BOARD COMMUNICATIONS – JANUARY 15, 2021

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Superintendent, Robert G. Nelson, Ed.D.

SUPERINTENDENT – Robert G. Nelson, Ed.D.
S-1 Robert G. Nelson Superintendent Calendar Highlights

AFRICAN AMERICAN ACADEMIC ACCELERATION – Wendy McCulley, Executive
AA-1 Wendy McCulley The Office of African American Academic Acceleration Afterschool Reading Program
AA-2 Wendy McCulley The Office of African American Academic Acceleration’s Superintendent’s Task Force

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES – Santino Danisi, Interim Chief Financial Officer
AS-1 Kim Kelstrom School Services Weekly Update Report for January 07, 2021
AS-2 Kim Kelstrom California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Program Mandate Reimbursement Claim

EQUITY & ACCESS – Lindsay Sanders, Chief Equity & Access
EA-1 Andrew Scherrer Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Praxis Collaborative Update for Quarter 2

OPERATIONAL SERVICES – Karin Temple, Chief Operations Officer
OS-1 Jason Duke Upgraded Public Address Systems for District Schools
OS-2 Amanda Harvey Food Services Update – Non-Program Foods Calculation

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP – Kim Mecum, Chief Academic Officer
SL-1 Jeremy Ward Community Media Access Collaborative’s Youth Voices Training Program
SL-2 Bryan Wells Central Section Football Coaches Association and the “Let Them Play” Initiative
Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board of notable calendar items:

- Met with California Urban District Superintendents to prepare for meeting with Governor Newsom’s office regarding his phased reopening of schools plan
- Met with Governor Newsom’s office, California Urban District Superintendents, Department of Finance, and State Board of Education representative regarding the Governor’s phased reopening of schools plan
- Gave interview with John Fensterwald, EdSource, regarding meeting with Governor Newsom’s office
- Participated in Facebook Live event with Fresno Teachers Association to reiterate and finalize our plan to return to in-person instruction in the Orange tier
- Met with Executive Cabinet and Cabinet teams
- Attended CART Board Meeting
- Participated in weekly call with Fresno County Superintendents
- Spoke at principals meeting regarding call with Governor Newsom’s office
- Participated in Principal Pipeline Learning Community webinar titled “Principal Pipeline District Equity Audit”
- Met with labor partners
- Recorded podcast for EdSource with John Fensterwald and Louis Freedberg regarding Governor Newsom’s phased reopening of schools plan
- Attended the Hoover Region LCAP Townhall Meeting
Regarding: The Office of African American Academic Acceleration Afterschool Reading Program

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information on the 2nd year pilot of the afterschool reading program. The Office of African American Academic Acceleration in partnership with Springboard Collaborative will offer this program for African American students who are 1-2 grade levels below in reading. This 10-week program will run from January 19, 2021 through March 26, 2021.

The program model for the afterschool program is adaptable for distance learning or onsite instruction. This program combines daily reading instruction, weekly family workshops, a rigorous coaching cycle for teachers; and an incentive structure that awards learning tools to families in proportion to student reading gains. This year we are using EasyCBM for our benchmark assessment, an integral part of the Response to Intervention model. These micro assessments allow us to test in the following areas: Letter Names, Letter Sounds, Phoneme Segmenting, Word Reading Fluency, Passage Reading Fluency, and Vocabulary that correlate to the core skills needed for skillful reading.

Instructional sessions are designed to last 60 minutes for all students and include the following segments: Book Talk, Specific Skills, Read Aloud, and Close Reading. Each program host site will meet for 3 hours weekly and serve an average of 45 kids per site. Last year we served 330 students and the goal of this year’s program is to serve 450 students throughout the district. To increase the number of students served, we introduced a feeder pattern similar to how we arrange our summer program. With the schools participating in our program this year, we were able to cover every region within Fresno Unified. Host sites for this year’s program are as follows: Thomas Elementary, Slater Elementary, Williams Elementary, Kirk Elementary, Columbia Elementary, Del Mar Elementary, Heaton Elementary, Turner Elementary, King Elementary, and Roeding Elementary. Additional students from Lincoln, Ayer, Wolters, Pyle, Vinland, Lawless, and Figarden elementary schools will feed into the above-named host sites.

As this program is designed to serve African American students, we partnered with library services to include more culturally relevant text from Sora that can be used as a resource during programming. We are also working with our ELA department to provide additional Professional Learning for teachers who do not generally teach phonics, as well as, bridging our Wonders (Wonders – no apostrophe) curriculum as an additional resource for the afterschool program.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Wendy McCulley at 559-457-3728.
Regarding: The Office of African American Academic Acceleration’s Superintendent’s Task Force

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an abbreviated progress summary of implementation processes and planning forward for the Board approved (March 06, 2019) African American Academic Acceleration (A4) Task Force recommendations. Implementation phases of the recommendations started in April 2019, to date and are ongoing.

The Task Force is a collection of stakeholders from Fresno Unified School District and the surrounding community who worked to reach consensus and direction for programmatic, policy and practice solutions to accelerate African American (AA) youth academically in Fresno Unified.

