Winter 2017 - Volume 7, Issue 2

News and Information from Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin for employees of the Tustin Unified School District

Visit the TUSD Website at www.tustin.k12.ca.us and www.DestinationTUSD.org
Follow us on:
Twitter: @SuptFranklin and @TUSDschools
Facebook: facebook.com/TUSDschools
Instagram on iPhone or Android: @TUSDschools

Students at Hicks Canyon Elementary School are seen developing their innovative skills.

Superintendent’s Message:
Developing Student Innovators

The Tustin Unified School District is committed to developing student innovators. Research suggests that most of us in the new economy will need to hone our abilities to solve problems creatively, innovate new iterations of existing solutions, or create entirely new products and services. What does that mean for TUSD? What skills and attitudes will be needed for our students to thrive in the future?

We must develop students’ curiosity. Innovators passionately pursue their interests and are much more motivated when they have an active role in deciding what and how they will learn. Our most passionate students desire to understand the world more deeply and volunteer to spend time pursuing their interests. In TUSD we have many examples – all of which involve providing students with “voice and
These include allowing students a variety of methods to demonstrate their learning, passion projects, real world project-based learning, and being able to apply classroom content in the real world. It's clear that worksheets and rote memorization of facts do NOT ignite the curiosity necessary for innovation.

We must develop students’ ability to collaborate with a broad variety of people with different interests and backgrounds. Researchers continue to find that innovators have very broad networks and learn from people and places that are different than their own experiences. Teaching students to ask questions, seek to understand other people’s perspectives, and work toward common goals will help prepare students to thrive in the world economy.

We must develop students’ bias towards action and experimentation. Every well-known innovator credits their failures with helping them achieve success. In our schools, the challenge is to create the time and space for students to risk and fail without penalizing them with a lower grade. If risk and failure are required for growth, how do we factor that into our current grading systems?

At the TUSD teacher welcome-back meeting in August, we talked about the need to engage students in “hard fun.” Infusing our classrooms with student opportunities to pursue passions, opportunities to collaborate with others, and finding ways for students to fail forward with new ideas will help our students be successful. I am proud of our progress and look forward to our next steps.

Go TUSD!

Gregory A. Franklin, Ed.D.

Source Material:
Creating Innovators: The making of young people who will change the world, by Tony Wagner
The Innovator’s DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators, by Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregersen and Clayton Christensen
The Medici Effect: What elephants & epidemics can teach us about innovation, by Frans Johansson
Where Good Ideas Come From: the natural history of innovation, by Steven Johnson
Foothill’s Robotics Team Ranked #1 in the World

Foothill High School’s VEX Robotics team is ranked #1 in the VEX Robotics Competition World Skills standings. The ranking consists of a composite score that combines programming skills and driver skills. Foothill currently has a combined score of 178, placing it at the top of a list of more than 1,500 high schools around the world that compete in VEX Robotics competitions.

The top-ranked Foothill team, Knight Time Bots, consists of junior Stephanie DeLeon, sophomores Tim Jang and Danny Romo, and freshmen Eric Lehman and Calvin Woolfolk. According to faculty coach Jeff Farr, “If the team remains in the top 50 throughout the season, they will qualify for the World Championships in 2018.” Season standings will be finalized in March of 2018.

Student teams compete around the world at regional competitions organized under the auspices of the VEX Robotics Education and Competition Foundation.

TUSD Teachers of the Year Honored by OCDE

The Tustin Unified School District’s 2017 Teachers of the Year – Elizabeth Catron, fifth-grade teacher at Heritage Elementary STEAM Magnet School, and Chris Price, digital media arts teacher at Foothill High School – were honored by the Orange County Department of Education at its annual Orange County Teachers of the Year Dinner on October 24 at the Disneyland Hotel. Both teachers represented the District in the 2017-18 Orange County Teachers of the Year program.
Jim Kollias conducts the Beckman High School Orchestra.

Beckman High Music Director Jim Kollias
Named OC Music Educator of the Year

Jim Kollias, instrumental music director and visual and performing arts chair at Beckman High School, has received the 2017 “Distinguished Educator of the Year” Award from the Orange County Youth Symphony Orchestra (OCYSO).

