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INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

Mao Misty Her

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS – AUGUST 30, 2024

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Interim Superintendent, Mao Misty Her

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT – Mao Misty Her

S-1 Mao Misty Her Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES – Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

BFS-1 Kim Kelstrom School Services Weekly Update Reports for August 23, 2024

BFS-2 Kim Kelstrom Federal Recovery Facility Projects Update

INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION – Dr. Natasha Baker, Chief Academic Officer

ID-1 Tangee Pinheiro Alternative Learning Pathways Points of Pride

ID-2 Tangee Pinheiro Opening of Schools for the 2024/25 School Year

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number S-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Mao Misty Her, Interim Superintendent
Cabinet Approval:

Date: August 30, 2024
Phone Number: 457-3884

Regarding: Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board of notable summer calendar items:

- Attended the 80th Anniversary Celebration at St. Rest Church
- Spoke at Principal's Meeting
- Gave interview on KBIF Hmong Radio regarding 100 Day Plan
- Site visits at Anthony, Aynesworth, Balderas, Centennial, Columbia, Farber, Jackson, Jefferson, Lane, Lincoln, Lowell, King, Roosevelt, Storey, Vang Pao, Viking, Vinland, and Yokomi
- Visited 40 classrooms during site visits
- Held Superintendent's Cabinet Meeting
- Held Executive Cabinet Meeting
- Attended the 11th Annual State of our Children Breakfast
- Participated in the Wallace Equity Centered Pipeline Initiative Superintendent Quarterly Meeting
- Met with Fresno City Manager White regarding search for Fresno Police Chief
- Met with labor partners
- Spoke at the Farber Grand Opening event
- Attended two-day Student Outcomes Focused Governance Workshop

Approved by Interim Superintendent
Mao Misty Her _____

Date: 08/30/24

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number BFS-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive
Cabinet Approval:

Date: August 30, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for August 23, 2024

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California's (SSC) Weekly Updates. Each week SSC provides an update and commentary on different educational fiscal issues. In addition, they include different articles related to education issues. The SSC Weekly Updates for August 23, 2024 are attached and include the following articles:

- Legislative Year Nears Finish Line – August 16, 2024
- Most California Schools Are Banning Smartphones, But Kids Keep Bringing Them – August 20, 2024
- Democratic Lawmakers Pull Bill to Establish Antisemitism 'Guardrails' in Ethnic Studies – August 19, 2024

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Approved by Interim Superintendent

Mao Misty Her 

Date: 08/30/24



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www.sscal.com

DATE: August 23, 2024

TO: Robert G. Nelson
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

RE: ***SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update***

Legislature Races to Meet Key Deadlines Before the End of Session

The Legislature has just a little over a week left to wrap up its business on bills for the second and final year of the 2023-24 legislative session. Last Thursday, August 15, 2024, the Appropriations Committees in both the Senate and the Assembly took up their suspense files and disposed of more than 800 bills. Many of the measures that made it out of the fiscal committees were amended to reduce costs or make the bill more palatable for interest holders and lawmakers.

We detail the significant education bills that survived this deadline and those that were held by the Appropriations Committees in our *Fiscal Report* article entitled “Legislative Year Nears Finish Line,” which can be found in the articles section of the *Sacramento Update* below. What we did not know when that article was posted was what amendments were applied to the noteworthy bills that enabled them to survive this critical deadline. We detail a handful of some noteworthy education bills that were significantly amended by the Appropriations Committee below.

Assembly Bill (AB) 2165 (Reyes, D-Colton)—Pupil Instruction: Financial Aid Application. AB 2165 would require a local educational agency (LEA) to providing prescribed information about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or a California Dream Act Application (CADAA) to parents and students prior to exempting a student from the requirement to complete a FAFSA or CADAA and requires that LEAs post specified data on the exemptions on their websites.

AB 2165 was amended in the Senate Appropriations Committee to remove a requirement for school sites to report data on the total number of submitted opt-out forms to school districts and for LEAs to publish specified data for each school site.

