

**From:** [Communications](#)  
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**Subject:** Community Zone -- February 14, 2023  
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February 14, 2023



## Photo of the Week



Design Science Middle College High School had the top team score for Fresno Unified at the Fresno County Academic Decathlon  
[Academic Decathlon Medal Winners](#)  
[Academic Decathlon Team Scores](#)

## Dates to Know

**February 22** (see website for time)  
[Board of Education](#)

## Video of the Week



[HBCU Caravan Video](#)

## Greetings!

Welcome to Community Zone, an e-newsletter from the Fresno Unified School District featuring news of the district and schools. [Sign up](#) to receive this newsletter every two weeks. Questions? Contact [Communications@fresnounified.org](mailto:Communications@fresnounified.org).

## Community News

### Excellence in Education Finalists Honored, Winners Announced

A sold-out, enthusiastic crowd of more than 700 was on hand January 31 for the Excellence in Education awards dinner at the DoubleTree Hotel.

#### Winners:

**Classified Employee of the Year:** Cathy Lopez, social emotional intervention paraeducator at Roosevelt High School [Cathy's Acceptance Speech](#)

**Elementary School Educator of the Year:** Emmelin Herrera, teacher at Herrera Elementary School [Emmelin's Acceptance Speech](#)

**Middle School Educator of the Year:** Jessica Matoian, teacher at Sequoia Middle School [Jessica's Acceptance Speech](#)

**High School Educator of the Year:** Kyra Orgill, teacher at Fresno High School [Kyra's Acceptance Speech](#)

**Administrator of the Year:** Abraham Olivares, principal at Fort Miller Middle School [Abrahams's Acceptance Speech](#)

**Department Administrator of the Year:** Tumani Heights, manager at Project ACCESS [Tumani's Acceptance Speech](#)

Cathy, Emmelin and Tumani will be moving on to the Fresno County Educator of the Year awards.

[Excellence in Education Video](#)

[Finalists Photos](#)

### District Launches Public Data Dashboard

Fresno Unified invites families, staff, and the community to view its data dashboard, which was made public on January 31. The digital dashboard allows easy access to state test results, student achievement data, and a variety of demographic information about students and the district. It is available in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

The data dashboard was developed incorporating essential feedback from focus groups of

Fresno Unified parents in English, Spanish, and Hmong. This initial launch is the first phase, with improvements and new features expected as the district continues to gather feedback from parents, students, staff and educational partners.

[Link to Data Dashboard](#)

[Video about the Dashboard](#)

## **Award-Winning Author Visits Thomas Elementary School**

In honor of Black History Month, award-winning author and poet L. Kobie Wilkerson, a.k.a [L. Kobie Da Wiz](#), visited Thomas Elementary School to share his passion for literacy and personal development. Students not only sang and danced with Kobie, but they learned the fundamentals of what makes a great story. Students got to take home two of his books! Kobie also met with students in the Black Student Union after the assembly.

## **District Tripling Scholarship Amounts**

Fresno Unified will triple scholarship money (to \$300,000) and the number of scholarship winners for 2023. Students meeting the eligibility requirements should apply now!

- Scholarships from \$1,000 to \$2,500
- More than 200 scholarships available
- Deadline to apply Wednesday, March 1
- Apply at [Fresno Unified Scholarship Application](#).
- Also apply for \$5,000 [Jim Newton Memorial Scholarship](#)

## **Fresno Unified Honored with Safety Award**

Fresno Unified was recognized by [Safe Kids Central California](#), led by Valley Children's Hospital, for its work to prevent injuries through awareness and training, at Sunnyside High School on February 1. The district's efforts have included:

- Stop the Bleed training for high school students
- Educating students and parents on pedestrian and car safety, including intoxicated driving
- Presentations on safety to Parent University
- Car seat checkup events held on FUSD campuses

## **Help Families Connect with New Ways for Funding College**

California's new children's savings account program, [CalkIDS](#), offers newborns up to \$100 and low-income public students between \$500-\$1,500 as scholarships for their future higher education expenses. It also aims to help families start saving with tools like [ScholarShare 529](#), California's official college savings plan.

For more information on [www.calkids.org](http://www.calkids.org) please see recent press releases from Governor Newsom's office (click [here](#)) as well as the California Department of Education (click [here](#)).

## **Superintendent Board Remarks from February 8, 2023**

- Superintendent Nelson started his remarks by providing an update on the transportation issues faced by Computech Middle School this year. Superintendent shared that this week all buses have been on time, except one which was caused by a malfunctioning gate at CART delaying the students' route. Even with that delay, the bus still made it to Computech before

the first bell. Superintendent shared his gratitude to our transportation team, our bus drivers, dispatchers, and our labor partners for working together to adjust routes and form a routing committee that will review bus routes every month moving forward.

- Superintendent then recognized concerns that have been brought forth regarding our bus routes for students receiving specialized services. Superintendent shared these routes are more complex than our general bus routes as they include door-to-door pick-ups and drop-offs, and they are serving students from across the district. He provided context, sharing there are 124 routes serving our students receiving specialized services vs. 69 general bus routes. Superintendent shared our transportation partner, First Student, has worked hard to recover from the pandemic and school closures by increasing their starting wages and increasing their recruitment efforts. Superintendent shared our teams will continue working with First Student collaboratively to improve those routes.

