving, over receiving, helps us feel better as human beings. So, please continue to share the goodwill, and give with love in everything you do. Happy holidays!
Measure Q Funds New Wing at Aynesworth Elementary

A brand new classroom wing opened recently at Aynesworth Elementary School, the latest in a series of projects transforming the look of Fresno Unified through the passage of Measure Q.

The new building houses eight classrooms, two student restrooms, a janitorial room, a small electrical room and a small central plant for heating and air conditioning equipment, and allowed the district to remove 11 portables from the campus.

“The new classroom building is a wonderful addition to our school,” said Principal Ermelinda Sanchez. “Our students, staff and families are excited about the integrated technology features in the classrooms, and the way the new wing blends in with the campus.”

The community’s overwhelming support for Measure Q in November 2010 launched $130 million in projects throughout the district, including two new buildings at Fresno High School and an academic building at Hoover High School that opened in August.

At Aynesworth, the new wing matches the last addition to the school, in 1999, but includes all the latest in technology, safety and energy efficiency. Each classroom has four solar tubes and each bathroom has two, bringing a tremendous amount of natural light into the rooms. With the addition of other energy saving equipment, the project has qualified for an HPI (high performance incentive) grant from the state.

Each room will include a Smart Board with a white board on each side and is equipped with the new short throw projectors as well as two student laptops. The classrooms have ample storage, including the long, wide drawers that teachers love for oversized paper and posters and lots of tall storage.

Other Measure Q projects include:

- **Baird Middle School:** Construction on gym expected to begin in early 2014; planning underway for a classroom building.
- **Bullard High School:** Planning underway for two classroom buildings, library/career center, administration building.
- **Centennial Elementary School:** Classroom building under construction; spring completion.
- **Columbia Elementary School:** Planning underway for a new classroom building.
- **DeWolf and Design Science High Schools:** Spring construction for classroom building and renovation of multipurpose building.
- **Easterby Elementary School:** Spring completion for classroom and kindergarten buildings.
- **Figarden Elementary School:** Planning underway for two classroom buildings.
- **Hamilton K-8:** School-wide modernization is underway; parking reconfiguration.
- **Hoover High:** Former science classrooms remodeled to accommodate special education classes; construction on a new pool is expected to start next spring.
- **King Elementary School:** Planning underway for new classroom building.
- **McLane High School:** Construction on a new classroom building expected to start in the coming weeks; upgrade/reconfiguration on locker rooms underway.
- **Robinson Elementary School:** New kindergarten/preschool building is in design.
- **Roosevelt High School:** Old arts and technology buildings have been demolished to provide for a new spacious quad area; campus lighting and decorative fencing is also being installed.
- **Sequoia Middle School:** Phase I of school-wide modernization is underway.
- **Turner Elementary School:** Planning underway for a new classroom building and office.

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kp.org/fresno
Why are they referred to as Common Core?
The term “common” refers to having consistency across all states and the term “core” refers to a foundational set of standards.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?
Yes. Teachers across the nation have been a critical voice in the development of the standards by providing specific, constructive feedback.

What are the benefits of teaching the Common Core Standards?
They will better prepare students for college and global work success because they are aligned to international standards. Students will develop higher level thinking skills and will learn how to use them together to solve real-world problems. Rather than assessing our students’ ability to recall facts, we will be able to determine their ability to reason, analyze, and think critically, thus providing a much more clear understanding of what they can do. Common Core will also help improve teacher collaboration because it will allow educators to share aligned information and resources nationwide.

What grade levels are included in the Common Core Standards?
The English language arts and mathematics standards are for grades K-12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities have also been involved with the development of the standards.

What are the Fresno Unified Scope and Sequence documents?
The Fresno Unified Scope and Sequence documents, created by district teachers and leaders, provide a structure for teachers to plan lessons and activities, integrating reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language.

What are the expectations of Fresno Unified teachers in the 2013-14 school year?
In this 2013-14 school year, teachers are expected to:
• Increase complex talk and complex tasks through reading, writing, listening, and speaking in complex text.
• Engage students in Common Core grade-level standards through the use of the Scope and Sequence in planning.
• Engage students in higher levels of thinking using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) reaching levels 2, 3, and 4.

