Focus on Goal 2: Arts, Activities & Athletics
Students Perform With Philharmonic

More than 5,700 fourth-grade musicians from Fresno Unified performed with the region’s finest musicians during concerts on Feb. 13 and 14 with the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra.

The concerts are one of the many ways Fresno Unified continues to expand arts experiences for students as it focuses on the district’s Goal 2 that “All students will engage in arts, activities and athletics.”

The fourth-grade students performed with their recorders as part of a program called Link Up, a concept designed by the Carnegie Foundation that partners orchestras with elementary music programs to increase students’ skills and appreciation for music. The partnership with the Fresno Philharmonic came about because of discussions through the Any Given Child initiative Goals and Action Plan.

In October 2012, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts selected Fresno as the 10th city for the Any Given Child initiative, which seeks to create an affordable arts education program, combining the existing resources of Fresno Unified, local arts groups and the Kennedy Center.

Through Link Up, fourth-grade music teachers have been teaching students specific music and subject matter that culminated with the concerts. Sitting from the seats in Saroyan Theatre, students performed with the Fresno Philharmonic in a program that allowed students to listen, learn and most of all, participate with the orchestra. Although most of the students performed on a recorder, the musical selections included lyrics and many students performed with the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra.

District Invests in Tablets for Students

The district has purchased more than 15,000 tablets for students in all grades to support classroom learning and instruction and for taking the new Common Core assessments.

Purchase of the tablets is part of the district’s substantial investment toward implementation of the Common Core State Standards, with a focus on professional development, technology and instructional materials.

The state has provided $14 million in one-time funds for implementation of Common Core, a revised set of educational standards that include rigorous content and skills, are research-based and are aligned with college and work expectations. The new standards promote critical thinking and encourage students to use what they have learned to complete real-world tasks.

The district’s purchase of the student tablets is essential for Common Core implementation because students will be expected to digitally complete the Smarter Balanced assessments for Common Core. The district’s purchase will equate to about six tablets per elementary classroom and about seven for middle and high school classrooms. The tablets – not intended for students to take home – will be rotated among groups of students for assessments.

See TABLETS, Pg. 11
Fresno Unified’s Negotiation News

In a continued commitment in providing Fresno Unified students with dedicated, qualified teaching staff, the Fresno Unified School District continued contract negotiations with the Fresno Teachers Association (FTA) providing its last, best and final offer. With a total compensation package ranked as the best in the Central Valley and 4th in the State (behind Garden Grove, Santa Ana and Long Beach), Fresno Unified places great value in its teaching staff. Our teachers go above and beyond for the more than 72,000 students who come to us each day and we have worked diligently to ensure that they are fairly compensated, especially in today’s challenging economic climate.

In mid-January when Governor Brown presented his budget for 2014/2015 and projected an increase in Local Control Funding Formula dollars, Fresno Unified recognized an opportunity to increase its offer to FTA. In response, FTA increased its proposal by more than doubling the District’s original offer in salary and benefits alone.

Fresno Unified proposes an 8.2% salary over the next three years. This very competitive salary increase also recognizes the work of those teachers who lead extra-curricular activities, offering the highest compensation for those additional duties in the Valley.

Fresno Unified’s proposal to FTA also includes:

- Class size reduction grades K-3: 24 to 1 student to teacher ratio in 2014/15 (The Governor’s LCFF calls for 24 to 1 in 2020/2021)
- Adding two classified aides to every kindergarten classroom
- Additional resources for students
- More collaboration time for all teachers
- Additional pay tiers available for senior teachers who acquire extra professional learning credits

We believe this is a fair and balanced offer and we are hopeful that FTA will see it as such.

Throughout negotiations Fresno Unified has emphasized a focus on the Board of Education’s core goals, while striving to prepare students for both:

**Who Wants to Enroll in Preschool?**

Preschool students at Vang Pao Elementary School get a head start on learning and will enter kindergarten better prepared.

Fresno Unified continues to enroll students in preschool with afternoon openings at the following schools: 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.

See NEGOTIATION NEWS Pg. 14

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SUPERINTENDENT’S Message

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

Tubman and Thurgood Marshall – these individuals, among innumerable others, represent the lasting struggle for equality still prevalent in not only the African American community, but also in many other ethnic minority groups across America.

Fresno is one of the most diverse cities in California, and it’s our colorful landscape of communities that make this city a great city. However, we also understand and recognize that even though it has been 50 years since the civil rights movement, there are still underserved communities that are not afforded an equal shot to realize the “American Dream.” This, in turn, deeply affects our education system – and in many districts across America, there is a stark difference in the achievement levels of minority students when compared to their white counterparts.

For this very reason, California set out to be the first state to adopt the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which provides funding to our most at-risk students. The LCFF funds are designed to decrease the disproportionate levels of achievement, and increase the amount of educational services that we can provide for our neediest students – from more time with a highly effective teacher, to more access to after-school programs, to increased access to the arts.

And while the LCFF provides the funding necessary to drastically balance disproportionality in education, it’s the CORE Waiver that ultimately puts the academic plan in place.

The CORE Waiver was designed by a group of eight California school districts with a mission to drastically improve student achievement. Under the CORE Waiver, it’s imperative that we recognize our schools that show tremendous increases in the different categories that make up our evaluation process.

I’m extremely proud to announce that we recently recognized five Fresno Unified elementary schools for their commitment to raising the academic bar. Manchester GATE, Webster Elementary, Balderas Elementary,

See SUPT’S MESSAGE, Pg. 12

Learn2Earn has provided workshops for more than 500 participants, helping them to understand how their education fits into their future career goals. They started a new workshop last fall at Central Adult School and 45 students participated in the series. Students discussed career opportunities in healthcare, business, automotive, and industrial and were eager to look to their future.

