

ACUSD NEWS

Letter from ACUSD's New Superintendent, Dr. Slavensky



Dear ACUSD Colleagues,

Thank you for your very warm welcome! I am thrilled to join the Amador County Unified team and am eager to meet all of you and begin to build collaborative, trust-based working relationships. Because our work is all about students and families, relationships are indeed the key. During my early days and weeks in the district, I will visit all of our schools, listening, observing, and taking note of the many strengths and opportunities on

which to build.

During my first 90 days, I will not make any substantive changes but rather I will visit schools and meet with all key stakeholders including teacher leaders, labor leaders, principals, student leaders, classified staff, cabinet members, board members, parents, community leaders with the goal of listening and learning. In order to move from being a good school district to being a great one, we will honor and celebrate our history and together forge ahead to set goals based on data and take action to meet those goals.

Sharing a little bit about me, it's important to know that I taught elementary school for ten years including 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grades. I was an elementary principal for 12 years and a middle school principal for 2 years. This foundation instilled a life-long passion for serving all students with a particular interest in serving low-income students and families. Once a teacher, always a teacher, I am committed to 4 big goals.

First, I am committed to demonstrating integrity with a focus on "students first" in every discussion, decision, and problem solving effort. This includes honesty, open communication, working together, and acknowledging and learning from our mistakes. Second, I am committed to a process of sense-making where we appreciate the history of our community through listening to stories and celebrating while at the same time we press forward with courage to serve and help our students become even more successful.

Third, I am committed to having a growth mindset, demonstrating openness and the ability to learn through challenges and sometimes even painful experiences, modeling this for each other and our students.

Finally, I am committed to demonstrating "passion and perseverance for long term goals." Angela Duckworth calls this grit. Personally and professionally, it involves risk taking, making approximations, falling down and getting back up again with a sense of hopefulness that we will reach our goals together.

I believe as we focus on these 4 big goals, we will become a very high functioning team, achievement gaps will close, and all of our students will graduate from high school ready for college, career, and citizenship.

Sincerely,

Amy L. Slavensky, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Argonaut High School FFA

September was busy and October plans to be too. Argonaut FFA members volunteered their time at the Beef Solutions Bull Sale in Ione on September 22nd. At the 3rd Grade Farm Day on September 27th, 6 Argonaut FFA members led different stations teaching about Forest Products and Satellite Use in Agriculture. Before presenting to 8 groups of 3rd graders, our FFA members prepared by meeting with community members who developed the stations. Three other members also helped the event organizers with tasks. The Argonaut FFA Officer team spent September preparing for the sectional Opening & Closing Ceremony Recitation Contest that was postponed at the last minute to November. The Officer team will also spend the first weekend of October in Modesto at the Regional Chapter Officer Leadership Conference networking with other chapters and gathering new ideas to bring back to our chapter. Seven Freshmen are attending the Greenhand Leadership Conference in Lodi on October 4th. Argonaut FFA will also have a team

competing in the El Dorado Forestry Challenge in Grizzly Flats at the end of October. Argonaut FFA is also proud to announce that alumni Hannah Billows is the 3rd Argonaut FFA member to earn the American FFA Degree, and the 5th for Amador County. We will be traveling to the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, IN the week after Fall Break where Hannah will participate in the American Degree Ceremony with recipients from all 50 states and Puerto Rico. To qualify, throughout their 3 or more years in FFA, members have to earn and productively invest over \$10,000 in their SAE projects, participated in at least 50 hours of community service, have a strong scholastic record, and be actively involved in the local, sectional, regional, and state levels of FFA, and continue as an active member of the chapter the year following high school graduation. We are very proud of all of the hard work of our FFA members.

Shannon Clark, Argonaut Agriculture Instructor & FFA Advisor



New Principal of Shenandoah Valley Charter School Charter, Tia Peters

Tia Peters, long-time teacher at ACUSD, takes on .25 principal role at SVCS. Ms. Peters will also continue her .75 Teacher on Special Assignment in the Curriculum and Instruction office.

