

# WE ARE **TR!**



## READY TO LEARN

Find out what Twin Rivers USD has been up to this summer



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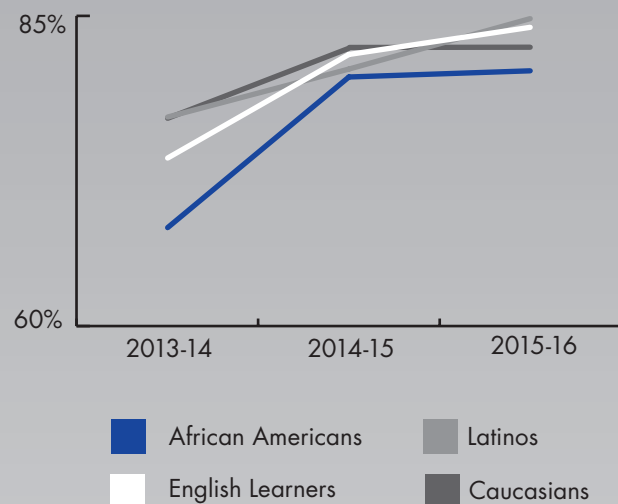
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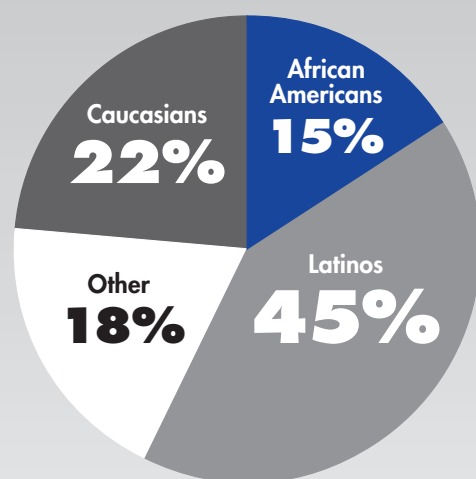
**TwinRivers**  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## GRADUATION SUCCESS

### GRADUATION RATES (BY DEMOGRAPHICS)



### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



### GRADUATION RATE

**84.4%**

(exceeds county and state average)

### DROPOUT RATE

**8.3%**

(below county and state average)

Cover photo by Roman Rykun



## Superintendent's Message

# SUCCESS, NOTHING LESS!

## Providing quality education for all students

Every school year we continue to improve. We strive to identify opportunities that provide our students with a quality education, inside and outside of the classroom.

At Twin Rivers, we celebrate our continually rising graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates. Every year, more students are meeting grade-level expectations, many of whom go on to attend four-year colleges after graduation.

As a district, our goal is to provide a quality education for all of our students. By ensuring they have strong foundational skills to build upon, we hope to give them a wide range of options as they go through our school system and then leave it for the world beyond.

This year, we're adopting new textbooks and rolling out new programs giving teachers instructional strategies to help them teach common core math and English language arts. Over the next several years, we anticipate seeing a significant number of students meeting proficiency because of the new strategies that we will be implementing this year.

We also provide students with engagement activities in the arts, science, athletics and other extracurricular

activities — science camp, music programs and LEGO competitions for example — in the hopes that through these opportunities, we can spark an interest in students that they can pursue through high school, maybe even launching their career.

The start of a new school year is the perfect opportunity to commit to a year of success, nothing less. Students, come to school every day prepared, with an open mind and ready to engage.

Parents, understand that your participation in the education process is critical to your child's success, no matter what grade they're in: Stay in contact with their teachers, ask what's expected of your student in the classroom and how you can help them when they're at home. It takes a coordinated effort by schools and parents to support our students' success in and out of the classroom.



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

TRUSD has received grant funding for 16 electric school buses, which will give the district the largest fleet of electric school buses in the U.S.

Photo by Anne Stokes



## News & Happenings



# NEXT STOP: ELECTRIC

## New fleet of electric school buses benefits students and the environment

by Kate Gonzales

**M**ore Twin Rivers students will be taking a newer, greener ride to school this fall.

That's because the district will be getting eight new electric school buses, adding to its existing fleet of eight electric buses it obtained last year. Twin Rivers Unified was one of three school districts that collaborated and applied for grant funding from the California Air Resources Board to purchase these buses. The participating districts were awarded \$17.2 million for the buses, with TRUSD using its portion of the funds to purchase a total 16 electric school buses.

"With our willingness to take on the new technology, we were lucky enough to get the grant," says Tim Shannon, Director of Transportation Services.

One requirement of the grant was that the buses would run in disadvantaged neighborhoods as defined by the Air Resources Board. The board uses factors like income levels, pollution and access to new technology in its definition of "disadvantaged."

