

Historical Overview of Clovis Unified School District
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CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Co-Curricular Programs

“...in the co-curricular we have the ability to set rules of physical conditioning, physical performance, physical behavior; whereas, in the academics, you don’t get involved in that particular aspect...when we depend on a person’s brain, we don’t depend on his personality and his other characteristics; and they are so important to the future of a society.

Floyd B. Buchanan, Ed.D.
Superintendent, C.U.S.D.

Clovis Unified School District has a long history of involving students in co-curricular activities, and this involvement is a direct result of the firm belief of the district’s administrators that all aspects of a student’s life improve if he has activities outside the classroom in which we can participate. The primary rationale behind developing so many co-curricular programs in Clovis Unified is the ultimate benefit students receive in building self-esteem and learning self-control. This ultimate goal, though, is the final step taken after many other successful challenges have been met and mastered throughout the student’s participation in an activity.

Participation in co-curricular activities develops worthwhile and positive attitudes in children, helping them develop cooperative social relationships. A child learns the benefits of teamwork and good sportsmanship, whether the activity is a sport or an academically-related involvement (math team, spelling bee, oral interpretation, etc.). The student learns what is required by involvement in an activity, what sacrifices of time and energy must be made, if he is to continue to participate in it. A direct benefit to his involvement is the awakening awareness that he is a valuable member of his “team” and school, and he becomes more actively involved in school morale and spirit. This, in turn, helps the entire school community by fostering a singleness of purpose and general sense of well-being toward the rest of the school. Through recognition of the student’s participation and achievement, the student gains greater self-esteem and serves as a good role model for his peers and younger students. With greater confidence in himself because of the commitment and self-control he has shown in the co-curricular activity, the child’s academic performance improves as well.

The development and maintenance of myriad co-curricular activities in Clovis Unified School District stem from the unmistakable observation that children who are kept occupied have neither the time nor the inclination to get involved with drugs; further, children and parents are provided with a natural communication bridge to overcome the customary problems of the “generation gap.” Clovis Unified’s administrators have endeavored to reinforce the family unit by giving parents and children a reason to do things together, to share. This has helped C.U.S.D. students have a greater feeling of worth within the family as well: prior to the

advent of many technological advances, a child understood that the chores he performed at home were valuable to his parents; by the 1960's and 1970's, though, this was no longer the case, and many children questioned their worth at home and at school. By providing opportunities for parents to see their children participating and achieving, C.U.S.D. has overcome this problem. In fact, it is unusual for parents to stay away when an event is taking place.

People who observe the Clovis Unified School District in the late 1980's do not always understand that the district did not arrive, full-blown, as it appears. The reputation Clovis has for presenting quality programs, using first-class equipment, and having supportive parents did not just "happen;" it is the result of laboring with what the district was when it unified and planning what the educators and the parents wanted to be able to provide for the district's children. The co-curricular program was no exception to the district's overall growing pains, maturity, and ultimate success throughout the years.

When the co-curricular program first began, students in the district who were interested in wrestling wrestled in cut-offs; some students who ran track did so barefoot; and the district gave each of the ten elementary school football teams \$750.00 worth of equipment to get the teams started, since, as a contact sport, administrators were worried about injuries without adequate equipment. After that initial investment, though, each school was responsible for any further sports equipment purchases. At the beginning of the second year of co-curricular sports measures had been taken to ensure that any needy student who wanted to participate in sports, but who didn't have shoes, would have shoes provided for him. The district was then able to mandate that no one could run barefoot on the track anymore. As years passed, parent clubs supported the purchase of uniforms for various sports at the elementary schools, and the program as seen in the 1980's had evolved.

The music program in Clovis Unified is an excellent example of how co-curricular programs evolve in this district. Although many members of the district community wish different programs would move forward more rapidly, district administrators have found that a three-year cycle gives them the most input on how a program does and should work. During the first year data is gathered concerning what the district is doing already and the level at which it is being done; the second year allows the teachers involved to organize and get a program going in the direction desired; and the third year is the time by which the program should be assessed and judged.

