

December 21, 2018

Dear community,

It's often the case that in December we consider both the year behind us and the year ahead. This is true for school district employees and families alike. Winter break seems a natural time to reflect on challenges and opportunities. And as we head into AUSD's own two weeks of rest, I can honestly say I am proud of the way our district staff have faced obstacles in recent years and have been able to develop strategies to address and overcome them. Knowing Alameda and AUSD as I do, I am confident that we can continue to work at continuous improvement to benefit all whom we serve.

### **Budget Priorities**

For instance, last year the Board of Education conducted a comprehensive budget analysis in a number of public meetings to identify more than \$3 million dollars in cuts to offer a 4.5% raise to district employees, and we know we will continue to work at finding ways to pay more to our currently underpaid staff. Workers in our CSEA 27 and CSEA 860 bargaining units accepted that raise this past August, and I am happy to report today that the Alameda Education Association, which represents teachers, counselors, and other employees, agreed to a TA with the district for the same salary increase this week. (A press release with more details is included in this newsletter.)

### **Student Support**

AUSD also has worked diligently in recent years on strategies to improve student learning outcomes. Currently AUSD staff are being trained in restorative practices to lessen use of exclusionary discipline so kids stay in school. Preliminary data shows that strategy is working for us as we help students understand the impacts that their decisions make on other students and their school communities. Meanwhile, AUSD has now implemented its strategy of convening Coordination of Services Teams (COST) as part of our MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) efforts. These teams provide academic, behavioral, and health/mental health supports and resources where needed to help students achieve to the California Common Core learning standards.

The Board has also adopted an updated dress code policy as a way to help ensure that students (particularly female students) are not excluded from school attendance and disproportionately impacted by the old dress code policy. While this appeared to be a

controversial and newsworthy topic at the beginning of this school year, again we have seen data showing that the new policy is working and generally embraced by students and staff alike. AUSD continues to work to identify how we can make sure that we are helping students succeed in school so we can achieve our vision of preparing them to be responsible citizens who are both college and career ready, and we know keeping students in class and in school is instrumental to that effort.

### **High School Alternatives**

Meanwhile, the AUSD Committee to Consider High School Consolidation and Alternative Scenarios will provide a report to the Board of Education in early 2019. As you may know, the Board of Education asked staff to convene this committee when teachers and members of the public wanted AUSD to review whether more equitable and more efficient programs might be possible for us as we prepare for the renovation and return of Historic Alameda High School to student use in 2019. Whatever final analysis is presented, I am grateful to this committee for their work to assess our potential for improving secondary education in the district. I am particularly excited by their focus on ways to provide increased opportunities for students to engage in more challenging, meaningful, and rigorous coursework that will prepare them for increased levels of college and career readiness.

I am specifically intrigued by the Committee's review of the opportunities that could be made available by increasing students' ability to enroll in college classes while still in high school. AUSD schools and students already have benefitted greatly from dual enrollment opportunities that have allowed students to succeed in college classes while still in high school. Since 2004, for instance, students at AUSD's Early College High School ASTI (Alameda Science and Technology Institute) have been able to use dual enrollment to provide them competitive advantage when applying for college. Indeed, most ASTI students complete their Associate of Arts degrees as they simultaneously earn high school diplomas or complete IGETC (Intersegmental Governmental Education Transfer Credits) and are thus better positioned to transfer to UC (University of California) or CSU (California State University) systems as a result. And we have been working at how to provide those same advantages to other students in AUSD.

Many students at Island High School (AUSD's continuation school) are also participating in courses offered by the College of Alameda or other Peralta Community College District institutions, including courses in Early Childhood Education, carpentry,

and other disciplines. Encinal High School students also have enrolled in college-level Genomics coursework over the past two years and have shown phenomenal results in learning biotechnology skills that set them up for competitive college admissions or immediate employment in that emerging health professions sector.

As such, I see the Committee's interest in dual enrollment as a great opportunity for AUSD to think about how we can do more in partnership with College of Alameda and other Peralta Community College District community colleges to help benefit our students and also run more efficiently in our high schools. We should explore how more students can also benefit in that way. You can learn more about the promise and potential of early college enrollment [here](#) in a letter I presented a few weeks ago to the Committee to Consider High School Consolidation and Alternative Scenarios.

### **Real Estate Strategies**

Facilities planning continues to be a big theme for us here. I am proud of work staff has done in recent years on strategizing how to best use AUSD facilities for the most efficient and best possible use for students, staff, and community. Over the last several years, for instance, AUSD has negotiated the return of two schools on Singleton Avenue (the former Miller Elementary School site and the former Woodstock Child Development Center (WCDC) site) from the Navy. We are excited at the possibility of adding two sites to our real estate portfolio so we are able to offer school facilities in the most cost-effective and efficient manners possible. Restoring these sites for use will be far less expensive than building two new schools. We hope to return Island High School and WCDC back to these sites as those schools would benefit from those more modern facilities, particularly with these school sites' proximity to College of Alameda and new home construction in that area.

Meanwhile, we also have planned how we might use the former Longfellow Elementary School site for a Maintenance, Operations, and Facilities yard and Food Services Warehouse. This would free up old substandard properties that could bring AUSD potential for cost savings and increased efficiencies. It may also allow us to sell the old Maintenance Yard and use that money to upgrade facilities elsewhere. You can learn more about these real estate strategies on our [Real Estate Strategy web page](#).

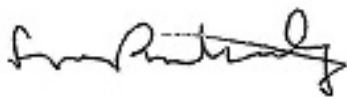
At the same time, we are working on plans to potentially move Alameda Adult School to Alameda High School (once Historic Alameda High School is completed) in case the Board of Education decides that will be the best use of our facilities to achieve our

district goals and offer the required space to this important community asset. We know adult education continues to be an important strategy to ensure more Alamedans can continue to aspire to dreams of better lives through ongoing post-secondary education and career preparedness.

Taken together, I see all of this work to date as new possibilities for programmatic and facilities change as we continue to usher in a new era of improved student and staff outcomes in AUSD. Please know we look forward to working in the new year to engage the Board and public in strategic planning efforts so we can keep up our efforts of turning challenges into opportunities to achieve and realize our vision of a district that helps each and every student achieve their potential.

As we mark the end of another calendar year here, I hope all our students, all our families, and all our employees can take time to reflect on how we can work together toward our unified goal of improvement and progress. As we look forward to the new year ahead, please know staff here will continue to strive to achieve our vision of a school district that honors, respects, and uplifts the Alameda community we serve.

Sincerely,



Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools