At the TRUSD Board meeting on February 16, 2010 Superintendent Frank Porter gave recommendations for the proposed realignment of Instructional Programs and Consolidation of Schools in the Twin Rivers Unified School District. The recommendations were as follows:

- Close at least four schools in the TRUSD by June 30, 2011 and at least two additional school by June 30, 2012.
- Realignment of Instructional Programs to improve academic achievement by creating K through 8th grade programs in each of the four neighborhood networks Highlands, Foothill, Grant and Rio Linda no later than June 30, 2013. A neighborhood Network Task Force will be created in each of the four neighborhoods to review all area K through 8th grade programs, data and research. The outcome of this review will be to plan the creation of K-8 schools and to develop an initial implementation that will consolidate at least one school in each area by 2011-2012. The task force will deliver preliminary proposals to realign and consolidate schools by March 15, 2010. Partial implementation is planned in the 2010-11 school year.
- Highlands Academy of Arts and Design will return to the name “Highlands High School” and additional specialized instructional programs will be offered.
- Expanding the Creative Connections Arts Academy Charter School (2010-2015) to include an additional site (former Don Julio Jr. High School) and expand its curriculum through the 12th grade.
- Relocating the Keema Independent Study program from its current location to another location by June 30, 2011.
- A three year pilot program transferring 6th grade students and programs from Strauch Elementary School to the Rio Tierra Jr. High School beginning with the 2010-11 school year.
- Designating the Dos Rios School as a site for current and future anticipated residential development
- A three year pilot program transferring 6th grade students and programs from Regency Park Elementary School to the Norwood Jr. High School beginning with the 2010-11 school year
- In the Rio Linda Neighborhood Network creating and phasing in the implementation of a K-8 network of schools by June 30, 2012 and to include an expanded K-8 campus (2011-12) housed between the Dry Creek Elementary School and Rio Linda Jr. High School.
- In 2010-11 8th grade students will remain at Rio Linda Jr. High School and operate on an instructional schedule matching the Rio Linda High School
- Rio Linda High will phase in additional specialized instructional offerings

The TRUSD School Board voted to approve these recommendations.

Ann Murray
TRUE Communications
President’s Message

February 11, 2010

As with proposed school closures and grade configurations, things can change rapidly. The lack of courage on the part of the District's administration has led us to the March 2 lay-off issue. There are facts and there is fiction on this issue.

• It is a fact that Twin Rivers has declining enrollment with a projected decrease of 622 students in 2010-2011. This equals to about 22 teachers.
• It is a fact that Twin Rivers faces a 3 to 6 mil dollar deficit in 2010-2011. Certificated employees account for about 45% of the budget.
• It is fiction that there is any kind of agreement between the Union and the District.
• It is fiction that, as of today’s date, the District has a plan to solve their problems.
• It is fiction that large class sizes, more furlough days and lay-offs are inevitable.

Here are the facts as I see them: Every school district in the state has financial problems. We can agree to nothing, and by the March 2nd School Board meeting (the only meeting scheduled before the March 15 deadline to communicate proposed lay-offs), and watch 40 to 140 layoffs happen. Immediately after the layoffs are announced, we can join two civic groups who will sue the Twin Rivers School District to make them have a November 2010 Board election. We can work to replace the Board members, and then they can replace the District administration.

An alternative would be to gather financial data, including cost savings for 1.5 more furlough days, which is about 1.2 million dollars, and begin to bargain. Class sizes also come into play. Staffing numbers like 25 students in Kindergarten, 28 in grades 1-3, 31 in grades 4-7 and 33 in grades 8-12, could save money.

There is an unusual factor that has come into play this year. The re-configuration of K-7 has the potential to affect credentialing and layoffs. The way seventh grade is set up, departmentalized vs. self-containing, will affect layoffs. Human Resources is seeking to “buy time” by laying off teachers until it comes up with a plan. However, TRUE feels that laying off teachers on March 2 to “buy time” until May 15th, is unethical and illegal.

TRUE also believes the School Board is attempting to avoid all teacher layoffs. We are lobbying them hard to work on Plan B or C. Just know that if the plan on March 2 is not “palatable” to TRUE’s membership, we will declare a crisis and go to war with this District.

John Ennis
TRUE President

Elections Update

Two different ballots were sent out this month:

1.)- The first election is for the NEA-RA State Delegates and is on a Scantron ballot. For this election it is critical that members sign the CTA sign-in sheet prior to receiving the ballot, for the ballot count must match the sign-in sheet or all ballots for the site will be thrown out. Please do not fold the Scantrons. The Scantron ballots must be returned to the TRUE office by 5:00 pm, March 12, 2010, to be verified before delivery to CTA. (Declaration of candidacy forms for the election of TRUE (local) NEA-RA seats will be out soon.)