AB 2901 (Aguiar-Curry, D-Winters)—School and Community College Employees: Paid Disability and Parental Leave. AB 2901 would require a public school employer and community college district to provide up to 14 weeks of paid pregnancy leave for employees who experience pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from those conditions, and the bill continues through the legislative process.

The bill was amended in the Senate Appropriations Committee to delay implementation to January 1, 2028, and it would take effect only if an appropriation is made for these purposes.

AB 2999 (Schiavo, D-San Fernando Valley)—Homework Policy. AB 2999 would *encourage* each LEA to develop a homework policy for all grades by the start of the 2027-28 school year, formally adopt a final homework policy by the start of the 2028-29 school year, and update the policy at least once every five years. The bill would also authorize the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop and post guidelines for LEAs to use in developing the homework policy.

Before being amended in the Senate Appropriations Committee, the bill *required* LEAs to develop and adopt a homework policy and the CDE to develop guidelines. The amendments changed the bill from a mandate for LEAs and the CDE to an option.

Senate Bill (SB) 445 (Portantino, D-Burbank)—Standardized Individualized Education Program Template: Translation. Previously, this bill would have required the CDE to develop and issue guidance advising LEAs on best practices in translating a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) and written documents into the native language of a Limited English Proficient (LEP) parent. The guidance was to recommend that, upon an LEP parent’s request, an LEA translate specified IEP documents within 30 calendar days of the IEP team meeting, or within 30 calendar days of a later request by the LEP parent, into the native language of the LEP parent.

As completely rewritten, SB 445 would require, by January 1, 2027, or no later than 18 months after the final draft of the state standardized IEP template is converted to a digital platform, whichever date comes first, the CDE to translate the IEP template into the top ten most spoken languages used across the state other than English and make those templates available on the CDE’s website. The CDE would also be required to notify LEAs and other relevant interest holders that the IEP template, including all translated templates, is available on the CDE’s website and via other methods of dissemination upon request.

Next Steps

There are two other critical deadlines that the Legislature needs to consider before the close of session on August 31, 2024. By its own rules, Friday, August 23, 2024, is the last day for the Legislature to amend bills on the floor.

Despite this deadline, the Legislature has the power to suspend its own rules, and many things can happen in the final days, notwithstanding the passage of certain deadlines in the legislative calendar. However, the Legislature cannot waive the requirement that a bill be in print for at least 72 hours in its “final form” before each house can vote on it. Derived from 2016’s Proposition 54, this constitutional requirement sets Wednesday, August 28, 2024, as the absolute last day for any legislative measures to be amended before the end of the session.

Leilani Aguinaldo

Legislative Year Nears Finish Line

By Michelle McKay Underwood
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
August 16, 2024

Yesterday, Thursday, August 15, 2024, the Appropriations Committees in both the Senate and the Assembly, chaired by Senator Anna Caballero (D-Merced) and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland), respectively, dispatched several hundred bills with little commentary other than to announce the vote and provide a short description of any amendments taken. The Senate had the heavier workload with 515 bills to consider compared to 315 in the Assembly.

With yesterday's actions, the bills approved by the committees will move forward to the Senate and Assembly floors for consideration before the legislative year ends on August 31, 2024. Below is a summary of a number of noteworthy education bills that will be moving forward to the house floors as well as those significant education bills that were ultimately held by the committees.

Bills Approved by the Appropriations Committees

- Senate Bill (SB) 1315 (Archuleta, D-Pico Rivera) would require the California Department of Education (CDE), on or before March 1, 2025, and every two years thereafter, to provide a report on the number and types of reports that local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to annually submit. The bill would require the report to include, among other things, the purpose of each report and recommendations for which reports can be consolidated, eliminated, or truncated.
- SB 1248 (Hurtado, D-Sanger) would require, by July 1, 2026, each LEA in the state to develop, implement, and annually review extreme weather protocols related to student physical activities outdoors.
- SB 1244 (Newman, D-Fullerton) would authorize an LEA to enter into a College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) dual enrollment partnership with a community college district (CCD) outside the LEA's service area in certain circumstances.
- SB 98 (Portantino, D-Burbank) would require the Legislative Analyst's Office to submit a report on the effects of changing per-student funding from attendance-based funding to enrollment-based funding.
- SB 445 (Portantino) would require the CDE to develop and issue guidance advising LEAs on best practices in translating a student's Individualized Education Program documents into the native language of a Limited English Proficient parent.
- Assembly Bill (AB) 2901 (Aguiar-Curry, D-Winters) would require school districts and CCDs to provide up to 14 weeks of paid leave for employees experiencing pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from those conditions.
- AB 359 (Holden, D-Pasadena) would provide that CCAP partnerships can offer dual enrollment to all students and prioritize those not typically college bound or underrepresented in higher education.

