We want to thank everyone who participated in our districtwide Town Hall Meeting on Monday, September 24th, at Pioneer High School. Many parents, staff, students, and community members were in attendance to comment on and ask questions regarding San Jose 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 & Instruction**

“I’m looking for a complete set of youth health curriculum for 8th and 9th grades. The binder at school only has lesson plans and some activity descriptions. It is missing key information such as presentation materials, discussion scenarios, and a parent guide. A guide should be made available online so parents can make informed decisions on behalf of their student about their youth health education.”

It is our goal that parents in our communities receive comprehensive information about the California Healthy Youth Act and the content required to be taught by Ed Code. SJUSD has partnered with Planned Parenthood in order to guarantee that students receive accurate information about the required topics outlined in Ed Code from Health Educators in the field. SJUSD offers four parent preview nights where Planned Parenthood shows the same slides used in classrooms with students and discusses the units in the curriculum. Although the material is not offered online, a binder containing these slides and discussion scenarios is available at each middle and high school for parents to preview; it is also accessible in the department of curriculum and instruction at our central office.

“What services are provided to the exceptional (gifted) students? IEPs only address the needs of kids to meet minimum requirements.”

San José Unified’s strategic plan emphasizes the need to accelerate student learning and provide all students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. Our teachers have been trained and are expected to provide instruction using a variety of strategies that differentiate curriculum in order to meet the needs of each student in ways that challenge their thinking and talents within the classroom — in both general education and special education.

Students who are academically prepared may earn high school credit for both math and world language while in middle school. San José Unified offers more Advanced Placement courses than most other local high schools. Our schools support open enrollment in these courses, which serve to prepare our students for the rigors of both college and career.

“K-6 education: my son is currently in kindergarten. Several kids in his class have never attended school. How does the district reach out to parents in order to help educate them on how best to help their children? Do you have a parent education program in place?”

San Jose Unified’s Family Engagement Office hosts Family University Events throughout the year. During these events, attendees can learn about a wide range of opportunities available to families through the district. A variety of free workshops are also offered by the school district. Topics such as: Common Core, Writing, Math, Transitions to Different Schools or Between Grades as well as STEM careers are some of the most popular areas covered during these events.

In addition, we offer a “Raising a Reader program” at seven different sites that focus on Family Engagement through reading. Participants are taught valuable strategies that teach how to “read” a book regardless of the language of the text. Parent
Liaisons, available at each of these sites, share SJUSD information with families and communicate back to the district any specific topics of interests families would like to see addressed by SJUSD.

We continue to reach out to families through ongoing emails, parent links, flyers, and phone calls. Currently, we are working on creating short videos that will provide early literacy tips for families to view.

“We need more ethnic studies in our K-12 curriculum. We’ve noticed that often the curriculum taught doesn’t reflect our student body. How can we better embed ethnic studies into our current curriculum?”

When we look at new resources for our classrooms, we strive to consider the needs of our diverse population and try to purchase resources that reflect our students. This is an ongoing process and we acknowledge that there is always room for improvement.

“Is there a plan to lower class sizes –particularly in Transitional Kindergarten – 3?”

We have lowered the class size in Transitional Kindergarten from 30 to 26. At this time, however, we do not have plans to lower class size in kindergarten through third grade. While research shows class size does have an impact, the class size number needed to make a difference is one we would not be able to offer due to limited funding received from the State of California. However, our schools have the option to use flexible staffing, which enables them to support the specific needs of their school site. You can find more information on class size here: https://www.brookings.edu/research/class-size-what-research-says-and-what-it-means-for-state-policy/

“The Art program has been removed from the Bret Hart elective wheel. Please bring Art, Music and other Liberal Arts to the elective wheel.”

This decision is made at the school level and would be a great conversation to have with your school’s leadership team. Many factors can impact a school’s ability to offer courses; understanding the process and the rationale for course decisions will help improve the partnership between the school and parents.

Student Services

“SJUSD needs to have more information available for the LGBTQ student community, particularly in the sex-ed curriculum.”

Although the State of California provides our Sex-Ed curriculum, SJUSD does keep an extensive list of resources for LGBTQ+ students on our website. To find these, go to our website, click on Menu, then Student Resources. Part of that list includes a link to LGBTQ+ resources.

“What are we doing to change hateful types of behavior and racial profiling sometimes seen happening on our campuses?”

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) is in place on 34 of our 41 campuses. This fall we created an initiative to bring positive climate to all of our schools, regardless of their PBIS status. Each school has created or will create: a set of universal behavior expectations for all students and staff; create a system that recognizes and rewards positive behavior for children and adults; and each school will make those expectations public everywhere in and out of the classrooms. Feel free to ask your site’s principal about what their school site plan entails.
Communication & Engagement

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

“How do we coordinate with SJPD on lockdown procedures when an incident is in the neighborhood?”

School site administration coordinates with their local police officers whenever an incident transpires at their school. Our high schools normally include the school’s campus officer in SJPD trainings. Should an incident occur, SJPD typically contacts the school site directly and advises school personnel if they need to go on lockdown/shelter in-place depending on the severity of the situation. In return, sites contact the SJUSD Superintendent’s Office with information concerning the situation.

“How can we be informed quicker when safety issues arise?”

While we strive to send out messages as soon as possible to the communities they involve, it is necessary that the information is accurate and fact based. This sometimes takes longer than we would like but a critical step before passing along any information to community and parents. A message, managed/coordinated by the PIO office with direction from the Superintendent, is then disseminated via the Parentlink/Blackboard application. Information specific for employees is determined on a site by site case with schools/sites responsible for informing their employees. If it is a District wide emergency, a message is released by direction of the Superintendent and relayed by various methods of communication (e.g., e-mails, text message, emergency radio, etc.) depending on the type of emergency. We encourage families/students to update emergency email addresses and cell phone numbers through their student’s Parent Portal/Infinite Campus account to ensure receiving district messages in a timely manner in case of an emergency. Should you need to create an account, please contact your child’s school. For more information regarding the Parent Portal, visit the Parent’s Resources section on our main website: https://web.sjusd.org/

“The policy needs to change in regards to kids on school buses. A child was “lost” on the school bus. How often do kids get displaced when riding buses? We want a change in policy where kids are never left alone to find their way home by themselves.”

Student safety is our top priority and as a unified community, we believe our students should feel secure and supported by the adults around them. We are currently looking at ways to enhance our transportation protocol including the possibility of using new Transportation Routing software to ensure the safety of our students.

“Employees need to wear name tags when on campus to better identify them as workers and not a stranger. Can we get nametags for all employees?”

Employees at each school site receive an ID card, normally created each year when school pictures are taken, and usually carried on their person. At the district office level we provide ID badges to any personnel or contractor who is tasked with visiting multiple school sites.

“Can schools create a page on the school or main website announcing new programs the schools offer that help promote positive student behavior?”

Each school should have behavior expectations in place. These expectations have been reviewed with all administrators on September 25th, 2018. We will send a reminder to school administrators to ensure these behavior expectations and motto are also posted on their school’s websites and at the school. By the end of the 2018-2019 school year, your student should be able to speak to you about behavior expectations at his or her school and how students are rewarded for
exhibiting those positive behaviors. Should you have any additional questions regarding the behavior expectations, please contact the principal at your child’s school.

*Communication between schools and parents seem sparse. Schools need to better communicate to parents what is being offered at the school.*

Our goal is always to provide effective communication. Most of our schools send home regular communication either through a written newsletter (usually elementary) or a ParentLink message and email. This is a great opportunity for parents to give feedback to their school administrators and make suggestions about what would be more effective. Each parent has a different perspective and situation so it is always good to hear from a variety of people when we are creating communication plans. In addition to school site communications, we host several Town Hall meetings throughout the school year and welcome comments from our communities. Should you have additional ideas on how we can enhance our communications at each school, please let us know by reaching out to your child’s principal.

*“How can we better partner with San Jose State University? Particularly, can we work with them in areas of research and best practices?”*

We currently work with SJSU to support their student teachers both in our classes and by presenting at the university. We believe that a strong connection between what young teachers learn in their preservice learning and what they will be expected to implement in their jobs can only help them to be stronger, but also to have the confidence and skill to remain in the profession. We meet with SJSU staff regularly to discuss partnership opportunities.

SJUSD needs to communicate better with parents, especially when there are changes in administration – most notably when a school is seeking a new principal. Parents and staff need to be kept in the loop with updates on the process of obtaining new staff and principals.

Change is never easy, especially when it occurs while school is in session. Sometimes we are aware of a personnel change well in advance, other times it happens quickly. Once notified of the change, we offer the employee or site principal an opportunity to announce the news to the community most affected. The community then receives a message via Parent Link from the district office outlining the process followed in finding a replacement candidate. Usually the date and time of a community meeting, should further discussions be warranted, is also included. Upon the completion of the interview process and the selection of a new staff member, we announce the new hire through a letter on the site website as well as a Parent link communication such as an email or phone call. Often, parent organizations from the school have helped us spread the word.

*“What is the policy regarding students having cell phones on campus?” Is it possible to limit the use of the phones?”*

Use of technology, including cell phones, is addressed in the Parent/Student handbook and outlines SJUSD rules regarding its use including the need to respect and protect the privacy of others and using electronic resources for educational purposes. Each school/teacher has their individual rules regarding the use of cell phones in the classroom. Please check with your child’s school and/or teacher to learn more about what these expectations are in regards to the use of personal electronic devices. For more information, go to page four in the Parent/Student handbook [go.sjusd.org/students](http://go.sjusd.org/students).
“How can we bring better equity between SJUSD schools? It seems some schools receive better attention than others. Although students are given a choice of schools to attend, schools in lower socio economic areas are not being publicly promoted to students living in a more affluent neighborhood. Would like to see the Board give serious thought on how to have students in lower socio economic areas attend schools in a higher socio economic area and vice versa.” Noted that students do better with parental involvement and acknowledges that not all parents can be as involved as they would like due to other commitments.

Equity between schools, as it is addressed in both our SJUSD Strategic Plan and the Local Control Funding Formula (LCAP), demands we are a district that distributes resources in an equitable manner. Our budgets, staffing and resources are distributed among our sites with our equity lens as indicated in our Board Policy 0210 (Equity Policy). In addition, SJUSD continues to provide communications and focus on schools with each school site participating in active recruitment efforts through the “Choice” period, December-February each year. During this time, district families are invited to school site tours, recruitment fairs, and other opportunities for families. School sites in the northern part of the district participate in extensive recruitment activities. We remain committed to supporting schools in their recruitment and marketing efforts while simultaneously balancing our families desire to choose schools they believe will meet the best needs of their student.

“District needs to advertise the IB program.”

San Jose Unified offers an International Baccalaureate (IB) program at three SJUSD schools. Horace Mann Elementary offers the Primary Years Programme, preparing students to become active learners. Students are encouraged to continue in the IB program by attending Burnett Middle School’s Middle Years Programme (MYP) and then later San Jose High (MYP and DP) Programmes. While information detailing these three programs are included on the individual school’s websites, we recognize the need to add information on the main website and in our Enrollment Center. We are pleased to announce that a Public Engagement Officer will soon be joining our staff and are excited about the possibility of collaborating with these particular schools to increase their visibility. We will look into ways we can further promote these programs to the communities they serve

How can we obtain and retain good administrators for our schools?”

We believe in hiring an innovative workforce that knows the lessons we learn are just as important as the lessons we teach. We are able to obtain and retain good administrators by having a competitive hiring process in place as well as a compensation package competitive with other school districts. Our support and opportunities for advancement helps attract a pool of talented prospects, as does the positive reputation of the district. The knowledge that we are pioneers in education here in Silicon Valley helps attract some of the best and brightest teachers.

“How is the district helping Latino males and Special Education students? How is the district helping stakeholders become better aware that SJUSD schools are focusing on providing extra help and support these two groups?

Here at San Jose Unified, we feel strongly about our mission to unite as one community and elevate opportunities for all of our students. As we continue to bring together teachers and staff with parents and students, we have chosen to shine an additional focus this school year on two specific areas: Latino males and special education students. Administrators at each site are working with staff in creating a variety of ways that will engage and promote educational opportunities for these two groups with the goal of an elevation in test scores and a reduction in school absences. We are sharing about this focus at our monthly parent committee meetings, during board meetings, as well as our site principals sharing information with their communities. We encourage you to reach out to your principal to get more information.

Thanks to all who submitted questions, comments, and suggestions. The conversation will continue at our next Town Hall Meeting on February 4th, 2019 from 6-8pm. Location to be determined.