

2022-2025 Superintendent Goals Article #3

Goal 3: Academic Achievement – Facilitate systems and implement actions/projects that ensure high quality educational programs for all students while closing achievement gaps.

Background, Description, and Rationale for Goal 3:

The primary function of any public school/district is to provide a quality education for all of its students. Teaching and learning are core to any school district's mission, but when highlighted as a superintendent goal then teaching and learning are considered a driving force leading the organization. The goal for academic achievement, however, is to facilitate systems that ensure high quality educational programs for all while closing achievement gaps. Facilitating systems within a public school requires that the school/district adopt the philosophy of working within a cycle of continuous improvement. Continuous school improvement includes setting goals for student learning, identifying learning strategies to help students reach those goals, evaluating the student progress toward meeting those goals, and adjusting further instructional supports until the goals are attained. It is a "feedback loop" for learning (reference article on continuous improvement in schools; <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED557599.pdf>).

Part of the continuous improvement cycle used in SUSD is to ensure systems for the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) (<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/what-is-a-professional-learning-community>) strategies. This concept allows educators within a school or district to work collaboratively "in recurring cycles of inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2002). By using the PLC collaborative strategies our teachers are able to determine both how to most effectively address the initial teaching of a concept to students, and then use assessment information to address any reteaching needed for students to fully master the concept instructed or address extension/enrichment of concepts for students who have successfully mastered the skill(s). SUSD began laying a district-wide foundation for the PLC process by implementing its curriculum pacing guides in 2019 and has continued building on that foundation with its consistent district-wide curriculum and assessment system. In 2022, district teachers, curriculum leaders and administrators worked together to build the district's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that will allow a systematic and systemic approach to addressing the individual learning needs of students.

While refining the systems needed to ensure a district-wide emphasis on teaching and learning will be ongoing annually, SUSD has been approaching improvement in the areas of teaching and learning by focusing on the subject areas of English Language Arts (ELA) or Reading and Mathematics. We have adopted new curricular materials, supplemental materials, provided on-going, research-based teacher professional development, and supported changes in classroom instruction through use of our Teacher-on-Special-Assignment (TOSA) coaches that support "first best instruction (FBI)" is occurring daily. We have also implemented a district-wide intervention program, during the school day, to support students needing additional opportunities for learning specific skills and opportunities for receiving more intensive instruction. To address the needs of the district in improving learning in the areas of ELA and Mathematics, SUSD will focus on the following major projects:

Projects or Actions for Goal 3:

Project A: Develop a plan, a series of actions, and monitoring to address improved/increased mathematics achievement with a special emphasis in Grades 3-6.

SUSD has seen many changes in the area of mathematics instruction since 2019 when it hired two TOSA staff for the area of mathematics. Together with other teacher leaders, these instructional experts have worked collaboratively with teachers in grades K-6, but primarily focused support in grades 3-6, to ensure that the math instruction provided to students addressed the conceptual understanding needed for mathematics (i.e. distributive properties) while also addressing the arithmetic algorithms expected for students to be successful in higher level math.

The plan for achieving continued increases in mathematics includes five specific parts. Part 1: Improve Existing Core Math Instructional Practices through focusing regular support and monitoring for grade levels at identified schools. The support will include refining the use of Number Talks to build individual student number sense and ability to manipulate

values in order to better understand connections between numbers, using common formative assessments (CFAs) to determine the level of mastery following instruction and to determine the various needs for reteaching to increase mastery of skills. Part 2: Using Data, Assessment, and Program Monitoring to ensure that decisions related to instruction are specifically connected to student needs and are fully aligned to the appropriate level of rigor for the grade-level standards. Part 3: Create a Guiding Math Coalition to ensure there is a strong core of teachers and administrators at each school site who fully understand and implement effective mathematics instructional strategies. Having this guiding coalition allows new staff and/or staff who may need support with some math concepts, to have expert peers readily accessible to answer questions, provide support, and create improved classroom strategies that will increase student achievement in mathematics. Part 4: Math Adoption and Pilot Process will allow SUSD teachers to participate in the selection of state adopted mathematics materials once the California Department of Education approves the newest mathematics framework and the newest TK-8 adopted textbook list. Finally, Part 5: Professional Development will continue to occur using problem solving strategies, inquiry-based lesson designs, manipulatives for better understanding the concepts related to elementary arithmetic, and building visual models of mathematical learning to demonstrate student thinking as well as accuracy of computation. (see Board presentation for additional details <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=36030440&AID=368967&MID=16316>)

