

The *Promise*

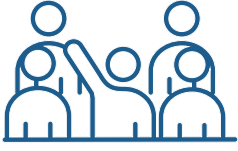
CHAMPIONS OF EXCELLENCE



Palo Alto Unified School District

At a Glance

10,318



Students Enrolled

1,790



High Quality Staff

15 to 1



Student to Teacher
Ratio

\$30,572



Per-Pupil
Spending

#1

Ranked Unified School
District in California
by Niche

81%



Students met or
exceeded standard for
English Language
Arts & Math

100%



Access to arts, music,
and library instructional
programs

#1

Ranked best places
to teach in Bay Area
by Niche

56



National Board Certified
Teachers

102



Career Pathway
Electives

\$5M
Million

Raised by PiE to
support our
students

AAA



Moody's and S&P
General Obligations
Bond Rating



**“Building
upon a
foundation
of
excellence.”**

A letter from the Superintendent

Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) is recognized as one of the premiere school districts in the entire nation. Currently ranked by Niche as the top school district in California and the #1 school district with more than 10,000 students in the nation, Palo Alto is truly a destination location for families with children.

In 2019–20, the PAUSD Promise replaced typical strategic plans to balance organizational goals, student outcomes, and innovative practices. Priority areas were revised for the 2022–23 school year:

- Early Literacy
- Equity
- Healthy Attendance
- Mental Health
- Serve and Celebrate Others

Our students are challenged to reach high standards and are provided an experience capable of accelerating learning through pedagogical academic supports, access to rigorous courses, and an unwavering belief that our schools can positively impact the trajectory of each child.

While competitive in every aspect, PAUSD also values the importance of inclusion and success for all students. We strive to create an environment characterized by acceptance, respect, and support, to invest in the pursuit of learning and excellence. This is all possible with our dedicated teachers and staff.

The 2022–23 report reflects the power of committing to focused priority goals. Attention to detail, aligning resources, and skilled staff members have contributed to unparalleled improvements in student outcomes. Our teammates, including Partners in Education (PiE) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA), support our schools and ensure students have tools and experiences that match the reputation of our district and expectations of our community.

PAUSD respects the journey as much as the destination. Please enjoy the summary of our progress this year and our plans to embrace a culture of continuous improvement together!

***Donald B. Austin, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools***

Serve & Celebrate Others



Building people up through positive interactions and acknowledging those who invest in others

PAUSD has an ongoing Ad Hoc Committee designated to serve and celebrate others

- The committee worked hard to compile “Serving and Celebrating Others” activities (e.g., Special Olympics, Family Giving Tree, Food and Toy Drives) across campuses. More than 100 meaningful activities have been tracked.
- PAUSD was awarded the State Seal of Civic Engagement Outstanding School District Award from Santa Clara County Office of Education. This distinction was earned by demonstrating excellence in civics education and participation, and an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government. Over 80 percent of diverse graduating seniors are awarded the seal this year. The committee is looking to expand to other grades.



Staff contributes to “Building Up” our students everyday

- The PAUSD traveling builder helmet symbolizes service and celebrations on behalf of others who positively impact peers, colleagues, and the broader community through human interaction and connections free of judgment and joy. Over 100 employees from a wide array of departments and sites have been recognized with the traveling builder helmet.
- PAUSD celebrates and shares the work of student artists and musicians through the community event, Arts in Unusual Places. The goal of this event is to celebrate art and music outside the classroom and in the community.



Modeling service & celebrating people for their contributions

Community members serve our schools as volunteers, mentors and builders.

- Libraries and classrooms highlighted books focused on empathy, kindness, and perspective-taking. This effort supports the continued work toward building an environment where all students feel they belong. Staff, students, and families wore orange in support of a unified commitment to prevent bullying through acceptance, inclusion, and kindness. Students engaged in Unity Day themed activities such as building schoolwide unity chains, and making posters with positive messages of acceptance and inclusion.
- Palo Alto Community Advisory Committee of Special Education (CAC), PAUSD Special Education Department, and the Palo Alto Council of PTAs co-sponsored the annual “Family Fun Day” for families of children with individualized education plans (IEPs), 504s, and/or learning differences.
- Community members continued to step up to be partners and mentors (e.g., Advanced Authentic Research Mentors, and Adult School English as a Second Language Volunteer Tutor Program).



