



# SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item# 10.1

**Meeting Date:** August 1, 2019

**Subject:** School Climate Update

- Information Item Only
- Approval on Consent Agenda
- Conference (for discussion only)
- Conference/First Reading (Action Anticipated: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Conference/Action
- Action
- Public Hearing

**Division:** Academic Office & Continuous Improvement and Accountability

**Recommendation:** Receive information on the district's school climate efforts, including results from the 2018-19 School Climate survey.

**Background/Rationale:** School climate refers to the norms, values, and expectations that support people to feel physically, socially, and emotionally safe and connected. To be their best, students must feel a sense of connectedness and belonging to their school community. Specifically, schools that are committed to promoting a variety of positive relationships with caring adults will have more connected and engaged students.

**Financial Considerations:** None

**LCAP Goal(s):** Safe, Emotionally Healthy and Engaged Students

**Documents Attached:**

1. Executive Summary

<p><b>Estimated Time of Presentation:</b> 15 minutes</p> <p><b>Submitted by:</b> Dr. Iris Taylor, Chief Academic Officer Vincent Harris, Chief Continuous Improvement and Accountability Officer</p> <p><b>Approved by:</b> Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent</p>
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## I. Overview/History of Department or Program:

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. It is the norms, values, and expectations that support a child, teacher, and an administrator to feel physically, socially, and emotionally safe and connected, and leads to them looking forward to being at school each day. Specifically, schools that are committed to promoting a variety of positive relationships with caring adults will have more connected and engaged students. Likewise, a student's sense of safety has a strong correlation to their academic success, increased social and emotional well-being, and greater engagement.

This presentation is the first in a two-part series that will (1) provide an overview of school climate through the lens of Chronic Absenteeism, Suspension, School Climate Survey Data, and Site Intervention Plans and Supports; and (2) outline the cycle of continuous improvement under way as staff work to improve the culture and climate within District schools.

In addition to the School Climate Survey, climate can be measured utilizing the California Dashboard metrics for Suspension and Chronic Absenteeism.

As the Capitol of Suspensions report highlighted in 2018, Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) was noted as having the worst suspension rates for Black boys and men in the State of California, an issue that must be addressed head-on. However, the District has previously suffered from a lack of coherence in an approach to overcome the startling statistics of black male suspensions, and suspensions overall. The effects of a poor school climate disproportionately affect students of color.

Chronic Absenteeism is also an indicator of a poor school climate when controlled for external forces such as illness, transportation issues and other, and that too also disproportionately impacts homeless, foster youth, and students of color. Factors that lead to chronic absenteeism that are controllable by the District and school sites include negative school experiences, lack of an authentic engagement of the students, and misconceptions about the importance of attending school regularly.

District affiliated groups, such as the Graduation Taskforce, African American Achievement Task Force, Special Education Audit, LCAP PAC, and recurring Board Meeting comments have outlined concerns and the need for reductions in suspension and chronic absence rates and more professional learning regarding trauma-informed practices and social emotional learning.

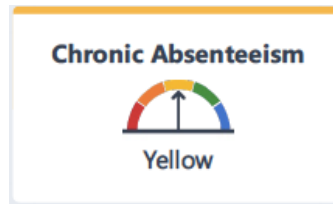
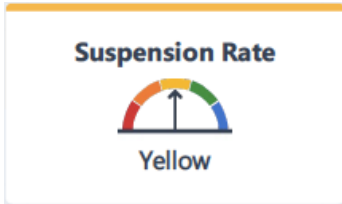
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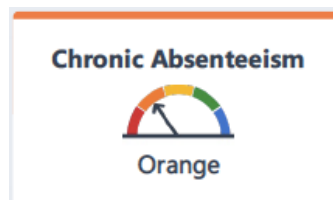
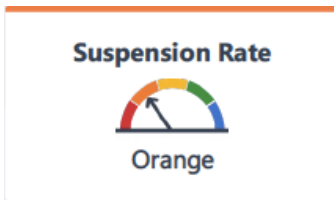
## 2018 California School Dashboard Data for Suspension and Chronic Absenteeism Rates:

Statewide Average:



## California School Dashboard Statewide Data for Suspension and Chronic Absenteeism Rates:

Sacramento City Unified School District Data:



## II. Driving Governance:

Research shows that schools with a positive climate are less likely to have discipline issues and more likely to have higher academic achievement (NEA, 2013). Additionally, students who are socially and emotionally connected have shown improved academic gains up to 11 percentage points, decreased negative behaviors, and improved prosocial behaviors (CASEL, 2016).