Planning and Preparation for Implementation of Task Force Recommendations

2020-2021-FUSD Board of Trustees approved six (6) Task Force recommendations on March 06, 2019, as outlined in the Accountability Matrix. The recommendations being addressed are as follows:

- Attitudes, Beliefs and Mindsets of FUSD Employees
- Access to African American Teachers
- Rigorous Instruction and High Expectations
- Early Learning
- Family Engagement
- Pride in and Respect for African American Cultural Heritage

The A4 Executive Director and her team designed an accountability structure for the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

Planning Forward 2020-2021

Continuing with the priority of impacting system change throughout FUSD for all stakeholders, the collective leadership between A4 and TRIO recommended an in depth look at the Task Force implementation priorities, Theory of Action and systematic leadership for Fresno Unified’s Board of Trustees. Customized Trustee meetings were planned and coordinated. The meetings included 4 Trustee sessions, A4, TRIO and Executive Cabinet members. The meetings were held on September 15, 2020, September 22, 2020 and October 20, 2020.

Meeting presentations for the Board of Trustees included the following topics:

- Systemic Context: African American Academic Acceleration
- Instructional Leadership
FUSD’s Superintendent Task Force: Contextual Development

- Implementation Phase: Progress, Highlights and Challenges
- Systemic Accountability: Accountability Matrix
- A4’s Superintendent Task Force Key Messages

In communication after the Task Force meetings, Board Trustee Elizabeth Jonasson Rosas recommended incorporating targets and more specific dates for the Task Force recommendations. After further examination, we determined the informational structure of the Accountability Matrix is sufficient to address this concern. We will work with the Executive Champions and their teams to add more detailed information to the Accountability Matrix to address the Trustee’s request. In addition, we are changing the operational model of the Task Force to go deeper in addressing one goal with one department to accelerate the recommendation. We are calling this model an ‘equity accelerator’ to focus on the highest leverage recommendations to make more progress faster for African American students. This progress is even more important given the challenges of distance learning and the ravages of COVID-19 on the African American community. Implementation of this method will be launched in Fall 2021. The work of each department on the remaining five recommendations will continue and progress will be reported out quarterly in board communications and in an annual public board presentation.

**Task Force Planning into Action:**

In 2021-2022, the Task Force planning into action is to:

- Add the Accountability Matrix to the A4 website for board and public accountability
- Implementation Phase II: Introduce Equity Accelerator Model with Early Learning pilot
- Quarterly board communications with the Accountability Matrix to update board on the Task Force recommendations progress
- One series of board customized group presentations with Executive Champions and an annual public presentation to the board

Please reference the attached PowerPoint presentation documenting the history of the task force. The document has been updated to include the contents of this board communication (pages 15-18).

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Wendy McCulley at 559-457-3728.

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D.

Date: 01/15/2021
The Task Force is a collection of stakeholders from Fresno Unified School District and the surrounding community who worked to reach consensus and direction for programmatic, policy and practice solutions to accelerate African American youth academically in Fresno Unified.
Following the unanimous board adoption (March, 6 2019) of the Task Force Recommendations, the goals for the next phase of work included the following priorities:

- **Develop** a structure and implementation planning process that reflected shared responsibility and accountability for implementation of the Task Force Recommendations
- **Develop** a Theory of Action for the Task Force Recommendations that would serve to contextualize the recommendations in the larger systemic work of the District and aligned to the work of the A4 Office
- **Provide** a framework for communicating to internal and external stakeholders about the implementation of the Task Force Recommendations
If AA students experience rigorous instruction and respectful, culturally responsive and supportive cultures and climates in their classrooms, schools and all FUSD activities, then AA students will feel respected and valued and their overall academic engagement and achievement will increase.

Office of African American Academic Acceleration (A4)

If the Office of A4 provides structural direct support and addresses and mitigates systemic barriers to academic achievement for African American students, then AA students will have more access to accelerated academic learning opportunities.
Collaborative meeting structure and systemic capacity progress engagements are defined below:

- **A4 Leadership Team**: Bi-Weekly Meetings and Work Sessions
- **Core Leadership Team**: Monthly Meetings and Work Sessions
- **Executive Cabinet**: Quarterly Meetings and Work Sessions
- **Task Force**: Quarterly Meetings and Work Sessions
Pre COVID-19: Key Highlights

- Fresno Unified School District’s African American Academic Acceleration (A4) Task Force reconvened to implement the FUSD Board approved Task Force Policy Recommendations in academic year 2019-2020; over 95% of dedicated District level leaders and Task Force members worked collaboratively to focus, elevate and leverage actions toward the urgent attention needed to explicitly and systemically address the academic acceleration of our African American children.

- The 2019-2020 A4 Task Force-Implementation Phase ushered in a set of inquiry cycles to engage dialogue amongst members about specific, measurable objectives and actions for each of the Recommendations and how to operationalize them Districtwide.
Pre COVID-19: Key Highlights

- District leaders, affectionately titled "Champions" engaged in work sessions to develop metrics to calibrate implementation expectations and establish key Cabinet-Level timebound actions
- The District leaders achieved shared understanding of the Task Force Recommendation Accountability Matrix and reached consensus on its utility and purpose to promote transparency
- A continuous series of Cabinet-Level meetings presented improvement cycles and strategies to deploy actions through the leadership of the Districts valued "Implementers". Our focus included the following:
  - Increase familiarity with the A4 Task Force recommendations
  - Address African American student disproportionality
  - Operationalize the Accountability Matrix
Pre COVID-19: Key Highlights

- District leaders **committed** to collectively identify their individual and team capacity to implement the Board approved A4 Task Force Recommendations.