Monitoring of the implementation of this plan will occur through regular classroom/site visits by site and district administrators, coaching sessions administered by the TOSA team, monitoring the use of supplemental mathematics tools (i.e. IReady & Next Gen Math), and the monitoring of district level assessments throughout the school year.

Project B: Implement MTSS plan to address academic needs of students and provide appropriate interventions to close gaps in achievement.

The Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) plan to address the academic needs of students is a three-part system that requires on-going monitoring and refined instructional support to ensure student progress over time. Implementing a common system district-wide allows staff the ability to adjust services and strategies to meet the needs of individual and/or specific groups of students, while continuing to ensure that appropriately rigorous grade-level instruction occurs in every classroom across the district. The focus of the MTSS plan for academic learning is on Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics instruction, but it does address other subject areas such as social studies and sciences.

Tier 1 of the MTSS system is universal and addresses the regular, in class instruction that all students receive. This tier ensures that students have access to research-based effective core materials that are aligned to state grade-level standards. It also ensures that supplemental resources are consistently available across all 15 sites, but most importantly this tier ensures that quality, proven, research-based instructional strategies are used as the “first best instruction or FBI” for all students. Tier 1 also includes a regular re-teaching component for students and an assessment component to guide the re-teaching and pacing of the curriculum for all students. Approximately 80% of all students will have their needs met by the activities provided in Tier 1.

Tier 2 of the MTSS system is layered upon Tier 1 activities and provides additional more refined and specific interventions for students who are struggling to master grade-level skills. This tier may include regrouping of students in a grade level for appropriate re-teaching or supplemental instruction to remediate skills in reading and/or math by classroom teachers, but it may also include support from intervention specialists who can address any missing foundational skills that are impeding achievement with grade-level skills (i.e. address missing phonics skills to support stronger reading fluency and comprehension). Tier 2 activities combined with Tier 1 activities addresses the needs of an additional 15% of the student population.

Tier 3 of the MTSS system is focused more toward the individual student and addresses the remaining 5% of the student population. By layering Tier 3 activities with the other tiers, students are provided with a full range of academic support. Tier 3 assistance may include the student study team (SST) process and working with the student in very small groups or individually to ensure that the foundational skills needed for grade level learning are present for the student. This tier emphasizes the individual needs of individual students and refines instructional practices to best meet those individual needs.

To gain a better understanding of the MTSS plan/process please review the Board presentation from May, 2022 (file:///C:/Users/chawkins/Downloads/IV_A_MTSSBoardPresentation51722_0.pdf).

Project C: Continue refining literacy instruction (reading & writing) to meet the needs of new, struggling, and advanced readers.

Strong literacy instruction is the foundation for all future reading and writing as part of learning. In 2019-2020 SUSD began its journey into the science of reading (<https://www.nwea.org/blog/2022/the-science-of-reading-explained/>) by providing two teacher-on-special-assignment (TOSA) positions to focus on classroom coaching and refining primary reading instruction through strong research-based methods. At that time many primary teachers (60) and administrators also began attending the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) course *Getting Reading Right (GRR)*. The emphasis of this course was on the aspects associated with the science of reading – phonemic awareness (sounds within words), phonics (connection of printed letters to sounds in words), fluency (speed and accuracy of decoding), vocabulary, and comprehension skills. From that initial work, SUSD sees that more than 150 teachers have been trained in the skills associated with the science of reading and the GRR project.