What will students do differently when they are learning?
When you walk into a classroom you will see students engaged in:
• More hands-on, active learning.
• Collaborating with peers in groups.
• Reading more real-word text such as non-fiction and digital sources.
• Writing for real purposes and audiences.
• Applying knowledge to complete real-world tasks.

How will students be assessed?
New assessments are being developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and will be implemented in the 2014-15 school year. The new assessments will be taken online and will assess research, writing, and analytical skills. Sample test items can be viewed at www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks.

How can parents help their children at home?
To help facilitate the development of Common Core skills, parents can:
• Supply non-fiction text and read it aloud with your child.
• Provide series of texts on topics of interest.
• Have discussions about ideas within non-fiction texts.
• Ask for evidence in everyday discussions.
• Encourage writing at home and write “books” together using evidence/details.
• Push your child to master basic math facts.
• Ask your child why they know their answer in a math problem is correct.
• Ask your child to do math that comes up in your daily life.

For more information and resources, visit the Fresno Unified Common Core website at go.fresnounified.org/commoncore.
Tips From the Doctor to Prevent Injuries

By Brian Guthrie, MD  Pediatrician at Kaiser Permanente Fresno

A trip to the emergency room with a sick or hurt child is a terrifying experience - one that no parent wants to experience.

But there are ways you can protect your children from some of the most common preventable injuries, and hopefully avoid a trip to the ER. Here are some tips for keeping your children safe:

Injuries from motor vehicle accidents

The correct use of seatbelts, child safety seats, booster seats – and following the recommended guidelines for child seat selection in a car – can prevent many serious injuries from motor vehicle accidents. Child seat recommendations by age and weight can be sometimes confusing, but a helpful summary of guidelines can be found in an online brochure published by the California Department of Public Health: http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/iniyiosaf/Documents/ParentBrochure-English.pdf

The most important thing to remember is to always buckle your children when they are in the car no matter how quick of a trip you are making. Teach them at a young age about the importance of wearing a seatbelt.

Poisoning

It’s easy to overlook, but locking up medications (prescriptions and over-the-counter medications) can prevent accidental overdose and poisoning in children. A common scenario is a child who gets into a grandparent or other relative’s medications, sometimes mistaking it for candy. We are seeing more cases of teenagers abusing their parents’ or relatives’ prescription medication. When adults are visiting your home, make sure purses and handbags with medications in them are secure and out of the reach of children.

Warn your children and teens about the dangers of taking medication not prescribed to them by a doctor.

Sports injuries

Make sure your child has and is using the proper gear and equipment for the sport he or she is playing. Teach them about proper warm-ups and cool-downs before and after sports participation. Warm-up exercises make the body’s tissues warmer and more flexible. Cool-down exercises loosen muscles that have tightened during exercise. Both can help prevent serious injuries from occurring. And always make sure your children are staying well-hydrated when they are playing. Encourage them to drink water frequently and remember to apply sunscreen while playing a sport outdoors.

These tips are just some of the ways you can prevent your child from having a serious medical emergency. For more information and resources on how to keep your child healthy visit www.kp.org/fresno.

New Version of ATLAS Parent Portal Rolled Out With Added Features

The newest version of the ATLAS parent portal is now available at http://go.fresnou.org/parents and includes full Spanish translation for parents more comfortable reading Spanish.

Previously, the portal only included partial translations. Parents may now choose between reading in Spanish or English from the home page.

The updated site also introduces the English Learner (EL) Re-designation feature and California English Language Development Test charts for those students taking the CELDT. The changes make parental navigation easier for Spanish users while also providing new resources to all district parents.

Other changes are on the way. By the beginning of the new calendar year, the district will roll out an email and text messaging system. Parents will be able to gain “on demand” snapshots of their children’s grades and attendance, every day, simply by texting a designated district number. By spring break, parents will be able to sign up for monthly, weekly or even daily messaging. Grade and attendance information will be delivered directly to parents’ cell phone or email as frequently as they desire. The ability to opt-in and request “scheduled” updates will eliminate the likelihood of receiving unwanted emails or text messages.

Another significant highlight of the district’s new messaging system will be “school blasts.” In the unfortunate event a school safety issue occurs, school sites and/or the district will have the ability to alert parents with timely information directly to their cell phone or email address.

