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**SUPERINTENDENT**

Robert G. Nelson, Ed.D.

**BOARD COMMUNICATIONS – MARCH 22, 2024**

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  
S-2 Ambra O'Connor Spring Break Office Closure

**BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES – Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer**

BFS-1 Kim Kelstrom School Services Weekly Update Reports for  
March 14, 2024

**COMMUNICATIONS – Nikki Henry, Chief Officer**

C-1 Nikki Henry Communications Tools for Families

**INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION – Dr. Natasha Baker, Chief Academic Officer**

ID-1 Marie Williams, Ed.D. Charter School Material Revision Review Question  
and Answer Meetings  
ID-2 Marie Williams, Ed.D. Summer Regional Athletic Pyramid Proposal  
ID-3 Marie Williams, Ed.D. Curriculum Adoption Process and Timelines  
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ID-5 Marie Williams, Ed.D. Scholastic Inc.  
ID-6 Jeremy Ward Bricks 4 Kidz Overview and Outcomes  
ID-7 Jeremy Ward FAFSA Submission Update  
ID-8 Jeremy Ward Bulldog Bound Auto Admission Programs

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: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

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

- Spoke at the Principal's Meeting
- Attended The Foundation for Fresno Unified Schools Suite Drive Kick-Off
- Gave interview with KSEE24, Brian Matthews, and ABC30, Gabe Ferris, regarding the Community Priorities for Superintendent's Search
- Attended the Lease-Leaseback Hearing at Fresno Superior Court
- Attended the Fresno State STEAM Leaders Luncheon
- Attended The Foundation for Fresno Unified School District Board Meeting
- Spoke at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Laotian-American Educational Conference

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number S-2**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Ambra O'Connor, Chief of Staff  
Cabinet Approval:

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3838

Regarding: Spring Break Office Closure

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board information regarding planned office closures during the Spring Break.

The Board Office and Superintendent's Office will be closed to the public during the week of Spring Break and will reopen on Monday, April 1, 2024. Board Packets will not be delivered during Spring Break and regular packet delivery will resume on Monday, April 8, 2024.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Ambra O'Connor at 457-3838.

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

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, Chief Executive

Cabinet Approval:



Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for March 14, 2024

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California's (SSC) Weekly Updates. 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 Updates for March 14, 2024 are attached and include the following articles:

- UCLA Economists: A Return to Normalcy – March 13, 2024
- California's Science Test Will Be Added to State School Dashboard – March 13, 2024
- California Lawmaker Introduces Bill to Remove Artificial Dyes From Cereals, Baked Goods and Other Foods Served in School – March 12, 2024

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D.



Date: 03/22/24



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www.sscal.com

DATE: March 14, 2024

TO: Robert G. Nelson  
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

RE: *SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update*

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## Senate Unveils Early Action Budget Plan

On Thursday, March 14, 2024, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) and Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee Chair Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) announced a [plan](#) by Senate Democrats to shrink the State Budget shortfall through early action.

The goal of the plan is to shrink the budget shortfall from a projected \$38-\$53 billion to \$9-\$24 billion using a mix of program reductions, borrowing, fund shifts, delays, and deferrals. The plan is broken down by the various Senate budget subcommittees. For the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 1 on Education, the plan calls for \$29 million in budget solutions for 2023-24 and \$1.8 billion in 2024-25. The six actions listed for the education subcommittee are:

- Approving the Governor's proposal to reduce the School Facility Program by \$500 million
- Approving the Governor's proposal to delay \$550 million for the Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, and Full-Day Kindergarten Facility Program
- Approving the Governor's proposal to pull back \$29 million of the \$35 million provided in the 2021 Budget Act to expand broadband access to isolated and underserved communities
- Approving the Governor's proposed one-time deferrals of \$227.8 million for the University of California
- Approving the Governor's proposal to forego a \$300 million investment for a new construction project at the University of California, Los Angeles
- Approving the Governor's proposal to defer \$240.2 million one-time for the California State University

All of the budget solutions listed above are non-Proposition 98 investments, which means that the Senate is not proposing to take early action reductions or

deferrals for K-14 education. In fact, the document states that they are looking to provide “school funding certainty.”

A conversation about reductions or deferrals for K-14 education may still happen later in the State Budget process, but for now the Senate is currently aligned with Governor Gavin Newsom to protect school funding (the Assembly has not come up with its own plan).

Senator McGuire has said that the next step is to work with the Assembly on this early action plan and then draft legislation. While the plan does not include a timeline of when they would vote on this bill, Senator McGuire has expressed urgency in getting this done sooner rather than later.

### **Proposition 1 Likely to Pass**

Despite approximately 800,000 ballots still left to process, the opponents of Proposition 1 (2024) conceded this week that the measure is likely to pass. Proposition 1 would authorize \$6.38 billion in state general obligation bonds to fund housing for homeless individuals and veterans with mental health or substance abuse disorders. It would also amend the Health Services Act to provide additional behavioral health services.

As of this writing, Proposition 1 has a narrow lead of 50.2% to 49.8% and is separated by only 24,224 votes. The reason why election experts believe Proposition 1 is on its way to passing is that the counties with the most unprocessed ballots remaining have shown solid support for the measure according to the ballots that they have processed.

Governor Newsom and the proponents will take a victory lap for getting the measure over the finish line; however, the close contest might spell some pessimism for the spending measures that qualify for the November 5, 2024, General Election ballot, especially since Proposition 1 proponents raised nearly \$21 million to get the measure passed, while the opponents raised and spent very little money. Additionally, Proposition 1 was also the only statewide measure placed before voters on the March 5, 2024, primary ballot, while the November ballot is shaping up to be a crowded field for statewide measures.