Learn2Earn is excited to work closely with those participants who graduated with a GED or high school program to start focusing on higher education and training that can lead to career employment. Learn2Earn provides a 12-week job search program for participants to assist them in learning how to effectively job search and market themselves to employers. The program focuses on resume preparation, interviewing, effective job search techniques, and the opportunity to begin networking with others who can help with employment. If you are interested in this program, contact our office to see when the next one starts.

Learn2Earn has great opportunities for anyone looking to begin their education and our advisors can help you plan and get started. The changes to the GED assessment process that began January 1, 2014 will provide more opportunity for students to obtain their GED. There are many high school diploma completion programs available in Fresno as well. You can contact our office at 559-230-4018 for more details.

Watch for our education fairs coming up this spring and check our website for dates and times as they are updated.

We have opportunities currently for anyone interested in pursuing their education. Don’t wait, contact us today, and take the first step. It’s possible.

If you are interested in getting started with Learn2Earn today please submit an interest form at www.learn2earnfresno.org and meet with an advisor today.
Theory of Action puts Fresno Unified in Position for Sustainable Change

This column is the second 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 to prepare career-ready graduates.

Change is a constant reality. The key to a strong organization is one that can improve along with these natural changes. Nearly seven years ago, the Fresno Unified Board of Education adopted a Theory of Action policy that has proven effective in making sure that effective change can – and has – taken hold across the district. The board’s Theory of Action policy boldly professed that dramatic improvements were required at all levels of the district.

Simply put, the Theory of Action policy describes a purposeful approach to guide daily actions and binds everyone in the district to a defined purpose. It set into motion a set of reform policies that strengthens the boardroom-classroom connection, creating clarity of purpose and action throughout the entire district.

At its core, the Theory of Action calls out the significant increase in expectations for all, including:

- Aligned instructional system: The No. 1 focus is on the classroom, making sure that learning standards, teaching standards, assessments, planning, and targeted instruction are all aligned. This clear focus on an aligned instructional system puts all the pieces of the puzzle together in the classroom to maximize student achievement.
- Support student individual educational goals: Each and every student will learn the same standards, but will be supported based on their individual needs to meet their educational goals.
- Leadership and accountability are essential at all levels: Leadership is not bound by job title – it is an expectation of everyone, requiring risk-taking and learning. All will be held accountable.
- All learners take responsibility for their learning: Everyone in the system is a learner and all learners will take responsibility for their learning.

The board recognized that with higher expectations for all, the supports needed to attain these higher expectations required a significant boost. The Theory of Action calls out for increase in supports for all through:

- Building capacity for all learners
- Professional development
- System capacity
- Infrastructure
- Engaging to collaborate
- Directing resources where required
- Piloting new ideas
- Empowering schools after demonstrated performance

Most importantly, the Theory of Action set out to provide a stable, long-term framework for improving student achievement. Seven years after its adoption, the Theory of Action continues to prove its effectiveness in guiding change.

For example, during the recent state budget crisis, the Theory of Action anchored the board’s decisions to protect investments in the classroom. And, now – during a time of re-instated funding – the board has clarity in budget decision-making because it is anchored to the Theory of Action.

The Theory of Action is proving the test of time. Now – more than ever – this Theory of Action policy puts Fresno Unified School District in the position to be nimble and continue improvement, as change happens. Most importantly, it allows the district to actually effect change as demonstrated by the recent waiver from the federal government to more fully align federal, state, and local standards.

The board-adopted Theory of Action policy demonstrates what can happen when change is harnessed and guided through intention and clear purpose.

To comment or provide feedback, email Vincent Harris at Vincent.Harris@fresnounified.org.

Board Sustainability Committee’s Message

Fresno Unified 2013 NAEP Results Show Significant Gains in Reading, Math

Just prior to winter break, the U.S. Department of Education released the 2013 scores for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for Fresno Unified, showing significant gains in eighth grade reading and mathematics scores since the 2011 test.

The two-year reading gains ranked second among the 21 large city districts voluntarily participating in NAEP. Fresno also ranked second in eighth grade mathematics gains, tied with Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) and Los Angeles. The district showed slight gains within fourth grade reading and mathematics.

Fresno Unified was one of five districts showing gains in all subjects/grade levels tested. Improvements made by Fresno Unified were also recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as he invited Superintendent Michael Hanson to join a national press conference call and share some of the practices implemented in achieving these results.

Hanson stated during the call, “While we’re not where we want to be, the NAEP results parallel the important strides we have been making in implementing a more rigorous set of Common Core standards. The improvement is impressive particularly in eighth grade, where Common Core-focused professional learning has been in place since prior to the 2012-13 school year.

“We have launched fully into the implementation of Common Core this year at all grade levels, and we expect to see acceleration of student learning across the board on both state and national assessments in the future.”

Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, stated, “I am impressed by the district’s two-year gains in eighth grade reading and mathematics, and the upward swing in fourth grade as well. Fresno Unified voluntarily selected to participate in NAEP beginning in 2009 as a part of a 21-district cohort of the Council of the Great City Schools. Under the leadership of Hanson, the district has aggressively implemented the Common Core standards and these gains mark an important confirmation of their first steps on this path. Fresno’s participation and gains make it crystal clear that the district is fully committed to the highest academic standards for children.

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**Common Core State Standards Focus on 21st Century Skills**

One of the biggest changes in Common Core instruction is that it requires students to spend more time thinking and reasoning and less time memorizing facts. Students are now required to think critically, analyze information, solve problems, and explain/justify how they figured out the answer.