Mental Health & Wellness



Strives to provide social, emotional, and physical health needs of all students

Implementing School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Program

- The School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) model focuses on building an in-house program in which mental health professionals are PAUSD employees who are an integral and consistent part of the school community. In previous years, the District relied on contracted services from various agencies to provide services K–12. The SBMH model provides the opportunity for District-employed mental health staff to provide consistent mental health support and services for students, staff, and families, which align with the District’s overall vision for mental health and wellness.
- **Elementary Schools** – School psychologists at all elementary sites are now supported by mental health and wellness associates, and health technicians.
- **Middle Schools** – Wellness Centers, with expanded hours, are available for students at each secondary site. In addition, the newly-hired mental health therapist works closely with the school psychologists, counselors, and health technicians.
- **High Schools** – Each high school has a licensed mental health and wellness coordinator who supports the mental health needs of the school community. This support is in conjunction with new mental health associates, school psychologists, school counselors, Wellness Outreach Workers, nurses, and health technicians.

92% *of students (Grades 6–12) reported a positive relationship with their teachers*

Health Services Team

- Mental Health and Wellness includes the Health Services Team to support the whole child. The Health Services Coordinator, District Nurses, Health Technicians, and Nurse Clinicians address health-related barriers to a student’s access to education. The Health Services Team provides direct student support for health conditions such as epilepsy and type 1 diabetes; health assessments for Section 504 Plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs); and serving as liaison between schools, medical providers, and families.

Safe at School – Percentage of students who reported feeling physically & psychologically safe at school



Grades 3–5



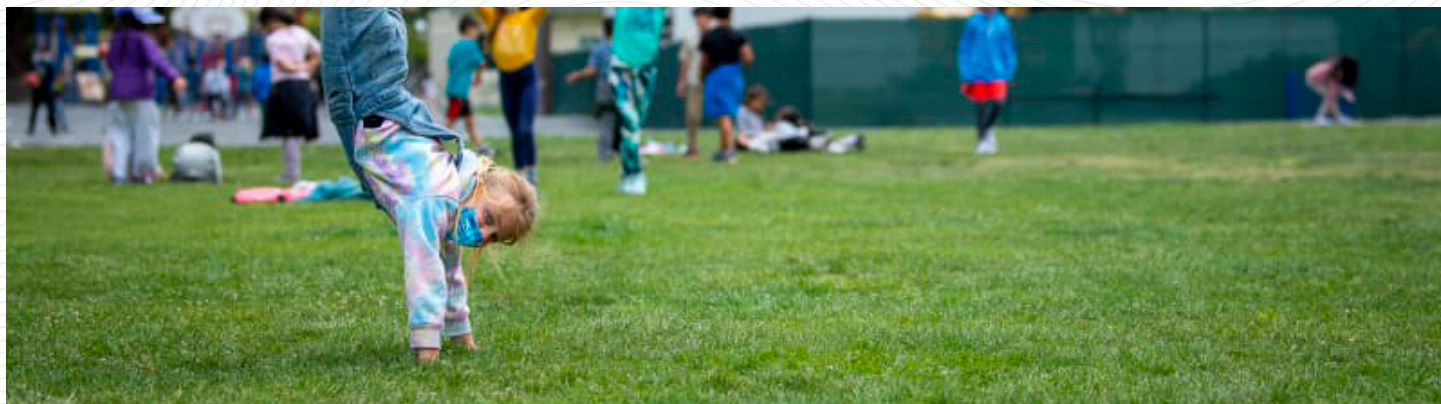
Grades 6–12

Providing Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

- The District is collaborating across departments and site-level teams to select a universal mental health screener to assess the social and emotional well-being of students and staff. The hope is that a screener could be part of an MTSS platform that integrates a tiered approach to mental health service delivery for students, and provides intervention data that can be monitored for effectiveness.
- Selecting and administering a universal mental health screener is a priority for Fall 2023. The integration of a tiered approach to mental health support within the MTSS framework will be worked on collaboratively across departments.

Delivering Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum

- Expanded Second Step training and pilot to all schools TK–8 and implemented youth education related to wellness and SEL. Monitor disciplinary removals to identify disparate outcomes and provide support to identified schools.
- A homework survey was administered Fall 2022. Perception of homework improved. The two most common times for students to do homework is after dinner and after extra curricular activities. Students report the most challenging homework is studying for tests (47 percent), assignments assigned the day before they are due (46 percent), and writing assignments (45 percent).

