BOARD COMMUNICATIONS - NOVEMBER 07, 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 — 3
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 October 31, 2025 — 4 - 13
School Services of California Weekly Update Report for October 31, 2025.docx
School Services of California Weekly Update Report for October 31, 2025.pdf

5. OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Adela Garcia Duncan, Chief Officer

6. OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT & EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS
Wendy McCulley, Chief Officer

7. OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & LABOR RELATIONS
David Chavez, Chief Officer

8. OFFICE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION
Carlos Castillo, Ed.D., Chief Officer

8.1 Request for Material Revision by Endeavor Charter School 14
Request for Material Revision by Endeavor Charter School

9. OFFICE OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES
Paul Idsvoog, Chief Officer

10. OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES
Tami Lundberg, Chief Officer

Board Communications Approved by:
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: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Date: November 07, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

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

- Spoke at New Employee Orientation
- Team taught 1st grade at Mayfair Elementary School
- Site visits to Herrera, Sequoia, and Storey
- Held listening sessions with teachers from the sites as follows: Figarden, Gibson, Kratt, Lawless, Malloch, Rata, Starr, Tatarian, Tenaya, Terronez, Powers, and Slater
- Attended the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools' Superintendent Series 2 on Political Landscape
- Met with Cabinet teams
- Attended Dailey Charter Board meeting
- Spoke at the Wallace site visit to Fresno
- Met with Exceptional Parents Unlimited leaders, Lowell Ens, President/CFO; Amanda Tripp, Director of Development; Tru Moua, Direcor of Parent Education & Support
- Attended funeral for James Aldredge
- Met with Ivonne Der Torosian, St. Anges, to discuss potential programs and strategic initiatives partnership
- Attending Exceptional Parents Unlimited Gala of Light

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 Date: November 07, 2025
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive Phone Number: (559) 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for October 31, 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 October 31, 2025, are attached and include the following articles:

- Fed Cuts Rates Again, Balancing Inflation and Labor Market Risks – October 30, 2025
- California Wants to Overhaul High School Learning. This School is Leading the Way – October 27, 2025
- California Head Start Programs Face Uncertainty as Federal Funds Are Paused – October 31, 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

School Services of California INC.
An Employee-Owned Company

500 Capitol Mall
•
Suite 1700
•
Sacramento
•
California 95814
•
TEL: 916 . 446 . 7517
•
FAX: 916 . 446 . 2011
•
www.sscal.com

DATE: October 31, 2025

TO: Misty Her
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

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

California Sued Over Bond Program

A new lawsuit filed in Alameda County Superior Court accuses the State of California of running a school facilities bond program that unfairly advantages wealthy districts. The case brought by Public Advocates challenges the state's long-standing School Facility Program (SFP).

According to the complaint, the SFP structure has produced a deep inequity: affluent districts have been able to build and modernize facilities at a much faster rate, while low-wealth districts struggle with deteriorating buildings, mold, leaky roofs, outdated classrooms, and unsafe conditions. A University of California, Berkeley study cited in the lawsuit found that over the past 25 years, districts with the highest property wealth per student have received about two-and-a-half times more state construction aid than poorer districts. The plaintiffs argue that this violates the California Constitution's guarantee of equitable access to safe and adequate education facilities.

The lawsuit draws parallels to *Serrano v. Priest*, a landmark 1970s case that reformed California's education finance system by limiting reliance on local property taxes for operational funding. However, plaintiffs say that while operational funding has become more equitable through the Local Control Funding Formula, the state has failed to apply the same principles to facilities funding. They contend that recent policy changes, including those tied to 2024's Proposition 2 bond measure, still do not fix the system's underlying bias toward districts that can raise more money locally.

Ultimately, the plaintiffs are asking the court to order the state and the Office of Public School Construction to redesign the bond allocation system so that state funding no longer depends heavily on local wealth.

You can find the complaint here.

Government Shutdown Update

The federal government shutdown has entered its fifth week after the Senate failed to advance the House-passed continuing resolution. The Senate's vote to

advance the funding bill ended 54-45, falling short of the 60 votes required to proceed. Senate Majority Leader John Thune noted that more informal bipartisan conversations are underway, but no formal agreement has been reached, and the Senate adjourned for the weekend with no further votes scheduled until Monday, November 3. With the House largely in recess and the Senate insisting on reopening first, the shutdown is poised to become the longest in U.S. history.

