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**LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETING  
March 16, 2021**

**Present:** Jenny Angel, Emily Austin, Melissa Brennan, Kirby Brock, Hazelle Cato, Marnie Davis, Karrie DeMarco, Dr. Clara Finneran, Ryan Gleason, Nicole Goldstein, Ashley Goulet, Mary Hazlett Christina Heredia, Craig Hochhaus, Tina Johnson, Paula Johnson, Laura Kintz, Kiyomi Kowalski, Kelly Lampert, Thomas Liu, Nadia Rizk, Vanessa Savich, Lesli Stein, Monette Thomas, Dr. Kate Vadehra, Adam Weinstein, Emily Wigger, Melanie Wright

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Mr. Gleason.

Board of Education members Dr. Vadehra and Ms. Stein both greeted the Council and thanked them for their continued participation.

Mr. Gleason informed the Council that the Social Justice Standards which the Council moved forward for the Board of Education's (BoE) approval, were unanimously approved at the March 9 BoE meeting. He introduced a new agenda item for the committee to consider during this meeting. The District will be receiving somewhere between \$14 and \$16 million dollars in funding for supporting accelerating learning, mental health and getting students back to school and on grade level successfully. These funds will have to be spent over the course of the next one to two years. The District will be working with many committees to determine how best to utilize this one-time funding to develop a plan that has to be submitted and approved by the Board of Education, per statute, by June 1.

**Ethnic Studies Framework Update**

Mr. Gleason shared that March 17th will be an important day, because the model ethnic studies curriculum framework will be presented to the State Board of Education, for approval. If it passes, it will require California school districts to have a one semester, five unit ethnic studies course in place by the year 2026, to meet a graduation requirement for the class of 2030. Assembly Bill 1460 which was already passed, required the CSU system to add ethnic studies courses. By 2025, all students who graduate from the CSU system are required to take a three

semester, three unit course. So, the Cal States are already moving in this direction.

The 2021 ethnic studies recommended focus is on groups of historically marginalized individuals in the state of California through the lens of four key themes: identity, history, systems of power and social movements and equity. LVUSD's new Social Justice Standards incorporate many of these themes so they will provide a solid progression for our students as they move into secondary. When there is a focus on any historically marginalized group of people, other groups can feel excluded. This was the criticism of the initial framework and there were 140 pages of suggested changes submitted for consideration. Mr. Gleason shared sample lessons from the model curriculum for the councils' review. He added that in spite of these criticisms on the surface, his experience lent to seeing great overlap with where our social justice standards will be taking our students. The State Board decision as well as any amendments will be reviewed at the next curriculum council meeting.

Based on the standards, the current freshman seminar course will need to be recalibrated to incorporate new requirements into the freshman year course. A subcommittee of high school teachers, social studies chairs, and a few social studies teachers from the Curriculum Council, have been working on revising Freshmen Seminar into one semester of health and one semester that will focus on the values embedded within the ethnic studies model curriculum to meet the new requirements. Currently, they're focusing on the inclusive parts of the framework, such as: identity, connection, multicultural appreciation, and understanding the concepts of power bias privilege and systemic racism as institutions.

### *Health Frameworks Update*

Mr. Gleason explained that many districts are considering how to implement the California Healthy Youth Act. He shared a compliance tool for the California Healthy Youth Act to help the Council better understand what the curriculum needs to include in the one semester course and in a broader K-12 study, what is considered as developmentally appropriate, to meet compliance. He asked the Council to take some time to review these and meet in smaller groups to discuss. Three groups were asked to share their observations.

#### Group 1:

- Expressed concern about preparing and ensuring LVUSD teachers are ready and will have the necessary tools to teach the curriculum in a non-biased way.
- Questioned how to ensure professional development is successfully providing the foundation for teachers and that teachers are in full support of implementing the curriculum, despite personal or community biases.
- Questioned how to ensure districtwide buy-in with regard to the sensitive and age appropriate nature of the materials.

#### Group 2:

- Piggybacked off of the first group's concern as to how to ensure this is being taught equitably and how teachers would be identified to teach these classes.

- Will there still be an opt-out option for families and will certain information still be required to be taught that relate to the healthy development of self, understanding norms, developing coping skills, and mental health awareness.