These “21st Century Skills,” as they are commonly known, will prepare students for future college and career readiness.

All teachers and leaders in the Fresno Unified School District have completed two full days of training to help them better understand how to implement Common Core instruction, including what is expected from students and how to create lessons/activities that require use of 21st century skills.

Examples of Common Core instructional activities include:

**English language arts, Grade 4:**

After reviewing profiles at an entrepreneurial site such as www.kiva.org, students work in groups to research the economic and social impact of several proposals. Each group selects one proposal and creates a presentation to persuade classmates to choose that proposal. The class votes on the most persuasive proposal and creates an appropriate activity plan that might be used to raise the money to support the chosen proposal.

**Math, Grade 4:**

Students play common logic and chance games and analyze the mathematical understandings that are developed while playing these games. Participants play the games in small groups and consider how math influences the outcomes within the game. Students then experiment, making adaptations in the games in order to influence the games’ outcomes.

**Math, Grade 12:**

In small groups, students explore and devise a process for solving Rubik’s cube using three sets of moves that each complete a specific function. These activities are full of much more complex tasks than simply memorizing facts. They require the use of multiple skills and a variety of information to complete the task successfully. Fresno Unified School District is committed to moving teachers and staff to this state of instruction through professional learning, guidance, exemplars, and resources.

For more information on the district’s implementation of Common Core State Standards, visit go.fresnounified.org/commoncore.

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**Edison High School Recaptures Academic Decathlon Title**

Edison High School’s academic decathlon team is once again champions of Fresno County and will move on to compete at the California Academic Decathlon State Finals March 21-23.

Edison’s team was the Division 1 winner with 50,436.7 points, followed by University High School with 48,007.2 – which has in recent years beat out Edison -- and Bullard High School with 40,424.5 points. Sunnyside High School was the Division III winner and Roosevelt High School placed seventh overall. Teams competed Feb. 1 at the Fresno County Academic Decathlon held at Central High School’s East Campus.

Edison team members also had individual scores in the top three, with Dean’s Medals going to Thomas Moore and Ben Drake.

To regain the county title, Edison students put in long hours, practicing every day since Dec. 14 leading up to the county decathlon.

“All the hours, days, and weeks of hard work allowed us to beat our rival,” said Coach Gary Mrkaich. “Rather than focus on the one or two events they liked, this group of students pushed themselves to get better in all 10 subjects, and it is because of that dedication to excellence that we were able to reclaim the county championship.”

Edison’s Academic Decathlon team members are, front row, Moira Tan, Ernesto Batalla and Rumi Sherriff; middle row, Nathaniel Drake, Peter Yang and Ben Drake; and top row, coach Gary Mrkaich and Thomas Moore. The team took first place in the county competition.
Design Science Teacher Drills Students with Knowledge, Support

Gabe Villasenor teaches social studies at Design Science High School, where he has been on the staff since 2007. He also oversees the color guard and drill team and is co-activities director.

Principal Roy Exum described Villasenor as “the combination of excellent teacher, student mentor and advocate, motivator, activities supporter and well respected in individual his peers, students and community, come together in one person.”

What drew you to teach at Design Science?

As a new teacher I had heard of this new program that provided an opportunity for any student to be able to attend college and high school at the same time and complete their time there with a two-year college degree. I saw this as a chance to teach, work with, and be a part of the lives of motivated young people who would need to give more than 110%.

What is the biggest challenge?

Keeping up with the ever changing rules/ styles/ and teaching requirements that come our way.

Why did you become a teacher?

After retiring from the United States Army, I had the time to do anything I wanted. I finally decided I wanted to work with, mentor, and help young people. So I took advantage of the “TROOPS to TEACHERS” program, which encouraged retired soldiers to use the experience, leadership skills, and knowledge to become mentors and to acquire their teaching credentials. I taught many classes to soldiers while in the service, but I felt the difference the first time I got up in front of high school students. I felt like I made a difference. I didn’t realize I would also learn so much from the kids.

What makes you laugh about teaching high school students?

Every day there is something new to laugh about. Just being a part of your student’s lives and hearing what is a world tragedy to them (like what to wear to a dance), and how they handle it. I never spoke nearly as much to my teachers when I was in high school as my students do to me and all the other teachers here at Design Science. Also, seeing them transition from freshmen to young adults. I love to show them old pictures. At their age a couple of years can mean a big change.

How do you know you have succeeded as a teacher?

I can only hope that I am successful. I feel successful when I attend a high school/college graduation of one or more of my students, hear from students who are in college and university, and especially when I see a student smile after understanding a lesson they once said “I don’t get it” to during class.

If you couldn’t be a teacher, what career would you choose?

This is it for me: teaching!

What is your dream vacation?

Having spent most of my life (over 30 years) in the military, I have visited or been stationed throughout the world. So traveling and taking time (stopping in small town USA) to really see our great country on my Harley would be my dream vacation, which of course would have to include a visit to Sturgis for the annual motorcycle rally.

What is the most challenging?

Not having enough resources available, but I suppose that can be said for anyone in a leadership role.

What is the most bizarre thing that ever happened to you on the job?

No school name mentioned to protect the innocent or perhaps the guilty, but while opening a school one morning many years ago I heard a voice calling out “Help me” several times. It was barely getting light. I could not tell where this voice was coming from. Finally I looked up and a woman was sitting on top of the flag pole, nude. To make a long story short the paramedics and fire department were called and the woman was taken away for observation. To this day I have not been able to figure out how she was able to get up there because afterwards I tried myself and never could make it up more than 2 or 3 feet. Of course I had clothes on while trying it.
Construction progress continues to be on target for what will be Fresno Unified’s newest middle school, the Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School, opening in August.

