

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson

The quality of our educational system at all levels has been an interest grabber for years. We are all aware of the issues involved. So, what does it take to make a system great? As we near Super Bowl Sunday and two excellent professional football teams prepare to face each other, we might find an answer. No single coach or group of assistant coaches, no quarterback, no player at any position, no stadium of supportive fans, can become the best without successful teamwork. While we shall always have laggards among us, our greater community is realizing that if we are to move from good to great we need a strong focus on maximizing the quality of education provided to our children. The Fresno Business Council's support for education is based upon this single premise – assembling a system-wide integrated and supportive team of dedicated players at all positions. When we accomplish that, we'll be in the Super Bowl of Educational Excellence.

Learning to Finish—Best Practices & Innovative Ideas To Keep Kids In School

The hard costs, missed opportunity costs and soft costs of drop outs are staggering. Students that falter, drop out and don't drop back in, at best earn less and at worst choose a life of crime until the justice system catches up to them. We know that being prepared to learn by kindergarten is a critical triage point. The ability to read proficiently by 3rd grade is another touchstone. Relationships, Relevance and Rigor are the new buzzwords. What works and how to sustain implementation is an ongoing challenge. *The Pew Partnership for Civic Change* has offered up a Wiki to foster collaboration between parents, educators, community members, researchers and students to lower the dropout rates. The Learning To Finish Wiki is organized into four sections—Programs & Initiatives, Research, News & Resources and Act Now! Let's engage, invest in and sustain what works. The website is <http://www.learningtofinish.org>.

Valley CAN's 2008 Energy and Clean Air Expo is Slated for April 24

There are many approaches to change...force which at best achieves compliance and often requires costly enforcement activities, inspiration that lifts someone to a mindset resulting in behavioral change and creating new cultural norms that shift what was once thought radical to what is simply expected. *Valley CAN* (Clean Air Now) has embraced the second and third paths. Its mission is to encourage the public, industry and government to take responsibility for behavioral changes to reduce pollution. In addition, *Valley CAN* initiates new approaches and programs. Last year's Expo had over 110 exhibitors and 800 participants. Save the date for this year's Expo and check out the website at www.valley-can.org.

Short Sea Shipping—Clean Air Proposal To Be Discussed January 28

Operation Clean Air (OCA) and the Air District are co-sponsoring an all day conference at the Fresno Convention Center on January 28 to discuss, analyze and consider an interesting new proposal called Short Sea Shipping (SSS). The concept is to use specially designed clean operating ships to move semi-truck trailers from the ports in the south to the north and the reverse overnight. This approach would remove thousands of trucks off of 99 and I-5 each day. SSS would save fuel, reduce pollution, ease congestion, avoid the need for billions to add lanes and repair highways to accommodate increased truck traffic and reduce truck-involved accidents. The conference is free and includes a lunch. It is open to the public but is designed to get decision makers from the ports, the State, EPA, local government and the transportation and shipping industries together to try to agree that a full-blown feasibility study needs to be funded and completed. Go to <http://www.operationcleanair.org> for more information and to register.