- Task Force meetings **bridged** communication and action between District level leadership, the Office of A4, Board Members and Community Leadership by:
  - Member **continuity**
  - Progress updates on **implementation** of Recommendations
  - Collective voice to engage in an Accountability infrastructure through cycles of inquiry, analysis and actions
Pre COVID-19: Key Highlights

- **ALL District Champions and Lead Implementers** engaged in Designing for Action Workshop sessions to provide ongoing cycles of inquiry, assessment and **implementation improvements** by:
  - **Utilizing** evidence to examine areas of action
  - **Gaining** understanding and appreciation for existing and persistent African American specific and systemic efforts
  - **Engaging** in collaborative and rigorous inquiry of Task Force Recommendation implementation progress
District leaders *constructed* Guiding Principles to *disrupt* inequities, and *change* systemic behaviors by design for those students that are most underserved.

District leaders are using a survey to *assess progress* over the academic year, along with a reflection tool to gauge *implementation progress* over time.

District Champions and Lead Implementers will also utilize a survey to assess their active use of *FAST Goals and the Accountability Matrix*.
A End-of-Year virtual Task Force Cabinet Work Session was conducted to:

- **Increase** shared familiarity with African American learner and family priorities during COVID-19, while also elevating and addressing issues of disproportionality
- **Define and deepen commitment** of shared responsibility for implementing A4 Task Force recommendations during COVID-19 (A4 Task Force Recommendations Accountability Matrix)
- **Initiate thinking and planning** on how to frame the Delivery of Services and actions to support our African American students during and after the COVID-19 crisis
Increased Systemic Capacity Evidence

2019 – 2020 Key Implementation Outcomes:

- The Office of A4 is leading innovative and transformative systemic change.
- The Core Leadership Team members are building shared responsibility and effective structures for implementation of the Task Force recommendations across roles and departments.
- Executive Cabinet and District staff have a greater sense of shared purpose for strengthening outcomes for AA students.
Increased Systemic Capacity Evidence

2019 – 2020 Key Implementation Outcomes:

- District staff are **sharing responsibility** for developing an implementation plan and monitoring implementation of policies and programs that **accelerate** academic achievement of AA students.

- Stakeholders in the community, including families of AA students, have **increased** their knowledge of current District data and programs that will facilitate their engagement with educators to **support** academic acceleration of AA students.

- **Implementation “bright spots”** within FUSD show success with **improving academic outcomes** for AA students and are more visible, having greater potential to be replicated systemically across the District.
Pause for a reflective moment to document and memorialize our collaborative accomplishments to improve the academic excellence for African American youth in Fresno Unified.

Moving into 2020-2021, the Task Force planning into action is to:
- Commence a process for intensive and targeted summer Task Force planning
- Conduct Task Force implementation and progress surveys
- Expand Task Force membership
- Advance the District’s shared Accountability Matrix commitment
- Develop Priorities: Implementation Phase II
Task Force Planning into Implementation Action:

- **First Task Force Meeting:** For the 2020-2021 academic year occurred on September 30, 2020
- **Meeting Objectives:** Consisted of a review of prior Task Force meetings and priorities, systematic accountability updates, and Champion presentations
- **Key Messages** from Superintendent Nelson were presented
- **Progress Monitoring Survey** was sent to all Task Force members
Progress Monitoring Survey: *Designed to collect thoughts, feelings, and perspectives about the progress of the Task Force, Implementers and Champions*

The survey included the following elements:

- Roles and responsibilities of Task Force members going forward
- Recommended preference to serve on a Task Force sub-committee
- Families and community's capacity to partner with FUSD to implement Task Force recommendations
- Meeting frequency
- Fresno Unified’s Crisis Response:
  - African American academic performance
  - COVID – 19
Customized Trustee Meetings: Sustaining Trustee Engagement

- The incoming 2020-2021 – FUSD Board of Trustees unanimously approved Task Force recommendations on May 6, 2019

- Continuing with the priority of impacting system change throughout FUSD for all stakeholders, the collective leadership of A4 and TRIO felt it necessary to provide an in depth review of the Task Force implementation priorities, Theory of Action, and systematic leadership specifically for Fresno Unified’s Board of Trustees

- These customized trustee meetings (as required, no more than 3 Trustees per meeting) included A4, the Core leadership team, and Executive Cabinet members, also known as Task Force Champions
Each Trustee presentation included the following:

- **Systemic Context**: African American Academic Acceleration
- **Instructional Leadership**
- **FUSD’s Superintendent Task Force**: Contextual Development
  - Implementation Phase 1: Progress, Highlights and Challenges
- **Systemic Accountability**: Accountability Matrix
- **A4’s Superintendent Task Force**: Key Messages
Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Report for January 07, 2021

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California’s (SSC) Weekly Update. Each week SSC provides an update and commentary on different educational fiscal issues. In addition, they include different articles related to education issues.

The SSC Weekly Update for January 07, 2021 is attached and includes the following articles:

- Newsom’s Reopening Schools Proposal—More Details Emerge – January 04, 2021
- What Obstacles Schools Must Overcome To Offer in-Person Instruction – January 06, 2021
- To Help Address Learning Disparities, Boost Internet Access for Low-Income Students – January 05, 2021

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.
DATE: January 7, 2021
TO: Robert G. Nelson
    Superintendent
AT: Fresno Unified School District
FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team
RE: SSC’s Sacramento Weekly Update

2021–22 State Budget Proposal

Governor Gavin Newsom will release his 2021–22 State Budget proposal on Friday, January 8, 2021. We will provide more specifics about what is in the Governor’s proposal in next week’s Sacramento Update, but some of the education issues we will be looking for include:

- **Revenue Outlook**—Will the Administration’s revenue estimates align with the one-time windfall that the Legislative Analyst’s Office’s (LAO) November fiscal outlook report has predicted?

