We want to thank everyone who participated in our districtwide Town Hall Meeting on Monday, February 4, at Gunderson High School. Many parents, staff, students, and community members were in attendance to comment on and ask questions regarding San José Unified School District.

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.

Curriculum and Instruction

Ques: Many incoming freshmen have a chance to take accelerated math courses but there are no Accelerated or Honors English courses for freshmen to take. Can an Honors English class be added to the curriculum for freshmen students who excel in English and wish to improve their writing skills?

Answer: English Language Arts and Mathematics instruction in San José Unified is guided by the Common Core State Standards. The Math pathways adopted by SJUSD middle schools is in alignment with the progression of skills and knowledge that is rigorous and designed to provide a strong foundation for success in the new, more advanced Algebra I courses that will typically be taken by most students in the ninth grade. Given that math courses build upon prior concepts and skills, each math course in the pathway has clearly defined pre-requisite skills that students have to master in order to move on to the next level.

The English Language Arts pathways adopted by SJUSD is in alignment with the progression of skills and knowledge that is rigorous and directly aligned to the expectations of the high-stakes assessments that students take in high school (e.g., Advanced Placement English Language and Literature, PSAT, and SAT). Over the course of the ELA courses taught in grades 6-11, students read and analyze a wide range of texts in genres including poetry, novels, plays, biographies, nonfiction narratives, speeches, and films. They also learn to write essays, personal narratives, argumentative texts such as editorials, and research papers. The current ELA pathway is designed to prepare all students with the skills that they are expected to demonstrate in the high-stakes assessments mentioned above. We offer Accelerated and AP English courses in high school and they are available to all students as there are no pre-requisites attached to these courses.

Ques: As a Chinese language teacher, is there a possibility to have SJUSD provide testing opportunities for AP Chinese? Currently, there are long waiting lists for seats in the Chinese language course.

Answer: San José Unified believes in utilizing enhanced resources to make the extraordinary ordinary. As such, San José Unified students who complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application form are eligible to take up to 5 AP tests at the subsidized rate of $5 per exam regardless of their eligibility for free and reduced lunches. Our high schools offer AP tests in all AP courses currently being offered at the site. We also try to accommodate requests from the community by offering AP tests, (e.g., AP Chinese), that students are interested in taking even if those courses are not offered at our sites.
AP exam registration and administration involve significant time, effort, and planning on the part of our staff. Administration of AP language tests is more complex as sites have to prepare for the listening and speaking sections. For AP test administrations for courses currently offered at our schools, we ensure participation of all SJUSD students who are currently enrolled in the courses. In the case of an AP test for a course that is not currently offered at our schools, we prioritize participation for students enrolled in higher grades. If we are not able to accommodate students during a given year, we ensure that they are included in next year’s AP test administration.

Student Services

Ques: On January 25, 2019 it was reported that there was a disturbance at Castillero Middle School involving students acting disrespectful and in an unsafe manner. What is SJUSD doing to make Castillero safer on campus and address the increase in behavior problems seen on campus? Please communicate the next steps to address this behavior problem. Is it possible to increase the number of adults on campus and/or more parent volunteers to become more involved in school activities?

Answer: Castillero staff strongly believe that all students should be supported in order to be successful. Castillero is a PBIS school and is committed to creating a positive climate. Principal O’Connell has been working with site staff to prioritize strategies that will be used to reteach behavior expectations. Additionally, a team from Student Services has been working collaboratively with Castillero to determine areas of focus for improving systems to ensure success for all students. As the plan is implemented and refined, Student Services will continue to be onsite and provide support in order to improve behaviors.

Ques: What is the district’s message to people when special ed students are identified? The district’s objective needs to change as the district’s job is to identify and help those children with special needs. What is the district doing to help GATE students? How is the district seeking out and helping students who aren’t thriving?

Answer: It’s our job to provide a high-quality education for all students, and we’re committed to doing whatever it takes for all students to be successful. Each student is unique. They learn through different modalities and at different paces. Some students excel in some areas and struggle in others, so teachers differentiate in the classroom according to student needs.

When concerns arise, teachers come together with the Student Success Team (SST). Each school in San José Unified has a Student Success Team. The purpose of the SST process is to bring together a collection of professionals to determine the best approach to meet a student’s individual learning needs and allow the student to make progress toward grade level standards. A student can be referred to an SST either by their family or school staff when there are concerns regarding the student’s academics and learning. The family can initiate the process either by contacting the school in writing or speaking with school staff in person and requesting an SST for their child.
Ques: The practice of using the prone restraint when trying to subdue a student can lead to a tragic outcome. How can we revisit the Admin Regulation AR #6159.4? It needs to be revised and the use of this type of restraint banned.

