



Historical Overview of Clovis Unified School District

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UNIFICATION DIVIDES BEFORE IT UNITES

By Charlotte Hutchison

Together we stand

The momentum of increasing student performance and athletic excellence continued to build through the 1970s, with community and staff fully behind the district's efforts to build a school system that served its students well. In 1978, what could have sent this momentum to a crashing halt became another defining moment in Clovis Unified history. California voters, frustrated with soaring property tax rates, passed the Jarvis-Gann Act (Proposition 13) in June of 1978. The bill would revolutionize both the way the state calculated property taxes and the way it funded its public schools.

Immediately, school districts around the state were thrown into disarray. Unsure of what was to happen to their ability to pay for teachers, textbooks, classroom supplies and the other basic necessities of education, schools began to lay off teachers and slash transportation, performing arts and athletics programs. But, not in Clovis Unified. Spurred by mounting panic among other education agencies, Buchanan called an emergency meeting of all Clovis Unified employees in the summer of 1978. Tucked into an un-air conditioned Clovis High School gymnasium, employees listened as Buchanan laid out Clovis Unified's plan to respond to the state's new funding mechanism: Clovis students weren't going to lose important resources or the programs that had begun to define a Clovis Unified education, and Clovis Unified employees weren't going to lose their jobs. Buchanan told the assembled employees, "We're all in this together, and if we have to close school early and all go home, that's what we're going to do."

Confident that their jobs were secure, teachers, custodians, bus drivers and school leaders threw themselves into working even harder to build an unmatched educational experience for their students. When the end of the school year rolled around and classes were still in session, employees knew that Clovis Unified could get through anything so long as they remained united.

In 1973, six years before California voters passed Prop 13, the Clovis community expressed strong support for Clovis Unified's building program through the passage of a special override tax. The facility tax was used to establish a recreation, cultural and athletic (RCA) fund specifically for special facilities and is credited with setting the standard for high quality facilities for CUSD students. This emerging commitment by the local community to provide resources for school facilities was stalled by the passage of Prop 13, which removed local tax override measures then in place and prohibited future measures at the local level. Though CUSD continued to receive approximately 90% of the original RCA fund from the state, it wasn't until 1986, when Prop 46 modified the prohibition on school facility bonds included in Prop 13, that the CUSD community was able to cast their vote in support of a \$59 million school bond measure; which they did again in 1993 (\$49.2m), 1996 (\$98m), 2001 (\$79m) and 2004 (\$168m).

The continued support residents in Clovis Unified have shown for facility bond measures demonstrates their faith in how the district has managed tax dollars and the importance placed on state-of-the-art schools and athletic/performing arts venues in providing an outstanding educational experience for students.