There are already ten qualified measures for the General Election ballot and while none of those measures are bond proposals, the Legislature currently has several pending proposals in the hopper, including a school facilities bond that the Newsom Administration has committed to negotiating. In addition to the legislative bond proposals, there are several potential voter-driven measures that could qualify in the next several months if they meet the requisite signatures.

Proposition 1 barely passing could just be the result of low turnout in a primary election where both major parties’ presidential nominees were essentially known, or it could foreshadow that California voters are feeling bond and tax fatigue. The Legislature and Governor Newsom are going to need to be very strategic with how many bond proposals to place before voters in November and the price tag of those measures. With registered Democrats nearly doubling registered Republicans (47% to 24%) in the state, lawmakers will also be looking to drive turnout as Democrat voters are more likely to vote for spending measures than Republican voters.

*Leilani Aguinaldo*

## UCLA Economists: A Return to Normalcy

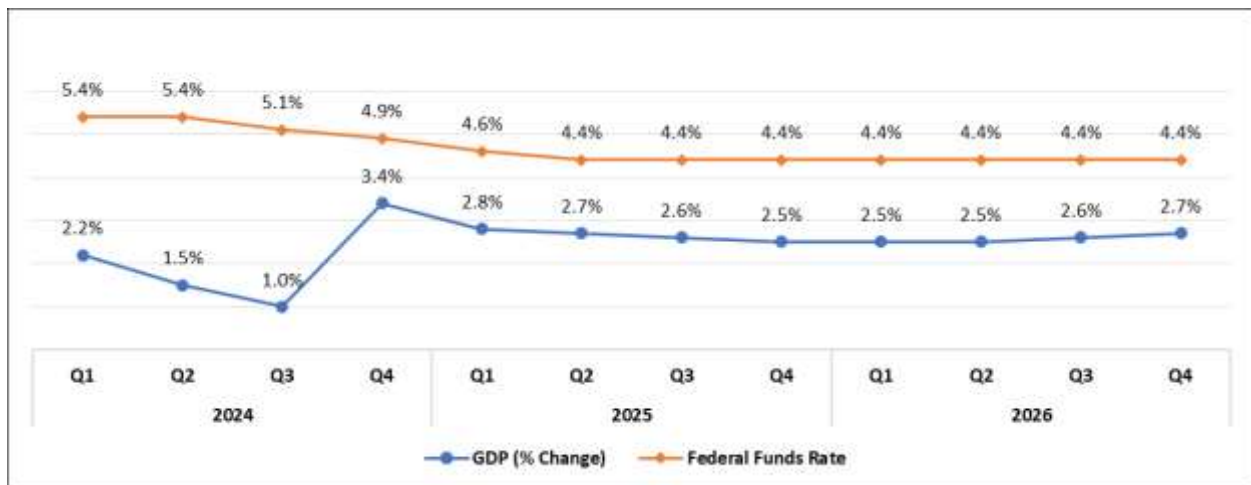
By Patti F. Herrera  
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*  
March 13, 2024

In the first of its 2024 quarterly reports, UCLA Anderson Forecast (Forecast) economists continue to predict slow growth for the U.S. and California economies and a return to more normal trends with no recession in the near term. This is due largely to expected economic weakness in 2024 as interest-sensitive sectors feel the delayed impact of the Federal Reserve's (Fed) restrictive monetary policies offset by the tailwinds of strong consumer demand, a robust labor market, and a new national industrial policy spawned by major federal investments in infrastructure, technology, and climate change.

### GDP and Interest Rates

According to the Forecast, the U.S. economy will reach a trough later this fall before rebounding and reaching a plateau of 2.7% by the end of 2026. This corresponds with the Forecast's expectations that the Fed will refrain from cutting interest rates in the first part of 2024, followed by three consecutive rate reductions beginning in the fourth quarter of this year (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Federal Funds Rate**



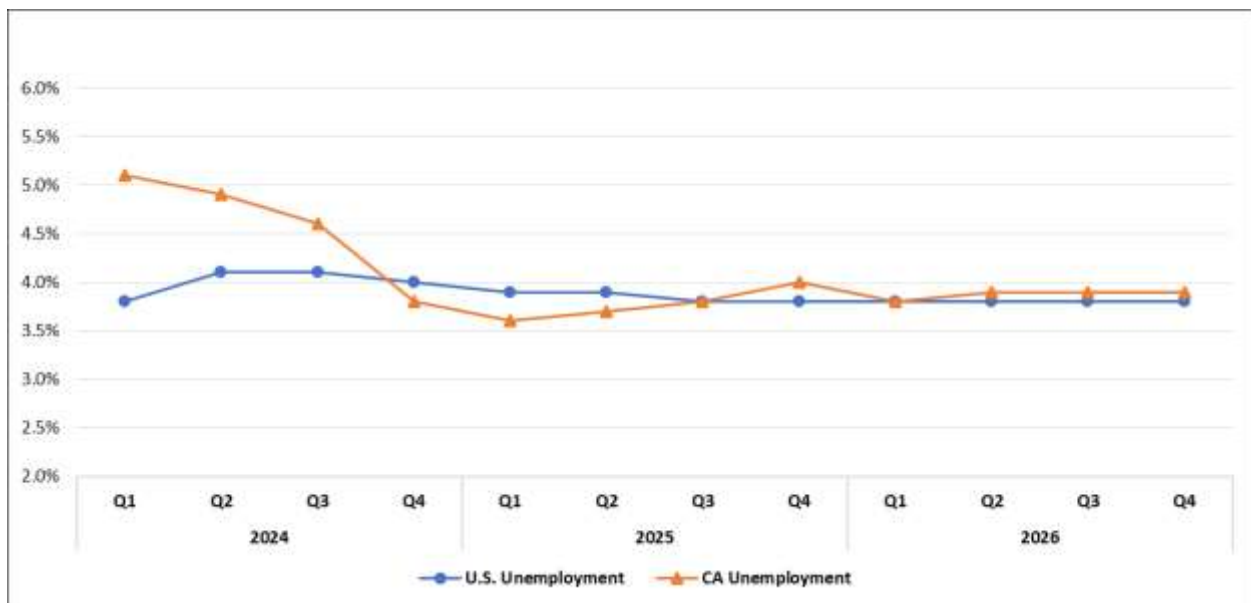
Source: UCLA Anderson Forecast, March 2024

