



SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item# 10.2

Meeting Date: May 16, 2013

Subject: Early Childhood Development

- ☒ Information Item Only
- ☐ Approval on Consent Agenda
- ☐ Conference (for discussion only)
- ☐ Conference/First Reading (Action Anticipated: _____)
- ☐ Conference/Action
- ☐ Action
- ☐ Public Hearing

Segment/Department: Academic Office/Child Development

Recommendation: None

Background/Rationale:

Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) believes that learning begins long before children enter preschool. The process for ensuring that children acquire the necessary skills that will render them college and career ready, which is an essential pillar that serves to anchor the district's vision for *all* of its students, begins during the early years. Over the course of the past two years, SCUSD has been focused on the need for increased articulation among its Child Development, Early Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs. The onset of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards brings heightened awareness to the implications that this reality poses for preschool curricular and instructional practices. Quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs can play a pivotal role in closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students meet the established goals outlined in pillar one of the district's strategic plan, College and Career Ready Students. To facilitate children's progression along the SCUSD learning continuum, Child Development has executed a number of initiatives to ensure children's successful progression along SCUSD's learning continuum.

Financial Considerations:

The Child Development program is supported by the following funding sources: Head Start (\$8,396,924), Early Head Start (\$1,544,881), State Preschool (\$4,766,198), State General Child Care (\$1,010,068), Partners for School Readiness/First-5 (\$1,200,000), and School-Aged Fee-Based (\$1,179,890), which totals \$18,097,961.

Documents Attached:

1. Executive Summary

Estimated Time of Presentation: 40 minutes

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Approved by: Jonathan P. Raymond, Superintendent

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I. Overview of Child Development

Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) recognizes that learning begins long before a youngster enters preschool. This process for ensuring that students are college and career ready, an essential pillar that serves to anchor the district's vision for *all of* its students, begins during the early years. In the past two years, SCUSD has had a laser-like focus on the need for increased articulation among its Child Development, Early Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs. Perpetuated by the reality that some of SCUSD's youngest students demonstrate disparities in the cognitive, oral language development, literacy and numeracy domains the moment they begin their trajectory in formal schooling, there has been increased emphasis on the need to examine the evidence of children's learning and to carefully consider the determinants of children's ultimate success as life-long learners. The district recognizes that the stakes are incredibly high in today's global community and that the effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards has huge implications for preschool curricular as well as teacher-child and parent-child engagement practices. Hence, there must be a sense of urgency around investigating ways to increase outcomes and the accomplishment of familial goals for young children and their families. SCUSD's collective efforts around this moral imperative remain "front and center" so its children may fare well and garner all of the skills necessary to successfully compete in the 21st century.

Over the years, the Child Development program has impacted scores of children and their families in the areas of school readiness, family efficacy and self-sufficiency. Today, in addition to the 275 children served through the Adult Education Parent Participation program, the Child Development program provides intensive and comprehensive center-based and home-based services to approximately 2,800 expectant families, infants/toddlers, preschool and school-age children from a variety of socio-economic strata, racial, ethnic and culturally-linguistic backgrounds. The program utilizes a compendium of curricula and assessments to enhance and determine children's physical, social-emotional and intellectual growth, with particular focus on children's development in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Child Development's philosophical approach, which is based on effective practices that are grounded in research, encompasses the very nature of children and captures the essence of developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all children. To this end, the department's work with children and their families is undergirded by the certain basic principles and beliefs:

- Development is sequential and orderly and all children, including atypically developing children, acquire skills and abilities at their own natural pace;

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- Children are both human and divine and approaches to teaching and learning must seek to nurture the child's mind, body and spirit;
- Educators of young children must be intentional in their efforts to scaffold children's development and must recognize that children possess multiple intelligences, unique temperaments and approaches to learning;
- Childhood educators must view them themselves primarily as facilitators, mediators and enablers of children's learning and must understand the merits of creating constructivist learning environments for children;
- Effective teachers of young children are continuous learners, visionaries, set high expectations for children—and are always intrigued with and delight in children;
- Families must be valued for their bonds, traditions and dreams for their young children as well as their commitment to work, home and community;
- Parent engagement in program planning, administration and decision making is essential to the healthy growth, development and academic success of all children;
- The distinct, racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences that exist among educators, children and their families can be instrumental in fostering a community of mutual respect and numerous opportunities for learning.

