

Freedom School, Perhaps Largest In California, Prepares For Influx Of Several Hundred Additional Students

Residents Of District Vote Tuesday On Special Tax To Raise Funds For Classrooms

Freedom union elementary school—which has the largest enrollment of any rural elementary school in this region and possibly in California—is making plans to care for an additional influx of several hundred youngsters this coming school year.

The reason? Some 200 new houses are being constructed in Watsonville's Roache district, where Freedom school is located. One large building project is just across the road from the school. Majority of all these new homes will be completed and occupied this fall.

"We've been told that there will be an average of two-and-a-half children in those families which will come to this district to live," said Mrs. Eleanor Fontes, superintendent and secretary of the district. She has been superintendent since six school districts were unionized in 1946 into the Freedom union district. She began teaching in the Larkin valley school in 1940.

Last October, enrollment at Freedom school was 1003. With the expected increase, more classroom space is badly needed. That's the reason district voters will go to the polls Tuesday, August 4, to vote on a proposed special tax of 50 cents. With this money, the trustees can make classrooms in a large barracks building on the grounds.

The proposal failed in June when only a small percentage of district voters appeared to cast their ballots. This time, the trustees expect much more interest and a large turnout of citizens.

In 1946, the Amesti, Calabasas, Fruitvale, Larkin Valley, Roache and San Andreas school districts were unionized, forming the Freedom union elementary school district.

With Linton Forrester, still a member of the board of trustees, spearheading the movement, the district acquired the site and facilities of the former naval air station. For only one dollar the district received the bulk of the 14 buildings now in use. Later, for only \$1857, additional buildings and land were purchased from the war assets administration. The district has spent over \$100,000 in altering these buildings, making them suitable for school use, and for securing necessary equipment and furnishings.

Mrs. Fontes has taken an active part in all of these progressive steps of Freedom school.

She is no stranger to the Santa Cruz area as she has resided in Capitola since 1935. Her husband, Anthony (Pop) Fontes is a garage operator. Their two children, Mrs. Jessie Eller, now of Tacna, Ariz., and Wayne, attended Santa Cruz high school and they went to San Jose State college. Wayne became famous as national intercollegiate boxing champion in the 155-pound division. He has been an instructor at Soquel school for the past two years and next fall he will be principal of a school at Campbell. Mrs. Eller is the wife of an engineer in Arizona.

Mrs. Fontes, a native of Arkansas, came to California in 1913, residing first in San Mateo.

She received her A.B. degree at San Francisco State college and her administrative credential at San Jose State. She received her M.A. degree in administration at Stanford university.

Mrs. Fontes is a past president of the Santa Cruz Business and Professional Women's club. She is a member of the vestry of St. John's Episcopal church and she also served five years as a member of the Capitola planning commission.

When not occupied with school affairs this summer, she enjoys her baby-sitting activities with her grandchildren.

The school district of which she is superintendent has 40 teachers and some 20 non-certified personnel.

ificated personnel.

There are three kindergarten teachers. They hold morning sessions only and spend the afternoons conferring with parents, visiting homes, etc.

There are four first grade, four second grade, five third grade, four fourth grade, four fifth grade, four sixth grade, four seventh grade and three eighth grade teachers.

There is an industrial arts instructor for seventh and eighth grade boys and a home-making teacher for all seventh and eighth grade girls. The students spend one hour a day in these classes.

A physical education instructor for sixth, seventh and eighth grade boys plans and supervises the entire physical education program. Bill Morey is instrumental music teacher with 50 in the school band and 30 in the orchestra. There also is a speech therapist who instructs daily in the kindergarten, first, second and third grades and has remedial work with older children.

Non-certificated employees include Phyllis Normand, librarian; Alden Rhody, attendance clerk; Florence Skillcorn, office manager; Gertrude Dyer, cafeteria manager; and Otto Bewley, resident custodian.

There are six employees in the cafeteria as well as a school gardener, two janitors, two maintenance men and five bus drivers.

Trustees of the district are Linton Forrester, Courtney Proctor, John Hoover, R. Joe Reimer and Sidney Vanderpool.

Citizens School Committee Will Meet Monday

A public meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Committee to the city board of education will be held tomorrow night at 7:30 at the Mission Hill auditorium, according to Mrs. Hulda MacLean, chairman of the organization.

The meeting has been called in order to discuss with the public the closing of the Branciforte elementary and Santa Cruz high school buildings, prior to the end of the school term last month.

The public will be encouraged to ask questions relative to the closings and the committee will discuss with the public the information it has obtained before making its recommendations to the school board.

Mrs. and Mrs. Clarke Johnston, 992 I... ed fr... at th... Lake

Freedom Superintendent Faces Busy Year



Mrs. Eleanor Fontes, superintendent of Freedom union elementary school since six districts were unionized in 1946, is pictured above at her desk at the school in Watsonville's Roache district. A resident of Capitola since 1935, Mrs. Fontes is well-known in this area and has been active in Capitola civic affairs. She is a past president of the Santa Cruz Business and Professional Women's club.

Freedom school, which has one of the largest enrollments of any rural elementary school in the state, expects several hundred more pupils next year inasmuch as some 200 new homes are being constructed in the Roache district. A classroom-extension program is planned.

Mrs. Fontes began teaching in Larkin Valley school, which was one of the districts in the unionization program, in 1940. She is pictured also with the bell from the first U.S.S. Langley, which now is attached to the school's flagpole. It was obtained by the school through efforts of Admiral Harry Hansen, USN, retired, who was county civil defense director until his retirement last June 1.

When Commodore Perry landed in Japan in 1853 he found that the villagers at Kurihama, 30 miles south of Tokyo, were terrified at the black smoke pouring from the funnels of his gunboats.



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