We want to thank everyone who participated in our districtwide Town Hall Meeting on Monday, Feb. 5th, at Leland High School. Nearly 200 parents, staff, students, and community members were treated to a vigorous, student-led debate on school start times, then asked to offer feedback about the district, our schools, and our focus in the near and long term.

If you had questions or comments we couldn’t answer that night, we’ve tried to do so here. Please feel free to contact our Public Information Office at pio@sjusd.org if you have any follow-up questions.

**General**

*Will you be updating school boundaries?*

At this time, there are no plans to change school boundaries in San José Unified. Based on projections of declining enrollment, the Board of Education may appoint a committee of parent, staff, and community leaders in the future to study and advise the board on potential impacts and solutions. If the board were to appoint a committee, all meetings and information will be publicly accessible, and no decisions will be made without substantial opportunities for input from our entire community.

*San José Unified should build partnerships with tech giants moving into San José.*

We agree. We currently enjoy partnerships with a number of Silicon Valley companies both large and small, including Apple, Google, Microsoft, Box.com, NextFlex, and Accenture. We work with these companies to provide our students with technology, internships, and opportunities that prepare them to succeed in an increasingly digital society. We also partner with organizations like the Tech Museum, the Silicon Valley Organization, and the City of San José to offer students hands-on learning experiences like field trips and job shadow days. We will continue to build on these partnerships and look to develop new ones in order to elevate opportunities for all of our students. We’re excited to have a seat on the City of San José’s Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), which will advise the City Council on the proposed Google campus at Diridon Station. We will leverage this opportunity to advocate for additional investments in our schools as part of this highly-anticipated development in the heart of our district.

**Curriculum & Instruction**

*Students from Hacienda Elementary expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the Achieve3000 reading program.*

First, we were proud to see our students step up to make their voices heard! Achieve3000 is a differentiated program that provides articles about social studies and science from the Associated Press. The instruction before students read the article is the most important part of this resource. Teachers teach students different comprehension strategies that enable them to tackle a wide range of
topics and texts. The research indicates that students need to complete 40 activities in order to achieve one year’s growth. We have found that when students are assigned articles to read on their own, it can be frustrating and not engaging. We encourage you to speak with your child’s teacher if you have any concerns.

*Please make the kids read from a book.*

We absolutely agree that it is important to maintain a balance for our students. When San José Unified adopted Achieve3000, we also purchased class sets of novels. Common Core requires students to read 50% fiction and 50% non-fiction at upper elementary grades (3-5). Furthermore, the San José Unified Language Arts Scope & Sequence maps out a clear balance of fiction and non-fiction while supporting teachers as they make connections between the two. In addition to Social Studies and Science textbooks, Achieve3000 provides access to quality non-fiction.

**Middle school math is taught with a workbook but no textbook. How can the students study?**

Prior to Common Core, the focus of math instruction was on skill development, with limited opportunities to apply this knowledge in order to demonstrate understanding and mastery. The SpringBoard math curriculum is designed for students to study mathematical concepts at a deeper level. The emphasis is on the application of mathematical concepts in the context of real-world scenarios. In addition to teacher-driven direct instruction, SpringBoard also includes investigative, student-centered lessons which require students to determine what mathematical facts, patterns, or formulas would explain the real-world scenario involved. The consumable format allow students to mark, annotate, and take notes directly in the book, encouraging a high level of interaction between the student and the text.

In addition to the textbook, SpringBoard offers additional resources for students and teachers. Every unit has links to Khan Academy videos and practice opportunities that support the objectives of the unit. Teachers can also assign end-of-lesson and short-cycle assessments to check for understanding and progress within units.

*There were a number of comments about students getting too much homework.*

Our Curriculum and Instruction team has worked with elementary teachers to revise our Board’s homework policy for grades K-5. Now, we’re bringing it to parents to get more feedback before submitting a final proposal to the Board. The emphasis of our proposed policy is a balance between school work and family time as well as the need to have an appropriate amount of homework to provide students with opportunities to practice skills they learn in the classroom.

Our high school Academic Counselors provide extensive guidance to students in explaining the workload and homework commitments involved in Advanced Placement courses before students sign
up for them. All of our high schools have adapted their bell schedules to accommodate a flexible support period (Tutorial, Advisory, Learning Center) during the school day, when students can work on their homework or seek additional help from teachers.

*San José Unified should teach life skills to all students such as budgeting, cooking, sleeping habits, etc.*

While we agree that these are important skills, we have to prioritize our resources to best meet the needs of our students. Common Core requires that skills be connected to real world situations, and our curriculum does make those connections when appropriate. Given the constraints of a five-hour instructional day, we make every effort to incorporate all appropriate content. Many of our schools connect with outside organizations to provide life skills connected to classroom content.