“I am very pleased and excited to have the opportunity to work with the staff and students at Shenandoah Valley School this year. There are wonderful and creative things happening at the school. In addition to the core academic content, the students have a great variety of electives to choose from including Spanish, Music, Art, Maker Space, gardening, and photography. They are excited about their projects and really enjoy all of the technology they have available. The teachers are doing great things with the kids and I love seeing all of the learning that is happening.”

Tia Peters, Principal, Shenandoah Valley Charter School

ACUSD Teachers Participate in September Professional Development

On September 21st, teachers and administrators from Ione Junior High and Jackson Junior High joined together for the first organized middle school collaboration session in some time. The two schools have made a unified commitment to become a Professional Learning Community (PLC) by teaming together in content-area teams. Each collaborative team will work together throughout the year to answer four essential questions that will drive improved student achievement:

- What should students know and be able to do?
- How will we know that they know it?
- How will we respond when students don't know it?
- How will we respond when they have already learned it?

During the first collaboration session, teachers learned about the key characteristics of PLCs and discussed the cultural shifts that are necessary to collectively improve student learning across both schools. In future sessions, collaborative



Continued on page 5

Frank Porter, Transitioning Comments During his Final Board Meeting as ACUSD's Interim Superintendent



As I was reviewing and organizing my files, I culled a few closing comments that I hope will prove to be of benefit to you and ACUSD's new, full-time superintendent, Amy Slavensky.

Begin with the end in mind. – This quote from Stephen Covey became our mantra as we worked to solve problems, big and small. I encourage you to continue to 'begin with the end in mind'... and fully realize bigger and better futures for Amador County students. Always strive to be the truly exemplary governance team that makes this happen.

No Surprises – In our first conversations together, the concept of 'No surprises' was something you embraced and agreed should be how we worked together as a Board Governance Team. I think, by and large, we did that. While it's difficult to remove all surprises in a Board – Superintendent working relationship... just like in a marriage.... but for a few hiccups, we made that happen! I encourage you to sustain a similar "No Surprises" relationship with your new superintendent.

Conduct autopsies, without blame: (with credit given to Jim Collins who describes "blameless autopsies" in his book, *Good to Great*) As I explained during my initial interview, when you've got a mess to clean up, spending time affixing blame, is largely a waste of time. To move forward, administrative staff needs to face facts consistently and conduct thorough, blameless autopsies. Then they need to make corrections and then put those improvements and corrections into consistent practice. This isn't easy work and it's often contentious, tedious, and exhausting but it needs to be done, with fidelity and consistency. Encourage and support your new superintendent through the 'thick and thin' work of creating an organizational culture of trust, where the truth is heard affirmatively and consistently acted upon.

Communicate, communicate, and then communicate some more: There is no such thing as 'over communicating.' The staff has made significant headway in this area with ongoing district communications planning work, including a newly redesigned district website, improved school site websites in the works, new monthly newsletters, and other efforts. I urge you to continue supporting and encouraging your new superintendent in this area.

The superintendent is your only employee: The ACUSD Board of Trustees, consistent with state law, has established and approved a series of Board Bylaws which establish rules to guide best governance practices. One of your central bylaws is Board Bylaw 9200, the Limits of Board Member Authority which states, among other declarations:

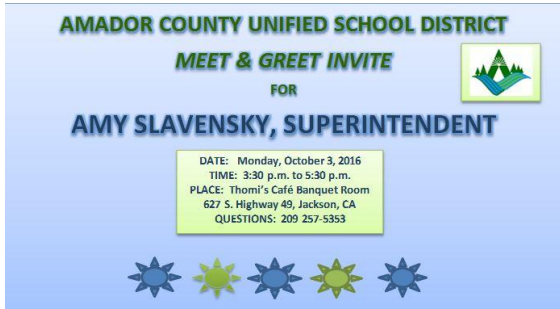
The Governing Board is the unit of authority over the district. It has broad but clearly limited powers. The exercise of its authority is restricted to the functions required or permitted by law, and then only when it acts in a legally constituted meeting. If approved, the Superintendent or designee shall perform any necessary research associated with the request and report to the Board at a future meeting.

