March 9, 2012

Teaching and Learning

Child Development Redesign

A team of SCUSD staff, parents and community partners met on Wednesday to begin the process of redesigning the Child Development Department to improve teaching and learning with our youngest students. The group engaged in a “visioning” exercise, which required each person to speak openly and candidly about how the “ideal” Child Development Department might look. The overarching goal of the redesign project will be to closely examine aspects of teaching and learning in the early years, with a specific focus on determining critical benchmarks towards continuous improvement. The team is also looking at other related areas such as family and community engagement, the registration and enrollment processes and providing the supervision and monitoring needed to improve the cognitive, oral language, literacy and numeracy development of the children we serve.

STAR CST and CMA Writing Standards Tests for Grades 4 and 7 Students

All SCUSD schools with grades four and seven students administered the California Writing Standards Tests and the California Modified Writing Standards Tests on Tuesday. As part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, a writing component is included in both the California Standards Tests (CST) and the California Modified Assessment (CMA) tests for English Language Arts (ELA) in grades four and seven. Scores for this component are combined with the students’ scores on the multiple-choice component of the test to produce the ELA test scores.

EAP Essay for Grade 11 Students

While not a part of the STAR Program, the Early Assessment Program (EAP) is a joint program of the California Department of Education (CDE), the California State University (CSU) system, and the California Community Colleges (CCC) system. The EAP is voluntary. The English section of the EAP is available for students in grade eleven who are taking the CST for ELA. The mathematics section of the EAP is available for grade eleven students who are taking the CST for Algebra II or the CST for Summative High School Mathematics. The EAP questions are included on the California Standards Tests that students take in May.

The EAP essay, a component of the English section, is administered separately from March 5 through 23 at each of our high schools.

For students who seek or intend to enroll in a state university, the EAP provides the CSU system and community colleges an opportunity to obtain information from the STAR tests about student
readiness for college-level English and mathematics. Additionally, the EAP may help students to earn an exemption from the CSU and participating community colleges from taking English and/or mathematics placement tests that are required for entering freshmen. The EAP results are included on the STAR Student Report for grade eleven students.

**Data Inquiry**

Five cohorts of schools participated in Data Inquiry work this week. Two of the cohorts representing 20 schools are in the early stages of identifying learner-centered problems and problems of practice. Two other cohorts are beginning to launch the instructional rounds phase of examining teaching and learning in classrooms. One cohort of 10 schools culminated its work by performing instructional rounds at Kit Carson Middle School today.

**Operations**

**Negotiations with SCTA Continue**

Representatives of the district and Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA) held a full-day bargaining session on Thursday. The conversation was productive and progress continues to be made. The next bargaining session is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20.

**Community Engagement**

**Grant Applications Submitted**

SCUSD submitted two grant applications this week. The first, from the Integrated Support Services Department to the Sierra Health Foundation, requests $25,000 to increase health care access for students and families at Hiram Johnson High School through services provided by the school’s health clinic. Funding would support staff time for Hiram Johnson’s school nurse/health clinic manager to provide early intervention services; for the clinic’s nurse to operate the Fit Teen program and provide health education and prevention services; and for the Connect Center’s Youth and Family Health Advocate to provide health insurance enrollment assistance.

The second grant application, from the Multilingual Department to the Central Valley Foundation, requests $198,546 a year for three years for an English Language Learner after-school tutoring program for approximately 100 students a year at seven targeted language immersion schools: Elder Creek, William Land, Susan B. Anthony, Edward Kemble, Caesar Chavez, Ethel Phillips and Bowling Green elementary schools. School site staff will provide tutoring 1.5 hours a day, three days a week, from September through May.

**Bullying Prevention Work Continues**

More than 200 CSUS teachers-in-training learned about bullying and the district’s prevention efforts at a presentation by SCUSD staff on March 2. CSUS Professor Dr. John Tamblyn invited the district to help the college’s students become trained on the identification of bullying and how to
support students who are the target of bullying as well as supporting the student who is bullying others. SCUSD also made a bullying prevention presentation on February 24 at La Familia Counseling Center for parents and youth.

In a related note, the Administrative Regulation for Anti-Bullying has received district committee and community input. A final version will be submitted to Cabinet this spring. The AR will provide implementation guidance to administrators to prevent bullying behavior on school campuses.

School Readiness Fair

Hundreds of families turned out on Saturday for SCUSD annual School Readiness Fair at the Serna Center, coordinated by the Child Development Department. Children and their families were afforded a range of free comprehensive services that included on-site kindergarten registration and vision, hearing, health, developmental and dental screenings. Approximately 350 children received screening services, 55 families completed on-site kindergarten registration, 77 applications were received for pre-K Summer Camp and 55 families completed preliminary registration applications for preschool. The event was a wonderful example of the old adage: “It takes a village to raise a child.”

The event was made possible largely through funding by California First 5 and other contributing community partners such as SMUD, Kaiser Permanente and Lakeshore Learning. The School Readiness Fair was a collaborative endeavor and provided SCUSD departments and programs such as Early Kinder, Nutrition Services, Special Education, Adult Education, Charles A. Jones Skills and Business Education Center and Matriculation Orientation Center (MOC) an opportunity to showcase their services. The primary goal of the School Readiness Fair is to facilitate children’s transition from preschool and other types of early care arrangements to kindergarten, which can greatly contribute to children’s success in the initial year of formal schooling and beyond.

SES Community Meeting

On Thursday, approximately 100 students, parents and community members attended a community engagement meeting held at the School of Engineering and Sciences. The purpose of the meeting was to gather positives, concerns and questions regarding grade level reconfigurations. Specifically, the school’s Design Team has been examining a 7-9 grade configuration and a 9-12 grade configuration. At the meeting, staff updated the group on SCUSD’s 2012-13 budget, reviewed the purpose and status of the Design Team was given and invited attendees to brainstorm positives and concerns regarding the two grade configurations. Comments were logged during a “gallery walk” in which participants were able to write down ideas on poster paper at six stations set up in the multi-purpose room. The feedback will be incorporated into the next Design Team meeting on Thursday, March 22.

Leadership Academy

The School-Family Partnership Leadership Academy is midway into its schedule. The Leadership Academy is a nine-session leadership training designed for parents, school staff and community leaders who want to gain greater skills in leadership and deepen their understanding of the issues, policies and functions of our k-12 educational system. The program is offered to a
maximum of 25 participants every year. At each session, participants have an opportunity to meet and interact with top leaders in education who are experts in areas such as educational policy, administration, curriculum and school finance. The program is made possible through a partnership with the Sacramento Council of PTAs.

**Hmong Student Leadership Conference**

More than 450 students from 10 SCUSD schools attended the 12th Annual Hmong Student Leadership and Educational Conference on Tuesday at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Students toured the campus, participated in educational interactive workshops, learned techniques for staying physically active through dance and enjoyed healthy, nutritious foods throughout the day. In addition, students enjoyed traditional Hmong cultural performances and inspirational testimonials and videos, included presentations from SCUSD’s Chief Family and Community Engagement Officer Koua Franz and Mao Vang, director of Assessment, Research and Evaluation.

Students received T-shirts and programs. Many left with Target, Wal-Mart or Barnes and Noble gift cards and Sacramento Kings tickets that were raffled off throughout the day. One lucky student from C.K. McClatchy went home with an iPod donated by Hmong Women’s Heritage Association. SCUSD staff and community volunteers supported the students and acted as mentors throughout the day. Adults also had the opportunity to attend workshops that addressed the criminal justice system, financial aid and health as it relates to the Hmong community.