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Robert G. Nelson, Ed.D.

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS – FEBRUARY 04 , 2022

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, Ed.D. Superintendent Calendar Highlights

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES – Santino Danisi, Chief Officer

BFS-1 Kim Kelstrom School Services Weekly Update Report

HUMAN RESOURCES/LABOR RELATIONS – Paul Idsvoog, Chief Officer

HR-1 Paul Idsvoog Additional Information regarding Math and Science Sections

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number S-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Robert G. Nelson, Superintendent
Cabinet Approval:

Date: February 04, 2022

Phone Number: 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

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

- Held principal interviews
- Met with Executive Cabinet
- Attended Edison Region's 8th Black History Month virtual event
- Participated in weekly call with Fresno County Superintendents
- Met with Chief Balderrama, Fresno City Police Department, regarding possibility of returning Student Neighborhood Resource Officers at middle schools
- Attended the President's Commission for Teacher Education virtual meeting
- Gave interview with John Fensterwald, EdSource, regarding progress on State Seal of Civic Engagement
- Attended Fresno Compact virtual meeting
- Attended virtual CORE Board Meeting
- Attended the Fresno K-16 Collaborative Executive Steering Committee virtual meeting

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D.



Date: 02/04/2022

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number BFS-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Executive Officer
Cabinet Approval:

Date: February 04, 2022

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Report for January 28, 2022

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 28, 2022 is attached and includes the following articles:

- Why School Leaders Are Sweating the Deadline for Spending COVID Relief Funds – January 25, 2022
- California School Districts Improve Pay, Working Conditions to Ease Teacher Shortage – January 27, 2022
- The Battle Over Vaccine Rules for Kids Reignites in California – January 27, 2022

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D.



Date: 02/04/2022



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DATE: January 28, 2022

TO: Robert G. Nelson
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

RE: *SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update*

Assembly Budget Committee Hearing

On Wednesday, the full Assembly Budget Committee received an overview hearing on Governor Gavin Newsom's 2022-23 State Budget proposal. The Department of Finance provided a high-level overview of the proposal followed by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) giving their analysis of the State Budget blueprint.

The remarks from the Department of Finance and LAO were similar to last week's Senate overview hearing. The LAO reiterated that the Legislature should focus on ensuring the success of the initiatives funded in the current fiscal year (2021-22) State Budget by dedicating the early part of the State Budget process to overseeing the implementation of those programs. They also advise caution on creating additional new programs and expanding the scope of existing programs. The LAO also recommends that the Legislature closely consider the extent to which the Governor's proposals properly prepare the state for the reality that COVID-19 will likely remain a public health and economic challenge in future years.

When members had their chance to ask questions and comment on the Governor's proposals, Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach), who chairs the Assembly Education Committee and sits on the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance, said that he would like to see a \$10 billion investment for school facilities in the Budget as the School Facilities Program is essentially out of money. He also said he would prefer eliminating some of the Governor's proposed initiatives outside of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and instead use that funding to increase the LCFF base. O'Donnell echoed the LAO's caution of funding new programs by reiterating that it is not a good year to create a lot of new programs for schools.

Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), who chairs the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance, characterized the Governor's proposal as a great Budget that mostly builds off of last year's work. He then pivoted to what he would like included in the State Budget including preschool rate reform, investments in educator funding to mitigate the teaching shortage, and the use of one-time funds for facilities.

Now that both houses have had their Budget overview hearings, the budget committees will split their work into subcommittees where they will dive deeper into the details of the Budget over the course of a number of hearings. Both of the Assembly and Senate budget subcommittees that handle the education proposals will meet at 9:00 a.m. next Tuesday, February 1, 2022.

Vaccine Work Group Introduces Legislation

Last week the Legislature announced the formation of a Vaccine Work Group comprised of Democratic members from both houses. The work group has been tasked with developing “cohesive and comprehensive, evidence-based policies to strengthen our ability to stop the spread of COVID and other diseases, while battling misinformation.” One of the main things that will come from this group will be the introduction of legislation related to vaccine policy. In fact, two of the work group’s members introduced vaccine bills over the past two weeks.

Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) introduced Senate Bill (SB) 866 last Friday. This bill would permit minors 12 and older to get vaccinated without parental consent for all vaccines approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that meet the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Monday, Senator Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) introduced SB 871, which has potential to become the most contentious bill of the year. SB 871 would add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of compulsory vaccines required for students to attend school. The bill would also repeal Health and Safety Code Section 120338, which is the statute that requires any vaccine mandate done via the regulatory process to include a personal belief exemption.

