

CUSD Today



March 2021

Volume 23, No. 8

Clovis Unified School District — WHERE CHARACTER COUNTS!

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We're back ...



Clovis Unified welcomed intermediate and high school hybrid students back to campus Feb. 23 for the first time since last March as recent updated county and state guidelines allowed for their return. Strict health and safety protocols are being followed for the now 21,000+ students at all the district's elementary and secondary school sites who are taking part in in-person learning.



Pictured, clockwise from top, Buchanan High teacher Pat Geil takes a selfie with his American Government students on the first day back. For some classes at Clovis West High, students are meeting in the lecture hall to spread out. Kastner Intermediate orchestra instruction is held outside. Welcome signs greet returning students.

For ongoing re-opening updates and plans, see cbsd.com.

Photos special to
CUSD Today.

Vaccines available for all district staff

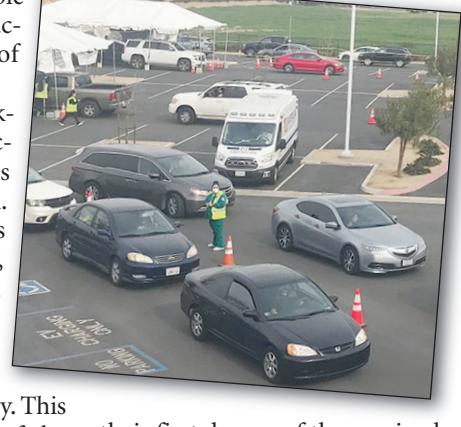
■ Around 3,400 opt for vaccination in March

Educators became eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in Fresno County as of March 1.

Clovis Unified acted quickly to create easy access to vaccinations for all employees who chose to receive them.

About 50 percent of Clovis Unified's 6,400 employees, which includes full-time, part-time, substitutes and walk-ons, indicated they wanted vaccinations in a survey conducted in February. This is in addition to the 1,000 of the district's healthcare and close-contact special education employees who were allowed and chose to receive the vaccination in January.

This month about 3,600 vaccines and accompanying blocks of appointment times were developed for CUSD employees with local vaccination providers: Sierra Pacific Orthopedic Center (SPOC), Valley Health Team and Baz Allergy Institute. All employees using these services were expected to receive



their first dosage of the vaccine by mid-March.

District employees continue to have the option to make appointments with any vaccine provider in Fresno County.

Partnering providers used either Pfizer or Moderna vaccines that have both been shown to have 94-95% efficacy against contracting COVID-19.

Learn more: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/#When-can-I-get-vaccinated>.

6 schools win Bonner Awards

Six Clovis Unified secondary schools won the prestigious 2021 Bonner Character Award.

The Virtues and Character Recognition Award was presented during an online celebration Feb. 24 to Alta Sierra, Clark, Granite Ridge and Kastner intermediate schools and Clovis and Clovis North high schools.

In addition to completing an extensive application, finalists arranged a panel of administrators, teachers and students to be interviewed by the Bonner Center who then determined recipients. In even years, the awards program recognizes elementary schools and in odd years, intermediate and high schools.

Joshua Shapiro, Ed.D., the principal of both recipients Granite Ridge and Clovis North, said receiving the award validates the schools' efforts to provide high-quality instructional programs that include a focus on character development and civic education.

"To achieve success requires dedication and collaboration from all stakeholders. I am proud to say [these schools] demonstrate these valuable qualities," he said.

Clovis Unified's six recipient schools are among a total of 10 Valley secondary schools that were honored this year by Fresno State's Bonner Center for their schools' exemplary character and civic education.



The 'Golden' Eagle has landed

CW grad helps develop cameras on Mars; scientist Zooms with former teachers, students

By Patti J. Lippert
CUSD Today

When the Perseverance Rover landed on Mars Feb. 18 after traveling 300 million miles in six months, it carried with it the years' long work of a Clovis Unified graduate. Clovis West High 2004 alum Colin McKinney led the NASA team responsible for the cameras on the Perseverance that successfully and immediately began relaying images to Earth when it touched down.

His third-grade Valley Oak Elementary teacher Chris White could not have been more proud. Her current class – fifth graders at Bud Rank Elementary – had watched the landing of Perseverance live. "The first thing I said to my class when it landed was, 'Look how clear the pictures are,'" she said. And that was before she knew of McKinney's connection. When she found out, she couldn't wait to tell her class.

McKinney recently joined White's students through Zoom to talk about his work for NASA. It was a reunion of sorts as also attending were McKinney's first-, fourth- and fifth-grade Valley Oak

teachers Kendra Matson, Nancy Swain and Linda Meyerson, respectively, and Superintendent Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D., a former Valley Oak teacher and principal.

"We are so proud of him," White said. "Colin is an inspiration. He played such a large role in this major event that was captured around the world!"

McKinney attended Clovis Unified schools Valley Oak, Kastner and Clovis West; earned his electrical engineering degree from Cal Poly; and joined NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in 2008. In 2015 he assumed the role as the product delivery manager of the Mars 2020 Rover Enhanced Engineering Cameras. The Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover launched July 30, 2020.

McKinney explained to students that the goal of the Mars 2020 mission is to search for signs of ancient life on Mars by taking soil and rock samples that will later be returned to Earth and studied. Advanced camera technology needed to be developed in order for the rover to move around the planet faster to desired sites (images from satellites orbiting

► Please see McKinney, Page 7



Photo special to *CUSD Today*.
Clovis West graduate Colin McKinney led NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory team responsible for developing technologically advanced cameras for the Perseverance Rover's mission on Mars.

INSIDE:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2021-22 registration underway

Registration has begun for the 2021-22 school year for incoming transitional kindergarteners, kindergarteners or new-to-the-district first through 12th graders. [Page 3](#)

FOUNDATION

New projects and programs funded

Six new projects and programs supporting social-emotional wellness and two supporting citizenship and civic pride are underway in Clovis Unified. [Page 6](#)

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Making progress and planning ahead

At this moment in time, one year after the start of the COVID pandemic, I must give praise to an educational team who has forged a path where no map existed. [Page 5](#)



Clovis Community College



Attending community college for the Summer or Fall 2021 semesters?



Then be sure to participate in the College Advising process:

- During the advising process, you will meet with a counselor to develop your Student Education Plan (SEP).
- High school seniors will use the SEP to register for their community college classes.
- Please complete the college advising when offered through your high school.
- Check with your high school counseling office or College Outreach Specialist for community college advising session dates and times.

Missed the community college advising session at your high school?