- **K–14 Deferrals**—If the Governor identifies a windfall similar to the LAO, will he use those dollars to eliminate the K–14 deferrals from last year’s State Budget Act?

- **COLA**—Will the Governor once again propose suspending a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and other education programs?

- **Safe Schools for All Plan**—Any new details from his Administration’s school reopening proposal that encourages local educational agencies (LEAs) to resume in-person instruction via incentive grants, including the updated reopening guidance that LEAs are required to abide by in order to receive this funding.

- **LCFF**—In his veto message of Assembly Bill (AB) 1835 (Weber, D-San Diego) last year, the Governor said he would direct the Department of Finance to draft language around unspent supplemental and concentration grants. What will this proposal look like?

We will provide more information about what is in the Governor’s State Budget Proposal in subsequent Sacramento Updates over the next several weeks and will provide updates on the proposals as they are vetted by legislative budget subcommittees.
Democrats to Control the U.S. Senate

Both Democratic candidates, Reverend Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, are projected to have defeated Republican incumbent Senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue in Tuesday’s Senate Runoff Elections in Georgia.

As a result, the Senate will be evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, but with the incoming Joe Biden Administration in the White House, it effectively gives Democrats control of the Senate with the narrowest of margins.

While Democratic control of the Senate should allow President-elect Biden to install his cabinet members, including Connecticut Commissioner of Education Miguel Cardona for U.S. Secretary of Education, the narrow majority will make it difficult to adopt some of the more robust policies that he championed on the campaign trail.

Leilani Aguinaldo
Newsom’s Reopening Schools Proposal—More Details Emerge

By Leilani Aguinaldo and Patti F. Herrera, EdD
School Services of California Inc’s Fiscal Report
January 4, 2021

On December 30, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a proposal to encourage local educational agencies (LEAs) to resume in-person instruction as early as mid-February by providing incentive grants with a base rate of $450 per average daily attendance (ADA) to pay for costs associated with classroom-based learning, such as cleaning, disinfecting, salaries and compensation, and COVID-19 testing for students and staff (see “Newsom Proposes Incentive Grants to Reopen Schools” in the December 2020 Fiscal Report). Since the unveiling of the Governor’s plan, new details have emerged regarding the conditions that must be met for LEAs to access the grants, which are summarized below.

The Safe Schools for All Plan would open up rounds of grant funding beginning in February 2021. To qualify for the first round of funding, LEAs must meet the following requirements:

- Submit to their county office of education (COE) a COVID-19 Safety Plan (CSP) that complies with new school reopening guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and emergency regulations for all employers issued by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CalOSHA) no later than February 1, 2021. Governor Newsom indicated that new CDPH guidance for schools would be released on Friday, January 8, 2021, which will include testing cadences for students and staff to which grantees must adhere. LEAs also must post the CSP on their website homepages.

- Submit to their COE a ratified collective bargaining agreement or memorandum of understanding, if applicable, that implements the LEA’s CSP no later than February 1, 2021. Districts in single-district counties are required to submit their documents to the California Department of Education.

- By February 16, 2021, offer in-person instruction to students in grades TK–2 and specialized cohorts across all grade spans, including students with disabilities, foster and homeless youth, and students who are unable to participate in distance learning, with a plan to adhere to asymptomatic testing requirements of students and staff consistent with the guidance from the state. LEAs that have already reopened for in-person instruction and meet these requirements will be able to access the incentive grants.

- By March 15, 2021, expand in-person instructional offering to all TK–6 grade students served, if sixth grade is offered at the elementary school site.

- Continue to provide in-person instruction to all specified students through the 2020–21 school year unless otherwise required by state or local health orders or guidance.

- Certify to their COE that students who remain in distance learning have the necessary tools (computing devices and high-speed internet access) to participate in online education.

LEAs that are unable to meet the condition for funding under the initial round will have the opportunity to apply for lower grant amounts on a monthly basis. In order to be eligible to apply, they must meet the aforementioned requirements by the first day of the subsequent months (e.g., March 1, 2021) with in-person instruction for all TK–2 grade students and specialized cohorts on the first day of month and then to students through grade 6, if applicable, within the subsequent month.
LEAs that are unable to reopen for in-person instruction by February 16, 2020, due to local health conditions—specifically residing in areas where the average seven-day COVID-19 case rate exceeds 28 per 100,000 per day—are still eligible to apply for and receive funding from the initial round with base rates of $450 per ADA. However, they must subsequently offer in-person instruction and meet all other requirements the month immediately following the case-rate level dropping below 28 per 100,000.

Finally, Governor Newsom’s Administration has confirmed that the reopening incentive grants will be allocated based on an LEA’s total ADA minus students enrolled in independent study. The requirement to offer in-person instruction covers all grade spans since cohorts of vulnerable students beyond sixth grade are included in the requirement. Therefore, all LEAs are eligible to apply, including high school districts.

We will provide updates on the anticipated new school reopening guidance and the reopening incentive grants once it becomes available.

Note: In a letter to the Governor, the superintendents of some of the state’s largest school districts expressed concerns that districts like theirs would not qualify for funds under Governor Newsom’s “Safe Schools for All Plan.”