Once the district receives all 16 of the new buses, it will boast the largest number of electric school buses on the road in the United States.

The buses have several benefits to the district and community, including cost savings in fuel and maintenance.

"School buses are not cheap," says Nancy Jensen, a state-certified Twin Rivers school bus driver instructor. "To replace a school bus is a huge expense ... [and] it comes right out of the general fund. So a smaller school district would have a really hard time doing something like this without grants."

They also run cleaner — they produce less carbon emissions and pollution — helping the environment and the health of students and drivers.

**Because the electric buses run so quietly, they play a tune when traveling 15 mph or slower to alert pedestrians.**

That's a breath of fresh air for Jensen.

"I've been around diesel my whole life and to have the opportunity to work around a clean fleet to me is a health benefit," Jensen says. "We're changing our environment in a very healthy way."

As with any change in technology,

Jensen says there can be a learning curve for drivers accustomed to diesel engines.

"As you start these up, they don't make any real noise," she says. "We're ... used to hearing that engine come on and used to hearing it shift into gear."

As Jensen trains drivers on electric bus driving, she asks them to use a more visual technique called "point and say," where drivers look, point and say they are switching gears, for example.

To address a different aspect of the same noise issue, the electric buses play a

tune when traveling 15 mph or slower to alert pedestrians to the quiet buses. To help make this new technology fun for students, Shannon says, the district will hold a contest for students to decide what kind of music the bus will play when it's traveling slowly.

The electric buses also present a new opportunity for high school students to get hands-on training in Career Technical Education courses through the district's Green Diesel Engine Repair program. The program is held in partnership with American River College, so students can start learning to work on green engines in high school and easily transition to college-level classes.

Giving students the tools to pursue careers in this growing industry has a big impact.

"This is where the industry is going," Jensen says. "The trucking industry is going there already with the fleets on the East Coast that have all-electric garbage trucks. ... I think that it's only going to get bigger and better."



# BIG THINGS COME FROM SMALL CLASS SIZES

Student-to-teacher ratio has an impact on academic achievement by Amanda Caraway



Photo by Roman Rykun

Twin Rivers Unified School District has made it a priority to have fewer students per class. In fact, the district’s average pupil-to-teacher ratio is 19 students per teacher — lower than Sacramento County and state averages.

“We are driven and deeply committed to improving educational outcomes for our students,” says Dr. Anne Zeman, Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership. “To help us accomplish this we allocated more funds to hire additional teachers so that the student-to-teacher ratio remains low, especially in the early grades. It is our goal that every student is reading at grade level by the time the student finishes third grade. Third grade is a critical year. It’s when students make the leap from learning to read to reading to learn.”

With smaller class sizes, the district should be seeing some encouraging results in student achievement.

“Already we have seen 26 percent growth since 2015 in the number of students who are proficient in reading in grades K-6,” says Zeman. “When class sizes are small, teachers can give students more individual attention and meet their needs more easily.”

Smaller class sizes not only help teachers meet the academic needs of students, they also help teachers meet the social and emotional needs of students as well.

“A teacher has tremendous potential to have a very positive impact on students, on students’ beliefs about themselves, and on students’ dreams and aspirations,” says Zeman. “We reduce class size in order to maximize that positive potential for such guiding and positive influences.”

**“When the class sizes are small, teachers can give students more individual attention and meet their needs more easily.”**

Anne Zeman, Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership

(Data is from Twin Rivers Assessment & Accountability Department)

## AVERAGE CLASS SIZE



| TK-Kindergarten | 2nd Grade | 6th Grade | Mathematics (7-12) | Science (7-12) |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| 21.37           | 23.16     | 26.85     | 25.05              | 25.66          |

Data is from Twin Rivers Assessment & Accountability Department.



Photo by Roman Rykun

# RISING TO THE TASK

## Students encouraged to challenge themselves

by Kate Gonzales

There are many ways to measure success in education. If participation is any indicator, Twin Rivers students have made strides in the last school year.

Each year, thousands of Twin Rivers students take tests that assess their progress in core subject areas. Students in grades three through eight and grade 11 take the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which measures competency in English language arts and math. While the spring testing results are not in yet, Twin Rivers' efforts to promote high levels of student achievement and college preparation are paying off.

More Twin Rivers seniors are graduating. The district saw graduation rates climb from about 75 percent in 2012-13 to 84.4 percent in 2015-16. Over the same period of time, there was a decrease in the dropout rate districtwide.