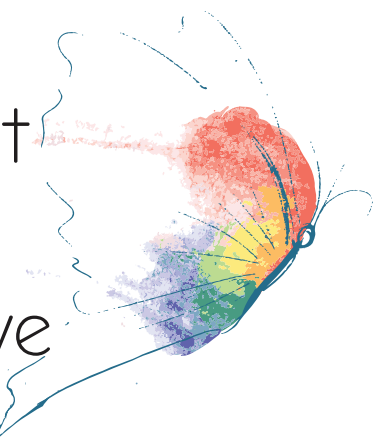


Early Literacy

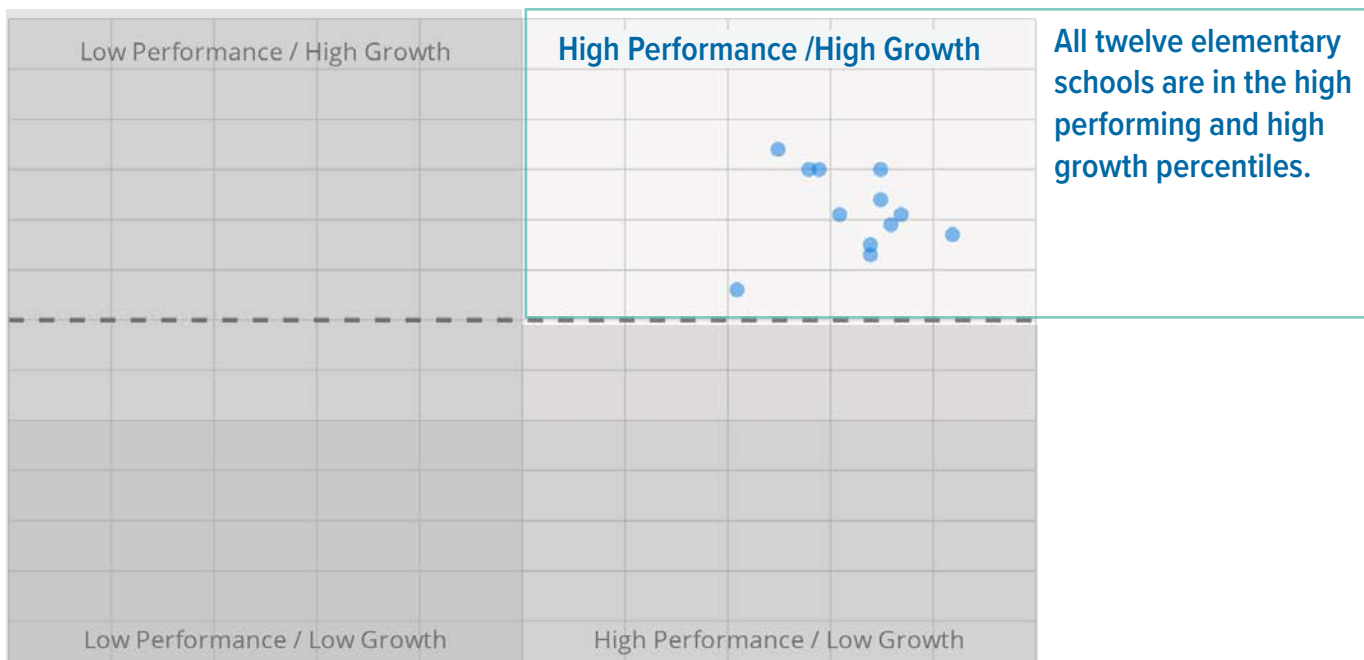
ESRI strives to reach the goal of ALL students reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

- The Every Student Reads Initiative (ESRI) demonstrates PAUSD's commitment to reducing the disparity in achievement outcomes among historically underserved student groups: African American or Black, American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic or Latino students compared to their White and Asian peers. Similarly, disparities in performance exist for English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students.
- While expecting ESRI groups to achieve at least 50 percent of each goal, every group met and exceeded the end-of-year expectations on the mid-year iReady assesment.
- Teachers provide small group reading instruction based on the specific skills and strategies students need to become proficient readers.

