March 16, 2012

**Teaching and Learning**

*CAHSEE Testing*

High school sophomores were administered the California High School Exit Exams (CAHSEE) this week. Tenth graders took the English language arts section of the test on Tuesday and the math section on Wednesday. Twelfth grade students who have not passed also had the opportunity to take the test. This was the last opportunity seniors have to take the test to be able to receive scores before graduation.

Students who do not pass one or both parts of the CAHSEE in grade 10 have up to two opportunities in grade 11 to try again; seniors have at least three and up to five opportunities to retake the part or parts of the exam not yet passed. The passing score for the mathematics exam is 55 percent or a scale score of 350. The passing score for the ELA exam of CAHSEE is 60 percent or a scale score of 350.

*Inclusive Practices*

The district’s six schools serving as early implementers of Inclusive Practices continue to refine their work to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities. A recent visit to the sites included question-and-answer sessions with teaching staffs at California Middle School and C.K. McClatchy High School. The tone of the sessions represented a clear commitment to improving teaching strategies. The time spent with the teachers was truly inspiring.

All six sites are employing co-teaching practices in classrooms and are working to refine their utilization of more sophisticated elements of the model. At Sutterville Elementary, a fifth grade co-teaching partnership was observed during a math lesson. It was clear that both the general education teacher and special education support teacher had an equal role in the classroom and were in the habit of utilizing parallel teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. At Jed Smith Elementary, teachers are exploring the idea of planning lessons together so that instruction incorporates accommodations/modifications for special needs students. This is just one example of the site’s journey toward a high quality Inclusive Practices model.

Caleb Greenwood has co-teaching partnerships in all grade levels. It is evident that the students are included into all parts of the teaching and learning at the site and that the general education teachers and Special Education support teachers work alongside each other to provide instruction to all students in the classrooms. Oak Ridge continues to have a laser-like focus on every student that attends there. This focus serves as a means for students with disabilities to have their
individualized needs met with strong first instruction and differentiated support within the general education classroom.

The common theme at all implementation sites is that students with disabilities have a strong presence, access and voice in the general education classroom.

**Common Core**

On Wednesday, the district hosted the sixth meeting of its Common Core early implementation school sites. This group is comprised of 19 schools representing the elementary, middle and high school levels. Teachers focused on preparing students for college and career by learning more about teaching argumentation/opinion reading and writing, which is considered a key skill for college and career success. During the meeting, teachers collaborated in grade-level teams to develop performance-based reading and writing assignments that align to the higher-level of cognition required by the California Common Core Standards (CCCS). Teachers also developed lesson plans and analyzed student work samples to inform instructional improvement. SCUSD continues its journey towards district-wide implementation of the CCCS.

**High School Task Force**

The High School Task Force met this week to continue its discussion of SCUSD’s high school graduation requirements. The group compared SCUSD’s required courses/units to those required in the San Jose Unified School District and those proposed for the San Diego Unified School District. Of particular interest is San Jose Unified’s increase in its graduation rate over time, with increased expectations. These increases were dramatic across all subgroups. Reaching further out, the Task Force found that 21 states have increased their statewide graduation requirements well beyond the current requirements in SCUSD.

The Task Force is examining the potential for increasing requirements as a seamless effort with the work around Common Core implementation. The group’s next meeting is March 28.

**Physical Education**

Heather Deckard (SCUSD Physical Education Coordinator) presented at the Network for a Healthy California Statewide Conference on March 5. The session was called Physical Activity in Schools – Taking Advantage of Every Opportunity. Other presenters were Project EAT Director Dr. Chris Boynton and Laura Squaglia from the Alameda County Office of Education.

The mission of the Network for a Healthy California (Network) is to create innovative partnerships that empower low-income Californians to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and food security with the goal of preventing obesity and other diet related chronic diseases.

With support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Network now works with nearly 150 different public and non-profit agencies. This has enabled California to qualify for federal reimbursements for nutrition education starting at $2.8 million in 1997 and rising to nearly $110 million in 2011. About 80
percent of these funds support community-based programs directly. The Network provides statewide leadership through a variety of venues.

