Sacramento Commitment to Excellence

Partners from SCUSD, Sacramento City College and California State University, Sacramento, met at California Middle School on Wednesday to continue to work on the collaborative effort now titled the Sacramento Commitment to Excellence. The three organizations are laying the groundwork for a seamless pathway from pre-school through post-secondary degrees and certificates. A blueprint for college and career success is emerging as the partners build plans to align curricula between pre-K-12 and post-secondary, establish high-leverage data-sharing agreements and develop the plans for family and student support as students learn how to prepare for and complete college academic degrees and technical certificates.

The highlight of the day was the panel discussion with California Middle School seventh and eighth graders, who spoke passionately and from their hearts. The students shared their aspirations for college and their self-proclaimed measures on personal readiness. Although a diverse group, a common thread ran through their words: “We want to be prepared. Challenge us, give us rigorous classes and make sure we are ready.” The professionals from each institution were extremely moved by the enthusiasm and incredibly frank and honest assessments from these students regarding the importance of college and career readiness and how it fits into their families and personal lives.

Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL)

SCUSD hosted the first regional social and emotional learning meeting on May 10 with planning team leads and CASEL staff from Oakland Unified School District and Washoe County School District. SCUSD continues to gain momentum in its planning efforts through twice a month planning sessions and weekly management team meetings.

The planning team has been tackling complex issues related to the integration and expansion of SEL during a time of shrinking resources. As a result, the team is positioning SEL as an overarching framework for student success rather than as a new initiative with short-term demands and a limited lifespan. The planning team drafted a vision statement to guide its work and will be revisiting it as the planning process unfolds. Planning team discussions have been lively, which has allowed new ideas to solving challenging issues to flourish. The next SEL planning team meeting will be held on May 24.
Chinese Delegation Visits William Land’s Mandarin Immersion Program

The Jinan Peace Messengers Delegation from Jinan, China, visited the Mandarin language immersion class at William Land Elementary School on Monday. Eight middle and high school students were part of the delegation, along with two teachers. They arrived at William Land at 11:30 a.m. and stayed through lunch. Four members of the Jinan-Sacramento Sister Cities Corporation accompanied the delegation. During the visit, kindergartners in the class sang to the visitors in Chinese.

Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) Waiver

Great news: The California Department of Education has granted SCUSD’s requests for Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) waivers for four schools: Edward Kemble Elementary School, Ethel Phillips Elementary School, Hiram Johnson High School and Luther Burbank High School. The QEIA grant requires participating schools to meet targets in six component areas: Teacher Experience Index; Class Size Reduction (CSR); Highly Qualified Teacher; Professional Development; Williams’ Settlement Case; and Academic Performance Index. The individual targets for each QEIA school were established utilizing 2005-06 data. SCUSD’s waiver requests were based on the fact that QEIA funds served to significantly reduce class size and meet the requirements in the early years of QEIA implementation, but are no longer sufficient to meet targets. Each of the QEIA schools have encountered increasingly difficult challenges imposed by limited site budgets, changes in the state level CSR Program, recalculated class sizes in SCUSD and the impact of teacher surplusing within the district.

Had the district’s grant been denied, the loss in funding to the four schools would have totaled more than $4 million.

SCUSD Represented at State Board of Education Meeting

SCUSD’s Chief Accountability Officer Mary Shelton was one of three education experts invited to testify at Wednesday’s State Board of Education (SBE) meeting. The Board is taking testimony on accountability issues as the California State Board of Education ramps up a comprehensive review of California’s public school accountability system examining such areas as:

- The Academic Performance Index (API), a numeric system for assessing school quality;
- School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs), annual reports from every school that provides the public with a wide array of information about school quality; and
- Past and present efforts to assess school quality through local visits, audits and monitoring efforts.

The state Board also heard from John Deasy, superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District, and Dave Brown, executive director of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The Board also reviewed a study it recently commissioned from WestEd that summarizes quantitative and qualitative approaches to school accountability, including examples from other states.
**Community Engagement**

*LGBTQ Youth Leadership Conference*

SCUSD’s Integrated Support Services Department and the Connect Center sponsored the district’s first annual LGBTQ Youth Leadership Conference on Saturday, May 5. Titled “Grow. Change. Hope,” the conference was coordinated by Emily Herr, the district’s first LGBTQ Focus Intern, who works within the Connect Center’s LGBTQ Support Services division. This daylong event was held at the VIBE Urban Lounge in midtown and offered students throughout the district access to resources, community leaders and educational workshops. Some of the workshops presented addressed topics such as cyber bullying and internet safety; understanding healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; and substance abuse prevention.