The 2015-16 school year also saw a jump in student enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

"That increase in participation in AP courses supports students in the rigor needed for success not only in high school but for college as well,"

says Dr. Sara Noguchi, Associate Superintendent of Innovation, Research & Design. She says the district made a targeted effort to increase high school AP enrollment by thoughtful planning of course schedules and offering more courses.

The district also saw a rise in students taking A-G courses, which are required for enrollment in the University of California and California State University systems.

"It is important for students to enroll in A-G courses because it provides students the opportunity to engage in academically challenging coursework," says Noguchi. "Developing these skills will support students in college and/or career after graduating from high school."

Another effort to encourage students to take the PSAT and SAT has paid off. While fewer than 700 students took the PSAT in the 2013-14 school year, just over 5,800 students took the PSAT last year, at no cost to families. The number of high school students who participated in the SAT went from 616 to 1,043 in the same time. To reduce barriers to students taking the admission exam for four-year public

universities, Twin Rivers also covered the cost for students wanting to take the SAT.

"Allowing our students the experience of taking the SAT increases their ability to increase their score on the college entrance exam thus increasing their chances of being accepted into the college or university of their choice," says Noguchi.

The results for the SBAC tests will not be available until fall, but Twin Rivers already has plans in place to continue to support academic growth. Twin Rivers teachers engage in ongoing professional development and training over summers and after-school hours. The test results provide the data that drives the focus of teacher training.

"We will look at the test results and identify areas of growth," Noguchi says. "We will then identify targeted professional development and resources to ensure our teachers have what they need to meet the needs of our students."



## YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

While students have been away on summer break, Twin Rivers crews have been hard at work improving facilities across the district.

### MISSION POSSIBLE 2017 PROJECTS

Twin Rivers applied for and received more than \$25 million in state grants to repair aging infrastructure. Combined with nearly \$17 million from the district's own budget, just over \$42 million in facilities improvements will be completed over a three-year period. Projects include:

- Upgraded HVAC systems
- ADA compliance remodeling
- Roofing at 11 sites
- New door card readers
- Clocks, bells and intercom system upgrades

### CAPITAL PROJECT INITIATIVES

In 2015, Twin Rivers identified \$2 billion in needed repairs and replacements through its Facilities Master Plan needs assessment. The plan prioritized projects in terms of safety, replacing aging facilities, constructing new buildings or systems, and long-term goals. Projects completed in 2017 include:

- Grant Union High School aquatics complex and walk-in refrigerator
- Highlands High School restroom building and retaining wall
- Rio Linda High School SCOE portable

# SHINY, NEW FACILITIES

## Summer renovations will make schools a better place to learn

by Anne Stokes

This fall, students and staff at Harmon Johnson Elementary School will finally be able to enjoy freshly made hot lunches. The school's kitchen, built in 1952, is in the midst of a \$2 million upgrade set to be completed over the summer.

"We've been living with packaged food that's delivered to us and then served to the kids, like hamburgers that come in plastic bags and heated. They're nutritious, but there's nothing like fresh food," says Principal David Nevarez. "That's a huge thing, not only for the kids, but the community, for the parents and for the staff."

At Twin Rivers, the average facility is over 63 years old. With those aging structures eventually comes the need for upgrades. Through district and state funding, Harmon Johnson Elementary is one of many Twin Rivers sites on the receiving end of a long list of renovations, including remodeled bathrooms and offices, painting, new concrete walkways and a new parking lot.

"Some of it is safety, ... some of it is ADA compliance, but it's really creating an environment that's more conducive to teaching and learning," says Nevarez. "It has a big impact psychologically ... They feel like they're being treated right, it's a welcoming place and that they're valued. And I'm speaking about students and staff."

**"It's really creating an environment that's more conducive to teaching and learning."**

David Nevarez  
Principal, Harmon Johnson Elementary School

Twin Rivers' Mission Possible initiative — which includes 27 projects slated for completion by 2019 — is made possible through a combination of state grants and funds from the district. Other renovations are funded solely through the district's Capital Project initiative, a result of Twin

Rivers' 2015 Facilities Master Plan needs assessment.

"One of our goals here at Twin Rivers is for all students to have a safe, clean and secure environment that creates opportunities for learning," says Kimbely Barnett, Executive Director of General Services. "By doing these modifications, that's the environment that we're creating for our students and our staff."

One of the renovations Nevarez is looking forward to the most is upgrading the campus' storm drain system. According to him, whenever it rains, it floods, leaving five or six inches of standing water pooling between wings for weeks at a time.

"It had nowhere to go. Now all of that will drain out and we can put in grass, put in plants, put in trees," he says. "This will be a significant change from where we've been ... this will make the school look completely different."



