

WE ARE **TR!**



FIELD TRIP!

Find out what happens when students are engaged *outside* the classroom

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All you need
to know about
testing

TwinRivers
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



What extracurricular activities do you do?



"I'm the secretary of Hmong Club. We're always doing something interesting for activities, so everyone gets into it."

Kiltha Chang
8th grade
Martin Luther King, Jr. Technology Academy



"I'm in Leadership. We plan out festivals, family nights and we try our best to make our school better for everyone around us."

Tony Le
7th grade
Pioneer Elementary School



"I go to ASES (After School Education and Safety) ... There's reading groups, so that helps you be more advanced in your reading."

Olson Jackson
6th grade
Sierra View Elementary School



"I'm the secretary in the Feminist Club. It's not like we're bashing on guys, it's more like we're trying to show that as a female we're just as strong and can do what guys can do."

Jalya Patton
12th grade
Creative Connections Arts Academy



"Robotics. It's really hands-on. You get to code, you get to play with the robot, you get to mess with it — it's really fun. I do it because it gets my brain working."

Aaron Laster
7th grade
Rio Linda Preparatory Academy



CELEBRATING FACULTY AND STAFF

We all play a role in student success

One of the things that sets Twin Rivers Unified School District apart from other districts is our incredible faculty and staff. In this publication, we honor six individuals who serve as a model of what makes Twin Rivers so great. This is just a small sample of our amazing employees who all go above and beyond to support student learning.

Every Twin Rivers employee understands that the quality of his or her performance directly impacts students throughout the district. I see this with our facilities staff who complete work orders in a timely manner, our bus drivers who arrive on time and greet students with a smile, and our office staff who act more like caring guardians. Their dedication is evident in their willingness to sacrifice their free time to attend professional development trainings in the evenings and over the weekend.

When I compare my time at Twin Rivers with the time I have spent at other districts, the difference is clear. We work under the principle of "stronger together," and that includes parents and community members as well as students and staff. We all play a role in student

success! That's why we have created programs to support parents and provide resources for them as well. A great example is Parent University. Under the direction of Parent and Community Involvement Coordinator Yolanda Mayoral Falkenberg, the program is based on

the understanding that academic achievement depends on parent involvement as much as what students learn in the classroom.

Most importantly, our employees understand that we have an impact on our students that goes well beyond their time at Twin Rivers. We want to ensure that our students are successful even after they

leave us. It's our responsibility to give them the tools that they need to compete in the world.

"Every Twin Rivers employee understands that the quality of his or her performance directly impacts students throughout the district."



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

PROFESSIONALS WITH PASSION



Star Staff

Meet 6 TRUSD staff members who are raising the bar for student achievement

by Anne Stokes



Erika Saber
Accounting Clerk Senior,
Twin Rivers Transportation
Services

Favorite movie: "Love & Basketball"
Favorite book: "The Keatyn Chronicles"
by Jillian Dodd
Favorite food: Mexican
Favorite artist: Nick Jonas or
Lady Gaga
Favorite subject in school: History
Favorite activities outside of work:
Spending time with her 4-year-old son



Erika Saber knows what it takes to get things moving. For the past five and a half years, she's worked in Twin Rivers Unified School District's Transportation Services as both an accounting clerk and a relief bus driver. She says she enjoys the mix of office and field work.

"I like it in this department because there's so many different tasks that you can do to mix up your work day," she says.

With nearly 60 schools to serve — both within and outside of Twin Rivers Unified School District — reliable transportation is critical to students' education.

"Transportation is very important, especially in this district because we transport so many students," she says. "Without us, there would be so many

"Transportation is very important ... without us, there would be so many kids that wouldn't get to school."

Erika Saber
Accounting Clerk Senior,
Twin Rivers Transportation Services

kids that wouldn't get to school. In addition, we do so many field trips, so our kids are very lucky that they get to

have all these extra opportunities to go outside the classroom and do hands-on learning."

Saber's most memorable moment, however, happened after school hours when she helped drive a bus to deliver gifts for the Twin Rivers Spreads Holiday Cheer gift drive in December.

"That was probably the most memorable because it was just so gratifying to see the kids smile and so happy to see that we cared and that they were going to get something for Christmas," she says.



Brian Bowman
School Resource Officer, Twin
Rivers Unified School District
Police Department

Favorite TV show: CrossFit Games
Favorite book: "Harry Potter"
Favorite restaurant: Sushi (Mikuni)
Favorite music or artist: Country
Favorite subject in school: Biology
Favorite activities outside of work:
Cross training, snowboarding, the outdoors



For the past 10 years, School Resource Officer Brian Bowman has been keeping Twin Rivers students safe. As the school resource officer for several elementary, junior and high school sites, his job is more than maintaining order and upholding the law. He's there to support staff and students in whatever way they need and in doing so, hopefully humanize the face of law enforcement.

