

Superintendent Rick Schmitt's Monthly Update

August 22, 2014

Superintendent Schmitt plans to update the greater San Dieguito Union High School District community through our local media with a monthly update. Topics covered will include curriculum, facilities, budget, safety, and other specific and special interest topics. Today's update focuses on welcoming all to the new year and our 2014-15 priorities.

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I want to welcome you and our 12,400+ students to the 2014-15 academic year. The start of a new school year is always exciting. We have spent the summer eagerly preparing for your student's return on August 26 and look forward to sharing new learning experiences with each of you. For parents/guardians whose students are entering our schools for the first time, I would like to extend a special heartfelt thank you for the trust you have placed in us.

For generations, the San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD) has been the educational home to students across our community, as well as a critical part of what makes our cities and towns 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 communicating and delivering our vision for success...

1. by offering a cohesive curriculum, instruction, and assessment program aligned to Common Core
2. by deliberately prioritizing budget stabilization and recovery
3. in world-class, 21st Century facilities aligned with instructional priorities, school safety, balanced enrollment capacity and our multi-year Prop AA projects.

Here is a brief update on Common Core, Prop AA, and school safety.

Common Core

Our district continues our gradual, multi-year transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Literacy. These standards represent a significant shift in what we expect our students to know and be able to do and the standards apply to all of our subject areas. The CCSS ask students to think deeply and critically about information, to apply knowledge and skills in solving real world problems, and to master key skills essential to success in college and the workplace. 21st Century skills such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication are central to the CCSS and will help ensure that our students are prepared for whatever path they choose when they leave our schools.

One major area of focus for us this year will be ensuring that the learning outcomes we identify for each course are aligned with CCSS and that the assessments that we use to measure student learning are also aligned with CCSS expectations. We will also begin to implement our new CCSS-aligned integrated math courses in grades 7-9 and we will support student learning in these courses with new instructional materials. Finally, we will focus our professional development efforts on helping our teachers make the shifts in instructional and assessment strategies inherent to the CCSS. All of these shifts will be gradual, collaborative, and will be supported by ongoing comprehensive professional development for our teachers and staff. With this in mind, we expect students to find new levels of engagement in and ownership of learning.

For more information about our district's transition to the Common Core State Standards please visit our CCSS website at <https://sites.google.com/a/sduhsd.net/ccsscommunity/>.

Prop AA

Over the last two summers, Proposition AA has funded improvement projects at every one of our schools. We have updated several media centers, expanded bandwidth and wireless access, built new fields & stadiums, and added air conditioning to hot classrooms. Our newest middle school, which will open next fall, is under construction and building continues on new high school science classrooms. I'm proud to report that so far all of our projects have come in at or below budget.

As we head into this school year, we are excited to expand upon that work and prepare for the next series of projects which will focus on new science and academic buildings, renovations of older classrooms, accommodating enrollment demand at our academies, and completing technology infrastructure upgrades at all of our schools.

We will be working with the Board of Trustees throughout the year to align instructional priorities with project budgets for the next two years. We will keep our Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee and the public informed of our progress. For detailed information, refer to our regularly-updated [Prop AA website](#).

School Safety

Last year, I reported to you on our efforts to increase student safety at our schools. Teachers and principals worked together to identify areas to improve security on campus. We addressed many of those items over the summer and will continue to target the remaining issues this year. Some improvements will take longer to plan, and Prop AA projects will certainly play a part in bolstering our physical security. Principals will keep all informed of our plans and interim solutions as we continually refine our focus on safety.

We are also reinforcing a culture of safety. We will continue to work with law enforcement on our emergency response planning and training. Visitor and staff identification policies are being revised to help distinguish adults on campus better. The most important factor, however, is that students, parents, teachers, administrators and staff talk about what is happening at school and work together to ensure school is a safe place for every student.

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. It means conservative budgeting and seeking new ways to protect taxpayer investment in our schools. SDUHSD has earned a reputation for efficiency and quality.

Please know that we always work to address critical issues transparently and involve community members in decisions that must be made on behalf of students. 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 principals and teachers. Please take note of the following links:

[Back-To-School Nights Schedule](#)
[2014-15 Instructional Calendar](#)

When I reflect on what we have to be proud of in San Dieguito, I always think about our talented students and staff who are regularly recognized for their achievements. They make us all proud. One way to follow all of our amazing students, staff and programs is to follow SDUHSD updates on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), the [SDUHSD website](#), through our local media outlets, and by attending our school and community events.

On behalf of our district, please accept my thanks for your support of our schools and our students and, on a personal level, for the opportunity to lead and work with you as your superintendent.

You can follow Superintendent Schmitt on [Facebook](#), <https://www.facebook.com/sduhsd>, and [Twitter](#), https://twitter.com/SDUHSD_Supt.