**Every
Student
Reads
Initiative**



All student groups exceeded the end-of-year progress goal



Largest growth achieved by students reading two or more grade levels below

Median percentage of typical growth achieved by Fall placement level

		K	1	2	3	4	5	All Students
Mid or Above Grade Level	Median % Typical Growth	51%	76%	105%	76%	92%	114%	88%
	Students Assessed	113	205	300	331	335	351	1,635
Early On Grade Level	Median % Typical Growth	73%	77%	110%	127%	129%	108%	98%
	Students Assessed	139	82	121	177	109	170	798
One Grade Level Below	Median % Typical Growth	80%	76%	92%	112%	100%	128%	90%
	Students Assessed	277	285	171	81	167	124	1,105
Two Grade Levels Below	Median % Typical Growth		95%	95%	85%	126%	118%	102%
	Students Assessed		24	59	52	23	62	220
Three or More Grade Levels Below	Median % Typical Growth				161%	114%	94%	121%
	Students Assessed				19	41	26	86

Just-right instruction & intervention improve student reading

- Changes made to create a robust Tier 1 reading program:
 - ◊ Implemented Benchmark Advance/Adelante reading curriculum
 - ◊ Implemented Orton-Gillingham methodology for grades TK–3
 - ◊ Provided decodable texts to practice phonics skills in the context of reading
 - ◊ Piloted supplemental Phonemic Awareness Curriculum
- Changes made to create robust Tier 2 reading program:
 - ◊ Implemented Phonemic Awareness Intervention for Grades 2-5
 - ◊ Implemented Phonics Intervention for Grades K-5
- Changes made to create a robust Tier 3 reading program:
 - ◊ Implemented Benchmark Advance Intervention curricula aligned with Tier 1 Benchmark Advance reading curriculum for students with Mild/Moderate disabilities



Early Identification Tools

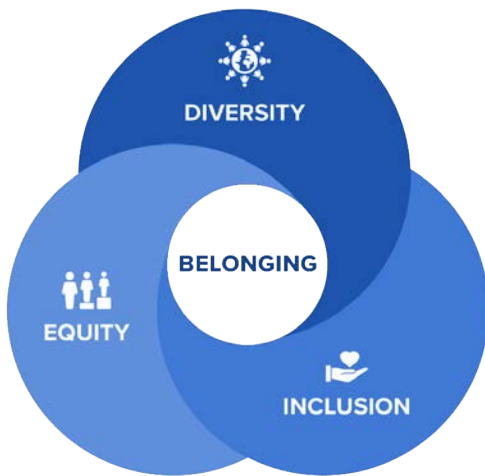
- Dyslexia Screener
- Vision Screener
- Hearing Screener



Equity & Excellence



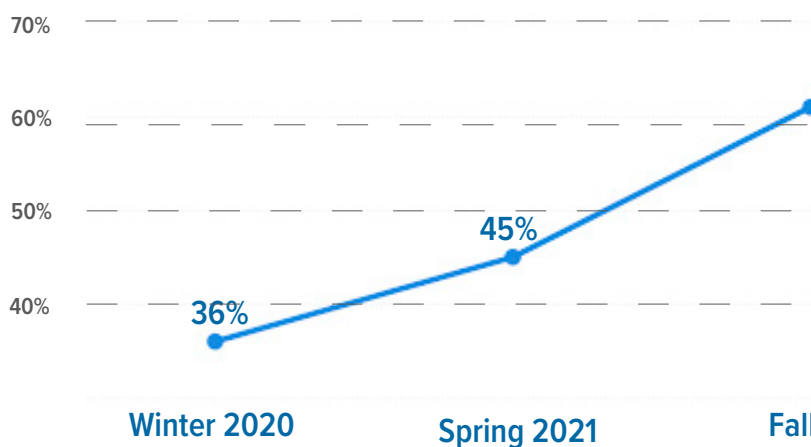
Excellence shall become the norm for all, regardless of background or demographics.



Implementing culturally proficient practices

- 25 Multicultural Affairs Liaisons were appointed to serve as principal accountability partners and equity leads at school sites.
- 14 school sites are working directly with the Office of Equity and Student Affairs to strengthen equity literacy skills and equity-focused leadership.
- All middle school teachers received professional development that focused on generating ideas and navigating issues surrounding grading, assessment, reporting and student voice for the purpose of equity.

