



***Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014***  
***Rethink. Innovate. Excel.***

Putting Children First.

## **Sacramento City Unified School District Mission Statement**

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Students graduate as globally competitive lifelong learners, prepared to succeed in a career and higher education institution of their choice to secure gainful employment and contribute to society.

## **Board of Education**

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## A Message from the Superintendent



Dear families, employees and friends of the Sacramento City Unified School District:

We are living in a time of exponential change. Consider the following:\*

- China will soon be the No. 1 English-speaking country in the world.
- India has more honor students than America has people.
- The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that today's learners will have 10 to 14 jobs by age 38.
- For students starting a four-year technical degree, half of what they learn in their first year of study will be outdated by their third year of study.

\*Source: *Did You Know?/Shift Happens* by Karl Fisch and Scott McLeod

This rapid change demands that we set aside time-worn ideas—that a high school diploma and a factory job are the paths to success—and embrace a fresh approach to education, one that takes into account the reality that many doors will open to our graduates if they have been properly prepared.

*Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014* represents Sacramento City Unified School District's ongoing effort to improve the education we provide to *every* student in *every* classroom so they can meet the challenges of our 21st-century world. The text is the result of conversations with a wide range of community partners who have a vested interest in our continued success as an organization. Those partners include students, teachers, administrators, classified employees, parents, colleges, businesses and nonprofit groups that support our work.

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to all who participated in this process. You shared insights and concerns, goals and strategies. This input was vital to our objective of creating a document that will direct our work as we accelerate our rate of change.

The result of this collaboration is a plan that breaks with the past in format. We begin with a vision narrative—a revelation of what we imagine our district will look like in the future.

The narrative is hoped to inspire and enlighten. It is meant as a descriptive companion to our Board of Education-adopted mission statement: Students graduate as globally competitive lifelong learners, prepared to succeed in a career and higher education institution of their choice to secure gainful employment and contribute to society.

We followed the vision narrative with a declaration of commitment to the three foundational pillars we have chosen to anchor this plan: Career- and College-Ready Students; Family and Community Engagement; and Organizational Transformation.

Finally, the plan itself includes strategies and measurements for moving the district toward our stated goals. The intention is to present a bold statement that will unify the district in a collaborative call to action: We cannot maintain the status quo—a small gain here, a small loss there—and meet our potential of becoming a world-class educational organization.

In a time of exponential change, incremental action isn't enough.

Sincerely,

Jonathan P. Raymond





## **Our Vision**

### **Let's take a simple idea and start a revolution.**

Let's pledge that children come first in the Sacramento City Unified School District.

Let's promise to put a child's best interest at the heart of every decision we make.

Let's stand up together.

What would happen?

Teachers, effectively trained, supported by their peers and armed with data on each child's progress, would engage students with curriculum that is meaningful and compelling. Teachers would be dedicated to the idea that readying our students for an ever-evolving world means encouraging each child to think, to solve problems, to work well with others, to master essential standards. To communicate.

Principals, teachers and all district employees would believe that every child can learn and have the results to prove it.

Students would come to school every day expecting to be challenged, no matter their ability level or background. When they graduate, they would leave us as well-prepared to choose a college or career path that is right for them. They would leave us knowing that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit or defining of character than giving all to a difficult task.

Our important allies in the community—families, colleges, businesses and nonprofit partners—would be engaged in our cause and we would be ready to benefit from their collective wisdom. Schools that once operated as island entities in isolation, open only during school hours, would become vibrant hubs of activity after the last bell and on weekends.

Walls would fall. Classrooms would lose borders and become seamlessly connected to neighborhoods—and the world. Schools would lose divisions that stifle good ideas. The chasm between the central office and the school site would narrow and disappear.

New principles for a new economy would emerge: Rethink. Innovate. Excel.

This is the Sacramento City Unified School District we envision. To get there, we have established three foundational pillars that intertwine to support a holistic approach to education. Like Aristotle, we believe the whole is more than the sum of its parts. These pillars both anchor our decisions and propel us forward as we accelerate our rate of change to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. These pillars—Career- and College-Ready Students, Family and Community Engagement and Organizational Transformation—represent our commitment to our students.

### **Our promise.**



**Sacramento City Unified School District  
Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014**

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**I. Pillar I: Career- and College-Ready Students**

“I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.”

– *President Barack Obama*

***Why this is important:*** By giving our students the knowledge, habits and skills that can only come from a rigorous, relevant and well-rounded education, we are preparing them to choose the path that is right for them: apprenticeship in a trade, vocational school, community college or a four-year university. We cannot know what the future holds; the risk is in under-preparing our students for an ever-evolving world and thereby limiting their choices. Bottom line: the same characteristics that make students appealing to top universities—the ability to think, problem solve, work well with others and communicate—make them ideal job candidates as well. Our task is to expose students to an array of post-high school options and then arm them with the skills needed to pursue those opportunities. This job begins the day a child walks through our doors and continues until he or she leaves us.

***What we value. What we will do. How we will do it.*****A. Every student must be held to high expectations.**

We will provide students with a relevant, rigorous and well-rounded education that includes 21st-century career exploration, visual and performing arts and that meets four-year college and university requirements. Our goal is for all schools to hold students to the highest academic expectations. We will meet this goal by making the following curriculum improvements:

1. Develop instruction and curriculum in language arts, math, science and social studies that captures student interest, incorporates an appreciation of diversity, and motivates and challenges each child—regardless of ability level—to higher achievement.
2. Expand and replicate highest-performing schools and programs.
3. Develop clear expectations about what students need to know and master at every grade level.
4. Develop instruction and curriculum that connects student learning to the real world of work.



**B. We are committed to continuous improvement and lifelong learning—for our students and our employees.**

We believe all staff and students will thrive in an environment focused on learning and continuous improvement. We will create professional development opportunities that are practical and have high impact on student learning. Our goal is for all of our schools to use the School Quality Review to guide their improvement efforts and collaborative data inquiry teams as vehicles for continuous improvement. We will meet this goal by the following:

1. Invest in professional development for teachers and principals that accelerates student learning by giving children ample opportunities to think critically, work with others, solve problems, struggle with difficult tasks and enjoy school.
2. Develop training designed to address each area of the School Quality Review process.
3. Train principals and teachers to use data inquiry teams to connect student results to effective instructional practices.



**C. We are committed to eliminating achievement gaps.**

As a result, we will develop rigorous, holistic assessments to measure ongoing student progress. Our goal is to decrease all achievement gaps by 20 percent annually on all measures. We will meet this goal by the following:

1. Develop a measure for a year's growth for every subject and grade level.
2. Develop and train teachers on common assessments that inform teaching.
3. Develop a common understanding of exemplary student academic writing that can be used as a standard to evaluate student work.

***How do we know when we are successful?***

We will know we are successful when: 100 percent of schools receiving a second School Quality Review improve by one performance level; 100 percent of students achieve more than a year's worth of growth in a year's time; and we narrow the achievement gap between the lowest-performing and highest-performing students.

## II. **Pillar II: Family and Community Engagement**

“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”

– César Chávez

**Why this is important:** Who among us is so strong that they don't need help? Urban public school districts face enormous challenges that cannot be met without families and community partners. Our district is no different—we cannot achieve significant change alone. We need involvement. We need a shift in our culture away from seeing schools as island entities operating in isolation and open only during school hours. Our new image should be of campuses that are vibrant public places, hubs of community activity during school, after school and on weekends. Our engagement should be two-way: We should be as eager to learn from others as we are to teach. Our partnerships should span the breadth of our needs—finances, resources, manpower and brain power.



***What we value. What we will do. How we will do it.*****A. Families are our most important partners.**

We will develop meaningful opportunities that will empower families to participate in their children's education. Our goal is to have the option for all parents to engage in courses and workshops at school sites and to have all schools involved in the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project. In order to meet these goals, we will:

1. Offer classes, courses and workshops that enable families to help their children succeed in school.
2. Create welcoming school environments that encourage student, family, parent organization and community engagement.
3. Expand the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project.
4. Ensure that School Site Councils are high-functioning.
5. Require each school to have a plan—developed with its unique community—to engage families in student learning at home, at school or a Sacramento City Unified School District site.





## **B. We believe schools are community centers.**

We will ensure that every school becomes an integral hub of community life to provide open space and access to resources. Our goal is to ensure that all of our schools are open and welcoming to families and to community partners. In order to reach this goal, we will:

1. Establish a family resource center at every school to connect families to resources that will help them support their child's learning.
2. Train administrators and teachers on developing school/family partnerships that focus on student learning.
3. Partner to open facilities on nights, weekends and holidays.
4. Create community gardens at our schools.

### **C. We believe partnerships provide opportunities for students to learn beyond the school walls.**

We will increase strategic partnerships that expose students to career pathways through internships and service learning. Our goal is for all schools to be engaged in partnerships that increase summer, during- and after-school opportunities for students. In order to reach this goal, we will:

1. Connect with public and private institutions that can provide students with enriching experiences that teach them how to thrive in a work environment.
2. Develop district partnerships to provide resources that support learning aimed at creating globally competitive graduates and parent engagement opportunities.

#### ***How do we know when we are successful?***

We will know we are successful when 100 percent of our schools are open and welcoming to families and engaged in partnerships that increase opportunities for students.

### III.

#### **Pillar III: Organizational Transformation**

“We are now at a point where we must educate our children in what no one knew yesterday, and prepare our schools for what no one knows yet.”

– *Margaret Mead*

***Why this is important:*** A school district is an organization of people. To meet future challenges, our employees need to be innovative, resourceful, flexible and creative. They must value collaboration and work well in teams. We must improve how we recruit, hire, train and retain our staff. We must empower our people to be education leaders. We must be driven by research and a constant adaptation in light of evidence. We must be held accountable. We must seek to reflect in our workforce the diversity of our community. On an operational level, the school district needs to break down barriers between the central office and school sites to create a more effective flow of services. Those services should include everything necessary for our schools to be clean, safe, welcoming and healthy. Pockets of excellence—programs and projects proven to work for students—should be replicated and made systemic.



***What we value. What we will do. How we will do it.*****A. We stand for the relentless pursuit of excellence.**

We will create a “no-excuses” culture that is focused on results and continuous improvement. Our goal is to create and expand examples of proven successes both at the school site and central office. In order to meet this goal, we will:

1. Use Superintendent’s Priority Schools as places of innovation to attack persistent under-performance and the achievement gap.
2. Align School Development and Improvement Plans, School Quality Reviews and budget.
3. Create a project management process to implement the Strategic Plan.
4. Develop a Data Dashboard to monitor progress of the Strategic Plan.
5. Ensure schools are organized to accelerate student learning with supports and interventions tailored to the needs of each campus.



## **B. Our diversity is our strength.**

We will recruit, train, retain and support a motivated, capable and diverse workforce. Our goal is to ensure all staff members improve their performance from year to year and that 100 percent of our employees have a plan for career development. In order to meet these goals, we will:



1. Design a performance evaluation system for all positions that clearly defines effectiveness, measures efficiency and ensures equity in employment decisions.
2. Establish strategies—such as a recruitment committee, a Principal Fellowship Program and a Teacher Institute—to attract, train and retain a diverse workforce.
3. Create a system that orients new staff as they arrive and provides clear pathways to promotion for all employees.

### **C. We put children first.**

We believe the core business of our organization is teaching and learning. We will focus every department, team and individual in the organization to support teaching and learning. Our goal is for 100 percent of our schools to express satisfaction with central office services and for 100 percent of our schools to report central office has assisted in the improvement of teaching and learning at their site. In order to meet these goals, we will:

1. Make decisions based on what is best for children. Incorporate student voice into that decision-making process.
2. Ensure that school environments, from the curb to the classroom, are conducive to student learning.
3. Reorganize the central office to facilitate collaboration, improve collective accountability and enhance the quality of teaching and student learning.

#### ***How do we know when we are successful?***

We will know we are successful when 100 percent of our schools express satisfaction with central office services.





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## Glossary of Terms

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**Academic writing:** Academic writing is based on analysis—the process of breaking down ideas—to increase understanding. The general purpose of academic writing is to present information that displays a clear comprehension of a subject. Assessments such as research papers, essays, speeches and short- and long-answer tests ask students to perform academic writing.

**Accountability:** The demand by a community (public officials, employers and taxpayers) for school officials to prove that money invested in education has led to measurable learning.

**Achievement gap:** Differences in academic performance among groups of students which are identified by ethnicity, ability and income level. The achievement gap can be observed on a variety of measures, including standardized test scores, grade point average and dropout rates.

**Common assessment:** An assessment used by all teachers of a grade level or subject to measure student learning. The assessment can be in many forms: a test, an essay, a speech, a group project, etc.

**Culturally relevant:** Culturally relevant teaching refers to instruction and curriculum that empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural reference points to connect with students and impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.

**Curriculum:** A course of study offered by a school, class or teacher.

**Data Dashboard:** A “data dashboard” is an online tool for viewing and analyzing student achievement and performance data. Key data for monitoring student achievement and directing policy-level decisions are presented in a series of online charts and graphs, or “gauges,” much like a car’s dashboard displays.

**Data inquiry teams:** Data-based inquiry and decision making is a process in which school personnel engage in ongoing data analysis from multiple sources to provide a comprehensive picture of a school’s strengths and challenges. Schools then develop a plan to prioritize and address those challenges.

## Glossary of Terms Continued

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**Holistic assessments:** In assessing student work, a holistic assessment assigns a single score based on overall performance rather than by scoring or analyzing dimensions individually. The product is considered to be more than the sum of its parts, and so the quality of a final product or performance is evaluated rather than the process or dimension of performance.

**Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project:** A nonprofit organization that increases family engagement and builds community trust by training teachers and other school district staff to visit student homes.

**Professional development:** Training sessions for school district employees that develop skills and knowledge to improve services to students and for career advancement.

**Rigorous:** Rigorous courses are those which are challenging to every student, prepare students for college and career by engaging them in their own learning and stretch every student to the limits of his/her potential.

**School Development and Improvement Plan:** The written school improvement plan for each school includes strategies for improving student performance in targeted goal areas, information on how and when improvements will be implemented and information on the use of federal and state funds.

**School Quality Review:** School Quality Review is a process designed to develop a clear picture of the quality of education provided in a school. It assists the school in establishing a clear view of its strengths, areas for development, challenges and successes.

**School Site Council:** The School Site Council is a school community's representative body, made up of school staff, parents/community members, and at the secondary level, students.

**Superintendent's Priority Schools:** Selected district schools that rank in the lowest 20 percent of academic performance in California and are targeted for improvement through a focus on staffing, resources and teaching and learning.

**Well-rounded education:** A well-rounded education is a varied, well-balanced and fully developed education that exposes students to visual and performing arts and other enrichment activities in addition to core disciplines.



# Putting Children First:

## Strategic Plan 2010 -14

### Three Pillars

#### **Pillar I: Career and College Ready Students**

**A.** Provide students with a relevant, rigorous and well-rounded education that includes 21st Century career exploration, visual and performing arts and that meets four-year college and university requirements.

**B.** Create professional development opportunities that are practical and have high impact on student learning.

**C.** Develop rigorous, holistic assessments to measure ongoing student progress.

#### **Pillar II: Family and Community Engagement**

**A.** Develop meaningful opportunities that will empower parents to participate in their children's education.

**B.** Ensure that every school will become an integral hub of community life to provide open space and access to resources.

**C.** Increase strategic partnerships that expose students to career pathways through internships and service learning.

#### **Pillar III: Organizational Transformation**

**A.** Create a "no-excuses" culture that is focused on results and continuous improvement.

**B.** Recruit, train, retain and support a motivated, capable and diverse workforce.

**C.** Focus every department, team and individual in the organization to support teaching and learning.





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