The district encourages parents to visit the ATLAS parent portal to update their phone and email address if they haven’t done so already. More information on the new communication tools will be available in the coming months.
Edison’s Academy is a Beacon of Excellence

Edison High School’s Green Energy & Technology Academy has been selected to represent the California Partnership Academies (CPA) as one of 15 CPA Lighthouse Academy model programs. The California Department of Education’s CPA Lighthouse Academies set the standard for correct implementation of the CPA model, provide assistance to other Partnership Academies, and provide critical assistance to the state CPA team. Jerry Winthrop, lead consultant for the CPA program, said: “Being chosen for this distinction reflects the quality, history, and understanding of the CPA model to which your team has dedicated itself.” Status as a CPA Lighthouse Academy includes a $10,000 stipend to defray costs.

Hamilton Honors Teacher for a Race Well Run

The Hamilton K-8 School community paid tribute to Mike Pappas, a dedicated teacher, mentor and coach who died of cancer Oct. 15 at age 63, by gathering at “Pappas Lane” on campus Oct. 22. As a tribute to Mr. Pappas, guests donated running shoes and spikes to the Hamilton track program, wrote messages and contributed toward the purchase of a bench to be placed outside the gym.

Edison, Bullard Forensics are Among Best in Nation

The National Forensic League has notified the forensics teams at Edison and Bullard high schools that they are among the best in the nation. Edison High School’s forensics team is in the elite 200 Club, while Bullard’s team is in the top 10% and is in the 100 Club. The rankings are based on points earned in competition and service-related activities.

Tehipite Honors Veterans

In recognition of Veterans Day, Tehipite Middle School honored six veterans -- including a Tehipite teacher that served in Desert Storm -- during a special assembly Nov. 8 organized by the school’s social studies staff. The event included student readings, presentation of certificates to the veterans and the playing of Taps. The six veterans honored were Tehipite teacher Juanita Hester-Haynes, Sgt. Joseph Lonero, Chris Salcido, Sgt. Angel Ortiz-Bello, Earl Franks and Murray Farber, who with his wife, Francine, established the Steve’s Scholars scholarship program at the campus last year.

Webster Hosts Dinner to Honor CST Success

Webster Elementary School held its second annual California Standards Test (CST) dinner celebration Oct. 24, honoring the 150 students who scored proficient or advanced.

Bullard Band Win in Stockton

The Bullard High School band and color guard were highly successful Nov. 16 at the Lincoln Review of Champions in Stockton, winning grand sweepstakes for field show and parade, first place for field show in their division, field show sweepstakes tie for color guard, second place in field show for brass and third place in field show for woodwinds.

Students Say No to Bullying

The district places a strong emphasis on teaching students how to prevent bullying, with several schools launching Olweus programs over the past months. At Easterby Elementary School, following two weeks of activities bullying prevention activities, all classes displayed their work outside their rooms and participated in “gallery walks” on Oct. 25 to see the work of their peers. At Figarden Elementary School, students performed skits on Oct. 30, while at Powers-Ginsburg on Oct. 31, students and staff held a parade wearing hero costumes.

Kings Canyon Showcases Art at Frank’s Place

Kings Canyon Middle School students displayed art and performed at Frank’s Place in the Tower District Nov. 7, giving students a chance to showcase their talent in a public venue. Music was provided by the drum line and choir, while art students displayed “Welcome to the Jungle” featuring animal self-portraits; perspective city drawings of downtown Fresno; and “Metaphorical Family Trees,” which includes poems written by the students.

County Official Speaks to Thomas Students

Students in Thomas Elementary School’s Boys 2 Men after-school program had the opportunity Nov. 8 to meet and talk with Henry Perea, a member of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, as part of an effort to introduce the students to strong, positive male role models. Boys 2 Men is a mentoring program for at-risk students, similar to Fresno Unified’s Men’s Alliance programs for middle and high school students. Through Boys 2 Men, students are learning skills for the real world, including how to be leaders and self-sufficient learners, resolve conflicts, and resist peer influences.

Addams Creates Ellis Island

The fifth grade team at Addams Elementary School created its own Ellis Island on Oct. 18. Students had a hands-on opportunity to bring to life what they had been studying about the rights and responsibilities immigrants faced coming to America. The cafeteria was set up as Ellis Island’s Great Hall, with four stations for students to rotate through where they were either “delayed” or “passed.” Students wrote about their experience and feelings while going through the process and were encouraged to express the feelings the immigrants must have felt.