Group 3:

- Discussed what it means to be unbiased, relating to gender expression and identity. It will take a dynamic type of presentation to engage young people with these concepts, which go beyond sexuality and how gender is experienced or expressed.
- Community supports already exist in these areas, so could bring in existing partners to help.
- Age appropriateness. There are resources that already exist relating to positive body image for elementary through secondary and hopeful staff can utilize these existing resources.

Mr. Gleason stated the Healthy Youth Act has been in place for a few years and the new health frameworks passed in 2020 during the pandemic. There are state adopted resources available. Per Ed Code, families can opt out of the subject areas including STDs, HIV/Aids, human sexuality and family life. Both health and ethnic studies semesters will examine identity and cultural proficiency, power and privilege through different lenses and these circle back to the core of what had initially been intended for the Freshman Seminar course.

Mr. Gleason asked Melissa Brennan to share the thoughts he heard her express in the breakout session, out loud, with the council. Melissa explained that she came from a school background which provided collaboration time to develop, practice, drill down and work together to feel more comfortable in sharing and presenting resources. Ryan concurred and said the themes he was hearing included this emphasis on training time, the right person teaching these courses, and time for collaboration.

**Social Justice Curriculum Update**

The District has recruited a team of K-12 English language arts and social studies educators to align the LVUSD Social Justice Standards with supplemental curriculum using the Learning for Justice platform to make recommendations. Next steps are to bring these supplemental curriculum recommendations forward to the Curriculum Council and then the Board, for adoption. The original timeline for this was late spring. However, if when these committees convene, they receive feedback that more time is needed, they'll honor that. Since this work will be happening in a subcommittee, updates will be brought to each Curriculum Council meeting.

As preparation for today's meeting, Mr. Gleason had asked the Council to determine areas they see a need for more expansive targeted social justice professional development in the months and years ahead. He asked committee members to add their thoughts to a Padlet. These themes have been synthesized and documented below. The number refers to the committee members concurring or offering a similar sentiment:

- Consultation/Facilitation/Speakers (9)  
PD provided by an outside consulting group who is well-versed in these subjects and expert in their fields to evaluate needs at both systemic and individual teacher/staff/admin levels and to facilitate effective PD across curriculum, health and ethnic studies standards.
- Building Effective Communications (5)  
Between staff and students, staff and parents, parents and students for productive discourse, language for sensitive topics, within a trauma informed pedagogy.
- Multiple Sessions (3)  
Desire to have multiple sessions offered at different times of the year and for specific groups. Staff should be provided the opportunity to attend multiple trainings.
- Sequencing resources so materials are not repeated in subsequent grades/years.

Mr. Gleason shared that these recommendations/requests will be reviewed in conjunction with our board, our bargaining unit and other committees, as we put together a plan for next year.

#### **State/Federal Stimulus Funding**

As a result of Congress passing the American Rescue Plan, LVUSD will receive approximately \$14.3 million in funding to be spent in the next year or two, for the learning and social-emotional challenges caused by COVID-19. The District is experiencing declining enrollment that is still reconciling its position with respect to its current funding formula. It is important not to invest in infrastructure that is going to create an ongoing cost, as the District will be unable to maintain it. The strategic plan for the use of these funds will need to go before the Board of Education by June 1.

Mr. Gleason asked the Committee to break into groups again to identify the consequences of COVID-19 on academic and social emotional experiences of students, utilizing a Futures Wheel to identify consequences and determine goals that might be considered to address them. The small groups identified the following goal areas for consideration:

- Assessments that target areas of needed growth.
- After school, summer, and extended learning
- Social emotional enrichment through the arts.
- Extended counseling supports and social groups.
- Interventionists and smaller support class sizes.

Mr. Gleason thanked the Council for their time and expressed how the work they're currently engaged in, will bring about lasting change. The social justice work alone is a great foundational focus. In addition, the district is developing their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) for the \$90 million operating budget as well as the plan for supplemental funding, in a two month time period which needs to be deployed/spent in 14 months. This is an opportunity that will be great for kids, however we have to make decisions about extraordinary unprecedented challenges

faster than we're used to, or would like to. He asked members to complete a survey at the conclusion of the meeting to share their priorities and ideas, what concerns they might want to share about these one time funds, and what else they would like the Board and Cabinet to know.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06pm.