



BOARD COMMUNICATIONS - SEPTEMBER 05, 2025

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Page

1. OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

1.1 Superintendent Calendar Highlights

4

[Superintendent Calendar Highlights.docx](#) 

2. OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

Ben Amuku Drati, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent

3. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Ambra O'Connor, Chief of Staff

4. OFFICE OF BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Patrick Jensen, Chief Officer

4.1 School Services of California Weekly Update Report for August 28, 2025

5 - 17

[School Services of California Weekly Update Report for August 28, 2025.docx](#) 

[School Services of California Weekly Update Report for August 28, 2025-BACKUP.pdf](#) 

4.2	Accounting Department Invoice and Employee Reimbursement Payments	18 - 19
	Accounting Department Invoice and Employee Reimbursement Payments.docx 	
	Accounting Department Invoice and Employee Reimbursement Payments-BACKUP.docx 	

5. OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

6. OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT & EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Wendy McCulley, Chief Officer

7. OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & LABOR RELATIONS

David Chavez, Chief Officer

7.1	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Waiver	20
	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Waiver.docx 	
7.2	Physical Education Waiver	21
	Physical Education Waiver.docx 	
7.3	The Wallace Foundation Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative	22 - 23
	The Wallace Foundation Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative.docx 	

8. OFFICE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION

Carlos Castillo, Ed.D., Chief Officer

8.1	Proposition 28 and Cheerleading Support	24
	Proposition 28 and Cheerleading Support.docx 	

9. OFFICE OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

Paul Idsvoog, Chief Officer

9.1	Support of Applications and Proposition 2 Transparency Requirement	25
	Support of Applications and Proposition 2 Transparency Requirement.docx 	

10. OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Tami Lundberg, Chief Officer

Board Communications Approved by:

Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mao', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

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

Date: September 05, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

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

- Met with Cabinet Team
- Attended Dailey Board Meeting
- Held teacher listening sessions at Roosevelt and Fort Miller
- Site visit at Wilson Elementary School
- Met with Rick Miller, CORE Districts
- Met with Latinx High School Celebration planning team
- Spoke at the Charter Schools beginning of year leader training
- Attended the Student Advisory Board Meeting
- Attended and spoke at the Foundation for Fresno Unified Schools Taking Flight event

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Misty Her at (559) 457-3884.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

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

Date: September 05, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for August 28, 2025

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 28, 2025, are attached and include the following articles:

- CDE Releases Updated TK FAQs and Penalty Calculators – August 25, 2025
- California Schools May Soon Phase Out Ultra-Processed Foods. Here's What That Means – August 25, 2025
- California Schools Brace for Fallout from U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Religious Rights – August 25, 2025

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at (559) 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval:



Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

500 Capitol Mall

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Suite 1700

•
Sacramento

•
California 95814

•
TEL: 916 . 446 . 7517

•
FAX: 916 . 446 . 2011

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www.sscal.com

DATE: August 28, 2025

TO: Misty Her
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

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

Appropriations Committee Deadline

Tomorrow, Friday, August 29, 2025, the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees will take up their respective suspense files.

In a sense, the suspense file is legislative purgatory, where measures that are deemed to have a fiscal impact of a certain magnitude are placed until all those measures can be dealt with at once. Many of the bills on the committees' suspense files will not move forward, which means that they are effectively killed without a public fiscal debate on the individual merits of the bill.

Of the bills that do pass the Appropriations Committees, hundreds are amended to address costs or any issues that may concern Governor Gavin Newsom since many of the approved bills will eventually make it to his desk. The bills that advance get a full floor vote in the second house and, if they have been amended during their time there, will go back to their house of origin for a concurrence vote on amendments, and then will be sent to Governor Newsom's desk.

We will provide an update of the noteworthy education bills that survived the committee as well as the significant bills that were held by the committee in next week's *Sacramento Update*.

California Looks to Cut Chronic Absenteeism by 50%

At a press event last week, State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) Tony Thurmond [announced](#) that the state is on track and committed to reduce chronic absenteeism by 50% over five years.

Speaking at Williamson Elementary School in Rancho Cordova, the SSPI was joined by Assembly and Senate Education Chairs Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) and Sasha Renée Pérez (D-Pasadena) as well as other education leaders to unveil the guidance developed with Attendance Works and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence.

During the event, Thurmond touted that the state has cut its TK-12 chronic absenteeism levels by one-third, from 30% in 2022 to 20% in 2024, and said that the state is on track to reduce chronic absence by 50%.

You can view the California Attendance Guide and resources [here](#).

Leilani Aguinaldo

CDE Releases Updated TK FAQs and Penalty Calculators

By Megan Baier and Patti F. Herrera, EdD
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
August 25, 2025

With the start of the 2025-26 school year representing the full implementation of universal transitional kindergarten (TK) whereby any student who has their fourth birthday on or before September 1 is eligible to enroll in a TK program, the California Department of Education (CDE) has posted critical updated program information.

