

## **2014 State of the District**

**Dec. 1, 2014, 5-6:30 p.m.**

**Lewis Middle School**

**Cindy Marten**

Thank you Kevin.

I join President Beiser in acknowledging and thanking all of you for your extraordinary work in achieving the accomplishments you just heard.

President Beiser mentioned that our community-based reform efforts are a revolution. That's what being innovative, what focusing on equity and access and excellence are driving.

For this, I extend my gratitude to all of the stakeholders in this room who have been involved in the critical community conversations about the areas in which we need to improve...and for remaining our partners in this ongoing process.

We have accomplished a lot going into this year. A LOT. But we are not content with where we are. We've addressed some of the short-term issues, but we continue to look at the long-term road to sustainable progress.

We need to strengthen the outcomes for Latino and African American students...and Long-Term English Language learners.

You heard President Beiser talk about Vision 1 for Student Achievement...and about the gaps revealed by our L-CAP study and monitoring these groups of students. After a careful review of the future class of 2016 – our current juniors – we see data that are encouraging....and we see data that are prompting the urgency to do things differently. Data that are prompting a transformation.

What does this mean?

Here's an example. Nine percent of English Learners in the junior class are meeting a-g requirements.

That is unacceptable.

Now...compare this with the data for Reclassified English Learners. Fifty-seven percent of these students are meeting a-g requirements. That tells us something is working well for these students....something is working REALLY well...and we're now looking very closely at what has worked for these students and expanding and increasing reclassification rates.

We're also inviting others to help identify best practices in this area. To this point, we will be working with the Panasonic Foundation this spring on an initiative to bring high schools from across the country to look at – among other issues - effective supports for Long Term English Learners.

Also as part of our L-CAP, we have been studying suspension and expulsion data. The numbers are improving – we had 38% fewer expulsions in 2013-2014 than the previous year. There were 1,500 fewer suspensions. Our efforts have promise, but the data show the percentage involving students of color remains disproportionate.

This past June, the Board and I signed a pledge as part of the Council of Great City Schools "Call to Action for African American, Hispanic and Males of Color."

By signing this pledge, we are committing to improving the academic achievement of males of color to ensure success in college and careers.

Our draft implementation plan calls for changes to early education and social development... looking at cultural proficiency training, the development of early learning

metrics, and professional learning for principals and teachers focused on supporting males of color.

Another component to our implementation plan will be piloting a Literacy Intervention Program at the elementary level, focusing on students in grades 3-5 who are struggling readers. Progress monitoring will be a key element of our plan.

You heard President Beiser talk about the alignment of our high school graduation requirements with the UC and CSU 'a-g' course requirements as part of this. There is a sense of urgency within our district to ensure all students have equitable access to these upper level courses.

This urgency is driving a **very** critical analysis of the master schedules to drive changes we believe are imperative to high school graduation.

We are starting the work to align world language offerings between middle school and high school so that students can maintain a continuous course of study from middle school to high school that includes Honors and AP level courses.

We're taking a close hard look at improving the pathways to expand programs we know to be effective.

And we're taking a close, hard look at improving the pathways and expanding effective programs.

As an example, we believe students who struggle with speech difficulties may benefit from taking American Sign Language...or A-S-L...as a world language course...so we are working on expanding ASL course offerings across the District.

We will be collaborating with our Special Education Department to identify and implement effective strategies so that students with Individualized Education Plans can also experience success in world language courses.

The UC and CSU systems provide six options for students to meet or satisfy world language requirements. We are working to increase awareness and provide enhanced access to these various options.

One of these options – the Language Other Than English Assessment – is a district-developed assessment that currently provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in Spanish, Arabic, Cambodian Somali, Swahili and Vietnamese.

Students who demonstrate the proficiency equivalent of up to three years using this assessment also meet the Language Other Than English requirement for the Seal of Biliteracy. This is being innovative to achieve equity and excellence.

A moment ago I mentioned our work expanding programs for English Learners and their reclassifications.

We're working toward a comprehensive district-wide approach. We are serving the needs of English Learners through our concentrated efforts expanding the reach of services coordinated by the Office of Language Acquisition. We're making sure all schools have developed and implemented site-based plans that best serve the needs of their students.

As we have been doing with data on completion of graduation requirements, we are using data to find out what works for English Learners – and expanding on it.

At the beginning of the year, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of how the California English Language Development Test - or CELDT – was being administered at schools.

This gave us an important opportunity to look at all of the processes and practices in place....to study access and equity...and determine what was working really well and why. And we're asking...can these best practices be applied across the district?

We are working closely with our Community Advisory Committee to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. This includes increasing the percentage of students with disabilities who are earning high school diplomas....and increasing the percentage of students with disabilities participating in functional curricula.

We're making sure our Special Education leadership team and other district staff have a regular presence at the C-A-C so parents have an opportunity to interact with us 1 on 1.

We have and will continue to increase parental engagement regarding special education and related services for Early Childhood Special Education. Support groups are in place for parents of children with special needs ages 3 to 5. We are making a point of distributing preschool information regularly and have engaged parents through survey tools to provide us feedback.

As part of our Vision for schools serving as neighborhood learning centers, you heard President Beiser talk about the extraordinary effort this summer dedicated to improving our physical sites. It was an investment in the physical environment that we are seeing pay off.

We will continue to make this essential investment through our districtwide sustainability initiative.

San Diego Unified has made significant sustainability-related advances through transportation management, sustainable energy production, the efficient use of utilities combined with reduced use of water and energy, recycling and other strategies to help us minimize our carbon footprint.

An update on our sustainability initiative will be part of tomorrow's Board meeting – and here we will examine some recommendations related to sustainability goals for climate action planning, lighting efficiencies and possibly going off-grid or net-zero.

President Beiser talked about the importance and value of partnerships with local businesses and social service agencies. He gave a great example of the partnership we have with local public safety agencies...and how critical these relationships are for our work becoming a restorative district.

I want to tell you about a partnership we are growing with local social service agencies through a very unique pilot program in City Heights. It's a great example of how – when a community comes together and pools resources - we truly are doing what's in the best interest of our children.

This pilot is the epitome of **Collective Impact**...a large-scale social change that requires broad cross-sector coordination – and not isolated inventions by individual organizations. It will be incredibly data-driven with the data closely monitored to see how best to effect positive change. It opens up new conversations for us on the use of data...*what* we measure....*when* we measure and how often...and *how* we will measure. The data become a flashlight...not a hammer. We are committed to using multiple measures as outlined in our L-CAP.

San Diego Unified has developed a new technology in the form of an Early Warning System to provide real-time data for students in three areas: daily attendance, academic performance, and behavior at school. Using an Early Warning System is a national best practice in education that was also recommended to San Diego Unified by the Harvard Graduate School of Education researchers earlier this year.

This tool – known as Orbit – is being launched in a pilot in City Heights with Hoover High School, and Adams and Central elementary schools. The intent is to identify students considered at-risk due to the digital red flags raised by the Early Warning

System in the three areas I just mentioned – attendance, grades and behavior...and provide personalized interventions and supports from local social service agencies.

In this pilot, we are partnering with the City Heights Partnership for Children...the United Way... with Social Work interns from San Diego State and Point Loma Nazarene University... and ultimately with local social service agencies and organizations.

Interns are already at work at these three schools - working with staff to identify students who have been red-flagged by the Early Warning System as potentially at-risk.

They are then working with the students and families to find out if there is something happening at home that may be contributing to the potentially at-risk status. Is there an issue with transportation? Food? Housing?

As they uncover contributing factors, the interns are recording their data and working with social service agencies for referrals and to see what wrap-around services may be most needed.

This collaboration will allow us to be proactive *as a community* in our approaches to supporting students. This goes back to what I said earlier about Collective Impact. Early intervention prevents future challenges – and when we *know* better, as a community we can *do* better.

We are also expanding innovative partnerships that will help us better students to meet workforce demands of a number of growing industry sectors represented in our schools – from business and finance – to health science and medical technology – to information and communication technologies.

President Beiser mentioned the importance of professional development to improving teacher effectiveness for improved student achievement. I couldn't agree more. It's

essential to our vision for having effective teachers and principals professional learning communities.

One of our 12 Indicators of a Quality Neighborhood School is professional learning for ALL staff.

In addition to the rich professional development offered to our instructional team – our teachers, our principals – we made it a priority this year to extend a focused professional development for all our of administrative support professionals so they could reflect on the services they perform and help lead the work to create a welcoming and helpful school climate.

We are interested in creating a powerful approach to evaluation tools that focus on growth and development. We believe a districtwide model of evaluation and professional development is one that is meaningful and relevant to all of our employees. And I'm excited about where we're going next with the building of a highly effective and diverse teacher work force.

The board, the district and S-D-E-A share a goal of developing comprehensive strategies for recruiting....retaining....and supporting district students to enter the teaching profession.

I am excited that early outreach programs exposing students to the teaching profession is in place at several high schools, and that these students are benefiting from scholarships and mentoring support available through the San Diego Education Fund. We are strengthening our Beginning Teacher Support Program to continue to support our future teachers as they follow the journey to the classroom.

We also share a goal of increasing district teacher diversity to reflect the student population.



While the percentage of teachers of color is higher now than it was six and seven years ago – it's not that much higher. And the mismatch between student and teacher diversity remains an issue.

We now have identified a number of strategies to improve how we recruit, hire, develop and retain a more diverse teacher workforce.