**Student Services**

*There is a lack of oversight of private child-care facilities on district property.*

San José Unified partners directly with after-school programs on some of our campuses. On campuses where we don’t, private child-care programs lease space from us. Although we do not work directly with those organizations, we nonetheless hold them to a very high standard. If you ever encounter a problem at any of our facilities with any of our partners, please contact your Principal.

*What are we doing to ensure bullying does not happen on school grounds?*

San José Unified promotes a positive culture and personal accountability on each of our campuses. As of today, 32 of our 41 schools employ the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) model, which puts behavioral expectations in the same light as any core curriculum subject. PBIS schools focus on positive behavioral expectations that are easy to remember. Rather than telling students what not to do, PBIS focuses on encouraging preferred behaviors, such as teamwork and positive peer reinforcement. We have found that full implementation of PBIS leads to healthier and more welcoming campus environments for all of our students.

*Can the district provide more information or workshops to parents regarding substance and alcohol use?*

We are always looking for opportunities to provide additional supports for our families, including workshops, trainings, and information sessions. The Family University program run by our Family Engagement Office offers sessions on topics from cyberbullying to college readiness to helping your kids with their homework. We would be happy to explore sessions on substance and alcohol abuse as well as mental health and how these issues impact the lives of our students and the climate of our schools. These are topics that are regularly addressed with students, but not as often with parents.

**Human Resources**

*There were a number of questions and comments regarding teacher and substitute shortages.*
It is always a challenge for school districts to find enough teachers and substitutes to fill vacancies. This is especially true for a district of our size, with 41 schools and more than 1,700 classroom teachers. Simply put, teachers are in high demand everywhere, not enough young people are choosing the profession, and diminished funding for public education prevents teacher compensation from keeping up with the high cost of living in our area. Our Human Resources Department works diligently every day with district and school leaders to ensure every classroom role is filled. Recruitment happens year-round through online portals, in-person job fairs, paid advertising, and word-of-mouth. We also encourage our students to consider teaching as a career path.

A number of concerns were expressed regarding the 30-day limit for long-term subs.

The 30-day limit for substitutes (20 days for special education) is set by the state, and we agree that it creates a challenge. Some subs qualify for TPSLs (Teaching Permits for Statutory Leaves) based on their prior education and experience. These permits allow them to cover a teacher’s entire leave, beyond the typical 30-day limit. We have been aggressively, and successfully, obtaining these permits for many of our qualified subs to help provide continuity in the classroom. We also continue to recruit credentialed subs who can stay in the classroom for longer time periods. To help us compete for these subs during the current shortage, we pay them a special rate when they cover long-term absences.

There needs to needs more consistency at the school administrator level.

One of the strengths of San José Unified is our ability to offer compelling career paths and leadership opportunities for our staff. This helps employees continue to develop their skills while we retain their talents within the district. Though some school administrators choose to pursue central office opportunities, others opt to explore new grade levels or geographic areas at other schools, and still others choose to remain at their school site. With all that being said, we retain a higher percentage of school leaders than most districts year over year. When school administrators choose to pursue other opportunities, we look to graduates of our Leadership Academy, which we use to cultivate our next generation of leaders and maintain a strong talent pipeline.

Athletics

Athletics take too much time away from academics.

Participation in interscholastic athletics is entirely voluntary. San José Unified’s interscholastic athletic programs comply with California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) rules, regulations, and policies, including the length of athletic seasons and practice times. We have also adjusted start times for sports contests to minimize the impact on instructional time. If you have any questions regarding specific athletic programs, please contact your school’s Principal or Athletic Director. They would be more than happy to answer any questions and address any concerns.
Facilities

There were a number of questions and comments regarding the status of Leland High’s aquatic facilities.

Work is underway on repairs. We anticipate that the pool will be re-plastered, the boiler replaced, and the entire facility back in service by the end of April. The school will share additional information as repairs move toward completion. Thank you for your patience!

Communication & Engagement

The live translation was a distraction. Perhaps there is a better way to address the language gap.

Simultaneous interpretation plays a critical role in our meeting process by providing the presented information to our non-English speaking community members in their own language, and keeping meetings efficient out of respect for the time of all members of the community who attend. Simultaneous interpretation is the leading model for meeting the needs of people who speak different languages, as seen in the United Nations and other organizations with constituents of different backgrounds. At present, our means of providing this service is our most cost effective solution. We will gladly explore any options for simultaneous interpretation that you may suggest which will benefit those who need it while mitigating unintended impacts on those who do not; for example, we welcome any soundproof booth donations or funds to acquire such tools to address the issue you mention. In the meantime, another helpful tip might be to arrive early and seek out the seats that are furthest away from the interpreters’ table. Truly embracing diversity and inclusion requires simultaneous interpretation.

Thanks to all who submitted questions, comments, and suggestions. The conversation will continue at our next Town Hall Meeting on Monday, April 30th, from 6-8pm at Lincoln High School.