- Check with your high school counseling office or College Outreach Specialist for community college advising session dates and times.

Summer School 2021:

- First-time community college students who are currently high school seniors are eligible to register at the same time for Summer and Fall 2021 semesters.
- Summer school registration dates will be emailed April 21.
- Check your community college email account for more information on April 21st or ask your College Outreach Specialist for more information.



Clovis Community College "Welcome Center"

Scan the QR code to watch helpful videos about the advising process.

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Enrollment fees waived up to two school years.

Eligibility is limited to two school years, with the year counted as Summer, Fall, Spring. Awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis due to limited funds. Eligibility is limited to California residents and requires completion of the FAFSA or CADAA and enrollment in at least 12 units per term.

Clovis Community College Outreach Specialists



David-Anthony Navarro

Schools: Clovis East, Clovis West, Clovis Online, Enterprise, Community Day School & Gateway
Phone: 559-325-5267
Email: david.navarro@cloviscollege.edu
Appointments are available per request.



Isaac Reyna

Schools: Clovis High, Clovis North, Buchanan
Phone: 559.325.5357
Email: isaac.reyna@cloviscollege.edu
Appointments are available per request.

Clovis Community College

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STATE CENTER
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➤ Announcements

2021-22 new student registration underway

Registration has begun for the 2021-22 school year for incoming transitional kindergarteners, kindergarteners or new-to-the-district first through 12th graders.

Kindergarten registration is occurring at all elementary schools in Clovis Unified. To be eligible to register, a child must reach 5 years of age on or before Sept. 1 of this year. Parents may utilize the pre-registration process available online at cbsd.com where they will fill out their child's registration form. They may attach enrollment documents to the online form or make an appointment to drop off enrollment documents to their resident school. Those needing help with the online process may go to their resident school during school hours.



Transitional kindergarten will be offered and is also open for registration. If your child will turn 5 years old between Sept. 2 and Dec. 2 of this year, the child may be enrolled in the district's TK program. Students in TK would then be enrolled in kindergarten the following year. Transitional kindergarten uses the same online registration system as kindergarten.

Registration for all new students entering grades 1-12 began at school sites on March 10; online pre-registration began March 4.

In cooperation with the State Department of Health Services and the Fresno County Health Services Agency, Clovis Unified's Sierra Vista Children's Health Center offers immunizations and CHDP physicals for eligible children. The center is located at 510 Barstow Ave., Clovis, and is open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Sierra Vista Children's Health Center phone number is 327-7976.

For additional information about new student registration, required resident and vaccination documentation or to pre-register, visit cbsd.com.

Join our team!

Clovis Unified is currently hiring for the 2021-22 school year. Learn more in an online Teacher Informational Recruitment Fair from 3 to 4:30 p.m. March 18.

Attendees will:

- Learn about certificated job opportunities at Clovis Unified
- Receive information on applying on Edjoin
- Be provided basic credentialing information
- Meet members of CUSD's leadership team
- Learn about the benefits provided to CUSD employees

Register at: <https://bit.ly/3dL8XLc>

Special Ed Teacher Residency Program accepting applications now

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a

special education teacher, Clovis Unified's Special Education Teacher Residency Program is a great way to achieve your goal while learning from caring, dedicated mentors.

Residents receive a tuition stipend, earn their specialist credential, complete student teaching in CUSD, and have ongoing professional development. They also receive priority hiring in Clovis Unified upon completion of the program.

Applications are now being accepted for CUSD's Fall 2021 Special Education Residency Program. Zoom information sessions are available for interested candidates through April. Sessions are one hour and are held at 3 p.m. on March 17, and April 7, 14, 21 and 29.

For more information and to access the Zoom sessions, go to www.cbsd.com/teach.

Meritorious Budget Award

Clovis Unified's Finance Department continued its award-winning streak for the 23rd year in a row when it recently received the 2020-21 Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) Meritorious Budget Award. The award honors sound fiscal management and budgetary policies and was created by ASBO to encourage districts to make budgets which carefully meet selected criteria and budgeting accuracy while also have a budget that is easy to read.

Clovis Unified's 23 consecutive ASBO awards marks the longest streak for any school district in California.

Student leadership conferences in March

Clovis Unified hosts two student leadership conferences this month that are in online formats, due to gathering restrictions. Attendees will hear from keynote speakers, local professionals and learn about post high school college and career opportunities.

Scheduled for this month are the CUSD Asian Student Success Conference and the CUSD Latino High School & Middle School Conference. Conference details are available through school counseling offices and on cbsd.com. Recorded conferences will be available for viewing following the events at cbsd.com/idac. The February CUSD African American Middle School Conference and Black History Month Student Celebration are also available for viewing on that site.

Spring Break

Clovis Unified schools will be closed for Spring Break March 29 through April 5. The district's business offices at 1450 Herndon Ave., Clovis, will be open during this time.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The following upcoming free online webinar will be offered by the CUSD Special Education Department's Family Resource Center. For more information or to inquire about an interpreter, please call 327-8455.

■ "Sensory and Motor Information Parent Strategies," 6:30 to 8 p.m. March 23 online. Free. Attendees will learn about sensory processing and tips on how to help a child improve attention, concentration, participation and skill development. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/FRCotpt>.

What's on your plate?

By Lul Taher
CUSD Campus Catering Intern

March is National Nutrition Month, an annual campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to raise awareness about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating habits.



There is no one-size-fits-all approach to nutrition and health. People have different bodies, goals, backgrounds and tastes. Recipes can be tailored to fit personal preferences.

A nutritious plate is half filled with fruits and vegetables, a quarter of grains (preferably whole grains), and a quarter of lean protein.

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide dietary advice for the public, with the focus on nutrient-dense (high in nutrients lower in calories) foods and beverages; a limit on those higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium; and staying within calorie limits.

Family meals are a great way to spend time together and try out new, healthy recipes. If it's not possible for a family to eat together at home regularly, consider making time to cook together on the weekend or share an afternoon snack.

Plan weekly meals and aim for variety. Include the five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy) to build healthy meals that meet calorie and nutrient needs.

Tips to make a healthy meal

- Prepare ingredients in advance of cooking, to make the cooking process easier.
 - Buy frozen and low-sodium canned vegetables to have some basic ingredients on hand.
 - Baking, grilling or steaming are healthy ways to prepare vegetables or protein.
 - Cook with herbs, spices, lemon juice or no-salt seasonings for flavor to keep sodium levels low.
 - Prepare extra servings of a favorite, healthy dish to eat throughout the week, to save time.
- Resources:**
- Healthful recipes: <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes>
 - Keep food safety in mind, visit: <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/food-safety-your-kitchen>



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New books reflecting diversity at Weldon added to library

■ Preschool teacher leads school project to expand cultural awareness

CUSD Today

Nearly 200 new books representing the ethnicities of all students at Weldon Elementary were added to the school's library shelves in February.