The Child Development program offers a variety of options for early care and education to income eligible children and families, which include the following:

- Head Start-Part Day (Monday-Thursday - 3.5 hours)
- Head Start State Wrap (Monday-Friday - 6 hours)
- Head Start State Children Center Collaboration (Monday-Friday, up to ten hours)
- Head Start Home-based (Home Visitations - 1.5 hours, one day per week; bi-weekly group socializations for 2 hours)
- Early Head Start-State Infant/Toddler (Center-based, Monday-Friday, up to 9.5 hours)
- Early Head Start Home-Based (Home Visitations - 1.5 hours, one day per week; bi-weekly group socializations for 2 hours)
- State Preschool-Part Day (Monday-Friday, 3 hours)
- School-Age (Before and after school care - Monday through Friday, up to eleven hours)
- School-Age, Fee-Based (Before and after school care - Monday-Friday, up to eleven hours)
- State General Child Care (Monday-Friday, up to eleven hours)
- Adult-Ed Parent-Participation (Ranges from 1-5 days/week)

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II. Driving Governance

The Child Development Department is committed to the district's vision for its students, which is anchored in the *Strategic Plan 2010-2014: Putting Children First* and its three foundational pillars: College and Career Ready Students, Family and Community Engagement and Organizational Transformation. Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs are touted as an effective remedy for minimizing the achievement gap that seems to persist among youngsters from low socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic minority families, when viewed in comparison to their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Research on the developing brain underscores the need to provide quality caregiving and educational experiences for youngsters during the very initial phase of their development. Furthermore, quality ECE programs that are comprehensive in scope and effectively administered constitute a good investment that yields high public returns, paying big dividends to society over time. Consequently, the earlier young children are linked to such programs, the greater the immediate outcomes and long-term benefits.

SCUSD ensures that its Child Development program upholds the eight essential elements of effective ECE programs in the execution of its daily operations. These quintessential elements include:

- The establishment of well-provisioned learning environments for young children, which are physically safe, emotionally nurturing and intellectually stimulating;
- Appropriate adult-child ratios to facilitate developmentally appropriate differentiated (individualized) instruction;
- A knowledgeable and qualified teaching workforce and ongoing professional learning that is job-embedded and which encourages ongoing reflection, self-study and inquiry;
- The implementation of research-based curriculum and ongoing assessment of children that respects children's range of experiences, diversity, language(s) spoken and cultural backgrounds;
- Continuity of care as children transition from classroom to classroom and from one program option to another;
- A holistic approach towards addressing the varied needs of children and their families in the areas of physical/mental health, social, emotional and cognitive development, including the specific needs of children with mild to significant disabilities;
- Opportunities for parents to engage in decision-making processes relative to the governance and daily operation of the program, including opportunities to volunteer on a variety of different program levels;

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- Evidence-based leadership that is responsive to staff needs and effective, including ongoing supervision of staff that leads to professional growth and increased program accountability.

III. Budget

The SCUSD Child Development program is supported primarily with the following state and federal categorical funds:

Head Start	\$8,396,924
Early Head Start	\$1,544,881
State Preschool	\$4,766,198
State General Child Care	\$1,010,068
Partners for School Readiness/First-5	\$1,200,000
School-Aged Fee-Based	\$1,179,890
Total Funding	\$18,097,961

IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures

As a critical part of the district's learning continuum, Child Development remains committed to cultivating the dispositions and habits of mind in preschoolers that are essential for college and career readiness. Hence, the department's focus on children's literacy and numeracy acquisition through the use of developmentally appropriate curricula and instructional methodologies that will predispose children to the rigor they will encounter in elementary school. It is Child Development's primary goal to set preschoolers on a learning trajectory that will allow them to graduate as globally competitive lifelong learners, prepared to succeed in a higher education institution and career of their choice and to become contributing members of society.

Additionally, as a delegate agency of Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), the SCUSD Child Development department is required to adopt the grantee's three-year county-wide School Readiness Goals (SRG) for both the Head Start and the Early Head Start program. The three goals, which are under the rubric of three broad categories, mental health, health

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and school readiness are: 1) utilize a range of services, systems and support to increase awareness of and participation in activities that contribute to children's, families' and staff's mental wellness; 2) bolster school readiness by developing the role of parents, students, and staff by implementing effective strategies for the classroom instructional and emotional support that lead to high quality learning experiences both at home and at school; and 3) increase prevention strategies that promote health and wellness among staff, children and families.