- AB 3216 (Hoover, R-Folsom) would require LEAs to develop and adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a schoolsite or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee at the school.
- AB 2088 (McCarty, D-Sacramento) would require school districts and CCDs to notice any vacancies for part-time and full-time classified positions to current regular nonprobationary classified employees, and offer them first refusal over all applicants, except those on reemployment or voluntary demotion lists, during a ten-day notice period.
- AB 1917 (Muratsuchi, D-Torrance) would require school board members to be trained on K-12 public education governance laws by January 1, 2027, and at least once during their tenure.
- AB 2999 (Schiavo, D-Chatsworth) would require LEAs to adopt a homework policy with the goal of promoting evidence-based homework practices to support pupil learning and well-being, and to ensure consistency and clarity in assigning homework.
- AB 2316 (Gabriel, D-Encino) would prohibit LEAs from serving or selling food or beverages containing certain synthetic food dye additives, including items that are part of the school breakfast and lunch meal programs or those in any competitive food or beverage offered for sale.
- AB 2245 (Carrillo, J., D-Palmdale) would count service of a regional occupational center or program teacher towards permanent status at a school district.

Bills Held by the Appropriations Committees

- AB 2112 (Muratsuchi) would have required the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish a workgroup to develop and provide recommendations to the Legislature on specified elements of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program.
- AB 2226 (Muratsuchi) would have required beginning with the 2026-27 school year, a student to have completed one year of kindergarten before being admitted to the first grade of a public school.
- AB 2149 (Connolley, D-San Rafael) would have required gates that are at least 50 pounds, 48 inches in width, and 84 inches in height to meet certain specified standards.
- AB 2557 (Ortega, D-San Leandro) would have imposed requirements on entities that contract with local governments to provide special services or temporary labor, where the contracted labor force performs “functions” that currently are, or in the last five years were, performed by public union employees.
- AB 2918 (Zbur, D-Los Angeles) would have required LEAs to offer at least a one-semester high school course in ethnic studies, contingent upon an appropriation of funds from the Legislature.

Next Steps

Many of the approved bills summarized above will be amended (and some quite significantly), but since specific language of those amendments is not yet available, we will use next week’s “Top Legislative Issues” article to provide updated summaries for many of the key measures below.

Bills that overcame this final committee hurdle will now move to the floor for final votes and to the Governor. The last day to send bills to Governor Gavin Newsom is August 31 when the Legislature concludes its two-year legislative session.

Note: There is a bill on the Senate floor, AB 3216 (Hoover, R-Folsom), that would require LEAs to develop and adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by pupils while at a school site or while under the supervision and control of an employee at the school.

More California Schools Are Banning Smartphones, But Kids Keep Bringing Them

By Carolyn Jones and Khari Johnson
CalMatters
August 20, 2024

At Bullard High School in Fresno, it's easy to see the benefits of banning students' cellphones. Bullying is down and socialization is up, principal Armen Torigian said.

Enforcing the smartphone restrictions? That's been harder.

Instead of putting their devices in magnetically locked pouches, like they're supposed to, some kids will stick something else in there instead, like a disused old phone, a calculator, a glue bottle or just the phone case. Others attack the pouch, pulling at stitches, cutting the bottom, or defacing it so it looks closed when it's really open. Most students comply, but those who don't create disproportionate chaos.

"You should see how bad it is," Torigian said. "It's great to say no phones, but I don't think people realize the addiction of the phones and what students will go to to tell you 'No, you're not taking my phone.'"

