

# WE ARE TR!

**Page  
4**

**Focused on  
the Future,  
Today**



**Spring 2016**

**TwinRivers**  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



**Page  
3**

**TR welcomes  
new teaching  
talent**

**Page  
5**

**Secret weapon  
for college  
success**

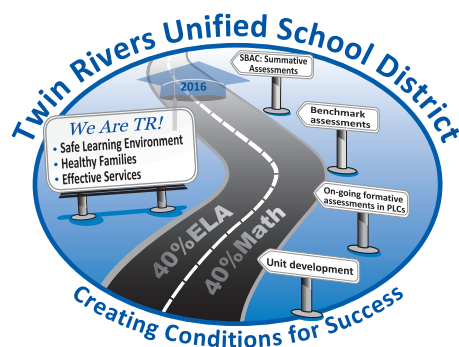
**Page  
7**

**Grant Union H.S.  
pool progress**



## Paving the Road to a Successful Future

Your input makes all the difference



At Twin Rivers, nothing is more important to us than ensuring each student graduates college-, career- and civic-minded ready. The work we've done so far is promising. More students are reading at grade level, graduating, taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and participating in school activities, while our dropout rate has significantly decreased.

Our schools are preparing students with the skills needed for the 21st century, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, reading comprehension, communication and collaboration. This spring, students will take the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) to measure many of these skills. We are working every day to help students develop a level of proficiency in these areas that aligns with and exceeds that in the rest of the county and state.

We're also working hard to build better school environments and communities. When a school environment is safe, secure and inviting, teachers can do what they do best and students are better prepared to learn.

That's why Twin Rivers is taking our ongoing commitment to improving school facilities to the next level. In late 2015, Twin Rivers polled voters to ask if they would

support increased school funding. We were pleased to hear the answer was a resounding yes, with more than two-thirds of respondents recognizing the need.

These dollars would allow us to update aging classrooms and make many other facilities improvements in every school. These improvements will continue to support our efforts in laying a foundation for student success. In the coming months, we will reach out for further input from our community on the specific improvements they want to see in our schools.

Our vision to continue to build an environment where students thrive includes you — every parent, every student, every teacher and staff member, every single member of our community. Be a part of the TR success story: Share your ideas and continue to be involved, so we can get this amazing and critical work done together. We are TR!

**-Dr. Steven  
Martinez,**  
*Superintendent  
of Twin Rivers  
Unified School  
District*



## TR Talk



### "Why do you want to go to college?"



"I want to go to college because when I grow up I want to get a good job and be set for life. I want to be a lawyer."

**Marise Labib, sixth-grader at  
Madison Elementary School**  
Dream college: Sacramento State



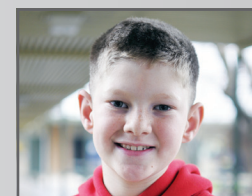
"I want to go to college because I want to open up my own fashion business when I get older. My mom gave me the idea that if I major in business and fashion design then I'll be able to do both."

**Cheyenne Nelum, fifth-grader at  
Ridgepoint Elementary School**  
Dream college: Sacramento State



"So I can get a job as a doctor and support my family. I can study and get my GPA higher, so I can get into UC Davis."

**Alexander Sour, sixth-grader at  
Del Paso Heights Elementary School**  
Dream college: UC Davis



"College can make me a better athlete, boost my confidence and help me get to where I need to be. I want to be a sports analyst or scientist."

**Sean Thomas, fourth-grader at  
Dry Creek Elementary School**  
Dream college: University of Georgia



"I want to be a heart surgeon. Going to college will help me learn what I can do and what I cannot do, so if somebody is hurt, I can help them."

**Meah Smith, fifth-grader at  
Babcock Elementary School**  
Dream college: undecided

# Professionals with Passion



Star Staff

Twin Rivers is proud to attract top teaching talent from around the region. The district welcomes all new additions to the Twin Rivers family, like Quoc Nguyen and Kayla Crews, who bring enthusiasm and energy to their classrooms.

By Mike Blount

## Teacher finds his calling

Quoc Nguyen

By the time Quoc Nguyen earned his bachelor's degree in computer networking in 2005, he knew he didn't want to pursue a career in the technology industry. He knew a job sitting behind a desk all day wasn't the best fit for him, so he decided to go back to school in search of his passion. While he was enrolled in an Introduction to Education class, the instructor encouraged Nguyen to try substitute teaching. That's how Nguyen found his calling.

"I taught at three different school districts in Stockton and really enjoyed the experience," Nguyen says. "I even taught at the school I went to when I was a kid and substituted for teachers that taught me."