Child Development utilizes a variety of measures, both quantitative and qualitative to determine, success indicators relative to the established goals indicated above. At the very basic level, success is evidenced by the observation of concrete and tangible changes in teacher practices, engagement and curricular approaches. Through the administration of interim assessments, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), teacher observations and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), the program will determine its impact on student learning. Additionally, results from the program's annual self-assessment; children's portfolios, SETA executed monitoring; teacher evaluations; Family Partnership Agreements (FPA); infant/toddler/preschool environmental rating scales; child file reviews; parent surveys and feedback from parent workshops will be used to measure progress of the goals.

V. Major Initiatives

Comprehensive Literacy Initiative

Recognizing the inextricable link between children's readiness for school and their early literacy development, over the course of the past two years, Child Development staff has been engaged in extensive professional learning exploring the critical elements of early literacy development in young children including alphabet knowledge (recognition), oral language development and phonemic awareness. Additionally, teachers have been provided a variety of strategies and support to administer ongoing interim assessments to children in order to determine their progress in meeting the established literacy benchmarks. In order to ensure sustained learning and build staff's capacity, Resource Teachers have provided extensive job-embedded coaching and support on the key elements proven to effect change in teacher practice.

With this enhanced understanding of the critical elements of early literacy development, the very important work of ensuring curricular alignment with the district's K-6 balanced literacy approach and the ELA Common Core State Standards has begun. The teaching and learning are conducted in print-rich environments where the message that reading for pleasure and reading for information is highly valued and widespread. This implementation of balanced literacy

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coupled with developmentally appropriate Common Core aligned standards will result in a literacy environment where students and staff are considered a community of learners.

Early Numeracy Initiative

Early numeracy is a fundamental building block for creating a solid foundation for deeper conceptual understanding and fluency in mathematics, science, social studies and technology. Hence, the Child Development staff is focusing on key essential elements including cardinality, conservation of number and one-to-one correspondence. Staff continues to expand their content knowledge and instructional methodologies by engaging in professional learning that addresses preschool mathematics and appropriate teaching strategies that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. To further build staff's capacity to successfully facilitate children's numeracy development, ongoing job-embedded coaching will be provided.

Health and Nutrition Education Initiative

Childhood obesity in the US is growing in epidemic proportions. Therefore, it is imperative that young children are provided learning experiences, which include the development of nutritional awareness and healthy eating habits as they grow. Recognizing the importance of this issue and in accordance to the established three-year goals, Child Development regularly monitors children's height, weight, nutritional challenges and medical allergies to provide nutrition education support and assistance to families.

Additionally, Child Development collaborates with a variety of educational and community partners such as the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Alliance and Capay Valley Farmers. These partners assist the department's efforts to provide nutrition education programs via parent workshops that promote the consumption of fresh foods and healthy eating for children and families. For example, parents have participated in cooking classes focusing on the use a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and were granted the opportunity to take the fresh produce home. As a result, families are benefitting greatly by learning about the nutritional value of fresh fruits and vegetables and their preparation. These experiences are enabling our families to assimilate these positive habits into their daily lives.

Social Emotional Learning

Child Development is infusing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into its curricular programs and teacher practice. The approach focuses on the social and emotional development of children from birth to five and utilizes a pyramid model to support their development of self-regulation and problem solving skills. This approach seamlessly aligns to the district's SEL initiative. During the course of this entire year, teaching staff participated in several SEL professional learning

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events, received on-site coaching support and obtained numerous resources dedicated to teaching strategies that support young children's social emotional development. As a result, teachers have become more proficient in the area of providing child-centered activities and creating classroom environments, which include consistent routines and schedules that support children's interests, learning modalities and social emotional development. Parents were also provided information and tools to support their children's social emotional development in the home environment and increased their awareness of the importance of providing consistent routines for children and supporting children's developing interests and learning modalities.

Inclusive Practices

Child Development is collaborating with the Special Education Department to provide a range of special education services and supports to children with mild to significant disabilities. Building on the foundation that has been laid by the Special Education Department, this year, Child Development has adopted the same inclusive practices framework that is being implemented in the district. The inclusive practices methodology is being utilized in nine classrooms at five sites (Isadora Cohen, Ethel Baker, Edward Kemble, Earl Warren and Hiram Johnson). Teachers have received professional development in co-teaching, which is the district's primary instructional delivery model for inclusive practices. This co-teaching model consists of two credentialed teachers sharing responsibility for planning and delivering instruction in the classroom. The instruction is rigorous and relevant for all students due to the unique expertise of each teacher.