In addition, the California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) received a grant from The California Endowment (TCE) to increase support and practice of physical activity programs across schools in California. Since SCUSD is in the TCE’s 14 Building Healthy Communities (BHC) and Deckard is CAHPERD’s North Central District Coordinator, the district was able to send 23 PE and classroom teachers to the annual state CAHPERD conference for free. Not only were the sessions exceptional, but the list of keynote speakers was outstanding: State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson; the late Jack LaLanne’s wife, Elaine; Robert Ross, president and chief executive officer of The California Endowment; Richard Simmons; Dr. James Sallis, a psychology professor at San Diego State; and Dr. James Morrow, professor of kinesiology at the University of North Texas. Members from our SCUSD team were able to spend time with each of these keynote speakers.

SCUSD PE teachers presented three sessions at the conference:
- “Youth Get Fit with the Kings” was presented by Elizabeth Stewart (Will C. Wood MS PE Teachers) and Deckard.
- “How Do I Teach Aquatic Standards without a Pool?” was presented by Stacee Oltmanns (Hiram Johnson PE Teacher) and Deckard.
- “Engage, Focus and Stay Sane!” was presented by Oltmanns and Deckard.

The second part of this grant allows for CAHPERD to bring a Brain and Activity-Based Standards Workshop to SCUSD next year.

Finally, on February 22, Trustee Ellyne Bell, Chief of Staff Teresa Cummings and Deckard were asked to present during a national webinar on PE. The webinar presented key strategies to get the attention of high-level school administrators and keep them regularly engaged in urban physical education. SCUSD was joined by the representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Action for Healthy Kids.

**Operations**

**SEIU, District Hold Initial Bargaining Session**

Representatives of the district and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) held a productive bargaining session on Monday, March 12. Further sessions have been scheduled for Wednesday, March 21, and Wednesday, March 28.

**Group Donates Salad Bar**

The Fresh Produce and Floral Council, a network of California wholesaler-distributors, retailers and grower-shippers based in Southern California, is donating a salad bar to SCUSD’s Nutrition Services as part of the Let’s Move Salad Bars to Schools initiative. The donation was coordinated by the United Fresh Produce Association. Nutrition Services is now determining the best site for the new salad bar.
**SCUSD Receives Standard and Poor’s Highest Credit Rating**

Good news! The district was notified that it received the highest short term credit rating for the Tax Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRAN) from Standard and Poor’s – SP1+. A credit rating is Standard and Poor’s opinion on the general creditworthiness of the district. The financial advisor team at KNN worked closely with district staff to provide information to the rating agency. This means our anticipated interest rate will drop and there should be a reduction in overall costs. This is a significant improvement over last year and rating agencies are pleased with the direction of the district. Despite our financial difficulties, we were able to show that the Board continues to address recent challenges and that we will continue to strive for financial stability.

**School Quality Reviews**

School Quality Reviews began last week and continue through next week at 15 schools in our district. The schools being reviewed are John Still Elementary, Fruit Ridge, John Cabrillo, Elder Creek, Mark Hopkins, Matsuyama, Pacific, Parkway, Phoebe Hearst, Sequoia, Woodbine, Jed Smith, Capital City, SES and the MET. Approximately 50 principals, assistant principals and Central Office staff visit classes, interview staff, parents and students and evaluate data to perform a qualitative and quantitative review of each school. Narrative results will be shared with the principal and staff and will drive the school’s formulation of the School Development and Improvement Plan for the following school year.

**Community Engagement**

**Community Quality Review**

The Office of School, Family and Community Partnership (SFCP) provided its third, two-part training for parents on the Community Quality Review (CQR). The training was hosted by Hiram Johnson High School on March 6 and 7. The first day included an overview of the Welcoming Schools Certification Process (WSCP) and its six stages, the purpose of CQR, the importance of having parents participate in the CQR, an examination of the CQR rubric and group work focused on gathering evidence for the four CQR domains: 1) School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning, 2) Family Understanding and Engagement, 3) Community Partners and Understanding and 4) Leadership.

Parents that completed the second day of the CQR training learned how to prepare to be part of a CQR review team by using available data and information found on the school website, in the School Development and Improvement Plan (SDIP) and in the School Accountability Report Card (SARC). Further, the group discussed the structure of the CQR day, the professional code of conduct, and the Record Book that is used to document the meetings held on the review day. SFCP now has a roster of 41 parents and community members who have participated in CQR training, with 29 fully vested in the process and ready to participate.

The first CQR was held Wednesday at Susan B. Anthony Elementary School.