Kollias was recognized by OCYSO for building one of the most robust and competitive music programs in all of Southern California. The Beckman High string program has grown not only in size, but in outstanding quality.

Founded in 2004, the Beckman orchestra has earned superior and unanimous superior ratings at every district and regional music festival it has ever performed. In April 2015, the Beckman Chamber Orchestra made its fifth appearance at Carnegie Hall and earned its fourth Gold Award for their performance at the New York International Band and Orchestra Festival.

Kollias has conducted honor orchestras in Southern California and served on the board of directors for the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association. In 2008, OC Family Magazine featured Kollias as one of Orange County’s “Ten Heroes Among Us.” He was a quarterfinalist for the 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award and twice a finalist for the Orange County Arts Educator of the Year Award.

Kollias began his teaching career in 1988 in Ontario and, prior to joining Beckman when the school opened in 2004, taught instrumental music at Tustin High School and Columbus Tustin Middle School. In 2006, he was named Beckman High Teacher of the Year.

The Orange County Youth Symphony Orchestra is the official youth orchestra of Orange County. Since 1970, the orchestra has maintained an enviable reputation for its artistic inspiration and performance training of young adult musicians.
Currie Entrepreneurship Teacher Zachariah Samarin Honored at Tustin Mayor's Business Recognition Luncheon

A.G. Currie Middle School entrepreneurship teacher Zachariah Samarin was honored at the fourth annual Tustin Mayor’s Business Recognition Luncheon as an “Outstanding Educator.” He received the 2017 Inspiring Young Minds Award for his dedication and passion in creating the entrepreneurship class at Currie.

Last year, Samarin wanted to create an entrepreneurship class where seventh- and eighth-grade students established a franchise or fictional business in Tustin. The students were placed in groups and each group had to locate a vacant property in Tustin and research the zoning, demographics with future projections, parking, square footage and price of the commercial space, check local competing businesses, and create a marketing plan. Ultimately, the groups did a formal presentation on each fictional business to a panel in the Tustin City Council Chamber.

Currie’s entrepreneurship class is the first of its kind in District history and the only one offered for middle school students in all of Orange County. For the third year, Samarin’s students recently presented in front of Tustin City Council members and business owners as to what businesses should come to Tustin.

“This is a very fun and wonderful opportunity for these students to take their research and apply it outside of the class,” Samarin said.
Tustin High School hosted its 25th annual Model United Nations (MUN) Conference on November 18 and 19. Over 1,500 students from more than 25 high schools throughout the state participated in the event.

Through debate and collaboration, MUN students discussed a variety of international topics and current events.

“This annual conference serves as a vital fundraiser for the Model United Nations program and is one of the largest student-led MUN conferences in the United States,” said Tustin High MUN Director Kevin Trevithick.

Individual and group awards were presented to students in several categories, including Best Research, Commendation, Outstanding Delegate and Best Delegate awards, along with large and small school delegation awards.

MUN is an academic program that offers an opportunity for students to simulate the activities of the United Nations organization. Students learn skills in researching, writing, negotiating, speaking and debating.

The program was started at Tustin High in 1991 as an extracurricular activity under the leadership of Linda Levine and has evolved into a four-year academic leadership academy curriculum with over 150 participating students, ranging from top honors to special needs students. Students compete at local, state, national and international levels.

“Over the years, Tustin High’s MUN team has ranked among the strongest in the nation, and we plan to continue our standard of excellence,” Trevithick said.

The team will compete internationally at the Genoa Model United Nations Conference in Italy in March and nationally at Silicon Valley in January, Boston University Conference in February and U.C. San Diego in April.
TUSD Makes the “AP Honor Roll”

The College Board has published their list of “2017 AP Honor Roll” districts. Tustin Unified has once again made the list and is being recognized as one of 447 districts from across the United States and Canada that are expanding access and pass rates for students. Special recognition was given to TUSD for being a district with over 30% of enrollment that includes under-represented subgroups. TUSD was also recognized for having been named to the Honor Roll multiple times.

The AP Honor Roll list can be found on the College Board Website or by following this link: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/score-reports-data/awards/honor-roll.