Bullard, which began restricting phones two years ago, is a step ahead of other schools around the state that have moved recently to prohibit cellphones in classrooms. Bullard and other pioneering schools offer a preview of how such bans might play out as they become more common. Educators who have enacted the smartphone restrictions said they help bolster student participation and reduce bullying but also raise challenges, like how to effectively keep phones locked up against determined students and how to identify and treat kids truly addicted to their devices.

Citing Bullard as an example, Gov. Gavin Newsom last week urged school districts statewide to "act now" and adopt similar restrictions on smartphone use, reminding them that a [2019 law](#) gives them the authority to do so. Los Angeles Unified, the nation's second-largest school district, recently approved plans to ban phones in January. [One bill before the state Legislature](#) would impose similar limits statewide while another would ban the use of social media at school. Another would prevent social media companies from sending notifications during school hours as part of a broader set of regulations intended to disrupt social media addiction.

Calls to limit how students use smartphones are driven in part by concerned educators. A Pew Research Center [survey released in June](#) found that 1 in 3 middle school teachers and nearly 3 in 4 high school teachers

call smartphones a major problem. During school hours in a single day, the average student receives 60 notifications and spends 43 minutes — roughly the length of a classroom period — on their phone, according to [a 2023 study](#) by Common Sense Media.

There is growing pressure to protect young people from excessive screen time generally:

- In June, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy urged Congress to require social media companies to place warning labels on their content in order to protect young people
- Attorneys general [from 45 U.S. states filed lawsuits](#) against Meta for failing to protect children
- Released in March, the popular book [The Anxious Generation](#) correlates declining mental health among young people with smartphone adoption and encourages parents to demand school districts ban smartphones until high school

The moves to limit smartphone use in California put it near the forefront of an increasingly national trend. In New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul has reportedly been mulling a statewide school smartphone ban for several months now. Florida, Ohio, and Indiana have all imposed some degree of statewide restrictions on phones in schools, and several other states have introduced similar legislation. Education Week in June said [11 states either restrict or encourage school districts to restrict](#) student phone use.

In San Bernardino, ban leads to higher teacher satisfaction

Teachers have had classroom phone policies for years; what's new at schools like Bullard are that their bans are blanket, campus-wide restrictions. Many of the schools that moved early to adopt such bans are smaller and charter schools, like Soar Academy, a TK-8 charter school with 430 mostly low-income students in San Bernardino. Like Bullard, it also found enforcement of its ban was tough. Suspending students wasn't an option. Neither was yanking phones from students' hands. That left an honor system, which relied on students' willingness to accept that smartphones and social media are harmful to their mental health and a distraction from learning.

“The key was that we needed 100% buy-in from teachers. There couldn't be a weak link,” said Soar principal Trisha Lancaster. “It was scary, because we weren't sure it was going to work. But we were determined to try.”

Lancaster said it also helped not to give parents or students a choice in the matter. The school simply presented the new policy, [alongside ample research](#) on the harmful effects of cellphones and social media on young people, and made it clear what the punishments would be.

For the first violation, staff would keep a student's phone for the day and call their parents. Punishments would escalate until the sixth offense, when a student would have to meet with the school board, whose members might suggest the student enroll elsewhere.

At Soar, the idea originated at the end of the 2022-23 school year, when teachers said they were fed up with distracted students and an overall dispiriting school climate. Students, Lancaster said, “had lost their social skills.”

So the staff decided to ban phones during class, at recess, at lunch and after school — essentially, all times except when in a special area where parents or others can pick them up from school. Students must keep phones off and in backpacks when they are not permitted.

The first year of the ban went smoother than expected, Lancaster said. Some students and parents protested, but most understood the policy was in students' best interests. Test scores didn't budge much, but at the end of the school year, a survey of teachers showed much higher job satisfaction than they recorded previously. And walking across campus, the improvements are obvious, Lancaster said.

"Everyone on campus is so much happier. You see kids actually socializing, problem solving, enjoying themselves," Lancaster said, choking up as she described the school atmosphere. "It's true, it's one more thing to enforce. But education matters, and now kids are learning. That's the No. 1 reason we did this."