What Obstacles Schools Must Overcome To Offer in-Person Instruction

By Louis Freedberg
EdSource
January 6, 2021

Gov. Gavin Newsom’s “Safe Schools for All” plan presented during the waning days of 2020 has raised hopes that more schools could reopen for in-person instruction this school year, at least for the state’s youngest children.

The goal, Newsom explained, is “to support all communities to be on track for safe in-person instruction by early spring 2021.”

Yet the outlook for that happening appears daunting. What challenges do districts face in jump-starting in person instruction? Here are the principle ones:

Covid-19 spreading across the state

Even those most vigorously arguing that returning to school presents relatively few risks to children acknowledge that it should be done within the context of containing the spread of the virus in the larger community.

But the virus is surging in California, reaching crisis levels in many parts of the states. What’s more, several countries that were often held up as models for what California, and the United States, should be doing, have shut their schools, most notably the United Kingdom. Germany also has closed its schools for a month, at least until mid-January, as have other countries such as the Netherlands and South Korea.

Not helping the situation is the detection of a new more contagious strain of the virus.
All this is likely to make more parents, in addition to school staff, more apprehensive about coming back to school for in-person instruction. It also presents a contradictory messaging problem for the state and schools: ordering families to stay home and not mix with other families or households for any reason — and simultaneously saying it is OK for them to return to school to interact with children and adults from multiple households, indoors, for hours each day.

**Logistics and costs of testing for Covid-19.**

Newsom’s reopening plan calls for testing everyone in a school — both school staff and students — including those who are asymptomatic. It says they must be tested every two weeks if the school is in a county in the purple tier, with infection rates of less than a daily average of less than 14 positive cases per 100,000 residents. Those in counties with more than 14 positive cases — currently all but two counties — would have to be tested every week.

School administrators worry about the logistics and costs of such a comprehensive testing program. Newsom says that private insurance plans would cover the costs of those who are insured, or MediCal. Fortunately, all but 3.6% of young people between 0 and 20 years have some form of health coverage in California, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

But the logistics of making sure that all staff and students are tested on a regular basis remain daunting, even if most of the costs are covered by MediCal, SCHIP, or individual health plans. Sources say Newsom is expected to provide more details soon about how the state will support testing programs, but these have yet to be announced.

**Disparate impact on districts serving low-income students in areas with high infection rates**

In a highly critical letter to Newsom, the superintendents of some of the state’s largest school districts (Los Angeles, San Diego, Long Beach, San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento) expressed concerns that districts like theirs serving predominantly low-income communities, where infection rates are far higher, would not qualify for funds under Newsom’s plan. That’s because infection rates are higher than the level set by Newsom (a daily average of 28 positive cases per 100,000 residents). “A funding model which supports only schools in communities less impacted by the virus is at odds with California’s long-standing efforts to provide more support to students from low-income families,” they said. “If nothing changes, many students in high-need communities are at risk of being left behind.”

**Buy-in from teachers’ unions**

Gov. Newsom’s plan requires school districts to get support from teachers’ unions before they can reopen, which means that reopening plans would have to be negotiated with teachers district by district. But taking issue with a central element of Newsom’s plan, the California Teachers Association is saying that schools shouldn’t open for in-person instruction in counties that are still in the purple tier. Given that all but two counties (Alpine and Sierra) are currently in the purple zone, making concrete plans for reopening schools will be difficult without assurances that teachers will agree to participate. The seven superintendents are asking Newsom to impose a uniform standard for reopening for in-person instruction, and then to require schools to reopen once they meet that standard, regardless of opposition from labor unions or anyone else.
Shortage of teacher substitutes and other staff

A big unknown for some districts is whether they will have the staff they need to provide in-person instruction — in addition to distance learning for children whose parents wish to stick with remote instruction. More teachers are expected to call in sick because of having to quarantine or sequester after exposure or possible exposure to the virus. In some districts, teachers at greater risk may choose to take a leave rather than take the chance of exposure in the classroom. Typically, these vacancies could be filled by substitute teachers. The problem is that even before the pandemic many districts were experiencing difficulties finding substitutes. In fact, there has been a precipitous decline in the number of substitute credentials issued in California. As reported by EdSource, over a six-month period in 2020, there were 22,236 applicants for substitute credentials. That was down from 31,871 for the same period in 2019, and 42,300 in 2018.

The problem is especially acute in rural areas where the shortages are most severe. The situation is so bad that Tim Taylor, executive director of the Small School Districts’ Association, describes the substitute shortage as “a code-red issue” for rural schools.

Another challenge is that implementing health and safety practices could require additional non-teaching staff. Scott Borba, superintendent of the Le Grand Union Elementary School District in Merced County, for example, says his district needs more custodians to sanitize school facilities.

Slow pace of vaccinations, with school employees not yet on the priority list

The availability of vaccines could make a big difference in convincing school staff to return to school, as well as to parents who for health reasons may be reluctant to have their children back in school.

But there are numerous unknowns regarding both the pace of vaccinations, and who will be receiving them. It seems certain that teachers and other school employees will soon be placed on the priority list (Phase 1B) to receive the vaccinations. But it is unclear when that would happen, whether the state will set a list of priorities for which school employees should be vaccinated first, and whether this will happen quickly enough to open schools this spring.

