

Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee

Highlights: May 1, 2025

Welcome/Announcements/Introductions

Superintendent Melissa Bassanelli welcomed participants to the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee (SPAC) meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Presenters

Melissa Bassanelli, Superintendent of Schools

Heather Brandt, Program Specialist, English Language Arts and History-Social Science

Trent Allen, Chief of Staff

Joel Ryan, Chief Financial Officer

Reading Difficulties Screener

Program Specialist Heather Brandt provided background information on the new Reading Difficulties Screener mandated by SB 114. She shared that beginning in the 2025–26 school year, all students in kindergarten through second grade will be required to participate in a universal screening process designed to identify potential reading difficulties, including the risk of dyslexia.

The goal of screening is to support early identification and intervention by helping teachers determine which students may need additional assessment or support. Results from the screener will inform instructional decisions but will not be used for diagnostic, eligibility, or high-stakes purposes. The screener is a brief assessment administered by trained staff and is not a substitute for formal evaluations or special education determinations.

Ms. Brandt also explained how the screener would be implemented with multilingual learners, noting that assessments will be available in both English and Spanish. For students, whose primary language is neither English nor Spanish, alternative processes will be used to evaluate risk. She also reviewed the exemption criteria, which allows parents or guardians to opt their child out of the screener under specific circumstances. These include students with a diagnosed reading difficulty or disability, students already receiving services through special education or a 504 Plan, and students currently being evaluated using similar assessments.

In accordance with the legislation, families will be notified at least fifteen calendar days prior to the screening. This communication will include the scheduled dates and information on how to opt out. Results from the screening will be shared with parents or guardians no later than forty-five calendar days after administration and will include guidance on interpreting the results and next steps for student learning and support.

The Reading Difficulties Screener Selection Committee has recommended using mCLASS (Amplify) with Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Eighth Edition and mCLASS Lectura for Spanish-speaking students. Next steps include staff training and continued communication with staff and families.

Q: Will the test be given to students who are visually impaired?

A: There are some supports, depending on the screener, but it would be monitored through their IEP.

Q: Is this duplicative of i-Ready or is it serving a different purpose?

A: i-Ready provides more of a general overview and is used to inform instruction and monitor a student's progress, and mCLASS with DIBELS is a tool that can identify which students might be at risk for reading difficulties.

Q: Will every teacher have access to a screener, and will it be done in or out of the classroom?

A: It may differ from site to site. The test could be administered by a classroom teacher, instructional assistant, intervention teacher or staff member.

Q: Do the assessments go away after second grade?

A: Per legislation, testing is required for students in kindergarten through second grade. However, there might be options to add additional grades in the future.

Q: Are the results internal or do they get shared?

A: Statewide reporting is not required; results will be used internally.

SPAC representatives participated in small group discussions to provide input on the essential information parents need to understand the purpose of the screener, preferred communication methods for receiving screener-related information, additional resources or support that would be helpful during the rollout.

Ms. Brandt thanked the group for their participation. The feedback gathered will help inform the content of the FAQ.

Instructional Materials and New Courses

Ms. Brandt provided a recap of the approval process for instructional materials and new courses, as well as an update on the instructional materials the district is considering for 2025-2026.

Ms. Brandt explained that instructional materials adoptions occur almost every school year and take about eighteen months to complete. The process typically begins in the spring with a call for committee members from the school community, including teachers and administrators, to review instructional materials for courses that need to be refreshed. The committee first prescreens materials, including submissions from publishers, and narrows down selections that best meet the needs of students. Publishers are then invited to present their materials and answer questions. Over the summer, the district provides support and training to teachers who will begin piloting the new materials in the fall, when school begins, through winter break. Throughout the pilot period, data is collected from students and teachers. After winter break, the committee reconvenes to review the data and develop recommendations for board approval in April or May. The district also offers in-person and online public review periods. Ms. Brandt noted that the district will be considering instructional materials for several courses in 2025-2026.

She also reviewed the course approval process, which allows teachers to recommend courses based on the needs and interests of their specific school site. The process begins with submission of a course packet by a teacher or an administrator, including the course rationale, standards, content areas and any necessary materials. The Curriculum Department conducts an initial review before the proposal moves through a multi-level approval process. Once approved, the course is presented to the Curriculum and Standards Committee and then forwarded to the board for action. She noted that sixteen new courses were approved for the 2025-2026 school year.

Information can be found on the curriculum [webpage](#), and questions can be directed to [Nicole Kukral](#).

