October 12, 2012

Teaching and Learning

Common Core: Going Further

This week, SCUSD launched its Common Core State Standards professional learning for the 2012-13 school year. This marks the district’s third year of work on the new content standards, which are academically more rigorous, and designed with the goal that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Although the standards will not be implemented statewide until 2014-15, the district is preparing for the changes.

SCUSD has spent the past two years working with groups of teachers and school leaders to learn the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core Standards. Two groups will engage in the professional learning this school year. The first group, Cohort B, consists of five-to-seven member teacher teams from 19 early implementation sites representing elementary, middle and high schools from across the district. The second group, the ELA Leadership Cadre, is comprised of leadership teams from each of the remaining schools and includes the principal and two to three teacher leaders. Both groups will spend the year engaged in inquiry-based professional learning to deepen their understanding of the ELA Common Core Standards and the instruction and assessment that best supports all students to read and write rich and complex informational texts.

District leaders and teachers will also begin their professional learning of the Mathematics Common Core Standards this year with a focus on grades 3-8. Through a generous grant, the district is using a two-pronged approach to serve and support all elementary/K-8 and middle schools. This approach consists of identifying target grade levels and focus schools. The target grade levels will serve two teachers per grade level per school in 36 elementary/K-8 and three middle schools, which total approximately 312 teachers. These teachers will participate in district professional learning for four months during which time, as a community of practice, they will develop the modules, implement them, examine student work and reflect on their own practice. In addition, they will have the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues on-site and further address local concerns twice per year, totaling 12 hours. The target grade levels will receive quarterly coaching support from the district training specialists. Even though these teachers will not receive the same level of
support as the focus schools, we are confident they will generate powerful information pertaining to bringing all schools on board.

In regard to the focus schools, they will serve as full early implementation sites, and as such, all teachers in the designated grade levels will participate. There are 12 elementary and five middle focus schools with approximately 224 teachers. Although these schools will receive four days of district professional development to develop the modules, implement them, examine student work and reflect on their own practice, coupled with the two on-site days to attend to local concerns, they will receive greater support. In addition to receiving monthly coaching support, they will be afforded eight additional hours for on-site common planning time. Accordingly, these schools will serve as demonstration sites as well as help to inform the scalability and sustainability of the work.

Since deep learning and conceptual understanding are our key levers, we will strategically “go slow to go fast.” Meaning, the learning and development will center around the following one or two domains and three practices aimed at building and solidifying students’ understanding of fractions and proportional reasoning, which are fundamental pre-algebra concepts and serve as cornerstones and gatekeepers to algebra:

- **Domains**
  - Gr. 3-5: Number and Operations - Fractions
  - Gr. 6-7: Ratios and Proportional Reasoning and The Number System
  - Gr. 8: Expressions and Equations and Functions

- **Mathematics and Corresponding Science Practices**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mathematics Practices</th>
<th>Science Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them</td>
<td>Asking questions and defining problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend to precision</td>
<td>Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model with mathematics</td>
<td>Using mathematics and computational thinking</td>
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**District Awarded CASEL Grant**

The NoVo Grants Committee on Tuesday approved SCUSD’s proposal for a $750,000, three-year grant to support district-wide implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The grant will begin on November 1 and will be distributed in three equal amounts of $250,000 over three years. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning and NoVo Foundation now will be following up with district with questions and comments generated by the grant review process.
A letter to the district from the NoVo Foundation states: “We applaud your early efforts in planning for this work, and look forward to learning along with you and other participants in this initiative, so that we may expand this effort to more districts and more students. Once again, congratulations!”

**Operations**

**Health Services**

Health Services is charged with supervision of the health and safety of all SCUSD students, spanning the developmental spectrum of preschool through young adulthood. Students with complex medical needs require careful planning and implementation to support their academic engagement, attendance and safety needs. Since school started last month, credentialed school nurses have written and disseminated 284 individualized Emergency Care Plans and are working on 150 more.

Each plan requires a variety of actions which may include consulting the student’s physician, conferencing with parents, checking medications and supplies and assessing developmental levels of students. These plans inform staff on how to care for students with diabetes, seizure disorders, anaphylactic reactions, moderate to severe asthma and implanted medical devices in emergent situations. Complementary workshops facilitated by Health Services nursing staff are occurring at both the site and district level.

**Nutrition Services’ Padilla Wins ‘Health Happens Heroes’ Award**

Nutrition Services Manager Brenda Padilla has won a “Health Happens Hero” award from The California Endowment (TCE) for her leadership in making SCUSD school meals healthier for kids. The award comes with a $10,000 grant for the district. “We’re proud to give Health Happens Heroes awards to leaders who ‘walk the walk’ to improve health in our schools, neighborhoods and with prevention,” said Robert K. Ross, CEO of The California Endowment, in a press release. Congratulations Brenda!

**Community Engagement**

**API Press Conference**

SCUSD hosted a press conference on Thursday to announce district scores on the state’s Academic Performance Index (API). The event was held at Fern Bacon Middle School to honor the campus for its two-year, 99-point rise in API, which is the highest amount of gain for a SCUSD middle school and for a SCUSD Priority School. Speakers included Fern Bacon Principal Nancy Purcell, Sacramento County Teacher of the Year Jennifer Ellerman and Superintendent Raymond. The Board will receive a full data report next month.