Uncertainties about state and federal funds to cover education and health costs

Currently, it is not entirely clear how much money districts can expect to get from the state and federal governments to get them through this school year — and whether the federal government will come up with additional funds after Joe Biden becomes president. The Georgia runoff election results make it more likely that more funds will be forthcoming, but that won’t be known for weeks, at best. EdSource has come up with estimates about how much districts can expect to receive from the federal government’s $900 billion relief bill approved in September, but these are only estimates. When it comes to state funding, districts will have a clearer idea about where they stand after Gov. Newsom announces his proposed budget for the coming fiscal year this week.

Finding a pathway for in-person instruction for middle and high school students

Gov. Newsom’s plan does not provide a pathway for middle and high school students to return to school. In fact, it is silent on the issue. If state regulations are still in force, school communities would be limited in what they can do on infection rates in their counties coming into the red, orange or yellow tiers before middle or high school students could even be considered for in-person instruction. Because of the dire situation in
the state now, it is impossible to predict whether that will occur in time for students and staff to return to school before May.

**Overcoming divisions within school communities on in-person instruction**

The entire issue of reopening schools is an emotional one, with different people having different comfort levels and needs regarding in-person instruction. In some communities, some parents feel passionately about the need to get children back to school as soon as possible, while other parents feel just the opposite. In many districts, teachers have been especially reluctant to return to their classrooms because of health concerns, often leading to stressful negotiations. Complicating the entire discussion is that school officials have limited time to figure out the best way to get students back to school this academic year.

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*Note: A number of broadband bills have already been introduced this year, including AB 34 (Muratsuchi, D-Torrance) which would place a measure before voters on the 2022 ballot that would fund increased access to broadband services for underserved communities.*

**To Help Address Learning Disparities, Boost Internet Access for Low-Income Students**

By Niu Gao, Julien Lafortune, and Laura Hill
Public Policy Institute of California Guest Commentary, *CalMatters*
January 5, 2021

With coronavirus cases spiking across California, districts have paused or delayed plans to reopen schools. Most school districts will continue to rely on distance learning for the coming months.

Prior to Gov. Gavin Newsom’s recent proposal to provide $2 billion in incentives for California schools to reopen for in-person instruction for younger students, Los Angeles Unified last month reversed course on its school reopening, while a growing number of districts – including San Bernardino, the state’s seventh largest – announced plans to keep students in distance learning for the entire 2020-21 school year.

Without equitable access to broadband internet and digital devices, many students are at risk of falling behind or dropping out, exacerbating educational inequities.

**California’s persistent digital divide**

The digital divide is a decades-old challenge for California, but the pandemic has lent it renewed urgency. The switch to distance learning last spring left a staggering number of K-12 students ill equipped to participate fully. U.S. Census Bureau data show that slightly more than one in four California students did not always have internet access available. The share was even larger among children in low-income (43%), African American (39%) and Latino (33%) families. Reliable access to digital devices was also a challenge. A third of all households did not always have a device available for learning, including half of low-income households.
Remarkable improvement in device access

Since the onset of the pandemic, California has invested in a number of efforts to narrow the digital divide, including allocating $5.3 billion mostly from the federal CARES Act and creating partnerships with the private sector. School districts have also stepped up by purchasing additional devices for student use.

These efforts have helped increase device access at home, with the share of students who always have a device available for educational purposes jumping from 67% in the spring to 79% in the fall. Gains were especially large among low-income students and African American students – with the latter seeing an increase from 58% in the spring to 83% in the fall. Latino students also saw an increase, though they still have less device access than other racial/ethnic groups.

Internet access remains a major challenge

Yet despite progress in expanding device access, internet access remains a widespread problem. More than 30% of Latino students still lack reliable home internet, as do nearly 40% of low-income students – essentially unchanged from the spring.

The economic downturn has compounded this challenge, with an outsized impact on low-income communities and communities of color, where many struggle to meet basic needs. Directing additional resources to families who lack broadband access – especially given that most students share internet with family members – could help remove one barrier to participation in distance learning as school closures continue.

The right policies can help close the gap

Far from being an equal-opportunity crisis, the coronavirus has disproportionately affected low-income students and students of color. California’s digital divide created problems for millions of students last spring and continues to impede learning today. Narrowing inequities will take further investment – and swift action by policymakers.

Existing programs, such as the federal Lifeline program and discount programs from internet service providers, are limited in scope and insufficient to level the playing field for students most in need. Every day, hundreds of thousands of students across the state miss out on meaningfully participating in school. If we allow this to continue for another several months, we risk widening existing educational divides – across race, region and socioeconomic status.

Recent federal relief will provide crucial support, including substantial funding for K-12 education. Although the state’s current fiscal position is better than anticipated, policymakers still face notable fiscal constraints – not to mention deep uncertainty due to the pandemic. This means confronting difficult decisions and tradeoffs in the coming months.

In considering how best to allocate resources – including federal dollars – state and local policymakers should make expanding broadband internet access a priority. The stakes of California’s digital divide are significant and may have lasting effects. Failing to ensure that all students can participate in distance learning fully and equitably may very well prove to be even costlier for our state over the longer term.
Regarding: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Program Mandate Reimbursement Claim

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information regarding the two reimbursement claims that were received on December 31, 2020 as they relate to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Program (CAASPP) for the period covering July 01, 2015 through June 30, 2017 in the amount of $493,077.

Government Code sections 17500 through 17617 provide for the reimbursement of costs incurred by school districts for mandated cost programs. All reimbursement claims are filed with the State Controller’s Office for reimbursement of costs incurred for which an appropriation is made for the purpose of paying the claim.

