

Foundation Committee Forming

By Neil Hufnagel, Superintendent

As we continue to seek additional ways to support a quality educational program for our students, an interest has emerged among the board of education, some staff, and several community members to create a Fowler Public Schools Education Foundation. This foundation would create and manage an investment fund which would generate financial support for educational programs in our school district.

How we raise money for the foundation, how that money would be invested and managed, and what projects or programs would be funded by the foundation are all yet to be determined. At this time, I am seeking interested committee members who would like to help us answer these questions and guide the process of creating the foundation. I already have a list of 4 or 5 individuals who have expressed an interest in participating, so any new volunteers do not need to be concerned that they would have to bear too much of the work load themselves. It is my plan to hold an informational meeting in April with those interested, establish a formal committee, and begin the legal process of creating the foundation as a non-profit entity in support of Fowler Public Schools. I believe we have a great opportunity to kick off some foundation activities in conjunction with the Fowler High School 50th Anniversary celebration we are planning for October of this year.

If you might be interested in assisting in the creation of a Fowler Public School Education Foundation, please contact me by Monday, April 6th if at all possible. While we will certainly continue to welcome interested individuals after that time, I will work with those who have volunteered by then to schedule a meeting at a time that works well for them. Please contact me at 593-2250 or nhufnagel@fowlerschools.net to volunteer or get more information.

Keys to Student Success #9 and #10

By Neil Hufnagel, Superintendent

This is the final installment of the 10 Keys to Success at Fowler High School that I have been sharing throughout the school year. As we head into the last quarter of the school year, this might be a great time to revisit the list with your student. If the year has been successful to date, now would be a good time to recognize and reinforce the good habits your student has displayed, and the good grades that have resulted. If things have not gone so well, now might be a good time to review the “Keys” and set some goals for improvement before the end of the year. To see the entire list, access the Freshman Orientation PowerPoint on the High School Principal page of our website at www.fowlerschools.net.

Key #9 – Share Your Progress and Planner with Your Parents

Just as effective communication with teachers helps high achieving students stay on top of things, the same can be said of having an open channel of communication with their parents. Students who do well take advantage of the support their parents can offer in helping them keep track of their responsibilities and do their best on all work.

The Parent Connect information available to students as described in Success Tip #7 is also available to parents. Students are urged to share their progress with their parents, and parents can access the same Parent Connect information directly through login and password information provided at the beginning of each school year. By monitoring their student's Parent Connect progress, parents get a great overview of their student's overall performance and can often detect any declining trends as they begin to develop.

Students are also expected to take their planner home every day and are encouraged to share it with their parents. Instead of asking their student if they have homework, I urge parents to ask instead to see their student's planner. Quickly go through the assignments for the day to see what they have been doing and to verify any homework that needs to be completed. When that homework is finished, ask to see it to assure it is complete and check it off together in the planner. I suspect everyone will sleep a little better knowing that everything is finished and ready for the next day! While this may not be necessary for students who comfortably manage all of their school responsibilities, following this process can have a huge positive impact on those who do not manage so well.

Similarly, students who succeed share their graded work with their parents as well. If the results were good, some positive reinforcement from parents will build confidence in the student and help establish a cycle of success. If the results are not what the student hoped, sharing the work with parents is still helpful as a discussion of what might be improved, or developing a different study plan, can lead to better results in the future.

Key #10 – Get Involved in School Activities

As students move up the grade levels, there is no doubt that the academic expectations for them at school increase, but is it also true that their opportunities to participate in fun and enjoyable extracurricular activities increase as well. Those students who succeed at high levels in the classroom are also often the same students who are very involved in sports, music, clubs, and organizations. Being involved in these activities help students get hooked into school, see school as a positive place to be, and build skills and confidence that carry over into the classroom.

While it would be nice to think that students roll excitedly out of bed in the morning in a rush to get to their Math or Social Studies class, it is probably not the case for most kids. However, if there is a band concert that night, a ballgame, or club meeting after school, students find it easier to be motivated about their day, and approach school in general with a more positive attitude. While it is important to monitor the balance between school work and extracurricular activities to assure homework and studying are still being completed, many students actually find it easier to budget their time when they are fairly busy. Students are less prone to put off work when they have the opportunity to do it if they know they have a busy schedule of games and practices ahead. Many also find the requirements to complete work and get the good grades necessary to be eligible to participate in many of these activities to be a helpful motivator as well.

Lastly, participating in these activities helps students develop their whole person. They identify their interests and learn the social interaction skills necessary to be part of these activities. These are lifelong skills that compliment the academic skills developed in the classroom.

Mark Your Calendar for the May 5th School Elections

By Neil Hufnagel, Superintendent

Non-Homestead Property Tax Renewal

At the February meeting, the Fowler Public Schools Board of Education approved a resolution calling for an election on a proposal to renew the non-homestead property tax rate to the 18 mills allowed by law for a period of 4 years. The 18 mill non-homestead property tax was last renewed by voters in 1998. This proposal will enable the school district to levy the statutory rate of 18 mills required for the district to receive it's full per pupil foundation allowance. Without this renewal, nearly \$122,000 of current funding would not be available as the state does not replace those funds if not approved by local voters. These are the funds that pay for the actual day to day instructional operations of the district, and should not be confused with construction bonds or sinking funds which can be used only for physical improvements or renovations.

You might recall that this is the second of two elections that were needed to renew the 18 mill levy. Last August voters in the district approved a restoration of 0.7 mills. The rate actually levied is adjusted periodically based on changes in property values and had fallen to approximately 17.2 mills. The result of last year's election is an expiring rate of approximately 17.9 mills which can now be renewed for the full 18 mills that we are allowed to levy under law. Because a renewal proposition can increase the pre-existing rate by no more than 0.5 mills it was necessary to first **restore** the millage to a rate above 17.5 mills so that it could now be **renewed** for 18 mills this year.

I know this can all be somewhat confusing. Back in 1992 Proposal A was passed, restructuring the way in which schools are funded, and shifting the burden from property taxes to the sales tax. It is important to note that it did not take the property tax completely out of the equation, but simply capped it at the 18 mill level as discussed above. The restoration millage passed last year, and the renewal request this year, are necessary to assure that we receive the minimum foundation allowance per student that funds the operation of our current instructional programs.

Please watch for additional information on this millage election in the April edition of the *Eagle Flyer*. I would be happy to meet with any community member or group to provide additional clarification or information regarding the May ballot issue. Please feel free to contact me at 593-2250, or our business office at 593-2296, with any questions or to set up a time to meet.

School Board Elections

The May 5th ballot will feature three candidates running for the two vacant positions on the Fowler Public Schools Board of Education. Incumbent Jeff Thelen is joined by district residents Dan Bengal and Adrienne Larson as candidates on the ballot. Voters will be asked to vote for

two of the three to fill the vacant seats. The April *Eagle Flyer* will feature short biographies on each of the candidates and their responses to a short survey on school issues.