At the same time, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is reaching a critical point. The United States Department of Agriculture has warned that funds may be insufficient to deliver November SNAP benefits unless appropriations are restored. Some states, including Minnesota and North Carolina, have already announced that November benefits will be delayed due to the lapse in federal funding. In California, Governor Gavin Newsom has cautioned that millions of residents who rely on CalFresh (California's version of SNAP) may not receive payments in November if Congress fails to act.

For TK-12 students and their families, the potential disruption to SNAP funding has significant implications. Many families with school-aged children depend on CalFresh to afford groceries and meet basic nutritional needs. A delay or halt in these benefits could increase food insecurity, directly impacting students' health, attendance, and ability to focus in school. Families in high-poverty areas, English learner households, and those supporting foster or homeless youth are likely to be especially affected.

While the shutdown is rooted in federal budget gridlock, its impact extends deeply into local communities. For TK-12 schools, the most immediate effect will be the rising food insecurity among students and families.

Leilani Aguinaldo

Fed Cuts Rates Again, Balancing Inflation and Labor Market Risks

By Wendi McCaskill
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
October 30, 2025

Yesterday, October 29, 2025, the Federal Reserve (Fed) reduced the federal funds rate by another quarter point to 3.75% - 4.0%, This marks the second consecutive rate cut since December 2024 and brings the federal funds rate to its lowest level since 2022. The reduction reflects the Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) concern about slowing job growth and the risks to employment amid still-elevated inflation. As anticipated, the FOMC will also conclude the reduction of its security holdings on December 1, 2025.

At yesterday's post-meeting press conference, Fed Chair Jerome Powell underscored that future rate decisions will depend on the evolving outlook for both inflation and the labor market. When asked about an additional rate cut in December, Powell cautioned that "a further reduction of the policy rate at the December meeting is not a foregone conclusion—far from it." He emphasized that while the FOMC is hopeful that key economic data will resume flowing once the federal government shutdown ends, uncertainty remains over data availability and the evolving economic outlook. Powell also acknowledged strong differences among FOMC members about the path ahead.

Inflation

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the September Consumer Price Index (CPI) for All Urban Consumers rose 3.0% over the past 12 months. The September core CPI, which excludes food and energy, also increased 3.0% year over year. Powell mentioned yesterday that the CPI was softer than expected and that "non-tariff" inflation is not far from the 2.0% goal. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index (PCE), was reported at 2.7% in August. Updated PCE data will not be published until after the federal government shutdown ends, but Powell noted that "estimates based on the CPI suggest total PCE prices rose 2.8% in September."

Labor Market

Powell said the labor market has continued to cool, with job creation slowing and hiring growth moderating in recent months. He noted that overall conditions remain broadly in balance, with unemployment still low; however, downside risks to employment have increased. Powell explained that the labor market's recent softening reflects both a decline in labor demand and supply constraints, including slower labor-force growth and reduced immigration. He added that while reports of layoffs, particularly in technology and AI-related sectors, have drawn attention, they are not yet visible in aggregate data such as unemployment claims or job openings. Powell emphasized that the recent federal fund rate reductions are intended to support demand and help prevent a deeper slowdown in employment while maintaining progress toward the Fed's inflation goal.

Wall Street

The market had a mixed response to yesterday's announcement. The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed down 0.2%, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq rose 0.6%, setting a closing record, and the S&P 500 dropped slightly by 0.0044%.

Note: The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence is launching a pilot program to redesign high school and middle school that that offer work experience, academics tailored to students' interests, and stronger personal connections with staff and multidisciplinary courses that link directly to careers and community needs.

California Wants to Overhaul High School Learning. This School is Leading the Way

By Carolyn Jones
CalMatters
October 27, 2025

At CART High near Fresno, there is no gum stuck to the floor. The saffron-yellow walls are unmarred by graffiti. Toting laptops, students file calmly down spacious, light-filled hallways to classes like biotechnology and digital marketing. There's no fighting, no shouting, no bells. No one even cuts class.

It's hard to believe CART High is a public high school. But in the future, this may be a model for every high school in California.

"We can see from the data that the big, old-fashioned factory model of high school – where students run from class to class with a locker as their only stable point of contact – is not succeeding," said Linda Darling-Hammond, president of the State Board of Education. "We need to overhaul the whole idea of what high school can be, and right now we have an opportunity to do so."

