

July 24, 2006

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson

One of the earliest identified attention areas of the Business Council was job creation. Fundamental to this aspiration is the availability of an educated work force. In recent months there have been significant changes within the formerly troubled Fresno Unified School District under the leadership of new Superintendent Mike Hanson. He is being strongly supported by a revamped Board of Trustees as well as outside individuals and organizations including the Fresno Business Council. Key to the success of these changes is the performance of the teacher in the classroom. Accountable empowerment is the new buzz word in Fresno Unified. The following is a simple reminder of how our culture so often mixes up intrinsic with monetary value.

What Teachers Make

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life .One of them decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?" He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." To stress his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher, Susan. Be honest. What do you make?" Susan, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make?"

"I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could. I make a C+ feel like the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. I make kids sit through 40 minutes of study hall in absolute silence. I make kids wonder. I make them question. I make them criticize. I make them apologize and mean it. I make them write. I make them read, read, read. I make them show all their work in math and perfect their final drafts in English.

"I make them understand that if you have the brains, and follow your heart, and if someone ever tries to judge you by what you make, you must pay no attention because they just didn't learn". Susan paused and then continued. "You want to know what I make. I make a difference. What do you make?"

Collaboration On Public Safety

With limited resources and complex challenges, no one institution or sector can solve the problems we face as a community. For years there have been discussions and studies about the efficacy of consolidation of our law enforcement functions. The Chamber called the question and thanks to their hard work our County supervisors and the City Council of Fresno met last week to discuss possibilities. At the outset, Police Chief Jerry Dyer provided a highly informative presentation to properly frame the issues and move past the myths and assumptions that so often distract from meaningful work. It is a tribute to the facilitation skills of Al Smith that the two bodies ended upon on the same page. They decided to create time limited task forces to address four issues: a joint property/evidence storage facility, a joint prisoner processing facility, a joint public safety dispatch center and governance for the joint facilities.

Primary Prevention Rests In the Work of the Families & Schools

While addressing public safety from the enforcement and incarceration end is important, the largest ROI comes from insuring that all children grow up with the relationships and tools needed to create their own lives. Many of us are actively engaged in the transformation efforts at Fresno Unified. While much of the work is concentrated in the schools, the work in the neighborhoods is also essential. Collaboration across systems in the County, City, schools and nonprofits will allow us to customize and leverage services behind shared goals. This has been historically difficult because of fragmentation starting professional training. We tend to see what we are trained to see or based upon personal experience. Thanks to Fresno State, there will be series of workshops this fall for the various professionals who work in the same geographical areas to learn together and from each other. If you are interested in more information, simply respond by email.

Upcoming Meetings

Executive Committee--Tuesday, July 25 at 7:30 a.m. at Deloitte

Board Meeting—Thursday, August 10 at 4:00 p.m. at Geil Enterprises

Fall Membership Meeting—Thursday, September 21st at the Craig School of Business (note date change)