"It's my goal to make sure they see me as a positive influence rather than a negative influence."

Brian Bowman
School Resource Officer,
Twin Rivers Unified School District Police Department

"We wear so many roles in this position: One moment we can be a mentor, another moment we're a counselor, we can be a therapist. So we have to constantly be changing

our dynamic when we address certain students," he says. "It's my goal to make sure they see me as a positive influence rather than a negative influence. I want to be able to change their mindset."

Bowman recounts recently running into a former student who had considered dropping out of school in the hopes of finding a job to financially help his family. Bowman had encouraged him to stay and graduate, explaining how much more challenging life would be without a diploma.

"He said, 'I'm so glad you told me to stay and get my diploma. Now I've got a job and I'm helping my mom pay rent and I'm helping my sister.' He was really happy about that."

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Karlene Bittler
Counselor,
Grant Union High School

Favorite TV shows: "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" and "The Good Place"

Favorite book:
"The Time Traveler's Wife"

Favorite restaurant: Taste of Tuscany in Antelope

Favorite music: Alternative-type music ("the Beastie Boys are the best!")

Favorite subject in school: Science

Favorite activities outside of work:
Running (training for first half marathon in March)



As one of several counselors at Grant Union High School, Karlene Bittler is responsible for students' academic success, personal emotional support and career planning for the future. She says she spends a lot of time doing all three.

"I really like working with students and helping them achieve their goals. It's really satisfying when a student ... comes to you for help and you are able to get them to a place where they're able to see the path forward," she says. "They're the ones doing the work, you're just the person shining the light on the solution."

"I really like working with students and helping them achieve their goals."

Karlene Bittler
Counselor, Grant Union High School

For 14 years, Bittler has helped guide students in and out of the classroom. Before coming to Grant seven years ago, she taught at Rio Tierra Junior High School. While she loved being in the classroom, she found her true passion working one-on-one with students and made the jump from teacher to school counselor. Today, she is one of only eight National Board Certified School Counselors in California, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Bittler is the product of three Twin Rivers schools: She attended Orchard Elementary, the former Rio Linda Junior High and Rio Linda High School. After graduation, she went to college in Utah, studied abroad and was a student teacher in Samoa.

"After my different travels, I really felt I wanted to be back home," she says. "I wanted to be back with the people I grew up with and be here in this area."



Marianne McMurray
Administrative
Secretary, Senior

Favorite TV show: "Longmire"

Favorite book: "Small Great Things" by Jodi Picoult

Favorite food: Italian

Favorite music: Classic rock from the '70s

Favorite subject in school: English

Favorite activities outside of work:
Book club and crocheting



Ask any student or parent and they'll tell you: Anything you need to know can be learned by asking the school secretary. Forgot your library book and need to call home? Whose jacket is this? What forms do you need for the next field trip? Ask Marianne McMurray.

Since 1988, McMurray has served Twin Rivers students, staff and administrators as a secretary. After 20 years working at a school site, she made the move to the district office where she is now Administrative Secretary, Senior, supporting elementary principals and school secretaries with whatever needs they may have.

"I was ready for a change and I wanted to be able to learn more about how the district operates and set up a new challenge for myself," she says. "I love this job. I work with really smart, hard-working, caring people here whose focus is on quality education, and I feel honored to be part of that team, to make sure we can really provide the best education around for the kids in our district."

McMurray says that it's important for educators, administrators and

"I work with really smart, hard-working, caring people here whose focus is on quality education."

Marianne McMurray
Administrative Secretary, Senior

families to know that the district is there to support them.

"I think that pretty much everyone without fail feels that way, that we're here to serve them. I like the way we work together to achieve that," she says. "I enjoy working here because I feel like I'm contributing as part of a team supporting our schools."



Russell Selken

*Executive Director of
Information and Educational
Technology Services*

Favorite TV show: "The Big Bang Theory"

Favorite book:
"Five Dysfunctions of a Team"

Favorite food: Mexican

Favorite music: Hip hop

Favorite subject in school: Math

Favorite activities outside of work:
Family time (taking vacations, going on hikes, going to the snow)



At Twin Rivers Unified School District, students have the power of technology at their fingertips. And it's Russell Selken's job to make sure things work seamlessly.

"We try to make technology transparent and just work," he says. "And not just average technology, 21st century technology that engages the student."

Selken, who has served as Executive Director of Information and Educational Technology Services for a little over a year and a half, says that coming to work for the district has been a breath of fresh air because of the positive, can-do attitude that pervades Twin Rivers culture.