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, a state agency, is launching a pilot program to redesign high school and middle school. Groups of districts already working on escaping the factory model applied for grant money, and winners will meet, brainstorm, work through challenges and share their experiences statewide, in hopes of inspiring other districts to create innovative high school options. The money will come from $10 million recently allotted in the state budget, as well as state programs promoting career pathways and dual enrollment in high school.

The idea is to move beyond the traditional high school — with its rigid 50-minute periods and stand-alone classes — and replace it with a new type of school that offers work experience, academics tailored to students' interests, stronger personal connections with staff and multidisciplinary courses that link directly to careers and community needs.

"It should be a joy to go to school every day," Darling-Hammond said. "That's what we're looking for."

Countless schools in California use elements of this idea, with schools-within-schools that offer career academies or other specialized programs. But very few high schools are devoted completely to it.

How high school came to be

Public high schools have only existed for about a century in the U.S. Education for younger children has existed for hundreds of years, but the idea of school for teenagers only came about in the early 20th century. The original high schools were based loosely on a factory model of efficiency, with learning measured in Carnegie units — 120 hours spent over a year studying a particular topic. Promulgated by the Carnegie

Foundation at the time in an effort to standardize education, the measure is still used at nearly all high schools and colleges.

But advances in adolescent neuroscience have shown that teenagers learn more in a flexible environment with plenty of hands-on projects and teamwork. Instead of sitting quietly at desks and listening to a teacher, students are more likely to be engaged if they're allowed some autonomy to pursue topics they're interested in, with their peers.

Alternative schools — typically, schools for students who aren't succeeding in traditional school — have been experimenting with this approach for decades. The state's top alternative schools aim to not only help students graduate, but also pair them with internships, teach them practical life skills and address their emotional well-being. They often have flexible schedules and small classes, with teachers getting to know students and their families personally.

There's plenty of evidence that traditional high schools may be outdated. In the most recent state student survey, nearly half of 11th graders said school "is really boring." Almost 25% of 11th graders were chronically absent last year.

Academically, the numbers were equally dismal. Just 30% of California 11th graders performed at or above grade level in math last year, with some student groups faring much worse. Although the graduation rate was 87%, fewer than half of those students had finished a college or career preparation track.

"The data speaks for itself," said Russlynn Ali, head of XQ Institute, which advocates for high school redesign, and a former head of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights under President Barack Obama. "There are young people today who've graduated from high school but can't calculate the tip on a split bill, grasp the main idea in an op-ed piece. The case for change is unmistakeable."

Transcripts and units

There are a few obstacles to transforming high schools statewide to look like CART. One is higher education. The University of California and California State University require high school students to pass a series of classes, known as A-G, to qualify for admission. Advocates for high school redesign say those requirements are too rigid, and high schools need some flexibility in creating new classes that are more interesting to students and more connected to life outside the classroom. They also say that traditional letter grades, which colleges rely on to admit students, are too limiting and that colleges need to consider a new kind of transcript that more accurately reflects students' abilities.

Another obstacle is the Carnegie unit, which is an integral part of the way high schools and colleges are structured. Even the Carnegie Foundation has been lobbying for changes, arguing that schools should measure students' progress based on what they know, rather than how much time they've spent in a classroom. But so far, colleges have shown little interest in dropping the Carnegie unit.

A school for 'the C kid'

CART High, which stands for Center for Advanced Research and Technology, opened about 25 years ago in a renovated water pump facility in Clovis. A joint initiative between Clovis Unified and Fresno Unified, the idea was to reach students who were floundering in school and give them some career experience that could also boost the local economy. It wasn't quite an alternative school, but it wasn't an honors program, either.

"We weren't looking for the top students. We were looking for the disengaged kids," said Staci Bynum, CART's dean of curriculum and instruction who's been at the school since its inception. "The C kid is going to excel here."

CART is open to 11th and 12th graders from both districts, with students selected through a lottery. Last year, more than 2,200 students applied and 1,000 were accepted. Nearly 80% of CART's enrollment is low-income.

Students spend half their day at their regular high school taking math, foreign language, art and other classes, and half their day at CART, where they choose an area of focus. Options include law and policy, business, forensics and psychology, among other topics.

Classes, which the school calls labs, are three hours long, and are taught by a trio of teachers who weave in literature and other academic subjects that are relevant to the subject. In biotechnology, for example, students read "The Andromeda Strain" and "The Martian," and write their own science fiction stories based on concepts they're learning in class. In the law class, students read Othello or Hamlet then subject characters to a mock trial.

"We work really hard to get kids to see the bigger picture of why they're learning what they're learning," said English teacher Emily Saeteurn. "We want them to have that 'aha!' moment."

Attendance is nearly 100% and discipline problems are almost unheard of, said principal Rick Watson. More than 90% of students scored at least "proficient" on the English portion of the Smarter Balanced test. Students take the math portion at their other high school.

When he's not running the school, Watson is giving tours. Education officials from around the world often visit, in hopes of replicating the CART model. Numerous CART-inspired schools have opened around California.

"You have kids in comprehensive high schools everywhere who are falling through the cracks," Watson said. "Comprehensive high schools don't work for some B, C, D students. The students have potential but they're disconnected.They're desperate for a different model of education."

Senior Madelyn Quiroga, who's in the biotechnology class, said she has mediocre grades at her regular high school, but all A's at CART.

"At my other school, they just throw stuff at you and never really explain it. Here, they actually teach us," she said. "And it's all stuff we actually want to know, so it sticks in your brain. Like when I hear someone talk about CRISPR (gene editing technology), it's like, 'Oh, I know something about that.'"

Audrey Riede, an 11th grader in the law class, said she's so inspired she wants to be a defense attorney.

"CART is way better than normal school," she said. "The teachers aren't just trying to get you to pass, they really want to make you think. It's just a totally different environment."

The state will announce the winning pilot proposals in November.

Note: Four Head Start programs serving nearly 1,000 of California's most vulnerable children will not receive their annual federal funding on Saturday because of the U.S. government shutdown.

California Head Start Programs Face Uncertainty as Federal Funds Are Paused

By Diana Lambert
EdSource
October 31, 2025

Santa Cruz County program closes, displacing 300 students

Four Head Start programs serving nearly 1,000 of California's most vulnerable children will not receive their annual federal funding on Saturday because of the U.S. government shutdown. One of the programs has already closed temporarily.

Losing Head Start programs could be a one-two punch for low-income families who are also facing a lapse in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits next week because of the shutdown.

The government has been shut down since Oct. 1 because Congress has failed to pass appropriations bills to finance the operations of federal agencies and programs. That means no education, child care, health screenings or healthy meals next week for about 300 infants and preschoolers in the Encompass Community Services Head Start program in Santa Cruz County.

Three other centers in California, including one serving about 400 students in Los Angeles and two smaller programs serving Native American students in the Central Valley and Northern California, are at risk of closing in the coming weeks if they cannot access funds.

"We really want to make sure that Congress understands the impact on everyday Americans of the shutdown and how this is really going to be detrimental to not just the kids we serve and people we employ, but also their families and the people that employ those families," said Melanee Cottrill, executive director of Head Start California.

Head Start serves children from birth to 5 years of age who are homeless, in foster care, on public assistance, or whose family income is below the federal poverty level — currently $32,150 annually for a family of four.

Nationwide, 135 Head Start programs serving 65,000 students are in danger of closing because of the government shutdown, according to the National Head Start Association.

If the shutdown continues until Dec. 1, tens of thousands of additional Head Start students and their families nationwide could be impacted, including about 2,000 students in four other California programs, Cottrill said.

November grants won't be funded

Head Start funding is complicated. Each federally funded preschool program receives a five-year grant that must be renewed annually. Because of the government shutdown, programs with November grant renewal dates will not be able to access funding.

But they aren't the only Head Start programs impacted; all are dependent on federal employees — now furloughed — who review routine paperwork and decide whether to approve purchases and other things needed for regular operations, Cottrill said.

No California programs were impacted on Oct. 1 when the government initially shut down because the state had no programs with an October renewal date, she said.

Program forced to shutter 11 school sites

Although Cottrill would not name the Head Start programs that will be impacted on Nov. 1, officials of the Encompass Head Start program, which has 11 school sites in Santa Cruz County, announced it had paused instruction on Wednesday.

The program has provided bilingual early education to infants and children up to age 5 in the Santa Cruz area for more than 40 years.

Teachers at the program's sites spent Thursday putting away books and children's toys, securing their classrooms and completing needed paperwork. Encompass Head Start has 95 employees.

