SCUSD graduates more students – and more are ready for college

Data released by the state today shows big gains in SCUSD graduation rates; achievement gaps narrow for students

April 9, 2013 (Sacramento): More Sacramento City Unified School District students are graduating from high school and fewer are dropping out, according to California Department of Education data released today (Tuesday, April 9).

More SCUSD students also are graduating having completed all coursework necessary for admission to a UC or CSU, an important college-readiness marker.

The state’s “cohort” data shows that almost 80 percent (79.8 percent) of SCUSD students who started high school as freshmen in 2008 graduated with their peers four years later. That’s an increase of 5.2 percent over cohort data for the class of 2011, a rise attributed, in part, to SCUSD’s expansion of programs that keep students excited about coming to school.

Similarly, fewer SCUSD students from the class of 2012 dropped out during their four years in high school. SCUSD’s 2012 drop-out rate of 11.5 percent represents a decrease of 6.5 percent over 2011.

SCUSD Superintendent Jonathan Raymond cited several factors that contribute to the district’s success in graduating more students. Among them: Expansion of SCUSD’s Linked Learning career pathways; an increased focus on alternative programs; online credit recovery; and better support for students and families.

“We are working harder than ever to make school relevant, interesting and empowering for kids,” Raymond said. “Through our expanded career-themed academies, specialized small high schools and highly engaging classes, we’re focused on preparing our young people for success in both college and careers. We’re also providing better access to programs that help kids who have fallen behind make up required courses on a schedule that works for them.”
Luther Burbank High School had the highest increase in its graduation rate -- 10.1 percent to 89.3 percent -- among SCUSD schools. Burbank’s graduation rate is 10.8 percent higher than the state average despite the fact that 90 percent of Burbank’s students live at or below the federal poverty line. Statewide, 60 percent of California kids live in families that meet the federal poverty threshold. More than half (51.6 percent) of Burbank students graduated having met all UC/CSU course requirements, an important college-readiness marker. Statewide, 38.3 percent of students meet UC/CSU course requirements.

Burbank Principal Ted Appel attributed his school’s improving graduation rate to great teachers, counselors and efforts to engage families in student learning.

“While it’s hard to attribute any one thing as the factor that makes the difference, programs like the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project, Parent University, a strong curriculum and good teaching in every class make a difference in keeping kids engaged and successful,” Appel said.

Burbank has six Small Community Learning Communities (SLCs) in such career-themed pathways as Construction and Engineering, International Environmental Studies, Law and Social Justice and Performing Arts. Each SLC has a core group of teachers and a counselor, providing kids with caring adults they can count on for help. “We have worked very hard to develop strong relationships with kids so we have fewer of them falling between the cracks,” Appel said.

Although there is still work to be done Superintendent Raymond said he is proud of the district’s ongoing efforts. “When kids are excited about school and see the connection between class and a career, they’ll stick with it. That’s our goal – to see every child earn a diploma and be prepared for the rigors of college and careers.”