



# SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item 9.1

**Meeting Date:** September 7, 2017

**Subject:** Student Achievement Presentation: Graduation

- 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

**Recommendation:** This agenda item is for discussion only.

**Background/Rationale:** The Sacramento City Unified School District recognizes that high school graduation is a pivotal milestone in the lives of its students and works diligently to ensure all students successfully complete the required course work and courses of study to graduate from the school district with the requisite skills for college and career readiness. The district's new Equity, Access, and Social Justice Guiding Principle underscores the importance of high school graduation and its significance in ensuring that all students are not just given an equal opportunity to graduate, but are able to do so with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options.

However, in recent years the SCUSD graduation rate trend has been uneven. For example, the graduation rate was 79.9% for the 2012-2013 school year, peaked at 85.3% for the 2013-2014 school year but declined back to 80.5% for the 2015-2016 school year. This concerning pattern led Superintendent Aguilar to create the graduation taskforce which was announced on the first day of school, August 31<sup>st</sup>. The taskforce will convene in September with the charge of developing a set of rigorous recommendations for the Superintendent by December 2017 that will guide district policy and practice and lead to improvements in graduation rates where all students are fully prepared for any postsecondary option they may choose.

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the board of education an update on recent graduation trends.

**Financial Considerations:** None

**LCAP Goal(s):** College, Career and Life Ready Graduates

**Documents Attached:**

1. Executive Summary

**Estimated Time of Presentation:** 20 minutes

**Submitted by:** Iris Taylor, Chief Academic Officer and  
Vincent Harris, Chief of Continuous Improvement  
and Accountability

**Approved by:** Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent

# Board of Education Executive Summary

## Academic Office/Continuous Improvement

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### I. Overview/History of Department or Program

The Sacramento City Unified School District recognizes that high school graduation is a pivotal milestone in the lives of its students and works diligently to ensure all students successfully complete the required course work and courses of study to graduate from the school district with the requisite skills for college and career readiness. The district's new Equity, Access, and Social Justice Guiding Principle underscores the importance of high school graduation and its significance in ensuring that all students are not just given an equal opportunity to graduate, but are able to do so with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options.

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### II. Driving Governance:

Per board policy 6146.1 - Because graduation from high school provides students with opportunities for postsecondary education and or employment, the Governing Board desires to prepare each student to obtain a diploma of high school graduation. High Graduation represents an important life achievement for the student, family and community. America's Promise Alliance has done extensive work on the importance of high school graduation. Below are several reasons why high school graduation matters:

- High school graduates are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable income, and aid in job generation.
- High school graduates earn a national average of \$8,000 more annually compared to high school dropouts.
- High school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or require social services.
- High school graduates have better health and longer life expectancy.
- High school graduates are more likely to vote. During the 2012 presidential election, 4 percent of people who left high school without graduating voted compared to 24 percent of youth with only a high school diploma and 37 percent with a college degree.<sup>[28]</sup>

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- High school graduates contribute to America's national security because students that leave high school without a diploma are not qualified to serve in the military.
- The nation's economy depends on skilled labor. Business leaders report difficulty in finding enough qualified employees with the skills, training and education to meet their companies' needs.

The important takeaway is that high graduation matters in multiple ways. High school graduates have a much higher chance of achieving their personal dreams than high school drop outs. Our job is to ensure that students graduate high school ready for whatever they aspire to do next in life.

### III. Budget:

The budget for this item will be determined by the recommendations of the Graduation Taskforce.

### IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures:

Improving graduation rate initiatives are included in the district's LCAP such as adding counselors at the secondary level, a California College Guidance Initiative pilot and College Readiness Block grant initiatives. In addition as the Graduation Task Force completes its work, several of their recommendations will be adopted during next year's budget process and LCAP revisions.

### V. Major Initiatives:

Even before the graduation task force meets, it is important to note that the district has started work to increase the graduation rate.

This work started on Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup> with a focused training for counselors and site administrators. Superintendent Aguilar and district leaders defined expectations around increasing Sacramento City's graduation rate and how counselor work directly impacts the Equity, Access and Social Justice work of the district through the effective use of the master scheduling process to updraft as many students as possible through graduation and a-g completion. In addition, Dr. Trish Hatch, an expert and best selling author in the field of counseling, provided an overview of the counseling profession, the importance of building a data driven counseling program, and the need for principals and counselors to build a strong collaborative relationship. This effort was very timely given the relatively short window to adjust student schedules before the start of the school year.

In addition, on Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup> a training was held with the high school registrars to complete quality control on student transcripts. District staff shared best practices regarding the transcript review process to ensure that course codes were appropriately showing on

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student transcripts. This work primarily applies to out of district or out of country students where transcripts may not clearly define the student course work. In addition, registrars were able to verify that recently updated course codes appeared correctly on student transcripts.

### VI. Results:

It is important to note that the Sacramento City Unified school district's graduation rate trend data has remained inconsistent year over year and there are significant gaps between student groups. While it is important to focus on the long-term aspiration of graduating all students college and career ready, it is critical to "see" the current reality. The chart below provides an overview of the district and subgroup graduation trends. The key takeaway is that the district has an important opportunity to accelerate graduation results for every student group.

School Year	District	Hispanic	Asian	African American	White	English Learner	Special Education
2015-2016	80.5%	77.5%	90.8%	70.6%	83.6%	73.3%	56.6%
2014-2015	80.3%	76.9%	89.5%	69.0%	82.3%	72.9%	57.5%
2013-2014	85.0%	82.1%	90.8%	73.3%	90.8%	77.7%	66.5%
2012-2013	85.3%	83.1%	90.3%	76.2%	89.1%	78.3%	70.0%
2011-2012	79.9%	75.2%	89.3%	70.4%	79.3%	75.4%	63.4%

### VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps:

- The graduation taskforce will meet from September to December 2017 and present its findings at the December board meeting.
- It will take a combination of district staff, board leadership and community partners to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to graduate with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options.