**"I believe the key to a good education is establishing relationships with the students."**

Quoc Nguyen  
Math teacher at Norwood Junior High School

Nguyen worked as a substitute teacher for five years and earned his teaching credential in 2014. When he began looking for a job, Nguyen says he fell in love with Norwood Junior High School.

"It's a very diverse population and I like working with students from different backgrounds," Nguyen says. "I believe the key to a good education is establishing relationships with the students."

Though it was his first year teaching eighth grade math, Nguyen was nominated for the Teacher of the Year award in 2015. Nguyen says he was surprised, but he's happy he is able to make a difference in students' lives as a math teacher.

"I am so grateful to be at Twin Rivers and Norwood, in particular," Nguyen says. "Both the administration and teachers work well as a team. I feel like I have their support when I need it. Going back to my experience as a substitute teacher, I know a good school when I'm at one, and Norwood is a great school."



Quoc Nguyen says he is happy he is able to make a difference in his students' lives.  
Photo by Melissa Uroff



Kayla Crews says she loves getting her students engaged in learning about math and science.  
Photo by Melissa Uroff

## Engaging with students inspires teacher daily

Kayla Crews

Kayla Crews says her students are the number one reason she comes to work each day. She loves inspiring them and getting them excited about learning math and science. While she's only been teaching for a year, Crews says she can't imagine doing anything else for a career.

"I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was enrolled in community college," Crews says. "I saw that a lot of my classmates weren't getting a good education because they were not motivated, and I wanted to change that and engage them in learning. I wanted to make a difference in education."

Crews graduated with a bachelor's degree in liberal studies with a

concentration in math in 2014. She also earned her teaching credential later that year. Crews says she wanted to work in Twin Rivers Unified School District because she was impressed by the professional development opportunities.

"I don't think any of us are ever done learning," Crews says. "Everything is always changing with technology and culture. We need to learn more about those changes as educators to meet the needs of our students."

Crews teaches both math and physical science to eighth grade students at Pioneer Elementary School. Crews says both the school administration and her co-workers help her make a positive impact on her students every day.

"The principal and vice principal are absolutely incredible and always willing to help," Crews says. "My middle school team is awesome. Everyone is just so encouraging and I'm really lucky to have found that as a new teacher. I feel like I hit the jackpot with my first teaching job."

**"I don't think any of us are ever done learning."**

Kayla Crews  
Math and physical science teacher at  
Pioneer Elementary School



# Paving the Road to College

For many students, a college education is the key to unlocking the future they've been dreaming about. That's why Twin Rivers is committed to helping all students graduate ready to make it to and through college and launch a successful career. Students are best prepared when they've developed

a strong foundation of the academic skills necessary to excel. Research shows that preschool, regular attendance and targeted academic support increase a student's success on the path to college. Here are some of the ways Twin Rivers is supporting students from day one.

Sandy Bouasavanh enrolled her daughter in a Twin Rivers preschool program to give her a head start on academic success. Photo by Anne Stokes



**"I value the preschool program because it's helping my daughter go to the next step of her education."**

Sandy Bouasavanh  
Parent of preschool student

## A Strong Foundation

Preschool paves the way to bright futures

by Mike Blount

**A**t Twin Rivers, the road to college starts as early as preschool. Enrolling children in preschool programs gives them the tools they need to have a successful academic career.

Early Childhood Education Coordinator Elizabeth Cunnion says preschool improves language acquisition skills, reading readiness and social skills. It also provides opportunities for children to learn through experimentation outside of the family home.

"Preschool produces substantial gains in a child's learning," Cunnion says. "Research has shown that children who are enrolled have an improved quality of life and are less likely to drop out of school, break laws or participate in delinquent behavior."

Twin Rivers parent Sandy Bouasavanh enrolled her daughter in preschool classes at Del Paso Elementary

School to give her a strong academic foundation before she goes into kindergarten.

"I value the preschool program because it's helping my daughter go to the next step of her education," Bouasavanh says. "She's learned a lot more than she's learned at home. She's learned all of her ABCs, all of her numbers and she knows all of the different colors and shapes. She'll be well prepared to go into kindergarten."

Twin Rivers is accepting applications for preschool and a summer program called Kinder Kamp. For more information, please call 916-566-1616 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Twin Rivers' preschool programs are subsidized and fees are based on a family's income. Cunnion says many families receive preschool services at no cost.

## ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO #ATTEND

Students who are chronically absent are at risk of falling permanently behind peers, affecting their ability to graduate or go on to college. But sometimes, the reasons behind chronic absence aren't obvious. Parents may even be unaware their child is missing school. A new program at Twin Rivers is aiming to address this issue by bringing all parties together to find a solution.