On Jan. 27, parent representatives, community partners and school site leaders convened for a special Gaston Advisory Board meeting. In addition to providing updates on the school’s progress and initiatives, they also celebrated what would have been the birthday of the school’s inspiration, the late Mr. Gaston.

A special feature at the new middle school will be the Gaston Health and Wellness Center (HWC), the first such school-based health center in Fresno Unified. The Health and Wellness Center will be housed in a 2,000 square foot space with a separate entrance from the school. It will have three exam rooms, a treatment room, an intake counter, medical offices, and lab area. It will be operated as a partner intake counter, medical offices, and lab exam rooms, a treatment room, an from the school. It will have three

The Gaston HWC will provide services to young people 0 to 19 years old in the Gaston attendance area five days a week, year round. It will be the “health home” for area students to ensure that families have access to services that prepare students to be ready to learn.

The Gaston Health and Wellness Center will be the Gaston Health and Wellness Center in Fresno Unified. The Health and Wellness Center will be housed in a 2,000 square

The Gaston HWC will provide services to young people 0 to 19 years old in the Gaston attendance area five days a week, year round. It will be the “health home” for area students to ensure that families have access to services that prepare students to be ready to learn.

The HWC will provide a full range of age-appropriate health and wellness services, with emphasis on prevention, early intervention and risk reduction. Such services include primary medical care, treatment for acute illnesses, mental/behavioral health care, substance abuse counseling, case management, health and wellness education, dental care by referral, vision and hearing screening, and immunizations.

School-based health centers (SBHC) provide an innovative way to support students access health care. Their location on school campuses offers services in a place that is familiar, trusted, age-appropriate and convenient for students and families. Over the past decade, SBHCs have grown significantly, with approximately 250 school-based health centers in California.

Funding Formula Targets Neediest Students

The California Board of Education in January approved regulations to help implement Governor Jerry Brown’s landmark education initiative passed by the state last year. “We have a great opportunity in our state to fashion a more effective learning environment,” Brown said following the state board’s approval.

The regulations will guide school district spending, directing resources to California’s neediest students by targeting low-income, 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

Fresno Unified and other districts will receive funding based on the number of students they serve. Fresno Unified anticipates receiving $24 million in additional funds through the state’s new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and has initiated meetings with various district leaders, employee groups, parents and community groups to discuss the funding formula. The meetings started in December and will continue through February. Feedback from these meetings will be used to create a Local Control and Accountability Plan 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.

LCFF replaces California’s overly complex finance system for K-12 schools. “Schools around the state have suffered for decades under a broken funding system,” said Superintendent Michael Hanson. “LCFF gives students who are in desperate need of more support a fighting chance at success.”

The Board of Education will continue to be exemplary stewards of Fresno Unified’s resources. The proposed plan includes funding to increase student learning by extending the school day for students, investing in more teachers to reduce class sizes, increasing professional learning for teachers and expanding early learning programs. Specific proposals include:

• 2014-15: Up to 10 additional professional learning days and 30 additional instructional minutes per day at up to 20 schools.
• 2015-2016: Up to 10 additional professional learning days and 30 additional instructional minutes per day at an additional 20 schools.
• Lower class sizes in transitional kindergarten through grade 3.
• Additional professional learning for teachers at all sites.
• Adding two kindergarten aides at every school.
Fresno Unified Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.

Last month, Fresno Unified School District joined the nation in celebrating and honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Superintendent Michael Hanson kicked off weekend activities at Courthouse Park speaking at the 30th anniversary of the Fresno Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration on Jan. 17. More than 150 students joined the festivities as organizers, city leaders and the Fresno community recalled the lessons and legacy King left behind.

Many spoke of King’s great intelligence and character and the impact he had on individuals from all walks of life. It was these very characteristics of King’s that were paramount in educating a community that had been given a late start in this country. King once said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character -- that is the goal of true education.”

Hanson, in his speech, noted, “These words still ring true and continue to drive many of our Fresno Unified District initiatives today.”

King often commented, “Life’s most urgent question is what you are doing for others?” It was in that spirit that schools throughout the district took the opportunity to give back to their community, giving up what many simply view as a day away from school. Known as “a day on, not a day off,” students at Wawona Middle School cleaned, painted and assisted with landscaping around their school. They took time to cut and tie fleece blankets that were donated to the Fresno County Sheriff’s Department to use in emergencies. Additional projects were completed to benefit the Majorree Masoo Center and the Leukemia Society. Over the past seven years, more than 1,300 volunteers have provided 8,000 hours of service to the community through Day of Service projects at Wawona, strengthening the very lessons learned from the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. Students at Fresno’s three International Baccalaureate schools – Dailey Elementary Charter School, Cooper Academy and Fresno High School – spent the day working on projects at Roeding Park’s Storyland and Playland.

King, who said it’s the quality, not the longevity, of one’s life that is important paved the road for many and provided great life lessons, lessons that students, teachers, administrators and the entire district continue to learn from and practice daily.

District Helps With FASFA

In preparing for college, one of the biggest areas of concern is affordability and the completion of an accurate Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as the FAFSA. Without an accurate FAFSA, students may not receive the maximum amount of financial aid for college and even jeopardize their opportunities to move on to higher education.

To make sure students have all the support they need in completing the FAFSA, Fresno Unified School District hosted a series of application completion workshops for the FAFSA and the DREAM Act. The evening workshops began in January, and continued with a special DREAM Act workshop at Fresno High School on Feb. 19. A FAFSA workshop will be held at Fresno City College on March 1 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the college Media Center. Students needing additional assistance should contact their high school counselor.