The "Diversify Your Mind with a Rainbow of Books" project is the brainchild of Weldon preschool teacher Joann Barry, who also serves on the district's Intercultural District Advisory Council. She has been involved in several of the school's multicultural learning programs and saw an opportunity to expand the cultures represented in the library.

"I am very passionate about children reading and being able to see themselves represented in a book," Barry said. "I feel, if children see this, it will instill an appreciation and respect for books and the people around them."

Barry pursued and received a Foundation for Clovis Schools grant to fund the project, along with receiving donations from Donor's Choose and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

"The goal was to have picture books,



Weldon Elementary preschool teacher Joann Barry sits among the nearly 200 new books added to the school library that feature characters from many different ethnicities and backgrounds.

Photo special to CUSD Today.

chapter books and nonfiction titles available in every culture represented here at Weldon," said librarian Lisa Palomares who joined Barry on the project. "How wonderful for a student to check out books that represent them in some fashion; to see a character they can relate to in a story!"

Barry and Palomares requested a break-

down of all the ethnicities of children at the school from registrar to help make the book selections. On the library shelves are now colorful, hardback books such as "Kimono," "Princess Hair," "Julie of the Wolves," "Little Kunoichi," "Imani's Moon" and "Island Treasures." Students have been eager to check out the new books.

"Knowledge is power," Barry said. "Here at Weldon, we want to give students the power of reading. We want them to read about the success of others and to inspire them with hope and determination so they can be the best they can be in mind body and spirit."



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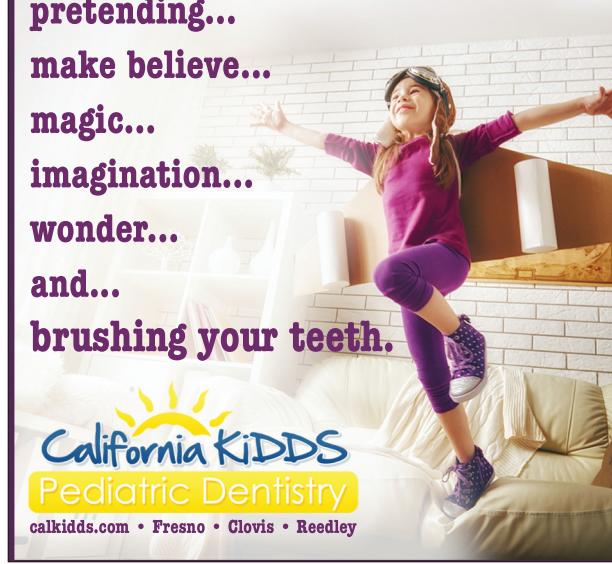
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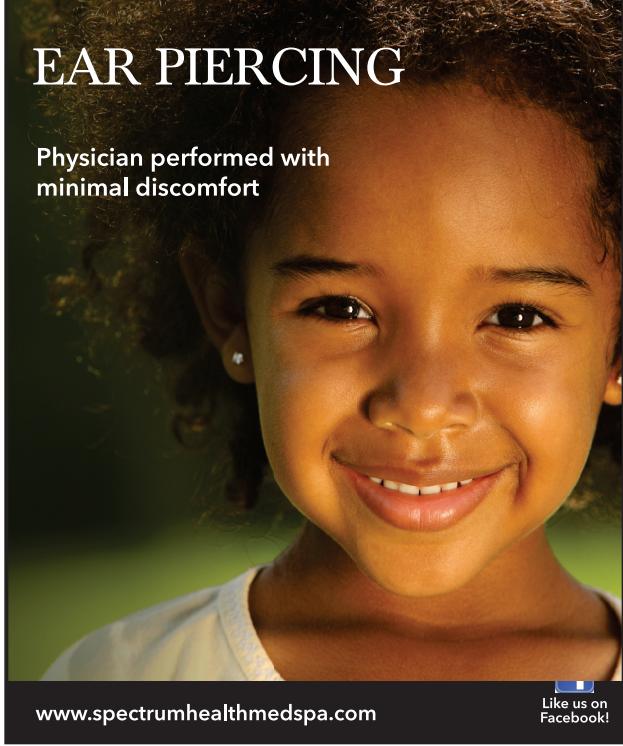
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*America's Kids Swim School and CampKids have been issued permission for safe reopening of business operations by Fresno County Department of Health. All facilities are under safety guidelines set forth by the CDC and local authorities.

Making progress and planning ahead

By Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D.
Superintendent



WELVE months can seem like a lifetime and the blink of an eye, all at the same time.

I find myself reflecting on that seeming dichotomy a lot as we have approached the one-year anniversary of the COVID pandemic's onslaught. On one hand ... could it possibly be 12 months since we've been able to see family members who live far away, or that we've been engaged in efforts to find a path back to a traditional, five-day-a-week school schedule? On the other hand ... wasn't it a lifetime ago that we sat down in a crowded movie theater to enjoy a good film, dined indoors with friends, or watched our student performers and athletes compete before hundreds of excited spectators?

Where we stand today as a school district, with every school opened for hybrid instruction and more than 21,000 students attending classes in person while another 21,000+ remain online, represents an incredible journey that has taken both a lifetime and a moment. It's a journey that won't be over until we return to a full, five-day-a-week schedule, but also one during which our Clovis Unified team has moved mountains, battled through uncharted territory, and overcome obstacles that have stymied many other school districts in California.

At this moment in time, one year after the start of the COVID pandemic, I must give praise to an educational team who has forged a path where no map existed, who has overcome their own worries and fears to serve students. Few may realize it, but it has often been our Clovis Unified team who developed the plans and strategies now used across

the state and county to return opportunities to students.

Whether through handing them a hot meal; creating Return to Play

options; delivering food and instructional materials; scheduling and rescheduling classes as we pivoted to different instructional models;

making sure our teachers had the supplies, equipment, support and information needed to recreate their instructional model three times in

just a few months; or accomplishing the myriad of other details that allowed school to remain in session, and now return to a form of in-person instruction – this team has done it all.

Our mountain has moved far, but it isn't yet where we want it to be for our students. That's why our efforts are now focused on the coming school year. Simply put, our goal is to return our students to a traditional, five-day-a-week schedule with the new school year.