How often do students learn about, discuss, and confront issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in school?



61%
*cultural awareness
and action*

Measuring student performance through data

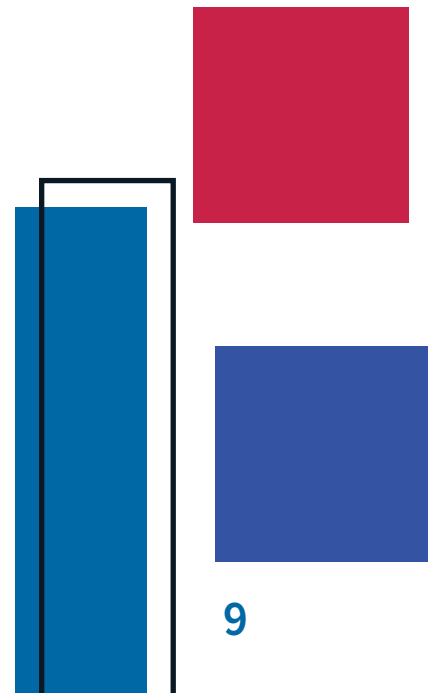
- School sites continue to analyze data on student achievement in order to support continuous improvement and inform multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), including Tier 1 classroom supports, intervention checklists, and referrals.
- The District introduced a new dashboard that provides greater continuity and consistency in how data is retrieved, analyzed, and reported. The richness of the data accessible from the new data dashboard creates more opportunities to identify successes and problem areas in practices and develop action plans in response to needs using precise and accurate data.
- Academic achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and A-G eligibility saw the greatest gains according to our System Wide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) equity measures.



16% 
***increase in
secondary
students'
perception
of cultural
awareness and
action from
Spring 2021 to
Fall 2022***

Diverse Pathways to Success

- PAUSD continues to grow its dual enrollment options to meet the needs of disproportionately impacted students who are not considering post-secondary education, and also engage students in college-level work. PAUSD currently offers seven high school courses, articulated to 23 Foothill Community College courses, serving 342 students. It is a great way for students to earn college credit at no cost.
- PAUSD entered into a partnership with the California College Guidance Initiative (CCGI), under which CaliforniaColleges.edu is the official college and career planning platform for the State of California. The platform provides lessons and resources on careers, financial aid, and college selection. This new platform is used in addition to the Naviance platform.
- PAUSD continues to nurture creativity starting at a young age. Hoffman Award-winning creativity cart programs have been serving over 2000 elementary students per month.



Healthy Attendance



Attendance is not only compulsory, but it is the foundation of student success.

Attendance Improvement Strategy

High impact attendance strategies include:

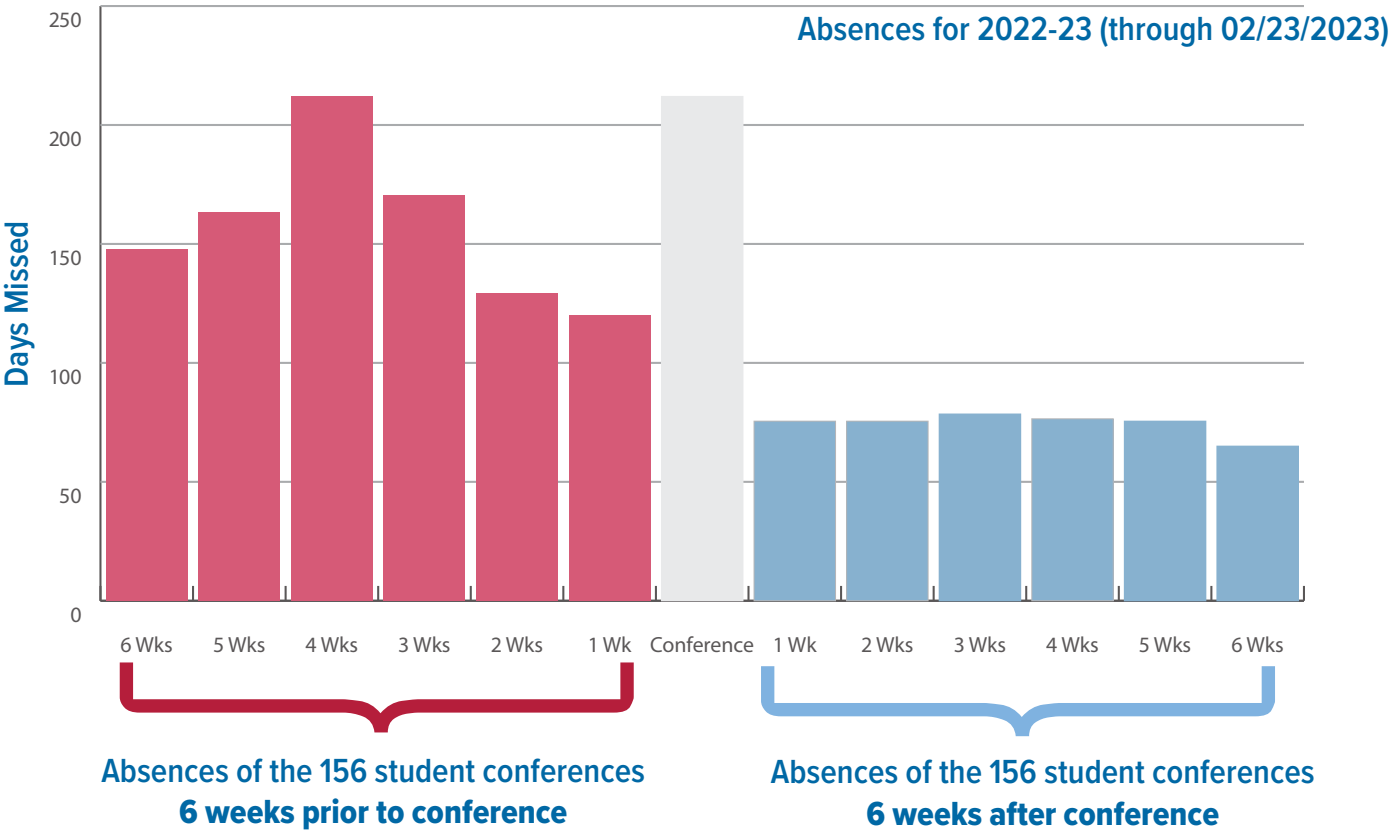
- Reiterate that ill students and staff should stay home.
- Disseminate and provide support for the implementation of strategies outlined in the Healthy Attendance Matrix, and utilize it to systematically address attendance concerns.
- Continue to implement attendance interventions.
- Conduct outreach to identified students and families to determine barriers to attendance.
- Provide parent education on the importance of attendance.
- Develop individualized attendance improvement plans for students who are truant.
- Schools engage students throughout the school year to increase attendance. For example, Fletcher Middle School's Tiger Camp welcomes all incoming Grade 6 students during the first few days of middle school to build new and lasting friendships. Social, dance, and art events are offered across all school sites. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) students participate in multiple field trips to colleges giving them a wonderful experience exploring college life.

Promoting Healthy Attendance

- Provide ideas for positive reinforcement, early interventions, and relationship-based interventions and strategies.
- Students in PAUSD are one-third less likely to be chronically absent compared to state levels.
- Collaboration between all school sites, District Attendance Supervisors, Registration Services, Student and Family Engagement Team (SaFE), District Nurses, and Mental Health and Wellness Specialists, allows for early intervention and specific outreach around attendance and mental health for targeted subgroups (Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic, SPED, SED).



Attendance Conference Effectiveness



Each week represents 5 instructional days. Data does not always represent calendar weeks.

	Before	After	Improvement Rate	Total Conferences (Closed & Conducted)
Days Missed	943	447	53%	156
Avg. Days Missed per Student	6.04	2.86		

Data-driven Support

- Students identified as benefiting from Tier 3 strategies received support from Student Success Coaches and Student and Family Engagement Specialists (SaFE) who examine chronic absenteeism or habitual truancy needs.
- PAUSD Attendance Improvement Initiative (AII) works to ensure that all identifiable student groups are below 5 percent chronic absenteeism rate. PAUSD focuses on providing targeted child welfare and attendance services and support Districtwide.
- Development and implementation of alternative Special Education Secondary Programs continues to show improved attendance for historically non-attending students.

