

Superintendent Rick Schmitt's Monthly Update

March 2016

Superintendent Schmitt regularly updates the greater San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD) 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 high school enrollment, middle school intra-district transfers and class size.

I regularly visit school sites to both observe classrooms and to meet with parents. During these parent meetings, several topics tend to come up on a frequent basis - High School Selection, Middle School transfers, and, more recently, class size. I'd like to take the opportunity to address each of these issues.

High School Selection

As you likely know, each year we conduct a process that we refer to as High School Selection. During a designated window of time (Feb. 1-29 this year) we ask each incoming 9th grade student, along with any upper grade students new to our school district, to declare which high school he or she would like to attend. Students already attending our high schools only need to declare a school during this process if they want to change from their current school. At the end of the declaration window, we analyze all declarations to ensure that each declaration was made by a district resident and then we compare the number of requests for each high school to the available capacity at each school. If the available capacity of a school exceeds the number of requests, then all students are admitted. If the available capacity of a school is less than the number of requests, then we are obligated by California law to conduct a random lottery to determine which students are enrolled. The only priority given in our lottery is to siblings of continuing students at the school.

We've worked diligently over the years to ensure that as many students as possible are enrolled at their school of choice and this year is not different. We've worked to add capacity at both San Dieguito High School Academy and Canyon Crest Academy to accommodate enrollment demand and we've added program enhancements (bell schedule & course offerings) at both La Costa Canyon HS and Torrey Pines HS to draw more students to those schools and thereby decrease demand at the Academies. While we are still working through this year's declaration data, we remain hopeful that we will, once again, be able to accommodate all students at their school of choice. I am hoping to announce our 2016-17 High School Enrollment plans via [Facebook](#) by March 15.

Middle School Transfers

On a related note, we also accept transfers among our middle schools on a space-available basis. The window for applying for an intra-district transfer among our middle schools is currently open and will close at 4:00 p.m. on April 15, 2016. Students wishing to attend a middle school other than their school of residence should complete an online Intra-District Transfer application via the link below. One common misconception that sometimes influences middle school transfer requests is the misbelief that attending a particular middle school gives a student priority for attendance at a particular high school. **There is no enrollment link between any of our middle schools and any of our high schools** - the middle school a student attends does not give any enrollment priority at any of our high schools.

<http://www.sduhsd.net/Parents--Students/Intradistrict-Transfers/index.html>

Class Size

I continue to receive occasional questions about class sizes in our schools, likely the result of some misrepresentations recently. Literally for decades, we've had the same maximum student to teacher ratios (32:1 at high school, 29:1 at middle school) which established maximum class size averages (38.4 at high school, 34.6 at middle school) in our district. It is important to note that these numbers represent maximum averages and that, in most school years, our actual class size averages are well below these maximums. In every school district in the state of California, class size averages tend to fluctuate with the level of state funding for public education, and our district is no different. During the difficult recessionary years, class sizes did creep slightly closer to our stated maximums. However, state funding and district finances have recovered, in just the past few years, we've invested over \$3 million in incremental class size average reductions and in reducing counselor to student ratios. It's also important to note that **every measure of student achievement in our district has thrived throughout the ebb and flow of class size averages** - a testament to the talent and commitment of our students, teachers, and families. Current budget plans call for continued efforts to reduce class size and counselor caseloads. Class size reduction along with our academic programs will always remain a top priority.

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