TUSD Administrators of the Year Honorees Announced

The Tustin School Management Association has announced its 2018 Administrators of the Year Honorees. They will represent the Tustin Unified School District in the 2018 Orange County Administrators of the Year Awards Program, sponsored by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Region 17:

- Elementary Principal of the Year – Tracy Barquer, Principal of Tustin Ranch Elementary School
- Middle Grades Principal of the Year – Erick Fineberg, Principal of A.G. Currie Middle School
- Personnel/Human Resources Administrator of the Year – Dr. Chuck Lewis, Chief Personnel Officer

ACSA annually recognizes outstanding administrators for their leadership skills, professionalism, creativity, innovation, and commitment to a quality education. Orange County Administrators of the Year will be announced in the spring. The 45th annual ACSA “Administrators of the Year and Friends of Education Awards” Dinner will be held in May 2018. Region 17 represents 28 school districts in Orange County.

TUSD Participates in Speak Up Survey About Digital Learning

The Tustin Unified School District is participating in the annual Speak Up Research Project for digital learning. The survey polls students, educators, parents and community members about the role of technology for learning inside and outside the classroom.

Since 2013, more than 4.5 million participants have shared information through the Speak Up survey, which is used by the District, as well as businesses, policy leaders and politicians. Schools within TUSD use the information to determine how students in the District, state, and nation use technology for learning at school and in the home and community.

The online survey, which takes under 20 minutes to complete, is open until Friday, January 19. Visit the TUSD Website at www.tustin.k12.ca.us and click on the Speak Up Survey icon at the bottom of the Home Page. Data will be used to assist the District in making decisions about technology and its usage in the schools and classrooms.
Tustin Unified recognizes that students learn in different ways and have different interests. Many of the students have developed interests in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM). In order to cultivate those interests, many different pathways, programs, and clubs have been developed. One specific way students are being reached in the area of computer science is through a program called CyberPatriot. The Air Force Association sponsors CyberPatriot, which is a National Youth Cyber Education Program. At the center of CyberPatriot is the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition allowing middle and high school students to compete, all while learning to secure and defend operating systems and other network components.

Beckman and Foothill high schools both have teams that compete in the CyberPatriot program. The Beckman team is coached by Johnny Gonzalez and the Foothill team is coached by Rob Hays. Both teams are competing locally this year in hopes to advance to a state or even national level. On November 4, four teams of Foothill students competed in Round 1 of the CyberPatriot competition at Irvine Valley College. During the six hours of competition, the teams had to find and fix vulnerabilities, check for unauthorized user accounts, close active ports that did not need to be open, and increase the security of each operating system. The teams were also tested on their knowledge of computer networking using Cisco routers and switches. Two Foothill teams earned perfect scores of 100/100 on the Windows 7 machines. The competition continued with Round 2 on December 9.

Computer Science Education Week which is always the first week of December marks a great time for students to begin or renew their interest in coding and programming. TUSD continues to search for ways that will engage and inspire students to pursue their passions. Providing students with opportunities and choices that support their learning interests, as well as teaching them skills that will benefit them in the real world, makes the CyberPatriot program a very welcome program in Tustin Unified.
Educational Services:
Redesigning Homework

Many elementary schools are exploring new solutions and approaches to homework. As times change and new technologies have increased teachers’ abilities to personalize learning, the need for traditional homework has shifted.

Many TUSD schools are redesigning what they are asking students to do after the school day ends with the hope that students will have more time to explore projects and activities that are sparked from their natural curiosities and interests. Additionally, this will also provide time for students to play with friends and siblings, enjoy family time, cook and eat together, create self-initiated projects, enjoy physical activity, participate in teams and clubs, and get enough sleep. Many of these experiences are often sacrificed or limited in order to complete school assigned homework packets and projects.

The research on elementary school homework has found that traditional homework in the early years has very little to no effect on improving academic performance and test scores; yet, teachers often spend a great deal of time assigning homework, grading homework, and following up on homework-related issues. These research findings further report that homework can contribute to students actually developing negative attitudes towards school and can cause stress for families.

Educational experts have substantial research on the great benefits for students when they engage in daily reading. Understanding the significance of these research findings, many schools are replacing traditional homework packets and projects with required time for independent reading or being read aloud to every night.