Healthy Attendance Tiered Levels

- Tier 1** - Students with three or less unexcused absences.
Goal: All students are connected and feel that adults on campus miss them when they are not at school.
- Tier 2** - Students with seven or less unexcused absences.
Goal: School staff identify barriers to attendance for the student and family. School team will create a plan for healthy attendance success and continue to let the student know they are missed when not on campus. If a student does not have a trusted adult on campus, the goal is to create a connection.
- Tier 3** - Students with 12 or more unexcused absences.
Goal: Revisit barriers to attendance and Attendance Success Plans. School team will create a plan for healthy attendance success and have individual check-ins with students.

Glossary

504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act reflects Congress' intent that schools receiving federal funding provide protections and services to students with disabilities. (PAUSD Website)

Ad Hoc Committee: Short-Term Ad Hoc Committees serve in an advisory capacity; they may make recommendations, but their actions shall not be binding on the Board or Superintendent (BP. 1220).

Attendance Improvement Initiative (All): Work focused on creating safe and welcoming school environments where students feel welcome and valued.

AVID: Advancedment Via Individual Determination

Behavior Specialists and Behavioral Coaches: Provide coaching and support in behavior management and implementing/modeling developmentally appropriate strategies that meets the individualized needs of students.

Benchmark Advance/Adelante: Aligned with Science of Reading research, Benchmark Advance and Adelante are core language arts programs that provide a cohesive structure for the development of literacy skills and content knowledge. (Benchmark Education)

CAC: Community Advisory Committee. Palo Alto CAC is a volunteer group that supports families of students with special needs.

CCGI: California College Guidance Initiative works to smooth the path to college for California students and unify the efforts of the institutions that serve them. Combining data-driven tools and infrastructure with capacity building and student-focused curricula, CCGI helps close the gaps between systems and ensure that all California students, especially those who have been underrepresented in higher education, can move seamlessly from K-12 to college and career.

Certifications: Verifications of skill or knowledge attainment based on generally-accepted skill standards for an occupation. PAUSD offers several certifications through its CTE programs.

Chronically Absent/Chronic Absenteeism: A "chronic absentee" has been defined in Education Code

Section 60901(c)(1) as "a pupil who is absent on 10 percent or more of the school days in the school year when the total number of days a pupil is absent is divided by the total number of days the pupil is enrolled and school was actually taught in the regular day schools of the district, exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays."

CTE: Career Technical Education

Dual Enrollment: Dual Enrollment courses refer to high school courses that have gone through curricular alignment with a community college and whose students are enrolled in two institutions concurrently; therefore, earning high school credits and college credits simultaneously.

Early Literacy: Literacy is a combination of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Early literacy refers to learners using these skills from Kindergarten through 5th grade. (Superintendent Update, 12/10/21)

ERMHS: Educationally Related Mental Health Services Provides individual counseling for students with IEPs, including participation in assessment and goal development.

ELA: English Language Arts. Information to help students achieve progressive levels of mastery so that they may communicate effectively in English and, ultimately, participate fully in society and the world of work. ELA classes help students improve their listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills.

ESRI: Every Student Reads Initiative by the end of Grade 3, all students will read at grade level.

General Obligation Bonding Rating (S&P/Moody's): Rating systems to provide clarity around the components of credit risk.

Healthy Attendance Matrix: Palo Alto Unified School District Secondary Attendance Matrix relationship based interventions. (PAUSD October 25, 2022 Board Report)

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

K: Kindergarten

Mental Health and Wellness Associates: Provide mental health support through group and 1:1 counseling, class presentations, parent and teacher consultation, site team collaboration, parent and staff psychoeducation

Mental Health Contracted Providers:

CASSY- Provides mental health support through counseling and consultation for high school students and families (4 therapists, 2 at each high school).

Stanford Fellowship Program-Child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship program that provides evaluations, diagnostic recommendations for students, guidance for parents, and crisis support as needed.

tbh-Provides secondary students with 24/7 individual and group virtual coaching sessions, parent education, bilingual therapists and culturally inclusive supports, and connections to resources.

Care Solace-Assists staff, students, and families in finding local mental health related programs and counseling services.

National Board Certified: National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and provides numerous benefits to teachers, students, and schools.

Niche: Online resource providing information on K–12 schools, colleges, cities, neighborhoods, and companies across the United States.

