

Jacobson Culinary Arts Academy, Envision 2014, Budget and Placement Fairs
By Julie M. Janssen

This month I come to you with a heavy heart as I am saddened by the tragic news of so many deaths that have occurred within our district over the past few weeks. At the same time, I am so proud of how our principals, students, staff members and entire school communities have pulled together during these tragedies. Crisis teams made up of district and school grief counselors, social workers and psychologists have assisted more than 1,000 of our students. We could not have gotten through these difficult times without their guidance and strength. I am thankful for their service and expertise in providing the stability that we need when these unforeseen crises occur.

Turning toward a positive thought, I am excited about the upcoming Grand Opening of the Jacobson Culinary Arts Academy at Tarpon Springs High this Friday, April 24. This 11,600 square-foot, state-of-the-art career academy, includes two complete teaching kitchens with 48 student cooking stations, a 50-seat teaching kitchen/auditorium, and a 100-seat dining room/restaurant that will provide our students with one of the most sophisticated high school culinary arts academies in the United States. The \$5-million funding for the academy was provided by a capital campaign through the Pinellas Education Foundation and included gifts by longtime Tarpon Springs resident, Carol Martin and the EIMar Foundation and the Richard O. Jacobson Foundation as well as several other major contributors. The public is welcome to attend the celebration of this wonderful new learning facility.

At the April Superintendent's meeting, I presented principals and district leaders with an overview of [Envision 2014](#), the foundation for our strategic initiatives. This five-year plan will be our guide as we begin to shape a new vision and chapter in the district's history. This information is available on Moodle and on the district website. If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to review this important information that summarizes our plan for 100% student success.

During a recent school board workshop, the district finance team reviewed the latest budget model that includes the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) stimulus funding totaling \$35-million for our district for each of the next two years. While we continue to learn more about the requirements of using and reporting these funds, we now are better able to move forward in the budget process. We anticipate the need for \$56-million in spending cuts for 2009-10 and have already proposed reductions of \$45-million in non-salary areas. At the last Bargaining Leadership Team meeting, the employee organizations unanimously agreed that furloughs were preferred over pay cuts for employees if our proposed budget reductions did not meet the full amount we need to cut in order to balance the budget. The School Board will determine the required number of furlough days for each employee group based on the difference between proposed district budget reductions and the amount remaining to balance the budget for 2009-10.

The district is moving forward with placement fair plans for instructional and support employees who may be affected by school closings and other budget-cutting strategies. The district's Placement Fair for Involuntary Transfers has been rescheduled for Friday, June 5, 2009, at Pinellas Park High. The decision to reschedule the fair was made in cooperation with PCTA and is a result of budgetary uncertainties and complicated issues related to student assignments, unit allocations and program changes that have been delayed. Once the involuntary transfers are identified and confirmed, the HR Department will communicate the details of the placement process. A Supporting Services Placement Fair also is anticipated when all budget decisions have been made and placement opportunities have been identified.

In effort to enhance communication with parents, staff and the community, our communications office has begun posting district news on Twitter. Twitter is the third largest networking and micro-blogging service that lets users send and read other users' updates known as tweets. Tweets are text posts up to 140 bytes in length. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them. Sign up to follow district news at www.twitter.com/pcschools.

Finally, as many of you may already know, Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Harry Brown, will be leaving the Pinellas County Schools' family at the end of June. After 25 years with us, Harry will be continuing his career in education as the principal of Renaissance College, a private International Baccalaureate school in Hong Kong. We all will miss him and we wish him well in his worldly educational endeavors.