Harmon Johnson Elementary School Principal David Nevarez shows one of the facility improvements at his school — an upgrade to the kitchen that will make it possible for hot food to be made on-site.  
Photo by Anne Stokes



Resource Officer Tim Kiesling with the Twin Rivers Unified School District Police Department directs traffic and keeps students safe as they cross the street.  
Photo by Roman Rykun

## BACK-TO-SCHOOL SAFETY TIPS

Everyone can help Twin Rivers students stay safe! Review these safety tips and share them with your student.

### FOR DRIVERS

- Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks
- Avoid distracted driving, including talking or texting on your phone
- Use car seats and seat belts
- Look both ways at intersections and driveways, even if you're turning onto a one-way street
- Reduce speeds near a school to 25 mph

### FOR STUDENTS

- Identify safe routes for walking and biking
- Pay attention! Avoid wearing headphones or looking down at your phone
- If you're biking or boarding, wear a helmet and go with the flow of traffic
- Use the buddy system
- Follow pedestrian rules — use sidewalks, crosswalks and don't jaywalk
- Check in with your family when you arrive at your after-school destination

# BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES

## Outreach and safety go hand-in-hand

by Kate Gonzales

The people who work to keep Twin Rivers students safe each day know their job is about more than preventing bad things from happening. To promote school safety, they take an active role in building community.

David Lugo, Interim Chief of Police for Twin Rivers Unified School District Police Department, says it's essential for officers to be accessible to students, staff and parents.

The department employs 18 full-time officers, with nine assigned to specific schools. Each of the district's high schools and continuation schools and one middle school have a designated school resource officer on campus daily. He says this presence not only allows them to be proactive in addressing threats to student safety, it also helps them build relationships on campus.

"Not everything is always a law enforcement issue, so our officers are resources," he says. "Our primary mission is to provide a safe teaching and learning

environment for our students and staff. So what can we do to help everyone?"

The officers are familiar with various social services, so they can help Twin Rivers families access CalFresh benefits and other assistance and resources. They form connections with families, even lending a helping hand to kids in need.

**"Officers are getting to know these students. ... They have this direct relationship."**

David Lugo  
Interim Chief of Police, Twin Rivers USD

"Officers are getting to know these students," Lugo says. "They have this direct relationship. So when a student needed cleats for football, one of our officers took up a pool ... so he could go out and purchase the student a pair of cleats."

That kind of personal commitment to students is not uncommon.

Officers also visit classrooms. One officer participates in an after-school tutoring program; another mentors and counsels students after school. They present to parent groups and make themselves available to anyone with an interest in school safety.

The district continues to develop tools to promote safety. Over summer break, the newly formed District Safety Task Force held its first meeting to discuss school site safety. The task force includes community members/partners, and school district staff committed to peaceful school environments.

"Most of our students come to school every day, they feel safe, they interact with friends and staff members on campus, and safety isn't something that weighs on their shoulders," he says. "We really are here for our students, staff and parents."



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916-566-1600

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



List of  
schools



District news



Parent  
resources

## CONNECT WITH US!

Back-to-school is a time to make new friends. Add Twin Rivers Unified School District to your social circle by following and liking the district on social media. Stay in-the-know about events, important dates, and the great things happening in the district.



Twitter:  
[@TRUSDschools](https://twitter.com/TRUSDschools)



Facebook:  
[facebook.com/twinriversusd](https://facebook.com/twinriversusd)

Also make sure to **connect with your child's school** on social media for even more important updates. Start the year off right and stay connected — your involvement means your child does better in school!

# SCHOOL STARTS TUESDAY, AUGUST 8!



## 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR

KEEP TRACK OF ALL  
IMPORTANT TWIN  
RIVERS DATES AT:

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

### AUGUST 2017

8/8 First day of school

### SEPTEMBER 2017

9/4 Labor Day

### OCTOBER 2017

10/31 Professional  
Development Day  
(no school)

### NOVEMBER 2017

11/10 Veterans Day  
(observance)

11/16 -11/17 Parent/Teacher  
Conference Days (TK-6)  
(no school)

11/20-11/24 Thanksgiving Break

### DECEMBER 2017

12/19-12/20 Finals/Minimum Day  
(secondary only)

12/21-1/5 Winter Break

### JANUARY 2018

1/15 Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Day

1/26 Professional  
Development Day  
(no school)

### FEBRUARY 2018

2/16 Presidents Day

2/19 Presidents Day

### MARCH 2018

3/16 No school

3/26-4/2 Spring Break

### MAY 2018

5/28 Memorial Day

5/31 Minimum Day  
(secondary only)

### JUNE 2018

6/1 Last Day of School  
(minimum day)