The State Controller’s Office audited the costs claimed by Fresno Unified for the legislatively mandated CAASPP program for the period covering July 01, 2015 through June 30, 2017. The audit was completed on December 16, 2020.

It was determined that $2,402,989 of the $2,897,066 submitted to the State Controller’s Office as a reimbursement claim for this period did not qualify for reimbursement. The State Controller’s Office determined that the district had sufficient computer devices, network equipment, and broadband internet service to administer the CAASPP testing during the period for which the claim was submitted. As a result, reimbursement of the costs incurred by the district to administer the CAASPP program were disallowed. The district is currently working to contest this decision and will be submitting an Incorrect Reduction Claim with the Commission on State Mandates.

The $493,077 in reimbursement received from the state is for the salary and benefits that were included in the reimbursement claim for this period. Currently, the State Controller’s Office has audited ten Local Educational Agencies for CAASPP mandate reimbursement claims. Fresno Unified is the first district to receive reimbursement for CAASPP mandate claims submitted for this period.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Santino Danisi at 457-6225 or Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.
Regarding: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Praxis Collaborative Update for Quarter 2

The Purposes of this communication is to provide the Board a progress update on the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Fresno Unified. In preparation for the new semester, the DEI Praxis Collaborative Advisory Team continued to focus attention on each of four areas of the framework: Cultural Proficiency, Culturally Responsive Practices, Multicultural Experiences, and Social Action in support of the year one goal for all district employees in 2020/21: “Building Your Equity Lens”.

The following are 2020/21 progress updates for Cultural Proficiency as the foundational learning and professional learning:

- Tier 1
  - All employees have been provided the link to the NAVEX diversity module with the expected completion at the end of January. To date, 33% of all employees have already completed the module, and schools and departments have been asked to make time for this introductory foundational aspect of Cultural Proficiency training.
  - As an update on school site training, 97 sites have completed and 2 are in process of completing Module #1 (3 hours). For Module #2, 31 sites have completed the training and 68 are in progress. The final module, Module #3, is scheduled for completion in the second semester.
  - For Departments, many are continuing throughout 2020/21 according to various schedules, and the DEI Advisory Team is ensuring there is co-facilitation or provided facilitation for areas that have not typically had district-wide training. For example, all bus drivers and Campus Safety Assistants (CSA) have completed all three modules, and the Nutrition Services leadership team was provided all three modules over Winter break toward designing the most suitable avenue for the remaining employees in the department.

- Tier 2

- Tier 3
  - The Trainer of Trainer (ToT) (80-hour) training will continue towards completion at the end of 2020/21 with almost 60 additional trainers bringing our certified trainers to over 100. Trainers are called upon for needs through the district as site and department leaders reach out to the DEI Advisory for support or assistance.

The following are progress updates for tiers within Culturally Proficient Practices, Multicultural Experiences, and Social Action that are already in motion for 2020/21:
• The DEI Advisory Team is continuing to work on and develop the accompanying Administrative Regulation (AR) for the Board Policy 0415 in support of the DEI framework.
• The DEI Advisory Team has hosted the second of many quarterly events (Multicultural Experiences, Tier 2) which included the “One Story, Many Cultures” video shown just prior to break which collected cultural celebrations from employees across the district.
• The DEI Advisory Team has put out the second issue of the DEI Newsletter (Culturally Responsive Practices, Tier 1) to all employees towards greater connectivity, sharing, and reflecting on diversity, equity, and inclusion needs and concerns in Fresno Unified.
• The DEI Site Steering Committee, including site representatives across the district, have been meeting for important feedback loops toward improving the Cultural Proficiency training supports, and in preparation for equity walks across the district.
• The Ethnic Studies Leadership and Work Teams (Multicultural Experiences, Tier 1) have been meeting weekly toward developing the Ethnic Studies Pathway essential elements, rubric, and content alignment for presentation to the Advisory Team meeting on January 12, 2021.
• All departments are actively creating and turning in DEI Plans for their respective departments and are provided thinking partnership, collaboration, and check-ins through monthly Steering Committee meetings. A draft plan has been compiled for review with both internal and external partners.

If you have further questions or require additional information, please contact Lindsay Sanders at (559) 457-3471.
Regarding: Upgraded Public Address Systems for District Schools

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information regarding improvements to public address (PA) systems at district schools. On January 30, 2019 the Board adopted Resolution 18-08, approving the CareHawk Life Safety Communications Platform system as the district standard for PA systems. CareHawk provides upgraded PA technology for improved school safety and security by enabling remote notifications to one or all schools from authorized administrators, two-way conversations from classrooms to the office or district administrator, and lockdown and other emergency notifications. Additional features allow future connectivity of equipment to further enhance school safety and security.

To date the CareHawk system has been installed at 42 schools, with the remaining schools planned to receive the system over the next five years. The January 20, 2021 Board meeting agenda includes a recommendation (item A-7) to award a bid for CareHawk equipment.