The district is also developing plans to assist students with the new paperless enrollment process for State Center Community College District (Fresno City College, Willow International and Reedley College). Enrollment will open for incoming freshman at midnight April 8. Because many students do not have internet access in their homes, the district is planning special early enrollment sessions for students, with the locations and details in the works. High school counseling staff will be able to provide details to seniors very soon.

Sally Fowler, Fresno Unified’s executive officer for college and career readiness, urges all students to apply to a community college – even those planning to attend a four-year college or university. Eligible students should apply to all of their college options in case they do not get admitted to a four-year college of their choice or family finances or other plans change.

The soaring cost of college has made the FAFSA process more important than ever. The district’s workshops provided step-by-step instructions to students and their families in completing the electronic application. On site assistance and computers were available, as well as translators.

The questions on the FAFSA can be complex for students, especially for those who are the first in their families to attend college or are from low-income households.

For more information on the FAFSA, students and families can contact their high school counselor or go to www.fafsa.gov or www.calgrants.org/workshops.
District Celebrates Black History Month with Various Events

America celebrates Black History Month in February, honoring the achievements and advancements by African Americans and recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history.

Black History Month, which began as Negro History Week in 1926, was the brainchild of Harvard-trained African-American historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Dr. Woodson declared that a period of time should be set aside to reflect on the achievements of blacks in America. He chose February because President Abraham Lincoln and famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass were born during that month. From its humble beginnings as a week-long observance, Negro History Week was extended to an entire month in 1976 and since then, every U.S. president has officially designated the entire month of February as Black History Month.

Fresno Unified recognized this historic month through a wide variety of community events and programs. For example, Wawona Middle School held an “I Have a Dream Student Engagement Day” on Feb. 19, with the goal of engaging students in a range of conversations and encouraging them to express their ideas clearly and persuasively. On Feb. 22, Cooper Academy hosted a Black History Month dinner, and Fresno High School held a special luncheon focused on African-American history and hosted an assembly based on multi-cultural arts and affairs.

The events at schools provided an opportunity for students to learn more about the countless inventors, writers, engineers, business owners, political leaders, lawyers, medical professionals, clergy and athletes from the black community who have made instrumental contributions to American life and have enriched the nation’s entire cultural landscape. The idea of honoring black history has spread to other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom.

Black History Month is also an opportunity to focus on notable Californians, including Tom Bradley, the first African American to be elected Mayor of Los Angeles (1973-1993); Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, the first African-American woman to represent the West Coast in the U.S. House of Representatives; Angela Davis, a political activist, feminist, writer and scholar; and Mary Ellen Pleasant, a former slave who became a millionaire entrepreneur, abolitionist, and conductor in the “Underground Railroad.”

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District Communications Department Receives Top Awards

The Communications Department recently received top awards from the California School Public Relations Association (CalSPRA) for the district’s multimedia safety campaign and newspaper, Building Futures.

The Fresno Unified safety campaign highlighted train, cyber and driving under the influence safety through billboards, video and other messaging. The campaign, which featured district students, received an Award of Excellence in the multimedia communication category.

Building Futures is published six times a year and features news of district initiatives, programs, students and employees. The paper received an Award of Merit in the print newspaper category.

“We are extremely proud of these awards because they highlight the work we are doing to make our students, parents and community better informed,” said Public Information Officer Susan Bedi. “Through the safety campaign, we were able to communicate to a wide audience about specific dangers that affect our students in particular. And through Building Futures, we have established a tradition of getting the word out about all of the great things going on in Fresno Unified.”
Measure Q Projects Elevate Roosevelt’s Curb Appeal, Expand Gathering Space

The district will complete a dramatic new campus entry point and new quad area this spring at Roosevelt High School, enhancing the school’s distinctive architecture and improving space for student activities and gathering.

The work at Roosevelt is part of $130 million in Measure Q projects completed or underway throughout the district following the community’s overwhelming support for the bond measure in November 2010. Measure Q projects are providing better teaching and learning environments, a boost to the local economy and reinvestment in Fresno neighborhoods.

The striking entry portico under construction at the front of Roosevelt provides a natural student access point from both Cedar and Tulare and adds an appealing, highly visible architectural element that complements Roosevelt’s Mission Revival style. A wrought iron fence around the front perimeter of the school replaces chain link fencing.

Principal Bryan Wells said students and alumni are pleased with the projects.

“This new entrance lets the students experience Roosevelt’s great architectural style each day as they enter the campus,” said Rick Andreasen, project manager.

The newest Roosevelt projects follow the completion a year ago of the school’s 16,000 square foot, L-shaped new academic wing on the east side of the campus housing 12 classrooms. The building features space for entrepreneurial classes, science labs, media graphics, special needs students, art, photography and pottery.

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 and expanded central quad.
- 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 and a kindergarten building.
- 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 this spring.
- King Elementary School: Planning underway for new classroom building.
- McLane High School: Construction underway on a new classroom building; upgrade/reconfiguration on locker rooms underway.
- Robinson Elementary School: New kindergarten/preschool building is in design.
- Sequoia Middle School: Phase 1 of school-wide modernization is underway.
- Turner Elementary School: Planning underway for a new classroom building and office.

Roosevelt High School’s new arch at Tulare and Cedar avenues creates a functional and stylish entry point for students. It is one of the district’s Measure Q projects.
To enroll it’s IMPORTANT to bring the following documents:

____ Photo Identification for the person completing the application
____ Social Security Number for each person requesting insurance
____ Recent Income Tax Statement (Form 1040). If you did not file taxes, bring current income verification for each family member (paycheck stubs for last 30 days, letter from employer verifying current wages, Government benefits award letter, etc.)
____ Verification of Current Address (utility bill, rent receipt, car registration, etc.)
____ Verification of Citizenship or Immigration Status for each person requesting insurance (Birth Certificate, U.S. Passport, Permanent Resident Card, etc.)