The work group has signaled that these will not be the final vaccine bills introduced by the Legislature this year, so it will be a group worth monitoring as the Legislature approaches their February 18, 2022, deadline to introduce legislation.

Leilani Aguinaldo

Note: A coalition of nearly three dozen school, health, and environmental advocacy groups sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona asking the department to consider extending the deadline for spending COVID relief funds.

Why School Leaders Are Sweating the Deadline for Spending COVID Relief Funds

By Mark Lieberman
EducationWeek
January 25, 2022

As the president, federal lawmakers, and critical media coverage ramp up pressure on schools to quickly spend the \$195 billion in federal pandemic aid they received in 2020 and 2021, school administrators are pushing back with an unexpected message: We need more time.

A coalition of nearly three dozen school, health, and environmental advocacy groups, led by AASA, the School Superintendents' Association, last week sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona asking the department to consider extending the deadline for spending COVID relief funds on construction and capital improvements projects.

The current deadline for spending all of the COVID relief funds is September 2024—more than four years after the pandemic began taking a toll on school operations and causing all manner of disruption for students and staff alike. Congress approved the aid in three waves in March 2020, December 2020, and March 2021.

School administrators say they want until December 2026 to spend federal funds on improving ventilation; fixing roofs, windows, and doors; and modernizing classrooms to account for the oncoming effects of climate change. Districts are competing over the same finite set of contractors and materials, leading to price hikes and shipping delays that are likely to persist for a while, school leaders say.

Facilities have long been a major area of need for the U.S. school system, whose buildings are increasingly dilapidated as state and local funding for construction falls billions of dollars short of the necessary work. The federal government last year dangled the possibility of dedicated funding for school infrastructure as part of President Biden's Build Back Better proposal, but those funds ultimately fell out of negotiations for the still-languishing bill.

The list of districts' priorities for federal funds is long and varied: everything from expanded instructional programming and curriculum materials to increased salaries and recruitment bonuses for educators; new laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots for students; and masks and other personal protective equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some districts got thousands of dollars per student, while others got far less.

Determining how much federal funding schools have spent so far is nearly impossible to do without lots of guesswork. Some districts may have committed to investing in salaries for people that will only be fully paid out by the end of the school year. Others are mixing federal funds with other sources to piece together investments.

Some districts have been wary of using federal funds for ongoing initiatives or positions, which they might have to cut or downsize once again when the funds run out. A similar situation after the Great Recession caught many school districts off guard.

Read [this explainer](#) from me and my colleague Andrew Ujifusa that describes how the COVID funds work, how schools can use them, and how their effectiveness will be assessed.

Note: A new report from the Learning Policy Institute has found that schools have increasingly had to hire underprepared teachers working with intern credentials, permits, or waivers instead of completing the coursework, clinical practice, tests, and other requirements.

California School Districts Improve Pay, Working Conditions to Ease Teacher Shortage

Federal, state and local officials can do more to make teaching profession more attractive

By Diana Lambert
EdSource
January 27, 2022

A severe teacher shortage exacerbated by the Covid pandemic has California school districts increasing teacher pay, developing new hiring strategies and trying to ease teachers' workloads by hiring more support staff, according to a report by the Learning Policy Institute, a nonprofit education research organization.

The persistent teacher shortage, coupled with higher-than-usual retirements and resignations during the pandemic, has district officials scrambling to fill classrooms this school year, even as additional state and federal funding gave them the ability to hire more staff.

The report, "Teacher Shortages During the Pandemic: How California Districts are Responding," consists of a survey of district officials from eight large and four small school districts — Modoc Joint Unified, Upper Lake Unified, San Juan Unified, Elk Grove Unified, San Francisco Unified, Los Angeles Unified, Long Beach Unified, Santa Ana Unified, San Bernardino City Unified, Needles Unified, San Diego Unified and San Pasqual Valley Unified. The districts educate a combined 1 out of every 6 California students.

The report is a follow-up to "California Teachers and COVID-19: How the Pandemic Is Impacting the Teacher Workforce," published by the Learning Policy Institute last March.