Efforts like our current work to obtain vaccinations for our educational team are steps in the right direction to accomplish this goal. This month we are also working with our employee groups and leadership team to analyze options and the impact of various health and safety measures on staffing, facilities, scheduling, transportation, and other operational elements of the school day.

We are also using this month for discussions with state and local health officials about future physical distancing requirements that impact education. After initial plans are drafted, in April we will be processing possibilities with our student and parent communities in advance of releasing final plans in late April. At that time, families will be asked to indicate if they will return their children to our comprehensive campuses for in-person instruction or choose a continued online option for learning.

As we've heard from our parent community, before they can realistically make that decision, they need details of what in-person and/or online learning will look like, what access will be available to co-curricular programs, what transportation and food service will look like, and the other details that help make an informed decision. It is our intent (barring any major changes in state policies for California school districts) to provide parents with these details by the last week of April, giving families time to plan for the upcoming school year and the end of this long and arduous journey we've traveled together.

LESSONS

Inspirations by, for and from our CUSD students

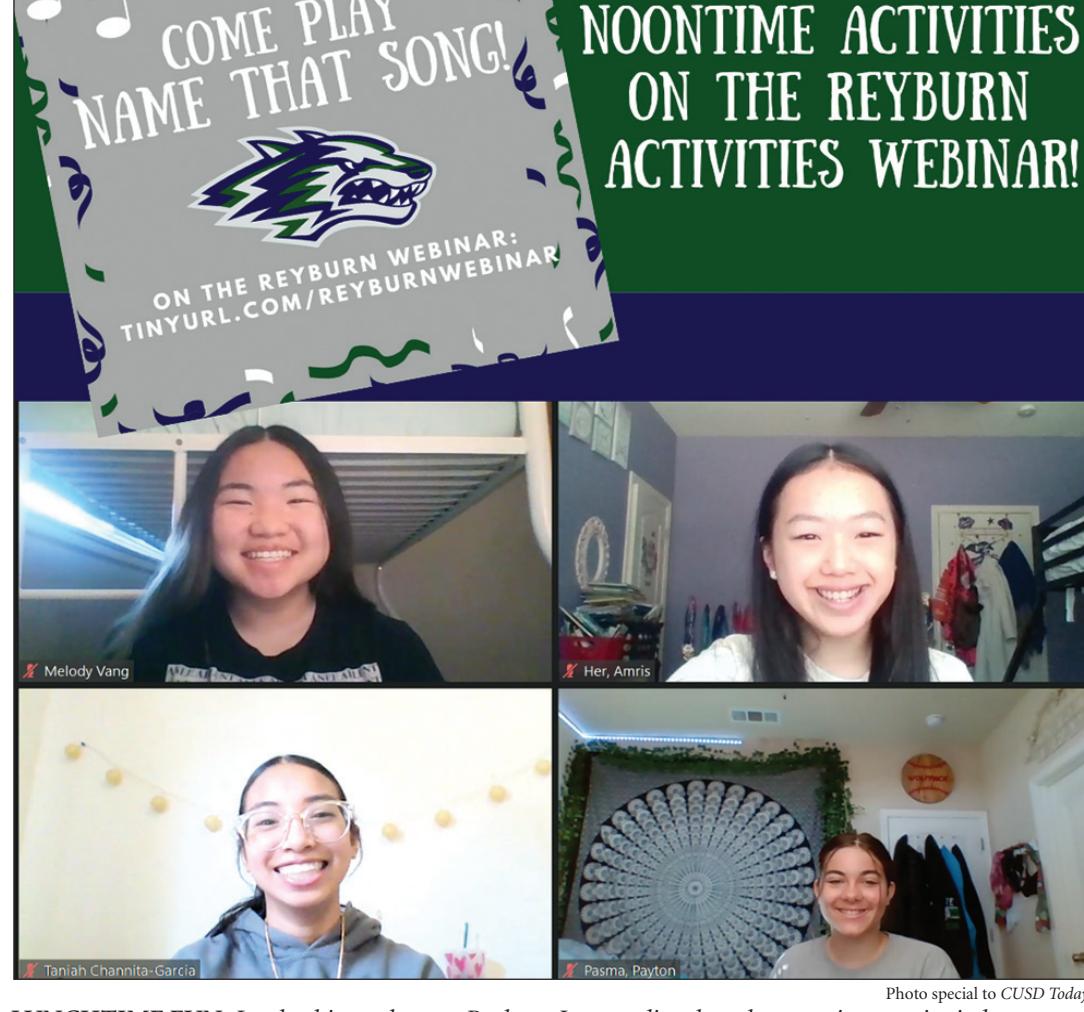


Photo special to CUSD Today.

LUNCHTIME FUN: Leadership students at Reyburn Intermediate have been getting creative in how to stay "social" during these unique times. They are holding student-led "Noontime Activities" Zooms to play a variety of games virtually – including Name That Tune, Pictionary and Hangman. They've even held Cookie Decorating and Turkey Hunt contests! For hybrid students, leadership kids are holding in-person, socially distanced games before school.

"It is a happy talent to know how to play."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Most powerful instructional initiative: in-person learning

Editor's note: Clovis Unified's Liberty Elementary Principal George Petersen is a 2019 recipient of the nation's highest school principal honor, the U.S. Department of Education's Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding Leadership. The annual award is presented to just 10 principals from out of the more than 100,000 in the United States.

By George Petersen
Principal, Liberty Elementary



I began teaching high school English back in 1987, and after several years of Clovis Unified's version of administrative preparation, I eventually landed at Liberty Elementary School as principal. Through my journey, I have experienced numerous attempts at improving student achievement. These attempts were often referred to as an "initiative," for example, an instructional

initiative, which might involve redesigning lessons, adopting new curriculum, or renovating the classroom. These initiatives took a great deal of time, sometimes multiple years, to get an entire staff trained and the programs implemented correctly. It also took time to gather the data to determine if the initiative was effective or not. Many educators have become cynical towards initiatives because of their reputation of promising much and delivering little.

In my 34 years of education, I have never seen such an immediate impact of an instructional initiative as what I am experiencing now. Our district's decision to bring back students to in-person instruction is the single most effective instructional initiative that I have ever been involved with. I have never seen the classroom more powerful than today. In

some instances, I have watched students' attitudes and their academic performance improve in a matter of minutes.