When Margaret Lowe was hired as the district resource teacher for music, she followed this method of assessment, organization, and growth. In addition, as all coordinators of co-curricular activities in Clovis Unified are, she was directed to find the best program (in this case, in music) west of the Mississippi, discover why it was so successful, then implement it, refine it for the Clovis community, and make it better. This approach to beginning new programs has resulted in remarkable success for classroom activities and county, state and national competitions. The students of Clovis Unified continue to excel in all areas of academic and co-curricular life, far out of proportion to the size and financial scope of the district.

Planning and dedication have been the keys to that success. The strength of Clovis Unified School District comes from the dedication of all members of the C.U.S.D. community family: students receive on-going support from parents, teachers, administrators, and even other students, at uncommonly high levels, and this support helps them continue to develop into strong, healthy personalities. Dedication, though, can be stymied if planning isn't developed as fully as Clovis Unified's administrators have done.

The sports program was developed because it was the most readily acceptable program to the largest portion of the community, so that is where the co-curricular program began. The band program was formulated to give students who were not interested in athletics a program to which to belong. Further, it complemented the football program and encouraged band parents to support the sports program by having them attend games where the band played. Their purchase of tickets helped support other co-curricular programs within the district (the "gate" from Lamonica stadium is divided between the student bodies of Clovis High School and Clovis West High School to support their individual school's co-curricular activities), and it provided parents the opportunity to see their children participating and achieving with their music.

District administrators purposely built a lighted baseball field at Clovis West High School because the lights provide built-in flexibility: not all parents can attend a game played at 3:30 p.m., when lights are not needed; most, though, can come for a 6:00 p.m. game, when lights would be necessary. It also is not as warm to play in the evening, which is preferable for the athletes and spectators. Moreover, a lighted field is a draw to community organizations, like the Babe Ruth League, which will pay to use the playing field. This helps to defray C.U.S.D.'s overall expenses, providing additional funds to the district and giving the students of Clovis Unified the opportunity to participate in a variety of outstanding programs, using exceptional facilities, without students having to pay to be a member of the team. To accomplish this at a time when most school districts in the United States cannot adequately finance classroom materials is a testament to the ingenuity and far-sightedness of Clovis Unified's leaders.

The activities from which students may choose to participate are seemingly countless, with pride taken in the fact that students may receive instruction even in swimming, gymnastics and tennis in elementary school. Administrators have sought to provide instruction in sports which have traditionally been reserved for those children whose parents could afford to pay for private lessons; instead, Clovis students have the opportunity to select any activity and receive specialized instruction in it.

"We use these vehicles to get the kids disciplined. You have to be disciplined to compete in all of those things. And, discipline is the one basic element that you have to have to get through life, provided you have determination. Whenever you cut everything else away, co-curricular, sports, etc., participation is designed to give you determination. Sometimes the determination is nothing more or less than the willingness and the character to stay on a team, even though you are not playing much...Once you establish that, the kid is prepared for life."

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This portion of the Clovis Unified School District co-curricular program is one which has been discussed at length, as it centers on the issue of participation versus elitism. It is true that, in co-curricular activities as in academics, different students will possess different skills and potential which will create inequities concerning their participation level in activities. A recurrent complaint from some parents is that all students are not able to play during some portion of every game. While this may be the optimum goal, it is not a realistic one if the co-curricular activity is to have value for all students. Believing that it is “the problem of the child to search and find the activity in which he can succeed, not to demand that the activity adjust to him,” Clovis Unified administrators did, nonetheless, understand how devastating it can be not to make a team or to be on a team, yet not get to play; however, it is no less different for the student athlete than for the singer who wants a solo part, but who is denied because another student possesses a truer tone and vocal quality; or for the child who wants to be the top speller in the district, but who encounters someone else who knew more of the words. Life isn’t always “fair,” but that is one of the lessons that co-curricular activities can help teach a child: there is elitism in everything.