Bans from San Mateo to San Diego

Soar's experience has been mirrored on a larger scale in the San Mateo-Foster City School District, which serves 10,000 students at 21 TK-8 schools south of San Francisco. After a full-time return to campus in 2022, teachers in the district found many students were "interacting intensely with cellphones in a way we didn't see before the pandemic," said superintendent Diego Ochoa, and so the school district adopted a smartphone ban for four middle schools in 2022.

Administrators were convinced to do so following a trip to a nearby high school with a smartphone ban. There, they saw students speaking to each other and looking at one another during break time instead of their phones.

Ochoa said the benefits of locking smartphones away is evident from improved test scores and an anonymous annual student survey that found a decline in depression, bullying, and fights in the 2023-24 school year relative to prior years. But saying the smartphone ban led to those benefits is tricky because they could have also been caused by other policy changes that happened at the same time, including a "restorative" approach to discipline that relied less on detention and suspension and more on support from counselors. Still, when students were surveyed specifically about the policy and the biggest difference in their education since it was put into place, they said that they pay more attention in class.

Ron Dyste also implemented a smartphone ban and, like Ochoa, recommends them. Dyste is principal at Urban Discovery Academy, a TK-12 charter school in San Diego, which banned cellphones during the 2023-24 academic year amid an uptick in bullying, harassment and anxiety among students, staff told CalMatters. Nearly 90% of discipline cases, across Urban Discovery Academy and a school where he worked previously, could be traced to misuse of phones or social media, including students filming fights, spreading nude photos of classmates and encouraging students to kill themselves.

"I may never get some of those images out of my head. It's horrible, what kids can do to each other," Dyste said. "The damage to our kids and our communities is real."

Dyste got the idea to ban phones when he and his wife went to a Dave Chapelle performance where audience members were required to secure their phones in locked pouches.

"My wife said, why don't we do this in schools?" he said. "We knew we had to do something."

Over last summer, the school sent out notices to families about the new policy, explaining the rationale. Some students complained, but parents were thrilled, Dyste said. And the improvements in campus climate were almost immediate.

Instead of “hiding away with their screens,” said Jenni Owen, the school’s chief operations officer, students spent their breaks talking, dancing, playing volleyball, and having fun. They developed empathy and a sense of community, she said.

At the end of the academic year, the school logged zero fights. The previous year, the school’s suspension rate was 13.5%, almost four times the state average.

“For schools that are wondering if they should take this on, I think the answer is, we have to,” Dyste said. “If we don’t educate kids on how and when to use this technology, we’re going to continue seeing a rise in suicide, sexual harassment, and anxiety.”

State legislators have recognized the importance of healthier technology use among children. California students are supposed to learn about “appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior... related to current technology” under a [media literacy law passed in October](#).

To pouch or not to pouch

To enforce smartphone bans, some schools rely on smartphone lockers or locked pouches like the kind Dyste saw in use at the Dave Chappelle show.

He tried using locked pouches from the Los Angeles-based company Yondr but encountered numerous issues. Some kids were breaking and smashing the pouches to open them, or they’d listen to music all day by connecting their earbuds to their locked-away phones using Bluetooth.

“We had to return what was left of the equipment,” he said. Instead of going with Yondr, which wanted \$6,000 to cover 110 kids, Dyste found clear, plastic phone lockers on Amazon that cost \$50 each and put one in each classroom.

Yondr told CalMatters: “Our pouches are designed to withstand heavy-duty usage, and we are continuously working to improve the durability of our solution. However, there will always be students who try to push boundaries, especially when policies are initially rolled out. For this reason, it is critical that our team works directly with districts and administrators in rolling out the Yondr Program, to ensure that the most effective policies and procedures are implemented for successful school-wide adoption. Without adherence to strong policies, schools may struggle with student compliance.”

Soar Academy also considered purchasing Yondr phone pouches but was discouraged by the \$19,000 price tag.