Before in-person instruction resumed, I heard countless stories from families of how a child hates his life, doesn't like school, is depressed, refuses to participate on Zoom, grades the lowest they have ever seen, talk of self-harm, etc. After our district decided to bring back students, the transformation process for those struggling happened as soon as they entered the classroom. Our teachers told me their stories with delight:

"George, what took me days on Zoom to get these kids to understand, took me only an hour with them in the classroom."

"On Zoom, this kid never did work. He's all caught up now!"

"She went from all F's to B's and A's."

"You should have seen her face light up when she came into classroom!"

"He's smiling again!"

Some of the teachers told me their stories with tears of joy.

When the online classroom began last year and continued at the start of this school year, we monitored our students' progress, not just with assignments and grades, but we also interviewed parents and met with students. We were shocked to discover that a great deal of the academic content our staff was working hard to teach online was not being mastered by our students. We concluded that a large portion of our student population would never, no matter how long they stared at a screen, be entirely successful. But with in-person instruction, so many of those struggling learners had an immediate and dramatic turnaround. The evidence for this initiative's effectiveness is indisputable.

Before COVID, I took some of the things we did at the elementary school for granted, one of them being recess. Part

of our plan for the return of students was structured play during break (with health and safety protocols in place). The immediate social-emotional impact on our students was not only extraordinary, but so much fun to watch. I have never seen so many kids playing with so much joy. Another example is lunch. Students talk with so much enthusiasm about the opportunity to sit down with friends to eat.

If I believed in-person instruction placed children and adults in an unsafe environment, I would not have allowed students back on campus. After much research and training in the safety protocols, the Liberty staff, back in October, concluded that in-person instruction can be delivered in a safe environment. Our belief has been realized. It works. We also understand not everyone agrees with us, which is why we still offer an online option.

I have been blessed to be part of a team that personifies what it means to put the education of children first. The grit and determination of the staff to work through the challenges of bringing kids back to in-person instruction has been inspiring. I saw a staff design new curriculum and learn how to utilize new delivery systems in a matter of months. They dealt with the lack of knowledge and experience, the setbacks, and the failures of implementing the simultaneous teaching model. They embraced the workload demanded by safety protocols. They endured all this because they knew what was best for our students.

This past year, I have reassessed how vital of a role my profession plays in our community and how important educators are to the healthy development of children. As a graduate of a high school in Clovis Unified and the only district I have worked in, I can say, more than ever, I go with admiration for what we do as an educational team. More than ever, I am proud to be Clovis Unified.

— ABOUT US —

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CUSD Today, Clovis Unified's good news publication, is sent directly to the homes of all CUSD parents and staff, as well as district supporters. In an effort to unify the CUSD community, the newspaper highlights the achievements of Clovis Unified students and staff; profiles new and updated Governing Board policies; and shares general news and information happening within the district.

Circulation: 34,000.

Funding: All costs associated with producing, printing and mailing *CUSD Today* are entirely funded by our advertisers. To show your appreciation of their support, we ask you to consider patronizing these businesses and services as the need arises.

Story submissions: Please submit all ideas to the Site Coordinator at your school. Please contact your school to find out who your Site Coordinator is. Editorial deadlines are two weeks before the publication date. We do our best to include as many submissions in each issue as our editorial space will allow.

Foundation provides \$40K boost for projects

- New specialty grants fund programs supporting wellness and citizenship

By Sara Almaraz
Foundation for Clovis Schools

Six new projects and programs supporting social-emotional wellness and two projects supporting citizenship and civic pride are underway in Clovis Unified, thanks to specialty grants awarded recently by the Foundation for Clovis Schools. The specialty grants, which include support for mentorship programs and teen dating violence prevention curriculum, among others, are funded as part of the Foundation's Classroom and School grants program.

"We're very fortunate to have the means to continue to offer support to Clovis Unified educators and students during the pandemic," said Foundation Chairperson Michael Fennacy, who is a partner at Darden Architects. "Support from our Foundation donors has made this program's success a reality, and we are appreciative to have community partners who care so deeply for CUSD kids."

The specialty grant awards, totaling \$39,278, are funded as part of the Foundation's Classroom and School grants program, which strives to help educators innovate in their classrooms. Approximately 3,000 students will be impacted through the grants, which were funded through partnerships with Kaiser Permanente and Clovis Veterans Memorial District.

Descriptions of non-specialty Classroom and School grants were published in the November issue of *CUSD Today*. The specialty grants awarded are:

All comprehensive high schools: KNOW MORE Club – Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention – Provides domestic violence and dating violence education and intervention to teens. The program utilizes drama, music, real life situations, and statistics of abuse in teenage relationships to demonstrate how serious this problem is in our community and in the world.



Alta Sierra Intermediate: Connecting Our Students and Community Through Creative Video Productions – Provides Alta Sierra Broadcasting students with technology needed to allow for opportunities to express themselves, connect with peers, and connect with the community.

Clovis Community Day: CCDS Focus Fix – Provides at-risk students with strategies to release negative energy through isolated aerobic activity-based Cooling Stations, which will promote positive physical movement.

Clovis Community Day: Project SMART – Provides a school-based mentoring relationship for at-risk 4th through 8th grade students thereby improving academic achievement and interpersonal relationships, and reducing levels of juvenile delinquency. Grant funds support fingerprinting of mentors, fieldtrips and support of other mentor/mentee activities.

Clovis High: Collaborative Mentoring Art Class Cricut Maker – Provides a Cricut Maker for the Collaborative Mentoring Art course at Clovis High so that students may learn to create items including paper crafts, iron-ons, decals, leather crafts and more.

Clovis High: Clovis Proud (Patriots Grant) – Will honor the five branches of military by purchasing decals for Clovis High football players' helmets. Also provides military-themed yard signs for athletes and staff to help promote a sense of citizenship and community.

Cole Elementary: Social Emotional Learning A Priority During COVID-19 – Implements specialized emotional wellness curriculum for Cole Elementary first graders. Includes the purchase of 12 readers/songs, lessons, and positive reinforcements for all first graders, addressing social emotional needs.

Red Bank Elementary: Reading and Writing for Cultural Awareness (Patriots Grant) – Provides standards-based reading and writing materials that facilitate a better understanding and appreciation for others' experiences while addressing current political and social unrest.

Diamonds

SPARKLING GEMS IN THE DISTRICT

Clovis Unified's 60th anniversary year is unlike any other with the challenges resulting from the COVID pandemic. But in this, our Diamond Anniversary year, there are many ways students, staff and families are shining brighter than ever as they make the best out of difficult situations. We salute these diamonds that illustrate the strength and character of Clovis Unified.

