

# Piner-Olivet Press

*The Newsletter of the Piner-Olivet Union School District*

Volume 2, March 13, 2009



## **District Budget Update**

*By Becky Leffew, Director of Business Services*

In this newsletter, you will read about how each of the District's six schools are providing a "guaranteed and viable" education for all 1,705 students currently enrolled in the District. How does the District's budget support the students' education? Piner-Olivet's Governing Board approves Goals and Success Indicators each year. Those Goals and Success Indicators include standards for student achievement, staff development, and many other issues. The District's budget supports the Goals and Success Indicators by including funding for programs such as Class Size Reduction in Grades K-3 and staff development for teachers and other instructional personnel.

The District receives special funds for many of the programs offered to students such as special education and GATE. The funds received for those programs can only be spent on those programs. Some of those special funds pay for the Instructional Assistant, Library and PE Programs. Sometimes, extra funds are received such as the RTI Grant at Schaefer School, or the OST Grant at Jack London.

Both of the District's charter schools, Piner-Olivet Charter School and Northwest Prep at Piner-Olivet receive their own funding from the State. The District's general operating funds are not spent on the charter schools. The charter schools' budgets also support the District's Goals and Success Indicators.

The next few years will be very challenging for the Piner-Olivet budget. The State's financial crisis and resulting reduction of funds to public education means that difficult decisions need to be made by the District's Governing Board. While making these decisions, the Board always considers what is best for the District's students and how to continue to offer a "guaranteed and viable" education to all students.



The Piner-Olivet Press is a tri-annual publication of Piner-Olivet Union School District. The newsletter is intended to keep families, and other community members informed about District updates, school programs, highlights, and events.

## **Making a Difference for Our Students**

*By Karen Ricketts, Director of Student Instruction*

Maximizing the academic performance of all students is a key goal for the Piner-Olivet School District. To support this goal, teachers, administrators, and staff provide a "guaranteed and viable curriculum" in each classroom throughout the district.

Students benefit by a variety of components including identified power standards, State and Board approved instructional materials, differentiated strategies, frequent monitoring of progress, targeted interventions, and extended learning opportunities.



*Schaefer principal, Jennie Snyder and teacher, Judy Armstrong work together on responding to students' learning needs by identifying appropriate interventions and enrichments.*

Student learning is further enhanced when grade level teams and collaborative groups meet frequently and work together to review and discuss student performance data and next steps. When new student data is reviewed, teachers and staff refine and adjust instruction to meet individual student needs.

Although we are facing an unprecedented State financial crisis, the Piner-Olivet Union School District continues to focus on our most important asset - our students!

*Guided by the research model of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's), teachers and administrators discuss strategies and interventions to support student success!*



## **Jack London's Learning Community**

*By Jack Potter, Principal*

The staff at Jack London works hard to guarantee a viable curriculum for all students in the Jack London learning community. Through district sponsored and site based workshops and grade level team meetings, teachers collaborate with each other and teachers at other sites in the Piner-Olivet District.

While working with teachers at other sites, we have studied the State Standards and identified power standards for each grade level. We have developed and agreed on formative assessments to monitor student progress and identify the needs of our students. After compiling the results of our students and connecting those results with the district's power standards the grade level teams designed lessons and differentiated instruction to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students.

Besides direct instruction in the classroom, teachers and instructional assistants work with individual students and small groups. The computer lab has been set up so that the Read Naturally program can be used by students school wide. The "SIPPS" Program is being used to help upper grade students develop and strengthen strategies to decode large words made up of multiple syllables. Primary grades put additional efforts in the areas of phonemic awareness to help students prepare for and strengthen reading skills. Math tutoring is offered to students who are struggling to help them master skills and establish a foundation for students to build upon. All teachers continue to use and improve their use of Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps help students with different learning styles and language skills access the curriculum. The teachers at Jack London use a variety of strategies and techniques to ensure that learning styles of all students are honored so that each student reaches his or her full potential.

### **Piner-Olivet Union School District**

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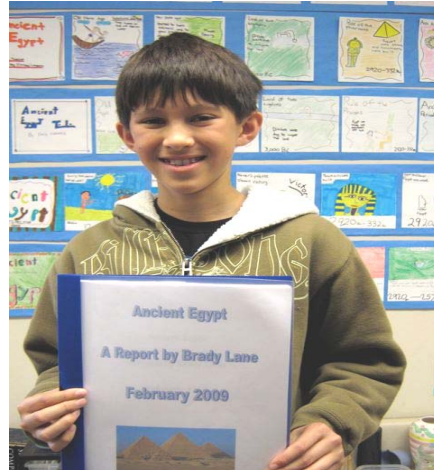
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## **Olivet 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Benchmark Projects**

*By Emily Davis, Principal*

Olivet 6th graders are hard at work on their benchmark projects. This three-part project is a requirement for graduation from 6th grade. Since sixth grade social studies focuses on ancient civilizations, each student will complete an 8-10 page written research report, build a three-dimensional structure or art project, and present an oral report pretending to be a person from the civilization.



*Brady Lane finished his report early and proudly presents the product of his hard work!*

When students have completed these assignments, they have demonstrated mastery of many 6th grade standards, and, most importantly, gained a deeper understanding of the six themes of history: culture, government, geography, economics, belief systems, and science and technology.

Another important skill they gain from this project is time management, and self-discipline. To help them learn these things the teachers have developed a guide with many smaller deadlines as the students work through the report writing process. The students are given the grading rubric so that they know exactly how to get the best grade they can.

