

Coalition for Students with Disabilities

Public comments for Sept. 17, 2020 SCUSD Board of Education meeting

7.2 Resolution No. 3167: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (Victoria Flores and Isa Sheikh)

Joint public comment on behalf of the Coalition for Students with Disabilities by Angie Sutherland, Angel Garcia, Sarah Williams Kingsley and Renee Webster-Hawkins

We thank the Board and District for creating this important Resolution. The Resolution states that the "recent California Healthy Kids Survey of SCUSD students indicated that on average 1 in 5 students has considered suicide in the past 12 months". It would be important to know if SCUSD actually tracks suicidal ideation incidents and demographic information along with this, rather than relying only on survey responses.

When a student expresses suicidal ideation to their teacher or an adult at school, the response to the student is very critical and an official report needs to be made. In some of our children's experiences, this has not happened and students were made to feel like their feelings and emotions were unwarranted and they were causing their problems. This cannot happen if we say we want to increase awareness of and access to mental health supports, help to prevent and overcome mental health challenges, including self-harm, suicide, substance abuse, and other dangerous behaviors.

Bullying is also closely tied with suicide. It was disheartening to learn that SCUSD did not track data on bullying motivation in 2018/19 and only partially tracked it in 2017/18. It will be interesting to see what the data says for 2019/20.

For example, in the 2017/18 School Year: The number of bullying reports per responsive records received, was 171. Of this number, the district tracked that 52 listed a "motivation" for the bullying. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Appearance (12) 23%
2. Race (12) 23%
3. Sexual Orientation (11) 21%
4. Disability (10) 19%
5. Sexual Harassment (6) 12%
6. Religion (1) .02%

The motivation for bullying was not listed for 119 of the cases in 2017/18. We are not sure if this was omitted on the complaint or was not tracked.

In addition, the District stated it did not track the motivation for bullying at all in 2018/19. In a high needs district like SCUSD this is unacceptable. The Coalition also requested responsive records that were not provided on the number of substantiated versus unsubstantiated cases of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. We are still waiting for this information that was requested last December. In addition, the district is not taking advantage of the resources of community partners. The Coalition will need to inquire further to gain a clearer understanding about the frequency of bullying, types of bullying, and the responses to bullying. **How can SCUSD really develop targeted emotional supports if they are not tracking these related issues? Our call to action is to put more action behind this cause and we are here to help.**