VI. Results

Comprehensive Literacy Initiative

Child Development's literacy initiative is having a positive impact on students' learning arc. Baseline data on children's knowledge of the alphabet collected for approximately 1,400 four year-old preschoolers in the fall of 2012, compared to data collected on children during the late winter, yielded very positive results. Pre-kindergarten (kinder-bound) children, including English Learners (EL), showed reliable and significant alphabet knowledge growth from the fall to winter. Furthermore, kinder-bound children with special needs also demonstrated growth, and the level of growth was comparable to children without special needs. While some growth can be attributed to children's natural maturation, it is safe to attribute much of the growth in letter recognition among children, which is a critical skill for children's later reading success, to teacher instructional practices. Similarly, Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment data measuring children's literacy and language development administered in the fall 2012 and winter 2013 yielded significant growth in the two highest performance areas,

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which are “building” and “integrating.” The fall assessment revealed that approximately 27% of the children performed at these two levels compared to 49% on the winter 2013 administration.

Numeracy Initiative

Staff reported that the initial exposure to professional learning in numeracy development peaked their interest and has underscored the need to provide appropriate numeracy experiences for young children. To this end, staff will engage in more extensive professional learning in this domain in the summer of 2013.

Health and Nutrition Education Initiative

Parents reported that the health and nutrition initiatives devoted to nutrition education for Child Development children and their families have elevated the significance of maintaining healthier lifestyles. Recently, parents requested permission to form a nutrition committee, which will allow them an opportunity to apply some of their new knowledge in the area of health and nutrition when working conjointly with SCUSD staff, including SCUSD Nutrition Services, to create children’s menus. Additionally, this past April, a small group of parents met at a local community grocery store to receive guidance from the registered dietitian in reading and appropriately discerning ingredients included in packaged foods so that parents can make informed decisions about what kinds of packaged goods to include in their shopping carts. Lessons in seeking the best value when purchasing food were also offered. Parents have expressed an interest in continued participation in these types of activities.

Social Emotional Learning

With regard to the effective implementation SEL training and teachers’ regular usage of SEL strategies in the preschool classrooms, Child Development has evidence indicating that there is a decrease in the amount of conflict and problematic relationships among children in the classroom; children tend to “use their words more” and are more apt to articulate their feelings and social/emotional needs, as well as engage in increased problem solving. Furthermore, Child Development has also found that the increased usage of SEL strategies being integrated into the daily operations of the preschool classroom, has led to more of an increase in the positive classroom environment and better management of the preschool classrooms. Finally, it is important to note that the DRDP assessment conducted in the fall 2012 and winter 2013 in the area of social emotional development yielded positive growth for children. Winter assessment data indicated a 26% increase in children’s overall performance at the “building” and “integrating” levels in the area of social and emotional development when compared to the fall data.

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Another substantial benefit has been parents' use of SEL strategies at home, simultaneously. To reinforce children's social emotional learning at home and in order to foster better connections between home and school, parents have been provided information and tools to support their children's social emotional development in the home environment. Child development parents have received informational booklets in their respective language and have been offered a series of parent workshops focusing on children's social emotional development. Hence, parents have also increased their awareness of the importance of providing consistent routines for children and supporting children's developing interests and learning modalities. Children benefit from having predictable routines and adults in their lives that understand and support their individual interests and learning when engaged in home activities.

Inclusive Practices

Although in its infancy, the implementation of inclusive practices is showing positive results. Teachers conveyed that there is greater collaboration which has served to hone their instructional practice and has resulted in more consistent utilization of instructional strategies to support children's learning and development. Both special education and general education students are showing signs of improvement. This is indicative in their improved communication skills as well as increased ability to engage in critical thinking and problem solving. Lastly, parents of students with special needs have reported that they are appreciative of their children's participation in a "normalized" classroom setting.

VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps

- Continue to provide extensive professional learning in the areas of language and literacy development.
- Include instructional aides in the professional learning activities on an on-going basis to maximize impact on student learning.
- Expand numeracy initiative professional learning to include opportunities for teachers and aides to examine their attitude, experiences, and beliefs about mathematics.
- Maintain coaching and mentoring support to teachers and aides to ensure effective, developmentally appropriate numeracy instruction.
- Continue to provide opportunities for parents and families to engage in a range of health and nutrition education activities in order to educate the "whole child."
- Provide SEL professional learning and more targeted coaching/mentoring support for teachers in the areas of supporting children's establishment of positive peer relationships, including children's acquisition of impulse control.
- Deepen staff's understanding of inclusive practices via the co-teaching model.