BOUQUET OF KINDNESS: A flower garden is blooming at Tarpey Elementary thanks to not one, but two thoughtful grandmothers connected to the school.

The colorful flowers are actually hand crocheted yarn pencil toppers that were first made for students by kindergartner Lily Garth's grandmother, Cindy Nelson. Nelson was inspired to make the flowers after hearing Lily's class on Zoom doing their MindUp Curriculum.

The kindergartners were learning about deep breathing and being calm. Teacher Teri Varvis and school psychologist Suja George had students practice deep breathing by pretending to smell flowers (inhale through the nose) and blow out a candle (exhale through the mouth). Nelson got the idea to crochet the flowers for the class, and teacher Mrs. Varvis turned them into pencil toppers, even attaching positive messages to them such as "Good Job" and "You Are Loved!"

The flowers became very popular and soon others wanted them, too, but Lily's grandmother had returned to the East Coast. To the rescue was grandmother number two – longtime school volunteer Shirley Wood, who took up her own crochet hook and got to stitching. She has already made more than 100 additional flowers for students and staff to enjoy. (*And to make this "Diamond" story sparkle even brighter, here's a fun fact about Wood. She began volunteering at Tarpey 18 years ago when her granddaughter Kianna was in kindergarten. Kianna has long since graduated, but Wood stayed on. She continues to volunteer every week for the Spartans and is beloved by all at the school!*)

MIGHTY LOVE FROM SOME OF LITTEST LEARNERS: Fort Washington Elementary students learn daily lessons from The Positivity Project. In February, second-grade students in Kathleen Karas' class were learning about compassion, and the children decided

they wanted to create treat bags for kids their age who might not have received a Valentine as a way to be compassionate. The idea flourished. The class and entire school provided donations of treats, handmade cards and hand sewn masks (made by Ms. Karas), the children put together 90 gift bags that were then donated to the Marjaree Mason Center for children there.

TEACHERS SUPPORTING TEACHERS: Sierra Vista Elementary teacher Michael Williamson received a special gift recently. His former Valley Oak Elementary third-grade teacher John Armendariz ("Mr. A") presented him with his

entire tie collection!

Williamson said his third-grade year was a challenging one, and his teacher Mr. A – who always wore a tie – made a big impact on his life.

As a teacher now himself, Williamson said he makes a point to carry on the necktie tradition by wearing a tie in his class at least once a week.

With Mr. A's retirement from teaching last year and his generous, unexpected presentation of 60 fun-themed ties, looks like Williamson will have plenty to choose from for many years to come.

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AROUND THE DISTRICT

March 2021

CUSD Today

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Excellent s-p-e-l-l-i-n-g

Eleven Clovis Unified schools took part in the district's annual CUSD Spell Off in February, with the top two sellers in the elementary and intermediate competitions advancing to the Fresno County Spell Off that will be held in March.

Achuth Vinay (Fugman Elementary) and Xara Hussain (Century Elementary) finished in the top spots for elementary, while Rajbir Longia and Tatum Custer (both Alta Sierra Intermediate) earned first and second for intermediate.

Participating schools were Bud Rank, Century, Dry Creek, Fugman, Liberty, Mountain View, Valley Oak and Young elementary schools and Alta Sierra, Granite Ridge and Kastner intermediate schools.

Students chat with civil rights icons

Clovis Unified held its annual African American Middle School Conference Feb. 22. Keynote speakers were civil rights icons Joanne Bland and Joan Mulholland. As a little girl, Bland marched with her sisters in Selma, Ala., and later worked with civil rights activist John Lewis. Mulholland, who was among the first white people to join the Jackson Woolworth's sit-in, and she participated in more than 50 sit-ins by the time she was 23. Clovis Unified intermediate students Inaya Johnson (Granite Ridge), Jordyn Sanders (Kastner) and Brooklyn Washington (Reyburn) interviewed the legends following their presentations. The conference video is available for viewing on cbsd.com/idac.aspx.

Broncos earn second place in Academic Decathlon

Clovis North won second place in the 39th Annual Fresno County Academic Decathlon that was held virtually in February. The event featured 23 teams competing in the theme "The Cold War."

Academic Decathlon teams are comprised of 12 students with GPAs ranging from under 1.00 to over 4.0, who compete in 10 examinations: art, music, language and literature, mathematics, economics, science, social science, speech, interview and essay. The final culminating Super Quiz encompasses all seven subjects.

Clovis Online helps families

Members of Clovis Online School's National Honor Society, California Scholastic Federation (CSF) and student



Photo special to CUSD Today.

Freedom Elementary sixth-grader Alexia Lopez takes part in and adaptation of a game played at camp at Sonora called "Jays and Junco," which recreates the bird world and teaches students about how birds store food, nest and the dangers of predators.

leadership team did not let stay-at-home orders or social distancing protocols put a stop to their volunteer efforts. For the last several months, COS students have been collecting resources for the Ronald McDonald House Central Valley, which supports families of those receiving care at Valley Children's Hospital with food and a place to stay, and recently delivered four truckloads of items! Donations included everything from toilet paper and laundry detergent to crackers and pasta.

COS students brainstormed what they could do, and junior Aidan Purtell made an online platform for classmates to share ideas. CSF advisor, Kim Patterson, said it was a great experience that allowed the students to build teamwork and communication skills all for a good cause. "The

students came up with some great ideas about safe ways to collect resources," she said.

Hannah Larson-Olivarria, a member of both CSF and NHS, wrote a formal letter to solicit donations and shared it with her classmates. Another student, who is an avid tennis player, made collection bins and placed them at multiple tennis clubs. Other students spent hours on the phone, and also used various social media platforms to request donations from family, friends and businesses.

"It was really cool to get to help people who are struggling in a creative way," said senior McKay Kinsey. "I also learned how to organize and collaborate with other people remotely, which is going to be super important in college and beyond."

McKinney: 'My education in Clovis Unified gave me a wonderful jumpstart'

FROM PAGE ONE

Mars show surface features that look similar to old riverbeds) and to move the rover's drill arm with precision to take soil and rock samples. "The cameras are basically the eyeballs of the rover," he said. "We needed better eyes to allow the rover to drive farther and faster."

