Teaching and Learning

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

On November 14-16, SCUSD hosted a team of six educational leaders in the field of social and emotional learning during a three-day site visit from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The site visit followed SCUSD’s selection as one of five finalists for a national initiative to make social and emotional learning (SEL) an integral part of every student’s educational experience.

CASEL will work long-term with six to eight large school districts that are committed to systemic, comprehensive implementation of SEL. The selected districts will join with CASEL to:

- Build knowledge about how to organize high-quality, systemic, district-wide implementation of SEL.
- Create tools and resources that districts can use to achieve systemic SEL implementation.
- Document the short- and long-term effects of such systemic efforts.
- Serve as demonstration sites that others can visit to observe systemic SEL in action.

Participating districts will receive ongoing, intensive technical assistance, and financial support from the NoVo Foundation. Top leaders from each district will also have regular opportunities to meet with their counterparts in other districts with the goal of creating a national learning community on SEL. Finalists are expected to be notified in early December.

Summit for Student Gay-Straight Alliance Leaders

SCUSD’s LGBTQ Support Services program, in collaboration with the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network, held an all-day summit for student leaders of GSA campus clubs on Saturday, November 5. The summit, which was open both to SCUSD students and students from the greater Sacramento region, was held at the new VIBE Youth Lounge in downtown Sacramento. Approximately 40 students attended and learned skills such as meeting facilitation, planning and collaboration. SCUSD hosts GSA clubs at nearly every high school in the district, as well as at two middle schools. The clubs are designed to provide a safe place for students to meet, support each other and work to end homophobia.
Summer Learning Conference

Superintendent Raymond participated in a Superintendent Perspectives panel at New Vision of Summer School’s 2011 National Conference on Summer Learning held in San Francisco on Monday. SCUSD is considered a leader in innovative summer programs for our Summer of Service, a program for incoming seventh, eighth and ninth graders. Targeting at-risk students, Summer of Service incorporates service learning and helping the community into a “bridge” program for kids transitioning to either middle or high school. Almost 1,000 students participated in Summer of Service last year. We are gearing to serve 2,000 students next summer.

Math and Science Credentialing Program Grant

SD Bechtel Jr. Foundation has awarded SCUSD a two-year $600,000 grant to create and implement a Foundational Level General Science and Foundational Level Math teaching credential program for beginning teachers in collaboration with Sacramento State. This program will serve as a model for comprehensive, integrated, intensive preparation for beginning K-8 teachers to effectively teach science and mathematics. Program participants will experience an integrated, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning science and math that capitalizes on their unique position as already credentialed teachers.

Participants in this program will experience these key elements:

- Integration of science and math instruction across grade levels aligning after-school learning with in-school learning of science, mathematics and STEM
- Integration of science and math content with content-specific inquiry based teaching methodologies in “real time,” as participants are teaching science and math in out-of-school settings
- Comprehensive attention to the entire K-12 grade span, with a focus on spiraling of science and math curriculum and on school feeder patterns (elementary to middle to high school)
- Attention to closing the achievement gap in science and math for English Learners and special needs students

The SCUSD/Sacramento State program is an innovative demonstration of a clinical preparation partnership based on the medical training model endorsed by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in their report entitled *Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers* (NCATE, November 2010).
Community Engagement

SES ‘SunFlower’ Unveiling

SMUD and SCUSD staged an unveiling on Tuesday of the nation’s first solar “SunFlower” installed at the School of Engineering and Sciences. The SunFlower is a towering, 400-watt, student-controlled solar array (visualize solar panels configured onto a large steel flower) that serves as an interactive learning laboratory, the first of its kind in the nation, to promote math and science. Students can manipulate the panels to learn how to harness the sun’s energy into electricity to operate or charge electronic devices and equipment. Information is also uploaded to the web, so students can monitor energy production, share it with other students and even teach their parents the value of alternative energy resources.

The SunFlower at the School of Engineering and Sciences is the first installation of the pilot class of similar projects at Sacramento area schools and will serve as a model for other school district partnerships throughout California. An energy curriculum that utilizes the SunFlower and can be shared across all state public schools is also in development.

School Closures and Consolidations

Under the direction of the Board, staff is holding community meetings for the families whose children attend three schools recommended for closure (AM Winn, Freeport and CP Huntington) and two schools recommended for consolidation (Edward Kemble and Cesar Chavez). The first community meeting was held Wednesday evening at A.M. Winn Elementary School and was attended by about 300 adults and children. Concerns expressed included loss of the after-school START program, transportation problems for parents, the lack of safe walking routes to new schools and fears of overcrowding at other schools. Questions and comments were recorded and posted on the district’s website today.

Three more community meetings are scheduled: CP Huntington (6:30 p.m. Monday, November 28); Freeport (6:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 29) and Kemble/Chavez (Thursday, December 1 at Chavez).

In addition, the Design Team process is moving forward at eight sites recommended for programmatic expansion, consolidation, grade reconfiguration and/or other changes. Letters, translated into all threshold languages, explaining the process in more detail are going home with children today. A Connect-ED phone call alerting parents to look for the letter will be sent this evening. The following is a summary of progress to date:

- Kit Carson Middle School (exploring programmatic design and configuration options): A Design Team is in place. A meeting is scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving break.
● Caleb Greenwood K-8 (exploring programmatic design and configuration options): A Design Team is in place. Its initial meeting on Tuesday night proceeded smoothly with members working to envision a “Dream School” to serve the East Sacramento area.

● School of Engineering and Sciences (exploring programmatic design and configuration options): A Design Team is in place and has met three times. The team is considering a grade-level reconfiguration, programmatic redesign and possible community partnerships. The team is now in the process of developing timelines for its work.

● John Still Elementary/John Still Middle/Freeport (exploring becoming one K-8 school and programmatic options): A Design Team has been formed with representation from all three schools. A meeting is scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving break.

● West Campus (exploring a co-location with Sacramento Charter High School on the Sacramento High campus or moving to Sacramento High and relocating Sacramento Charter to the current West Campus facility): A Design Team with representatives of both West Campus and Sacramento Charter High School is in place. The district is working with Sacramento State’s Center for Collaborative Policy to find an appropriate facilitator for the first meeting of the team after Thanksgiving break.

● Leonardo da Vinci/Hollywood Park (exploring consolidation and programmatic expansion): A Design Team with representatives from both schools is in place. Both principals have met and have held a preliminary discussion on consolidation/program issues. The district is in the process of finding a facilitator for team meetings.

Input and community feedback gathered at meetings will be brought to the Board at its December 8 meeting.