The School Fiscal Services Division at the CDE has updated its TK Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page that includes answers to age eligibility, average class size, classroom ratios, teacher qualification requirements, and related noncompliance penalties. The updated FAQs can be found [here](#).

Additionally, the CDE has provided the following TK penalty calculators to help local educational agencies determine the potential impact of not complying with certain TK program requirements.

- TK Adult-to-Student Penalty Calculator
- TK Teacher Qualification Requirement Penalty Calculator

Note: A TK class size penalty calculator for 2025-26 is pending.

The TK penalty calculators can be found [here](#).

Note: Assembly Bill 1264 (Gabriel, D-Encino) would seek to define “particularly harmful” ultra-processed foods by 2026 and require schools to begin phasing them out of school meals starting in 2028 and be totally rid of them by 2035.

California Schools May Soon Phase Out Ultra-Processed Foods. Here's What That Means

By Catherine Ho
San Francisco Chronicle
August 25, 2025

Ultra-processed foods — a recent target of both U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and California Gov. Gavin Newsom — could soon be phased out of school meals in California if proposed legislation moves forward.

Assembly Bill 1264, authored by Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel, D-Encino, is slated for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on Friday. If it passes, it will go before the full Senate. It has already passed the Assembly. The last day for each house to pass bills is Sept. 12.

The bill seeks to define “particularly harmful” ultra-processed foods by 2026, and require schools to begin phasing them out of breakfasts and lunches starting in 2028 — and be totally rid of them by 2035.

The proposal is the latest effort by lawmakers and regulators at the state and federal levels to reduce Americans’ consumption of ultra-processed foods, or UPFs, which have been linked to higher risk of several cancers, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and early death.

Newsom in January issued an executive order directing state agencies to recommend ways to limit the harms associated with UPFs.

And the FDA is considering a proposed rule that would require nutrition labels to appear on the front of packaged foods — many of which are UPFs — to help consumers quickly see the amounts of added sugar, sodium and saturated fat and potentially avoid UPFs.

UPFs were also named in RFK Jr.’s “Make America Healthy Again” report issued in May as a main source of chronic illnesses in children. However, UPFs were reportedly mostly left out of a second MAHA report, which was expected to be released this month but has not yet been made public. The second report is expected to spell out the administration’s policy plans to address the nation’s health problems.

Here’s what you need to know about ultra-processed foods:

What are ultra-processed foods?

UPFs are commercially produced foods that include ingredients you wouldn’t typically find in a home kitchen, and are often high in sugar, salt and saturated fat. They often contain additives like flavor enhancers, emulsifiers and colors.

UPFs are considered Category 4 foods in the four-tiered NOVA food classification system, which was developed by Brazilian researchers to sort and study foods based on how they were processed. The system was introduced in 2009 and is considered the gold standard for scientists to study and classify processed foods.

Category 1 includes unprocessed or minimally processed foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, meat and fish. Category 2 includes processed culinary ingredients like vegetable oils, butter, sugar and salt. Category 3 includes processed foods made from ingredients in Category 1 and Category 2, such as canned vegetables, freshly baked bread, cheese and cookies.

Some of the most common ultra-processed foods are sugar-sweetened beverages like soda and energy drinks, and processed sandwich meats.

Why are ultra-processed foods concerning?

UPFs have been studied for about 20 years, which is considered relatively new for nutrition research. But, “we’re getting to a tipping point where we’re starting to understand the fact that UPFs are largely unhealthy for us,” said Allie Reimold, a postdoctoral scholar at UC Davis’ Department of Human Ecology who researches food policy.

Studies show that when people are given unlimited access to either ultra-processed foods or unprocessed foods that were matched in nutrient content, people who ate UPFs ate more calories, carbohydrates and fat — but not more protein — and gained more weight.

“These foods are engineered to be highly palatable so there’s more of a propensity to overeat,” Reimold said.

Eating UPFs is associated with increased risk of colorectal, colon, breast, ovarian and pancreatic cancers. It is also linked to higher risk of heart disease and stroke, poor gut health and mental disorders like depression and anxiety.

Are we eating more ultra-processed foods?

The availability of UPFs in the food system, and the amount of UPFs that Americans are buying and eating, is increasing. The proportion of U.S. adults’ calorie intake that comes from UPFs has increased over the last 20 years, while the proportion that comes from minimally processed foods has decreased.

Federal health data estimates that about 53% of adults’ calories and 62% of children’s calories come from UPFs.

Are all ultra-processed foods unhealthy?

Research has found that the vast majority of UPFs, about 84%, are also high in nutrients of concern like sugar, salt and saturated fat — so it’s likely that a majority of UPFs are considered unhealthy, Reimold said.

However, she said, some UPFs may fall into a gray area of potentially healthy, such as commercially baked whole grain bread, low-sugar yogurt and low-sodium veggie burgers.

Why focus on ultra-processed foods in schools?