"One thing that I've noticed is there's a very positive professional environment," he says. "People are willing to work with you through issues. Between coordinating our services with facilities, there's always some kind of issue we have to get through and I think it's been a positive

team environment with everyone."

One of the successful collaborations that exemplifies such professionalism was Keema High School's complete transition from traditional textbooks to online educational resources.

"The entire Keema staff was amazing. They were in the process of moving to a new site and worked hard to train and prepare to be the first school — not only in Twin Rivers, but in Sacramento County — to be 100 percent online — no textbooks," he says. "Everyone had a positive attitude. This was a huge paradigm shift for them."

Selken says that facilitating that transition was a very rewarding experience.

"It's all about supporting our students and teachers and providing the best educational experience leading the 21st century classroom," he says. "Always continuous improvement."

"It's all about supporting our students and teachers."

Russell Selken
*Executive Director of Information and
Educational Technology Services*



Jodi Jugo

*Special Education Teacher,
Foothill Oaks Elementary
School*

Favorite TV show: "The Big Bang Theory"

Favorite book: Harry Potter or
"Lord of the Rings"

Favorite restaurant: High Steaks
Steakhouse at Thunder Valley

Favorite music: R&B, old-school music

Favorite subject in school: Math

Favorite activities outside of work:
Working out or tennis



Jodi Jugo characterizes her job as challenging but extremely rewarding. A Special Education Teacher at Foothill Oaks Elementary School, she works with first and second-grade students on the autism spectrum.

"Working with the students and really getting to see them grow ... is a very rewarding job."

Jodi Jugo
*Special Education Teacher,
Foothill Oaks Elementary School*

"Working with the students and really getting to see them grow — learning skills and doing something more than they were doing before — is a very rewarding job," she says.

Jugo says much of what she teaches focuses on students' individual education goals, but she also tries to

bridge the gap between those special education goals and general education standards.

"We're really trying to get them all the skills that any first- or second-grader would be learning," she says.

Jugo has been in the classroom for the past 11 years. She started at Rio Linda Union School District and stayed when the district joined with others to become Twin Rivers Unified School District. She says that one of the keys to success in the classroom is collaboration between educators, administrators and service providers like speech and occupational therapists.

"This isn't a one-person job. When I attribute any successes in the classroom, it's to my team because we really are a whole," she says. "I couldn't do it by myself, they couldn't do it by themselves ... it's about teamwork."



ENGAGEMENT IMPACTS PERFORMANCE

Engaged students are enthusiastic about learning by Amanda Caraway and Anne Stokes

Students at Smythe Academy visited the Aerospace Museum of California in February, where they were able to experience working versions of machines designed by Leonardo da Vinci.
Photo by Anne Stokes



It only took a 15-minute bus ride to transport Alyssa Qualls' third-graders back to the 15th century.

Their destination was the Aerospace Museum of California, where the Smythe Academy students got the chance to experience working versions of machines designed by Renaissance inventor Leonardo da Vinci.

Students manipulated pulleys and turned cranks. "I really liked that you were actually able to move the things and touch them and not just look at them," says 8-year-old Sariah Amavisca, who appreciated the hands-on displays.

"It definitely brings it to life for the kids," Qualls says. "Every field trip we take should be some form of enrichment to guide our students into thinking more creatively and realizing things that they can do."

Twin Rivers recognizes that student engagement can have a direct impact on academic performance. That's why district leadership has hired a student activities director for all middle and high schools. A director of co-curricular activities oversees engagement programs in elementary and K-8 schools. All work together to ensure that field trips, clubs and extracurricular activities keep students excited about learning.

"Student engagement dips between elementary and secondary school," says Laura Hanusek, Student Activities Director at Rio Linda High School, pointing to the importance of continuing engagement efforts with older students.

"It definitely brings it to life for the kids."

Alyssa Qualls
Teacher, Smythe Academy

Student engagement affects attendance, interest, enthusiasm and participation in learning. She says a positive attitude among students and staff results in more graduates and improved behavior across the board.

Heather Coburn, Student Activities Director at Norwood Junior High agrees. "Not only can engagement help students feel more connected to the school, these programs help bring diverse students together."

The school offers many different clubs and activities to appeal to a wide variety of interests. Coburn has also created a series of quarterly incentive trips to reward academic achievement and good behavior.

"Students who have improved their GPAs and attendance, or joined the honor roll, get to do things like go to the movies or eat at a favorite local pizza place," she says.

School activities directors also manage the student leadership program. Tenth-grader Ethan Wilson got involved in the student leadership program at Rio Linda High School on the recommendation of a friend.

