

# Opinion

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THE FRESNO BEE FOUNDED IN 1922 BY CARLOS K. McCLATCHY

## OUR VIEW

# Fresno Unified budget, academics on course

Many big state districts are struggling and facing layoffs.

**T**he administration and school board of the Fresno Unified School District have been guiding the school system on a wise course over the past three years. That's quite an achievement for a district that was once in danger of state takeover because of financial problems. The fact that they did this in a terrible economy is that much more impressive.

On Wednesday night, the school board underscored the progress that has been made by unanimously adopting a budget of almost \$702 million. Superintendent Michael Hanson said the spending plan meets district objectives of protecting programs to improve student academic programs, focuses on campus safety issues and maintains important programs, including music, arts and after-school sports. There are no layoffs planned. In addition, the budget has strong reserves for financial emergencies.

Hanson praised his financial team, led by Ruth Quinto, the district's

chief financial officer. Fresno Unified clearly is much improved, and the community should be thankful for this strong financial and academic oversight. The classroom has been protected, and that's important as the district works on improving lagging student achievement.

This is an economic story that most of California's big urban school districts would like to be telling their communities. Most are struggling and considering teacher layoffs.

Fresno's teachers will have more money for instructional materials, which they have been asking for. But there won't be pay increases for teachers or other employees as the district moves carefully through these difficult economic times. There will be a reduction in the teaching force because of declining enrollment, but that will be handled through attrition, according to Hanson.

Fresno Unified still hasn't solved all of its problems, but it is working on them in a way that gives us confidence that solutions are near.

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