The San Mateo-Foster City School District paid \$50,000 to obtain Yondr pouches for roughly 3,000 students. To use them, staff hand out pouches at school entryways each morning, then students swab the pouch over a demagnetizer to unlock the pouch at the end of the day. Kids who want an exception to the rule — for a family emergency for example — must come to the school front office and ask for permission.

Yondr pouches come with a hefty price tag, Ochoa said, but he thinks it's worth it to improve student focus.

"Call up five random superintendents, I don't care where they're at and ask them, how much would you spend to have your students pay more attention? It's worth millions," he said.

Mixed feelings among students

Whether phones get locked in a clear box or a silver pouch, Oakland High School senior Leah West said she finds it punitive to require students to lock their phones away before they have broken any rules with the devices. While Oakland High School does not have a blanket smartphone ban, her former English teacher sometimes locked student phones in Yondr pouches.

"We should be given a chance to prove ourselves," she said, adding that such an approach can motivate a rebellious streak in students like her who like freedom and don't like when she isn't trusted to make a responsible decision.

Louisa Perry-Picciotto, who graduated from high school in Alameda in June, said students with jobs rely on their phones for work updates and all teens use their phones to communicate with their friends.

Still, she's grateful her parents didn't get her a smartphone until she was in eighth grade.

"I get distracted easily, and without a phone I was a lot more connected to the world," she said.

Edamevoh Ajayi, who is a junior at Oakland Technical High School, said there's no question some students don't pay attention in class because they're busy texting or playing games. Those students would definitely benefit from rules surrounding cellphone use like the kind being implemented at her school this year.

But she feels like she has a strong sense of self-control and a desire to learn, and doesn't need a phone ban.

"When they take away my belongings, I feel like I'm being treated like a child," she said. At her school, policies vary by classroom. In general, students are free to use their phones between classes and at lunch.

When students use their phones in class it can be frustrating for everyone else, said Fremont High School science teacher Chris Jackson. It puts teachers in a tough position: Either ignore that student and carry on for the sake of the students who are listening or disrupt learning for all students and confront them.

In the long run, Jackson said he's worried that Black and brown students, who have historically faced higher rates of punishment than other students, will again bear the brunt of disciplinary actions related to smartphone bans. Rather than punishment, Jackson would prefer to see solutions that address root issues like addiction that lead students to use their devices in violation of the rules. So no matter what policy school districts adopt, he wants the focus to remain on teaching students digital literacy and how social media can be a risk to their health.

Course corrections

Some schools who helped pioneer smartphone bans have reassessed their initial approach.

This year, Bullard is changing its policy to allow students to access their smartphones at lunch time. Torigian said school administrators wanted to make room for important communications, for example by allowing students who pick up younger siblings to text with their parents. They also hoped the looser rules would encourage more students to comply with the ban.

If kids don't comply, teachers call parents, and if they still refuse they're sent to what the school calls the re-engagement center. Starting last month, California began prohibiting suspensions for "willful defiance." Torigian believes that schools need an exemption from the policy in order to enforce smartphone restrictions. He wants it back because he said he needs a way to hold kids accountable.

"That's why the governor's got to give us some leeway on this willful defiance; you can't do one [smartphone restrictions] without the other."

Ochoa said if he had to do it over again in San Mateo-Foster City he would devote more time to explaining to students why they adopted such a policy before putting it into place. Getting a smartphone is a big deal for middle school students, a milestone for adolescents that represents more freedom and autonomy, and it's counterproductive for the school environment if they feel punished or something they value is taken away with little explanation.

"Our teenagers told us, 'you forgot to explain why we're doing this,'" he said, adding that even if a small percentage of kids violate the policy it can be really harmful academically and to school culture. "Even with your conviction to implement a policy like this, spend the time developing the language around the policy and explaining it to your students."

Common Sense Media CEO Jim Steyer, whose nonprofit is focused on how children use media and technology, agreed that it works best to explain to kids why a rule to limit smartphone access at school is necessary. Parents and teachers need the same explanation so that they can help enforce some restrictions in order to keep kids safe and healthy.