If you are unable to attend, but want to sign up for health insurance, please call Clinica Sierra Vista at 457-5826.

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An increased reliance on fast food and a lack of exercise are helping create an alarming health risk for Central Valley children: more children are being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, considered to be a rare occurrence in children as recently as 20 years ago.

Studies show this disease touches one out of every 10 people who live in the Valley and it’s now impacting our children, putting them at increased risk of developing serious conditions later in life, including heart attacks, strokes and high blood pressure. Some predict the number of diabetics worldwide could double within the next couple of decades.

Although historically the more common diagnosis among children has been Type 1 diabetes, increasingly we are seeing young people with Type 2 diabetes – a disease more commonly diagnosed in adults.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body stops producing insulin. The body needs insulin to move sugar from the bloodstream into the body’s cells, where it can be used for energy or stored for later use. The cause of Type 1 diabetes is not fully understood, but in general there is no way to prevent Type 1 diabetes with diet or exercise.

With Type 2 diabetes, which is preventable, the body can’t make enough insulin to manage all the sugar eaten. The sugar stays in the blood creating high blood sugar levels. High blood sugar over time can lead to problems with the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves and kidneys.

More of my pediatric patients are being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes – an alarming trend that we should all be working to reverse. The main cause of the increase in this disease among children and adults is excess weight gain. A combination of poor nutrition and inadequate exercise are the most common causes of this.

That’s one reason why Kaiser Permanente Fresno puts such a strong emphasis on making sure children are eating healthy meals and exercising at least 60 minutes a day. Even with a family history of this disease, making changes to diet and increasing physical activity will reduce the risk of your child developing this dangerous disease.

The symptoms of Type 2 diabetes can be subtle, which can make it difficult to diagnosis. Some children do experience mild symptoms such as frequent urination, feeling more thirsty than normal and losing a little weight for no apparent reason.

A simple blood test will confirm the diagnosis, so if you suspect your child might be at risk for the disease ask your pediatrician about having your child tested.

Testing to determine if your child has high blood sugar levels can also be a good way to see if your child is pre-diabetic and could be at risk for developing the disease later in life. If your child does have elevated blood sugar levels, eating a healthy diet and increasing physical activity can delay or prevent the onset of diabetes.

The key is to change your child’s eating habits now and increase physical activity levels. Teach your child about making healthy meal choices. Avoid sugary drinks such as juices and sodas. Encourage your child to drink water and even carry a water bottle at school, reducing their temptation to grab a soda from a nearby vending machine. Pack them healthy snacks like carrots or celery sticks and apples or almonds. Make sure their lunches are free of chips and cookies.

If your child is overweight for his or her age, talk with a dietician or pediatrician about developing an eating plan for your child that might work.

Exercise is also extremely important. Children should be getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity during the day. Encourage them to move during recess time at school, not just sit and chat with their friends. Get them involved in an after school sport. Go on long walks after dinner or on the weekends as a family.

Also, make sure to set a good example at home. Eating and physical activity changes are difficult but are most successfully changed when the whole family makes the changes together. Reduce everyone’s risk of developing diabetes by adopting healthy nutrition choices and consistent exercise habits.

Many people don’t realize their children are at risk for developing the disease until it’s too late. Take the first steps to make a healthy lifestyle change for your children now, to prevent diabetes later in life. For more information on how to prevent diabetes in children or other health-related tips visit kp.org/fresno.
The district has identified five elementary schools as Fresno Unified Reward Schools for their academic achievement and/or growth along with improvement in both overall school improvement and student engagement. Checks for $25,000 were presented to Baldaras, Easterby, Manchester GATE and McClardle elementary schools in January. The Reward School designation is directly related to the work of the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) districts. These five Reward Schools will be partnered with CORE district schools throughout the state of California to share best practices and assist other schools striving to make improvements.

**Students Honored for MLK Essays and Art**

Students from Sunnyside High School took all three prizes in the high school division for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest and Fresno Unified students took top honors in the elementary division as well. Several students from the district also were recognized for their work submitted in the MLK art contest. Winners are:

**Essay, high schools:** Joscue Ocotlan, first; Satwinder Kaur, second, and Elisandra Aguilar, third, all from Sunnyside; essay, elementary: Eliah Lawton, first (Manchester GATE Elementary School) and Talit Rodrigues (Vinland Elementary School) second; Superior art: Nitara Hamilton, Logan Hamilton, Abel Iryb and Aniki Amezcua (Norseman Elementary School) and Alex Aparicio (Wawona Middle School); Excellent art: Anna Horner (Turner Elementary School); Good art: Maria Perez and Eric Reynoso (Kings Canyon Middle School), Jose Ruiz (Roosevelt High School) and Jasmine Salas (Turner).

The students’ art was on display through Feb. 13 at Clovis Veterans Memorial District, 808 Fourth St. in Clovis in the North Lobby from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday and from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Sunday. Art and essay winners were honored at an exhibition and reception on Feb. 11. The contest was sponsored by the Fresno County Office of Education.

**Rep. Costa Visits McLane Art Exhibit**

McLane High School’s ArtVenture Academy hosted a reception Jan. 30 for Rep. Jim Costa and the academy’s most recent exhibit, Stories of Home: The Southeast Asian Story Project. Costa was one of the final presenters in the academy’s Speakers Bureau, a series of lectures on various historical and cultural aspects of the Hmong. Costa spoke about the Lao Hmong Veterans Burial Honors Act, H.R. 3192, which would allow Lao and Hmong war veterans to be buried alongside American military personnel in national cemeteries.