Attention2Attendance (A2A) ensures parents and school officials are notified

each time a student misses a day of school. School officials can then schedule a conference with the parents to understand why the student was absent. Twin Rivers Director of Student Services Rudy Puente says the district has scheduled over 2,000 conferences with parents across the district since the program began in 2015.

"The issues aren't always cookie-cutter or clear," Puente says. "The student might have become seriously ill and hasn't been able to

notify the school, or there could be another stressor like a recent death or divorce. This program helps us find out what those issues are and make recommendations to improve attendance."

Puente says the key to the program's success is getting adults involved.

"The key is the adult buy-in," Puente says. "We have adults talking to students about the importance of attendance and why it is important to be in school."

According to Puente, students have received the program very well so far. Puente adds he looks forward to ramping up the visibility of the A2A program in the future. Students can show their support by using the hashtag #Attend in their social media posts.

"The idea is to say, 'I'm at school today, I'm here to learn and it's a cool thing to be on campus today.'"

Rio Linda High School senior Kristine Gonzales (left) and Foothill High School senior Pedro Martinez (right) are both enrolled in the AVID program. The program helps students be more successful in the classroom by providing a support structure.  
Photos by Anne Stokes



## Cover Story

### HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED

In addition to AVID, Twin Rivers offers several programs that help students pave the way to college and beyond.

#### ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES

Students can gain college credits while still enrolled in high school by taking AP classes. The program has been expanded across the district to offer 26 different courses in math, science, English, social studies, visual and performing arts and foreign language.

#### PSAT

The PSAT exam helps students prepare for the SAT. It's offered to high school students in grades nine through 11, on campus and free of charge. Through a partnership with The College Board and Khan Academy, students can receive their results online, learn what they need to study and improve their SAT scores.

#### STUDENT COUNSELING

The counseling program provides college and career guidance to students enrolled in Twin Rivers high schools by assisting them in choosing classes and analyzing their transcripts. Counselors also help students apply to community colleges and universities.

# Making the Grade

AVID program helps students prepare for college and career by Mike Blount

Applying for college can be a daunting task for a high school student about to graduate. But for students in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), it's a goal they start working toward from the first moment they are enrolled in the program.

Students in AVID take an elective class daily and teachers in content-area classrooms integrate AVID strategies. The program is currently offered at 15 Twin Rivers sites and serves grades six through 12. The support, mentoring and encouragement provided through AVID help students be more successful in the classroom and more competitive in the race to college.

Foothill High School senior Pedro Ramirez has been enrolled in AVID for five years, and with help from his AVID teacher Samantha Switzler, Ramirez has applied to eight colleges and several different scholarships. He plans to major in aerospace engineering.

"I grew up by an airport and I've always been fascinated with airplanes," Ramirez says. "I love math and science and thought it would be the perfect job to design and build airplanes for the rest of my life."

Ramirez says the program is helping him achieve his goal of being the first in his family to attend college.

"My parents are from Mexico," Ramirez says. "Coming from an immigrant family, I want to set a good example for my two younger sisters and show them that anything is possible."

The AVID program is also helping Rio Linda High School senior Kristine Gonzales become the first in her family to attend

college. Growing up, Gonzales says she saw her family struggle because her parents did not have a college education. She hopes to become a nurse one day so she can help children become and stay healthy.

"I used to babysit a lot and I love kids," Gonzales says. "I like helping people and I thought I should be a pediatric nurse. I want to go to college so I can have that opportunity."

With hard work and determination, she earned a 4.1 GPA last semester. Her AVID teacher Katherine Graf says she has seen Gonzales become more confident.

"I first met her when she was a freshman," Graf says. "She was a little shy, but her work was very good. Her voice has become much stronger and she is more outspoken now. She's become a much more well-rounded student."

Gonzales says the AVID program helped her believe in herself.

"When I was younger, I struggled in some classes," Gonzales says. "Because of that experience, during my freshman year, I didn't think I was going to be able to go to college. AVID helped me become the student I am today. My family is very proud of me."

Data show the Twin Rivers AVID program has proven successful in preparing students to get to and through college. For example, 75 percent of AVID's graduating seniors from the 2013-2014 school year enrolled in college, besting the national average by 7 percent.

**"AVID helped me become the student I am today."**

Kristine Gonzales  
Rio Linda High School senior

## News & Happenings



Twin Rivers Adult School provides opportunities for adults to gain new skills or learn a new trade, setting them up for greater success in the labor market. The district is expanding its offerings in 2016.