You are to be commended for having such clear Board bylaws.

During my tenure with the ACUSD Board of Trustees you have consistently demonstrated a commitment to building and sustaining an effective Board– Superintendent working relationship by making significant changes in how Board meetings and business is conducted, consistent with the best governance practices. Together as a governance team, you've made remarkable progress to resolve issues and move ACUSD forward.

I wish you continuing success by 'beginning with the end in mind.'

Frank Porter, Interim Superintendent



ACTC NEEDS YOUR INPUT

Amador County Transportation Commission (ACTC) is in the process of updating the Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan. Please visit our website at <http://walkbikeamador.com> to stay up to date on the planning process.

We have recently begun the first stage of the public involvement process for the plan. By visiting the website there are several ways that community members can get involved.

First, you can use the **Public Comment Map** to identify where they already walk and bike in the County, points of interest such as historical sites or community assets that can be accessed by walkers and bikers as well as existing hazards.

Second, you can **take our survey** to help us better understand walking and biking needs in the area. More information is available on the website.

The public comment period to participate in the survey and public comment map is open until November 14th, 2016.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any further questions. You may also visit the facebook page for the plan at facebook.com/walkbikeamador Best,

Allison Platt, Transportation Planner, Amador County Transportation Commission
Phone: (209) 267-2282; Fax: (209) 267-1930
www.actc-amador.org



**October 9-October 14th: Fall Break
No school**

**October 12, 2016: Board Meeting
(workshop)**

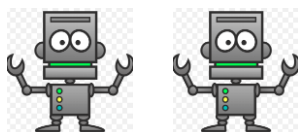
October 26, 2016: Board Meeting

Colds versus Flu: How to Tell the Difference

Are you coming down with a cold? Do you have the flu? Look below to see some differences and similarities between colds and flu.

Differences Between Colds and the Flu	
WITH A COLD:	WITH THE FLU:
Symptoms are usually less severe than flu symptoms	Symptoms are usually more severe than cold symptoms
Symptoms develop gradually over a few days.	Symptoms come on quickly and severely.
You rarely have a fever.	You almost always have a fever.
You feel sick mostly in your head and nose.	Your entire body feels sick.
Body aches, headaches and pain are usually mild if you have them.	Body aches, headaches and pain are common and can be severe.
You may or may not feel tired and weak.	Tiredness and weakness are common.
There is no vaccine to protect you.	You can get vaccine to protect yourself.
Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations.	The flu can result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations.
Similarities Between Colds and the Flu	
WITH A COLD:	WITH THE FLU:
Caused by a virus.	Caused by a virus.
Affects the body's breathing system (nose, throat, windpipe and lungs).	Affects the body's breathing system (nose, throat, windpipe and lungs).
Usually goes away on its own.	Usually goes away on its own.
You should contact your doctor if symptoms change or get worse.	You should contact your doctor if symptoms change or get worse. There are antiviral medicines, by prescription, to treat the flu.

Jackson Junior High School Students Build Robots



Students at Jackson Junior High School are using SparkFun robotics kits to build and program a robot using Arduino language. Students are also building and programming the NXT EVE-3 generation of Lego Mindstorms robotics kits using the Mindstorms block programming language.

ACUSD September Professional Development (Continued)

teams will develop Essential Learning Outcomes, sequence them in a learner-focused manner, and develop common formative assessments to effectively respond to students’ needs. Although teachers have quickly realized that the PLC journey will be a long one, many are excited to envision how the collective expertise of their collaborative team will enhance learning in the classroom.

Jessica Dorris, Principal, Ione Junior High School



On September 21, 2016, Pine Grove teachers completed the first two phases in the Three-Phase Professional Development Model for Project Lead the Way. Pine Grove teachers have been introduced to PLTW Launch and gained hands-on experience as they worked through a design problem using the APB approach. The teachers have completed grade-level-specific Core Training, which provides an introduction to the content of the modules aligned to their grade level. The third and final phase of Three-Phase Professional Development Model is the Ongoing Training. Teachers will work through a professional development series for in-depth training for each of their four grade-level modules. This has been a fun and engaging process where our teachers are not only learning how to teach project based learning through STEM lessons, but they are also interacting with the technology involved just as their students will when we begin the program in a few months.