**Students and Staff Reach Out to the Community**

As the holidays approached late last year, students and staff at numerous district schools rallied to assist the less fortunate. Their efforts included:

- Students from the Boys 2 Men afterschool program at Thomas Elementary School partnered with Fresno State School of Social Work alumni to collect clothing for the homeless.
- Leadership students from Roosevelt High School helped with Operation Gobble, a project of Assembly Member Henry T. Perea’s office to provide Thanksgiving turkeys to those in need.
- DeWolf High School held an essay contest and delivered three donated trees, along with lights and decorations, to winning students. Students were asked to write an essay about how a Christmas tree would affect their family in a positive way this Christmas season. Skoolum tree farm donated the trees.
- Cambridge High School with Fresno Sunrise Rotary donated and delivered 75 holiday food boxes and chickens to Cambridge families. Aynesworth Elementary School students conducted a canned food drive to contribute to the giveaway, and many employees from the Fresno Unified family donated their time.
- At Roosevelt High School, students collected 1,038 nonperishable food items for the needy.
- DeWolf High School students donated six frozen turkeys and hundreds of non-perishable food items to the manager and a client of the New Life for Girls women’s shelter.
- The student leadership team at Hamilton K-8 School fanned out from campus December 18 to spread cheer in the area, greeting residents of the Hamilton community and giving cookie plates to over 40 neighbors.
- Del Mar Elementary School students collected more than 700 food items to benefit the Poverello House. Parent Maria Gonzales organized the food drive.
- Terronez Middle School supported children and families in need by collecting more than 2,000 cans and $1,000 for the Community Food Bank and raised funds for the Make a Wish Foundation. Terronez Making Wishes Come True and the Salvation Army.

**Tehipte Showcases Student Work Launched by Middle School Redesign**

Tehipte Middle School celebrated the academic and creative achievement of students during a Winter Showcase Dec. 5. The event demonstrated the additional enrichment students are now receiving as a result of a district-wide redesign of middle school programs that added electives to more than 3,000 students’ schedules. The redesign at 11 campuses provides students with a richer array of classes as well as personalized instruction in literacy and math and more collaboration time for teachers.

Tehipte now offers art, Spanish I, Spanish for Native Speakers, Spanish Cultures, and leadership classes and continues to offer orchestra and band. The Winter Showcase will feature a gallery of essays, videos and other student works in Spanish; a silent auction of student art; and a concert by the orchestra and beginning and advanced bands.

**Staff Donates 346 Coats**

Generous Fresno Unified employees gathered 346 coats during the Great Winter Holiday Coat Challenge, with the Special Education Department winning the Golden Stapler for the third year in a row donating the most coats: 104. Departments housed in the Education Center basement collected the second highest amount, just two coats shy of Special Education’s total. The Education Center and other district departments collected new and gently used coats for students in Project ACCESS.

**ACSA Will Honor Administrators**

Several Fresno Unified leaders were honored Feb. 24 at a dinner hosted by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Region 9. Selected are:

- Russ Painter, Manchester GATE Elementary School, for elementary principal of the year.
- Pang Vangyi for career technical education administrator.
- Katie Russell for central office administrator.
- Teresa Plascencia for classified leader.
- Val Hogwood for curriculum and instruction administrator.
- Jacque Canfield for business services administrator.
- Erica Hasenbeck for pupil personnel administrator.
- Sossie Djibrayan for special education administrator.
- Hoover High School student Corey Miracle for Every Student Succeeding.
- Debra Odom for President’s Choice Award.

**Yokomi and Storey Teachers Win Grants**

Tara Yamamoto from Storey Elementary School and Stephen Barnett from Yokomi Elementary School won teaching grants from the California Table Grape Commission worth up to $750 each. Storey’s grant project calls for the drama club to perform a musical highlighting conflict resolution. Yokomi’s grant project calls for students to plan and maintain a community garden.
college and career. This includes:

More time with an effective teacher, for students Sustainable and competitive compensation, for teachers Student involvement in the arts, activities and athletics Continual professional learning opportunities, for teachers Fresno Unified School District and Fresno Teachers Association had their 20th meeting of Collective Bargaining today, February 13. To date, more than 140 hours have been spent at the table as Fresno Unified continues to maintain its focus on its Board of Education’s core goals—which strive to build deeper infrastructures for improving student outcomes. With the District’s goals as its core, the proposal presented to FTA represents a balanced approach in meeting the needs of both the District’s youth, and it’s more than 3,800 teachers.

Governor Brown’s Local Control Funding Formula is designated to provide more resources to students with the greatest needs -- those who are impoverished, in foster care, with special needs, and second language learners. In Fresno, where poverty levels are among the highest in the country, our students need all the available resources they can access to obtain success. Through our FTA proposal, those very resources are outlined to drive student achievement and provide teachers with the tools they need to foster this outcome. FTA’s proposal focuses primarily on providing financial increases and includes limited focus on student achievement and growth.

While the District wholeheartedly believes in the value of negotiation and finding common ground with FTA, there is concern that this lengthy process could be detrimental to students and their families. In order for many, if not all, of these initiatives to be in place by the coming school year, an agreement between the District and FTA needs to be established. It is our hope and our goal that we can reach such-based on the last, best and final offer provided to FTA on this 20th day of collective bargaining.

For more information, including an informative video, visit our website at www.fresnounified.org.

Bullard Pushes Human Element Initiative Forward

by having a kindness week where all students participated in various activities including attending an assembly where an inspirational speaker spoke about the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion. To continue carrying the movement beyond our kindness week, we created a Human Element Club made up of students interested in leading the efforts to facilitate change within our community.