2.)- The second election is for TRUE Representatives to the CTA State Council. Please vote for two candidates and use the two-envelope system for this ballot. No need to sign a sign-in sheet. Ballots must be returned to the TRUE office by 5:00 pm, Friday, March 12, 2010 at the latest.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Elections Chair
At a recent CTA conference, staff members briefed attendees on the latest news concerning the onerous Race to the Top program put forward by the Obama Administration. The federal government will allocate approximately $4.5 billion to some states and Local Education Agencies (LEAs). California could get between $300-700 million, less than 2% of the California education program. In effect, this amounts to less than $50 per student to the districts “lucky enough” to qualify for one of the competitive grants. Fifty percent of the amount would be sent directly to the local districts. The money will be allocated based on Title I numbers but the funds may be unrestricted once it is received. RTTT funding, which is designed to improve student achievement, pales in comparison to the successful QEIA program. QEIA funding amounts to about $1000 per student. Amazingly California is pulling out all the stops to win funds which play such a small part of the education financing. Nevertheless, LEAs are being asked to make major changes in work conditions even though the California application is weak and probably barely competitive. California’s competitiveness for receiving a grant could be fatally wounded because California already fails to commit funds to properly fund education. In order to qualify for the federal funds, each state and the LEAs must commit to major changes in assessment and testing, evaluation procedures, and the use of data to reward “effective” teachers. The state must sign the Memorandum of Understanding required for the application. It must agree to pursue the changes demands by the Scope of Work addendum. Despite these considerations, some districts and the state seem determined to seek one-time funds no matter what the cost in program disruptions and changes. The Scope of Work requires changes in standards and assessments. Fortunately for California, our standards are more rigorous than those of other states. Nevertheless, some changes may be mandated, slowing down current progress towards improvements based on California’s decade-long efforts to bring about standards-based instruction. CTA supports the requirement for collecting data to the extent the data is used to revise and reinforce instruction. Teachers have long used data collection in their classroom and at the site level to guide instructional change. However, CTA strongly opposes the use of a single test score to determine teacher effectiveness. CTA finds particularly onerous the efforts of some to use data to tie salary and job security to the nebulous concept of “student achievement.” No one has yet devised a system of measuring student achievement that’s fair and unbiased. The distribution of classes across a district or at an individual site magnifies the unfairness of most placement programs. One school might have a GATE program that serves its students and those of a nearby school causing a significant difference in student profile at schools located within blocks of each other. How fair is this to the teachers at the school that is programmed to lose its best students. Likewise, the differences in teacher assignments at a given site make the use of test scores an inappropriate item for evaluating individual teachers. Some teachers may have mostly college preparation students while others labor with “at risk” students in remediation classes. Additionally, the budgeting realities of districts and sites make it difficult to compare students statewide. How can administrators judge the performance of teachers whom they have failed to properly support? Rarely are teachers at poor performing schools provided the supplies, resources, and parental and social support necessary to focus student efforts towards academic achievement. Yet, some leaders place their hopes on a system that uses a “growth model” which is based on the concept of the “value added” by the teacher. Some believe that an “effective teacher” helps students move one grade level in achievement. A “highly effective teacher” would assist students in making a 1.5 grade level improvement in achievement. Unfortunately there is no practical way to make even this system really fair, reliable, and valid. Rarely is student placement really random. In some schools students can choose their teacher. Parents frequently request placements to avoid teachers who might demand better performance of their children. Likewise, some administrators engage in a strategy of placing successful students in the

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“No Confidence” at Foothill High School

On January 14th the certificated staff administered a vote of no confidence concerning Will Brown, the acting Principal of Foothill High School. There was 100% participation among the teachers. The outcome did not bode well for Mr. Brown. The outcome was 74% “no confidence” and 24% “confidence,” with 2 votes abstaining. The voting also demonstrated a strong voice of unity among the certificated staff.

The outcome had shocking effect on Foothill’s administration, who continues to think it was just a popularity vote. The vote is actually a response to the overall lack of leadership at FHS. There was a prompt response to the vote. The administration convinced the classified staff to vote as well, who complied knowing some would be losing jobs at the end of the school year. The administration was hoping that the counter-vote would offset the certificated vote. Unfortunately, the unofficial results of the classified vote have the administration coming up short again.

Administrators at FHS see themselves as “targets of discontent” when, in fact, Foothill High School has become a dysfunctional work environment. With no clear communication skills, administrative decision making, and effective leadership skills being demonstrated by Will Brown, the staff felt that they had no choice but to vote to send a message to the district office. It has been noted that additional administration coaching has been observed on the site.

Unions (like TRUE) have found the “no confidence” vote to be one of the most powerful and effective political tools at their disposal. Using this means to apply political pressure to influence policy, decision-making, and/or removal of the administration. Unions have often taken “no confidence” votes for the specific purpose of requesting that the administration be removed from office because of his or her lack of leadership at the school site.