“There are so many reasons why schools would be a good place,” said Jennifer Falbe, an associate professor of nutrition and human development at UC Davis. “For children, schools are providing a large proportion of foods they’re eating everyday, so it’s an easy way to improve the diets of children in a setting where they’re spending most of their time.”

Childhood is also when lifelong dietary habits are formed, which makes schools a natural setting for policies that encourage healthier eating. Schools also already have to meet other nutrition standards for school meals, so they’re not unfamiliar with these types of regulations.

A 2024 California law, also introduced by Gabriel, prohibits public schools from serving foods that contain six synthetic dyes by 2027. The dyes — Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1, Blue 2 and Green 3 — have been linked to behavioral and developmental issues in children.

Note: Two months after the U.S. Supreme Court granted public school parents the right to withdraw their children from materials and discussions on LGBTQ+ issues and other subjects that conflict with their “sincerely held religious beliefs,” conservative leaders in California are predicting schools will be swamped with opt-out demands.

California Schools Brace for Fallout from U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Religious Rights

Social conservatives push for parents to opt-out children from LGBTQ+ materials and lessons

By Thomas Peele
EdSource
August 25, 2025

Two months after the U.S. Supreme Court granted public school parents the right to withdraw their children from materials and discussions on LGBTQ+ issues and other subjects that conflict with their “sincerely held religious beliefs,” conservative leaders in California are predicting schools will be swamped with opt-out demands.

That hasn’t happened yet, but attorneys agree that this latest escalation of the culture wars will likely cause turmoil, confusion, and years of litigation, largely because the court offered no guidance on how opt-out requests should be handled, how religious belief claims can or should be verified, and how schools should handle potential logistical issues.

“There is a lot of trepidation about how to handle this issue in a way that is legally compliant and doesn’t trigger a backlash from one side of the issue or the other,” Troy Flint, a spokesperson for the California School Boards Association, told EdSource via email Saturday night.

“Superintendents have concerns about how to make a fact-specific determination regarding parent requests, and we have heard of districts getting threats of litigation from both sides,” he said.

LGBTQ+ advocates and defenders of the state’s progressive school standards are threatening discrimination lawsuits if opt-outs are granted, Flint said. Parents are threatening to sue if they aren’t granted immediately.

In most districts, he added, leaders “are hesitant to address this publicly for fear of attracting more scrutiny and making the issue even more difficult to manage.”

A leading academic on education law said that while the Supreme Court decision was based on parental objections to LGBTQ+ books and lessons, the religious opt-outs are likely to have a broader reach.

“It is deeply misguided for people to believe that this case is only about LGBTQ+ and equality,” Yale Law School professor Justin Driver told EdSource. The decision “sweeps, given the prevalence of deeply felt religious objections, to lots of material,” he said.

It could “affect everything from reading to science, to literature to history. It’s difficult to overstate the significance of the decision,” Driver said. “Some people think Bert and Ernie are gay. Is ‘Sesame Street’ now suspect?”

California, for instance, requires students to learn the history of gay people fighting for civil rights and the story of the country's first openly gay elected official, Harvey Milk. The San Francisco supervisor was assassinated in 1978 and posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by former President Barack Obama.

Flint said that parents "in at least one district have hinted at trying to expand the opt-out requests to other types of instructional materials." He did not identify those materials.

Meanwhile, as school administrators ponder their next steps, firebrand social conservatives are seizing the moment that the nation's highest court created.

"There should be opt-outs. There are things that go against what God laid down," pastor Angelo Frazier, of Bakersfield's RiverLakes Community Church, said of what's taught in California schools.

"It's not education. It's 'You can touch me here.' It's very suggestive and inappropriate." He said the ruling was a relief to frustrated parents in his congregation. "It gives them breathing room."

The leader of a Fresno-based Christian group, long involved in parental rights advocacy, said the state is no longer in charge of what children learn in school.

The ruling shows that "parents are the ultimate determination of whose values get taught to the child," said Greg Burt of the California Family Council. "We're now in charge of deciding what we think is good and what we think is not good."

But as opt-outs begin to play out across California's more than 10,000 public schools as the 2025-26 academic year opens, the only certainty from the case, *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, is that uncertainties abound — and may for years.

They include:

- Can or should parents file blanket opt-out requests stating they want their child removed from any and all instruction about LGBTQ+ topics, and leave school personnel to sort it out? Or should schools ask parents to review reading lists — often available online — and let parents flag those items to which they object?
- What do school leaders do with students whose parents opt them out of a class? Their class time still needs to be used for instruction. Where do they go?
- Who watches or instructs the youngest of removed students, who can't be left unsupervised? Some of the books cited in the Supreme Court case, including ones about a child's favorite uncle marrying a man and a puppy getting lost at a Pride parade, are used in kindergarten and even transitional kindergarten classes.
- Will school districts need to budget money to defend lawsuits from parents whose opt-out requests may be denied?
- Can parents even attempt to opt out their child from exposure to an LGBTQ+ teacher, or a teacher who displays a Pride flag in a classroom?