Thus far, our club has lead assemblies attended by student leaders from the Bullard region elementary schools, introducing them to the principles of the Human Element and empowering them to make a positive impact on their campuses. We are constantly looking forward to what we can do next to continue to spread the Human Element. Within the upcoming months, our club members will be on the campuses of our region’s middle schools in an attempt to continually spread our message through Human Element assemblies.

We truly believe in The Human Element, the values it stands for, and its ability to have a positive impact on all of the members of our community. In the past few months alone it has taught me and other students around the district responsible for leading the spread of this movement not only about kindness, but also that our ability to invoke change on a large-scale is not dependent upon our age, but solely upon the extent of our effort.

Important Testing Dates

March 18-19
California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

April 7-June 6
Smarter Balanced Field Test

April 22-May 9
Legacy STAR Test (high schools)

April 28-May 16
Legacy STAR Test (elementary and middle schools)

May 5-16
Advanced Placement

May 13-14
CAHSEE
Exención CORE la que últimamente pone el plan académico en acción.

La Exención CORE ha sido diseñada por un grupo de ocho distritos escolares de California con la misión de que drásticamente mejore el aprovechamiento estudiantil. Bajo la Exención CORE, es imperativo que reconozcamos nuestras escuelas que muestran avances significativos en las diferentes categorías que actualizan nuestro proceso de evaluación.

Estoy extremadamente orgulloso de anunciar que recientemente reconocimos cinco escuelas primarias del Distrito Escolar de Fresno por su compromiso en aumentar la barra académica. Las escuelas Manchester GATE, Primaria Webster, Primaria Baldres, Primaria McCardle y Primaria Easterby fueron todas reconocidas por su esfuerzo ejemplar o su mejoramiento continuo en el desempeño académico. Por este gran logro y con el generoso apoyo de nuestra Mesa Educativa, hemos podido otorgar $25,000 a cada una de nuestras escuelas distinguidas.

Esperamos que todas nuestras escuelas en el distrito se esfuercen en ser escuelas distintas el próximo año escolar.

Mientras trabajamos en el tema del aprovechamiento estudiantil, quiero invitar a cada padre o tutor a que mantengan una participación activa en el desarrollo académico de sus niños. Las becas de calificaciones recientemente fueron enviadas e invitado a los padres a que revisen, estudien, analicen y reciban las becas de calificaciones de sus niños.

Información Basada en Investigaciones ha demostrado que la educación de los niños y el desempeño socioemocionalmente directamente relacionado al tiempo de interacción que los niños pasan con sus padres.

Los padres deben poner especial atención a como sus comportamientos apoyan el desarrollo y el aprovechamiento académico de un niño(a). Por lo tanto, si usted no lo ha hecho, por favor asegúrese de analizar la calificación de calificaciones y promueva un diálogo sano con sus hijos sobre de sus calificaciones.

Mientras tratamos de acortar la brecha del aprovechamiento y crear un distrito donde todos los estudiantes estén aprendiendo proporcionalmente con sus compañeros, mucha de la carga es puesta no solo en los educadores aquí en el Distrito Escolar de Fresno, sino también con nuestros educadores dentro de cada hogar en Fresno.

Nuestros padres tienen verdaderamente la llave para abrir el potencial de los niños y aquí en el Distrito Escolar de Fresno estamos decididos a hacer todo lo que esté a nuestro alcance para asegurar que los padres tengan las herramientas necesarias para salvaguardar a sus niños y mantenerlos en el camino correcto hacia la grandeza y que el Distrito provee todas las herramientas que ellos necesitan para alcanzar el éxito.

El mes de febrero, como una nación, celebramos el Mes de la Historia Afroamericana, un mes dedicado a creación de conciencia de las contribuciones y logros de los Afroamericanos y el reconocimiento de su papel central en la historia de los Estados Unidos. Al pasar de los años, hemos sido testigos de incontables historias de generaciones, individuales, dolorosas y legítimas luchas por la igualdad y para hacer que sus voces se escuchen en un país que se siente orgulloso de la libertad que demanda para todos sus ciudadanos. De Martin Luther King a Fredrick Douglass, de Rosa Parks a Harriet Tubman y Thurgood Marshall – estos individuos entre otras innumerables cosas, representan la interminable lucha por el derecho a vivir.

En el Distrito Escolar de Fresno estamos decididos a hacer todo lo que esté a nuestro alcance para asegurar que los padres tengan las herramientas que ellos necesitan para alcanzar el éxito.

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Healthy Minute

Recipe Step-by-Step

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly oil a 13”x9”x2” pan. In a large mixing bowl, combine apples with sugar, raisins, and pecans; mix well. Let stand 30 minutes. Stir in oil, vanilla, and egg. Sift together flour, soda, and cinnamon. Stir into apple mixture about one-third at a time. Turn mixture into pan. Bake 35 to 40 minutes. Cool cake slightly before serving.

Makes 20 servings

Each 3½-by-2½-inch serving contains:
241 calories, 5 g fat, 57 mg cholesterol, 273 mg sodium, 45 g carbohydrates

Recipe courtesy of Claremont EAP, Krames StayWell

Know Your Numbers

Take the first 3 steps along your path to better health with the Know Your Numbers personal wellness campaign. From February - April, the WellPATH Employee Wellness Program at Fresno Unified School District is offering FREE personal wellness assessments, wellness screenings, and wellness coaching to eligible employees and dependents covered under the District’s plan.

For more information and to pre-register for a wellness screening, visit the District’s Joint Health Management Board website at www.JHMBHealthConnect.com.