"I wanted to help make a difference, and not just attend the events, but actually help plan them," he says. "I like helping people feel happier to be at school and give them more options to be involved. I want students to say, 'I get to go to school and it will be fun,' rather than, 'I have to go.'"

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Twin Rivers Unified School District's Student Engagement Department prides itself on developing engaging programs that are educational, provide good academic incentives and appeal to a diverse student body. It's important to offer programs that help students feel invested in their studies and connected to the school community. Activities include:

- **Field trips** to places like The Aerospace Museum of California, California State Capitol, Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, a planetarium and an outdoor learning science camp
- **School rallies, dances, lunch-time activities, and unique events** like Sport-o-Rama, where students play games and perform skits for points — with the winning class getting a trophy
- **Athletics, student leadership programs and clubs**, where students can meet others with similar interests, such as drama, LEGO and robotics

ASSESSMENTS GAUGE SUCCESS

Help your kids prepare to excel throughout the year

by Amanda Caraway



News & Happenings

Assessments are one of the most important ways to gauge success for students, teachers and schools. Tests measure growth and help teachers compare results from year to year.

"If there's an area [where] students are doing poor across the board, we can make improvements to how we teach that standard," says Farah Joy, Teacher at Foothill Ranch Middle School.

Scores help schools measure faculty efficacy and let administrators know if schools are meeting standards. If scores are low at a certain school, the district can take steps to help.

"Test scores are like a school's report card," says Randy Holcomb, Principal at Foothill Ranch Middle School. "Testing is a matter of school pride and we aim to show growth from year to year."

Twin Rivers has switched from California State Standard testing to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Grades three through eight and 11 take tests for English Language Arts and math, with some pilot science testing.

"The assessments focus more on the application of skills than on memorization, and each question assesses several standards," says Dr. Lori Grace, Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership at Twin Rivers. "It's no longer a one-size-fits-all approach. The test is tailored to each student."

There is also a shift to computerized testing, which provides new challenges and requires students to learn technology skills. Programs can alter test questions based on the student's responses and can accommodate different learning abilities. For example, if a student struggles with reading, they can use headphones and hear the questions read aloud.

"The answers are no longer black and white, multiple choice," says Joy. "Students need to explain their answers and provide evidence."

Because the questions build on one another, if a student gets one question wrong, they will miss the next few."

Because these tests are so important, teachers prep students throughout the year. Parents can help prepare their kids by making sure they get enough sleep, eat breakfast and understand the tests are important. Joy recommends parents engage with

kids throughout the year through conversations so students can verbalize ideas and tell you what they're learning. Grace suggests encouraging kids to do practice tests online.

"Encourage a positive attitude and celebrate improvements," says Holcomb. "Ask how it went, where they struggled and how you can help."

Find practice tests online at www.smarterbalanced.org.

"Test scores are like a school's report card."

Randy Holcomb
Principal at Foothill Ranch Middle School

TESTING TIPS

With spring assessments just around the corner, you may be wondering how you can help your child prepare to do their best.

- **Discuss the tests** with your child — make sure he or she is not scared or anxious.
- With older children, explain that the tests were created to help him or her **better prepare for college and career**.
- Explain to your child that the tests will be **more challenging for them**, especially the first few times they take them.
- Tell your child that you and his/her teacher have high expectations and that you are both **there to help them every step of the way**.
- Make sure your child gets a **good night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast** before testing.
- **Review test results** with your child, bringing your child's teacher into the discussion as necessary.
- Please **check with your child's principal for testing dates**.
The testing window is:
April 17-28, grade 11;
April 17- May 19, grades 3-8.



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

Visit www.twinriversusd.org for:



List of
schools



District news



Parent
resources

GET READY FOR **SPRING TESTING!**

Every school in Twin Rivers is gearing up for the Smarter Balanced testing window — mid-April through mid-May.

Testing dates may vary from school to school, so be sure to check with your child's teacher or the school office if you're unsure about the specifics.

The Smarter Balanced tests are an important indicator of students' preparedness for current college and career demands. Being at school every day, and on time, must be a priority. Students need to know that being in school is their "job."

The Smarter Balanced assessments, for students in grades three through eight and grade 11, are rigorous computer-based tests that measure student knowledge of California's English Language Arts/literacy and mathematics standards.

Practice tests are available online at
www.smarterbalanced.org

2017 CALENDAR

APRIL 2017

4/10-4/14

Spring Break

MAY 2017

5/29

Memorial Day

5/31-6/1

Second semester final exams/
minimum day (high school)

6/1

Last day of school/minimum day/
end of grading period

KEEP TRACK OF ALL IMPORTANT
TWIN RIVERS DATES AT:

www.twinriversusd.org/calendar