

Superintendent Rick Schmitt's Monthly Update

August 2015

Superintendent Schmitt regularly updates the greater San Dieguito Union High School District community through our local media with a monthly update. Topics may include academics, facilities, budget, enrollment, safety, and other specific and special interest topics. Today's update focuses on welcoming all to the new academic year, key 2015-16 priorities, growth and facilities, school attendance and a social host reminder from our San Dieguito Alliance partners.

On behalf of our Board of Trustees and our entire staff, I want to welcome and welcome back everyone to the San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD). For parents and guardians whose students are entering our schools for the first time, a special welcome and a heartfelt thank you for the trust you have placed in us. We have spent the summer eagerly preparing for your students on August 25th.

The start of the new school year creates opportunities for each of us to renew our commitment to education, to our parents who work alongside us, and to our students who arrive in our classrooms ready to learn. The beginning of a new school year reminds us that the future holds infinite possibilities. We tell young children they can be whatever they want to be. Many middle and high schools limit choice and options for families - not those in the San Dieguito Union High School District. Students here are able to select courses, programs, school start times, academic levels, pathways and schools. We should be very proud of that.

Since 1937, the SDUHSD has been the educational home to students across our community, as well as a critical part of what makes our neighborhoods such a great place to live. As superintendent, I am thrilled to live in our community and be part of a school district whose traditions are honored and where keeping current with the best teaching and learning practice is valued. Our priorities include clearly and effectively communicating and delivering our vision for success...

- By offering a rigorous and cohesive curriculum, instructional, and assessment program aligned to the state standards
- By allocating necessary resources to support our efforts
- With world-class programs, staff and facilities aligned to support 21st Century teaching and learning in a safe environment.

As we finalize preparations for this school year, growth is again part of the SDUHSD story. More than 1,000 housing units are currently under development, most in the Pacific Highlands Ranch neighborhood. We will greet more than 12,500 students this year and we are continuing to hire staff as needed. Our more than 1,200 full and part-time employees at our ten campuses are eager for students to return. Over the past year, Prop AA has funded improvement and growth projects including new and renovated classrooms, renovated media centers, new safety measures, expanded bandwidth, wireless access, PE, arts and athletic facilities, and heating, air

conditioning and ventilation. Our newest and fifth middle school, Pacific Trails, will open on time and under budget on August 25th with its first class of 7th graders.

School Attendance

As the 2015-16 school year fast approaches, I would like to remind you that every day counts in a child's education. Students who attend school regularly will benefit from carefully planned instruction, will learn more, and will be more successful than students who do not. Parents who make regular school attendance a priority are also helping their children learn to accept responsibility, which is essential for their current and future success.

New for our schools this year, we receive funding only for students who are actually in class, and no longer receive money for excused absences including illnesses. This is different than how our local elementary districts are funded. Please continue to support your student and work to minimize absences as much as possible.

San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth

SDUHSD has partnered with the San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth for many years. San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth was organized 30 years ago by parents, educators, and community members to prevent and reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs by youth in our community. San Dieguito Alliance collaborates with elementary, middle and high schools, parent and youth organizations, cities, law enforcement agencies, business, civic and chamber groups who are dedicated to creating a healthy, safe and drug free community. Their focus is on education, awareness and training. Here is a reminder from them:

You Matter!

Parents are the most powerful influence on their teens when it comes to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drug use. Not friends, not school. You. It's up to you to be proactive and use that influence on your child. It's a conversation that needs to happen so your teenager knows where you stand on this critical issue. Get off to a good start, talk early and often...and then talk some more. Silence isn't golden, it's permission.

Don't be a Party to Teenage Drinking! Avoid Social Hosting.

A Social Host is anyone who knowingly hosts underage drinking parties on their property. All cities in San Diego County have enacted laws to protect youth from the problems associated with drinking alcohol. Avoid a Social Host arrest. Please remember that allowing underage drinking in your home is against the law. When parents allow underage drinking in their homes, it becomes a rite of passage.

Let's all work together to make 2015-2016 a safe, healthy and happy school year.

A key goal of mine is to provide options which positively impact the greatest number of families. As I wrote last year, "Our continuous improvement efforts are critical to our students, ensuring that the high quality of our schools is maintained. Improving student achievement goes beyond academics, co- and extra-curricular activities, and student performance." Much of our success is attributed to the support of our parent community. We want you to be involved and engaged in your child's learning, balancing involvement with looking for opportunities for our young adults to work their way toward independence. We will maintain our track record of inclusion and collaboration with our parents and extended community. Back-To-School nights are a great

chance for you to be involved and hear from your children's principal and teachers. Please take note of the following links or find them posted on our website at www.sduhsd.net:

[Back-To-School Nights Schedule](#)
[2015-16 Instructional Calendar](#)

As I begin my 36th year as a public school educator, I am looking forward to this school year and hoping that all students and their families have their best year yet. The SDUHSD community continues to be an extraordinary place made up of exceptional people and it continues to be a privilege to live and work here.

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