This is a magnificent example of how our unity can prevail, even in times of economic turmoil and crisis.

Submitted by a
Foothill H.S. Educator

Obama Administration Likely to Seek Sweeping Change in NCLB

While the Obama administration has not yet unveiled a detailed plan for a reauthorizing ESEA, the administration’s budget request offers some insights. According to news stories in the Washington Post, the New York Times, Ed Week’s Politics K-12 blog, and other media outlets, we can expect big changes if the administration gets its way on ESEA reauthorization. Among the likely changes:

• Ending Adequate Yearly Progress reports. The administration is looking at more effective ways to judge progress being made by students and schools.

• Wiping out the 2014 deadline (embedded in NCLB) by which all students are required to be proficient in math and reading.

• Making changes in how schools are funded, so that a portion of federal dollars would be awarded based on academic progress or other goals, rather than by formulas that apportion money to districts based on student population.

Even with these potentially sweeping changes, ED officials are making it clear they remain committed to closing achievement gaps and improving teacher quality. The way officials have characterized the administration’s goal: all students must leave high school “college or career ready.”

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classes of teachers they like and the more difficult students in the rooms of teachers that are not “administrator pets.” Similarly, how fair is it to base salary and job security on a program where class sizes at the same site and in the same department can vary by thirty-to-fifty percent or more.

How fair is it to use a single test score when the social conditions vary dramatically across the academic landscape. California long ago recognized the importance of these factors when it created the “similar schools” comparison as part of the API system. Now under RTTT, these factors will be discounted or ignored. CTA believes that any model used to evaluate individual teachers should reflect the number of days each student is in attendance and the number of days the teacher had the student. It is patently unfair to hold a teacher accountable for the performance of a student who is assigned to his/her class three weeks after the academic year starts, misses school frequently while attending the school, and then drops out for a month or more before returning to the classroom weeks before the school administers its California Standards Tests.

The pity associated with the current RTTT plan is that California already has done much to improve student performance. The California Standards of the Teaching Profession, the content standards, and the PAR program have already been adopted as state programs designed to improve student achievement. If districts had not raided the Peer Assistance and Review funds, experienced teachers could have received the extra assistance needed to improve their instructional performance. Instead of a positive emphasis on improvement, RTTT moves towards a program designed to punish teachers for performance that they have only a limited input to affect.

Because of the changes RTTT requires in the state Education Code, the use of unfair and unproven accountability, the implementation of pseudo-merit pay, and the elimination of seniority as a factor in assignments and layoffs, RTTT has only lukewarm support nationwide. Only 28 state affiliates of NEA are supporting RTTT and another five are unsure. Four state affiliates, including California oppose the current program. In California, only 449 California districts and 308 county offices have signed the MOU sent forward by the Schwarzenegger administration. This amounts to slightly more than 42% of California’s LEAs. For the one-time influx of a few dollars, these LEAs are moving down the road towards massive overhaul in their work conditions and employment rights. Most districts are not willing to rush through a program that does little to provide meaningful improvement in instruction but changes the work environment for the employees with no promise of future funding. Union leaders need to ensure that all pertinent matters are resolved through effective negotiation without giving up rights that have little to do with the desire to improve education. Districts must commit to fair evaluation systems and adequate support before using data to punish teachers.

Article prepared by Chuck Denonn, Director-at-Large of the TRUE Executive Board, TRUE Representative at the CTA State Council, and District 12 NEA Resolutions Committee member, who is solely responsible for the accuracy of the information. For questions or comments, please send an e-mail to: cdenonn@peoplepc.com

Continued from page 3 - The Race to Torment Teachers

Continued from page 4 - Obama Administration Likely to Seek Sweeping Changes in NCLB

As we have mentioned numerous times in this newsletter, the proposal for ESEA reauthorization is expected to be influenced by the current Race to The Top (RTTT) initiative, which is part of the administration’s economic recovery program. So the administration may also continue pressing to tie teacher evaluations to student’s federally mandated standardized test scores and to use competitive grants more often to award federal education dollars.

In addition to the substantive changes, Secretary Duncan has made it clear that the once popular “No Child Left Behind” moniker is dead. Nearly everyone agrees that it’s become a symbol of federal initiatives gone horribly wrong.

Article taken from the NEA ESEA/NCLB Newsletter
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### Calendar of Events

- February 26-28...CTA Urban Issues Conference
- March 02...TRUSD School Board Meeting, Aero Haven
- March 04...Day of Action: “Start the Day for Students”
- March 05...CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference
- March 08...Newsletter Articles Due
- March 09...TRUE Executive Board Meeting
- March 10...Site Rep Training @ CTA
- March 12...Ballots Due @ TRUE
- March 23...Site Rep Council Meeting @ CTA
- March 26...CTA State Council @ Los Angeles
- March 29-April 02...Spring Break
- April 05...Furlough Day