

2022-2025 Superintendent Goals Article

Goal 1: Safety & Security – Facilitate systems and implement actions/projects that ensure the physical safety of school facilities and the emotional safety and well-being of students and staff within each facility.

Background, Description, and Rationale for Goal 1:

Safety and security are defined by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (safesupportivelearning.ed.gov) as “schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying and harassment, and the influence of substance use.” Safety and security are a foundation for ensuring a quality learning environment. The Saugus Union School District (SUSD) Governing Board and District leadership believe that maintaining safe and secure schools are our number one priority and have made it the number one goal for the Superintendent for 2022-2025.

Physical safety and security of a school includes more than fences, gates, and locks. Safety and security include having quality air filtration systems, resurfaced playgrounds to eliminate tripping hazards, clean well-maintained classroom buildings and school facilities, and implementing the daily routines and procedures that are included in each school’s safety plan. The running of a school and/or district includes a large variety of everyday activities and small projects that must occur regularly for safety and security to exist, but districts also have larger more complex projects to support the physical safety and security of students, staff, and community that need attention, too.

Projects or Actions for Goal 1:

Project A: Refine plans and actions for Phase 2 of “single point of entry projects” to ensure that each site’s perimeter protection meets recommended prevention tools and provides appropriate security for the regular use of the facility by its community partners.

SUSD has a single-point-of-entry system at each campus and is currently installing front office door cameras and buzzer systems as an added layer of security. But safe single-point-of-entry systems also include barriers that slow access and make it more difficult for individuals to enter areas where children are present. In the spring of 2022, SUSD facilities staff/leadership began working with architects to refine each site’s single-point-of-entry to ensure there are barriers that will delay any individual’s forced entry to a school. This work is unique to each campus as each entry to a school is different from another, but this work includes things such as raised counters to create barriers to unwanted entry, adding column systems from counters to ceilings, and locked interior doors that must be “buzzed” to allow entry to the campus. Several of these projects have been approved by the Governing Board this summer and more are set to be on future Board agendas.

In the fall of 2022, District facilities leadership will work with the superintendent, our security expert resources, and our architectural experts to determine a timeline for all 16 elementary school campuses to have an enhanced office entry system that provides additional tools to slow access to the facility. Some projects will take more time and resources to implement, however, staff will develop an anticipated timeline and required projects list to allow the Board and the community to understand how and when the remodeling will occur.

Project B: Develop plans and actions to ensure that seismic safety (earthquake) needs, specifically on AB 300 sites (6 sites), are appropriately addressed and remedied.

Paying attention to physical safety at school also involves the maintenance of each school campus by ensuring it is up to current building standards. Addressing the seismic (earthquake) needs of individual sites is part of this maintenance. Assembly Bill 300 (AB 300; 1999) identified schools across California that were constructed using non-wood framing or block construction. Districts of schools on the AB 300 list must examine these structures to determine how to make them meet current seismic codes. **Being on the AB 300 list does not mean a school is unsafe for use or that it needs to be closed. It means that it needs to be fortified to ensure that it performs well in the event of a large magnitude earthquake.** Just like we retro-fit freeways and other public structures, schools on the AB 300 list need to be examined

for possible “retro-fitting”. SUSD has 6 of its 15 campuses on the AB 300 list – Santa Clarita Elementary, Emblem Academy, Skyblue Mesa Elementary, Cedar creek Elementary, Rosedell Elementary, and Rio Vista Elementary. Architects and structural engineers have begun the investigation process on these sites so we can determine the next steps of fortifying these buildings. None of these structures has been marked as uninhabitable. All of these sites, however, need to be examined thoroughly to determine how SUSD will ensure they meet current seismic building codes.

Part of the work this fall is for the Governing Board and District leadership to hear presentations from its architects and structural engineers to best understand how to improve the buildings at these sites. In addition, District leadership team members are planning individual school site meetings to allow each school community to understand its school’s needs and voice any concerns they may have. Finally, the District will engage with its architectural experts in creating plans and timelines for how it will fund and complete these necessary projects. While AB 300 is specific to the 6 school sites it is something that impacts every member of the Saugus Union community.

Project C: Refine District practices, protocols, training, and messaging to ensure that bullying or discrimination are not experienced on a school campus and that when a case of bullying or discrimination is reported it is appropriately investigated and addressed by school staff.