Lawyers and academics interviewed for this story said that Justice Samuel Alito's decision, joined by the court's five other conservatives, offered little guidance on how opt-outs should work.

Mahmoud v. Taylor happened because the Montgomery County schools in suburban Maryland created an opt-out program to appease parents who objected to the teaching of LGBTQ+ materials on religious grounds. But the program ended in less than a year. Alito noted in his decision that school officials found that "individual principals and teachers could not accommodate the growing number of opt-out requests without causing significant disruptions to the classroom environment." Parents then sued.

Focusing largely on principles of religious freedom, Alito's decision doesn't specifically address how opt-outs might work given the Maryland situation, or how claims of a sincerely held religious belief might be evaluated.

The high court has long recognized the rights of parents to "direct the religious upbringing of their children," he wrote, a principle at the case's core.

But in a dissenting opinion, Justice Sonja Sotomayor predicted opt-outs would cause "chaos for this nation's public schools."

Giving parents the chance to opt out of all lessons and story times that conflict with their beliefs "will impose impossible administrative burdens," Sotomayor wrote. It threatens the very essence of public education.

"The reverberations of the court's error will be felt, I fear, for generations."

Opting out in California

Conservative groups in California opposed to LGBTQ+ themed teaching materials are generating letters and emails to school districts for parents to use to demand that school leaders proactively remove children from classes where there might be any mention of gay or transgender people, same-sex marriage and other related topics.

A nonprofit Riverside County law firm, Advocates for Faith & Freedom, created one such letter, calling for children to be removed from any teaching involving "gender identity, the use of pronouns inconsistent with biological sex, sexual activity or intercourse of any kind, sexual orientation, or any LGBTQ+ topics" so parents can raise children "in the fear and knowledge of the Lord."

The letter gives principals 10 calendar days to respond in writing. Lack of a response "will be considered a denial" that will cause parents to "proceed accordingly."

Erin Mersino, an attorney at the firm, said via email, "responses were just starting to come in," and that it was too soon to discuss the letter's effectiveness. Other groups are circulating at least four similar opt-out templates or email forms.

The 10-day response demand in the nonprofit's letter "is insufficient in my opinion," said Mark Bresee, a La Jolla attorney specializing in education law.

Bresee also questioned if "a blanket, year-long 'opt-out' demand" is consistent with Alito's decision, noting that the justice wrote that the "religious development of a child will always be fact-intensive. It will depend

on the specific religious beliefs and practices asserted, as well as the specific nature of the educational requirement or curricular feature at issue.”

It’s unclear how far and fast those letters are circulating. Some school officials said they have received a few opt-out notices.

Conservative activist Brenda Lebsack, a Santa Ana Unified School District board member, said mass opt-out requests are unlikely to come until school districts themselves notify parents of the new right the court granted. “Opt-out forms should really be coming from the schools because if you’re getting opt-out forms from all these different law firms, and they’re all different, that could get really confusing,” she said.

At the Manteca Unified School District in San Joaquin County, Assistant Superintendent Victoria Brunn said late last week that only one “opt-out request has been received so far. She said the parents who made it were told it would be granted.

A spokesperson for the Turlock Unified School District in Stanislaus County said it had received a single inquiry about the opt-out process and created a standard form for requests, but that no requests had been received. Parents can either use the form or email a teacher, citing “specific instructional content” a student should not receive, according to a copy provided to EdSource.

“Teachers can also provide notice of upcoming curriculum,” the spokesperson wrote in an email.

At the Hope Elementary School District in Santa Barbara County, Superintendent Anne Hubbard created an opt-out form. As of Friday, it had been used once to opt out two children in the same family, she said.

Last week, the board of the 85-student Howell Mountain Elementary School District in Napa County canceled plans to create an opt-out form after community objections.

“Howell Mountain Elementary respects and values the LGBTQ+ community. We will not be adopting any type of opt-out form that specifically targets LGBTQ+ curriculum,” Superintendent Joshua Munoz said in a statement. Instead, the district will remind parents annually that the right to opt out exists, but will not cite any specific curriculum.

The Press Democrat reported that among those who spoke to the board was a St. Helena High School junior who’d attended Howell Mountain.

“When I was in seventh grade, I realized that I liked girls,” she said. “In school, the times that we were taught about LGBTQ+ people would remind me that I was not alone. I was not a freak or an alien. I was just me. And I could still do anything I wanted in my life.”

In San Francisco, Mawan Omar, the parent of a sixth grader, told EdSource he intends to opt his son out of LGBTQ+ materials because the teaching contradicts his family’s Muslim faith.

Omar said his son, Hezma, objected on his own to an LGBTQ+ lesson in elementary school because it was contrary to what he had learned from the Holy Quran. “He just didn’t want to be around it because he knows our religion,” Omar said. After what he described as a dispute with the school’s principal, it was agreed informally that Hezma would be allowed to leave any classes involving similar materials.