The Forecast notes that the inversion of the ten-year and two-year treasury yields, which historically has been a reliable predictor of economic recessions, has sustained its longest run. And UCLA economists don't expect that to change any time soon. However, they are careful to highlight that a yield curve is "simply a market prediction of future interest rates," or what bond holders expect to yield from their investments in the short- and long-term. Given that the Fed will need to manage an economy in 2024 that is sensitive to even mild shocks, they predict that the Fed will ease rates before holding firm in the wake of sticky inflation (see "[Inflation Shows Persistence](#)" in the March 2024 *Fiscal Report*).

### Labor Market

Full employment is sustained nationally and in California across the forecast period. The current modest uptick in the U.S. unemployment rate is not the result of increased layoffs but rather of more people entering the workforce, outpacing new job openings. The California job market has recovered beyond pre-pandemic levels in almost all sectors and most of the state. The notable industry that has been affected by layoffs is technology, namely in the Bay Area and San Francisco, but these jobs are being consumed elsewhere out of continued demand for high-skilled workers in manufacturing, which has increased by 26% since 2018, and in an evolving economy reliant on artificial intelligence. Tight labor market conditions create two opposing dynamics for the economy: (1) sustained consumer demand as personal income remains healthy, and (2) slow growth due to less labor supply.

Figure 2. U.S. and California Unemployment Rate



Source: UCLA Anderson Forecast, March 2024

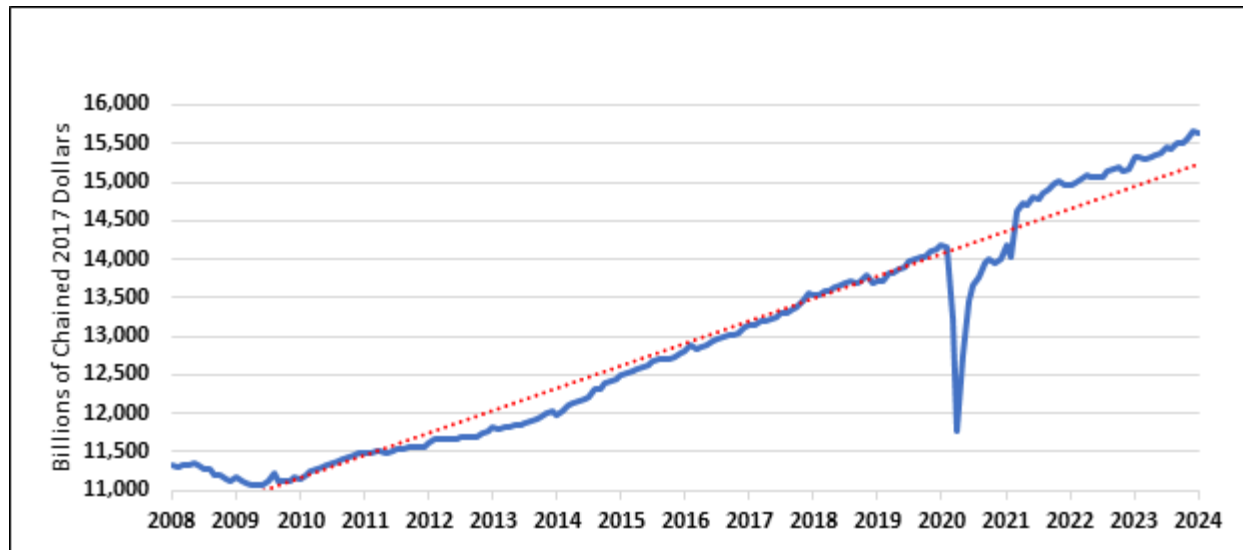
### U.S. Economic Outlook

The drivers of economic growth, according to the Forecast, are consumption and investment. The latter is buoyed by increased defense spending domestically and among allied nations. Geopolitical conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and tensions in the Pacific are creating demand for U.S. defense goods. The U.S. satisfies 40% of defense demand from its allies.

Figure 3 illustrates a collective spending pattern that UCLA economists note occur after major historical events, such as the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, and the COVID-19 health pandemic. And this is an unwillingness among American consumers to defer gratification and instead to engage in more epicurean behaviors. Since 2021, American spending has outpaced and continues to outpace historical trends. The Forecast predicts that strong personal income will sustain current consumer patterns.



**Figure 3. U.S. Real Personal Consumption Expenditures**



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data

## California

The outlook for California is similar to that of the U.S., which is unsurprising given that it is the fifth largest economy in the world. Increased investments in high-tech manufacturing, which the state disproportionately houses, alongside seaport diversions from the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico resulting from labor strikes and climate conditions, are contributing to California’s economic growth.

While the Forecast takes note of California’s current budget deficit, it frames the problem as the gap between anticipated General Fund revenues and desired future spending—not as a problem stemming from an underperforming economy.

Instead, the state’s growth, particularly in the housing market, will be constrained by limited workforce supply due to the persistence of a tight labor market.