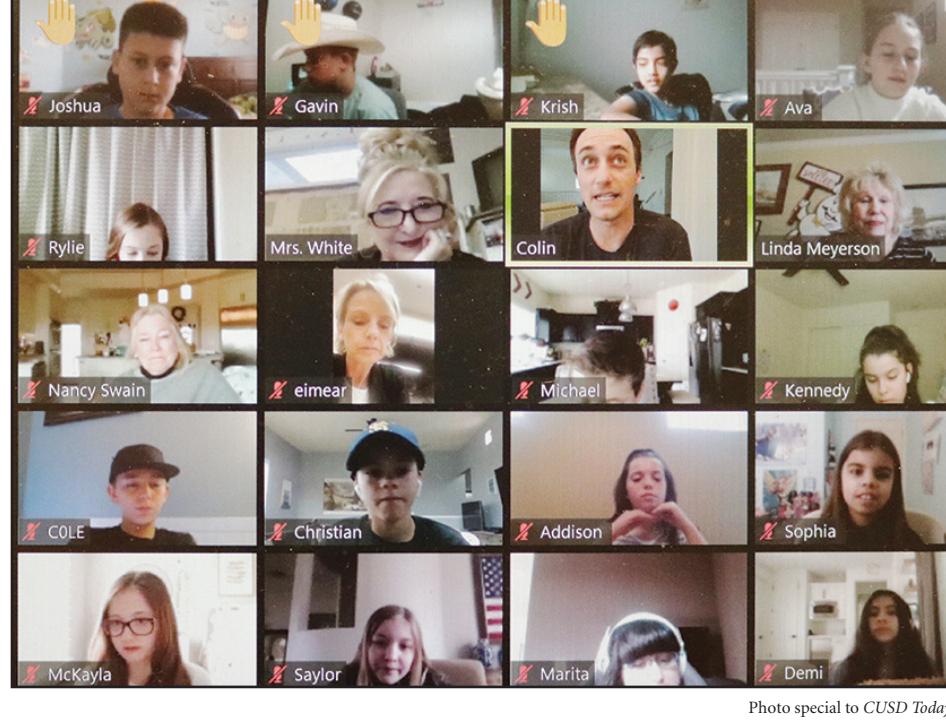
In previous missions, cameras took black and white images and the rover had to stop each time a picture was taken. "It was a slow process. Imagine if you had to stop each time you blinked," he said.

For the Mars 2020 project, McKinney and his team of 30 engineers, scientists and technicians were tasked with developing cameras that could take high-resolution color photos while the rover was moving. They worked on the development for five years, built and tested 25 cameras, and nine of those are on the Perseverance today.

"It was both a thrilling and daunting endeavor. On one hand, I get to use my experience to design, build, and test groundbreaking cameras that will be on another planet. On the other, they can't fail. The mission is dependent on these cameras to function – without them, we are literally driving blind."

Much to McKinney's joy, the cameras did not fail. He and his team watched together on a Zoom call as Perseverance landed in February, and they cheered as the first pictures came through. "It was a huge sigh of relief," he said.

White's students had lots of questions for McKinney. "What's a day in the life of your job like?" asked Rylie. "Why did you want to be an engineer?" asked Thiago. "What age did you become the most interested in the rover?" asked Christian.



Former Valley Oak Elementary student Colin McKinney Zooms with his former VO third-grade teacher, Chris White, and her now fifth-grade students at Bud Rank Elementary. Kids used the "hand up" icon to take turns asking the Mars scientist lots of questions.

The Golden Eagle graduate answered each question and encouraged the fifth graders to keep dreaming big. He said while it wasn't until college when he started putting the pieces together regarding his career, he knows his time at Clovis Unified helped him be well prepared.

"My education in Clovis Unified gave me a wonderful jumpstart into the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field and prepared me for a career at NASA and beyond," McKinney said. "It was par-

ticularly my engagement in the GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) program in sixth grade at Valley Oak under Gary Cohagan that allowed me to blossom and feel empowered to reach for the stars."

He also said he benefitted from his involvement with marching, symphonic and jazz bands at Kastner and Clovis West. "The music programs provided me the social, leadership, and individual development opportunities to grow as a young individual," he said, which were skills he needed to lead

his NASA team.

White's students liked hearing that it was McKinney's love for playing video games that started him on his path to engineering. He described as a kid when a new game came out and his computer couldn't operate it because it was older, that he took his computer apart and figured out how to upgrade it.

He also credits his success to his mom, Linda McKinney, to whom he says he owes everything. They had modest means when he was young, but she provided him with all he needed and gave him the confidence to succeed. "She is my inspiration and role model of what a parent should be," said McKinney, who with his wife Jenny, are expecting their first child this summer.

As for his interest in the stars, he told students that they were always a draw for him. He said he would look out at them on clear nights as a child in Fresno and be fascinated.

"Sometimes, if I was lucky, I could see Mars," he said.

Little did he know, that sometime, in the future, he would help the rest of the world see it, too.

"We are very proud of you Colin," Superintendent O'Farrell said.

"It's not often a teacher can say a former student is literally a rocket scientist," White said. "Colin, you'll always be 8-years-old to me, though" she said showing a picture of him from an old Valley Oak yearbook when he was in her class. "I'm so happy for you and what you've accomplished."

And to her current students, White pondered, "Which one of you will I be talking about in 20 years? I hope this has inspired you to reach for the stars. You can do great things for this world!"

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Board hears return updates, Career Technical Education report

By Kelly Avants, A.P.R.
Chief Communications Officer

March 3

The Clovis Unified Governing Board heard updates on the return of students to campuses in the district, vaccination for employees and testing, federal and state COVID relief funds, athletic and after school activities for students, and continued work to navigate a path back to a pre-COVID instructional schedule in the future. Representatives from all three employee groups that represent classified, certificated and operations employees also spoke at the meeting.

A report was given on the district's 20 Career Technical Education pathways and the 3,928 students enrolled in these programs around the district. More information about CTE is available online at <https://www.cusd.com/CareerTechnicalEducation.aspx>.

In other action, the board:

■ Approved an agreement with WestEd for Teaching Pyramid professional development for preschool and Special Education Department staff.

■ Approved the partici-

► BOARD BRIEFS

pation of students from the district's high schools in the concurrent public higher education program for the second semester of the 2020-21 school year.

■ Accepted a donation of an electric transfer walker manual wheelchair to Clovis North Educational Center.

■ Approved a new course of study proposal for intermediate schools.

■ Celebrated Music in Our Schools Month by viewing a selection of performances of students in visual and performing arts programs.

Feb. 17

After last week's return of the final phase of elementary students waiting to resume in-person instruction, Clovis Unified elementary teams are now serving more than 14,600 TK-6 grade students on-site. During a staff report, the Governing Board heard updates on this work, and final preparations underway at the district's secondary schools to welcome an additional 7,500+ students for in-person instruc-

tion next week.

