

The College Review

The quarterly newsletter of Think College Now, a college-focused small public elementary school

THINK COLLEGE NOW

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Welcome to Year 6!

TCN Celebrates Back to (Distinguished) School Night

As in previous years, Back to School Night saw Think College Now enter September with great accomplishments at its back – and big plans for the future.

But the school greeted families and students with something extra to open its sixth year: TCN was named a California Distinguished School last spring, an honor shared by only two other Oakland schools! In a ceremony in Los Angeles, State Superintendent Jack O'Connell rewarded TCN for its "school-wide vision of excellence where every student can succeed and achieve at the very highest levels." Back home, the city of Oakland honored TCN with a special "commendation" in a city council meeting.

The district's "Use Your Voice" results shared at Back to School Night support these distinguished accolades. Among our parents, 99% are satisfied with teachers, and 96% say they feel encouraged to participate in school activities. 94% of students say they've learned a lot from their teachers, and 89% say, "I am going to college." 100% of teachers believe



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parents support strategies to improve achievement.

Our California Standards Test (CST) results are equally encouraging. As the graph on this page lays out, the percentage of TCN students at or above grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math increased for the fourth consecutive year. These scores are also well above both Oakland and statewide averages.

New Goals for 2008-09

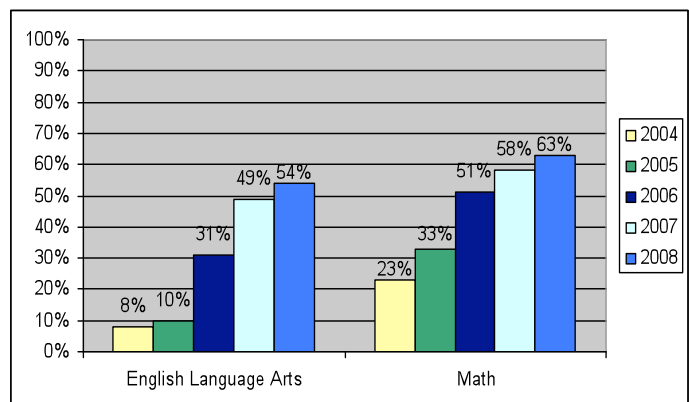
After sharing these positive numbers, Principal David Silver and Assistant Principal Doran Catlin outlined plans and goals designed to help TCN build on its award-winning reputation.

In ELA, students will use the widely successful Accelerated Reader to track reading comprehension progress, and TCN has partnered with Drew Hetzel to open a Reading Partners tutoring center on campus. *[Continued on page 2]*



Students with medals awarded at Back to School Night

Percentage of TCN Students At or Above CST Grade Level Over Time





The 2008-09 Think College Now Staff in front of mural painted by after-school program students

These efforts will hopefully only bolster the amazing writing growth we saw last year: TCN 4th-graders had the second-highest improvement in the entire district, leaping from 19 to 70 percent at grade level or higher. With continued achievement growth, we hope to reach our Academic Performance Index (API) goal of 800.

Beyond academics, we're looking to improve our already strong culture by dedicating more energy to social-emotional learning. We've recruited four social work interns and increased the hours of our social worker, Michelle Morales. We're also pushing to boost our after-school program attendance (which is already high) by adding WOW, a Girls Inc. program focused on self-esteem building, nutrition, and sports, as well as bringing on *Super Stars Literacy* for lower-grade boys. We also look to empower our Family Resource Center to better connect families with teachers, classrooms, and community resources – something it has continued to do so well every year.

Finally, in what may be our most ambitious effort, we plan to send every student on three different field trips in 2008-09. Every grade level will visit a college campus, go on a social studies field trip, and take one science-based

excursion. Hands-on learning outside of school is invaluable in expanding horizons and giving kids real-life examples they can connect to their classwork.

As is often the case, money is a major roadblock. These trips are costly, from transportation to food to venue rental. TCN hopes to draw on the wider community to help fund the trips. (See the "SUPPORT TCN!" sidebar on this page!)

Student Stands Tall for Small Schools

Since its founding, Think College Now has been dedicated to the spirit and values behind the small schools movement. Its emphasis on small class sizes, individual attention for students, and entrepreneurial vision has guided us every step of the way.

Recently, the TCN community has rallied to support Oakland's small schools, turning out in force at several events. At one school board meeting, TCN 5th-grader took the mic to speak as convincingly as any administrator could: "My name is Javier. I am a 5th-grader at Think College Now. The teachers are great and make us focus on our work. The parents are brave because they are trying to help our school be better and for us to have a better education. My classmates are helpful and enjoy learning. I hope there are more great schools like TCN." We're proud of you, Javier!

SUPPORT TCN!

Thanks to generous donors near and far, Think College Now raised \$63,000 from individuals last year! To support our goals for 2008-09, we're shooting to raise \$100,000 in the coming year. This money will help fund three field trips per student, pay for library books, and give our teachers much-needed resources such as LCD projectors and document projectors (both very expensive and well beyond our already-stretched budget).

You can make a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation by visiting www.thinkcollegenow.org/donate, or by sending a check to "OSSF/TCN," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620.

Think College Now
Juntos,
Si Se Puede!

