January 20, 2012

Teaching and Learning

Special Education Redesign Team

The Special Education Department has convened a Redesign Team to assist in analysis of current Special Education programs and to make recommendations for improvement in service delivery for students with special needs. A cross-section of administrators, parents, Special Education teachers, general education teachers, instructional aides and support staff are joining forces to do this exciting work. The team clearly understands that the high-leverage initiatives being rolled out in the district include opportunities and expectations that students will be supported to become college or career ready by the time they graduate from high school or transition from school-age services. To that end, it is obvious that our traditional and often compliance-driven system will not move us to the high level of achievement we are after. The team has come together to question, dream, test and evaluate our options to produce the system we are looking for in the 21st century. Teaching, learning, and access to the least restrictive environment, will be our focus.

The first meeting was held Wednesday, January 11 with 18 enthusiastic participants in attendance. The group began “visioning” work at the first meeting and this will be continued at the next meeting. The team will reconvene on Tuesday, January 31, with additional meetings scheduled into March.

IB Program Seats Made Available Through Open Enrollment

The capacity of Luther Burbank High School’s International Baccalaureate (IB) program will be expanded for the 2012-13 freshman class to allow a limited number of Open Enrollment students to apply. In the past, the IB program was open only to students living in Burbank’s attendance area. In a policy change, students from other parts of the district will be allowed to enroll via Open Enrollment, which begins January 30. The limit on Open Enrollment students will be 10 percent of the IB program’s freshmen class.

Operations

Online Payment Service for Student Lunches to Launch

Starting February 1, SCUSD families will be able to pay for student meals online, which will streamline lunchtime cafeteria service, reduce long lines and eliminate risks associated with the
handling of cash. The service will also eliminate a considerable amount of paperwork, which aligns with the district’s “green” agenda.

Through the mySchoolBucks.com online payment system, parents can electronically deposit lunch money directly into SCUSD’s cafeteria fund bank account – untouched by school employees and children. The service uses a “super-secure” data center with a transaction system using 128-bit encryption for confidentiality. The upcoming district launch will include marketing the service to households through our K-6 printed menus, ConnectED phone calls, the eConnection newsletter and the district’s website.

Households will be able to prepay for as many meals as they wish using a credit or debit card. A $2 fee will apply. Parents will receive deposit confirmations and may sign up to receive notices when the account is running low on funds.

Sacramento Emerging Leaders Academy (SELA)

For SCUSD’s educational community to improve and grow, it is crucial that we train talented staff to take on future leadership roles. The Sacramento Emerging Leaders Academy (SELA), a result of the Sacramento High Performing Schools Compact and funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, will provide educators with the potential to become effective principals with an intensive leadership training course based on a research-proven curriculum.

The program is currently taking applications from educators within our district with proven leadership qualities. Applications are due February 1; space is limited to 40.

Community Budget Forums Scheduled

Five Community Budget Forums have been scheduled to provide families, employees and others with information about SCUSD’s 2012-13 budget and to receive feedback on proposed cuts. The schedule is:

- Thursday, January 26 – Luther Burbank High School (cafeteria)
- Monday, January 30 – C.K. McClatchy High School (library)
- Tuesday, January 31 – Rosemont High School (big theater)
- Monday, February 6 – John F. Kennedy High School (main auditorium)
- Wednesday, February 8 – Hiram Johnson High School (little theater)

All meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m. The district has also created a new budget page on SCUSD’s website (www.scusd.edu/BudgetNews) that includes links to media stories, updates from Board of Education meetings and a suggestion box. It also includes facts about our finances and questions and answers relating to rumors and myths about the district’s budget.
Leadership Academy Starts Winter Training Cycle

Twenty-five parent and community leaders will start their first session of the School-Family Partnership Leadership Academy on Monday at the Serna Center. The Leadership Academy, now on its third year, is offered by the district in collaboration with the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). The program is designed to provide parents and community members, who currently hold leadership positions in their schools or organizations with advanced training on collaborative leadership and educational issues. Among the session topics presented are: High Performing Schools; The Structure and Function of the School; The Structure and Function of the School District; The School Curriculum: What Your Child Should Know; Parent Rights; and Raising Academic Achievement through Parent Engagement. Besides topic speakers, the program sessions also include six interactive Leadership Modules on Collaborative Leadership. The program is supported by the Teichert Foundation.

Community Quality Review of Schools Training Begins

The School, Family and Community Partnership Department will be offering a training to parents and community stakeholders from the current cohort of schools participating in this year Welcoming School Certification Process. Twenty participants are attending two half-day trainings, one held today and another scheduled for tomorrow. The purpose of the training is to help participants learn about the process of a Community Quality Review of Schools, and develop a reference and guide for the review teams to evaluate schools. Reviewers will focus on four “criteria domains”:

- School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning: Students feel safe, secure and motivated to learn and engage rigorous learning challenges.
- Family Understanding & Engagement: The school promotes a comprehensive, proactive approach to family communication and engagement including opportunities to volunteer and advocate for their student(s).
- Community Partnerships: The school establishes/maintains collaborative community partnerships that support students and families, provide relevant opportunities to learn and offer ways students contribute to and learn from the community’s cultural, business and civic life.
- Leadership: School leaders’ actions reflect a collaborative culture that engenders trust and support among faculty, staff, families and members of the broader school community. School and community leaders initiate and sustain relationships and partnerships in a climate of mutual understanding and respect.

Community Quality Reviews will take place in the month of March. The following schools are currently participating in our Welcoming of Schools Certification Process:

- Albert Einstein Middle School
- Camellia Basic Elementary
- Caroline Wenzel Elementary
- Earl Warren Elementary
- Edward Kemble Elementary
- Ethel I. Baker Elementary
- Father Keith B. Kenny Elementary
• Fern Bacon Middle School
• Hiram Johnson High School
• John F. Kennedy High School
• Maple Elementary
• Peter Burnett Elementary
• Susan B. Anthony Elementary
• Rosa Parks Middle School
• Mark Hopkins Elementary
• Will C. Wood Middle School
• William Land Elementary