Traditionally, independent nightly reading has been assigned at the conclusion of homework time and is often sacrificed when other homework assignments and worksheets take precedence. Emphasizing reading as the most important learning activity each night encourages students and families to read independently and together.

Students working on activities beyond the school day will certainly continue as the 21st century is a 24/7 learning environment. As schools redesign their homework practices, students may be engaging in home learning activities such as student-driven technology projects, lesson extensions, independent learning projects, writing reflections, or they may just be independently reading. These shifts honor the early childhood developmental needs of our students and encourage their genuine love of learning.
As the Tustin Unified School District approaches the midpoint of the school year, it’s important to note that all K-12 school districts are required to file their First Interim financial report to the state by December 15. For Tustin Unified, the financial report was submitted to the TUSD Board of Education at its December 11 meeting.

School boards and administrators are being challenged to maintain fiscal solvency while continuing critical educational programs amid mixed messages being sent from Sacramento regarding uneven funding.

Between fiscal years 2013-14 and 2015-16, the state was collecting taxes under Proposition 30 (Temporary Taxes to Fund Education) and K-12 schools were also receiving significant funding increases through implementation of the state’s new funding model “Local Control Funding Formula, (LCFF).” These funds were used to absorb increased annual operational costs, increased pension obligations, augmentation of various educational programs, as well as provide for ongoing increased costs to support the neediest students identified under the District’s “Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP).”

Beginning with fiscal year 2016-17, the substantial increases in funding received under LCFF began to slow down as K-12 schools reached 97% of what Sacramento identified as target levels of funding dating back to fiscal year 2007-08. With the start of the 2017-18 school year, many K-12 schools are now experiencing sizable spending deficits and have begun preparing and/or even implementing budget reductions, while absorbing ongoing increased costs related to LCAP, pension obligations, and ongoing operational costs, such as insurance, utilities, books, supplies, and services.

Most recently, due to increased tax collections, the state’s Legislative Analyst’s Office projected that K-12 schools may see another year of significant funding for the upcoming 2018-19 fiscal year. While it’s not certain how the governor and the state legislature will allocate additional funding for education, the mixed message scenario of up and down funding appropriations makes it extremely challenging for school districts to plan and implement quality educational programs. Consequently, the District is again faced with preparing a “worst case” operational and financial plan in hopes of improved funding allocations.
Personnel Services:

TUSD Holds Seventh Annual Employee Health Fair

The Tustin Unified School District Personnel Services Department held its seventh annual Employee Health Fair on October 25 in the courtyard at the District Administration Center. Nearly 500 employees participated in this year’s fair.

The Health Fair included free flu shots, interactive and informational booths, biometric screenings and a healthy BBQ lunch of chicken and veggie burgers served by TUSD Nutrition Services. Additionally, 165 employees signed up for the Biggest Loser weight-loss program.

TUSD employees talked to health experts and representatives from local fitness centers, physical therapy centers, vision and health insurance companies, SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union and others. All participants were entered into drawings for various prizes, such as gift cards from local vendors and two bicycles. It was a great event!
Maintenance, Operations and Facilities:
Construction Projects Update

Construction of a new two-story twelve-classroom building at Robert Heideman Elementary School is well underway and scheduled for completion next spring. The project is part of an overall campus improvement plan that also includes a front entry and parking enhancement scheduled for next summer.

Installation of solar carports and shade structures at six schools – Hicks Canyon, Myford, Red Hill, Columbus Tustin, Hewes, and Orchard Hills– are nearing completion and staff is preparing an updated schedule prior to embarking on the remaining nine sites on the solar project list. As a reminder, the solar effort is part of a 25-year agreement with Psomas FMP that projects to save the District millions of dollars during that time span. The project installation and system is fully funded and owned by Psomas FMG, and they are also charged with all maintenance and upkeep of the system thereby creating a no-cost scenario for the District. A percentage of energy produced will be purchased from the solar provider instead of Southern California Edison at a discounted flat rate which stands to benefit the District substantially.

Facilities staff also continues to work on finalizing the design for the proposed new Legacy Magnet School, which will be submitted to the state architect for review shortly.

