

WE ARE TR!

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Always Striving for Success!

The new Strategic Framework
charts a path for achievement

December
2015

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UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent's Message



Let's Get to Work!

High student achievement is at the heart of what we do at Twin Rivers Unified School District. Each day, we strive to provide the atmosphere, tools and instruction for students to thrive. We all play a role in fostering a rich learning environment.

I am excited to share some of the ways we're working even harder this year to raise the bar. We have developed a Strategic Framework with three focus areas: Unparalleled Student Achievement, Engagement and Outreach, and Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness. Student Achievement is our top priority, and the other two focus areas support our work in that area.

Students will see some of these changes directly. We have early release Wednesdays — a time for

teachers to work with principals and colleagues to share best practices and analyze student work. People who are closest to the work have the best solutions and I am pleased our teachers have time to collaborate.

Other efforts will happen behind the scenes, like the work of facilities employees to keep our campuses in top shape. Kids will experience the results of this work each day — they will feel safe and welcome at school, and enjoy being there.

We also want to deepen engagement. We want students to be enthusiastic learners; meeting basic needs is only the starting point. Students can delve into science or the arts, or join a sports team. There is something for everyone at Twin Rivers!

We also value parent engagement. Our Parent University offers on-campus opportunities for parents

to learn strategies to support their child's learning. We never take for granted the power of strong relationships between our schools and families.

I look forward to implementing these focus areas. At Twin Rivers, we prepare students to be college- and career-ready. Everyone has a part to play in making this happen. We are *all* TR — so let's get to work!

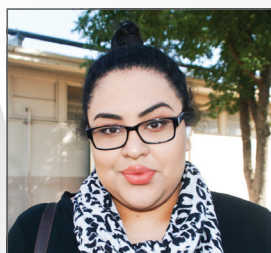
—**Dr. Steven Martinez**
*Superintendent of Twin
Rivers Unified School District*



TR Talk



"What motivates you to excel in school?"

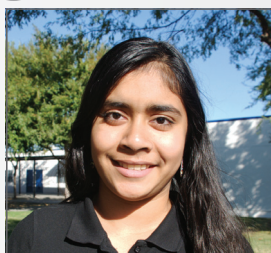


"My dreams and my goals. I want to give my family everything that they could not give me. Education will take you so far in life; it can help in so many ways."

Jasmin Castillo, senior,
*Vista Nueva Career
and Technology High
School*

Favorite class: biology

Future major: psychology and
criminal justice



"My family and my friends because they really support me a lot. I want a good job and my parents motivate me. My brother and sister, if I need help with homework they help me."

Shayleen Khan, eighth-
grader, *Norwood
Junior High School*

Student of the year 2014

AVID (Advancement Via Individual
Determination) student



"I want to be able to get into a high-level college and be successful in life. Doing well here, now, will help me get there."

Jordan Davis, eighth-
grader, *Rio Tierra
Junior High School*

Earned 100 percent in math
section of California Standards
Test in third and fifth grade

Sports: football and soccer



"It would probably be my mom and dad. Since I was little they've been pushing me harder and harder. I just really want to make them proud of me for doing well in school."

Kyu Phongmany, seventh-
grader, *Rio Tierra
Junior High School*

MESA (Mathematics,
Engineering, Science
Achievement) student

Former GATE student



"Getting good grades so I can get a good job."

Wa Lor, seventh-grader,
*Norwood Junior High
School*

Sports: soccer and basketball
Former GATE student



"My parents — they both work in the district. They're kind of like my coaches and my cheerleaders."

Geneva Speakman,
senior, *Rio Linda High
School*

Sports: basketball, water polo
and swimming

Future major: nursing

Making the Grade

by Mike Blount • Photos by Nate Eckler

Even if it isn't always easy, these high-performing students and many others like them throughout Twin Rivers are striving each day for unparalleled achievement, pushing themselves to reach their full potential. These exceptional scholars, and many more, deserve recognition for their commitment to working hard in school as the first step toward a bright future.