Now, Alito’s decision, Omar said, is gratifying. “We knew all along we were right.”

But Lebsack, who focuses on transgender issues and has formed an interfaith coalition primarily around them, said Alito's decision isn't enough.

"I think Mahmoud versus Taylor is throwing us crumbs," she said in an interview. "I mean, I'm grateful for it, but it needs to go much further than that."

Lebsack, a special education teacher and former Orange County probation officer, claimed the California Department of Education is ripe to be sued under the First and 14th amendments for "compelling public school students to accept and affirm extremist ideologies of unlimited gender identities" and for "bringing extremist forced teachings into K-12 public education."

Asked to respond to Lebsack's assertion, a spokesperson for the state Education Department directed a reporter to guidance posted online about Alito's decision. It states, in part, "The California Department of Education and California law continue to promote a safe, fair, and welcoming learning environment in all schools. It is important to note that *Mahmoud* does not invalidate or preempt California's strong protections for LGBTQ+ youth from discrimination, harassment, and bullying."

The goal: Banning books?

Other conservatives said they see a path where Alito's decision could lead to the removal of books and teaching they oppose by overwhelming schools with opt-outs to the point where the best option is to remove the materials.

"If there are so many people who want to opt out of this curriculum, maybe we should stop teaching it," said Julie Hamill, an attorney and president of the California Justice Center. School leaders, she said, should be reflecting on whether they are "doing something wrong as a district and educational entity. Those are questions that are not being asked right now. It's very obvious that's what needs to happen."

Sonja Shaw, a Chino Valley Unified School District board member running for state superintendent of public instruction in next year's election, said she wants opt-outs to "overtax the system to where they just give up, and they stop teaching this stuff."

If so many opt-outs were filed that books are removed from curricula, that would help, said Burt of the California Family Council, which has urged parents to flood districts with opt-outs. "We're advocating for good books in school, and we think these are bad books, so we're not going to be sad if we see them go."

But an anti-censorship advocate said that would amount to book banning by a different name.

"I'm not at all surprised that this is their plan of attack," Tasslyn Magnusson, senior adviser to the Freedom to Read team at PEN America, an anti-censorship group, said of conservative activists. "These are books about families. These are books about how we experience the world, and they're beautiful and well written," she said. "Remember that it's important for kids to have a variety of materials in front of them that resonate with their lives and their experiences."

Another impact of the opt-outs will be how LGBTQ+ students and students from families with LGBTQ+ members will react when classmates leave and when teaching materials reflecting their lives are presented.

That could make "a child feel they're not only different, but that they're not accepted or that they should be ashamed of the family that they have," said Jorge Reyes Salinas, a spokesperson for Equality California, a

civil rights group. Although the opt-outs promise to be disruptive, he said, they won't end the state's use of an inclusive curriculum. "We're talking about a very small population of parents that are ignorant and full of hate."

The presidents of California's two largest teachers unions both said educators are not going to fold under pressure created by the high court's decision.

"The role of the public school is to help students develop the critical thinking skills and knowledge necessary to engage in a pluralistic democracy," said Jeff Freitas, president of the California Federation of Teachers. "We cannot have individuals dictating what is the good of the public. It's also important that our public schools avoid over-compliance and refuse to capitulate to the weaponization of this decision."

David Goldberg, president of the California Teachers Association, said that teachers "will obviously follow the law, but we want to make it clear to our members that there are other laws in California around kids' ability to learn about their own identity, cultures, or all kinds of identities. We're going to still honor kids' ability to learn about their own identity and all kinds of identities."

Goldberg also said it would be a mistake for school administrators to place the burden of opt-outs on teachers. "Teachers are overwhelmed already, just getting through the curriculum," he said. Opt-outs are "a compliance thing that districts are going to need to figure out."

The Scopes Monkey Trial

The country has a long history of science clashing with religion.

Driver, the Yale law professor, noted that in a 1987 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit overturned a lower court that ruled fundamentalist Christians could remove their children from public school lessons that depicted women working outside the home, which they argued conflicted with their religious beliefs.

Now, following Alito's decision in the Maryland case, the losing argument in that case could be successful, Driver said. "It seems to me the Mahmoud versus Taylor decision empowered these sorts of objections to potentially carry the day."

Alito's decision also came 100 years after the landmark court case on the teaching of evolution in public schools — the epic clash of science versus religion known as the Scopes Monkey Trial that pitted legendary lawyers Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan against each other.

Jennings, hired to prosecute a high school biology teacher, John Scopes, for teaching evolution against state law, won. But Tennessee's Supreme Court later overturned Scopes' conviction, ruling that a state law banning the teaching of evolution in public schools was unconstitutional.