## Risks and Conclusion

The Forecast identifies several risks to the U.S. economy—namely, geopolitical conflict in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and tension in areas of Asia. While the economists noted the gridlock in political Washington D.C. and assumes it will continue through 2026, the Forecast predicts that the economy both expects the dysfunction and that its impact will be short-term. For California, the risks are more endemic to persistent problems faced by the state: housing availability and affordability, homelessness, public safety (particularly in urban centers), disruptive climate events, and a shutdown of trade with China (resulting either from a recession in China or trade policies).

Despite these risks, economic tailwinds prevail and the U.S. and California economies continue to grow, albeit slowly through 2026 with no recession in sight.

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*Note: The State Board of Education is moving forward with plans to add the state's science assessment to the California School Dashboard, making it a new piece of the statewide school accountability system.*

## **California's Science Test Will Be Added to State School Dashboard**

*Its inclusion will force school districts to focus more attention and instruction on science*

By John Fensterwald  
*EdSource*  
March 13, 2024

The State Board of Education is moving forward with plans to add the state's science assessment to the California School Dashboard, making it a new piece of the statewide school accountability system.

Students first took the online science test in 2019, before Covid forced an interruption of testing in 2020. Starting in 2025, performances by district, school and student groups will receive one of five dashboard colors, designating the lowest (red) to the highest performance (blue) — just as with math, English language arts and other achievement indicators. Each color reflects two factors: how well students performed in the latest year and how much the score improved or declined from the previous year.

Science teachers welcomed the move as a way of drawing more attention to science instruction. “Doing so will add visibility to ensure that districts invest in making sure that all California students receive the science ed they deserve,” Peter A’Hearn, a past president of the California Association of Science Educators, told the state board at a hearing March 6.

“Our biggest frustration is that students have not been getting any or minimal instruction in elementary schools, especially in low-performing and low-socioeconomic schools,” A’Hearn said.

As required by Congress, all students in grades five, eight and at least once in high school take the California Science Test or CAST. Designed with the assistance of California science teachers to align with the Next Generation Science Standards, the test includes multiple-choice questions, short-answer responses and a performance task requiring students to solve a problem by demonstrating scientific reasoning.

For the 2022-23 year, only 30% of students overall scored at or above grade standard. Eleventh-grade students did best, with 31.7% meeting or exceeding standard.

The test measures knowledge in three domains: life sciences, focusing on structures and processes in living things, including heredity and biological evolution; physical sciences, focusing on matter and its interactions, motion, energy and waves; and Earth and space sciences, focusing on Earth's place in the universe and the Earth's systems.

California replaced its science standards with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in 2013. NGSS was a national science initiative that stressed hands-on learning, broad scientific concepts and interdisciplinary relationships of various science domains. The state board adopted the state's NGSS framework in 2016, and textbook and curriculum adoption followed.

Districts' implementation has been slow, with no funding specifically dedicated to teacher training and textbook purchases. The pandemic set back momentum, said Jessica Sawko, director of the California STEM Network, a project of the nonprofit advocacy organization Children Now.

“NGSS pointed us to a higher-quality and richer approach, but it has not yielded statewide equitable access to science,” she said. “There have been shifts in instruction, but they have not been widespread and haven’t resolved a narrowing of access to science, particularly before fifth grade.” She said many districts don’t include goals for science education in their three-year planning document, the Local Control and Accountability Plan. Tracy Unified, which budgeted \$768,000 this year for teacher training in NGSS and STEM studies, is an example of one that did ([see page 28 of its LCAP](#)).

Although the science assessment will be part of the state dashboard, the State Board of Education has yet to decide how it will factor into the state and federal accountability systems — if at all. Congress does not require the science test to be included with math, English language arts and graduation rates. Folding the science test into the state system would entitle the lowest-performing districts and student groups to assistance in science instruction from their county office of education.

### **Student growth measure, too**

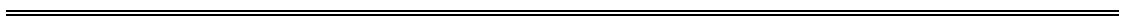
Also at the March 6 meeting, the state board discussed a timetable for adopting a system to measure individual students’ growth on standardized test scores — an idea that has been discussed for nearly a decade. More than 40 states are using a student growth model for diagnosing test scores.

The state’s current system, which the California School Dashboard reflects, compares the percentage of students who achieved at grade level in the current year with the previous year’s students’ level of achievement. The student growth model, a more refined measure, looks at all students’ individual gains and losses in scale points over time.

A comparison of the two ways of measuring scores was a factor that led to the settlement last month of the Cayla J. v. the State of California lawsuit. Brought on behalf of students in Oakland and Los Angeles, one of its claims was that Black, Latino and low-income children’s test scores fell disproportionately behind other student groups during the pandemic.

The state, using the current method, said that all student groups’ scores fell about the same percentage from meeting standards. Harvard University education professor Andrew Ho’s analysis for the plaintiffs showed that “racial inequality increased in almost all subjects and grades. Economic inequality also increased.” The settlement calls for using scale scores under a student growth model to determine which groups of students will be eligible for state improvement money.

The state must collect three years of data for a student growth model, which it won’t have until next year. Then the state board must decide whether to use it as a replacement or as a complement to the current system for the state accountability system, said Rob Manwaring, a senior adviser for Children Now.



*Note: Assembly Bill 2316 (Gabriel, D-Encino) would prohibit schools from offering foods containing six artificial food dyes that have been linked to hyperactivity and behavioral issues in some children.*

## **California Lawmaker Introduces Bill to Remove Artificial Dyes From Cereals, Baked Goods and Other Foods Served in School**

*The proposed legislation would prohibit school cafeterias from serving foods with Red 40 and six other chemicals associated with potential health and behavioral issues.*

By Elizabeth Chuck  
NBC News  
March 12, 2024

A state legislator introduced a first-of-its-kind bill Tuesday that would ban seven additives from the foods that are served in California's public schools.