"Any even remotely engaged parent is going to want their kid to do well in school, and is going to want them to understand why phones and social media platforms get in the way of learning and can be really distracting and can affect your mental health," he said.

Note: AB 2918 (Zbur, D-Los Angeles) would have required LEAs to ensure, prior to adopting an ethnic studies course or instructional materials, that the course and materials are developed in conjunction with specified interest holders.

Democratic Lawmakers Pull Bill to Establish Antisemitism 'Guardrails' in Ethnic Studies

By Andrew Sheeler
Sacramento Bee
August 19, 2024

A California bill intended to place “guardrails” against antisemitism in mandatory ethnic studies high school courses died in the Senate Appropriations Committee’s suspense file last week after the authors requested that the bill be pulled.

Assembly Bill 2918, by Assemblymembers Dawn Addis, D-San Luis Obispo, and Rick Chavez Zbur, D-Hollywood, was one of more than 170 bills held in suspense by the Senate Appropriations Committee last Thursday, meaning the bill is effectively dead for the legislative session.

If passed into law, it would have required local educational agencies to “ensure that the course and instructional materials are developed in conjunction with specified stakeholders, including certificated teachers, classified public school staff, and parents and guardians of pupils,” according to a summary provided by the Digital Democracy project at CalMatters.

According to the bill authors, the legislation was pulled to allow more time to work on it.

“It’s important that we get this right the first time. This is a complicated issue that requires time and honest conversations, and we owe that to our educators, administrators, parents, and most importantly, our students,” Zbur said in a statement.

Addis added, “It is absolutely critical that students see themselves and their stories represented in their classrooms. Ethnic studies curriculum plays an essential role in honoring the diversity and complex history of California. We must teach California’s diverse students in ways that uplift and bring them together — and ensure antisemitism and other bias has no place.”

One group opposed to the legislation has given tens of thousands of dollars to Democrats on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

According to the Digital Democracy archives, which draws records from state campaign finance documents, the California Faculty Association, which opposed the bill, has given more than \$86,000 to the Democratic members of the Senate Appropriations Committee; that includes \$18,500 to committee chair Sen. Anna Caballero, D-Merced, between 2018 and 2022.

A Digital Democracy analysis shows that Caballero voted with the CFA 72.5% of the time between 2017 and 2024.




Supporters of the bill said that since California enacted a law requiring high school students to complete an ethnic studies course in order to graduate, some of those classes were “co-opted” by people with anti-Jewish biases.

Groups that supported the bill included the Jewish Political Action Committee (JPAC).

Besides the CFA, others opposing the bill was the Sacramento chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, which said the legislation would be used to squash criticism of Israel.

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number BFS-2

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive 
Alex Belanger, Chief Executive 
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: August 30, 2024

Phone Number: 457-3934

Regarding: Federal Recovery Facility Projects Update

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an update on the status of the Federal Recovery Facility projects as of June 30, 2024, and plans to expend all Federal Recovery Funds by January 25, 2025.

The Federal Recovery Facility projects encompass several initiatives aimed at improving student support spaces, expanding the Alternative Education program at Farber Campus, upgrading ventilation and air purification systems, and acquiring autonomous floor scrubbing equipment. The total allocated budget for these projects is \$197.6 million.


At the end of June 30, 2024, \$113.3 million had been expended. It is projected that an additional \$54.8 million will be required in fiscal year 2024/2025 to complete the projects within the designated funding period, resulting in cost savings of \$29.5 million from the original allocation.

The savings from the facilities projects have allowed the district to shift allowable expenditures from the Unrestricted General Fund, Special Education, Title I, and Title II to the Federal Recovery funds of \$29.5 million. The 2023/24 Unaudited Actuals will include a reserve of \$24.5 million for future pandemic recovery and \$5.0 million for future textbooks.

These savings can be attributed to various project cost savings, competitive federal procurement bidding practices, and changes in engineers' estimates related to fluctuating construction cost and market saturation. For example, implementing the design build process exceeded our expectations both in construction overall duration and cost efficiency.