Vanessa Brown

Vanessa Brown loves the community at Grant Union High School. Vanessa, 16, says the connections she's made with teachers and other students have motivated her to live up to her true potential.

"The support system is what drives me to do all that I can," she says. "They give me the resources and encouragement that I need. They pushed me out of my comfort zone to give me confidence. When I step in front of a class, I'm not shy anymore."

Vanessa is currently taking two Advanced Placement classes — government and economics. She is also an Associate Student Body commissioner, a position that helps organize and plan school events and activities.

After she graduates, Vanessa plans to study physical therapy, Spanish and child development. Though she'll be sad to leave Grant Union High School, Vanessa says she's excited to go to college and pursue a career.

"I really like healing people and making them feel better," Vanessa says. "And kids inspire me to be the best that I can be. I think I would be good working with kids."

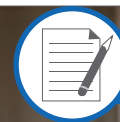
Isaiah Tenette

Isaiah Tenette, 17, barely has a moment to relax. The Highlands High School senior is quarterback of his football team, plays basketball, baseball and tennis, and runs cross-country and track. In school, he takes three Advanced Placement classes, including European history, literature and government. Despite his busy schedule, Isaiah says he never feels overwhelmed because he has a great support system.

"My teachers are always on top of me, making sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and looking out for me," Isaiah says. "My coaches are always supportive, and the teachers push me to challenge myself and extend my mind. All of them push me to do better."

As the oldest of three siblings, Isaiah says it is important to him to be a good example to everyone around him. He plans to go to college after he graduates and study either criminal justice or engineering. Isaiah says he's thankful for his parents' support and encouragement that has pushed him to succeed.

"They make sure that I always have everything to be the best that I can," Isaiah says. "They mean the world to me."



Student Spotlight



Oscar Vergara

Seventeen-year-old Oscar Vergara is currently the No. 1 ranked student at Foothill High School. He is taking five Advanced Placement classes, including literature, government, calculus, environmental science and Spanish. He also stays busy as captain of the varsity soccer team. Though he knows hard work is the key to success, Oscar credits his parents for keeping him motivated.

"My parents have sacrificed so many things for me and my sister to have a better life," Oscar says. "My dad left Mexico when he was 16 and worked as a dishwasher to send money back home to his family. Making good grades and going to college is the only way I could pay them back for what they have done for me."

Throughout his high school career, Oscar has maintained a nearly perfect straight-A streak. After he graduates, Oscar hopes to attend University of California, Berkeley and study computer science so he can learn about software development and how to create video games.

"Everyone at Twin Rivers has always encouraged me to do better, and now I feel all that hard work has paid off," Oscar says.



A Plan for Unparalleled Achievement

Rolling out the Strategic Framework

by Kate Gonzales

Great things are happening throughout Twin Rivers Unified School District, as administrators and teachers, bus drivers and parents all work to raise student achievement.

"In order for us to be a high-performing district, we needed to align our systems," says Dr. Jacqueline Perez, Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.

The district developed a Strategic Framework with **three focus areas**: Unparalleled Student Achievement; Engagement and Outreach; and Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness. The district places primary focus on student achievement — preparing students for career and college success, while the other two focus areas support that mission. When district officials questioned how they would increase student achievement, the answer took many forms.

Twin Rivers wants each child to receive high-quality first instruction — an approach to teaching that emphasizes student motivation and ensures they understand a lesson or skill the first time around. Teachers also have a growing set of resources, like a computer system that tracks student progress, one-on-one training and designated time to work with colleagues. New Professional Learning Communities give faculty the structure and time to assess and brainstorm methods to enhance student achievement, and classified staff districtwide have more opportunities for professional development.

"This culture of collaborating and discussing conditions we create for kids to make them successful is happening across the system," says Perez.

Greater efficiency in Transportation Services and other departments is aimed at retaining staff and boosting morale, creating a more enjoyable experience for students day-to-day. The district has developed a Facilities Master Plan to create a 21st century learning environment. Classified staff are aligning and digitizing their procedures to create a smooth system across the board.

The goal is to streamline policies and procedures, leading all staff to focus on boosting student achievement.

Student engagement is another key factor in fostering high achievement. High schools are offering more college-preparatory courses meeting the A-G requirements so students are eligible to apply to the University of California and California State

University systems. The district addresses the social-emotional learning of students, and invests in Career and Technical Education and pathways to careers. Twin Rivers students have opportunities to excel in every grade.

"[We're] enhancing what we're offering to kids to ensure we're setting it up for them to have lots of opportunities and ways to get to college," says Associate Superintendent Perez.

Twin Rivers also offers opportunities for family engagement, like on-campus parent resource centers, annual parent retreats and weekly discussions through Parent University.

With this three-pronged approach to creating the conditions for success, the staff, students and families of Twin Rivers are poised to accomplish great things. Read on to learn more about some ways the Strategic Framework is making the district even stronger.

"This culture of collaborating and discussing conditions we create for kids to make them successful is happening across the system."

Dr. Jacqueline Perez
Associate Superintendent of
Teaching and Learning



ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

Parent University brings families into the fold

Alexis Fonseca was not necessarily looking for ways to connect with other parents, but at Twin Rivers, that's what she found.

When the mother of three dropped off her son, Mosshal, at Michael J. Castori Elementary one morning, a librarian told her about the Parent University session that was happening right then.

"I'm really grateful," says Fonseca. "Being able to have conversations with parents whose kids are attending the school is a good thing."



Stephanie Kyler with her seventh-grade daughter, Hailey Ganjouee, and her bus driver Ismael "Milo" Carmona. Kyler says Hailey is more excited about going to school each day thanks to the kindness of her bus driver.

Photo by Nate Eckler

Parent University is just one way Twin Rivers is meeting the Strategic Framework's goal of engaging with parents. During weekly on-campus sessions, families discuss issues that impact students' education. Parent University is offered at 14 Twin Rivers campuses, where attendees brainstorm topics relevant to the school, vote and begin a dialogue.

Discussing issues like bullying and self-esteem with parents who share common ground has a real impact. Fonseca was also able to connect with Spanish-speaking parents through a translator.

"It was almost as if we were speaking the same language because we were all in the same conversation," she says. "We all had the same feelings about what was going on."

In the future, Fonseca would like to talk about school music programs and Parent University will likely provide that opportunity.

"I believe every parent should be at these things," she says. "I know what's going on ... and now I know how to deal with situations a lot better."

Alexis Fonseca attends a Parent University session at Michael J. Castori Elementary, where her son is in second grade. Fonseca says Parent University has helped her connect with the campus and fellow parents.

Photo by Nate Eckler

UNPARALLELED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Twin Rivers gives students a place to thrive

Brandon Thao sees a career in engineering in his future. A seventh-grader at Rio Linda Preparatory Academy, Brandon already has experience designing and building model bridges, prosthetic arms and rockets through Project Lead The Way.

Project Lead The Way is a nonprofit that offers STEM programs for students in kindergarten through 12th grade across the nation. The Rio Linda Prep chapter engages students in design and construction projects and tests their skills in competitions against other schools each spring. The club exemplifies the rigorous programs Twin Rivers offers to meet the Strategic Framework's goal of Unparalleled Student Achievement.

Brandon enjoys the process of designing, making prototypes and testing his creations, and wants to help people through engineering. Twin Rivers takes pride in raising students to be civic-minded and college- and career-ready. In addition to his involvement with Project Lead The Way, Brandon is a Math, Engineering, Science Achievement student. MESA offers students from middle school through the university level both a sneak peek and a head start on careers in engineering, science and math.

Seventh-grader Brandon Thao enjoys playing football and soccer at Rio Linda Preparatory Academy. He also excels academically, in part because of his participation in the school's engineering club. Photo by Nate Eckler



Last year, Brandon won first place in a MESA competition for a sail car he designed and built.

He earns straight A's and plays football and soccer, taking advantage of the full range of opportunities for excellence provided at his school.

"High-performing districts have lots of activities and opportunities for students to be successful outside of the classroom," says Dr. Jacqueline Perez, Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.

As he moves on to high school, Brandon will find that Twin Rivers offers a variety of programs as well as college-preparatory classes that satisfy the A-G requirements needed to apply to four-year universities. He'll also benefit from the growing support teachers get through collaboration with Professional Learning Communities and one-on-one support from Teachers on Special Assignment, or TOSAs.

Through its demanding coursework, diverse program offerings and faculty support, Twin Rivers has built an environment to prepare students for unparalleled achievement.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS

How Transportation Services is driving student success

Tim Shannon has been navigating the bumps in the road of Twin Rivers' Transportation Services. With the department's new focus on efficiency, modernization and morale, parents are seeing improvements.

"[It's] 100 percent better," says Stephanie Kyler, whose daughter, Hailey Ganjouee, is a seventh-grade special education student at Rio Linda Preparatory Academy who relies on the bus system to get to school.

Changes in Transportation Services fall within the Strategic Framework's focus on Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness.

Shannon, director of Transportation Services, says routing inefficiencies, with some buses running only half full, was something the district wanted to address. Using Versatrans

software to track passenger numbers, the district consolidated 15 routes and created one central bus yard. The district also wanted to make punctuality a priority.

"Nobody likes to get somewhere at the last minute," says Shannon.

The issue is particularly important to students who rely on eating breakfast at school.

"We get them to school on time, we get them to breakfast [and] teachers don't have to worry about interruptions in class," he says.

Transportation Services is also installing StudentConnect, a tool which uses GPS technology to track bus and student locations. Students will swipe a card to enter and exit the bus. Parents will be able to access the information through an app to follow their

children's progress as they travel between home and school. Kyler says she looks forward to using StudentConnect, but it's the personal touch that has really made a difference for Hailey.

"Her bus driver this year is phenomenal," Kyler says. "She really wants to go to school because the bus driver is very good with her. She's more excited."

Shannon and his team want to ensure students start their day in the best possible way.

"We are striving really hard to make every student successful," he says.



Staff Provide the Support Learners Need to Succeed

A celebration of just two of the many dedicated professionals at Twin Rivers who give their all each day to help students succeed.

by Mike Blount • Photos by Nate Eckler

Leading the Way

Stephanie Tarrell

Sierra View Elementary School's new principal, Stephanie Tarrell, is committed to ensuring each student lives up to his or her potential. Tarrell was the vice principal at Smythe Academy of Arts and Sciences for two years and brings 18 years of experience in education to her new role. Tarrell says she looks forward to helping teachers and staff at Sierra support students' learning and growth.

"It's all about educating the whole child — developing them physically and emotionally," Tarrell says. "I think one of the most important things for teachers is the ability to develop relationships with kids by being understanding and being able to communicate with them. We want to make sure students feel cared about and supported."

Before she transitioned into administration, Tarrell worked as a support teacher helping colleagues develop their skills by modeling lessons. Though she enjoyed being a support teacher, Tarrell says she likes being a principal because she gets to wear many different hats.

"I get to see students when they are doing good, and I get to redirect their behavior and come up with a plan to make them more successful when they need help," Tarrell says. "I get to interact with parents and work with teachers."

With the transition to Common Core State Standards, Tarrell says teachers will continue to provide more engagement opportunities for students in the classroom. Students participate in group learning activities and are more involved in the learning process.

Tarrell also believes that teachers and parents need to work together to keep students engaged. In fact, the district's new Strategic Framework places Engagement and Outreach, for both students and parents, as one of its top three focus areas to help support achievement.