Nutrition Services:
Student Taste Tests

The foods that are chosen for Tustin Unified’s breakfast and lunch menus must meet many different requirements. Does the menu item meet the federal and state nutritional requirements? What is the cost of the item? Will the parents approve of the item? Most importantly, do the students like the food? In order to answer the last questions, TUSD does taste tests with students to get their feedback.

TUSD Nutrition Services conducted a test at Jeane Thorman Elementary School (see student Nathan Cardenas on the right) to determine which type of bean to use in a nacho beans and rice recipe. Selected students sampled two types of beans: the current pinto bean and the new fiesta bean.
After tasting the two samples, the students filled out a survey and circled which sample they preferred. The students preferred the current beans because the recipe contained whole beans. Student feedback is important to the District’s menu.

Jump for joy! This young runner is having the time of his life at the Tustin Public Schools Foundation’s 27th annual Dinosaur Dash held on November 5 at the Tustin Market Place.

Photo courtesy of Marc Gewertz

Tustin Public Schools Foundation:
Dinosaur Dash Finishes Strong

The Dinosaur Dash benefiting the Tustin Public Schools Foundation celebrated its 27th year with another successful event on November 5, when more than 7,000 participants converged on The Market Place in Tustin to run, walk, and bike in support of all schools in the Tustin Unified School District. Dino Dash 2017 raised close to $200,000.

One highlight of the Dino Dash came just before the start of the Tustin Auto Center 5K race when Tustin Auto Center Board Member and Tustin Toyota Parts and Services Director Glenn Kashima presented a commemorative $90,000 check to TPSF President Arman Karamardian to reflect the proceeds donated during the auto center’s annual October promotion. The auto center donated $50 for every new and used car sold or leased during the month. This year, 1,800 vehicles were counted.

TPSF has announced the winning schools in the Dino Dash registration competition. The schools with the highest percentage of registered runners compared to enrollment got the prize. This year’s winners were Foothill (high school), Hewes (middle school), and Red Hill (elementary school). Each school received a $500 grant from TPSF. Red Hill received an additional $500 grant for having the greatest increase in registrations over last year.

The 28th annual Dinosaur Dash will be held Sunday, November 4, 2018. TUSD middle and high school students can take their best shot at designing next year’s logo. TPSF will award the winner a $250 cash prize plus an additional $250 for their school’s art program. Visit www.tpsf.net for more information.
Follow Superintendent Franklin and TUSD on Twitter!

During the year, get the latest news and information! You can always follow Superintendent Gregory Franklin and the Tustin Unified School District on Twitter: @SuptFranklin and @TUSDschools. “Like” us on Facebook: TUSDschools. Stay in touch with us!

TUSD Calendar of Events

- December 22 ~ Teacher Work Day (No students)
- December 25 - January 5 ~ Winter Recess (District Office closed both weeks)
- January 8 ~ School resumes
- January 15 ~ Martin Luther King Day (Holiday)
- January 17 ~ School Tours Day, 9 and 11 a.m. (All Schools except Magnet Schools)
- January 18 ~ Magnet Schools Tour Day, 9 and 11 a.m. (Including Heritage and Marjorie Veeh elementary schools, Tustin Memorial Academy and Columbus Tustin Middle School)
- January 22 ~ TUSD Board of Education Meeting, District Office, 6 p.m.
- January 27 ~ Irvine Valley College 31st annual Astounding Inventions Competition for grades K-8
- February 1 ~ Tustin-Santa Ana Rotary Club Good Idea Awards Luncheon, noon
- February 12 ~ Lincoln Day (Holiday)
- February 13 ~ TUSD Board of Education Meeting, District Office, 6 p.m.
- February 15 ~ Every Student Succeeding Breakfast, Pioneer Middle School, 7:30 a.m.
- February 19 ~ Washington Day (Holiday)
- February 26 ~ TUSD Board Meeting/Study Session, District Office, 3:30 p.m.
- March 2 ~ Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day

The Franklin Almanac is produced by the TUSD Communications Office.

For questions, comments or information, contact: Mark Eliot, Director of Communications and Public Information (714) 730-7339 or meliot@tustin.k12.ca.us