Also included in the report were updates on planning of Class of '21 activities, athletic and visual and performing arts programs, and work to prepare for delivering vaccination to employees choosing to receive the vaccine when it becomes available to educators.

In other action, the board:

■ Approved an extension of the 2021 elementary summer school calendar to include an additional two weeks of intervention instruction for students identified to participate.

■ Appointed Gonzalez Architects to provide design services for the Dry Creek portable relocation project, and awarded bids for office supplies, additional work on the Dry Creek portable relocation, the Clovis East High School Farm & Food Production CTE building to Seals Construction, and the Buchanan High School Production & Managerial Arts CTE building to Marko Construction.

Feb. 3

The board received a re-

port on the Governor's January Budget Proposal and the district's preliminary budget for 2021-22. The district's proposed budget reflects the Governor's intent to provide schools with a 3.84% COLA after a year in which districts were provided 0% COLA and had to manage the state's deferral of some cash payments.

There is some additional money proposed for Special Education Early Education and supporting schools in returning students to in-person learning, along with plans for federal stimulus money directed to education, and provisions for school districts that have seen ADA drop because of the pandemic that allows for the higher of the past two years

to be used to calculate budgets.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Governing

Board is March 17 with the public portion at 6:30 p.m. Agendas, minutes and videos of meetings are available at cud.com.

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SPORTS

March 2021

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Let's play!



Sports competition returned to campuses in February after state and local health officials provided health and safety guidelines that allowed for play to resume. High school cross country teams were the first to hold meets (pictured, Clovis West and Clovis East teams compete), with girls golf, tennis and swim/diving soon following. Intermediate school sports followed a similar pattern. At elementary schools, sites began offering after-school skill-based programs for athletic training; some team sports may be offered in a condensed season later in the year. Evolving guidelines from state and county health officials regarding competitions are ongoing and being reviewed. For the most recent updates about athletics, visit individual school and team websites.

On par with Clovis West girls golf coach

■ Shipley wins top award for successful program

CUSD Today



Longtime Clovis West girls golf coach Ken Shipley was named recently the National Federation of High Schools' Girls Golf Coach of the Year for the Western Section (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah) and the state. The Golden Eagles girls golf team has won 15-straight league championships, 13 of the last 14 Northern Area Championships, and seven-straight and 12 of the last 14 CIF Division-I Valley Championships.

"The program's success is directly related to his skill, knowledge and ability to develop our young ladies into champion golfers," said Clovis West Athletic Director Matt Loggins in congratulating Shipley for the recognition. The NFHS award will presented at a later time when gathering is allowed.

Shipley is in his 14th year at Clovis West but his coaching career actually began after he retired from a long career of university teaching and administration. Unknowingly, though, he was training for the roll for years, helping play golf with and take to lessons his own daughter, Jennifer. She was the top female golfer when she attended Clovis High (Class of 2004) before going on to play at Fresno State.

"That provided a great opportunity to watch the game, watch player development and see coaching at different levels," Shipley said.

Q: What are a few special moments from coaching Clovis West girls golf?

A: There are so many highlights

and great times, including: the first team I coached (2007), and the team winning the Valley Championship; the 2012 Valley Championship when our freshman sixth-player shot par on the 18th hole to seal that championship in front of everyone who had already finished and was gathered on the last hole watching; when our 2017 team won the Valley Championship by an incredible 64 shots; taking four of the teams to play the world-famous Stadium Course at PGA West in La Quinta; the 2019-20 team winning Clovis West's 15th TRAC championship in a row and its seventh Valley Championship in a row; having 14 girls go on to play college golf since 2010; having four alums who are now coaching or teaching golf locally, including Alison (Ross) Noonkester and Keila Takeuchi who are coaches at Clovis East and Laura (Scrivner) Sanders at Kastner.

Q: What is your coaching philosophy?

A: I tell my players to focus on improving as individuals and a team, and very rarely do we talk about things like winning or losing. If we do our best, use good technique, use self-discipline and good self-management skills, we will see good things when we look at the scoreboard afterwards. I think that both current girls and alums describe me as organized, hard-working, supportive and approachable. They also know that I believe strongly in our abilities to improve and do well.

Q: What does this award mean to you?

A: I never anticipated anything like this. I've been very surprised by it and am deeply honored. It has also been very special to hear reactions from our current players, alums and families. Very special!



Photo special to CUSD Today.

Clovis East High's Jacob Tafoya signs to play football for Air Force.

22 athletes sign NLI

avan Le Fevre, football, Lewis and Clark College

From Clovis North High:

Emma Brown, soccer, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; Jeffrey Forbes, swimming and diving, Washington University in St. Louis;

Ryan Franco, wrestling, West Point; Sydney Hancock, volleyball, Colorado State University, Pueblo; Gabriel Jett, swimming and diving, University of California, Berkeley;

Rees Kent, baseball, St. Mary's College; Christian Silva, soccer, California State University, Northridge; Toby Miller, volleyball, University of California, Merced; Izabella Arballo, soccer, New Mexico Highlands University; Carys Hall, soccer, University of Alabama; Mia Antonino, softball, California Lutheran University

From Buchanan High: Shagan Bhullar, soccer, Pomona-Pitzer College; Helen Chu, track and field, Columbia University; Jaedyn Davies, swimming, University of Montevallo; Shayla Sakkakhanaune, soccer, Whittier College; Raegan Stermer, basketball, Briar Cliff College

From Clovis East High: Emily Adams, wrestling, Texas Wesleyan University; Andrew Manning, wrestling, Menlo College; Jacob Tafoya, football, Air Force

From Clovis High: Maddy Arnold, softball, CSU San Marcos; Caitlin Decanio, softball, Azusa Pacific University; Don-



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CCCO Student Success Metrics 2018-19 academic year

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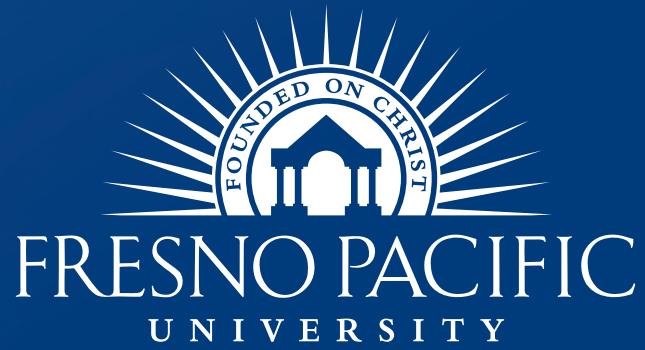
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