Standardizing on CareHawk for PA systems provides the following benefits to the district:

- Reduced pricing due to combined volume of districtwide purchases
- Fewer design issues by allowing architect/engineer to design to specific equipment
- Minimized construction delays by avoiding design review resubmittal
- No need to stock multiple brands of product/equipment
- Streamlined staff training and less need to subcontract services and repair work to an outside source in emergency situations, minimizing downtime of critical systems
- Reduced operating and repair costs due to consistent and cost-effective maintenance
- Simplified coordination, tracking, and servicing of warranties for designated products
- Allows for spare/salvaged parts to be used to repair and replace existing equipment
- Maintains compatibility of existing software programs and computer hardware currently utilized by the district

If you have questions or need further information, please contact Jason Duke at 457-3260 or Karin Temple at 457-3134.
Regarding: Food Services Update – Non-Program Foods Calculation

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information regarding the methodology for establishing the district’s cost per vended meal, in response to inquiries at the January 13, 2021 Board meeting related to an agreement with the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS) to provide vended meals to Career Technical Education Charter High School (CTEC). The FCSS agreement allows the district to provide nutritious meals to additional students while generating revenue for Food Services Department operations.

Vended meals are considered “non-program” foods, which are food items purchased outside the reimbursable (National School Breakfast and Lunch) programs. Other non-program food categories are catering, a la carte sales, and adult meals. Per federal regulations, the ratio of non-program revenue to total revenue must be equal to or more than the ratio of non-program food cost to total cost. In addition to the cost of food, labor and transportation, the amount the district charges for vended meals must generate revenue equal to or more than the revenue ratio from the reimbursable school meal programs.

As a result of the recent Food Services administrative review conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE), the prices the district charges for vended meals were adjusted to comply with the non-program food requirement. The contracted cost of the meals to be provided to CTEC was approved by CDE in accordance with federal regulations and the administrative review, and is slightly higher than the reimbursement the district receives through the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact Amanda Harvey at 457-6278 or Karin Temple at 457-3134.
The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an overview of our Community Media Access Collaborative’s (CMAC) Youth Voices Training Program, in addition to more detailed information on the related scholarship and work-based learning opportunities for seven Fresno Unified students.

CMAC, one of Fresno Unified’s many industry partners, is a membership-based, non-profit organization that was created to help citizens, schools, non-profits, and public agencies better connect with community using media. Their mission is to empower voices in the community to promote awareness, understanding, dialogue, and civic engagement by providing media resources and access to training through broadening media literacy. Their Community Media Center is in the historic Fresno Bee Building and offers a full range of production tools and training at low or no cost to community users.

One specific way CMAC supports students in our community and our industry partnership is through the Youth Voices Training Program. This program is an intensive 14-week documentary filmmaking experience that targets Central Valley students who are under 18 years of age. The program teaches youth how to harness the power of media to tell stories of personal and societal significance through documentary filmmaking. Over the course of 14 weeks, CMAC will provide video production equipment, mentorship, and instruction as the student cohort develops and produces their own documentary films. The created documentaries can then be viewed during a free public screening in April 2021. During their time in the cohort, students will receive extensive training in story development, video production, media literacy, script writing, camera training, editing, and post productions.

CMAC’s ideal applicant has an interest in media, writing, storytelling, journalism, filmmaking, civic engagement, and public service. Applications are open to all middle and high school students in the Central Valley. Twelve applicants are chosen to participate and receive a $1,000 stipend and a one-year membership to CMAC. The selected cohort meets once a week virtually from January to April 2021.

Cohort members were selected and notified in December and the College and Career Readiness Department is pleased to announce that the following seven Fresno Unified School District students were selected to take part in this incredible learning experience:

- Junious Barnes, Edison
- Yaeleen Garcia, Roosevelt
- Jennifer Garcia Villa, Design Science
- Laila Jordan, Fresno High
- Brianna Mendoza, Design Science
- Ishan Singh, Sunnyside
- Michael Yamamura, Sunnyside
We are so grateful for the many ways our industry partners support our students and school district and wanted to share the good news.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeremy Ward at 248-7465.

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. ___________________________ Date: 01/15/2021
Regarding: Central Section Football Coaches Association and the “Let Them Play” Initiative

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information about the newly created Central Section Football Coaches Association (CSFCA) and its connection to the national, state and local movement to get student athletes back to practice and competing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the launch of a national movement and the formation of the West Coast Football Coaching Alliance out of southern California, several Central Section coaches joined forces to create a similar local collaborative. The organization went public recently on a local sports radio show. Their collective focus is gaining state and local support to extend the fall athletic season into the spring so that athletes can return to the field and compete, despite school reopening delays and varying restrictions by counties or school districts. The California Interscholastic Federation’s (CIF) delayed fall sports calendar tentatively earmarked the start of competition to begin and end (based on the sport) December 28, 2020 through March 19, 2021. If health conditions allow, spring sports are tentatively slated to begin practice February 17, 2021 with competitions scheduled March 08, through June 04, 2021.

CSFCA asked the state to approve suggested athletic scenarios and change its color-coding system to allow more teams to play into the spring and early summer. CIF is not changing their current position. To gain support locally and in conjunction with similar national and state activity, a “Let Them Play” rally is being held Friday, January 15. SCFCA is also holding a press conference at Bullard High School on Tuesday, January 19.

During the winter break, Fresno Unified paused all athletic conditioning and practices from December 18, 2020 through January 03, 2021. The first day pods could resume practice was January 04, 2021. Based on increasing numbers in Fresno County and the extended stay at home order, January 05, 2021, Fresno Unified announced that cohorts, including athletics, would not return until the order was lifted. While unclear if the state will respond to the movement, it is possible that this subject will come before the Board for further discussion and action.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact Bryan Wells, Assistant Superintendent at 457-3805.

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. ___________________________ Date: 01/15/2021