January 27, 2012

Teaching and Learning

Oak Ridge Wins School Improvement Grant, Begins City Year Partnership

Oak Ridge Elementary School has been awarded a three-year School Improvement Grant (SIG), with year one funding (2012-13) of $1,548,785 from the California Department of Education. The School Improvement Grant will allow Oak Ridge to expand the school day by 45 minutes, increasing time spent in core academics, student enrichment and teacher planning/collaboration. The grant will enhance all aspects of Oak Ridge’s transformation efforts, which are aligned with the core principals and beliefs of the SIG Turnaround Model. Oak Ridge was eligible to apply because in 2009-10 it was in the lowest 5 percent of schools in the state in terms of academic performance. In 2010-11, the school’s Academic Performance Index rose 82 points. Click here to read a story about Oak Ridge in the Silicon Valley Education Foundation’s “Thoughts on Education” website: http://toped.svefoundation.org/2012/01/19/brown-favoring-school-inspections/.

In other Oak Ridge news, the school finished its second week of its partnership with City Year today. Eight “near peers” from the program have been working with small groups of students in classrooms and connecting with kids before school starts. City Year’s young people are also attending common planning time with teachers, helping students write raps and providing support as students work on their nonfiction research reports.

Packard Foundation Awards $110,000 Grant to SCUSD’s ‘Summer of Service’

The board of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation approved a grant of $110,000 to SCUSD to implement a third year of its successful “Summer of Service” summer learning program. The funds will be used to support the program – which targets at-risk youth in critical transition years – at eight SCUSD middle schools. “Summer of Service” helps build a bridge to middle and high schools for incoming seventh, eighth and ninth graders. During the summer program, kids work on service learning projects that benefit their communities. The program culminates in a showcase event that allows students to use newly acquired public speaking skills.

Anti-Bullying Work with Students, School Staff Underway

Following the Board’s approval of SCUSD’s new anti-bullying policy and the adoption of the Creating Caring Schools strategic plan, Integrated Support Services has been actively laying the ground work in three important anti-bullying areas: Policy; program and education; and training and awareness. New proposed administrative regulations will provide sites with implementation
standards. These regulations are currently out for review and comment from community members, parents and district committees.

“Steps to Respect,” a pilot program offered to students in fourth through sixth grade at Bowling Green Chacon and Pacific Elementary, covers developing pro-social skills, understanding the definition of bullying and learning how bystanders can help. Principals Liz Aguirre and Elena Soto-Chapa have championed anti-bullying efforts at their school.

Technical assistance has been requested from a few school sites about complex bullying incidents at their school. Tools such as guidance letters, student safety plans and behavior action plans have been developed for site administrators and staff to guide the discussion and respond to bullying incidents. Additionally, training for all levels of staff is anticipated to begin in March and continue through April.

*Capital City Hosts College Day*

Counselors and Principal Michael Salman at Capital City School hosted a college day for interested students and families on Wednesday. Dozens of students and approximately 25 families attended the first-of-its-kind event. Parents were provided materials and advice on applications, required courses, financial aid and more. Students received assistance with their applications, letter writing, college selection and financial aid. Due to the success of the event, subsequent college days are being planned to raise the career and college readiness of the Cap City community.

*Open Enrollment Begins Monday*

The online Open Enrollment application goes “live” on the district’s website at 8 a.m. on Monday (January 30) and will be available 24 hours a day through 5 p.m. on Friday, February 10. Parents wishing to apply in-person may do so at the Enrollment Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, to Friday, February 10.

*Self-Surplusing for SCTA Members*

The district and SCTA have agreed to extend the date for self-surplusing to February 15, 2012 for the 2012-13 school year (the previous deadline was February 1). In addition, the district and SCTA will co-sponsor a Self-Surplusing Fair where teachers and administrators may meet and discuss opportunities for placement for the 2012-13 school year. The date of the Fair has yet to be determined (likely to be held in late Spring) and the district and SCTA will work together to notify staff when details are finalized. Details of this agreement were sent to SCTA members in a joint communique on Friday afternoon.
**Design Team Work Continues**

The Design Team process continues to move forward at sites recommended for programmatic change and/or grade reconfiguration study and recommendations. This week:

- **Kit Carson:** The team is focusing on outreach to neighbors living closest to the school. A meeting with those neighbors has been scheduled for 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 6, at Kit Carson. This is not a community-wide meeting but a focused outreach to those who would be directly impacted by changes to the schools. Neighbors are being invited by personal phone calls and invitations. The objective is to listen, gather information and feedback and solicit ideas. In addition, the team launched into its in-depth study of the programmatic design of International Baccalaureate (IB) programs for middle schools and high schools. The next Design Team meeting is scheduled for January 30.

- **Caleb Greenwood:** The team is conducting an in-depth study of the IB elementary school program, reviewing positives and concerns. It has also studied Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI). Parents at the school are in the process of registering their children for the self-contained middle school for the fall. The next Design Team meeting is scheduled for February 7.

- **School of Engineering and Sciences:** The team met Monday to review the results of surveys sent to the community. The first data to be compiled is from students, staff and current SES families. Data from community members, perspective parents and SES graduates is still coming in. The next Design Team meeting is scheduled for February 6.

- **John Still Elementary/Middle:** The Design Team at John Still continued identifying and discussing researched-based “best practices” in teaching and learning that have shown to lower the achievement gap in high-poverty schools. Additionally, the team further discussed the pros and cons of the different grade configurations that were proposed at the last meeting.

**Focus Group for School Website Template Design**

District Webmaster Andrea Landis convened a group of 18 school administrators, teachers, staff and parents on Thursday to gather feedback on what’s important (and what’s not) for school website templates, which will be available to sites this spring as part of SCUSD’s website redesign work. The group provided excellent feedback and insights into which functions and design features would be useful for parents and other users. SCUSD’s goal is to create an easy-to-use/updated template that can be customized to meet each site’s needs.

**School Boundary Task Force**

The School Boundary Task Force met this week to continue its work on a new school attendance boundary map. Specifically, task force members are carefully reviewing implications for five sites.
that would see a significant increase or decrease in enrollment as the result of new boundaries. The group is made up of parents, community members, principals and staff. They are charged with examining current attendance boundaries for elementary, middle and high schools with the objective of recommending changes to the Superintendent that might create “cleaner” feeder patterns, eliminate non-contiguous boundaries, address over-crowded or under-enrolled schools and examine the impacts of schools of choice. The next School Boundary Task Force meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1.