Following the initial training, our TOSA team began providing intensive professional development in the reading intervention strategies that are part of the Orton Gillingham (OG) Approach to reading instruction. This multi-sensory directed instruction approach is a key piece of working with struggling readers, especially dyslexic readers, to unlock the reading code. Staff also implemented the Heggerty program in grades TK-2. This is a systematic phonological awareness program that will give students the foundation needed for future reading success. Finally, the TOSA team began training teachers on the use of assessment tools, including a dyslexia screener, to diagnose the early reading needs of struggling students and to assess the progress of developing readers so instruction meets both the grade level and individual reading needs of each student.

The TOSA team continues working with individual classroom teachers and small groups of teachers to ensure they appropriately and fully implement these OG and Heggerty strategies in grades TK-2 for initial reading instruction and as an intervention tool for grades 3-6. Recently, support for students includes the work of our site intervention teams. These individuals work in concert with the literacy TOSAs to ensure that reading strategies are appropriately refined to meet the needs of struggling readers. By working with students in smaller more targeted groups, students are allowed to have more intensive support of the strategies needed to unlock the reading code. To support consistency across all District sites, the TOSA team developed a teach resource hub containing research-based lessons for promoting the foundational literacy skills needed by successful readers.

As our support of reading instruction continues to expand, SUSD sees the need to address having a quality writing program to align with its reading instruction. The reading/writing connection research show that students who are proficient writers are also proficient readers, but strong readers are not necessarily strong writers. With communication being paramount to success in the 21st Century, we must ensure that students can fully communicate their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in order to ensure they will achieve at high levels. Our TOSA team is beginning some pilot programs involving strategies from the Writing Revolution. This research-based sentence expansion approach to expository (informational) writing assists students of all types (i.e., English Learners, proficient writers, dyslexic students, etc.). We are excited to see the impact that a full spectrum of ELA areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking) has on our students. The research is clear that writing instruction is a key factor in increasing student achievement in a variety of areas and we are looking forward to seeing that same success become part of SUSD.

2018-2022 Academic Achievements and Awards in SUSD

- Created district-wide curriculum and pacing guide system to allow for aligned and coordinated standards-based instruction at all 15 sites.
- Created a district-wide grade level assessment and monitoring system for ELA and Math to allow regular monitoring of student achievement throughout the school year.
- Implemented the practices of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) across all 15 schools to ensure that data driven decisions were made to improve/increase student achievement overall and to close any gaps in achievement experienced by specific student groups.
- Implemented an outstanding teacher professional development and curriculum coaching system (TOSA Team) to ensure that classroom teachers have the instructional supports necessary to fully implement programs and strategies to improve student learning.
- Created a district-wide intervention system to address the learning needs of students as a result of the pandemic.
- Structured safe return to school system as soon as health officials allowed – SPED students September, 2020; Grades 1 & 2 cohorts in November, 2020; remaining grades in winter 2021.
- Created a short-term independent study system (STISS) to ensure that students impacted by COVID restrictions could maintain classroom learning through live instruction.
- Implemented monitoring systems/schedules to ensure that the needs of our English Learners were appropriately addressed and that more students reclass annually. (22% reclassification rate for 2021-2022 over a 10% rate in 2020-2021; 31% of students received a 4 on the summative ELPAC over 28% in 2020-2021; 45% of 6th Grade students in 2021-2022 received a 4 on ELPAC (English proficiency level) over 36% in 2020-2021 allowing for students to reclass prior to entering secondary schools).
- Created extended school day/year programs (i.e., academic Saturday School & Summer STEAM Camp) to reinforce reading and mathematics skills, address learning deficits, and extend learning into other subjects.
- 2022 CAASPP scores indicate limited learning loss as compared to national and state scores – ELA = a 2.09% loss over 2019 scores (64.69% (2022) to 66.78% (2019)); Math = a 1.22% increase over 2019 scores (57.28% (2022) to 56.06% (2019)).

2018-2022 Awards and Recognition Received by SUSD for Academic Achievement

- 2019-2020 Rio Vista Elementary School and West Creek Academy receive California Distinguished School award
- 2019-2020 Dr. Hawkins selected for the ACSA Foster Award for leadership in SCV ACSA Region 15
- 2021 IReady recognized SUSD as one of the top three Southern California school districts for overall growth achievement