Olivet has a new computer lab, and many 6th graders are working on their projects during their weekly class visits to the lab. It is so exciting to see the learning that is going on in the 6th grade! We look forward to seeing the finished projects and watching the speeches!



## **Piner Elementary Delve into Science**

*By Joe Hamp, Principal*

Students in the intermediate grades at Piner Elementary are delving deeply into science these days and having a lot of fun doing “hands-on” science. Mrs. Lorenzen’s sixth grade class just finished an extensive unit where the focus was on learning about the five parts of the scientific process. In order to do this, each student had to conduct an experiment that involved asking a question, formulating a hypothesis, gathering appropriate materials, creating clear procedures and deriving a conclusion. In addition, each student was responsible for writing up their findings, creating an

effective graphic presentation and giving an oral report.

The following is an example of one of the projects:



Piner intermediate students have also been working with an organization called Ocean Discovery to bring hands-on science to the classroom. Recently, students participated in a three hour squid dissection and learned about the physiology, anatomy and special adaptive features of the amazing squid. Students compared squid organ systems to human organ systems, learned the physics of jet propulsion, and studied the squid’s camouflage skills that enable it to adapt to its ecosystem.

Next year, Piner teachers and students plan to work with Ocean Discovery on a multi-school science symposium in which students will collect data through the scientific



process and then convene a panel of experts to share their knowledge. “I learned a lot,” 5<sup>th</sup> grader Julia Boitano-Muniz commented, “It’s the best way to learn science.”

## **Schaefer Elementary School’s RtI Pilot Project**

*By Jennie Snyder, Principal*

At Schaefer Elementary School, we have been working on continuing to refine our instructional practices to best meet the needs of all of our students. Through our participation in the Response to Intervention (RtI) Pilot Project coordinated by the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), we are able to network with other schools throughout the county as we examine and refine our instructional practices to help our students succeed. A core group of teachers representing grades K through 6 have participated in training workshops and collaborative work to share professional knowledge to benefit our students. With this information, our staff has been fine-tuning our practices for assessing student needs, providing support to meet their needs and monitoring their progress. Teachers meet in grade level and cross-grade level teams to analyze student performance data and make decisions to match instruction with student needs.

Primary and intermediate teachers use a variety of strategies to strengthen core instruction such as small group, differentiated reading instruction, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, etc. During the English Language Enrichment (ELE) rotation, students across grades 1 through 6 receive supplemental instruction to meet their needs. Students who read at or above grade level engage in writing activities, literature discussions, and/or readers’ theater. Students needing extra support in reading may participate in learning activities that focus on building phonics skills, fluency and/or comprehension. Students who are learning English participate in activities to help them develop their reading, writing and speaking skills in English. Group placements are fluid. Students are shifted into new groups once skills are mastered.

Students also have opportunities to enhance their learning through our after school programs. Our GATE students have been focusing on project-based activities which provide enrichment. This spring they will be working as Grade Level Web Page Designers, interviewing teachers and students at each grade level, using technology to upload images and report on what’s happening at our school. Students needing extra support in reading or math receive extra instruction to help build their skills.

***Piner-Olivet Union School District  
Literacy Intervention - Summer School***

**Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> - Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Schaefer Elementary School**

**Hotline: 522-8924 ext. 17**

## Northwest Prep's Guaranteed Curriculum

*By Keith Muelrath, Principal*



I'm sure that, by now, you've heard that The Career Academy is now Northwest Prep. Nothing else has changed. Rest assured that our mission and vision remain the same. We strive to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all of the NWP students. To meet this goal of enabling all students to achieve high standards, the staff has worked hard to write course descriptions that align with the A-G requirements put forth by the U.C. system.

This alignment coincides with our current work with the accreditation process. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) require a self-study that ensures our program provides a curriculum that is rigorous and relevant.

At Northwest Prep we are fortunate to have a Common Planning time built into our schedule. This time allows for valuable collaboration as we move toward academic excellence for all. It also provides the venue for staff to do the hard, yet rewarding, work required of the University of California and the self-study process that is known as WASC.

These are exciting times at Northwest Prep; Exciting because the work we're doing with the UC system and WASC validates our viability and enriches the educational lives of all of the Northwest Prep at Piner-Olivet community.



## Piner-Olivet Charter School - Culture of Excellence

*By Diana Drew-Ingham, Principal*



Piner-Olivet Charter School curriculum has been standards-based since its beginning in 1996. It was important to district families and charter founding members that the school provided a rigorous program to all students, challenging them at their individual levels and preparing them for high school courses. California did not have State standards at the time, so POCS' curriculum was based on the National Standards. As California established its curriculum standards, POCS adopted and implemented the State standards.

Minimum days are scheduled weekly on Wednesdays to provide teachers regular collaboration time to develop curriculum, plan integrated units, analyze student achievement data, and discuss individual student progress and needs. This year, in addition to reviewing student progress, staff has used this time to continue making the standards more accessible to all students. Power Standards were identified in Math and Language Arts - those that are essential to grade level learning and preparation for the next grade in these subjects. Teachers have also begun important work in breaking down those standards into smaller lesson components.

Additionally, teachers developed and implemented strategies and interventions to meet individual needs. For some students, time and assistance within the regular classroom is not enough. Three days a week students have Tutorial time during their afternoon Advisory/Tutorial. During Tutorial they work on assignments and have the opportunity to see their core subject teachers for extra help. Math Support, Reading, and English Language Development classes are offered in the afternoon enrichment schedule for students who need this kind of instruction and assistance.



Piner-Olivet Charter School works very hard to build a culture of excellence. We hold all of our students to a high standard and provide instruction and supports to promote success for all of our students.