Two-thirds of the districts surveyed reported they have had more teacher vacancies than usual to fill this school year, and a more difficult time finding teachers to hire. As a result, schools have increasingly had to hire underprepared teachers working with intern credentials, permits or waivers instead of completing the coursework, clinical practice, tests and other requirements to earn a full teaching credential.

"The solutions that are available aren't often the solutions we would want for our children — cutting classes and combining classes, or trying to fill classes with substitutes and teachers on emergency credentials who haven't demonstrated competency in the subjects they are teaching," said Desiree Carver-Thomas, one of the authors of the report. "What we would want is for classes to be filled with competent teachers that are experienced. Instead they are scrambling to find those people and are relying on strategies that aren't necessarily ideal."

Research shows that students who have access to fully qualified experienced teachers perform better academically than students who don't, Carver-Thomas said.

The report offered recommendations that researchers say would help increase the number of teachers in California classrooms:

- School districts should increase teacher compensation by increasing wages, and offering stipends and bonuses, especially for hard-to-fill positions. They should develop their teacher pipeline by starting teacher residency programs and initiatives that recruit and train school staff to become teachers as they earn a credential. Districts should also continue to invest in teacher recruitment and add more staff to support teachers.
- The federal government should make teaching more financially attractive by making college debt-free for educators and providing income tax credits and housing subsidies.
- The state should implement a program to help teacher candidates navigate teacher preparation programs, credentialing requirements and funding opportunities. It should also invest in programs that allow students to begin teacher preparation at community colleges and complete it at a four-year institution. This could be especially helpful in rural areas that aren't near a four-year university, but are served by a community college.
- Universities should increase enrollment in teacher preparation programs, especially in high-demand fields.

Teacher burnout is one reason cited for resignations and retirements, according to district officials. In one large district, retirements in 2020-21 increased by 25% over the 2018-19 school year and leaves of absences increased by 50%.

Despite an overall need for teachers, the greatest demand still was for teachers credentialed to teach in the hard-to-staff areas of mathematics, science and special education, according to the report.

The teacher shortage is amplified because of an acute substitute shortage so severe that many schools are forced to merge classrooms, send administrators to teach in classrooms and in a few drastic cases, close schools for one or more days.

“In San Lorenzo USD, directors, principals, assistant superintendents, and the superintendent are in classrooms trying to support school sites,” said Superintendent Daryl Camp in the report. “Teachers are subbing during their prep periods way too much.”

In August and September, when the districts were surveyed, six still hadn't filled 10% or more of their open teaching positions. One district had more than 25% of its vacant teacher jobs still open. Only one district reported fewer vacancies than it had at that time the previous year.

School district officials also expressed concern about how the instability of teacher vacancies and changing substitutes are affecting students' well-being.

“A lot of districts want to prioritize student well-being, which is hard to do without a stable workforce,” Carver-Thomas said.

With only a limited number of candidates for jobs, many districts are focusing on retaining the teachers they have by hiring additional staff to help them in the classroom and improving the working conditions for

teachers, according to the study. Several districts surveyed for the study increased teacher pay, while one large district focused on building its pool of substitute teachers by increasing daily pay rates for substitutes.

Rural districts, which generally have even fewer potentially eligible teachers in their communities than other districts, have struggled to attract teachers to their schools despite some offering signing bonuses and relocation stipends, Carver-Thomas said.

One small district offered teachers an initial signing bonus, annual bonuses for each of four contract years and a stipend to move to the area. The district offered a \$15,000 signing bonus and a \$3,000 moving stipend to fill positions in high school mathematics and music, but had not received any applications for those jobs, according to the study.

Districts that can't find enough teachers are using state and federal recovery dollars to hire classroom aides to reduce teachers workloads, as well as counselors, psychologists, social workers, instructional coaches and assistant principals to help students and, in turn, teachers. Districts are also investing in recruitment, hiring more human resources staff, hosting job fairs, streamlining their recruitment process and increasing their presence at virtual and in-person job fairs.

"Each district had its own strategy — from what we heard it's a holistic set of strategies," Carver-Thomas said. "They are doing everything they can, making classes smaller, hiring counselors, hiring instruction aides."

The report acknowledges the state's record investment in teacher preparation, retention and training over the last two years. The budget proposed by Gov. Gavin Newsom earlier this month includes more than \$54 million to recruit teachers and make it easier for them to earn a credential. Carver-Thomas said these funds can be used to support some of the report's recommendations.

Note: The committee hearings for the vaccine bills that have been introduced will likely yield several hundred people to the Capitol to express their opposition or support of these measures.