But it didn't end the debate over teaching science in the face of religious beliefs, said Pepperdine University law and history professor Edward Larson, author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning book on the trial. When it ended, "school districts all over the country and some states banned the teaching of the theory of human evolution," he said.

Even when religious objections were later banned, "a series of state laws and local actions calling for balanced treatment of either teaching creation science, along with evolution, or later intelligent design"

followed, Larson said. Several states, including Alabama, require disclaimers in biology books stating evolution “is just a theory,” he said.

“The issue of evolution in public schools remains a flash point,” Larson said. “It has been for a hundred years, it still is today.”

As the Alito decision plays out in the coming years, Larson said, “Schools may want to force people to provide all sorts of evidence” to prove their sincerely held religious beliefs. “But I’m thinking that most won’t feel it’s worth their time to get too engaged,” he added.

“That’s just inviting trouble.”

Staff writer Emma Gallegos contributed to this story.

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

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

Date: September 05, 2025
Phone Number: (559) 457-3907

Regarding: Accounting Department Invoice and Employee Reimbursement Payments

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an update on the Accounting Department's continued progress toward achieving our goals of paying invoices within 30 days and reimbursing employees within 15 days.

In FY2024, the department paid invoices on average within 56 days. This improved to within 43 days in FY2025. Notably, as of August 2025, the department achieved the 30-day goal for the first time, processing invoice payments within an average of 28 days.

Regarding employee reimbursements, the department averaged 19 days in FY2024 and improved to 11 days in FY2025, successfully reaching the 15-day target in October 2024. Since that milestone, reimbursements have been processed in under 8 days on average (please see attachment I).

These improvements are the result of several key process changes and a dedicated team effort, including:

- Daily monitoring of metrics and weekly team meetings
- Implementation of a new Internal Invoice Submission Form (March 2025)
- Launch of a new Electronic Travel Form (May 2025)
- Adoption of an Electronic Mileage Form
- A collaborative initiative with the Purchasing Department to improve workflow between departments
- Full training of new staff hired post-COVID

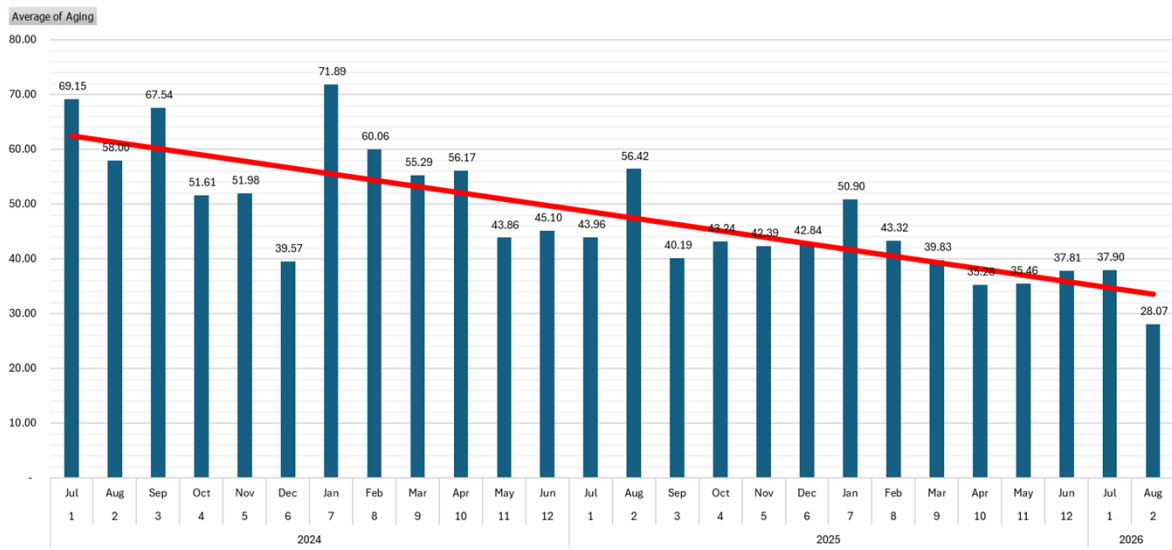
If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at (559) 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 