Assembly Bill 2316 would prohibit school cafeterias from offering foods containing six artificial food dyes that have been linked to hyperactivity and behavioral issues in some children. It would also outlaw titanium dioxide, a whitening agent used in candies and other products that is banned by the European Union because of concerns that it is potentially genotoxic, meaning it may damage DNA and cause cancer.

The bill, which was first shared with NBC News, would affect certain cereals, condiments and baked goods, among other foods, and it would make California the first state to ban the additives from schools. It was introduced by Democratic Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel.

"This legislation will not ban any specific foods or products," Gabriel said Tuesday at a virtual news conference. "The goal here is to encourage companies to make minor modifications to products sold in California if they want their products to be sold in California public schools."

The necessary recipe tweaks would be as small as changing one ingredient, Gabriel told NBC News, adding that many products sold on grocery store shelves use natural substitutes such as turmeric, beet juice or pomegranate juice for coloring.

Synthetic dyes "are nonessential ingredients," Gabriel said in a phone interview before introducing the bill. "These are chemicals that are added to food to make them appear more appealing. But for all of them, there are specific alternatives."

In addition to titanium dioxide, the bill would ban Red 40, Green 3, Blue 1 and Blue 2, and Yellow 5 and Yellow 6 in foods served by schools.

The Food and Drug Administration has said it has not established a causal relationship between behavioral problems and synthetic dyes for children in the general population who haven't been diagnosed with conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

But Gabriel said a comprehensive assessment from the state of California showed otherwise. The 2021 evaluation found an association even in some children without ADHD diagnoses.

"Overall, our review of human studies suggests that synthetic food dyes are associated with adverse neurobehavioral effects, such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and restlessness in sensitive children," the

authors of the assessment wrote. “The evidence supports a relationship between food dye exposure and adverse behavioral outcomes in children, both with and without pre-existing behavioral disorders.”

The bill comes as the number of ADHD diagnoses has risen nationally in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Gabriel, whose son has ADHD, said he found it baffling that schools would serve foods that could increase symptoms of the disorder.

“It just totally harms these kids and undermines our investment in helping them when we expose them to chemicals that we know are going to exacerbate their challenges,” he told NBC News.

AB 2316 would go into effect at the beginning of 2025 if it is signed into law this year.

The FDA had no immediate comment on the bill. The International Association of Color Manufacturers, a trade association, pointed to its past statements on food dyes, including one that rebutted the 2021 findings from California, in which it said that concluding that there may be an association between synthetic colors and negative health or behavior is “based on insufficient scientific evidence.”

The International Food Additives Council, another trade group, condemned state-level bans on ingredients that have been determined to be safe by the FDA.

“FDA is the federal agency charged with safeguarding the food supply, and those advocating for state bans are undermining FDA’s authority and causing unnecessary consumer confusion,” the council’s executive director, Robert Rankin, said in a statement, adding that the council “stands behind the FDA in its mission to uphold the highest standards of food safety.”

But Melanie Benesh, vice president of government affairs at the Environmental Working Group, a research and advocacy health organization that is co-sponsoring Gabriel’s bill, argued that the FDA is “asleep at the wheel.”

“California shouldn’t have to introduce this bill,” she said. “In an ideal world, we would have a credible federal regulator that would be taking aggressive action to make sure that the food chemicals that we are exposed to every day, and the foods that we eat, and the foods that we feed our family, are actually safe.”

An analysis by the Environmental Working Group found that if the bill passes, only a handful of items sold in California schools would be affected. Benesh said the group estimated that the additives that would be banned are only in about 4% of foods served in cafeteria lunch lines and less than 3% of items sold through à la carte lines. À la carte items are snacks and drinks that students can purchase separately from their school meals.

“There are some categories like cookies, chips, sugary breakfast cereals, that may be more likely to be tainted by these food chemicals and these colors,” Benesh said. “But even in those categories, there’s plenty of alternatives.”

The proposed legislation follows last year’s passage of the California Food Safety Act, which was also introduced by Gabriel and banned four food additives linked to potential health problems. The law was the first time that a state had outlawed chemicals allowed by the FDA and means that, beginning in 2027, California will prohibit red dye No. 3, potassium bromate, brominated vegetable oil and propylparaben from being in any food sold in the state.

Other states have since followed suit. Bills attempting to ban certain food additives have been introduced in Illinois, Missouri, New York and Washington state, among other places.

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number C-1**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Nikki Henry, Chief Communications Officer  
Cabinet Approval: NH

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3733

NH (Mar 21, 2024 12:41 PDT)

Regarding: Communications Tools for Families

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an update regarding the communications tools available to Fresno Unified families and how we have and can streamline our communications to families. As a foundation, our recent representative polling of families through our research partners at FM3 report that 65% of families believe they are receiving “about the right amount of communication” from Fresno Unified. That is up from 63% in 2022 and those reporting they received “too little” communication reduced from 22% in 2022 to just 16% in 2024.

From the district level, we fund and support ParentSquare, Let’s Talk, ATLASConnect, our Fresno Unified website, and social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. Additional communications tools such as ClassDojo are not district funded or sanctioned, however it is up to the authority and autonomy of each educator what apps they choose to use to communicate with families. Mandating a single communications tool for educators would require negotiating with all impacted labor unions. Instead of mandating, we work to provide training, support, and education to improve the adoption of ParentSquare as the main mode of communication with families across the district.

SchoolMessenger was eliminated in the 2023-2024 school year and replaced with ParentSquare and our new, user-friendly website hosted by FinalSite is expected to launch by the end of April 2024 replacing our current WordPress websites.

Below, please find descriptions of our communications tools and their uses for families.