The Battle Over Vaccine Rules for Kids Reignites in California

By Joe Hong and Elizabeth Aguilera
CalMatters
January 27, 2022

California legislators are reigniting an ugly fight over child vaccination requirements with bills that would mandate COVID-19 vaccinations, eliminate the personal belief exemption for COVID-19 vaccines and allow some minors to get vaccinated without parental consent.

These bills together constitute one of the most aggressive campaigns in the country to vaccinate more children.

It's possibly the most intense, emotional and potentially explosive issue the Legislature will take up this year. In previous years, lawmakers have been threatened and assaulted over their attempts to pass stricter vaccine rules. In 2019, a voting session for a vaccination bill was disrupted when an anti-vaccine protester threw what appeared to be a menstrual cup full of blood onto the Senate floor.

With an ever-changing pandemic, a new vaccine that isn't completely preventing transmissions and parental reluctance, the stakes are even higher.

Democratic authors of the new bills and local school district leaders expect the rhetoric and violence to only escalate in this next stage of the fight over vaccine requirements. Their response will likely be more of the same: statewide information campaigns paired with small-scale community outreach.

Here's how this year's battle's shaping up:

The lawmakers

State Sen. Richard Pan of Sacramento, a pediatrician and chair of the Senate Health Committee, is leading the offensive. If signed into law, his bill would require all children attending schools or enrolled in child care in person to be vaccinated for COVID-19 by Jan. 1, 2023. Most importantly, the bill would eliminate the personal belief exemption allowed by Gov. Gavin Newsom's student vaccine mandate issued in October.

"There's lots of evidence that vaccine mandates work," said Pan, citing an increase in vaccination rates after his 2015 bill eliminated the personal belief exemption for the 10 other immunizations required for students.

The bill also goes a step further by no longer requiring personal belief exemptions for any future vaccine mandates coming from the governor or the California Department of Public Health. Under the current plan, parents can request exemptions by saying, for example, that they have religious or political objections to vaccines.

The intent, Pan and other supportive legislators said, is twofold. In the short-term, it would give public health experts the flexibility to respond to future COVID-19 surges and variants. In the long-term, it would give state experts more authority to make public health decisions without the loophole of personal belief exemptions.

If Pan's legislation passes, parents who still wish to keep their children unvaccinated would be unable to have those children attend school or child care and would have to seek independent study if they wanted to keep their children enrolled in public school.

"I think what this bill does allows for a little more flexibility," said Assemblymember Akilah Weber, who co-authored the bill. "Having to go through the Legislature for every vaccine is not necessarily ideal."

So far, state public health officials have highly recommended but not required the vaccine for children. A handful of school districts like Los Angeles Unified and San Diego Unified tried to mandate it but faced challenges. Vaccines for children rolled out last year, first for teenagers and later for 5- to 11-year-olds on an emergency use authorization.

In California, as of Jan. 26, 24% of children 5 to 11 are fully vaccinated. Among those 12 to 17 the number is much higher, with 64% having had both shots, according to the state Dept. of Public Health.

A related bill by Democratic Sen. Scott Wiener of San Francisco would allow those 12 years and older to get vaccinated without parental consent.

Pan says he's open to thoughtful policy debates, but he also expects the same threats and vitriol he's received in past years.

“When people are making outlandish claims, relying on personal attacks and death threats, that’s not good policy,” Pan said. “That speaks to the poverty of their proposals.”

The opposition

Some say the number of breakthrough cases among vaccinated people and the relatively low number of serious illnesses among children makes the vaccine mandate both ineffective and unnecessary.

“This should be something that families should be able to make their own personal decisions about,” said Sharon McKeeman, founder of Let Them Breathe, a COVID-era parent coalition opposing mask and vaccine mandates. It was a lead plaintiff in a successful lawsuit to overturn San Diego Unified School District’s COVID vaccine mandate — the district is appealing —and McKeeman said her organization would sue the state if Pan’s bill becomes law.

Children 0 to 17 account for 1.2 million COVID-19 infections in California, or 17% of all cases, since the pandemic began. Of those minors, 47 have died and 790 kids have been diagnosed with a rare complication known as multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children, or MIS-C.

Christina Hildebrand, head of the opposition group A Voice for Choice Advocacy that has fought to keep exemptions to vaccine mandates since 2015, said she’s been gearing up for this battle for months. “This is premature,” Hildebrand said about the proposed mandate. “We don’t know where COVID is going to go, it changes week by week.”

