

Superintendent Rick Schmitt's Monthly Update

November 2014

*Superintendent Schmitt updates 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 high school enrollment, bell schedules, state standards and our newest school...Pacific Trails Middle School.***

In previous communications I've discussed many of the major initiatives underway in the San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD) and this column will serve as an update on several of these efforts. A central theme throughout is the collaborative engagement of all members of our district community (students, parents, staff members) in each of our initiatives. This collaborative approach is a hallmark of our district and results in better outcomes for our students.

SDUHSD High School Enrollment Study Group

One topic of great interest to our community is our work around how we enroll students in our high schools. As you likely are aware, we have a representative group of parents, students, and staff members examining all of the various enrollment options. This group, dubbed the High School Enrollment Study Group, is not a decision-making body, but rather an information gathering effort. The group has conducted its first orientation meeting and will continue its work over the coming months with a focus on the following tasks:

- Examine the long-term demographic & enrollment projections that could influence HS enrollment
- Examine current practices and relevant law in order to arrive at a list of potential ways we could enroll students in our high schools
- Analyze each potential option to identify some benefits and drawbacks of each option
- Share these options, along with benefits/drawbacks, with the broader community and seek feedback on each. This will be done through a community forum and formal surveys.
- Report findings to the School Board

We expect the group to report findings to the School Board in the spring of 2015. Given this, it is important to realize that should the Board decide to make changes in how we enroll students in our high schools, these changes would take place beginning with the 2016-17 school year, not the 2015-16 school year. We will employ our current enrollment practices for the 2015-16 school year with the High School Selection process beginning in early February, 2015. While we cannot guarantee that every 9th grade student will get into their first choice school for 2015-16, we are committed to doing our absolute best to enroll as many students as we can in their first choice school and we have a history of success with this effort. For more information on 2015-16 high school enrollment, please [click here](#). Summaries and notes from all of the High School Enrollment Study Group meetings will be posted to the District website.

Bell Schedule Examination

Each of our schools is also engaged in an examination of bell schedules that will include input from students, staff, and parents. This examination is undertaken with these goals in mind for all schools:

- Providing students and families with increased choice and flexibility with regard to the start/end time of the school day
- Increased flexible time during the school day for dedicated intervention and enrichment activities
- Increased collaboration and professional development time for teachers

In addition to these bell schedule priorities for all of our schools, La Costa Canyon and Torrey Pines High Schools are examining ways to allow students to take more than six classes during a school year. Again, any significant changes that come from this examination would be implemented in the 2016-17 school year, not the 2015-16 school year.

CCSS Transition

We continue our work in a gradual, multi-year transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by providing ongoing professional development for our teachers, ensuring that we provide our students and teachers with high quality CCSS-aligned instructional materials, and engaging in ongoing dialogue with our families. The greatest changes related to the CCSS are in the area of mathematics and we continue to dedicate ourselves to creating our own customized instructional materials that best meet the learning needs for our students while providing our teachers with ongoing formal professional development and classroom-based coaching. In addition to normal family/school communication, we are engaging students and parents in dialogue around the transition in math by hosting Family Math Nights at each of our middle schools and via upcoming formal online surveys of those enrolled in one of the new Integrated Math courses. While any curricular transition comes with inevitable glitches, we firmly believe that by investing time and resources in supporting students and teachers and by seeking ongoing feedback from our community, we will ensure a smooth transition for our students, teachers and families. If you have not yet done so, I encourage you to explore our District's [Common Core State Standards site](#) and our online Math Support Site.

Pacific Trails Middle School

We are pleased to announce the naming of our fifth middle school. A planning team made up of parents and district staff members brainstormed potential names that reflected the geographic locale of the campus and submitted three recommended names to the Board for consideration. At their meeting on Thursday, November 13th, 2014 the SDUHSD Board of Trustees formally adopted **Pacific Trails Middle School** as the name of the school. The school is currently under construction in the Pacific Highlands Ranch neighborhood of Carmel Valley and is scheduled to open in the fall of 2015 with approximately 220 seventh graders. The school will be led by founding principal Mary Anne Nuskin and enrollment of the founding class of students will begin early in the spring of 2015. Students will select the school mascot and colors in the fall of 2015.

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