**ParentSquare**

ParentSquare is Fresno Unified’s choice communication tool encompassing all district-to-home communications and most school-to-home communications with all schools having posted this school year. ParentSquare can send districtwide, schoolwide, or classwide posts which can allow commenting, as well as direct messaging between teachers, principals, and families. ParentSquare has automatic translations with the option to edit the translations manually to better the quality of translations. ParentSquare also recently acquired the Remind app, slowly bringing their loved features to ParentSquare over the next year.

ParentSquare allows families to easily customize their notifications to be reached how they prefer in mode and timing. Families can choose to receive email, text, call, and/or app notifications. Families are encouraged to download the ParentSquare app for the best user experience, however it is not required to receive communication from ParentSquare. Families can also choose if they want to receive notifications instantly or if they would like to receive notifications once per day in a digest form around 6pm each day. No matter their choice, families will still receive urgent or emergency notifications instantly. If families have not set their notification preferences, they are defaulted to receive email communication instantly. In the 2024 FM3 family survey, text messages (84%) and email (83%) continue to lead the preferred ways that families would like the district to communicate with them.

The features available make ParentSquare a two-way communication tool, directly supporting our district family goal to increase culturally proficient two-way communication with families. In our recent FM3 survey

of families, we found that the percentage of families agreeing that they have sufficient opportunities to give input grew from 57% in 2022 to 69% in 2024.

Regarding adoption, the survey showed that 73% of families think ParentSquare is an excellent or good way to communicate with them and 76% reported having used ParentSquare. Of those who have used ParentSquare, 86% are satisfied with the use.

### **Let's Talk**

Let's Talk is a customer service tool that allows our customers (parents, students, staff, community members) to ask questions, voice concerns, and give feedback. Every dialogue that is generated by a customer is auto routed to the correct department or staff member which improves efficiency and service. Customers get an immediate response when they ask a question and once a customer receives a response, they have an opportunity to provide feedback on our customer service. Let's Talk keeps our staff accountable by keeping track of questions asked and giving our staff reminders when they do not respond. It also helps us give timely and consistent feedback to our customers.

Let's Talk is currently available on every school's webpage and also on our main website. Let's Talk also directly integrates with our new website platform, FinalSite, ensuring no lapse in customer service as we launch our new website.

### **Social Media**

Fresno Unified manages official Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn accounts. Facebook has 20,300 followers with 47% of families reporting in the recent FM3 family survey that Facebook is a preferred way to get communication from Fresno Unified. Instagram has 9,012 followers with 35% of families reporting in the recent FM3 family survey that Instagram is a preferred way to get communication from Fresno Unified. X has 9,800 followers with just 16% of families reporting in the recent FM3 family survey that X is a preferred way to get communication from Fresno Unified. LinkedIn has 7,691 followers and families were not surveyed if they would prefer getting information from Fresno Unified through LinkedIn as the target audience on that social media channel is staff.

### **ATLAS Connect**

ATLAS Connect is a direct messaging tool for teachers and families through the ATLAS portal which also has an auto-translation feature. ATLAS Connect was launched prior to the district adopting ParentSquare, when there was no two-way communication option for teachers and families outside of email. Since adoption and the subsequent success of ParentSquare, we are continuing to discuss the merits of continuing or discontinuing ATLAS Connect.

In conclusion, ParentSquare is the communication tool of choice of the district for inbound and outbound communication with 96% of families receiving contact through the tool. Those 4% not receiving ParentSquare communication do not have valid contact information in ATLAS. Let's Talk is a tool to improve customer service and is only an inbound communication tool, we cannot and do not send communication outbound with the tool. Social media is a two-way communication tool, however less than half of our families prefer the medium for communication and delivery is not guaranteed based on the algorithms of each social media channel. ATLAS Connect is duplicative at this point and will be evaluated.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Nikki Henry at 457-3733.

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_




Date: 03/22/24 \_\_\_\_\_



Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-1**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3731

Regarding: Charter School Material Revision Review Question and Answer Meetings

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding an opportunity to review the material revision process for authorized charter schools in the Fresno Unified School District. Currently, Fresno Unified School District's Charter Office expects to receive two material revisions by the end of March 2024. These material revisions will be presented for potential Board approval on May 08, 2024, and May 20, 2024. In preparation for Board consideration and potential approval of the material revision submissions, Fresno Unified School District's legal counsel, Susan Hatmaker, will meet with Board trustees to provide an overview of the current Education Code as it pertains to board members' roles and answer any Board trustee questions. Upon receipt of a certified copy of proposed material revisions to a currently approved charter petition, legal counsel will provide an additional board communication.

The material revision information sessions will be held on Zoom on the following dates (Trustees need only RSVP for one session):

- April 03, 2024
  - 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
- April 09, 2024
  - 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Felicia Olais (559) 457-3948.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-2**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3731

Regarding: Summer Regional Athletic Pyramid Proposal

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding the proposed Fresno Unified School District Regional Athletic Pyramid.

The Fresno Unified School District Regional Athletic Pyramid aims to foster growth, mentorship, and vertical relationships within our athletic community. This four-week program funded by Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP), will provide a platform for teaching, enhancing skills, supporting one another, and building lasting connections among coaches and athletes from their respective regions. The focus will be on supporting students in kindergarten through grade eight.

The Regional Athletic Pyramid will consist of a series of workshops, training sessions, and friendly competitions held over four consecutive weeks in June. Each week will focus on various aspects of athletic development, ranging from technical skills to mental conditioning and team dynamics. At least ten students will be needed to field a team, and the goal is to recruit at least 150 students per region to participate in this summer program.