Per the 2018 California School Dashboard, SCUSD's current suspension rate of 6.1% and sustained suspension rate from the prior year resulted in the District receiving a rating of Orange for this metric, the second to the lowest of the five rankings available. There is great disproportionality in suspension rates for students with an ethnicity / race of African American, American Indian, Filipino, and Two or more races students. Additionally, the District received a rating of Red (lowest of five levels) or Orange for students identified as Foster Youth, Homeless, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, or Students with Disabilities (CDE Dataquest).

The following are guiding board policies and administrative regulations to support the work districtwide.

- Anti-Bullying BP 5145.4

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- Anti-Bullying AR 5145.4
- Discipline Policy BP 5144
- Discipline AR 5144
- Positive School Climate BP 5137
- Truancy BP 5113.1

### III. Budget:

Funding sources include LCFF, Title 1, and grants that are allocated to support Climate work which includes the SEL, PBIS, RP, and Bullying Prevention initiatives. Current allocations are approximately \$1,400,000 and include bullying prevention efforts, equity coaches, conferences, supports staffing, professional learning, curriculum resources, and community outreach. Additionally, the District is about to begin the third year of a 3-year grant for the Be HERE Now campaign focused on addressing chronic absenteeism.

### IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures:

Understanding the importance of measurable outcomes, the following success indicators have been developed for the Performance and Targeted Action Index (PTAI).

- Chronic Absenteeism Element
  - Chronic Absence Rate
  - Relevant Attendance Interventions
  - Attendance Growth
  - Attendance Retention
  - Growth towards On-Track/Grade Level Readiness
- Suspension Element
  - Suspension Rate
  - Disproportionality
  - Appropriate Behavior Intervention
  - Suspension Incidents per 100 students
  - Growth towards Positive Behavior and Grade Level Readiness
- School Climate Element
  - Safety (data from the School Climate survey)
  - Connectedness/Belonging (data from the School Climate survey)
  - Attendance (data from Infinite Campus)
  - Behavior (data from Infinite Campus)
  - Growth Toward Grade-Level Readiness (data from Infinite Campus)

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## V. Major Initiatives:

Effective whole-child education requires robust multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). SCUSD MTSS approach includes a complementary suite of research based practices such as SEL/PBIS/RP. Foundationally, at Tier 1, PBIS provides clear expectations around school-wide norms, explicit SEL lessons that support the practice and application of those norms, and RP structures that promote community/relationship building. In Tier 2, the PBIS structure of Check-In/Check-Out, SEL skills re-teaching, and RP harm circles, give students with targeted needs an opportunity to review and reflect on skills and actions that are important to their school success. In Tier 3, high levels of intensive supports are matched to individual student needs. If we do Tier 1 (Universal level) well and are effective, we can mitigate the high needs in tiers 2 and 3. For example, if teachers are explicit about building positive relationships between students and are intentional about cultivating SEL skills such as empathy and kindness, the number of students needing bullying intervention supports should lessen in tiers 2 and 3.

### Restorative Practices (RP):

Restorative Practices (RP) includes the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrong-doing, specifically those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrong-doing, and as a response to harm done after it occurs. “Restorative’ means to believe that decisions are best made and conflicts are best resolved by those most directly involved in them. (RP)..seeks to develop good relationships and restore a sense of community in an increasingly disconnected world.” (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009) RP is not solely an approach to discipline; it’s a value-based, relationship-centered, and community-building structure that actively engages students to take more responsibility for their growth socially, emotionally, and academically.

### Social Emotional Learning (SEL):

SEL provides the structure and process for adults and students to develop fundamental emotional and social competencies and experiences to:

- understand and manage emotions
- set and achieve positive goals
- feel and show empathy for others
- establish and maintain positive relationships
- make responsible decisions
- nurture a growth mindset in order to persist and be resilient

Social emotional learning became a district priority 7 years ago through a generous grant from the NOVO foundation and in collaboration with leading experts at the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). In the 7 years since SCUSD became a CASEL

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Cross District Initiative (CDI) partner, we've established a Whole Child policy, embedded SEL explicitly into both the Discipline and Positive School Climate BPs. To date, 58 schools are engaging in some professional learning and/or receiving coaching support to integrate SEL into their practices and 48 schools have adopted evidenced based SEL curriculum. Some examples of professional learning and practices are relationship-building strategies, culturally responsive teaching, implicit bias and mindsets, trauma-informed practices, and SEL instructional practices integrated into academic content and processes. Sac City hosted the CASEL National Convening for SEL in the Spring of 2019, and is recognized along with the other original 7 CDI districts as a national leader in the systemic implementation of SEL. Understanding that SEL is a journey, the NOVO foundation recently awarded each of the original 8 CASEL districts, which includes SCUSD, a new 3-year grant to expand and deepen the work.

### Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:

PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) is a framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. Foundational PBIS practices are: universal screening for behavior support, continuous progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and matching evidence-based interventions to students who show a need.

Our current practicing PBIS sites are: Earl Warren, Susan B. Anthony, Parkway, Hiram Johnson High School, John D. Sloat, Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School, and Success Academy. Of these sites, Earl Warren, Susan B. Anthony, Parkway, Hiram Johnson High School, John D. Sloat, and Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School have qualified for CA State PBIS Recognition from their work over the past four years, with Parkway qualifying for gold level status, the highest honor of recognition.

Practicing PBIS sites are supported by: a district PBIS coach, four days each year of personalized training through the Placer County Office of Education and the California PBIS Coalition, access to data analysis tools through the University of Oregon, and access to a wide array of resources and materials to support their multi-tiered systems of support. As a result of this work, our PBIS sites have seen, on average, a 57% decrease in state-reported behavior events since 2014-2015.

### Bullying Prevention & Intervention

The Bullying Prevention & Intervention program was launched in 2011 in the Student Support & Health Services Department. The program includes developing policies, reporting procedures, training, collaborating with stakeholders and engaging community partners for program implementation. The program is designed to prevent, address, and intervene in bullying behavior, keeping students safe and ensuring a healthy learning environment. Per Board Policy 5145.4, all school site staff are trained on bullying prevention and intervention, including

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reporting procedures. During the 18-19 School year 365 consultations were provided to school staff and families, and 195 students received case management services and supports. Intensive mediations were completed in 51 cases.

Through these approaches to developing positive school climate, SCUSD seeks to improve the data around suspensions, attendance, academics, and stakeholders' sense of belonging, safety, and connectedness. To reach the desired impact, the district will focus on strengthening implementation through defining clear expectations, analyzing data on a continuous basis. Data will be used to continuously improve existing practice and, to inform systemic implementation.

### School Climate/Chronic Absenteeism, and Suspensions Work Team

In the summer of 2018, the district established several internal work teams comprised of district staff from an array of departments and site level administrators. The purpose of the School Climate/Chronic Absenteeism, and Suspensions work teams is to begin to use a Theory of Action framework to analyze existing practices and the district's ability to gather information about the district's performance related to School Climate/Chronic Absenteeism, and Suspensions. The Theory of Action specifically calls for the teams to assess and address the following:

- Identify a set of data metrics for each body of work in the areas of suspensions, school climate, and chronic absenteeism;
- Assess if there is applicable board policies, CSBA policies, and if needed, craft sample language for the Board to consider adopting;
- For each data metric, assess whether we are currently able to record *and* access the information needed to populate each metric;
- For those data metrics that we cannot populate, explain the conditions or necessary steps we need to take to be able to do so (e.g. requires development of a new database to track information, development of a standard work process, professional learning, etc.); and
- Identify detailed timelines and milestone completion dates for each action.

In addition, the work team developed and administered a survey to gather information about site practices related to reporting suspensions, approaches to building school climate, and methods for providing behavior related interventions and supports. Data from the survey reveal inconsistent practices for using the student information system to document behavior infractions and suspensions and variation in what infractions sites consider cause for suspension and how they respond.

The work team has also drafted a discipline matrix that outlines expectations for responding to various infractions. The focus is on identifying more positive and restorative responses

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and alternatives to suspension. The team will also develop a set of reflective questions for site leaders to consider prior to suspending. The matrix will be taken to stakeholders including parent advisory groups, the African American Taskforce, and labor partners for vetting prior to implementation. The work team will also create a handbook to support site level planning in areas similar to those outlined above for MTSS (i.e. leadership team structures, data analysis protocols, responsive practices, implementing school climate initiatives, etc.). This will include explicit guidance on manifestation of determination and effective discipline practices for students with IEPs and those who are disproportionately suspended.

## Changing Adult mindsets and increasing cultural competency (This is the challenge – current reality):

- Suspend the kid based on adult demand.
- Increasing adult self-awareness and social awareness by way of demonstrating cultural humility and increasing cultural competency in order to be more culturally responsive with students, families, and colleagues.
- Culture and values have been more about Command and Control.
  - A balance between training vs pre-disposed habit.

## Chronic Absenteeism efforts:

In 2017, SCUSD was awarded a three-year Learning Communities for School Success Program (LCSSP) grant by the California Department of Education to address chronic absenteeism. The grant was written as a collaborative effort by the Enrollment and Attendance Department, Student Support Services and Youth Development to support positive school attendance at all levels. Our own SCUSD Youth Media team branded the campaign “Be HERE” as a recognizable, relatable and positive brand.

In an effort to reduce its high level of chronic absenteeism, the District partnered closely with Hedy Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works and a nationally recognized expert on chronic absenteeism and her team. In the Fall of 2018, Attendance Works completed a diagnostic review of SCUSD’s attendance practices. Many of the resulting recommendations were incorporated in the work at the District’s twenty (20) “Be Here” grant schools.

The Be HERE grant is comprised of three major components: a marketing and community education campaign bringing awareness to the negative impact of chronic absenteeism, a standardization of district-wide attendance practices, and an implementation of our targeted attendance improvement program at the Be HERE grant schools.

At each Be HERE grant school, the district supports site level staff in creating systems based on the MTSS framework that ensure attendance is a priority. Attendance teams comprised of site



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administrators, teachers, social workers and office staff and meet biweekly to monitor data trends and organize the school's tiered intervention strategies to improve attendance for all students. Be HERE District staff and the school teams create and implement a multi-tiered system of support to ensure chronically absent students and those at risk of being chronically absent are receiving the proper interventions and support to improve school attendance. The team sets school and student group goals based on historical and current data, and the data monitoring process is framed by these goals.

The District is utilizing data, both qualitative and quantitative, to guide and evaluate our efforts. Our new early warning system, the EIS, allows staff to identify students with attendance concerns and provide strategic interventions early, at the first signs of need. The tool also provides a means to monitor the effectiveness of those interventions and review and adjust as needed for each student. The Performance and Targeted Action Index (PTAI) is an accountability tool that administrators use to monitor chronic absence, attendance growth and retention and most importantly, the effect improved attendance has on grade level readiness and academic success.

## VI. Results:

As the district continues to implement SEL, PBIS, RJ, and Bullying prevention approaches, it will continue to refine its processes for collecting and analyzing data to assess impact. The district developed a School Climate survey in order to better understand students' (grades 3-12) perceptions on SEL, Belonging/Connectedness, and Sense of Safety; Parents' perceptions on Belonging/Connectedness, and Sense of Safety; and Staff's perceptions of SEL implementation, Belonging/Connectedness, and Sense of Safety. These qualitative data sets provide insight into stakeholders' experiences that are not always captured in quantifiable data sets. The School Climate was first administered in the Spring of 16-17, administered again in the 17-18 school year, and again in the 18-19 school year. The School Climate survey data, along with Attendance, Behavior, and Course performance data, has been used to better understand, refine, and deepen climate and culture work toward better equitable outcomes.

The following are some bright spots as well as some areas for growth:

### Students

#### Grade Level:

- Grades 9-12 (small high schools) students reported the *highest* Connectedness and Safety percentages of positive responses at 70.2%
- Grade 9-12 (comprehensive high schools) reported the *lowest* Connectedness percentage of positive responses at 60.2%
- Grade 3-6 students reported the *lowest* Safety percentage of positive responses at 61.3%

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## Ethnicity & Race:

- White students reported the *highest* percentage of positive responses for both Connectedness and Safety at 71.9% and 68.2% respectively.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students reported the *lowest* Connectedness percentage of positive responses at 62.2%, followed very closely by African Americans at 62.7%
- African American students reported the *lowest* Safety percentage of positive responses at 59.4%

## VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps:

### Lessons learned include:

- Non-systemic school climate approaches cannot stand alone: A district-wide multi-tiered system of supports is needed to have maximum impact.
- Documented student needs must be the driver for implementation.
- Comprehensive and continuous analysis of data at all levels of the organization (classroom, school, district) is vital for improvement in student outcomes.

### Next Steps include:

- Continue to populate the Performance and Targeted Action Index to continuously assess student progress and make improvements.
- Integrate school climate and culture systemic approaches to better meet student needs.
- Build the capacity of staff to use information to improve practice.