Nurses, Nurse Clinicians, and Health Technicians:

Provide health and physical wellness support and education for students, staff, and families (e.g., vision/hearing screenings, diabetes care, crisis response, trainings).

OG: Orton-Gillingham methodology is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy when reading, writing, and spelling does not come easily to individuals, such as those with dyslexia.

Pathway Completers: Students who complete a Career Technical Education pathway. A pathway is defined as a two to three-year course sequence that consists of an introduction (optional), concentrator, and capstone courses, as determined by the CDE.

PAUSD: Palo Alto Unified School District

Per-Pupil Spending: The amount of money spent on education by a school district or the state, divided by the number of students educated. For most purposes in California, the number of students is determined by average daily attendance (ADA). (EdSource)

Phonemic Awareness Curriculum: Explicit phonemic awareness curriculum that places the instructional focus on the phonemes or sounds we hear in words. (Heggerty)

PiE: Partners in Education

PTA: Parent Teacher Association

PTAC: Palo Alto Council of Parent Teacher Associations works with District staff, Board of Education, community partners, and PTAs at 17 schools to support the students and families.

SaFE: Student and Family Engagement. SaFE Specialists provide schoolwide support and resources to identified students and families.

SBMH: School-Based Mental Health Program

School Counselors: Facilitate SSTs and 504s; provide academic counseling, schedule changes; college and career readiness; and social-emotional support for students.

School Psychologists: Provide mental health and educational support through psychoeducational assessments for Section 504 Plans and IEPs, consultation, behavioral and social-emotional support, parent education, staff development, leadership for special education eligibility and legal obligations.

SED: Socio-Economically Disadvantaged, as defined by required state reporting.

SEL: Social-Emotional Learning

Glossary

SPED: Special Education

State Seal of Civic Engagement: California award for students who demonstrate excellence in civics education and participation, an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government.

Student Success Coach: Student Success Coaches monitor student academic performance and attendance and provide additional supports.

SWIFT: System-Wide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) driving the PAUSD equity agenda.

Tiered Interventions:

Tier 1 intervention are high-quality classroom instruction, screening, and group interventions.

Tier 2 interventions are targeted interventions whose intensity varies across group size, frequency and duration of intervention, and level of training of the professionals providing instruction or intervention.

Tier 3 interventions are intensive interventions and include comprehensive evaluations, which may involve an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). (RTI Action Network) For example, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

TK: Transitional Kindergarten. Currently, children in California can enroll in Kindergarten if they turn 5 on or before September 1. Younger children born after that date will be eligible to enroll in TK.

Unity Day: Unity Day, started by Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights (PACER) National Bullying Prevention Center as the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month, continues to grow every year as a tangible representation of the universal message that our society wants to promote kindness, acceptance and inclusion to prevent bullying.

Wellness Center: Wellness Centers provide safe, supportive environments on school campus where students can go to discuss a variety of issues from depression, grief, self-esteem, family life and stress to dating violence, sexual identity, and health needs.

Through on-campus programming and community-based partnerships, students receive coordinated health education, assessment, counseling, and other support services to maximize student engagement and success.

Wellness Coordinators: Oversee mental health contract agencies and referrals, coordinate with school counseling team and represent mental health and wellness in school team meetings; crisis response leads; parent coaching and psychoeducation for parents, and staff training around mental health.

Wellness Outreach Workers: Facilitate wellness activities schoolwide and for targeted groups of students; coordinate support with community based mental health organizations; manage Wellness Center and triage student needs; provide parent education, and coordinate with wellness focused students groups.



PALO ALTO

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Over **10,000** students served*

Elementary Schools

- Addison
- Barron Park
- Duveneck
- El Carmelo
- Escondido
- Fairmeadow
- Herbert Hoover
- Juana Briones
- Lucille M. Nixon
- Ohlone
- Palo Verde
- Walter Hays

Middle Schools

- Ellen Fletcher
- Frank S. Greene Jr.
- Jane Lathrop Stanford

High Schools

- Henry M. Gunn
- Palo Alto

Additional

- Greendell
- Packard Children's Hospital/Stanford
- Palo Alto Adult School
- Alta Vista High
- Foothill Middle College





Sophomores link arms and dance to “We Are the Champions.”



Anna Feng for The Paly Voice



PALO ALTO

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Promise Website



25 Churchill Avenue – Palo Alto, CA 94306 – 650-329-3700