Key objectives of the program include:

- Teaching: Providing coaches and athletes with opportunities to share knowledge, techniques, and strategies to enhance athletic performance.
- Enhancement: Offering specialized training sessions and workshops to help athletes develop specific skills and abilities relevant to their respective sports.
- Support: Creating a supportive network where coaches and athletes can seek guidance, encouragement, and assistance from one another.
- Mentorship: Facilitating mentorship opportunities between experienced coaches and younger athletes to foster personal and athletic development.
- Building Vertical Relationships: Establishing connections and fostering collaboration among coaches and athletes across different age groups, skill levels, and schools.

Next steps include meeting with site leadership and athletic directors to explain the program and begin student recruitment.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Bryan Wells 457-3805.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-3**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3731

Regarding: Curriculum Adoption Process and Timelines

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding the textbook adoption process and projected timelines.

In Fresno Unified School District, the instructional materials adoption process occurs over three years. In year one, an advisory committee is convened to ground their learning in the applicable content-area statewide framework and identify potential instructional materials to pilot. In year two, teachers pilot instructional materials and make a recommendation to the Board for adoption. Following Board adoption, instructional materials are purchased for implementation in the following year. In year three, teachers receive professional learning and implement the newly adopted instructional materials.

In the 2023/24 school year, the Board adopted instructional materials for kindergarten through grade six science and grade seven through grade twelve world languages. These materials have been implemented during the current school year.

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning (CIPL) is currently in year one of the adoption process for kindergarten through grade six history/social science. An advisory committee has begun meeting, and materials will be piloted in 2024/25 and purchased following Board adoption. Teachers will receive their instructional materials and professional learning in the 2025/26 school year.

In 2024/25, CIPL will initiate year one of the adoption process for kindergarten through grade six and grade seven through grade twelve mathematics. This process was delayed by one year to align with the release of the new mathematics framework and state adoption of approved instructional materials, in kindergarten through grade eight, from which Fresno Unified will identify potential instructional materials to pilot.

When instructional materials are adopted, it is not uncommon to make additional investments in components of the adopted instructional materials, such as consumable materials and digital access, for the life of adoption. In February 2024, CIPL was made aware that the current English language arts adoption needed to be extended to maintain digital access for teachers and students and ensure students have consumable workbooks. CIPL worked with the vendor to secure a quote that includes the cost of the consumables and provides free digital access for students. CIPL expects to initiate an instructional materials adoption process in 2027/28.

The CIPL team has worked to review each adoption timeline for accuracy. Updated information regarding upcoming adoption timelines has been shared with both the fiscal and purchasing departments to ensure clarity moving forward.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Pam Taylor at 457-3874.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-4**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3731

Regarding: Ethnic Studies Program Update

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding the development of a comprehensive preschool through 12th-grade ethnic studies program in Fresno Unified.

This past summer, Fresno Unified School District's ethnic studies team worked in collaboration with consultants to develop the Fresno Unified ethnic studies framework. This framework is aligned with the California Department of Education's ethnic studies model curriculum. The framework was officially launched this school year and includes the vision of ethnic studies for Fresno Unified:

*"The vision of Ethnic Studies in Fresno Unified School District is to provide students culturally and community responsive learning that centers experiences, identities, and knowledge of Ethnic Studies groups as a way to dismantle racism and intersectional forms of oppression. In Fresno, Ethnic Studies thrives in and through the V.A.L.L.E.Y."*

The V.A.L.L.E.Y acronym stands for Voices, Ancestors, Liberation, Love, Empathy, and Yearning. These tenets are further developed in the framework to include student outcomes and pedagogical commitments. This framework was also used to develop an ethnic studies curriculum handbook that includes seven units of instruction for high school comprehensive ethnic studies. In December 2023, an ethnic studies middle school scope and sequence was developed to support middle school instruction.

Currently, all seven comprehensive high schools along with Duncan have additional staffing (five sections) to increase ethnic studies course offerings. Although eLearn and Patino do not have additional staffing for ethnic studies, both sites are also offering ethnic studies courses. Courses that meet the ethnic studies graduation requirement include comprehensive ethnic studies, Chicano studies, African American studies, Advanced Placement African American studies, and Asian American studies (being piloted by Duncan). Beginning next year, Edison High School will offer women and gender in ethnic studies. In addition to these course offerings, several sites also offer dual enrollment ethnic studies course offerings.

Teachers have been provided with four release days for professional learning this year. Approximately 30 middle and high school teachers have attended each of these sessions. Fresno Unified has also partnered with several ethnic studies consultants to support professional learning during the 2023/24 school year. Topics have included self and stories, maroon communities, and ethnic studies social movements.

In June 2024, Fresno Unified will launch the third cohort of ethnic studies foundational professional learning. The previous two cohorts have trained 38 middle and high school teachers. Next year's cohort will be focused on building our elementary program and will train up to 20 teachers. Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (CIPL) is also partnering with our library services manager to

curate an ethnic studies elementary library collection that reflects our diverse student population. The teachers engaged in the June training will receive the ethnic studies classroom library and training on how to integrate the ideas, themes, and hallmarks of ethnic studies into their instruction.

Fresno Unified continues to partner with California State University, San Francisco, in providing an opportunity for teachers to earn an ethnic studies certificate to further build their knowledge and expertise. We are also currently researching the possibility of providing training for teachers to earn a micro-credential in ethnic studies.

In January 2024, a cross-functional ethnic studies leadership support team, composed of staff in multiple departments, was created. The team's purpose is to provide clarity, guidance, and support for the implementation of ethnic studies. The team has met twice with ethnic studies teachers and will continue to meet and offer support.

A crucial component of ethnic studies is centering student voice. To that end, Fresno Unified recently administered its first ethnic studies student voice survey to all middle and high school students currently taking an ethnic studies course. There were over 800 student responses. Students are also currently participating in an ethnic studies logo design contest with results to be shared at IdeaFest on April 20, 2024. The intent is to identify a student-designed logo to represent ethnic studies at Fresno Unified.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Pam Taylor at 457-3874.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D.