Answer: Our Special Education department is currently reviewing AR6159.4 in order to ensure San José Unified Administrative Regulations and Board Policies are in alignment with current legislation and that we have processes to intervene in any emergency in order to prevent all students from imminent risk of serious physical self-harm or harm of others.

Ques: What is the district’s policy in regards to 3rd party contractors located on district property? Are third party contractors autonomous without district oversight (e.g. after school day care centers)? If a child is bullied while under the care of a third party, what is the responsibility of the school to oversee the facility?

Answer: The expectations for safety and well-being of students is the same for both San José Unified and any third parties contracting with the district. Our third-party contractors are outside employees who must adhere to specific contract guidelines.

Ques: Concerned about the recent increase in the use of Juul/vaping and the type of messaging being given to students, attendees asked what preventative information is available to students regarding the hazards of engaging in the practice of vaping? What supports are available to educate students on the dangers of this type of behavior?

Answer: Through our partnerships with various community counseling services, SJUSD is beginning to schedule age appropriate presentations specifically about vaping. We are starting on the south end of the district, utilizing presentations from the Almaden Valley Counseling Center. We have also reached out to our other agency partners to determine how they can educate our students about the dangers of vaping.
Communication & Engagement

There were a number of questions regarding the proposed staff housing plan, safety on school campuses and the need for better communication between schools and parents.

Ques: What changes are being made to school policy in regards to sexual abuse by teachers? Does the district have a detailed plan/policy regarding sexual abuse?

Answer: San José Unified has the highest expectation for employees. When a concern is reported, we address it immediately and thoroughly. SJUSD Board Policy on harassment issues was recently updated; to review our complete policies and regulations, please visit this online portal and enter the following public username and password.

Username: public
Password: sanjose

Ques: Parents of students in the Gardner Elementary community are concerned with the turnover of principals and teachers at the school as well as the recent hiring process conducted in the search for a new school principal. Community members would like to know why parents were excluded from the interview process, and given only a few days’ notice to attend/comment in regards to the interviews.

Answer: The Principal hiring process in San Jose Unified is extensive and consistent; this process includes one community and one staff meeting with input on the desired characteristics of the next instructional leader (Principal). That process was used at Gardner for its recent hiring of their next principal.

Staff Housing

Many community members had questions regarding the proposal to build staff housing. We are in the process of providing more information as it becomes available. Please visit our main website at www.sjusd.org and open up the “Employee Housing” page under the “What’s Happening” tab for background information, Q & A and news coverage surrounding the housing issue.

Ques: While many attendees stated they are pro-teacher housing, they are against relocating Bret Harte and Leland. Instead of spending money on building new sites; it is asked: why not buy existing housing?

Answer: While an interesting proposition, it is cheaper to build on land already owned by San José Unified than purchasing homes or apartments on the open market. Purchasing individual homes distributed throughout the San José Unified district would create difficulties in maintaining and servicing these properties. In addition, purchasing existing properties would not address the current housing shortage seen in the area, but rather add to the problem of not having enough available affordable housing.
Additional requests included asking for data regarding size and scope of teacher recruitment and retention challenge and benchmark data comparing SJUSD to other districts in areas of teacher compensation and attrition.

Answer: Please look to our website at [www.sjusd.org](http://www.sjusd.org) and open up the “Employee Housing” page under the “What’s Happening” tab for the most up to date information regarding teacher recruitment, retention and teacher compensation.

Ques: *Teacher evaluation process in June should be reevaluated. Some teachers are unhappy with the evaluation process. What is the district doing to ensure administration is supportive of teachers?*

Answer: We utilize a nationally recognized evaluation system for teachers. Our exemplary system includes many checks and balances to ensure all teachers receive support and credibility.

Not everyone had a question for the district. Many community members wanted to extend their support of many district wide endeavors including teachers commenting on the high cost of living and the difficulties of living in an area near where they work but having to use half of their monthly earnings on housing due to the high cost of living. Others applauded the district for looking at a variety of innovative ways to address the rising cost of housing in the Bay Area. Another member wanted to announce an upcoming Special Olympics event on April 26 and a teacher at Gunderson wished to showcase the many wonderful events and attributes Gunderson High School had to offer including their music and theater departments. A representative from Supervisor David Cortese’s office invited community members to join them on a bus ride to Sacramento on May 15, 2019. Several parents expressed how proud they were of the district for supporting their teachers and students and thanked district staff for being innovative, encouraging leadership, teaching students that values matter and providing a bilingual education.

Thanks to all who submitted questions, comments, and suggestions.