Tarrell says there are many opportunities for parents to partner with the school.

"We let parents know about opportunities to come to the school to spend time in the classroom and observe teachers," Tarrell says. "We also connect to them through newsletters and phone calls. We want parents to be a part of their child's education because that really helps students be successful."

Setting the Scene for Success

Robert Whittaker

Robert Whittaker takes a lot of pride in his work. As the head custodian at Rio Linda High School, he makes sure that the floors are spotless, the bathrooms are cleaned and the trash emptied every day. Whittaker says he likes working for Twin Rivers because he enjoys being around students.

"I have kids of my own, so I always take time to communicate with students and try to help them in any way I can — even if it's just to tell them to have a good day," Whittaker says. "I want to be a positive influence in their lives."

Whittaker understands that he plays an essential role in providing students the right environment for learning. He has worked as a head custodian for the last four years and in custodial services since 1995. At Rio Linda High School, he makes sure his custodial staff members have everything they

need to do their job. He keeps supplies in stock and makes sure the school has coverage for sporting events and other after-school activities.

"High schools are basically running 24/7, and there's a whole lot more to clean," Whittaker says.

Running a tight ship is his way of contributing to the Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness of the district, one of Twin Rivers' three main focus areas under the new Strategic Framework. By keeping the campus well-maintained, he helps make sure teachers and students can focus on learning.

While cleaning a high school may be a never-ending task, Whittaker says his staff stays successful by staying organized.

"All of our equipment in our custodial shop is in its right place," Whittaker says. "My staff does not have to search for what they need and they don't lose time looking for something. When we get an email that something needs to be done, we can take care of it as soon as we get it."





Photo courtesy of TRUSD

Charting a Course to Success

Smarter Balanced test data drive academic improvement

by Susan Winlow

To know how far you've come, you have to know where you started. Now, with the recent release of test data from the first Smarter Balanced assessment, Twin Rivers educators have a clear baseline measuring where students are starting from. The data have already begun to play a vital role in helping the district target needs in student learning.

Last spring's test was the first assessment based on the new Common Core State Standards. Though the percentage of students currently scoring proficient in English and math falls short of district goals, the data are on par with other districts of similar demographics, such as Oakland and Fresno, says Dr. Sara Noguchi, the Associate Superintendent of Innovation, Research and Design.

There will be plenty of room for improvement in scores as students and teachers adjust to new standards, new ways of teaching and learning, and the new technology involved in the computer-based testing system.

And district leaders remain optimistic about the opportunities for growth.

Test data, which are also broken down by school site and demographics, will be used to identify and address the specific improvements needed.

After the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium released the data, site principals gathered and reviewed areas of strength and improvement to determine next

steps, such as programs and interventions, for schools, grade levels and departments, Noguchi says.

The district's goal is to reach at least 40 percent proficiency in each category, dubbed the "40/40 or beyond" goal.

Using data from student benchmark testing throughout the year will allow teachers to collaborate and compare

interim testing results and use each other's knowledge to improve.

Teachers have also received professional development in accessing test data to aid in teaching and have the help of Teachers on Special Assignment who can give classroom help and support.

"The road to improvement is going to be in the classroom," Noguchi says. "Teachers are the No. 1 force in this change."

"The road to improvement is going to be in the classroom. Teachers are the No. 1 force in this change."

Dr. Sara Noguchi
Associate Superintendent of Innovation,
Research and Design



News & Happenings

Building Toward the Future

Board adopts Long Range Facilities Master Plan

by Susan Winlow

Students learn best in schools that are well-maintained, clean and efficiently run. Twin Rivers district leadership is firmly committed to ensuring students have the best possible experience on campus, and has made some tremendous progress in modernizing and upgrading facilities in the last two years.

"Some great things are going on at Twin Rivers under our new leadership," says Kim Barnett, the Executive Director of General Services. "The leadership and trustees have each made a commitment to improving our facilities."