Not wishing to discourage students from trying, though, and recognizing that physical skills change greatly as children mature, Clovis Unified teachers and on-site administrators have attempted to provide additional opportunities to all students to participate, particularly in sports, where openings for first-string are understandably limited. In addition to the “A” team at most elementary schools, “B” and “C” team squads have been identified to allow as many students as possible to play and learn the skills of a sport. Similarly, cheerleading squads in elementary schools have been opened to allow any sixth grade girl who wishes to be a cheerleader to do so. At the intermediate school level intramural and off-season teams in various sports have allowed more students to join in whatever sport they wish to pursue. In providing these opportunities district educators hope to help students learn the values of competition, participation, and lifelong fitness and health. Such enrichment, awareness, and evolution are key elements in the development of each child’s character and personality.

Giving children the opportunity and space to be children, to grow and develop no matter the area of interest, is a critical component of the educational program advanced by administrators in the Clovis Unified School District. By the mid-1980’s this philosophy was stated explicitly in the development of the Clovis “Sparthenian:” a recognition that each student should strive to develop fully his mind, body and spirit. Since “spirit” embodies the character of an individual, C.U.S.D. administrators were affirming “that the development of a strong character is an educational commitment equal to the development of a sound mind and body.” Identified through a committee of the Curriculum Council and supported by C.U.S.D. educators, it was decided that students should be taught to be honest, responsible, respectful, dedicated, perseverant, self-respecting and concerned for others. All of these traits are ones that can be developed by participation in a strong co-curricular program.

The decline of the American family as a basic unit of society and the increased complexity of today’s world have necessitated educators review the role of teachers and education in developing the character and values of young people. It has become ever more critical to involve students in a variety of programs and worthwhile school activities, under the

guidance of trained professionals. Such involvement provides students the opportunity to test themselves, to explore their talents, and to experience the result of their beliefs and actions; it allows children to develop their personalities. In this environment students learn consideration of and helpfulness toward others and respect for the rights and opinions of others and society, in general. School personnel, then, foster an atmosphere that nurtures students' values, conduct and social awareness. Although this may seem an awesome, additional responsibility for the classroom teacher, the teacher does not derive immediate benefits: there are fewer discipline problems, less student-to-student conflict, and better overall cooperation among a student, his peers, and the school staff.

To provide such a nurturing atmosphere requires that certain practices be established and understood by all. First, there must be a clear understanding of the kind of student the school wishes to develop, and that should be decided by the school community of parents, teachers, administrators and students. Such efforts provide school administrators with an organized program. Second, there must be good rapport in the classroom for instruction and all activities related to character and value development. Third, there must be a clear understanding, by all member of the community, of the rules of conduct, disciplinary procedures, and standards and expectations for all students. Fourth, meaningful ways for students to contribute to the school and each other need to be established. There should be academic competitions, instrumental music, choir, school spirit activities, student government, classroom and campus cleanup, classroom monitors and messengers, cafeteria helpers, dramatic presentations, inter-scholastic and intramural sports, a school newspaper, cross-age and peer tutoring, academic group projects, community service, and school clubs and service organizations. Finally, a school must have a recognition program for achievement and participation in school activities, since this encourages already successful students and those who have yet to participate.

Administrators of Clovis Unified School District have striven to provide the proper environment to encourage children to develop and grow into mature, thoughtful, responsible adults. The blend of curricular and co-curricular programs and the emphasis on every student developing fully his mind, body and spirit have created a school district that is recognized nationally for its excellence. Students enrolled in Clovis Unified are inspired to follow their own chosen paths and to respect the choices other students make. By believing that it isn't what they do, as much as it is how well they do it, and by striving always to help students improve, students, parents, teachers and administrators all make Clovis Unified School District a refuge of educational distinction.