We will be expanding the size, stability, diversity and quality of our teacher applicant pool by casting a wider net for recruitment venues and outreach mechanisms.

We will be making sure that the best candidates are identified and offered positions in a timely fashion – and through more streamlined and targeted hiring practices.

We will better support teachers new to the district and new to the profession. More on this in a moment.

We will be forming an Advisory Board with representation from S-D-E-A....community partners...and key departments within the District to oversee the continued development of the Teacher Pipeline.

I mentioned better support for teachers new to the district or profession.

To support this....and the district's overall cultural proficiency goals....we will be launching a district-wide collaboration with the National Equity Project as part of our work toward finalizing and implementing Cultural Proficiency Standards.

As a school district community, this work will help us infuse an "equity lens" throughout our work....developing, refining, and sustaining structures, routines, and roles for adult learning. These structures will promote deeper conversations of the ways race, class, and culture impact academic and educational outcomes in schools....and we will embed them into existing cultural proficiency training to enhance the building of school cultures that honor the assets, culture and intellectual capacity of every child.

The first round of professional development will be afforded to the Board and our central office leadership – including me – along with Principals and new and beginning teachers. My hope is that more rigorous Cultural Proficiency training will help new teachers hit the ground running and be able to embrace – with confidence - and appreciate the wonderfully diverse student population we serve.

As part of Vision 4, President Beiser mentioned the innovative technology we continue to roll out as part of our i-21 program.

I am very thankful to our ad hoc i-21-Now Committee which helped to design the high-level framework of vision, opportunities, and recommendations that support Vision 2020 and our long term plan for today's learning, and tomorrow's worker and global citizen.

This work, which involved more than 1,000 hours contributed by dedicated staff and community committee members, developed technical recommendations in six areas:

- Curriculum and Professional Development
- Facilities
- Digital Tools and Policy
- Infrastructure
- Finance
- Broadband

Our digital tools are not exclusive to schools and students. We've made real-time data on student performance available to parents and guardians....and I'm happy we are now able to promote a new tool within our PowerSchool student information system that can email student progress information to parents... meaning they don't have to log in to anything to know how their child is doing.

Parental involvement in a child's education is essential to student success. The voice of our parents is important – and we are taking greater and wider steps to ask for feedback and provide opportunities to interact with district staff.

This is why you see district leadership and key departmental staff at all of the advisory committees. We're there to listen and learn. We're identifying ways technology can help us reach our parents more readily and conveniently.

I want to thank those parents and community members who have been helping to develop the cluster model approach to communications. This will be an increasingly valuable way to share information with each other and for the district to solicit ongoing feedback on the L-CAP.

I want to also thank the parents who have been part of our early efforts with restorative justice strategies. Family members play an important role in these strategies and we will be looking to families more and more to help make compassionate and practical decisions related to student discipline issues.

President Beiser talked about our pursuit of equity and adequacy in public education funding. This will be a huge focus of our work as a district going into 2015. To be the state with the lowest per-pupil funding is unacceptable.

We hope our definition of appropriate funding levels will be a model to be used throughout the state. We do not believe the student-teacher ratio in K-3 should be 25.5 to 1. For an elementary school with 600 students – we believe adequate funding would reduce the ratio to 20 to 1. It should be 16 to 1 in high needs schools.

We will be telling the California legislature that *adequate* funding for that elementary school would provide for a robust and properly-staffed enrichment program that includes Science and PE in addition to the Arts.

We will be telling the California legislature that *adequate* funding for that elementary school would provide for fully-funded positions for Literacy and Mathematics specialists....for a Parent Education Specialist...and for more teachers in the Arts, Sciences and Physical Education at high-needs schools.

As we advance this conversation with the legislature, we will be calling on all of our stakeholders to join this call to action and get California off the bottom of the list. Let's do what's best for all of California's kids.

As we close this evening, I want to thank you again for working closely with the Board and me in the best interest of our students.

We will continue to work with you to prioritize all decisions and dollars to offer the greatest impact for our classrooms.

In education, we apply certain perspectives – certain “lenses” - to what we are studying. As we move forward in our decision-making with you, we will continue to use the appreciative lens to discover what's working well so we don't reinvent the wheel. We'll look at replicating these excellent ideas and practices because we have seen they benefit students.

We'll look at prioritizing funding so we sustain these best practices. If it works – we'll make it a funding priority. We'll look at scaling these best practices systemically....and systematically.

We'll look at our classroom priorities with *equity* and *excellence*. And we'll do so in a context of *affordability* with less than adequate funding.

Before we leave this evening, I too would like to share a quote with you from someone I believe you would agree with me to be a pioneer in innovation. Walt Disney.

Walt Disney once said...

“All of our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them.”

Because of you, we can bring our dream – our vision – of a world class education to all of San Diego's students.

Thank you for dreaming big with us.

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