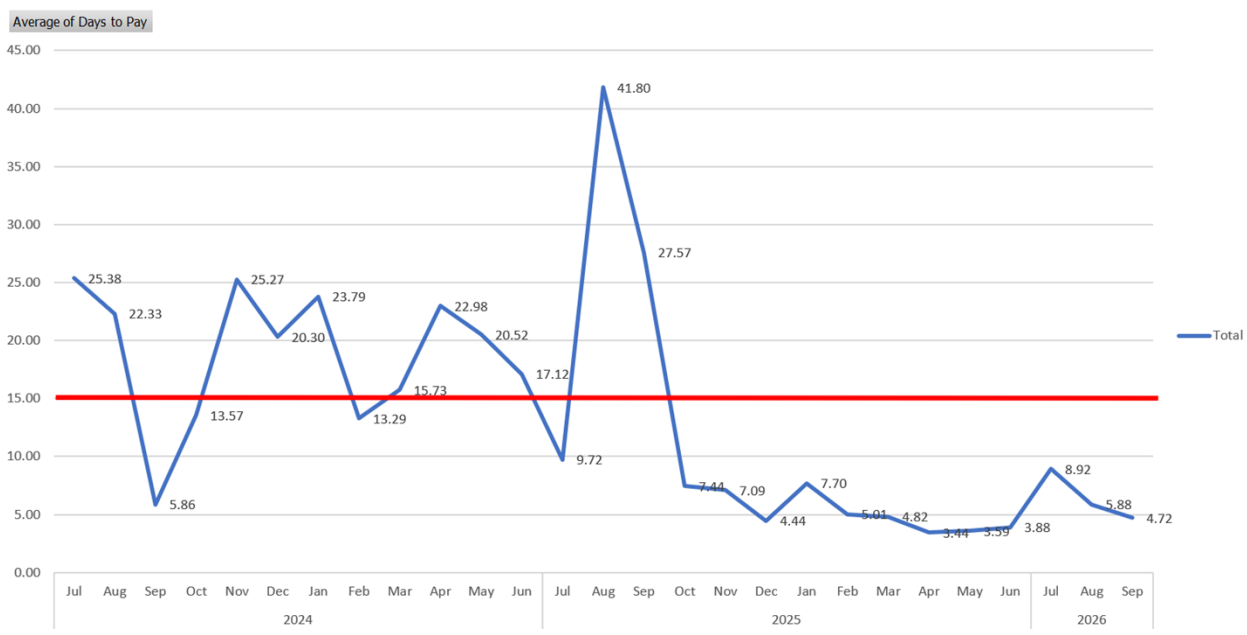
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

Attachment I

Invoice Payments



Employee Reimbursements



Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From: Office of the Superintendent

Date: September 05, 2025

To: Members of the Board of Education

Prepared by: Giovanna DiFilippo, Assistant Superintendent

Phone Number: (559) 457-3547

Regarding: Recommendation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Waiver

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an explanation for the recommendation of a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Waiver on the September 10, 2025, Board Meeting Agenda for Myra Stephanie Rubio. The waiver was created in response to the need to fill hard-to-fill positions, such as Deaf and Hard of Hearing, that is not covered by emergency permits. Fresno Unified is actively recruiting fully credentialed candidates to fill vacant Special Education positions.

Requirements for Issuance (Education Code 44225)

Initial issuance requirements:

- Evidence that the employer attempted to recruit a credentialed teacher
- Verification that the candidate has been admitted into the credential program
- Candidate affirms that the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) exam will be completed to meet credential requirements

Myra Stephanie Rubio holds a Master's Degree in Deaf Education. This is a one-year subsequent academic waiver for the 2025/26 school year. The employee is working toward passing the RICA exam, which requires special accommodation due to her disability (Deaf/hard of hearing). Completion is expected in June 2026.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Giovanna DiFilippo at (559) 457-3547 or David Chavez at (559) 457-3713.

Cabinet Approval: David Chavez

Name and Title: David Chavez, Chief of Human Resources/Labor Relations, 

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Giovanna DiFilippo, Assistant Superintendent

Date: September 05, 2025
Phone Number: (559) 457-3547

Regarding: Recommendation for Adapted Physical Education Waiver

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an explanation for the recommendation of one Adapted Physical Education Waiver on the September 10, 2025, Board Meeting Agenda, for Kiza Kelsey-Franco. The waiver was created in response to the need to fill hard-to-fill positions. Fresno Unified is actively recruiting fully credentialed candidates to fill vacant Special Education positions.

Requirements for Issuance (Title 5 80046.15)

Initial issuance requirements:

- Evidence that the employer attempted to recruit a credentialed teacher
- Verification that the candidate holds a prerequisite single subject physical education credential

This is a one-year academic waiver for the 2025/26 school year. Kiza Kelsey-Franco will be working toward adding the Special Education Adapted Physical Education Credential through Point Loma Nazarene University. Completion is expected in December 2025.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Giovanna DiFilippo at (559) 457-3547 or David Chavez at (559) 457-3713.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: David Chavez, Chief of Human Resources/Labor Relations

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kimberly Villescaz, Ed.D., Executive Officer

Date: September 05, 2025
Phone Number: (559) 457-3656

Regarding: The Wallace Foundation Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an update on the work of the Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative (ECPI) funded by The Wallace Foundation.

Background

Fresno Unified was selected as one of eight districts nationwide to participate in the five-year initiative. The grant provides approximately \$4 million to Fresno Unified and up to \$8 million total to support the partnerships with San Diego State University, National University, the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC). There are seven domains that must be addressed in each year of the grant. Updates are provided in each of the domains.

Leader standards

The district has adopted the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) for all site and department leaders. Small groups are in the process of identifying areas of equity within each standard. Community Voice supported in the development of our Portrait of a Leader.