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-5**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3731

Regarding: Scholastic Inc.

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding Fresno Unified School District's partnership with Scholastic Inc.

Since June 2021, Fresno Unified has partnered with Scholastic to provide book packs, with five books, for all students attending summer school. Additionally, since November 2021, all preschool through eighth-grade students have received a book pack with five books in the fall. Fresno Unified School District will continue with book distribution in the upcoming 2024/25 school year and is exploring the addition of offering student choice in the book selection process. To date, our partnership with Scholastic Inc. has delivered 1,118,414 books to the homes of Fresno Unified School District students.

Additionally, for the past three summers, the curriculum developed for our kindergarten through fifth-grade summer school literacy programs has included Scholastic's LitCamp program. Students participating in LitCamp strengthen their reading and writing muscles by mastering fluency, comprehension, analysis, and reflection, embrace the power of their own voice while increasing resilience, empathy, and a positive sense of self, and build reading and writing stamina, motivation, independence, and leadership.

Our partnership with Scholastic is strongly aligned with our Every Child Is a Reader literacy initiative, as the third pillar of our literacy plan is building family community partnerships by providing high-interest resources, supporting the development of home literacy routines, and fostering collective ownership.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Pam Taylor at 457-3874.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-6**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Jeremy Ward, Assistant Superintendent  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 248-7465

Regarding: Bricks 4 Kidz Overview and Outcomes

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board with information regarding Bricks 4 Kidz.

Bricks 4 Kidz specializes in hands-on workshops focused on science, technology, math and careers using coding, robotics and LEGO builds. Using their creative workshops, students are provided with hands-on learning opportunities that align with Fresno Unified's student goal of expanding student-centered and real-world learning experiences. Eight thousand, seven hundred and twenty-eight students in grades first and second, across all regions, participated in STEM opportunities within all regions. Of all 417 classrooms, there has been a request for a spring learning session. The number and percentage of first and second grade students that participate in a career awareness activity in STEM-related fields is collected and will be reported in year-end data and will be available upon request.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Jeremy Ward at 248-7465.


Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24

Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-7**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Jeremy Ward, Assistant Superintendent &  
Nancy Witrado, Director Counseling & Guidance  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 21, 2024

Phone Number: 248-7451

Regarding: FAFSA Submission Update

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board an update on FAFSA submissions for Fresno Unified School District.

The rollout of the newly revised 2024-2025 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been challenging for our students, parents, and school counselors during this current financial aid season. The new FAFSA opened on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, following a three-month delay. In addition to a shorter submission window, this new application also came with multiple glitches, and ongoing issues which have prohibited the submission of applications. The United States Department of Education (US Dept of Ed) has reported some of the technology glitches have been recently resolved, however there are still ongoing issues affecting our students who have undocumented parent(s), defined by the US Dept of Ed as mixed-status. Students from mixed-status families were unable to complete and apply until last week (March 12th). Some families, due to their citizenship status, are still unable to access the application because of the required identity verification process, which may take up to three weeks to verify. Monitoring progress has been delayed due to lack of data sharing between US Dept of Ed and the California Student Aid Commission. Once the data sharing begins, we will be able to monitor student progress and address application errors, as has been the practice in previous years.

Across the district, high schools have hosted 28 evening workshops, with 929 students and 1074 parents in attendance. As of March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2,180 (53%) of graduating seniors have submitted a financial aid application compared to last year's 3,141. Counselors continue to work with students and parents to help them meet the state priority deadline of April 2, by continuing to prioritize access to financial aid workshops throughout the school day and evenings.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Jeremy Ward 248-7465.

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_




Date: 03/22/24



Fresno Unified School District  
Board Communication

**BC Number ID-8**

From the Office of the Superintendent  
To the Members of the Board of Education  
Prepared by: Jeremy Ward, Assistant Superintendent &  
Nancy Witrado, Director Counseling & Guidance  
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: March 22, 2024

Phone Number: 248-7465

Regarding: Bulldog Bound Auto Admission Programs

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board an update on the Bulldog Bound Auto-Admission program, including the process and progress of student submissions.

During the Summer of 2023, the College and Career Readiness Department, in collaboration with the FUSD Communications team, created a communications plan to inform the Fresno Unified community about Bulldog Bound. To promote access to this postsecondary educational opportunity, information was shared through various media outlets. In the Fall of 2023, high school counselors began their regularly scheduled grade level presentations which included registration information about the Bulldog Bound Initiative. Concurrently, students were provided with registration information for the CaKIDS program. Counseling teams continue to promote and share information about Bulldog Bound during parent meetings, one-on-one conferencing and at school events. Counselors will continue to support students in Bulldog Bound registration through communication using their school site platforms. Bulldog Bound information is also scheduled to be shared with our elementary and middle school students.

Representatives from the College and Career Readiness Department, led by Director of Counseling Nancy Witrado, conduct biweekly meetings with the Fresno State Bulldog Bound Team. The Fresno State Bulldog Bound team shares ongoing metrics during the bi-weekly meetings, which includes Bulldog Bound Registration data and Fresno State Applications for the Fall 2024 admission window. Fresno State has reported a record number of FUSD applicants during the most recent application window.

Following the public announcement of Fresno Unified School District's participation in the Bulldog Bound Auto-Admission program, 832 Seniors, 494 Juniors, 458 Sophomores and 208 Freshman have registered for Bulldog Bound.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Jeremy Ward at 248-7465.

Approved by Superintendent  
Robert G. Nelson Ed.D. \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 03/22/24