Community Organizations Treat Students to Shopping Trip for Clothes

Two community partners, East Fresno Kiwanis Club and CalViva Health, treated 55 elementary students from five schools to a shopping spree at Burlington Coat Factory Oct. 5. Each of the students received $124 (plus tax) to spend on clothes, thanks to a $6,000 donation from the East Fresno Kiwanis Club, a $1,000 donation from CalViva Health toward shoes and a $670 donation from Burlington Coat Factory. Students were selected from Ayer, Balderas, Easterby, Greenberg and Storey elementary schools because of the high number of students living in poverty in those school communities. With more than 80% of the district’s 72,000 students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, the district is grateful to the many community partners who step forward to assist Fresno Unified students.

Students Read Otis to Younger Peers for Record

Middle and high school students in the Men’s Alliance and Women’s Alliance programs read Loren Long’s Otis to elementary students at several schools Oct. 3 and 4 as part of Read for the Record, a literacy project to help every child in America enter school prepared to succeed. The students joined millions of readers seeking to set a new world record for largest shared reading experience. Through the project, students at Gibson, Robinson, Wishon, Ayer, Greenberg, Eaton, Del Mar, Easterby, Scandinavian Child Care Center, Webster, Jackson, Easterby, and Wolters were read to by students from Ahwahnee, Fort Miller, Kings Canyon, Scandinavian, Tehipite, and Tioga middle schools and Bullard, Hoover, McLane, Roosevelt and Sunnyside high schools.

The Men’s and Women’s Alliance programs, housed at several middle and high schools in the district, provide mentoring, leadership classes, tutoring, cultural and community service opportunities and career and college exploration to at-risk students. The students in turn help mentor their younger peers.

See ROUNDUP, Pg. 16
McLane Project Highlights Southeast Asian Experiences

McLane High School students will exhibit works at the Fresno fairground and Vang Pao Elementary School at the end of December, the culmination of a 16-month project on the Southeast Asian experience during and after the Vietnam War.

As part of the ArtVenture Academy’s “Stories of Home” project, students conducted more than 300 interviews with Southeast Asian staff, community members, family members, and friends regarding their experiences in Laos, the refugee camps, and the United States, with supporting research from videos and articles.

Students translated their interviews into 40 large paintings, a graphic novel, film, an anthology, and a variety of other art work, some of which won awards at the Big Fresno Fair in October. Students will exhibit their work at the Fresno Fairgrounds during the Hmong International New Year Festival and at Vang Pao Elementary School, with both exhibits scheduled Dec. 26-29.

Because so many of the stories written by students referenced the Mekong River, the works will include a boat created by student artists with life-size people escaping to Thailand. Sculpted hands will protrude from the tableau, symbolizing those lost in the river and those reaching for a new life.

“This project has allowed Hmong students to better connect with their family history, while helping non-Hmong students better understand the Southeast Asian experience,” said ArtVenture Academy coordinator Marc Patterson. “At the same time, students have developed their skills in art, writing, storytelling and a variety of other academic areas.”

As another culminating activity for the project, award-winning author Kao Kalia Yang worked with students on their writing during an advanced writers workshop on Dec. 2. Last year, students read portions of Yang’s The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir, describing her family’s escape during the aftermath of America’s Secret War in Laos.

For many students at McLane and throughout the district, “Stories of Home” is highly personal. Beginning in 1975, Hmong refugees began arriving in the United States following the Communist takeover in their homeland of Laos. Today, Fresno and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area have the largest concentration of Hmong in the United States.

On Sept. 8, 2012, Fresno Unified dedicated Vang Pao Elementary School, named for the late General Vang Pao, a father-figure to the Hmong who led his countrymen in assimilating to the United States.

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As a student at Hoover High School, I feel since that powerful assembly I have seen a considerable difference in how my peers see each other, and treat each other. Numerous times, I’ve noticed students go out of their way to “take that first step” and do something for another student out of kindness and compassion, whether they knew them or not. We interviewed several students on their personal opinion of the Human Element to analyze the student impact and we received nothing but positive responses:

“I think the Human Element really helps show students that people around them go through troubles, have feelings and are all human; just like them.”

-Angela Lopez

“The Human Element has practically changed my whole outlook on people. I see that we must act differently and treat each other with effortless kindness. A simple word or sentence can change a person’s outcome, make a difference and establish a new friendship! Imagine the people we could save from doing just that.”