She would prefer to see the Newsom administration’s mandate stand because it’s flexible, allows parents to use personal belief exemptions and can be changed by the state Department of Public Health. If Pan’s bill advances, her organization will push for an amendment to allow a religious exemption for students, to mirror exemptions being given to school staff and other workers.

Nationally, three in 10 parents of 5- to 17-year-olds say they will “definitely not” get their child vaccinated for COVID-19, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey of parents published in early December.

Hesitant or opposed parents are most concerned about safety and potential side effects, the survey found. About a third of responding parents of 5- to 11-year-olds want to wait and see how the vaccine is working.

Some experts also question the effectiveness of such a mandate because the vaccine is so new and the infection still evolving.

A mandate could harden those who are vaccine hesitant against the vaccine because they feel forced, said Neeraj Sood, director of the COVID Initiative at the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics.

“Overall, the risk for kids is very low so it does not require the government to come in and mandate,” Sood said. “It’s not like a measles vaccine, where you take it and it offers lifetime protection.”

Pan’s legislation to close personal exemption loopholes for the measles vaccine in 2015 was driven by an outbreak at Disneyland. Roughly 1 in 1000 children infected with measles die, according to the CDC. Nobody died as a result of the Disneyland outbreak.

Outreach efforts

Despite the showdown looming at the state Capitol, vaccine proponents are pushing ahead elsewhere.

San Diego Unified, the state's second-largest school district, is relying on one-on-one communication with parents to combat vaccine misinformation — while hoping its appeal reverses a local court and allows its mandate to proceed. The district has also partnered with community organizations like Alliance San Diego and the Chicano Federation in a door-knocking campaign.

“It's going to require direct outreach,” said school board president Richard Barrera. “Our school staff is calling, texting and emailing parents every day.”

Already the district has gone from 70% of students vaccinated against COVID before its mandate to 82% of students vaccinated now, according to Barrera.

Catherine Martin, the executive director of the California Immunization Coalition, said her organization is hosting webinars to train pediatricians and health care providers on the best strategies for reassuring parents about the vaccine. She said parents are more likely to listen to someone they trust, like a family doctor.

“We work mostly with physician groups to get the word out,” Martin said. “I think we need to encourage people to ask questions.”

The governor's next move

It remains unclear how enthusiastic Gov. Gavin Newsom is about Pan's bill. A spokesperson for the governor said his office is still analyzing it.

Barrett Snider, a lobbyist for school districts, said the risks for the governor are a question. While it is an election year, the fallout from a vaccine mandate without personal belief exemptions might anger just a vocal minority.

“I feel like these issues of schools and COVID-19 were largely litigated in the recall election,” Snider said. “And there's no apparent contender for him in the upcoming election.”

Given the anxiousness many Californians feel, leaders should tread carefully, said Dorit Reiss, professor of law who focuses on legal and policy issues related to vaccines at UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco.

“Vaccines have been so politicized that our kids are nervous about them,” she said. “Moving forward with the mandate could exacerbate and push parents who are not anti-vaccine into the arms of the anti-vaccine crowd.”

The division could lead to more pressure on the Legislature, Reiss said.

“Everybody is nervous, stressed or tired and everyone is vulnerable,” she said. “And they are going online. It's a moment of opportunity for people who want to scare other people.”

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number HR-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Paul Idsvoog, Chief of Human Resources
Cabinet Approval: *Paul Idsvoog*

Date: February 04, 2022
Phone Number: 457-3548

Regarding: Additional Information regarding Math and Science Sections

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board additional information regarding the number of math and science sections not covered with a teacher or substitute teacher with a math and science credential during the first semester (August 02, 2021 through December 17, 2021).

- 4,665 math and science sections required coverage
- 3,359 math and science sections were covered by 376 substitute teachers
 - 89 of those sections were covered by a substitute with a math and science credential
- 1,306 sections were covered internally by the site or with a deployed credentialed district employee (i.e., Teacher on Special Assignment, Principal, Vice Principal, District Administrator, etc.)

We currently do not have the resources to search the remaining 1,306 positions to determine which of those internally deployed were covered by a credentialed employee with a math and science credential.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Paul Idsvoog at 457-3548.

Approved by Superintendent
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. _____



Date: 02/04/2022