Amanda Avila, *Principal*, Pine Grove STEM School



Preparing students for the global economy

ACUSD is currently in discussion with stakeholders at other school sites to bring this exciting program to other schools within the district.

ACTA (Continued)

The Amador County Transportation Commission (ACTC) is currently in the process of updating the County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. We are seeking to better understand more about your experience as a walker and biker in Amador County.



Visit our website: <http://walkbikeamador.com>

- Take our survey!
- Use our Public Comment Map to identify where you walk and bike, your favorite walking, hiking, biking routes, points of interest for walkers and bikers, and existing hazards.



Ms. Corner’s 5th Grade Class Works Together to Solve Challenges

At Pine Grove STEM school it’s all about solving problems together. Groups of three and four students in Mrs. Corner’s 5th grade class work together to build cup pyramids. The catch? You can’t use your hands. You have to use a rubber band that has 4 strings tied to it! Was this hard? You bet, but boy did we have fun. Every team was able to accomplish the task.

Go Bears! Lesslie Corner

lcorner@amadorco.k12.ca.us

Student Services

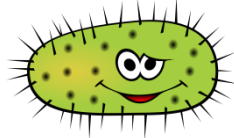
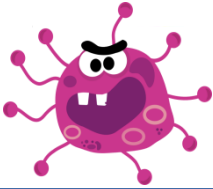
Cold & Flu Session Reminders

Numerous cases of strep throat have been diagnosed in our county in recent weeks, and influenza is right around the corner! Let's do what we can to prevent the spread of these and other infectious conditions.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds, using soap and water, after using the bathroom and before eating. Rinse well and dry with paper towel or blow dryer. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. **Soap, scrub, rinse, dry.**

Cough and sneeze into your sleeve! If you forget and use your hands, wash your hands afterwards.

If you are sick, stay home! If you do not feel well and have a fever over 100.5, stay home.



ACUSD Technology Plan Increase Chrome Book Student Ratio

The Amador County Unified School District is currently in the process of purchasing 403 Chromebooks and 12 storage/charging carts. They will be arriving the first week of October. The additional Chrome Books will bring secondary schools to a Chromebook to student ratio of 2:1, and primary schools to a Chromebook to student ratio of 3:1, as reflected in the ACUSD Technology Plan.

In addition, 200 Dell desktop PC's have been purchased, one per classroom for student use. The roll out plan is to have these Chromebooks in the schools by December and the desktops in place by the end of the first quarter of 2017.



Welcome to ACUSD, Mr. Knittel

Jackson Junior High School Welcomes a new teacher this year.

Mr. Ted Knittel taught 7th grade history and AVID for 5 years at Piute MS in Lancaster, CA.

He looks forward to bringing his training and experience to JJHS.

In his free time, Mr. Knittel, enjoys hunting and fishing and spending time with his wife and two "fat" babies.



"So far, I am really blown away by how talented my students are."

ACUSD Technology Plan Increase Chrome Book Student Ratio

Free Flu Shot Clinic



Don't let the flu get the best of you!

Get vaccinated at an upcoming FREE flu clinic!

Please bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to the Interfaith Foodbank

Join us:

October 29 or December 3, 2016

10 a.m.—2 p.m.

Sutter Amador Outpatient Services Center
Meadow/Mountain Conference Rooms
100 Mission Boulevard, Jackson CA

Light refreshments will be provided.

Details:

- Flu immunization will be free of charge to all attendees.
- Available to all people over the age of three.
- Call (209)223-7500 for additional information or questions.

- **Flu immunizations will not be available at Amador County schools this year. This is a great opportunity to have your children immunized.**
- For individuals under the age of three please contact your primary care provider to obtain vaccination.