High-quality pre-service principal preparation

Our Leadership Cohort achieved strong results, with 61% of candidates securing leadership positions for the 2025/26 school year. Cohort XXI also reflects greater diversity, with enrollment including 12% Asian, 35% African American, 38% White, and 23% Latinx candidates.

Selective hiring and placement

Refining the Principal hiring process to include CPSEL-aligned interview questions, instructional walks, a data-focused presentation, a presentation on a community problem of practice, and a review of candidates' previous evaluations, with rubrics for each component to help mitigate bias. The Vice Principal hiring process will also include CPSEL-aligned interview questions and instructional walks. Together, these processes are designed to ensure we select leaders who will effectively support every student, staff member, and the broader community.

Evaluation and support

Leaders across the system were surveyed to identify needed supports, and we partnered with other departments to create a comprehensive menu of professional learning opportunities. To further build capacity, we launched the Tier II Credential Program to internally support Year 1 and Year 2 candidates, along with a coaching model designed to help new Principals and Vice Principals strengthen their leadership skills and drive improved academic performance at their sites.

Principal supervisors

Principal Supervisors are receiving coaching to strengthen their skills in supporting principals, with a focus on aligning their coaching and feedback practices to better develop site leaders. This includes implementing school visit protocols and look-fors, identifying school leader priority moves and evidence, and engaging in job-embedded coaching and instructional walks.

Leader tracking system

The Leadership Development Progress Monitoring (LDMP) Tool is an active dashboard used to review hiring and selection. The tool shows various metrics and visualizations that allow users to review both potential and current candidates for leadership positions. The tool also provides a view of individual candidate characteristics alongside the performance of the school sites we are hiring.

Systems and sustainability

A District Partnership Team made up of the Superintendent, department leaders, university program leads, state agency leads, and Wallace Foundation representatives meet bimonthly to monitor process and address actions in the Fresno Unified Workplan. Cross departmental work teams have been developed to reduce siloed efforts to ensure leadership development efforts are owned across departments. Wallace domain actions are supported by other funding sources for sustainability.

Fresno Unified serves as the fiscal agent for all partners and monitors workplans and budgets in support of the grant. The total award for year five is \$1,080,000 to be distributed as follows: \$600,000 to Fresno Unified, \$225,000 to San Diego State University, \$225,000 to National University, and \$30,000 to the California Department of Education (CDE).

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Kimberly Villescaz, Ed.D., at (559) 457-3656.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: David Chavez, Chief of Human Resources/Labor Relations

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Bryan Wells, Assistant Superintendent

Date: September 05, 2025
Phone Number: (559) 457-3805

Regarding: Proposition 28 and Cheerleading Support

The purpose of this communication is to address a question raised at the Board meeting held August 27, 2025, regarding whether Proposition 28 (Arts and Music in Schools) funds may be used to cover cheerleading expenses.

Proposition 28 requires that funds be directed specifically toward arts education in the following disciplines: dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts (Education Code 8821; California Department of Education guidance). These are the only categories explicitly authorized under state law.

Cheerleading is not classified as an eligible discipline under Proposition 28. Although cheerleading incorporates choreographic and performance elements, it is considered an extracurricular athletic program. Limited components such as dance or choreography instruction that align directly with the recognized discipline of dance may be funded with Proposition 28 resources. However, expenses such as uniforms, equipment, or other athletic costs are athletics-related and may not be supported with Proposition 28 funds, consistent with guidance from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Bryan Wells at (559) 457-3805.

Cabinet Approver: 
Carlos Castillo (Sep 4, 2025 09:37:31)
Name and Title: Carlos Castillo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Heidi Heltne, Project Manager

Date: September 05, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3066

Regarding: Board Resolution 26-10, Support of Applications for Eligibility Determination and Funding

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with information regarding Resolution 26-10 to be presented for adoption at the September 10, 2025, Board Meeting. The Resolution will serve to meet conditions pertaining to processing applications related to eligibility determination and funding with the Department of General Services and the State Allocation Board.

The Resolution will also acknowledge Public Hearings have been held for the included list of projects. With the passage of the state bond measure Proposition 2 in November 2024 a set of transparency requirements were instated, including that the Board of Education conduct a Public Hearing for any projects to be submitted for funding applications under the School Facility Program. Resolution 26-10 will affirm Public Hearings have been held as per the current practice at all Board Meetings to provide an opportunity for public comment. If additional specifications are presented by the Office of Public School Construction related to meeting this requirement the district will take any additional action required. If the district submits future project applications for schools not listed in the Resolution, the Resolution will be readopted with the updated projects.

The Resolution will also designate the listed authorized district representatives to sign and submit documents on behalf of the district.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Heidi Heltne at (559) 457-3066.

Cabinet Approval:



Name and Title: Chief Operations and Classified Labor Management Officer, Paul Idsvoog