Photo by Anne Stokes

**“Adult education provides opportunities for adults who have not had success in traditional K-12 systems.”**

Jackie White  
Director of Arts and Career Education

# Education for the Whole Community

Expansion of adult education will benefit adults, families and economy

by Kate Gonzales

Twin Rivers’ commitment to the community doesn’t end at high school graduation. Many adults throughout Sacramento neighborhoods need access to ongoing public education opportunities. Twin Rivers Adult School can give anyone over age 18 a second chance at earning a high school diploma and provide the skills and on-the-job experience adults need to thrive in the labor market.

“Adult education provides opportunities for adults who have not had success in traditional K-12 systems, for adults new to the country and for adults looking to expand their current skill sets,” says Jackie White, Director of Arts and Career Education.

And when it comes to setting children on the path to a bright academic future, helping their parents and the wider community prosper is the best place to start, White says. Many adult education students are also Twin Rivers parents, and their gains in the classroom and in careers translate to greater future success for their children.

Twin Rivers Adult School currently offers English as a second language (ESL) courses, adult secondary

education, computer classes and high school completion. Recognizing the impact of these programs, White says Twin Rivers will expand ESL and citizenship course offerings this spring. Classes will be held at elementary school sites, so Twin Rivers parents will be able to study conveniently in their own neighborhoods.

The district is also launching a pre-apprenticeship training program for careers in construction, in collaboration with Northern California Construction Training Inc. Students will split time between classroom learning and hands-on experience under a journeyman carpenter. Students who complete this training can move on to an apprenticeship program, where they earn an hourly wage while continuing to expand their skills. This new program will help more people in our community find work in a high-demand career that pays wages that will support a family.

And ultimately, this helps our whole community — including the students at Twin Rivers — get ahead.

Contact Twin Rivers Adult School at 916-566-2785 or online at [www.tras.edu](http://www.tras.edu) to find out more.

# Your Opinion Matters

Community weighs in on long-term plans

by Kate Gonzales

Listening to the community is important to decision-makers at Twin Rivers.

That’s why, in fall 2015, the district partnered with a leading California polling firm to issue the Twin Rivers Unified Educational Priorities Survey. The survey measured residents’ opinions toward the district, perspectives on facility needs and educational priorities, and gauged support for a potential 2016 bond measure to fund facilities updates. Bill McGuire, Deputy Superintendent of Administrative Services at Twin Rivers, says the results were positive.

“The majority of people think we’re a good place for kids,” McGuire says. He adds that the district wants to continue building a strong learning environment.

To that end, the district developed a Long Range Facilities Master Plan — a 25-year road map for repairs and upgrades in district schools. Projects include upgrading aging math and science classrooms, heating and air systems and improving vocational facilities.

**“Our job is to provide a high-quality learning environment for students.”**

Bill McGuire  
Deputy Superintendent of  
Administrative Services

When asked whether they would support a ballot measure to fund projects, 73 percent of those polled said they would. Respondents also ranked their priorities for facilities updates — input that will be considered as Twin Rivers implements the plan.

More than 80 percent of voters polled say attracting quality teachers, preparing students for college and repairing things like roofs and gas lines are top priorities. McGuire says up-to-date facilities create a positive, productive setting for staff and students.

“High-quality facilities attract and retain high-quality teachers, and high-quality teachers are the key to student success,” McGuire says. “Our job is to provide a high-quality learning environment for students.”

Twin Rivers has plans to poll 600 more voters with more specific questions about facility upgrade priorities.

“We want to give all [voters] as many opportunities to comment as we can,” McGuire says.



Swim Coach David Kendrick welcomes the pool improvement project at Grant Union High School.  
Photo by Anne Stokes



# Pool Project Makes a Splash

Pool improvement underway for Grant Union High School

by Mike Blount

In the very near future, student athletes on the swim team at Grant Union High School will be able to practice and compete in their own pool for the first time since 2009.

The project, which will completely revitalize and bring the closed pool to current Sacramento County code standards, was approved by the Twin Rivers school board last year. Construction is in progress and is slated to be completed by the beginning of the next school year — although weather will be a factor in finishing the project on time, according to Grant swim coach David Kendrick.

The new pool will be state-of-the-art and allow the school to host swim matches against other schools as well. Kendrick welcomes the change — Grant swimmers have been practicing at the pool at Highlands High while awaiting the pool repairs at their home school.

“We’re currently at a disadvantage having to travel for practice,” Kendrick says. “Having access to our own pool will make things much easier for the

kids, and they are very excited about it.”

Kendrick says that swimming takes a lot of discipline as a sport and directly translates to student success in the classroom.

“You have to be determined and willing to learn,” Kendrick says. “Swimming is a great teacher of life. If you can learn to swim, you can get through anything.”