- Superintendent shared that last week the IT team completed the rollout of the Promethean board at all middle schools! Now every elementary and middle school classroom has a 75-inch interactive panel with high-definition sound and display with a mounted Windows computer. He shared that the Promethean pilot in high school classrooms begins next month.

- Superintendent then shared several recognitions and celebrations including:

- Congratulations to Duncan students Karen Vathanaphong and Oscar Vazquez as they were selected to participate in the 2023 Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Flight Academy Program. Karen and Oscar were selected out of more than 1,300 applications from JROTC members across the nation. Karen and Oscar will gain college credit and their private pilot's license through this prestigious program. [Check out the video of Karen's flight suit presentation here.](#)

- Congratulations to Baird for winning the annual Minecraft eSports Tournament against Figarden this past weekend. Baird will now move on to compete against Curro South Africa for the international title.

- Congratulations to our Excellence in Education finalists and the six winners announced at [last week's awards dinner](#). Our six winners this year included:

- Department Administrator of the Year – [Tumani Heights of Project ACCESS](#),
    - Classified Employee of the Year – [Cathy Lopez of Roosevelt High School](#),
    - Elementary School Educator of the Year – [Emmelin Herrera of Juan Felipe Herrera Elementary School](#),
    - Middle School Educator of the Year – [Jessica Matoian of Sequoia Middle School](#),
    - High School Educator of the Year – [Kyra Orgill of Fresno High School](#), and
    - Administrator of the Year – [Abraham Olivares of Fort Miller Middle School](#).

- Superintendent then recognized National School Counseling Week sharing his gratitude for the amazing counselors across our district. He then shared [this video from Nancy Witrado](#), director, College and Career Readiness.

- Superintendent then recognized Black History Month. Superintendent shared gratitude for

the ninth annual Black History Month program and showed a [highlight video](#). Superintendent shared a couple of examples of other Black History Month celebrations happening across the district including a visit to Thomas Elementary by L. Kobie Da Wiz with hundreds of students going home with two of his books, and a trip this weekend for more than 350 parents, students and staff to visit Allensworth, CA.

- Last, Superintendent Nelson invited Wendy McCulley to the podium where she presented a trophy to Trustee Thomas for winning the regional competition for fundraising on Giving Tuesday.

[View Full Board Meeting Recap](#)

## School Buzz

### **Duncan Polytechnical Students Selected for Flight Program**

Duncan Polytechnical High School students Karen Vathanaphong and Oscar Vazquez have been selected for the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) Flight Academy Program. Karen was surprised on February 2 with a formal presentation of her USAF pilot flight suit in front of cadet peers, with Oscar expected to be presented with his in March.

- Among just 200 students selected across all high school Air Force JROTC programs (105,000 cadets) from among 1,300 applicants
- Mentored by Technical Sergeant Michael Frank, Duncan instructor and former security forces member in USAF, for highly competitive selection process that includes physical exercises, ACT and the Aviation Qualification Test
- Through [Air Force Aim High Flight Academy](#) program, Karen and Oscar will attend eight-week summer aviation training program at a top aviation university on scholarship
- Scholarship covers round-trip airfare, room and board, collegiate academics and flight hours to earn private pilot's certificate
- First time in five years Duncan student selected for the program
- First time Duncan has two students selected for in same school year

### **Sunnyside Teacher Blogs on Writing Instruction for Publication**

Ginny Sandhu, an English teacher at Sunnyside High School, was the January guest blogger for the [Central Valley Higher Education Consortium publication](#). Her topic was her graduate studies journey and learning how to be a better writing teacher.

### **Computech Middle School Partners with Storyland**

The Computech Theatre Company and Computech Players presented a condensed version of their recent production of "Alice in Wonderland" on February 11 at [Storyland](#) and will perform again on Saturday, February 18. The performances are directed by Computech Middle School eighth-grader Jack Garvin.

Details:

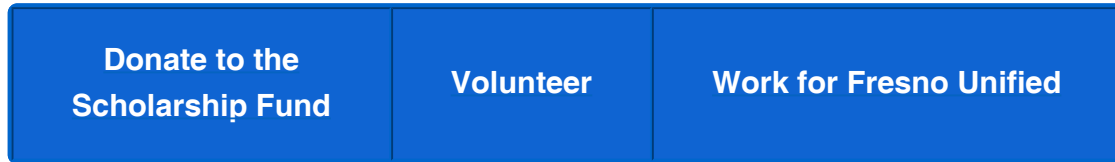
- February 18, 1:30 and 2:30 p.m.
- At Storyland in Roeding Park, 890 W. Belmont Ave.

- Entrance fees to Storyland -- \$6 for adults, \$ 4 for children and \$5 for seniors

### **Roosevelt Theatre Company attends Broadway Workshop at Disney**

The Roosevelt Theatre Company's cast of "Something Rotten" attended a Broadway Magic workshop at Disneyland on January 28. The three-hour intensive workshop included acting, dancing and singing, with students working on a scene and song from "Tangled."

"Our actors were so professional and positive that we received a compliment from our workshop director," said Roosevelt theater teacher Rachel Hibler.



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