Teaching and Learning

Sacramento ‘Pathways to Prosperity’ Meeting

The curriculum committee of the “Sacramento Pathways to Prosperity” initiative met today to advance the work of creating a seamless pre-K-through-college pipeline and roadmap for Sacramento youth and families. The “Sacramento Pathways to Prosperity” initiative is a partnership between the Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD), California State University (CSU) and SCUSD. The goals are to remove the obstacles to college; demystify and build a roadmap to college; build post-secondary college confidence; and reduce or eliminate the need for college remediation classes.

Representatives from the three institutions, including teachers/faculty, student support services staff and administrators, met to address the task of aligning the English Language Arts and math curricula to ensure that more students are prepared to not only enter but successfully graduate from the post-secondary institution of their choice. The team centered their dialogue on the recently adopted California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and mathematics, which provide a guideline for college readiness. The group will continue to meet and future sessions will focus on sharing data and resources that would ensure that all students graduate from SCUSD career and college ready.

Social and Emotional Learning

A team from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) held trainings on Wednesday and Thursday with district staff. On Wednesday, the team introduced social and emotional learning (SEL) to a group of SCUSD administrative leaders. The presentation included research on the many benefits of SEL, including gains in student academic performance, improved staff morale and calmer campuses. Social and emotional learning involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to: Understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions. The CASEL team also discussed the five SEL competency areas (self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness and responsible decision-making) and how SEL fits in with the Common Core Standards.
On Thursday, the district’s SEL Planning Team discussed ways to integrate SEL into core curriculum, thereby making it systemic. Members also worked on development of a “district strength inventory” or survey to assess current SEL programming.

SCUSD is one of eight districts nationwide participating in a CASEL cohort. Funding for SEL planning by SCUSD comes from a NoVo Foundation planning grant of $125,000.

**Operations**

**Bargaining Update**

Negotiations continued this week with representatives of the district and both the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The talks were productive and positive.

**Opening of Schools 2012**

Representatives of all SCUSD departments met on Wednesday for the initial meeting of many to follow on the opening of schools in the fall of 2012. The group discussed the many tasks that need to be completed to ensure a smooth transition into the new school year. They also discussed the communication that will be critical to implementing the various tasks. The group will continue to meet every two weeks through June. As the first day of school nears, they will step up the schedule to once-a-week meetings.

**Suspected Copper Thieves Arrested**

SCUSD maintenance worker Gary Bernauer and school surveillance cameras helped Sacramento police arrest men suspected of stealing copper wire from schools over Spring Break. The cameras caught images of men stealing copper from the air conditioning units of Bret Harte Elementary on Sunday, April 1. Then on Thursday, April 5, Mr. Bernauer noticed the two men from the video walking around Joseph Bonnheim Elementary School. Officers arrived and arrested the two suspects whom they believe were in the middle of stealing copper from that school’s air conditioners.

**Community Engagement**

**Welcoming Schools Update**

The Office of School, Family and Community Partnerships (SFCP) has now completed the Climate Walk Through (a milestone in the Welcoming Schools Certification Process) at two additional schools: Ethel I. Baker Elementary School (March 28) and Camellia Basic Elementary School (April 11). District staff and parents from each school site crisscrossed the campus from parking lot to multipurpose room. During the walk through, the team observed how each site reflects a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere that highlights the culture and diversity of the community and reflects school pride.
Another milestone of the Welcoming Schools Certification Process is the Community Quality Review (CQR). Groups of parents, students, teachers and community partners (in addition to the leadership team) are interviewed by the SFCP team of staff and CQR-trained parents. The open-ended questions touch on the four domains for feedback to the schools (School Culture and Context for Learning; Family Understanding and Engagement; Community Partners; and Leadership). On April 10, Hiram Johnson High School participated in the CQR, so has now completed this milestone. The next step will be the Community Presentation. Training for principals and staff on the Community Presentation will take place in May.

**SCUSD’s Bully Prevention Specialist Speaks at Summit**

SCUSD Bully Prevention Specialist Sheila Self participated on a panel with state Assemblymen Paul Fong, Cameron Smyth and Bob Weickowski at the Legislative School Summit held on Wednesday. Professor Mimi Coughlin of California State University, Sacramento’s Education Department moderated the discussion. The Legislative School Summit, a collaboration between CSUS and the California State Legislature, is held annually.

The Summit provided an educational forum in which California’s high school students and policy makers could engage in face-to-face dialogue about the issue of bullying in California schools. Students from across California submitted essays on bullying and the 10 students who won the competition came to the Capitol and participated in the Summit. The Summit allowed the students to sit in the Assembly dais and interview the panel mentioned above. The project-based activity gave students a real-life experience of being a member of the Assembly or Senate, asking questions from witnesses.

Also, on Tuesday, Ms. Self attended a special showing of the documentary “Bully” at the Tower Theatre and participated in a short panel discussion following the film.