Though his team has adapted to using other facilities in the last few years, Kendrick looks forward to the project being completed because it will be a great source of pride for the community and get more students to sign up for the swim team.

“Having a modern facility with all the bells and whistles will be a great feature to attract people to come to our school,” Kendrick says. “It will also allow our kids to be proud of where they are competing. It’s a great thing and we’re going to get more kids signing up for swimming because of it. I’m certain of it.”

**“If you can learn to swim, you can get through anything.”**

David Kendrick  
Grant Union High School swim coach



## News & Happenings

### YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Twin Rivers is continuing to implement its three-year, \$25 million facilities improvement initiative. Here is a list of the most recent round of projects completed, from summer 2015 to date:

#### EXTERIOR PAINTING PROJECTS:

Hazel Strauch Elementary School, Norwood Junior High School, Rio Linda Preparatory Academy and Winona Center.

#### INTERIOR PAINTING PROJECTS:

Del Paso Heights, Hagginwood, Kohler, Northwood, Village, W.A. Allison and Woodridge elementary schools; Foothill Ranch Middle School, Rio Linda Preparatory Academy, Futures High School and Grant Union High School West Campus.

#### PAVING PROJECTS:

Futures High School, Pioneer Elementary School, Rio Tierra Junior High School, Smythe Academy 7-8 and Woodridge Elementary School.

#### ROOFING PROJECTS:

Dry Creek, Fairbanks, Foothill Oaks, Hagginwood, Harmon Johnson, Kohler, Michael J. Castori, Noralto, Oakdale, Ridgepoint and Woodlake elementary schools; Creative Connections Arts Academy, Norwood and Rio Tierra junior high schools; Foothill, Grant Union, Highlands and Rio Linda high schools.

#### ARTIFICIAL TURF REPLACEMENT:

Foothill, Grant Union and Rio Linda high schools.

## HELP PAVE THE WAY

The Twin Rivers community works hard each day to pave the road to a bright, successful future for every student. The driving goal is for students to graduate ready for college, career and civic participation. Everyone has a role to play in this effort — from students and staff to parents and the wider community.

Connect with Twin Rivers online to find upcoming events, opportunities to get involved at your child's school, school locations, enrollment information, and updates on key issues like the Long Range Facilities Master Plan.

By staying connected and working together, we can help build better school communities. We are TR!



Twin Rivers Unified School District  
5115 Dudley Blvd.  
McClellan, CA 95652  
916-566-1600

Visit **[www.twinriversusd.org](http://www.twinriversusd.org)** for:



**List of  
schools**



**District  
news**



**Parent  
resources**

## Looking Ahead: Academic Calendar

### 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR

#### MARCH 2016

- 3/18** TK-6th grade shortened day
- 3/21-3/25** Spring Break
- 3/28** Non-student day

#### MAY 2016

- 5/30** Memorial Day:  
NO SCHOOL

#### JUNE 2016

- 6/9** Last day of school/  
minimum day

**KEEP TRACK OF  
ALL IMPORTANT  
TWIN RIVERS  
DATES AT:**

**[www.twinriversusd.org/  
calendar](http://www.twinriversusd.org/calendar)**

### 2016-17 SCHOOL YEAR

#### AUGUST 2016

- 8/9** First day of school

#### SEPTEMBER 2016

- 9/5** Labor Day:  
NO SCHOOL

#### OCTOBER 2016

- 10/7** End of grading period,  
grades 7-12

#### NOVEMBER 2016

- 11/11** Veterans Day:  
NO SCHOOL
- 11/15** TK-6th grade shortened day
- 11/17-11/18** Non-student day;  
TK-6th grade parent/  
teacher conferences
- 11/21-11/25** Thanksgiving:  
NO SCHOOL

#### DECEMBER 2016

- 12/20-12/21** First semester final exams/minimum day (high school)
- 12/21** End of grading period, grades 7-12/minimum day
- 12/22-1/6** Winter Break

#### JANUARY 2017

- 1/9** Students return from Winter Break
- 1/16** MLK Day:  
NO SCHOOL
- 1/27** Non-student day

#### FEBRUARY 2017

- 2/17 & 2/20** Presidents' Day:  
NO SCHOOL
- 2/24** End of grading period, TK-6th grade

#### MARCH 2017

- 3/17** End of grading period, grades 7-12
- 3/24** Non-student day

#### APRIL 2017

- 4/10-4/14** Spring Break

#### MAY 2017

- 5/29** Memorial Day:  
NO SCHOOL
- 5/31-6/1** Second semester final exams/minimum day (high school)
- 6/1** Last day of school/  
minimum day/end of grading period