So far, improvement has come in the form of numerous completed projects at school sites across the district, including upgrades and repair to heating and air conditioning systems, exterior painting, roofing, paved surfaces and tennis courts.

Now, the district is taking their commitment a step further. The trustees passed the district's first Long Range Facilities Master Plan (LRFMP) at the board meeting on Sept. 15. The purpose of the LRFMP is to provide the district with a current assessment of all the district's facilities and provide a road map for future facilities improvements, including priorities

and funding.

The new facilities plan prioritizes \$2.6 billion in projects through 2040. Though the price tag is hefty, the investment is necessary to simply bring the district's facilities up to par with other districts, says Bill McGuire, the Deputy Superintendent of Administrative Services.

And community support will be needed to make the investment in the future that Twin Rivers students deserve. The district is exploring the possibility of a facilities bond to appear on the November 2016 ballot in order to implement needed improvements.

A polling agency hired by the district will conduct two sets of telephone polls through March 2016 to determine if the district's voters would support a bond, and if so, how large.

McGuire says a \$230 million bond initiative is possible.

"It puts a dent into where we want to go," he says. "We've got to start somewhere."

To find out more about Twin Rivers' Long Range Facilities Master Plan, visit www.twinriversusd.org/misc/masterplan.



A new, state-of-the-art workspace in the district's Bay D space is one of the planned improvements in the Twin Rivers Long Range Facilities Master Plan.
Photo courtesy of TRUSD

VIEW 1: MAIN ENTRY/ COLLABORATION



Photos courtesy of TRUSD

Get Involved

Twin Rivers is working hard to create conditions for success at every school, and you can help. The district's new Strategic Framework outlines three goals: raising the bar for Student Achievement, fostering student and parent Engagement and Outreach, and creating an environment of Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness.

Parents are valuable partners in making this vision a reality. There are so many ways for families to get involved.

The Parent Advisory Committee has bimonthly meetings and is gathering community input on districtwide funding priorities. For parents looking to discuss issues pertaining to their child's school, the district offers Parent University classes at 14 campuses. Representatives of organizations that provide services to families in the district are also welcome to attend Parent University. Families can gain skills in positive parenting, family communication and related topics through the district's nine-week Strengthening Families program.

As always, families can encourage students to go beyond the classroom and take up sports, join an after-school or academic club and push themselves to achieve academic success. When we all work together, all of our students can thrive!



Twin Rivers Unified School District
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Visit www.twinriversusd.org for:



**List of
schools**



**District
news**



**Parent
resources**

HOW TO GET ENGAGED

Everyone plays a role in creating an environment where students succeed, and Twin Rivers offers many ways to be involved.

Parents have several opportunities to engage with the district. One way is through **Parent University**, a weekly gathering held at 14 campuses that gives parents a forum to discuss issues specific to the school site.

The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) helps parents understand their child's education and is held in Spanish and English. PIQE has two levels — the first focuses on basics like attendance and behavior, and the second covers topics like applying for colleges and financial aid. Each level is nine weeks and the next PIQE session (level II) begins Jan. 20.

The Parent Advisory Committee offers input to the Twin Rivers Board of Trustees and the superintendent on which districtwide goals should be prioritized under the Local Control Accountability Plan, or LCAP. PAC meetings are held at the district office. To make these meetings more accessible, Spanish, Hmong and Russian interpreters are available. Dinner and playcare for children ages 5 to 12 are provided. Here are dates for upcoming PAC meetings:

- **Feb. 4, 6 p.m.**
- **March 3, 5:30 p.m.**
- **May 5, 5:30 p.m.**
- **June 2, 5:30 p.m.**

There is also the **Parent Champions**, a group of 25 parents who are nominated by principals to be school site leaders. Parent Champions will work with the PAC to collect parent and community input that reflects the diverse makeup of the district.

Contact Martha Florez at 916-566-1600 ext. 64107 for more information.