PROJECT NAME	BUDGET	TOT EXP	REMAINING	2025 CARRYOVER	PROJECT SAVINGS
Student Support Spaces	\$39,076,156.00	\$7,941,109.82	\$31,135,046.18	\$27,428,962.15	\$3,706,084.03
Alternative Ed Expansion	\$47,126,268.00	\$44,170,497.26	\$2,955,770.74	\$2,955,770.74	\$0.00
Ventilation Upgrades	\$92,160,546.00	\$52,340,918.41	\$39,819,627.59	\$21,536,473.44	\$18,283,154.15
Air Purifyer Upgrades	\$17,500,000.00	\$8,832,717.86	\$8,667,282.14	\$1,090,556.43	\$7,576,725.71
Autonomous Floor Scrubbers	\$1,760,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,760,000.00	\$1,760,000.00	\$0.00
Total:	\$197,622,970.00	\$113,285,243.35	\$84,337,726.65	\$54,771,762.76	\$29,565,963.89


If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907 or Alex Belanger at 457-3813.

Approved by Interim Superintendent
Mao Misty Her 

Date: 08/30/24

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number ID-1

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Tangee Pinheiro, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: August 30, 2024
Phone Number: 457-3226

Regarding: Alternative Learning Pathways Points of Pride

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with detailed information regarding the recent changes in services for the Alternative Learning Pathways (ALPs) programs within Fresno Unified School District.

In 2018, Fresno Unified recognized the need to enhance instruction within ALPs programs. As a result, the district adopted Unique Learning Systems (ULS) as the guaranteed viable curriculum (GVC) for all students in this setting. Following the adoption of ULS, the district focused on ensuring fidelity in its implementation, making it a central theme in all professional learning opportunities provided to our staff.

We are pleased to report significant progress in key areas following this initiative. The completion rate of student profiles has shown a remarkable increase, rising from 25% in the 2020/21 school year to 69% in the 2023/24 school year. Additionally, the frequency of monthly pre-and post-tests, which guide teachers in making informed decisions about student learning, and quarterly benchmarks, which assist case managers in monitoring the progress of IEP goals, have both tripled during this period.

Due to the improved usage of ULS, we have been able to track an 11% growth in student performance within the ALPs setting during the first three quarters of the 2023/24 school year.

To sustain and build upon these improvements, Fresno Unified is committed to offering exceptional professional learning opportunities for the teachers who support our students in ALPs programs. The availability of these professional learning opportunities has quadrupled between the 2020/21 and 2023/24 school years, underscoring our dedication to continuous improvement in this critical area.


If you have any questions pertaining to the information on this communication, or require additional information, please contact Patrick Morrison at 457-3220.

Approved by Interim Superintendent
Mao Misty Her 

Date: 08/30/24

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

BC Number ID-2

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Tangee Pinheiro, Ed.D., Instructional Superintendent
Cabinet Approval: 

Date: August 30, 2024
Phone Number: 457-3226

Regarding: Opening of Schools for the 2024/25 School Year


The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an update on the successful start of the 2024/25 school year within Fresno Unified School District's Special Education Department.

We are pleased to report that we began the year with over 10,700 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). To better serve these students, we have expanded our program offerings across the district, ensuring that nearly all programs are now available in every region. Notably, we have extended our co-teaching program to include Transitional Kindergarten (TK) co-teaching in every region, further enhancing the support we can provide to our youngest learners. Additionally, Fresno Unified is now a demonstration site for early childhood inclusion through the Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) initiative.

Staffing has also seen significant improvements, with only one vacancy remaining for school psychologists. Additionally, all schools commenced the year with their Regional Instructional Manager (RIM) actively serving their campus. Special Education's RIMs and Manager III's have been working closely with school sites and collaborating with other departments to identify any settings that may require additional support or attention.

As we move forward, our next step will involve a thorough review of the leveling process to ensure that we are fostering environments that maximize student growth. This ongoing commitment to excellence will help us continue to support the diverse needs of our students and staff throughout the school year.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information on this communication, or require additional information, please contact Patrick Morrison at 457-3220.

Approved by Interim Superintendent
Mao Misty Her  _____

Date: 08/30/24