"Our goal is to reopen this program as soon as we can, so they are setting things up so that when they can come back, we can do that as quickly as possible," said Kim Morrison, interim chief executive officer of Encompass Community Services, on Thursday.

If the government closure continues beyond Nov. 12, Pajaro Valley Unified School District leaders have agreed to step in and operate the organization's sites in Watsonville, where the bulk of the programs are located, Morrison said. The school district will employ teachers and assistants from the Encompass Head Start program at some sites.

The Head Start program is seeking education partners to offer services to the 50 students attending classes outside Watsonville, Morrison said.

Encompass Head Start was already financially stressed before the government shutdown. First, its federal grant was reduced from $10 million to $6 million because of declining enrollment. Last month, it learned that Head Start programs were no longer allowed to carry over funds from previous years, meaning it lost $400,000 it had counted on.

Faced with imminent closure, Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz County Office of Education stepped up to provide $362,000 to fund the program through October.

Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, executive director of First 5 California, is concerned about the prospect of Head Start students losing services.

"You know that 90% of the brain is developed by age 5," Wong said. "These are our Head Start, Early Head Start babies. Eighty percent of the brain is developed by age 3. So, where are these babies getting enrichment, early learning opportunities, developmental opportunities if they're not at a Head Start site?"

Closures could destroy programs

After the pandemic, many of the preschool programs that closed never reopened, Wong said. Teachers took other jobs, leases went unpaid. She is hoping the same thing doesn't happen to Head Start programs that can't access funding.

Concerns about federal funding have had Head Start families and staff on edge since the beginning of the year. Preschool teachers and staff are hard to find, so Head Start programs are trying to reassure staff that these closures will be temporary, Cottrill said.

"We know that our teachers started looking for jobs," Morrison said. "They have to do that. They have to take care of themselves. We can't stop them from doing that at all. We hope that they feel strongly enough about our programs that they'll want to come back when we're ready to open."

'End the Shutdown Day of Action'

Encompass Community Services and Head Start California were among 18 California organizations to sign a letter sent by the First Five Years Fund on Wednesday that called on Congress to end the government shutdown and to protect Head Start.

The letter was part of an "End the Shutdown Day of Action" on Wednesday. Early childhood education advocates also rallied supporters to write to members of Congress to persuade them to pass a budget that fully funds Head Start and to quickly reopen the government.

The letter said that Head Start is essential for thousands of families in every congressional district.

"The longer this shutdown lasts, the worse the consequences will be," stated the letter, in part. "We cannot allow political gridlock to take away opportunities from our youngest learners and their families. It's time for lawmakers to re-open the government and fund these programs through the Appropriations process."

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent — Date: November 07, 2025
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Marie Williams, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent — Phone Number: (559) 457-3750

Regarding: Request for Material Revision by Endeavor Charter School

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with information regarding a material revision to the charter petition submitted by Endeavor Charter School (ECS) on November 03, 2025. ECS's charter, which was granted by the Board for the period from July 01, 2020, to June 30, 2025, has been extended pursuant to Education Code section 47607.4 through June 30, 2028, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and waiver provided by the California Department of Education (CDE). Trustees will receive a copy of the material revision petition next week.

ECS is requesting the addition of a location with an address located in the same Fresno Unified School District trustee area to provide space for improving their personalized learning program for their existing enrollment. Additionally, to offset the increased cost of the additional location, the material revision is requesting to increase ECS's projected student enrollment by nineteen students in Transitional Kindergarten through third grade, fourteen students in fourth through sixth grade, two students in seventh through eighth grade, and 23 students in ninth through twelfth grade over the next two years. ECS will present its plan to the Board at a hearing on December 17, 2025.

As set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ECS and Fresno Unified School District, a proposed change in enrollment that represents an increase or decrease from the enrollment originally projected in the charter by more than 25% in any grade level or 10% of the total enrollment in any given year, is a material revision to the charter as is the addition of an location.

On January 28, 2026, at a second public hearing, the Board will vote to either approve or deny the material revision. If the material revision is granted, the charter will be changed to reflect the material revision requested by ECS.

Pursuant to Education Code Section 47606(a)(3), "[a] material revision of the provisions of a charter petition may be made only with the approval of the chartering authority." Further, "[a] material revision of a charter is governed by the standards and criteria described in Section 47605."

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Felicia Olais at (559) 457-3923.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Carlos Castillo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer