



**SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL
DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Agenda Item# 9.3

Meeting Date: June 23, 2011

Subject: Academic Office: Building a New Learning System

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

Segment/Department: Academic Office

Recommendation: None

Background/Rationale:

The heartbeat of the Academic Office is high quality learning and teaching that are aligned with the educational and organizational goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010-2014: *Putting Children First*, which will result in college and career-ready students. The division is committed to building a learning system that focuses on the Common Core Standards, fosters instructional coherence, and promotes continuous improvement in the design and delivery of intentional instruction, integration of multidimensional formative assessments, and targeted intervention supports from Pre-School to Grade 12.

Financial Considerations:

Approximately \$676,000 for professional development contracts, training materials, and teacher substitutes/stipends. The projected costs for 2011-12 are \$1,928,000.

Documents Attached:

1. Executive Summary
2. Key Performance Indicators

Estimated Time of Presentation: 60 minutes

Submitted by: Olivine Roberts, Chief Academic Officer

Approved by: Jonathan P. Raymond, Superintendent

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I. Overview of the Academic Office

The heartbeat of the Academic Office is high quality learning and teaching that are aligned with the educational and organizational goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010-2014: *Putting Children First*, which will result in college and career-ready students. The division is committed to building a learning system that focuses on the Common Core Standards, fosters instructional coherence, and promotes continuous improvement in the design and delivery of intentional instruction, integration of multidimensional formative assessments, and targeted intervention supports from Pre-School to Grade 12. This means that, every day in every classroom, our focus is on delivering, through high standards that ensure academic rigor in a thinking curriculum, student learning experiences that not only provide significant and meaningful connections but are grounded in the knowledge and skills our students will need for success in a conceptual age.

It is through the support of administrators, teachers, and staffs that our students are provided the best educational opportunities available. Hence, our focus on learning is not just limited to only our students, but extends to these key stakeholders as well. It is clearly understood that professional development is one of key levers for continuous school improvement. Ernest Boyer captured the essence of its importance in stating, "When you talk about school improvement, you are talking about people improvement. That's the only way to improve schools." Professional development is focused on the improvement of student learning through the improvement of the skill and knowledge of educators. The Academic Office is fully committed to promoting a culture of learning that expands the professional repertoire of our administrators, teachers, and staffs.

II. Driving Governance

The work of the Academic Office is driven by the need to prepare our students for college or career readiness. This clarion call, which is echoed throughout the Strategic Plan, has required us to examine our current status and practice. For this reason, the district has chosen to move forward with the adoption of the Common Core Standards, which are fewer, clearer, and more rigorous and are designed to prepare students for success beyond high school. These standards set a clear bar and communicate a set of shared expectations across the system: all students, ready for college or careers, by the end of high school. It is the intent that the high expectations inherent in the standards will drive the entire system – across all classrooms – towards excellence and increase the outcomes and opportunities for all students.

The learning system goes far beyond the adoption of these standards. It is designed to build coherence using a common instructional framework that guides curriculum, teaching, assessment, combines specific expectations for student learning with models of high-quality performance, plus integrates the data inquiry methodology as well all other initiatives and practices. Due to enormity of the task, the development of the learning system has begun with a gradual adoption, meaning for this school year, the work was centered on a subset of the English Common Core Standards per grade level and will expand over the time plus the refinement and integration of processes and practices.

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III. Budget

The budget covers training, substitutes or stipends, and materials. Sources of funding are a combination of Title-I, Title-III, and General Funds.

2010-2011		2011-2012	
Common Core	\$100,000	Common Core	\$300,000
Inclusive Practices	\$120,000	Inclusive Practices	\$120,000
Response to Interventions (Rtl)	\$250,000	Response to Interventions (Rtl)	\$400,000
English Language Development	\$121,000	English Language Development	\$200,000
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching	\$60,000	Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching	\$150,000
Differentiated Instruction	\$25,000	Differentiated Instruction	\$35,000
		GATE/Advanced Placement	\$150,000
		Math/Literacy	\$350,000
Total	\$676,000	Total	\$1,705,000

IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures

The Academic Office is fully committed to promoting a culture of learning for administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Its goal is to empower and engage district and school-based staff in the process of creating and implementing a comprehensive “thinking” curriculum coupled with targeted instructional practices and assessment processes that are responsive to identified school and district needs, and will lead to conceptual understanding and yield high levels of learning. As a result, the Academic Office is resolve to provide an infrastructure of support based on research, reform initiatives and exemplary practices including quality professional development that is a continuous and fosters a deepening of subject matter knowledge and a greater understanding of learning for improving classroom practice and student learning; customize targeted support such as coaching, observing, and modeling rendered by the instructional coaches; and continuously form collaborative linkages between and among processes, departments, and divisions.

To assess the effectiveness and impact of the learning system, the Academic Office has collaborated with the Accountability Office to determine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will serve as the barometer for success. The Academic Office will measure the mastery of standards through the periodic administration of district benchmark assessments plus the analysis of the student-level and standard-

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level data throughout the year using a variety of assessments including classroom-based assessments, common assessments and performance assessments. Additionally, to assess the quality, effectiveness, and fidelity of implementation of teaching and learning resources at both site and district levels, the Academic Office will consistently review content (alignment with standards, cognitive demand, accuracy, diversity and relevance), observe presentation (alignment of instructional components, organization, readability, pacing, and ease of use), and evaluate learning (differentiation, strategies, interventions, and assessments) to determine if program changes are warranted.

V. Major Initiatives:

- **Common Core ELA Standards**

The goal of the Common Core Standards is to ensure that all students are college and career ready upon exit from high school. The standards are fewer and more rigorous, and focus on the same 10 college and career anchor standards across all grades, which define a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers. California will begin assessing our students using these new standards in 2014. To ensure our teachers and students are prepared for these new standards, initial work has begun with the adoption of the Common Core ELA Standards. Ownership of this high-quality initiative could not be accomplished without the involvement of our teachers. For that reason, over 100 PreSchool - Grade 12 English teachers responded to the call to join the Academic Office in this effort. Over the last five months, using a systemic model, this cadre of teachers engaged in the work by learning and examining a small subset of the standards, designed classroom assignments (performance tasks) aligned to the standards, and designed instructional units to support the teaching of the standards. In creating these resources, the teachers took a dual-vision approach and used two lenses: a zoom lens into the subset of standards for their particular grade and a wide-angle lens to capture the K-12 perspective, which provided a deeper understanding of our students' experiences over time; eliminated redundancy and gaps; and guaranteed consistency within and across grade levels. This provided a global perspective and afforded our teachers the opportunity to collaborate and articulate with their colleagues.

- **Inclusive Practices**

To better serve the needs of all students, the district is restructuring its educational programs to achieve optimal results for increasingly diverse students with complex learning needs. As a result, the district is expanding the continuum of services for our special needs students to incorporate inclusive practices, which are aimed at educating our students, to the greatest extent possible, in age appropriate general education classroom settings in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare them for college or career. Six schools (3 elementary, 1 K-8, 1 middle, and 1 high) have begun developing and implementing pathways to inclusive practices. Their work this year focused on building a deep understanding of inclusive practices and how to cultivate and foster a culture that supports this approach. Teams from these schools participated in targeted professional development addressing knowledge of inclusive principles, skills for collaboration, plus designing and delivering effective service delivery.

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- **Linked Learning**

Linked Learning, also known as SCUSD Pathways to Success, has become the district's high school reform initiative. It is a transformative model that supports the goals of the Strategic Plan by preparing students for post-secondary education and career. It combines challenging college-preparatory academics and demanding technical courses with hands-on learning, as well as affords numerous opportunities for students and teachers to learn from industry professionals. Pathways are being implemented at eight sites, (all five small high schools and three of the large high schools). This initiative has several professional development sequences – including site level experiential visits (which Health Professions hosted this fall), along with Site Level Training Modules and District Level Residencies. Both the district and site trainings have focused on developing desired student outcomes for rigorous academic and technical course sequences in the past year – and have now shifted to student supports and the next generation of performance-based assessments.

- **Early Kinder**

Early Kinder is an important step to reaching the vision of Pillar One of the Strategic Plan, College and Career Ready Students. It provides the avenue for the district to build a stronger support network for its earliest learners. It provides an opportunity for an additional year to 'ready' a child who is old enough to start kindergarten, but is not yet fully developmentally ready for the academic rigors of kindergarten. To ensure student readiness, this two-year program is designed to address the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of the students. There are currently four school sites serving as early implementers of the program. These programs offer children a language rich environment, using materials aligned with elementary school standards to children's language development and pre-reading skills, and pre-math skills. Early Kinder teachers focus on all aspects of children's development, bridging the play-based curriculum of preschool with the academic standards of kindergarten to lay a foundation for future academic success.

- **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching**

The district continues to address the diverse needs of the learners by developing instruction that incorporates an appreciation of diversity and assist in eliminating its achievement gaps through the implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. This initiative provides equitable access to learning opportunities regardless of academic gaps or needs; it is designed to impact learning for both Standard English learners and underserved students. Several schools participated in ongoing professional development that equipped them with effective instructional strategies for teaching and learning in increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. To further enhance our work around equity and cultural proficiency, the district will continue its partnership with Dr. Sharroky Hollie, who approaches the topic from an instructional/practical standpoint and we are establishing a new partnership with Dr. Randall Lindsey who will focus on leadership and sustainability. Principals and central office staff will be equipped with a set of tools used to guide organizational change. Both approaches will add

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value and assist both district and school-based staff in making our teaching more culturally responsive and engrained within the tapestry of our daily work.

- **Instructional Support Team**

Instructional Support Team serves as a vehicle for providing differentiated support to schools and job-embedded professional development for building instructional capacity and improving student achievement. This year's team consisted of four training specialists: two elementary math, one English language arts, and one English language development. They rendered support to eight elementary schools by devoting a half-of-a-day, twice per week. Working with each principal, the team developed a customized plan of support that served as the framework for action. The scope of their work included collaboration with individual or teams of teachers to design lessons, observing and providing constructive feedback, modeling effective practices, assessing the quality of learning using the data inquiry process, and facilitated staff-wide professional development.

- **Additional Professional Development**

To more effectively serve the needs of our diverse population, including but not limited to our English Language learners and GATE students, a series of targeted, ongoing professional development on differentiated instruction and English Language Development (ELD) was afforded to our teachers and administrators. Eighty-one teachers and administrators attended the differentiated training and 68 teachers participated in the ELD sessions. These learning opportunities provided the means for these participants to deepen their understanding of students' interests, learning styles, and readiness, and implement a systematic instructional framework built on a strong foundation of second language acquisition principles that maximize students' performance potential at every level of development. The knowledge gleaned was used to proactively plan intentional instruction characterized by clear learning objectives and varied approaches regarding what students learn, how they learn it, and how they show what they have learned.

VI. Results:

- **Common Core ELA Standards**

Grade level team leaders from school sites worked to gain a deep understanding of the English language arts (ELA) Common Core standards and how those standards will impact their instruction, as well as how the standards can be assessed. Teachers engaged in the process of examining the standards and designing rigorous curricula and assessments. The series provided educators with a systemic model to implement the Common Core within a learning environment rich in collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Teachers became more reflective about their instructional practices, realized the importance of the data inquiry process, and saw the value of reviewing student work to identify the learner-centered problem, and address their problem of practice.

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- **Inclusive Practices**

Teams from the early implementation sites participated in two days of professional development on inclusive practices facilitated by Dr. Marilyn Friend. Using the lessons learned, the teams begun making structural and instructional changes to their programs. There is evident in the increased number of co-teaching opportunities as a service delivery option. Follow-up visits were made to each site by Dr. Friend and staff to provide support and address implementation issues. During the 2011-12 school year, these schools will continue to their work with Dr. Friend and will serve as models of practice for the 2012-13 expansion.

- **Linked Learning**

The Linked Learning and CTE/ROP Division provided access to or sponsored space and coordination for a wide variety of professional development to almost 400 participants during the 2010-2011 school year. Topics ranged from Civic-Based Instruction, Green Building Codes, MacWorld Training, Writing across the Curriculum, Pre-Algebra and Algebra Project-based Curriculum Training, and Algebra-I Forum. Overall, the training provided allowed faculty to expand their knowledge and move forward with projects of interest. Teachers began to explore the ConnectEd studio which will allowed for collaborative project-based learning planning and a virtual port to students four year electronic portfolios. Additionally, over the course of the year, district leadership and pathway leadership participated in a wide variety of institutes, residencies and experiential site visits. These interactive, collaborative learning experiences used to enrich and enhance our local design.

- **Early Kinder**

This year's work focused on expanding the Early Kinder Program by building the infrastructure needed to support the four existing school sites and the plan for program expansion to a fifth site for fall of 2011. Progress is being made on developing an appropriate curriculum model, designing professional development opportunities, and facilitating parent engagement opportunities.

- **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching**

This school year, 32 additional teachers participated in 5 days of professional development on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. The series built teachers' background knowledge in the cultures and languages of underserved students, and expanded their repertoire of instructional practices for teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. The sessions focused on understanding the theoretical underpinnings of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching as well as effective culturally responsive student engagement strategies, classroom management strategies, and literacy instruction. The teachers returned to their classrooms having a solid understanding of the socio-historic connection to present-day systemic failure and why culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is necessary.

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- **Instructional Support Team**

Principals and teachers valued the support provided by the instruction team. This is reflected in their feedback/reflections as noted: training specialists modeled lessons and/or workshops that were uniformly high quality and appropriate to the needs of the teachers being serve; demonstrated the ability to provide teachers with clear and direct feedback in a respectful manner; provided the teachers with specific and instructionally appropriate suggestions for improvement; continuously sought ways to improve the support provided and made changes as needed in response to teacher and administrator input. For 2011-12, the team will expand to serve additional elementary as well secondary schools, but the training specialists will continue to collaborate with principals and teachers to ensure that the performance of students is “exemplary.”

VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps:

- Continue the adoption of the Common Core ELA Standards wherein early implementation sites will examine the standards, and design rigorous instructional plans and classroom-based assignments (performance tasks)
- Begin the development of benchmark assessments that are aligned to the Common Core ELA Standards
- Continue to collaborate with the Accountability Office in providing support for the implementation of the Data Inquiry Process and Common Planning
- Develop standards, common curriculum/instructional materials, and student learning assessment for Early Kinder
- Create models of practice for inclusive practices at the early implementation sites
- Design targeted, ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators that will deepen their content knowledge and expand their instructional toolkits
- Provide differentiated support to schools based upon need
- Refine approach for addressing cultural proficiency by developing a sustainability model for transforming the culture of the school and district
- Increase the number of schools receiving customized instructional coaching and support provided by the Instructional Support Team
- Refine and expand the GATE/AP program to reach more students and better serve their needs
- Continue to invest and support administrators in finding innovative ways to implement Linked Learning and build a broad-based coalition with the community including, but not limited to higher-education, industry partners, faith-based and community organizations