Q: Are the courses only for high school?

A: Yes, they are all high school courses.

Q: Are they at all sites?

A: Some courses are generated by individual teachers or schools. Since many students have already completed course selection, these new courses could be offered at all sites the following year, depending on student interest.

Q: Is TK-8 mathematics rolling out next year?

A: The district is piloting it next year, then adopting it the following year.

Cellphone Policy Update

Chief of Staff Trent Allen provided an update on the district's cellphone policy. As shared during the last meeting, this topic is complicated, as studies show mixed results, and the impact seems to vary depending on the group of students. Some data suggest phones can hurt academic performance and make it harder for students to focus. There are also concerns about increased opportunities for cheating.

Mr. Allen referenced AB 3216, which requires school districts to create a policy that limits or prohibits student smartphone use during the school day. This applies while students are on campus or under school supervision. The policy needs to be developed with input from stakeholders, updated every five years, and fully in place by July 1, 2026. AB 3216 allows exceptions for emergencies, health needs, or if outlined in a student's IEP.

The district conducted broad community engagement, including a ThoughtExchange that drew participation from over 4,900 individuals who shared 4,919 thoughts and contributed 63,314 ratings. The top ten themes that emerged were distraction, safety, privacy, emergency communication, enforcement, mental health, academic performance, technology access, social skills, and equity.

Two main perspectives emerged from the feedback:

- Some people (Group A) want phones restricted during the entire school day. Their concerns include distractions, negative impacts on learning, bullying, and the belief that communication with families can still happen through the school office.
- Others (Group B) believe phones should be allowed for emergencies or health-related reasons. They are especially focused on student safety and maintaining family communication when needed.

Despite these differences, there was agreement that the district should have a clear, consistent policy. Many participants supported balancing the need for a focused learning environment with access in emergencies and emphasized that whatever is decided should be enforced fairly.

Feedback on the draft policy indicated support for limiting phone use from bell-to-bell and providing clear expectations for both students and teachers. Some people expressed a desire to allow students phone access during breaks or non-instructional times, while others supported all-day restrictions to reduce bullying and promote social interaction. There were also concerns about how the policy would be enforced, and a few noted that staff should follow similar guidelines for consistency. Overall, there was no clear consensus on when phone use should be restricted.

Next steps:

- The draft policy will be presented to the board on May 13, 2025.
- A final vote is expected on May 27, 2025.
- Over the summer, communication materials will be finalized, and schools will decide how to implement the policy locally.
- Rollout will begin in August/September 2025, and full implementation is expected in the 2025–26 school year.

Each group was asked to discuss whether cellphone use should be restricted all day or only during class time to see if they could reach a consensus.

Q: Where can we find the draft policy?

A: The policy can be found on www.sanjuan.edu/mobilepolicy.

Federal Funding

Chief Financial Officer Joel Ryan and Superintendent Bassanelli provided an overview of how proposed federal changes might influence the district's funding. San Juan Unified recently shared an update on how possible changes to federal education funding could impact our schools. Mr. Ryan noted that while over \$90 million in federal funds currently support key programs, such as school meals, special education, early childhood education, and services for low-income students, there's concern about potential funding cuts due to recent proposals at the federal level.

Although no immediate changes are expected, the district is preparing by identifying critical programs to protect, exploring alternative funding sources, and working with state and federal partners to advocate for support. Special attention is being given to students most at risk, including those experiencing housing insecurity, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Parents can expect the district to continue monitoring developments closely, identifying critical services that must be maintained regardless of federal support, and communicating updates to families and community members as more information becomes available. The district's priority is to maintain strong, stable support for all students, regardless of potential federal shifts.

Q: How can parents help support the district?

A: Parents can share information from today's meeting with other parents.

Q: Can information be found online?

A: Yes, staff is working on an FAQ, which should be available next week.

General Q&A

Q: Will the district be attending the Fight for Schools event at Cesar Chavez Plaza on May 17?

A: I believe the teachers association will be participating, but not the district as whole.

Comment: I would like to see the same attention given to the rights of undocumented immigrants and the trans community.

Response: In January, the district shared information with school sites and posted resources on the [San Juan Unified for All](#) webpage.

Conclusion

Superintendent thanked everyone for their participation in SPAC this year. She noted that staff would remain in the room to answer any additional questions.

Links:

[Reading Difficulties Screener Presentation](#)

[New High School Courses and Instructional Materials Presentation](#)

[Cellphone Policy Update](#)

[Federal Funding Presentation](#)