School safety and security also include addressing the social interactions and relationships of the students and/or staff within a school. This requires an interconnected series of programs and actions to ensure that students are treating each other with kindness and respect, that each student is connected to the school through positive relationships, and that each student has the social skills necessary for the complex interactions created by the technology access in our world. SUSD will address this complex project by focusing on four crucial projects:

- Bullying prevention and anti-bullying education
- Implementation of Positive Behavior Supports Intervention (PBIS) strategies
- Providing strong social emotional learning activities to build executive functioning skills (self-regulating, planning/organization, adaptable thinking, etc.) and resiliency
- Implementing our school social worker program to ensure students and families are supported, connected and engaged

With the impact of the pandemic and increased student access to social media, schools are seeing more students who struggle with appropriate social interactions. We see students, when frustrated or unhappy, strike out at their peers by using words that are unkind, by creating social media interactions that are unkind, or striking out physically to injure others. SUSD has a zero tolerance for bullying and harassment, however, we continue to have work to do in ensuring bullying or harassment does not occur in our schools.

The 2022 school year began with a campaign of “see something, say something” to assist in preventing issues from occurring. Students report that they feel they are tattling when they report an incident of bullying, but staff cannot help if they are not aware. We encourage students to report bullying incidents immediately so school administration/teachers/staff can investigate and stop any further incidents.

SUSD is also addressing bullying issues by revising its bullying investigation process, by providing additional training for staff to identify incidents of bullying, and by providing appropriate social skills instruction to prevent bullying from happening. We are certain that these elements combined with further implementation of PBIS strategies and the support of our school social worker team will help to limit bullying incidents and remediate any incidents that may occur.

Students’ social emotional learning (SEL) is a critical component of ensuring that students feel safe and secure while at school. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments indicates that character education programs, learning social and emotional skills, developing positive communications skills and voicing individual needs, and conflict resolutions skills in schools allows students to feel safe and secure. In 2020, SUSD began implementing the philosophy of Maslow’s before Bloom’s to ensure that each student’s basic needs were met in preparation for meeting their

academic needs. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) shares that SEL support includes students gaining:

- self-awareness – the ability to understand one’s own emotions and thoughts, and how they influence our behavior in different contexts
- self-management – the ability to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations
- social awareness – the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others
- relationship skills – the ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships
- responsible decision making – the ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior

SUSD teachers have always assisted students in these areas, but as our world becomes more interconnected and yet less connected, it is critical to student success that schools emphasize these skills that allow students to be socially successful in the group settings that make up a school environment. SUSD continues with this work by providing a strong PBIS school-wide philosophy, by providing regular/daily social emotional learning activities that help students in all grades appropriately develop these skills, and by providing specialists in behavior and mental health to support students who may be struggling in these areas.

Progress for activities in Project C are more challenging to measure as they involve many individual situations. SUSD will use its school engagement data points (i.e., student attendance, School Connectedness Surveys, etc.) to assist with measuring its progress. Staff will also closely monitor its data points within PBIS, its bullying investigations, its implementation of social emotional instruction, and its referrals for support to the school social worker staff to gauge its needs toward improving in this critical area.

2018-2022 Safety and Security Achievements in SUSD

- Installed electronic door locks on all exterior doors and electronic key management system to limit key access
- Created single-point-of-entry systems at all sites and added the Raptor system for visitor access controls
- Added perimeter fencing to campuses and added self-closing gate systems to ensure secured access points around each campus
- Completed three individual threat assessments at all school sites to ensure quality strategies used
- Implemented Parent Square to improve emergency communications
- Participated in SCV LASD active shooter drills (2019)
- Rebooted the PBIS program to ensure appropriate support for students
- Implemented district-wide SEL program to support students’ developing resiliency and improved mental health
- Created a Positive Pupil Support Team to assist students struggling with behaviors at school
- Created a school social worker team to provide therapeutic mental health supports for students and to support families in need. Team includes Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Marriage & Family Therapists (MFT)
- Assigned a Wellness Teacher-on-Special-Assignment (TOSA) to support classroom SEL instruction and physical education instruction creating a mind-body balance for students
- Established a Wellness Committee and Wellness Plan to support a comprehensive approach to wellness (mental & physical) for our students and staff.

2018-2022 Awards and Recognition Received by SUSD for Safety and Security

- Staff invited to present at the CISCO Live conference (2022) regarding SUSD’s state-of-the-art safety notifications systems
- All 15 sites recognized by PBIS as gold or silver level program implementation
- Awarded two grants from the Kaiser Foundation for work in the area of wellness and mental health (total of \$40,000)