-Adrian Gomez

Thus far, this campaign for kindness has achieved its intended affect: we’re beginning to change the way people see one another. Our students are starting to see the big picture: That we are all human. Our students believe in the Human Element, and are looking forward to what we will do next.

As Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Knowing what’s right doesn’t mean much, unless you do what’s right.”

By Corey Miracle

McLane High School ArtVenture Academy students Kimberly Chang, left, and Linda Her work on the “Stories of Home” project.
Construyendo Futuros: Mensaje del Superintendent

Es difícil de creer que están llegando los meses del invierno, y que los días festivos se acercan. Parece que fue ayer cuando acudimos al almuerzo de las escuelas y dimos la bienvenida a nuestros estudiantes regresando de las vacaciones de verano.

Esta época del año es conocida como la época de dar, y al finalizar el 2013, me gustaría tomar un momento para reflexionar cómo en un año cosas extraordinarias han sido coadyuvando para comenzar y tener éxito en la secundaria. Estos son sólo unos ejemplos de lo que pasó para comenzar y tener éxito en la secundaria. Nosotros tenemos que seguir haciendo más que hacer y lo seguimos haciendo cada día.

No es una sorpresa que nuestros estudiantes estén generalmente mejorando en todo el Distrito. Hemos rediseñado nuestras escuelas para que nuestros estudiantes estén más cerca de los maestros, personal administrativo, directores, padres y líderes comunitarios, hasta nuestros mayores interesados -- nuestros estudiantes.

En los últimos años, gracias al apoyo generoso de nuestra Mesa Directiva, a la Mesa Educativa, a los maestros, a los estudiantes, a la Mesa Directiva, a los administradores, a los padres y a los líderes comunitarios, nuestro Distrito Escolar Unificado de Fresno ha sido capaz de hacer realidad cosas que hace años estaban fuera de nuestro alcance.

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New Funding Formula Targets High-Needs Students

Every day, Fresno Unified is responsible for educating more than 72,000 students, many of whom come to school with a variety of issues. To be fully successful, the district needs to address the social and emotional well-being of students as well as their academic needs.

With the state’s adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) earlier this year, it will direct more funding to California’s neediest children and help the district better support all students. Fresno Unified anticipates receiving $15 million in LCFF funds targeting high-needs students, specifically low-income students, English learners and foster youth.

More than 80% of Fresno Unified’s students live in poverty and face a number of hurdles just to make it to school in the morning.

• Over 59,000 students receive free and reduced meals.
• Over 16,000 students are English learners.
• Over 2,400 students are homeless.
• Over 600 students are in foster care.

Along with directing additional resources to the district’s neediest students, LCFF also untangles the complexity of school finance and reduces administrative burden, improves funding equity across districts and allows school boards to decide how funds will be spent to best meet local educational priorities.

The Board of Education will continue to be exemplary stewards of Fresno Unified’s resources, placing the highest priority on educational programs, employee compensation and financial reserves. It is developing a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) on the state’s approved template that details how funds will be used to create a high quality education program and includes goals that align with the budget.

Over the next two months, the district will be meeting with various district leaders, employee groups, parents and community groups to discuss the funding formula.

Duncan Students are Pitch Perfect

Duncan Polytechnical High School students Houa Thalchuefeng and Robby Yang both received honorable mention awards – and $100 gift cards -- at the Fresno State CEO Business Pitch Competition for their outstanding elevator pitch presentations. They were the only two high school students who competed in this college-level competition. They are enrolled in Duncan’s sales and marketing class with teacher Suki Dhaliwal.

Bullard TALENT Art Spotted at Warnors

Bullard TALENT K-8 School hosted the Yellow Spot Show at Warnors Theatre as part of ArtHop on Oct. 3. The show featured an imaginative collection of paintings by students and adults that all started with yellow spots on blank canvases. Each artist purchased their canvas and received a T-shirt commemorating the event for a $20 donation as part of a fundraiser for the visual arts program at Bullard TALENT. The event also featured entertainment by Bullard TALENT’s jazz and mariachi bands as well as a show at nearby Frank’s Place by the Bullard TALENT Showcase choir.

Yokomi Artist Creates With Shrinky Dinks for Exhibition Piece at Art Museum


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